(te•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

Chanukah Supplement

TIKKUN

Fiction: *Leo Litwak*
Reviews: *Christine Stansell, Regina Morantz-Sanchez, Daniel Lazare, Arthur Waskow*
Essays: *Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Gershom Gorenberg*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1992 $6.00

Nationalism



and Ethnic Particularism

Michael Walzer, Bogdan Denitch, Marshall Berman, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Gail Kligman, Todd Glitlin, Tsvi Blanchard, Marla Stone, Jenefer Shute

The Bisexual Boss
Marian Neudel

Mikveh
Shira Dicker

Auschwitz Memorial
James Young

Clinton's Victory and Ours

Clinton and the Id
Peter Gabel

Memos to Clinton
Gar Alperovitz
Tom Hayden

The Sixties Generation Returns
Michael Lerner

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Shulchan Aruch

We made each other happy in the dark,
moving blindly, as if in a ritual.
In the morning, we didn't kneel,
we didn't bow, we only moved lightly
around each other in the narrow
kitchen, changing places
as if in a dance.

Our days quickly filled up with rules,
ceremonies: the favorite tea
on Friday night—Lemon Zinger,
the favorite sculptor—Giacometti.
The one who returns home first in the evening
cleans up the morning's leavings,
sets the table

Avraham Balaban
translated by Enid Shomer

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 7 NUMBER 6

2 **Letters:** Clinton and Coercive Deference; Vichy and the Jews; Conservative Judaism's Repudiation of Gays; and Syria.

Chanukah Supplement How to observe the holiday in your home *(between pages 48 and 49).*

Clinton's Victory and Ours

7 **Michael Lerner** *The Sixties Generation Returns* Close to twenty years of society-wide psychological depression might be lifted if the baby boomers now heading to Washington have enough self-confidence to reclaim the liberatory themes of the sixties rather than trying to become "realists" in Washington's terms.

10 **Peter Gabel** *Clinton and the Id* It wasn't just "the economy." Clinton spoke to our desire for connection, our repressed life-energy, our need for meaning.

13 **Gar Alperovitz** *Memo to Clinton* A political strategy for Clinton, including advice on how to play hard ball with the military.

19 **Tom Hayden** *Memo to the Tikkun Community* Clinton may need a social movement *now more than ever* to offset the power of Washington's special interests.

Articles

22 **Marian Neudel** *Dodging the Bisexual Boss* Workers need changes at the workplace far more profound than those won so far.

31 **James E. Young** *The Future of Auschwitz* Can Auschwitz be saved from becoming a cheapened tourist trap insensitive to Jewish memory?

34 **Letty Cottin Pogrebin** *Beyond Mitzrayim: Egypt, Israel, and Middle East Peace* Egypt may play a central role in Israel's efforts for peace.

39 **Gershom Gorenberg** *The Missing Melody* Let's grab fistfuls of stories from all of the world's cultures and shower them on our children and students.

Special Focus: Nationalism and Ethnic Particularism

41 **Marla Stone** *Nationalism and Identity in (Former) East Germany* Robbed by German reunification of their previous identity and history, some East Germans have followed West German neo-Nazis into a demonization of the "Other."

47 **Tsvi Blanchard** *Jews and Latinos* How should Jews define self-interest when faced with the competing claims of other ethnic groups for recognition and political power?

49 *Roundtable on Nationalism in a World of "Ethnic Cleansing"* **Michael Walzer, Todd Gitlin, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Marshall Berman, Gail Kligman,** and **Bogdan Denitch.** As ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia and other parts of Eastern Europe becomes the face of some forms of nationalism, should liberals rethink their "celebration of difference" and make claim to the superiority of some universal principles?

57 **Jenefer Shute** *Sport, African Cultures, Value For Money: A Return to South Africa* Returning to her native land, the author finds a society that remains deeply wounded.

25 **Fiction** **Leo Litwak** *Heartless Willie*

62 **Personal Essay** **Shira Dicker** *Mikveh*

Reviews

65 **Regina Morantz-Sanchez** on Ellen Chesler's *Woman of Valor;* **Daniel Lazare** on Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun;* **Christine Stansell** on William R. Taylor's *In Pursuit of Gotham;* **Arthur Waskow** on Marge Piercy's *He, She & It*

Poetry: on the inside front cover: **Avraham Balaban;** on page 29, **Herb Levine;** on page 78, **Carol V.Davis. Cover art:** *Hell on Earth* by Peter Howson. Oil/canvas, 183 x 244cm, 1992. Courtesy of Flowers East Gallery. **Photography:** The photograph on page 7 is by Andrew Lichtenstein/Impact Visuals; on page 8, by Valerie Haimowitz; on page 10, by Brian Palmer/Impact Visuals; on page 15, by Harvey Finkle/Impact Visuals; on page 35, by Donna Binder/Impact Visuals; on page 43, Larry Boyd/Impact Visuals; on page 51, by Allan Clear/Impact Visuals; on page 61, by Eric Miller/Impact Visuals. **Line Drawings:** On pages 15, 27, 59, 63, 68, and 70, by Suzanne M. Long.

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Letters

Tikkun *reserves the right to select, edit, and shorten all submissions to the Letters section.*

COERCIVE DEFERENCE

To the Editor:

I don't know if you know this, but many African-American intellectuals read *Tikkun* magazine very carefully. I'm one of them, and I've appreciated *Tikkun*'s careful and thoughtful attention to the issues that confront our community.

I was particularly delighted to read Peter Gabel's response to Kimberle Crenshaw and Gary Peller. Peller and Crenshaw are right to be concerned about what a Clinton administration will do for the problems facing many African-Americans. I share their concern. But as an African-American, I resist their attempts, like the attempts of many "cultural nationalists," to dictate a specific identity that I must follow in order to be "kosher" as a Black man. Yet that is exactly what is implied when we are told there is a real Black identity and that it was suppressed at the Democratic Convention. My identity was not suppressed, and I refuse the definition of my "cultural particularity" that sister Crenshaw and her white ally Peller are seeking to impose as normative.

I have had these kinds of feelings for years, but until I read Gabel I didn't feel I had a right to say anything like this in public; if I did so I'd be betraying my Blackness and abandoning my African-American brothers and sisters. The fact is that I don't want to do any betraying. I am very much committed to social transformation in America in a way that will eliminate poverty and all forms of racism, not only against me and other Blacks, but also against Latinos, American-Indians, Asians, Jews, everybody. I'm not abandoning this desire for what amounts to deep structural change in America when I say that some of the forms of "cultural particularity" that are supposed to be mine, because I was born Black, just don't seem to fit me. Some I just don't want to have fit me. I think that the cultural thought police in the African-Ameri-

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can world can be just as rigid and alienating as those whom you in *Tikkun* are always complaining about in the Jewish world; those who tell you how you ought to be as Jews, how you aren't "real Jews" unless you support Israeli policy, or adopt religious orthodoxy, or something like that. I have always resented this in the Black world. In a funny way, all the contradictions came home to me when Clarence Thomas was defended by some Blacks who said that his way of talking to Anita Hill was merely a Black way of talking, that it had a different meaning in a Black context, and that in that context his way was normal and not a sign of harassment. I realized then that many people like to use "cultural particularity" as their own weapon to justify their own specific political approaches. I'd rather debate out the approach explicitly rather than have it shoved down my throat under the guise of being "culturally correct." So, while I think I may have lots to criticize Clinton about, I don't want to do it using this kind of cultural correctness that is suggested by the Crenshaw-Peller team.

James Armstrong
New York, New York

To the Editor:

There is a big danger in Gabel's concept of coercive deference: that he will let every unreconstructed racist, sexist, and imperialist off the hook that we've been trying to put them on for the past two decades. I can see that happening in the administration Clinton is putting together. The moment we critique the choice of, say, a Cold Warrior of the Les Aspin variety for Secretary of Defense, or of other right-wing Democrats, we are going to be told that we are insisting that Clinton succumb to coercive deference.

Gabel wants us to avoid the interest group politics of the past decade and speak in the name of some larger community. The problem is that no one has yet been able to mobilize such a larger community to fight for progressive values. All we have are the particular constituencies—women, gays, Blacks, Jews, Latinos—fighting for what they see as their particular needs. In general, these groups push for and help shape progressive political directions. But if Gabel succeeds, these groups will be demobilized while the alternative community of meaning has not yet been constituted. So then who will be around

Do your friends a favor this holiday season!



Subscription order form in this issue between pages 48 and 49

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to counter the massive pull of the Right and its likely influence on Clinton et. al?

I don't fault Gabel for attributing to Clinton some real empathy for the struggle of Blacks, women and gays, and sensitivity to the environment. But how is that sympathy going to get translated into politics once he is in office? Only if there are real powerful forces pushing him—and those will be the separate ethnic, sexual, and religious constituencies. And they will exercise influence precisely by insisting that Clinton show care and concern for their particular needs. At that point, they may be able to hook into Clinton's (in Gabel's terms) "unquenched life force"—but they will need the club they get by being able to insist that Clinton pay attention to their past oppression and present needs. In fact, it may be precisely the ability of these groups to make those kinds of demands that will give Clinton the tools he needs to counter the demands of the right. So Gabel is really asking the Left for unilateral disarmament, before they've won anything. I don't think that is very smart strategy.

Al Gross
Chicago, Illinois

Vichy and the Jews

To the Editor:

I find it bizarre that Mr. Weisberg should hold me responsible for views which I had clearly attributed to Dr. Fox, to the point of accusing me of offering "a shocking apology for the [Vichy] regime's leaders." This is very silly, as it would indeed be silly and bizarre to charge Dr. Fox, a most reputable scholar, with offering an apology for Vichy (which both he and I detest), even if his analysis were to be wrong. At any rate, I suggest that the Editors of *Tikkun* ask Dr. Fox to comment on Weisberg's article.

Abraham Brumberg
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Gays and Jews

To the Editor:

How ignorant of the Conservative Movement policy can Mr. Lerner be? Every arm of the Movement has made clear its abhorrence of discrimination against homosexuals. As Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, the seminary's chancellor, recently stated, "Judaism is as vital to the well-being of homosexuals as to heterosexuals. Synagogues should extend to gays and lesbians a respectful welcome. Banished from the larger society, discrimination and intrusiveness should find no haven in our religious institutions."

Excluding homosexuals from the rabbinate or cantorate can hardly be construed as oppression. To again quote Rabbi Schorsch:

"What we deem an avowed homosexual unsuited for is religious leadership [i.e., rabbi or cantor], on the grounds that the occupant of these posts should come as close as humanly possible to personifying the ideals of Judaism. But then, that is a standard that disqualifies many others, as well."

To "come as close as humanly possible to personify the ideals of Judaism" requires acknowledging the centrality of the heterosexual family in Jewish life. To achieve the status of "ha'adam" requires the merging of man and woman into a single unit, so "that they shall be one flesh," capable of creating life in the image of their Creator. It would be hypocritical—and indeed cruel—to expect a homosexual rabbi to ascend a pulpit to preach on the immutable centrality of the heterosexual family in Judaism.

Klal Yisrael (the Jewish community) must also be considered. It is not yet ready to countenance such rabbinic leadership. (While Halacha is not decided by the public, its views must be considered.) Thus, the Talmud in Mefilla 23b suggests that the only reason women were not called for aliyot was because the congregation would not stand for it. The Conservative Movement continues to abide by that ruling today by allowing each congregation the right to decide for itself the extent to which egalitarianism will be observed during the services.

The religious arguments aside, I find Mr. Lerner's references to the Nazi concentration camps both insulting and ironic.

What is insulting about it is the flat-out statement that "those camps [were] filled also with another persecuted minority—gays." Filled? Of the eleven million people who died in those camps, six million were killed because they were Jews. Indeed, that was the whole point of the death camps: to kill all the Jews. Among the other five million were gays—and Gypsies, political dissidents, the emotionally and physically disabled, Poles, Russians, Serbs, etc.

Except, perhaps, in the case of the Gypsies, there was no organized effort at a "final solution" for any of these victims. As for the Gypsies, whatever organized effort existed was limited to Germany proper. Only the Jews were meant as Nazism's universal victims. While I sympathize with the point Mr. Lerner sought to make, I resent the equality of status he seeks to create.

The irony is to be found in the fact that the Shoah offers the most poignant argument for retaining the ideal of the heterosexual family and not opening the door to alternatives. We have yet to recover numerically from that tragedy. There are only about thirteen million of us worldwide, far below the twenty-six million Jews who lived before the Shoah. The situation can only get worse because our low birth rate and escalating rate of intermarriage traps us in a ruinous pattern of numerical attrition. This is not the time to remove the heterosexual family as the sole legitimate Jewish norm.

Shammai Engelmayer
Director of Communications
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
New York, New York

To the Editor:

Michael Lerner acknowledges that the leaders of the Conservative Movement struggled with the issue of homosexuality, but "could not find a halachic peg on which to hang their humane concerns." He blames this on their lack of self-confidence. Dr. Lerner is correct in noting that these leaders could not find such a "peg," but that is because this peg does not exist. Rather than condemning the Conservative Movement for what he perceives as timidity, Dr. Lerner should be praising us for our staunch commitment to halacha.

By definition, a system that establishes standards of behavior and desired codes of conduct cannot be expected to please everyone. Indeed, changing halacha to accommodate one constituency may very well alienate another. Even more significant, the attempt to reinterpret halacha to equate all lifestyles threatens to negate the very purpose of this legal system, which has served us so well throughout our long history.

Additionally, it is completely absurd to complain, as Lerner does, that Conservative rabbis are no longer creative

and lack self-confidence. One has only to examine innovations in the Conservative Movement over the past ten or fifteen years to find significant developments not only in synagogue life, particularly related to questions of gender, but also in its willingness to confront important social issues, such as divorce and abortion. Indeed, these positive developments have been praised in the pages of *Tikkun* itself. Although Dr. Lerner has the right to criticize the Conservative Movement for not upholding *his* beliefs regarding homosexuality, it is intellectually dishonest to label the Movement noncreative and lacking in self-confidence when the contrary is clearly the case.

I also find it hard to believe that Dr. Lerner truly feels that the entire Conservative rabbinate is made up of individuals "whose central goal is to make comfortable suburbanites feel comfortable." Certainly, that description may apply to some rabbis in every denomination. But there are also many rabbis in every denomination who challenge congregants and, in so doing, make them uncomfortable, while causing them to grow. Indeed, many Conservative rabbis have actually put their jobs "on the line" for the sake of principle.

Finally, I was struck by Dr. Lerner's comments on Conservative Jewish youth. Our experience with United Synagogue Youth (USY) is just the opposite of what he describes. These young people have provided us with a cadre of leadership for the Movement. I am continually impressed by the number of synagogue leaders (professional and lay) who have risen through the ranks of the youth programs of the Conservative Movement. In part, this is because they have been exposed to the dynamism of the Movement in the very areas criticized by Dr. Lerner (witness the successful *Tikkun* Olam program, which involves thousands of youngsters each year in hands-on social action).

Dr. Lerner concludes his editorial by suggesting that it is time for the Jewish people to apologize to homosexuals for the way they have been treated. If we, as individuals, have been insensitive in the way we have spoken to or interacted with homosexuals on a personal basis, we certainly ought to apologize. Further, if we have in any way deprived homosexuals of their civil rights, an apology is in order. However, we cannot apologize for adhering to our religious principles and for honoring the process by which Jewish law is made and changed. To do less would be to dishonor the sacred teachings of the Torah—and that, more than anything else, would warrant an apology.

Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein
Executive Vice-President,
The United Synagogue of
Conservative Judaism
New York, New York

The Editor responds:

A few years ago leaders of the Conservative Movement were using these same kinds of arguments to explain why they prohibited women from becoming rabbis or from receiving aliyot. When the pressure became great enough, they suddenly found halachic justifications for switching their position. Talmudic rabbis found just such a way to get around the Torah's Sabbatical year requirements that freed debtors of responsibility for paying back loans. I have no doubt that within fifty years the Conservative Movement will find just such mechanisms to discover that gays can indeed personify the ideals of Judaism, but in the meantime a lot of people are going to be suffering unnecessarily. Just as in the case of women's rights the key element was pressure from within the Movement, so in this case it will be internal pressure that will eventually give conservative rabbis the courage that they currently lack to respond to the halachic arguments that Rabbi Brad Artson has already presented in these pages about why Judaism needs to change its approach to homosexuals.

As to the impact of the Holocaust: discriminating against gays and lesbians will not help deal with our declining numbers (none of them are going to convert to heterosexuality in order to become rabbis) but it may increase the alienation from Judaism that is a primary cause of assimilation.

To the Editor:

As a gay activist in my community I want you to know how much I appreciate *Tikkun's* forthright statement in favor of gay and lesbian rights in the Jewish world. I've heard many people attempt to apologize for the Conservative Movement's exclusion of gay and lesbian rabbis on the grounds that even though we can't have any rights, the

EROS AND THE JEWS
From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America
DAVID BIALE

Are Jews more—or less—neurotic? Drawing on works ranging from the Book of Ruth to the novels of Isaac Bashevis Singer, from the films of Woody Allen to the teachings of Hasidism, this book shows that the contemporary dilemmas of Jewish desire have their analogues in the past.

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EXCERPTED IN TIKKUN

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Conservative Movement adopted a position paper that said homosexuality should not be thought of as "an abomination." Well, thanks a lot. So now they will only discriminate against us, but not because we are absolutely disgusting! I don't think that this amount of forward movement represents enough to require a great deal of celebration among any of our friends in the straight world who care about our rights as human beings. And the prohibition they adopted making it illegal for Conservative rabbis to perform "commitment ceremonies" is the real abomination. I find it difficult to understand how any principled and sensitive Conservative Jew could agree to continue to pay the salary of a rabbi who thinks of himself as bound by the decisions of the Rabbinical Assembly's Law Committee or who could continue to allow their congregation to pay dues to the United Synagogue of America.

I must admit that when I first read *Tikkun,* I was worried about the way Michael Lerner emphasized the need for a progressive pro-family politics. Despite the fact that he was careful to include "gay and lesbian families" among the families he wanted to support, I had a suspicion that he really didn't care much about our issues. But the unequivocal stand he took against the Conservative Movement's decisions on this question reassures me in a way that previous pro-gay rights statements have not. Here is the tough case for Lerner—a case where Jews who share his approach to Judaism are moving in the wrong direction. So I'm mighty proud that Lerner and *Tikkun* stood up and spoke out. I know you showed courage on Israel for all these many years, but to show courage on gay rights may be even tougher. I just hope other straight Jews will follow your leadership.

Sol Harris
New York, New York

To the Editor:

I am a graduate student at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). A Conservative Jew, I am devoted to this Movement. I am also an open lesbian, and as such I applaud your questioning the Conservative Movement's recent decision banning commitment ceremonies between homosexuals. However, the issues run deeper in our daily lives.

Here at JTS, a handful of us gays and lesbians have formed a group called the Incognito Club, so named because most of the other members have chosen to remain unknown. Regardless of official pronouncements of nondiscrimination in the graduate and undergraduate schools, their situation still feels somewhat precarious to many of them. I suspect people are waiting to see what happens next.

The presence of open homosexuals here and the founding of the Incognito Club precipitated a tremendous struggle on the part of the administration to live up to their stated ideals. They have succeeded. There was a time, a couple of years ago, when I felt a certain social ostracism, as if I was dangerous to be seen with too often, but I perceive that we've moved past that stage. People are getting accustomed to the idea of homosexuals in their midst. That was a necessary first step. It should not be discounted, but neither can it be lauded as a final goal. All we are demonstrating, after all, is that we Conservative Jews, homosexual and heterosexual, can study and work together in an academic setting. The broader, Movement-wide problem of homosexuals in religious life is yet before us.

Our Movement leaders would have us believe that this, too, has been accomplished, or at least the requisite provisions made. Declarations of nondiscrimination in the pews and in membership are indeed encouraging. As a homosexual Conservative Jew, however, it is evident to me that these declarations will profit us nothing, unless they are also understood as just a necessary first step—the beginning, not the end, of a process. Centuries of prejudice and attendant discrimination cannot be eliminated with the flourish of a pen. If these declarations are to have any meaning, an open dialogue needs to begin with the very group most disempowered in this discussion, homosexuals. Without such a dialogue, all the debates now raging over our nature and our needs can only be speculation, rooted in that very same prejudice the Movement would condemn.

Why is it, for example, that, for all my visibility and availability as a lesbian in this Movement, only three people, left and right of the debate, have asked me about my experience: Rabbis Elliot Dorff and Gordon Tucker, and you, Dr. Lerner? Why is it that a mere student, at risk of her career, must thrust herself into print in a publication outside of her community to make a point which, to any casual observer, would have been self-evident: that, before the Movement decides our destiny, it ought to get to know us first, instead of relying so much on sensationalized media reports and the veritable tonnage of psycho– and biobabble available in print? Such ignorance and misinformation can only lead to inadvertent cruelty.

Last year, at the onset of the Rabbinical Assembly Law Committee Hearings on Homosexuality, my lover and I wrote a letter to all the members of that committee telling of the alienation and ostracism we had experienced here at JTS. Angered by the cruelty, Dr. Rabinowitz responded with a *teshuva,* a legal responsum, which forbade such community neglect. From that experience, I have come to understand and trust two things: One, I am not here among bad people, I am among good people grappling with a complex social evil no one fully understands; and two, that communication is the key to progress. I only beg that communication does not stop here, that we do not pretend the subject is closed. If no one knew of the ostracism before our letter, then there is so much more that no one but the homosexuals know.

For example, a homosexual would know that the current policies of the Movement regarding synagogue membership and participation contain the seeds of continued discrimination. We may, it is said, be welcomed into the pews, but access to synagogue honors, boards, and teaching positions in the Hebrew schools is contingent on the good will of the local rabbi. That may sound fine in theory, but in reality it means that we have been made a caste, vulnerable to synagogue and Movement politics and the brutal rule of cost efficiency. Given the state of synagogue finances, what will happen to the rabbi's good judgment if our further participation is opposed by a major contributor? Who will be sacrificed first? Moreover, once admitted, we have every reason to believe that our continued acceptance is contingent upon our continued good behavior. What will happen to us, if, in a moment's amnesia, we transgress someone's unarticulated boundary? Tiny gestures long allowed to heterosexuals and their spouses are still considered parades for homosexuals. I speak from weary experience when I say that the burden of being the "proper lesbian" in this community, like the onus of being the "good Jew" in past

(Continued on p. 75)

EDITORIAL

The Sixties Generation Returns: The Lifting of America's Psychological Depression

Michael Lerner

When people get depressed as many Americans have been for much of the past twenty years, they abandon their hopes about what could be. They lose their optimism, they suppress their fantasies, they armor themselves against the pain of daily life and have less energy to give to life. They let others make important decisions even though they know that they may be adversely affected by those decisions. They pick the narrowest possible framework for thinking about their lives. Maybe they can get a job or forge a career that brings in enough bucks to provide material comforts. Maybe they can find one other person to share life with, maybe have a child and channel all their energies toward their own family. Intellectually they may understand that their family is deeply affected by what's going on in the larger world, but because they don't believe they can make an impact on the events shaping that larger world, they set their sights on getting some measure of predictability and control over the tiny part of the world that they imagine to be "personal life." Doing their best to ignore the ways that "personal life" is itself shaped by larger social realities—since that awareness would necessarily lead them back into politics—they often find themselves falling deeper into despair and self-blaming as they discover that even in the limited personal sphere they are far less powerful than they had hoped to create the kinds of human relationships they desire.

This is what the depression of the past two decades has been like—and the most important possibility of the Clinton years is that they might lift that depression, bring people back into politics, and create a new sense of collective hopefulness that will help to heal many people's individual pain. This depression didn't start as a reaction to a single traumatic event. It was a process.

The 1960s had liberated a spirit of optimism and a sense of possibility that affected tens of millions of Americans. So much of human history had been dominated by narrow economic survival concerns, but postwar American prosperity allowed the generation coming of age in the 1960s and early 1970s to focus on larger concerns: what kind of human relationships and what kind of society they really wanted. The particular demands—for participatory democracy, for an end to racism and sexism and heterosexism, for the rights of workers and the handicapped, for freedom of expression, for an end to the war in Vietnam, or for an end to American economic exploitation of Third World countries—all bespoke a deeper yearning: for a world in which human relationships were no longer defined by survival needs and hence could begin to address deeper psychological, aesthetic, spiritual, and ethical needs.

American politics since the late sixties has been largely defined by people's complex reactions to the experiences of the sixties, analyzed in more detail in "Clinton and the Id" by Peter Gabel in this issue of Tikkun. The Republicans have been running against the sixties for the past twenty years, while the Democrats have repeatedly stumbled—unable to recognize that unless they could help people come to terms with the sixties, it would come back to haunt them. The Democrats were torn by contradictory needs: on the one hand to appeal to that part of their party that feels that its needs were first addressed by the social movements of the sixties while at the same time holding on to those segments of the party who felt deeply offended by the spirit of the sixties. Bill Clinton became the perfect synthesizer because his opposition to the war in Vietnam, his support of feminism and gay rights, and his identification with the music of the sixties seemed to symbolize a connection to the one community while his role in creating the Democratic Leadership Council as an alternative to liberal voices in the party reassured others that he understood and cared for their needs.

But why was a negative reaction to the sixties so powerful that it could become the basis for Republican victories for the next two decades? The reason is that those of us who built the movements that emerged from the sixties were people whose political commitments—to radical transformation of the world, to the re-eroticization of daily life, to the flowering of beauty, and to the restructuring of society according to democratic and moral ideals—was tragically flawed. Our vision lacked a corresponding sense of compassion for the limitations in all of us that would make these transformations a long and difficult process. Laced with the "instant gratification" ethos of the capitalist market, we demanded immediate transformation of the world and of ourselves. When we could not achieve it we turned on each other



and on outsiders with a critical and at times arrogant eye. Those who had not yet accepted our anti-racist or anti-sexist or anti-elitist ideals were made to feel that they were the embodiment of all evil. In the name of a more humane society, the social change movements fostered a contempt for the lives and situations of many ordinary Americans. Eventually, we turned on each other, and with this same lack of compassion we found that none of us had adequately transcended our selfishness, our egotism, our sexism, our racism. No one and nothing was enough.

The success of the Republicans in the past two decades rested in their ability to manipulate the resentment that many Americans came to feel towards these social change movements. Nixon won reelection in 1972 precisely because he could identify this liberal elitism as the enemy, and by the end of the seventies a New Right had emerged which insisted that the entire focus for Republican politics ought to be on the "social issues," namely, those parts of people's lives that set them most apart from the movements of the sixties. While Carter and his policy experts tooled away at micro-managing the society (often coming up with quite good foreign policy, energy and environmental ideas), the Right spoke to the pain and self-blaming in people's family lives, linking the collapse of family to the ethos of individualism and personal fulfillment that had become the media's pop-image trivialization of what the movements of the sixties and feminism had been about.

Liberals never understood what hit them. In their public reactions to the humiliating defeats of the Reagan era, they dismissed the national swing rightward as an expression of stupidity, manipulation, or racism. Unable to imagine that the Right was addressing a real psychological, spiritual and ethical crisis in the society when it talked about "the family," unable to recognize the well of anger that many Americans felt at having been treated as morally and intellectually inferior by the very "special interest groups" that seemed to be exercising increasing power in the Democratic Party, liberals could only explain the Reagan victories by talking about the way the American people allowed themselves to be manipulated. Thus the liberals' interpretation of their own political losses confirmed for most Americans their perception that liberals held them in contempt.

The irony in all of this is that by the 1980s most Americans had come to accept many of the central ideas of the social change movements. The anti-sexism, anti-racism, and even anti-imperialist ideals of the sixties had become so powerful that Reagan could talk of being constrained by "a Vietnam syndrome" and Republicans were forced to give surface acknowledgment to demands that emerged from the women's movement and the civil rights movement even though, as in the appointment of Clarence Thomas, they tried to do this in ways that would substantively subvert those movements. But while they accepted much of the perspective of the sixties, most Americans resented those who had been responsible for presenting these ideas, correctly sensing that these liberals had a not-too-well-concealed disrespect for the lives that most Americans were living. They agreed with the policies of the Democrats but felt better understood by, and hence felt more trusting of, the Republicans.

Luckily for the Democrats and the country, George Bush himself had never really understood the psychological power of the New Right's agenda. Though he embraced the New Right's language temporarily in 1988, he could not embody it in his being. So deeply a product of the elitist establishment, he could not show the kind of caring about the lives of ordinary Americans that had (mistakenly, but nevertheless pervasively) seemed to many to be the trait that distinguished the Reaganites from the Democrats.

It was *not* the recession that defeated George Bush, but his inability to convey a deep sense of caring about the economic fears that gripped so many Americans. Conversely, it was not the brilliance of Clinton's economic programs that won over America, but the fact that he seemed genuinely to care about them and their lives.

Thus, even the trump card of "pro-family" politics failed miserably at the Republican convention. I believe that the progressives and liberals ought to constitute themselves as the real pro-family force and now seriously address the complex set of social forces that work to un-

dermine long-term loving relationships. A progressive pro-family movement in the Clinton years could help people see that it is the narcissistic me-firstism, individualism, and materialism fostered by the destructive dynamics of the competitive marketplace that is at the center of the breakdown of contemporary family life, *not* the legitimate desires of women or gays for the power to determine their own lives. "Pro-family" had been successfully appropriated by the Right, both because the Left had allowed its struggles for women's and gay rights to be misinterpreted as anti-family and because the Right had used the persona of Ronald Reagan to articulate its pro-family orientation in a language that seemed to speak of compassion for the fate of ordinary Americans. It was the absence of that compassion, either in the put-down tones of Quayle's anti-Murphy Brown quips or in the ferocious right-wing rhetoric at the Republican convention that guaranteed the Republican's failure. Without the message of compassion, the substance of the Right's approach to "pro-family" politics could be seen through by most Americans who could finally recognize it as a transparent attempt to impose the lifestyle and mores of one section of the population on everyone else, restrict women, criminalize abortion, and stigmatize gays and lesbians.

Now the sixties generation is up at bat. I have no illusions that Washington is going to be overrun by hippies, flower children, or unreconstructed radicals. Nevertheless, many of those who will work with Clinton are people who were influenced by some of the best elements of the sixties, even if they weren't full participants (some because they were too young, others because they were hedging their bets and making careers for themselves). Undoubtedly there will be some on the Left who correctly point out that Clinton's policies don't go far enough toward embodying what we were fighting for. But we must also recognize that for most Americans it will be the Clinton-Gore years that test in practice whether the ideals of the sixties can work, and if this administration fails we may be facing the rise of a Right far more frightening than that which ran the country for the past twelve years.

This administration could fail if it is too timid in pursuing reform, too accommodating to entrenched interests in order to achieve concensus, or too lost in the details of policy to remember to build democratic participation and to foster a psychodynamics of hope. In every sphere, Clinton will face tremendous pressure to reassure elites of wealth and power that he is not going to go too far. Yet America's problems require dramatic and deep structural change; if Clinton doesn't go far enough, Americans may eventually see him as a rerun of Jimmy Carter, tinkering with details while the Right wins back the hearts of Americans by being more visionary and having a coherent worldview.

Clinton will have to stand up to big capital when it threatens to disinvest because it lacks confidence in his programs. He will have to challenge the media to go beyond their soundbites and create space for a more informed and a more involved electorate. He will have to challenge the medical profession to move beyond the profit motive. He can effect such bold change only if he mobilizes people through a politics of meaning, a politics that not only articulates a clear moral vision but also embodies that vision in the details of its policies. This won't always be easy for some of the policy wonks and technocrats who surround Clinton, nor for some of the establishment Democrats Clinton might bring into his cabinet. What Clinton needs most is to widen his circle to include people who recognize that his administration will succeed or fail not according to whether every detail of its proposed legislation gets enacted, but according to whether it has been able to rekindle a spirit of optimism in the country, elevate public life and a commitment to moral idealism, and embrace the best of the sixties by encouraging people to fight for their highest ideals for an ethically, spiritually, ecologically, and psychologically fulfilling world.

There are millions of Americans, *not* veterans of the sixties but also many younger and older people as well—who have never given up their commitment to an ethical vision. There is a well of idealism that could be tapped to create a political infrastructure for serious change. Mobilizing and sustaining those energies will require more than a few rousing speeches—it will require institutions. The Clinton administration should be giving as much attention to building ongoing community forums and assemblies in which people get a chance to articulate their ideas and debate programs as it does to its relationship to Congress. It should seek to promote a communitarian ethic in every aspect of American life—and give as much attention to that as it does to the budget (and it should do it *through* the budget as well).

If this becomes the Clinton administration's focus, if it can take a politics of meaning and make that central to its concrete programs, then we will see the lifting of the great psychological depression that has immobilized America for so many years, and the flourishing of a new kind of energy, the liberating of American ingenuity and creativity and caring in ways that will make us happy to be alive in the nineties. It is by no means certain that Clinton will move in this direction, and there are many coutervailing forces that may push him in a more spirit-deadening direction. Although Clinton's election does not make a turn to a politics of meaning inevitable, it is nevertheless exciting to have reached the moment when it is possible. □

Clinton and the Id

Peter Gabel

One of the most interesting aspects of the recent presidential campaign was the failure of any of the conventional right-wing assaults on Bill Clinton to affect his ratings in the polls or, ultimately, the election. The Republicans repeatedly invoked many of the same images that had worked for the last twelve years—such as patriotism, family values, and God—and sought to portray Clinton as someone who would undermine the sense of community conveyed in these images. This draft dodger, this "demonstrator on foreign soil," this womanizer, this husband of an "unfeminine" woman, this slick friend of the cultural elites (who don't care about our country or our families)—whatever they tried had no effect and even backfired, as if people were responding with, "come on, we don't care about this stuff."

Since the creation of these conservative images of community had played a major role in the rise and success of the New Right, it's fair to ask why they failed to move people this time. The conventional answer is that "all people cared about was the economy." But this answer can't be right. First, economic realities never speak for themselves—their political importance is always determined by the set of meanings people give to them. When Reaganomics led to a first big surge in unemployment and increased poverty in late 1981 and early 1982, economistic Democrats thought that the normal losses the presidential party faces in off-year elections would be greatly intensified in 1982. What they missed was that the energy and excitement generated by Reagan's "revolution" had sufficiently gripped the minds of the public that they wouldn't allow "economic facts" to turn them against the Republicans. It is the social meaning that people give to the economic facts that determine elections—and this has more to do with the flow of psychic energy than with the lifeless statistics that were available to Democratic candidates before Clinton.

Second—and more important—it is never true that all people care about is the economy. People care about connecting with others and come to life through this kind of connection, and politics always is significantly about this aspect of human desire, about its potential realization and repression. It is this erotic aspect of politics that accounts for Clinton's victory, not because Clinton is "attractive" in some superficial sense, but because he was able to be the carrier of a hopeful "opening up to each other" that people were ready to affirm again.

People were not ready to affirm this impulse in 1980 when Ronald Reagan was first elected because they were traumatized by the combination of the erotic energy released by the sixties and the violent, dislocating craziness that had accompanied it. The sudden feeling of being alive that swept the planet during those amazing years overwhelmed the capacity of dominant institutions to perform their major function—to cool out the movement of desire in the service of "alienation-management." We may not remember so well what it felt like to be alive in that way now that we've endured twenty years of concentrated cultural assault aimed at convincing us that we weren't really there, that all that happened was the bad parts, the excesses, the ways in which we were immature, the ways in which our ideals exceeded our level of individual and collective development. But for a while we did experience a rupture of the world's normal, numbed-out surface and had a radically different glimpse of what social connection might be like beyond the paranoia and alienation that has held humanity in its grip for much of human history. Unfortunately, as the id broke through the ego's retaining walls, giving us a taste of pleasure, ecstasy, and excitement about the possibilities of new forms of human relationships and new depths of human experience, many people reacted with a combination of exhilaration and fear—fear that they could not trust and contain the new possibilities, fear that they were not enough to be what they would have to be to live with a new set of truths. As a result of that fear, people attacked, mistreated, and hurt each other—in politics, sexual relationships, and families—undermining their emerging belief in the possibility of a different world. Through the spread of a "rotating doubt" subtly passed from person to person, most of us came to feel that what we were experiencing really wasn't possible, that it was false, and that fear led to an ebbing of energy, and a decrease in

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the connections that had previously sustained us. The sixties didn't end—they ebbed away in the seventies as each of us confirmed the doubt in the other and then found ourselves alone, doubting ourselves, losing our confidence that anything had really happened. We became susceptible to a societal assault that would reduce the sixties to self-serving draft dodging and mindless drug and music infatuation.

Enter Ronald Reagan. Freud said, "The superego knows more of the wishes of the id than does the ego," by which he meant that conservative, repressive authority—a legacy of our personal and cultural past that we each carry around inside ourselves—is keenly aware of our desire to break on through to the other side and is ingeniously capable of preventing us from doing so. As the sixties began to fade because of the doubt that we ourselves felt about its promise, those grown-ups whose sense of cultural identity and traditional community were most threatened by the sixties formed an alliance with younger people who felt hurt and betrayed by the sixties and harnessed the still-loosed power of desire in the service of a new repression—the New Right. Led by Reagan, the New Right capitalized on our doubt, got control of "The Force" released by the sixties and turned it against the sixties itself. Freud also made this point—that the superego, which has no energy itself, uses the energy of the id against the id to protect what he called civilization from all hell breaking loose (the standard paranoid fantasy of community).



The eighties succeeded in binding the energy of the sixties within a series of split repressive images—on the one hand, idealized images of community exemplified by the traditional family, church and nation ("morning in America"); on the other, the image of the "evil empire" against whom our collective rage was to be directed (along with other "others" like gays, liberals, and the like who—in the realm of the imaginary—were deemed to pose a threat to our idealized community). The disturbing, liberatory energy of the sixties, in other words, was literally converted into its opposite through the collective invention of Ronald Reagan as an idealized and also vengeful father-figure projecting images of an authoritarian, false, and "safe" community. To give one reminder of the energetic power of this image of authoritarian community, recall the frenzied search for the Original Intent of the Founding Fathers led by Attorney General Ed Meese in the mid-eighties. As I showed in my article "Founding Father Knows Best" written at that time, this attribution of hallucinatory power to the "original" intent of the Fathers above all fathers was part of a symbolic effort to "cleanse" the Law of the permissive liberal impulses released by the sixties.

Understood in this way, the Reagan revolution should be seen as what Freud called a "reaction formation," a defense against, and a ruthless denial of, the erotic longings of human desire. Unlike the blandness of what we might call bureaucratic historical periods, the Reagan era was hot and powerful precisely because it converted the social-connection energy of the sixties into an anti-sixties wrath and a passionate commitment to the purity of the Nation, the Family and other alienated images of connection, emerging from the McCarthyism and the kitchen-culture of the fifties, that the sixties sought to challenge. In this sense, Reagan was an erotic figure who bound people together through the invocation of an authoritarian, imaginary world fueled by the id-energy that the sixties had unleashed.

Yet precisely because the binding energy of the New Right was "false" in the sense that it was based on the repression of desire rather than the realization of desire, it was doomed to expire or dissipate. Offering nothing itself to the real human need for love, confirmation, and community, its energy was parasitic on the energy it sought to crush. And I think when Reagan left office in 1988, we all began to feel the erotic bind of the New Right weaken, even though Bush was able to win by adapting Reagan's imagery (the Flag vs. Willie Horton) to his kinder and gentler persona. Beginning in 1988, we began to float as a country, unmoored from both the liberatory energy of the sixties and the antilibidinal power of Ronald Reagan, Jerry Falwell, Oliver North, and those Founding Fathers who slipped back into their actual place in the past. As the cultural id let go of the convulsive struggle between the sixties and the eighties, people began to lose

interest in the supposed original intent of long-dead men or the kind of patriotic bond offered by Oliver North.

It was in this "floating space" that the recent presidential campaign began, and it is quite possible that George Bush might have ridden the inert images of the New Right to power; the election might have been a bland extension of the status quo while the id within us—by which I mean the powerful desire for social connection and confirmation—simply waited for its next historical opportunity, like waiting to find a lover during a period of drift and solitude. But, Bill Clinton emerged from whoever he had been (recall the unbelievably boring speech at the 1988 Democratic convention) to seize the opening created by the dissipation of the energy of the New Right. While the Right proceeded to exaggerate its increasingly lifeless images of its version of our social bond, Clinton stepped up to the plate to reclaim American society in the name of the long-dormant generation of the sixties.

To accomplish this, he had to both manifest a mature version of the erotic power of the sixties and dissolve the energy blockage that had been the political legacy of the failure of the sixties—the blockage created by the politics of "coercive deference" to special interest groups that had come to dominate the Democratic Party and the Left. As I showed in the last issue, the originally liberatory and potentially universal appeal of the labor movement, the civil rights movement, and the other transformative elements of the thirties and sixties had settled—mainly as a result of the self-doubt I referred to earlier—into a collection of bitter and angry demands for more rights and benefits against an "outside authority" that was refusing to sufficiently recognize the victim-status of these groups. This process, which had originally been reflected directly in countless organizations and meetings in the seventies, in which white "middle-class" idealists had been neutered and driven away by their politically correct, interest-group counterparts, had come to characterize the public politics of the Democratic Party and the Left in the eighties. We had these white grown-ups from our parents' generation—Carter, Mondale, Dukakis—trying to "lead" a collection of groups to whom they were forced to defer and who therefore, quite understandably, held them in contempt. The crazy, denunciatory aspect of the sixties produced this form of impotent civility in the mass politics of the late seventies and eighties, a hopeless politics of blocked energy, resentment, and inauthenticity that could not possibly unite people with constructive passion.

Clinton had the courage and smarts to cut this Gordian knot by publicly and politely repudiating Sister Souljah and in other ways indicating that he would not ritually defer to the victimized anger of interest groups in order to get votes. In so doing, he became what none of his recent, neutered, predecessors could become—a source of power and energy that could enable whites, Blacks, union members, and yuppies to get turned on together about reclaiming the world from the pathological eros of the Right. By cutting through the politics of guilt-based, self-denying deference—and by combining this with the expressiveness, youth, and saxophone power of the now grown-up sixties generation—he enabled us to reenter public space and rediscover each other. Against this reemergent but less crazy force of the sixties, the old right-wing appeals to the id seemed like the phobic sputterings of a dying generation. At the Republican convention, Marilyn Quayle made an admirable attempt to win the battle for the sixties by asserting that "not all of us participated in the sexual revolution"—meaning: not all of us gave in to that exhilarating sense of connection that produced, and can only produce, betrayal, pain, and loss. But Clinton had already defeated this attempt to invalidate the sixties precisely by repudiating the destructive dynamics that had emerged from the contradictions of the sixties and providing a safe way back into politics for people who remembered what was good about that time and the ways in which we were right.

Now we will see if in our adult years we can begin to build the confidence in our transformative aspirations that we could not do twenty years ago. One of the most important symbolic aspects of Clinton's insistent focus on the economy during the campaign was that it demonstrated an attentiveness to improving people's real lives that contrasted with the Right's increasingly hollow fantasies of community. In this sense, focusing on the economy meant caring about people and creating real community, while "family values" meant denying the pain in people's real lives and exhorting people to keep believing in the expired images of the Reagan years. But for our generation's coming to power to be a true extension of the spirit of the sixties, Clinton and all of us supporting him must not let his economic rhetoric lose its communitarian quality and become a set of technocratic formulas and slogans. If that happens, we will lose the spiritual opportunity that this victory represents and set the stage for new id-based forces of reaction led, perhaps, by the passionate and compelling Jack Kemp.

So let's have four years guided by saxophone power and the passion of a politics of meaning rather than the professional, moderately progressive reformism that can't engage people's life force and will set us up for failure. We need to join Clinton, embrace our generation's second chance, and pull him with us toward what still remains true and deep about the liberatory visions we once dared to hold. □

This is the first of a series of Memos to Bill Clinton that we will be publishing in the next several issues of TIKKUN

Memorandum to President-elect Clinton

Gar Alperovitz

TO: President-elect Bill Clinton
FROM: Gar Alperovitz
SUBJECT: "Perestroika," American-Style

As requested by *Tikkun,* herewith are my unvarnished views on a tough-minded political strategy for your presidency—one that also dramatizes a new "vision."

Despite the relief we all feel at your victory, I believe you must now confront a hard reality. Given the dangerous political-economic context and smoldering social problems facing the United States, your presidency could easily end up far worse than either Carter's or Bush's. On the other hand, if you are willing to seize the strategic initiative, I believe you stand a chance of doing as much for the United States as Gorbachev and Yeltsin have done for the former Soviet Union.

To do so—and to maintain the political initiative—you must get ahead of the game with something truly bold, a vision of what needs to change fundamentally in America plus a clear and detailed plan for bringing it about. If you are tough and shrewd, it is possible you could lay the foundation for a new era of extraordinary American development in the twenty-first century and be remembered as one of the great presidents in our history.

What is necessary is nothing short of a fundamental "perestroika"—the step-by-step restructuring of the American political economy and of American society. If you aim to do less than this, if you attempt to muddle through, allowing yourself to be pushed and pulled in a dozen different directions to please various constituencies that rallied behind your candidacy, I believe it will be your undoing.

The issues facing America transcend the realm of what is usually called "policy." You're coming to Washington with a lot of bright policy people, many of them friends or former colleagues of mine, and many of them deluded into believing that if you adopt their recommended policies everything will work out. A new laundry list of intelligent, technocratic policies, however, simply won't suffice. The only politically successful president in modern times, Ronald Reagan, based his approach on the insight that vision is important (although his vision consisted of a fruitless attempt to return to the past). The fundamental question is whether you can offer a meaningful and ethically fulfilling vision for the future, coupled with policies offering practical steps in the right direction.

Few Americans are interested in the legislative details. The way to rally them is to speak honestly and boldly to the crisis they know in their hearts is creating the social, economic, and moral chaos that is engulfing the nation.

Let me also offer a warning: You would do well to develop a set of political initiatives to get a jump on your enemies, for they will certainly attempt to get a jump on you. What follows is a strategy for your presidency based on my recent research, and seasoned by several years of Washington-insider, congressional– and executive-branch service. It contains equal parts of "vision," practical policies in furtherance of that vision, and some hardheaded pragmatic political moves to destabilize those who will challenge you.

First things first: The truth is that the United States is in fundamental, not temporary, political-economic stalemate. There are simply very few politically viable conventional answers to our most pressing social and economic problems. We face an ongoing reality of stagnation, taxpayer discontent, racial divisions, and urban and environmental decay.

It would be a fundamental mistake to be misled by the illusion of a substantial "mandate." At best, you can hope for significant support for a single two-year Congress, and then, even if you attempt a crash one hundred-day program, expect the inevitable backlash, particularly if you try to tax the middle class.

Thus, in the foreseeable future, despite your talk of a "new covenant," we all know there is not going to be a great deal of new spending on social programs, no matter who is elected at any level of government. Nor, despite

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your "economic policy agenda," is there going to be much new economic stimulus. There will be only a small amount of additional Keynesian deficit expansion, hence probably little change in the ongoing pattern of stagnation plus or minus a few up-down economic ripples.

Furthermore, even if you are successful in enacting your most novel economic proposals—a set of "industrial policies"—it will be difficult to detect any significant impact on the lives of most Americans.

The industries affected are simply too small relative to our nearly $6 trillion economy. And, given the vested interest, political, and bureaucratic infighting that dominates industry-oriented policies in the real world, whatever you do is likely to be flawed and compromised.

Finally, the United States does not act in a vacuum: Even as we stumble forward with first-generation industrial policies, other nations such as Japan will be racing on ahead to second–, third–, and fourth-generation versions. Even if such policies have a modest impact, it will not be felt until long after your first four years in office, and for the vast majority of Americans probably not much thereafter.

Thus, after all is said and done, unless you can break through to a new level of public debate about vision, as Reagan did, you are likely to be boxed in as Carter and Bush were. Growing social and economic problems will slowly spread through the nation, and you will have very little capacity to affect any of the crucial variables.

Few people have the courage to face the depth of our political-economic stalemate, but you helped lead the conservative Democratic Leadership Council in its politically successful rejection of two central liberal axioms—large-scale social programs and Keynesian deficits. What you now need to do is stare the implications in the face: The profound truth is that presidents can no longer have much impact on the domestic economy. Our system—not just a set of policies—is in trouble, which means either we begin to open the way to a new vision for the future that transcends decaying capitalism (and the corpse of "socialism!"), or quite simply, we are likely to flounder and fail.

There is a very real question, in fact, whether conventional "economic policy" ever made a major dent in the twentieth-century economic experience. The U.S. economy has rarely achieved sustained high employment except in time of war or very unusual postwar conditions: We were in trouble in the first quarter of the century until World War I bailed us out. The postwar years faded into the mixed bag of the 1920s which collapsed into the Depression until World War II bailed us out. Then the famous postwar boom occurred—aided and abetted by the Korean War, the war in Vietnam, and the Cold War. (The wartime destruction of Germany, Japan, and Britain, our major global competitors, helped too, until they returned to the fight with renewed vigor.) We are now in the era of deepening post-postwar stagnation.

Furthermore, despite a highly publicized debate about redistribution, the truth is that "policy" in our system has never achieved positive movement of income toward greater equality, not even through the New Deal and Great Society programs. The latter may have slowed the growth of economic disparities, but except for a tiny, temporary blip in the late 1960s the only phenomena that reduced inequality in statistically significant ways during the twentieth century were war-related economic booms and their aftereffects, and only temporarily.

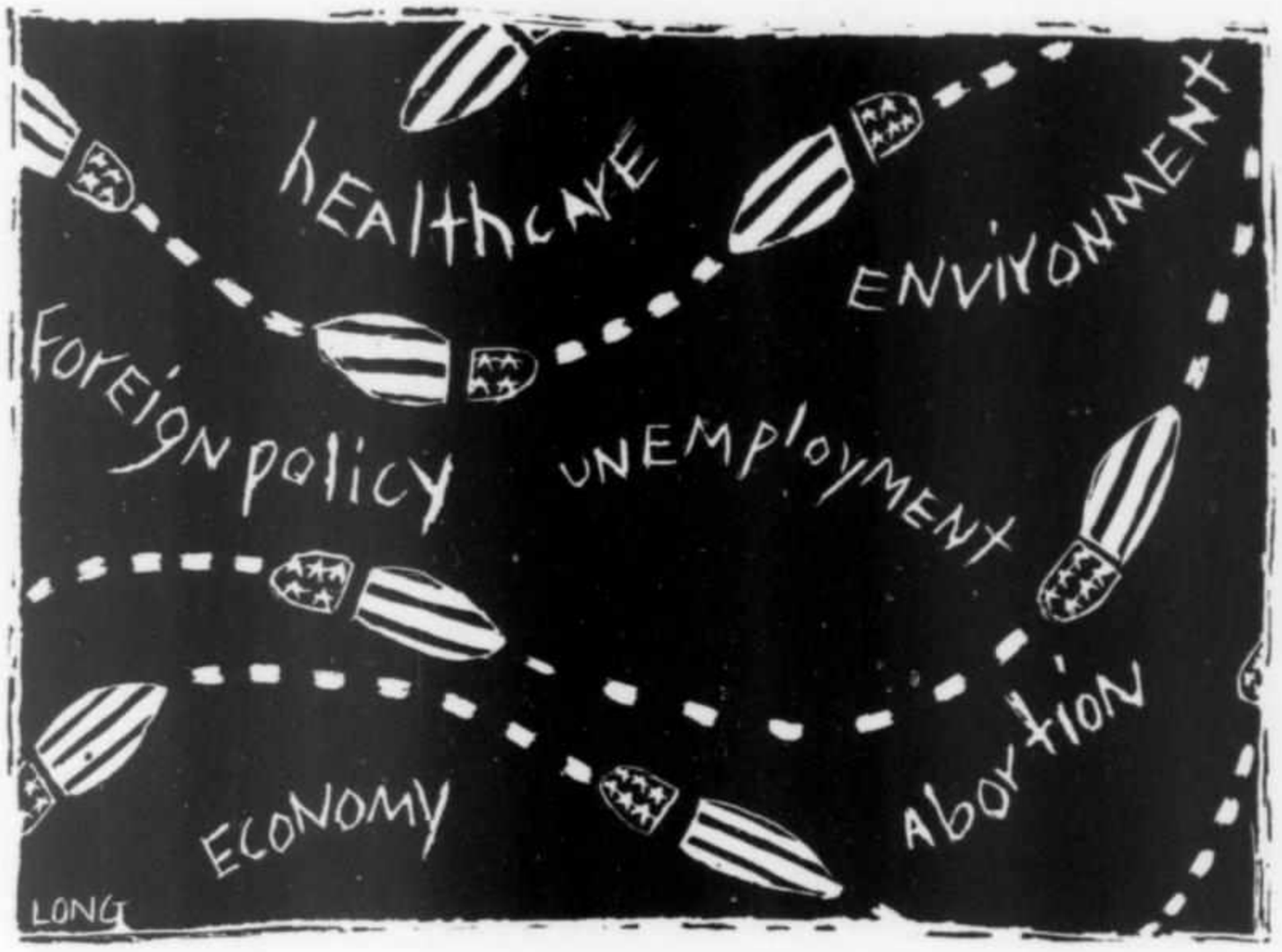
In the face of these realities, here is what I think you should do, both for the country and for your own political survival.

Obviously, you should try to accomplish as much as you can through tinkering with social programs, industrial policies, environmental regulation, and defense reduction—i.e., continue along the lines you're already proposing. I have no major argument with the reforms your kitchen cabinet of progressive policy advisers will cook up—except that in the end I doubt that you will be able to effect much measurable change in most people's lives, with perhaps a modest exception in the case of health care.

There is, however, a truth you need to engage at a very deep and personal level: When a system is truly in stalemate, the only answer is fundamental restructuring—"perestroika." Gorbachev and Yeltsin knew their system could not go on the way it was, and that therefore their own political fate was tied to their capacity to restructure the system. Our situation is not yet at the breaking point, but you face the same need to shift course dramatically.

The essential task is to help people confront what one day is likely to be understood as an extraordinary period of historical transition. I suggest you use the "bully pulpit" of the presidency to drive home the reality of the stalemate and the failure of the dying old system and begin to point the way to a new vision of democracy and community that offers the possibility of new moral and spiritual meaning for America. Above all, a meaningful vision must begin to attack at its roots the overmilitarization of our system, the institutionalized power of money, corporate domination, and wealth, and it must simultaneously move democratic decision making steadily closer to the people.

"Perestroika," or "restructuring," in the Soviet Union first involved a radical shift in the power of the military. Almost everyone has realized that our bloated military budget can be drastically scaled back. Few have under-



stood, however, that you are the first president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt to be in position to move forward with a serious program of general disarmament along the lines Kennedy and Khrushchev contemplated in the McCloy-Zorin agreements of the early 1960s—not "arms control," but carefully phased movement toward global disarmament. In the language of McCloy-Zorin, all states would keep "only those non-nuclear armaments, forces, facilities and Establishments as are agreed to be necessary to maintain internal order."

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet power fairly cry out for a bold disarmament strategy. Moreover, if you do not act decisively to alter global security imbalances, other nations must inevitably assume worst-case scenarios and respond accordingly. Our current posture of maintaining thousands of nuclear warheads is an improvement over the past, but if you live in China what you plainly see is that the United States is going to keep a lot of weapons around, and you had better do the same.

The only way to crack the cycle of fear and distrust that fuels all arms races is through bold leadership. If all nations move down the thermonuclear and conventional military ladder together, no one is at a disadvantage. You should launch a comprehensive "Year 2000," eight-year global build-down, using publicity, economic sanctions, and in the extreme, selective UN military interventions in the same way—but for a better purpose—that George Bush focused world attention in his mobilization for the Gulf War.

There is plenty of expertise available to fill out the details, and also numerous precedents from the Eisenhower years, and even from the old Baruch plan of the Truman era. A comprehensive strategy must steadily reduce national armaments around the globe at the same time UN inspection and expeditionary forces are built up, essentially an implementation of the initial pre-Cold War Rooseveltian conception of the United Nations.

To accomplish your objectives you will need a tough political strategy to get ahead of the Pentagon and the CIA. Otherwise they will find a new crisis and new enemy somewhere, somehow—and they will box you in, moving to boost military spending, which in turn will further limit your room to maneuver on the domestic front. The Pentagon and its allies have plenty of friends in Congress and the press, and decades of experience turning dubious secret intelligence information into scare stories to drum up political support for their budgets. They will eat you and your domestic program alive unless you launch an advance counterstrategy that puts them on the defensive.

There are some rather obvious things to do: Independent Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh has shown that if you probe half an inch below the surface of recent administrations, you will find an extraordinary record of illegality, lying, corruption, and violation of public trust. As a historian, I can tell you that you will find the same basic pattern throughout the Cold War, especially in connection with covert activities on the one hand, and wasteful and corrupt military spending on the other. (Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has recently shown how outrageous, for instance, were CIA intelligence estimates, and how foreign threats were regularly and systematically inflated to bolster military budgets.) There

is also an enormous amount of corporate-military procurement corruption—bribes, special deals, influence peddling, revolving door relationships.

You should launch a major effort to investigate, target, expose, publicize, and prosecute all violations of law and public trust in these areas. I would suggest you go at it vigorously because it is important on its own and because it will put you in the driver's seat, politically, as you begin to lower the military budget and move toward disarmament and the demilitarization of American society.

At the heart of a new vision for the future must be recognition that the institutionalized power of wealth inevitably produces both human inequity on a vast scale and power relationships inimical to meaningful democracy. Most Americans know that at bottom there is something fundamentally wrong about power in our democracy—something intimately connected with money, wealth, and the dominant influence of big corporations, which prevents us from building the kind of society we want.

A fundamental shift in the power relationships at the core of our system is the precondition of a sense that "we are all in it together," that our society is not just for the rich and powerful, that we can build a democracy that nurtures, sustains, and gives meaning to communities of support. It is simultaneously the necessary (but, clearly not sufficient) condition of an ethically vibrant vision for the future that goes beyond the materialist priorities of our present institutions.

Thus, just as property relationships had to be reassessed in the former Soviet Union, so too must they be reassessed as we in the United States approach a new century. I do not think you can duck this question. The challenge must be faced squarely, and then new alternatives proposed that point the way to fundamentally different economic institutions. Taking on these issues full-throttle will also permit you to maintain the initiative through the best of all political strategies: changing the subject—i.e., focusing the nation's attention on something new.

The statistics of wealth ownership in America are now so incredible and the power of big corporations so obvious that most Americans are ready for the blunt political argument that the only way to provide universal access to "the American dream" is to correct the extraordinarily inequitable distribution of the nation's economic resources.

The concentration of corporate power is widely understood by the American people. But the public at large is only slowly coming to recognize that individual and family wealth—the ownership of capital as opposed to current income—is extremely concentrated. A mere 1 percent of Americans, for instance, now owns more than a third of the nation's wealth—close to the peak reached in 1929 before the crash. The top 1 percent of households owns more than the entire bottom 90 percent taken together. The top 10 percent of households owns two-thirds of the country's net worth—more than double the total held by 90 percent of America. The tiny top one-half of 1 percent has almost 30 percent by itself.

Not only is something clearly wrong here, but the political dynamics of targeting the small elite group of very large wealth-holders are much different from targeting the large mass of middle-class, upper-income suburbanite voters. Your modest proposal to increase taxes on people making more than $200,000 is based on the same insight: Most Americans simply do not identify their interests with those of the very rich who control real economic power.

Taxation, and especially inheritance taxes, can play a role. However, the real trick is to combine an attack on the profound inequities with very concrete proposals that simultaneously give content to a new vision that aims at different, more democratic arrangements of wealth and power.

Here you are in the fortunate position of having hundreds of practical experiments available pointing the way: A very down-home, "American-as-apple-pie" process that puts capital in the hands of various "populist" institutions has been quietly underway for several decades. Many are prospering; others are struggling along with other firms in the stagnating economy. A full-blown effort over eight years could strengthen existing models, encourage new experiments, and build from these institutional foundations:

•There are now hundreds of worker-owned firms in the country, ranging from tiny shops to large manufacturing companies. Among the best-known are City Pride Bakery in Pittsburgh, numerous worker-owned plywood firms in the Northwest, Avis, and Weirton Steel, plus many other small, medium, and large companies. Some involve both ownership and democratic control; others have yet to achieve real participation in decision making. If a broad definition, including all forms of employee stock-ownership plans ("ESOPs"), is used, the number of firms now experimenting with worker-ownership approaches ten thousand, involving perhaps twelve million people.

•There are more than 30,000 co-ops, including 4,000 consumer goods co-ops, 13,000 credit unions, nearly 100 cooperative banks, and more than 100 cooperative insurance companies. Add to this another 1,200 rural utilities and nearly 5,000 housing co-ops, plus another 115 telecommunication and cable co-ops.

•Less well-known, but ultimately perhaps more important, are numerous cities that have "communitized"

capital ownership. David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, in their recent book, *Reinventing Government,* have catalogued some of the most interesting, including community-owned cable systems, hotels, fertilizer manufacturing companies, towing services, real estate development efforts, professional sports teams, etc. Add to this list thousands of efficiently run city-owned electric utilities. Virtually all these municipal socialist enterprises are completely nonideological: An important claim to fame (and to new political support) is a profit stream that increasingly helps out with local tax difficulties.

•At the state level, public capital-owning institutions range from the seventy-five-year-old state bank of North Dakota, to the state-owned insurance company in Wisconsin. Modern forms include state equity ownership in private corporations, in which Connecticut is a leader. Alaska uses oil royalties for both public and individual citizen support.

•A precedent from the Kennedy-Johnson era you might build upon is neighborhood ownership. Before it was gutted by the Nixon administration, the original Community Development Corporation (CDC) idea was based on community ownership of housing, stores, factories, etc., with profits put toward broad community development goals. The late Robert Kennedy was a driving force behind the concept, and although many CDCs today have a narrow focus, several dozen of the more serious variety still show what can be done.



You would do well, too, to look into some of the innovative local economic ideas that Mayor Harold Washington of Chicago was experimenting with before his death. Given the problems of America's inner cities, a rehabilitation of the original idea of a community-based economic attack on urban problems could be exceptionally important.

In broad historical perspective—and given powerful presidential backing for eight full years—such developments could provide the foundation for the beginnings of a new form of democratized political-economic system—one different in tone, in feel, in moral and human meaning from both traditional capitalism and traditional socialism. Here are some policies to add muscle to the call for a new vision:

First, virtually all existing federal loan, technical assistance, procurement, training, and other economic policies can be shifted in emphasis to give priority to the development of populist institutions rather than major corporations.

Second, state and local loan, technical assistance, procurement, and other programs can be geared toward the development of populist institutions as a priority, and the federal government can give incentives to states and localities that make the shift.

You have already put forward proposals for two major changes that can also be used to foster "perestroika."

Your industrial policies—involving the use of federal loans or loan guarantees (for pension or other funds)—can also be targeted to encourage growth of new economic institutions involving more democratic forms of ownership. (While I do not believe industrial policies will solve major problems at this stage, they can—brilliantly, in my opinion—help move local economic institutional development steadily forward.) It is also time to raise the profile and importance of the existing federal Co-Op Bank. Presidential leadership could increase its lending authority and its technical assistance capabilities.

You have also promised that you will use money taken from the military budget to invest heavily in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and highways. Those funds could also provide contracts and assistance to new economic institutions. (Recent Supreme Court decisions, such as the 1989 ruling overturning Richmond, Virginia's minority business set-aside program, make special procurement allocations to minority contractors more difficult, but they do not hinder preferential contracts to help low-income community-based economic institutions and cooperatives.)

Strengthening the traditional antitrust weapon could also force companies to "divest" profitable subsidiary operations that are in violation of law. You could take advantage of such a process by (1) requiring that a "right of first refusal" to purchase such subsidiaries be given to local worker, neighborhood, community, and other groups; and (2) that new industrial policy or Co-Op Bank lending aid such institutions in buying the spin-offs.

Since they are by definition profitable, they are financially viable. By this route, the country could move from experimentation to serious restructuring in many areas.

You can also use all these powers, I believe, to make sure that the new enterprises become models of ecologically sane and serious development, if such is your strategic objective.

The Pentagon and its allies will eat you alive unless you launch an advance counterstrategy that puts them on the defensive.... Investigate, expose, and prosecute the enormous amount of corporate-military procurement corruption.

As to the hard-nosed politics: You know better than anyone else that many people have a huge stake in putting you on the defensive on economic matters and that you had better get ahead of the game, here, too, unless you want to be their next victim. President Kennedy, you may recall, found this out the hard way when corporate business leaders cornered him early in his administration.

Thus it is absolutely essential that you launch a very early effort to define your enemies and that you do so in a way that helps pave the way for your economic initiatives.

If your staff gets serious about it they will find so much double-dealing, tax evasion, bribery, and other material that you will easily be able to demonstrate that many existing corporations are untrustworthy (and by implication that new economic institutions, closer to the people, should be encouraged). You might also begin to scrutinize American corporations that foist untested drugs and carcinogenic products on Third World people and bribe their government leaders.

I think your administration should aggressively pursue tax evasion by the very rich. Here, too, the economic and moral issues coincide with your political need to keep the other side off-balance as you maneuver toward "perestroika."

A final aspect of a new vision involves "power to the people." This requires that you confront issues of scale in governance and political-economic decision making. Yeltsin realized that if power stayed at the stalemated center, all was lost. Gorbachev, for all his brilliance, kept holding on to the center, and he was lost. Any serious new vision of the future must involve radical political decentralization.

Furthermore, given the profound deadlock at the center in the United States, I believe your only viable political option is to decentralize a wide range of political-economic issues. If we are ever to have truly meaningful democracy in America, it will require moving decision making on crucial political-economic issues ever closer to the community grass roots of the nation. People need to hear you loud and clear on this. They need a clarion call—and a sense that you really trust in and will help nurture the re-democratization of the nation at every level.

As a former governor, you are undoubtedly familiar with a wide range of innovative new initiatives that states have been forced to develop over the last decade. They were compelled to act because of the withdrawal of federal concern and support as a result of the stalemate. Many of these state initiatives, if combined with a new institution-building strategy, could form the basis for a serious effort to decentralize the political core of a new system.

A number of states have launched development policies that begin to transcend the present economic power relationships. Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin (to name only a few) have quite sophisticated public institutions that provide technical assistance, financing, and other support for both conventional and "new direction" economic development. Your own state of Arkansas has pioneered the use of state pension funds to help foster economic development.

Many current programs are quite diffuse; they aim to help any seemingly viable economic development project. But they could easily become a significant source of support for democratic political-economic institutions if this were made a priority. The state-level tools are there; the question is to what institutional use they are put.

Such state programs, in turn, are the *sine qua non* for providing jobs targeted to local communities. Washington has ignored truly local economic issues, but without local economic stability, democracy is a farce. Most communities are now hanging by their thumbs economically. The only "democratic decision" they get to make is whose budget to cut.

You can use federal power as a lever to achieve decentralization and re-democratization by conditioning various forms of existing federal funding for state and local programs on their willingness to move in the new direction; using similar criteria for deciding where to spend the enormous federal procurement budget; and creating new strategies of technical assistance and development funding to assist the process.

The truth is that the United States is simply too big to solve many problems. Any continental nation of 250

(Continued on p. 80)

Working the System: Memo to the TIKKUN Community

Tom Hayden

Bill Clinton has raised the expectation that his "New Covenant" will be a resurrection of the unknown and unfulfilled promise of the New Frontier and the early sixties. He has proved what seemed impossible a year ago: that the Democratic Party could be shifted to the pragmatic center and win back the White House. In light of this political miracle perhaps anything is possible. Yet the question remains whether in the three decades since 1960 America has become irreversibly ungovernable. Can Clinton's shifting pragmatism succeed in governing as it did in campaigning?

Campaigning, after all, involves creating coalitions around promises to voters; governing means extracting reform from entrenched interests. In Bush's perspective, governing was reduced to a night-watchman function. But Clinton has pledged to replace the old order with new priorities. He knows he must deliver. As Arkansas' governor, he could blame Washington for his state's problems. But who can a consensus-oriented president blame if the country's crisis deepens? What if Bill Clinton is just an adroit captain with good sea legs steering a sinking ship?

The danger is that Clinton could become another Lyndon Johnson, whose brilliance at politics and compromise could not save him from the deepening quagmire of Vietnam. Not even Johnson's "best and brightest" could think their way to victory. Indeed, the New Frontiersmen were fascinated with counterinsurgency and Green Berets; their arrogance prevented any understanding that the war was immoral and unwinnable. On the domestic front, Johnson's "war on poverty" yielded the battle to big-city mayors. In those days, Democratic presidents relied on Harvard; now the talent pool is expanded to include Yale and Oxford but the "best and brightest" always seem to be slow learners.

Instead of focusing the White House "war room" exclusively on a successful offensive in the "first hundred days," I would suggest a sixteen-year perspective—two terms of Bill Clinton and two terms for Al Gore—a realistic amount of time to recover from the present crisis and move toward a sustainable future.

When you first assume the presidency, it must be tempting to believe that you will be able to shape American society and government to your will. Then reality sets in. I once asked President Carter if he felt that the unelected heads of multinational corporations were more powerful than our elected president. He replied dryly, "I learned that my first year in office."

The crisis of institutional paralysis is graver than the partisan gridlock that could be solved by having a Democrat in the White House. The real crisis is the emergence of the Special Interest State, a permanent, insulated state within the democratic state. It is informal, a political protoplasm of interests who exercise virtual veto power over issues such as health care reform that garner overwhelming support among the electorate. This is not an enlightened establishment. Its defining obsession is with immediate interests at the expense of future welfare, making it the chief impediment to deficit reductions or any policies of sustainability.

The inner core of this phenomenon is a bureaucracy based on the notion that human behavior must be subject to uniform administration and regulation. There is little or no incentive for bureaucrats to reduce their administrative empires. Budgets are based on body counts rather than performance, for example, on how many warm bodies you have kept in the classroom instead of how many minds you have educated. Typically this budgeting is "xerox-based" rather than zero-based; that is, the previous year's budget is simply photocopied as a baseline for the next year's calculations.

Surrounding this administrative core is the legislative/political realm, which is subsidized by contributions from special interests seeking to gain competitive advantage through tax breaks, obscure amendments, and the loosening of regulations. The lobbyist corps grows annually, its inbred ranks increasingly filled with former politicians, Capitol staff, and party officials willing to sell their intimate knowledge of the system to manipulate and lobby their former colleagues. Supporting, rationalizing, glossing, indeed feeding off this structure is a Beltway culture in which insider gossip by well-connected talk-show pundits passes too frequently for in-

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dependent journalism.

More than simply a distinct "other" party that can be defeated and removed, this is the Party of the Status Quo, the Beltway version of the Berlin Wall.

Bill Clinton was right years ago to refuse to believe the sixties radicals, like me, who were skeptical of working within the system. As his 1969 draft-board letter indicates, he believed it was possible to oppose the war and keep ambition alive. And his calculation was confirmed by the reforms of the subsequent decade. The electoral system corrected itself in the McGovern-Fraser reforms, allowing a future candidate Clinton to win presidential primaries at the grass roots. Voting rights legislation enfranchised millions of Americans who had been barred by age or color from voting at the beginning of the 1960s.

But that era of reform, which peaked in the aftermath of Watergate, clearly has exhausted itself, and America's deeper dysfunctions have resurfaced, made more intractable by the passage of time, by racism, by economic competition, by the rusting of idealism, and by the loss of a younger generation to despair. By now, the Watergate-era campaign reforms are virtually meaningless and forgotten, twisted by the special interests into the ever-metastasizing cancer of political action committees (which ironically were created as a compromise to pass those very reforms).

Bill Clinton and Al Gore have struck an essentially Faustian deal that says they can force the interest groups to change. No doubt there are such opportunities for Clinton when certain special interests coincide with his public-policy agenda. For example, many large corporations may support Clinton on health-care cost containment, and natural gas utilities will want to promote their interests against coal companies. It is sometimes possible to seize power and then change conditions—what Clinton is trying to do and what Franklin Roosevelt did before him—instead of following the traditional grass-roots idea that conditions have to change first.

But it is also true that Bill Clinton's presidency can be frustrated if he concentrates too much on building a consensus among Washington interest groups. In order to achieve his campaign promises, Clinton needs the support of the K Street interest groups far less than he needs to inspire and rekindle a grass-roots populism.

Clinton can begin to stir enthusiasm by making bold appointments and executive orders that are dramatic departures from the past twelve years' status quo. He could appoint Anita Hill to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; eliminate the notorious "gag rule" on family-planning funds; appoint an AIDS activist to chair the war against the epidemic; create a majority at the Federal Communications Commission who will restore the fairness doctrine; appoint real environmentalists at the Departments of Interior and Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency, but also at the National Security Council and the Council of Economic Advisers; place a visionary entrepreneur at Commerce, one who also believes in industrial policy and the priority of new technologies; end the AID program that subsidizes the export of jobs; appoint a human rights advocate as ambassador to China.

There is little doubt that Clinton will institute an emergency jobs program aimed at rebuilding the infrastructure. The question is, what sort of infrastructure does he envision? Will the spending prop up traditional priorities or be a visionary investment in an energy-efficient, community-based future? Los Angeles, for example, doesn't need more spending on freeways; it needs federal support to become a center for environmental technology such as electric vehicles (before Japan captures that emerging industry), employing both displaced aerospace workers and hopeless inner-city citizens.

For the right sort of infrastructure investment to occur, Clinton's economic advisers will need to commit the "heresy" of trying to reconnect work to meaning. The economic historian R.H. Tawney observed that "economic ambitions are good servants [but] bad masters." Yet the philosophy that human beings can be reduced to *homo economicus* nevertheless remains economic orthodoxy. But, as Tawney pointed out, "even quite common men have souls, [and] no increase in material wealth will compensate them for arrangements which insult their self-respect and impair their freedom ... [economics] must satisfy criteria that are not purely economic."

Societies, like individuals, are not moved to be "competitive" or "productive" or "winners" unless they are fueled and sustained by a meaningful vision or goal. Any economic recovery plan has to be more than the expansion of McJobs; it must rethink the market so that values such as environmental preservation and community begin to be internalized. Clinton intuits that economics and environmentalism and community values need to be melded in his "new paradigms" and "covenants." He needs to reread Gore's *Earth in the Balance* and Herman Daly and John Cobb's *For the Common Good,* since the writings of his chief economic advisers offer scant evidence that they have gone beyond seeing the ecosystem as a disposable resource to be developed for high-technology export products. Despite conventional economic reasoning, the ecosystem is not infinite. The environmental issue is not secondary to the economic issue except in the old paradigm. The crisis

of America's economic stagnation arises from over-dependency on Persian Gulf oil, over-investment in the nuclear arms race, addiction to gas-guzzling automobiles, skyrocketing cancer and health costs due to toxic pollution, and the catastrophic depletion of resources that are no longer cheap and abundant.

Like the environment, the idea of community is often reduced by government programs to that of a laboratory where individuals are fit into programs administered from the outside. Bill Clinton's "New Covenant" contains an implicit image of an obligatory contract between the individual below and an omnipotent order above, not one of humbler government and more powerful citizens. Recent history is littered with the debris of these failed notions. The ballyhooed plan to "Rebuild L.A."—or similar dreams of "enterprise zones" and "urban development"—is simply impossible in South Central Los Angeles without a transfer of power and creativity from political, business, and financial elites to people still outside the mainstream.

Bill Clinton's strategic vision should blend the quest for economic renewal with this new thinking about the importance of the environment and community. His central priority should be to move America away from dependence on Persian Gulf oil, nuclear power, and coal, and toward independence and decentralization through a rapid transition to natural gas, renewable resources, and conservation, toward locally produced, energy-efficient technologies that can be exported to the world. A specific goal could be to put the unemployed to work converting two hundred thousand cars to electric power, a goal mandated by California law by the year 2003 (and copied in nearly twenty other states). The danger is that Clinton's campaign waffling on reaching a fuel-efficiency standard of forty miles per gallon has already set a precedent of yielding to the powerful automobile industry.

Health care is another issue that tends to be reduced to economics in the narrowest sense, without addressing the environmental causes of disease and the role of community in prevention. Clinton might succeed in battling the special interests only if he redefines health care more broadly in a populist crusade to improve human health and thus bring costs down. That would require broader benefits packages, to be sure, but also increased taxes on alcohol and tobacco, universal immunization programs, and much tougher sanctions against toxics that cause cancer, respiratory illnesses, and birth defects. In the late 1980s, Proposition 65, which attempted to ban cancer-causing chemicals in our water supply, and Proposition 99, which tripled tobacco taxes to be used for health care, were passed overwhelmingly by California voters despite massive interest-group opposition. Would Clinton even consider measures with that kind of muscle on the national level?

Similarly, his proposed education reforms will be bogged down in interest-group rivalries unless Clinton finds a way to engage the energies of the people with a positive, empowering set of goals. For instance, he could make the centerpiece a new Service Corps mobilizing thousands of idealistic Americans to inner-city tutoring (a Teacher Corps) and earth-restoration projects (a Green Corps).

In essence, Bill Clinton will have to paddle through the special interest swamps as best he can, while looking for a fresh current in American politics to move his presidency forward. For a precedent, there is the early 1960s case of the New Frontier.

John Kennedy won with 49 percent of the vote and was politically indebted to reactionary southern Dixiecrats. It was the emergence of the student, civil rights, and peace movements that created an opening for Kennedy to implement a broader vision. Just as Kennedy enabled those movements to have hope for change, they enabled the president to broaden his popular base beyond the traditional ethnic political machines.

Like Kennedy, coming after Eisenhower, Clinton has raised expectations and hopes that have been buried for over a decade. The tragedy of the 1990s may be that there is no progressive movement today that can be compared to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the early Students for a Democratic Society. We cannot blame Bill Clinton for that, but we can encourage Clinton and Al Gore to remember that history often shows that idealism at the grass roots can move the mightiest establishment. After all, the civil rights movement created the space for the emergence of Bill Clinton and Al Gore from the "New South."

Each of us must do more than lobby Bill Clinton with our pent-up frustrations and demands. We must ask what we can do to reawaken the idealism that accomplished so much and seemed to make all things possible in the early 1960s, when Clinton's journey to the White House really began. □

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Dodging the Bisexual Boss: Fundamental Rights in the Workplace and Beyond

Marian H. Neudel

The Hazards of the Nondiscrimination Model

The rationale used by the courts for handling sexual harassment cases makes dangerously clear the theoretical shortcomings of *all* of our legal reasoning in equal employment cases, and, ultimately, in civil rights cases generally. Sexual harassment in the workplace, the courts tell us, is illegal *only* because it is an instance of *discrimination*. The most common instances, of course, lend themselves readily to this analysis. Male boss demands sexual favors from female employee. "Put out or get out," he tells her. If she were male, she would be able to keep her job *without* having to submit to the boss's sexual demands. Therefore, she is the victim of discrimination by reason of sex, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act provides a remedy for her.

This reasoning has been extended to cases involving:

(1) male employees who have been found to be the victims of discrimination because, unlike their female colleagues, they cannot earn extra points with the boss in the bedroom;

(2) male employees who have been subjected to sexual demands from female bosses; and

(3) male employees who have been subjected to sexual demands from homosexual male bosses.

Presumably in these two latter situations, a female employee who could not earn extra points with her boss in the bedroom would also have a cause of action, though I know of no such case in the courts at present.

In each of these cases, discrimination has been found because the boss in question was making sexual demands of only *one* gender, thereby discriminating against the employee in question either for being of that gender or (occasionally) for being of the *other* gender. Not, in any case, because there is anything *inherently* illegal in sexual demands made by a boss, as such, of an employee, as such. What is illegal is not the employer's abuse of his or her power, but the discrimination against one sex which is *ordinarily* built into that situation.

Unfortunately, it is probably only a matter of time before the courts are confronted with a *bisexual* boss who can raise the utterly valid defense, when charged with sexual harassment of Ms. Jones: "Who's discriminating? Sure, I put the make on Ms. Jones last week. The week before that, I was chasing Mr. Smith around his desk." And the courts will be forced to confess that the law provides no remedy for Ms. Jones *or* Mr. Smith against an equal opportunity exploiter.

The shortcomings of the current "fundamental rights" model

Our entire system of civil rights legislation rests on the notion that individual human beings can be protected from abuse by powerful entities and individuals only by virtue of a small number of fundamental rights, most of which can be asserted only against governmental entities—the right to vote, to travel, to associate and speak freely, to practice their religion, and not to be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Against private entities—landlords, merchants, and, most crucially, employers—what the ordinary citizen mostly has are the right to be free from the depredations forbidden by the criminal code (murder, robbery, battery, rape, and so on) and the right not to be treated any worse than anybody else, if and only if that disparate treatment results from belonging to a "suspect classification"—race, religion, nationality, alienage, sex, age, or handicap. This approach, which will be explored here in the arena of workers' rights, has problems wherever applied. If "civil rights" mostly means the right of members of Group A not to be discriminated against in favor of Group B, this leaves it to the would-be discriminators to set the bottom line, the worst treatment to be meted out—evenhandedly, of course—to *all* victims. And, even more disastrously from the point of view of the polity, it sets Group A against Group B—when, in all likelihood, neither of them is doing very well—at the expense of both and to the profit of the discriminators. Neither Group A nor Group B can protect itself or assert its rights except by an unedifying contest in whining: "I've been treated worse than you." "No you haven't."

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Our limited view of fundamental human rights means that most of the "fundamental rights" of the citizen which are constitutionally protected against *governmental* encroachment can still be infringed upon with impunity by a *non*-governmental employer or landlord. An employee can be fired, a tenant evicted (in the absence of a written contract or lease), for having the "wrong" campaign bumper sticker on his or her car, or for discussing the merits of a particular candidate or cause with other tenants or employees, on or off the premises. In the absence of specific state statutes requiring employers to give employees time off to vote or do jury duty, an employee can be fired in most states for fulfilling either of these civic duties. S/he will almost certainly be able to collect unemployment compensation afterwards, but that is small comfort, and it looks no better on a resume. The status of an employee's right not to be required to work on his or her religiously mandated day of rest is still being contested in the courts, but prospects for it look dim. The courts lately have tended to hold that there is a difference between being fired for being a Seventh-Day Adventist, which would be a violation of the Civil Rights Act, and being fired for refusing to work on Saturday, which is generally held not to be a violation. All the constitution can offer is the right to collect unemployment benefits after being fired.

When is discrimination not discrimination?

The "nondiscrimination" model means that discriminating against an employee for any reason *other* than being in a "suspect classification" does not violate the Civil Rights Act. For instance, absent specific *state* legislation, an employer can refuse to hire the following people:

(1) Anybody whose last name begins with the letter "s" (although Sikhs, who almost always use "Singh" for their last name, might have a cause of action);

(2) Redheads (except where redheads are statistically likely to be members of a particular racial or national group);

(3) Men who wear earrings;

(4) Women who wear earrings;

(5) Women who don't wear earrings;

(6) People with children (provided men and women are equally affected)—or people without children, subject to the same proviso;

(7) People who live with their aged parents;

(8) Anybody who isn't related to someone in upper management.

And so on.

And finally, it means that an employer who mistreats his or her employees more or less evenhandedly, at least as pertains to "suspect classifications," and refrains from violations of union or written contracts or basic criminal laws, can do virtually anything else to the employee. There is not even a legal term for abuses committed against employees by employers, which do not violate the National Labor Relations Act or criminal or civil rights statutes. Some of the most popular of these practices are these:

(1) Firing an employee who has just had a work-related accident, for fear that he or she might file a Worker's Compensation claim (there are now legal protections against being fired *after* filing a claim);

(2) Firing an employee who takes off "too much" time for a validly documented illness—even if the amount of time involved is within the employer's previously set limits for paid sick leave (this issue is currently under litigation);

(3) Refusing to hire a worker who has a handicapped family member, for fear of the effect on health coverage rates (this may actually be illegal, at least under several state statutes, and possibly under federal law; it is not clear whether firing a worker when a member of his or her family *becomes* handicapped has the same legal status);

(4) Firing a competent, qualified employee to create a position for an incompetent, unqualified relative of the boss;

(5) Firing a worker just before he or she becomes eligible for benefits or union membership, or just before pension vesting;

(6) Requiring all workers to contribute to an employee benefit fund and firing all but a favored few before they become eligible to collect from it;

(7) Providing no benefits, and a vastly lower hourly wage, for part-time workers as opposed to full-time workers, even though typically part-time workers are actually more productive per hour worked;

(8) Requiring employees to work seven days a week or on double shifts, for months at a time, and firing anyone who refuses to do so—this is perfectly legal as long as overtime is paid;

(9) Surveilling the most personal activities of employees including bathroom breaks, personal conversations in or out of the workplace, and employees' political activity.

On the popular, political level, Americans live with this situation either by denying it—it is amazing how many nonexistent rights most people *think* they have against their employers—or by accepting it as an unavoidable cost of the free enterprise system. The more sophisticated may be cynically aware that employment and fair treatment on the job have been officially considered "fundamental rights," and legally protected as such, in many Eastern bloc countries where the workers have been, at best, no better off than the average blue-collar American, and often a good deal worse off. But they are likely to be utterly unaware that workers have higher wages, better benefits, and better protection against workplace abuses in such thriving capitalist economies as Germany, Scandinavia, and even Japan, than in this land of the free.

Legislators over the past ten years or so have been cynically dodging demands for legislation that would protect all workers from the kinds of abuses outlined above, by saying, "That's what unions are for. Put it in your collective bargaining agreements." At the same time, not altogether coincidentally, corporations are carrying out the best-financed, most highly organized, and most successful union-busting and decertification campaigns in thirty years. Union membership in the private sector is at its lowest ebb in forty years, protecting fewer than 15 percent of all private-sector workers.

Expanding fundamental rights in the workplace

In short, both union contracts and the discrimination rationale to be found in the Civil Rights Acts and the Supreme Court's interpretation of them, though obviously better than nothing, are poor substitutes for a legislated system of fundamental rights for all workers. Such a system has to go beyond the rights now considered fundamental by the Court, to the bread-and-butter rights real workers need in their day-to-day lives.

Most of the "fundamental rights" of the citizen which are constitutionally protected against governmental encroachment can still be infringed with impunity by a nongovernmental employer or landlord.

The two best-publicized drives for specific worker-rights legislation are those for parental leave, and for pay equity. There is a surprising amount of grass roots support for both. But there is also a widespread tendency, among both supporters and opponents, to see both proposals (but especially pay equity) as "women's issues." This has at least some potential for weakening their support, since women, in today's political lexicon, are a "special interest group."

Somewhat less visible are the state and local campaigns demanding that plant closings be subjected to various restrictions and penalties, for the benefit of both individual workers and areas economically dependent on the plants in question.

Every now and then somebody proposes a law forbidding (or, more often, limiting) compulsory overtime. Major employers in the area respond with a barrage of complaints and the usual blackmail, to the effect that any alternative to unlimited compulsory overtime would be prohibitively expensive and would result in plant closings. As a result, these bills rarely get *into* (much less out of) the appropriate legislative committee.

One of the few bright spots in this picture is that the courts are increasingly holding employers *civilly* liable to ex-employees for "wrongful discharge" for various infringements of individual rights or public policy in the workplace, under numerous *nonstatutory* tort theories ("public policy" is legalese for "there's no statute or regulation requiring this—it's just the way we do things.") This is very good news for a rather severely limited category of workers:

- the worker who has actually been discharged, rather than merely harassed; *or*
- who has been harassed to the point where a court can find that no reasonable person could possibly work under those conditions ("constructive discharge"); *and*
- who can find legal counsel willing to handle such a case without a substantial retainer to cover the heavy expenses such cases normally entail.

Aside from that, the increase in tort suits for wrongful discharge is useful to working people in general mainly in the small but discernable effect it is now beginning to have on the way employers *present* their actions. It has added one line of type to every employee manual—"THIS IS NOT A CONTRACT"—and it has raised the level of managerial hypocrisy. (This is by no means a negligible benefit. It prevents the most blatantly visible outrages and encourages a degree of managerial caution about the more covert abuses.)

Most working people at all levels and despite frequent denials, are acutely aware that "the Constitution stops at the door of the workplace," and that most American adults spend fifty hours a week, fifty weeks a year, fifty years out of their lifetimes working in what at times appears to be a banana republic–like enclave.

But responses to this situation have been piecemeal and fragmented. No one yet has proposed a *comprehensive* code of worker rights, at either the federal or the state level, to include the following:

- pay equity,
- equal rights for part-time workers,
- parental and disability leave,
- mandatory health insurance,
- accountability to workers and communities for plant closings,
- limits on mandatory overtime, and
- codification of the various wrongful discharge theories now used by civil courts.

Organized labor, many salaried professional groups, the women's movement, civil rights groups, and communities currently or potentially affected by plant

(Continued on p. 79)

FICTION

Heartless Willy

Leo Litwak

Father didn't have to give honest answers. He didn't have to admit we were Jews. It would have been simple to lie. We could easily have passed as pure Dutch. Even the name—Frucht—gave nothing away. He had friends in high places and the Dutch would have supported us up and down the line. What did it have to do with what was in our hearts? We had no duty to tell the truth to the Commissioner. And yet Father chose to list us as Jews in the special census. Once we were on record everything followed. We lost business, our car, bank account. They even took our bicycles. We had to wear the yellow star, palm sized, sewn permanently into outer garments, the word JOOD in black at the center. I was removed from school and friends and sent to an exclusively Jewish school. Then the final insult. Jews were yanked from other parts of the Netherlands and squeezed into the Amsterdam Jewish Quarter and the Chernitzes were foisted on us.

They were from Poland, orthodox and rural, and had somehow found their way to the Netherlands. Their natural tongue was Yiddish. They spoke a garbled Dutch, larded with a Yiddish German. There were four of them, the bearded patriarch, his shawled wife, and his daughters Sophie and Fanya. They lit candles Friday nights and donned prayer shawls. The father wore a skullcap around the clock. They stained our kitchen with the cooking odors of an ancient poverty that I feared might become the stink of our own decline. They were entirely out of place. Bump into any of them and they begged forgiveness. *Entschuldigen mir.* Forgive me. I'm sorry. They cracked their door to see if the kitchen or bathroom was available, too timid to knock, then scurried for the room once they were sure we were out of it. They made themselves light walking down the hallway so they wouldn't disturb us. Their quarrels were muted to whispers. They claimed no space and I couldn't find it in my heart to grant them any. I had been exiled to a cot in the second parlor and the girls had my room.

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Fanya, at fourteen, was the younger of the Chernitz daughters and always in the way. I would come out of the kitchen, bump into her near the door. I'm sorry, she'd say. Forgive me. There's nothing to forgive, I'd say. I almost bowled her over when I left our apartment. She was there fumbling with the key, bearing a load of groceries. Excuse me, I'm sorry, and I said, Save your sorrys. Use them when you really make a mess.

She wore a shapeless smock and a full skirt. Her head was covered with a black shawl. She had a ruddy, peasant complexion. Her cheeks were plump and fiery red.

She came into the kitchen, saw me there. I told her, "For godsakes, don't jump!"

Mother called me to her room.

"Does it cost you anything to offer a little sympathy? They've lost everything. They don't choose to be here."

I asked what they'd lost. They had a better place here with us than they'd ever had.

"What's lacking in you, Willy? Don't you have a heart?"

"That's right," I said. "That's what I don't have."

"Heartless Willy." She tried to tease me into a lighter mood but it was an awful time and I wasn't up to it.

One afternoon I said to hell with it and returned to the old school and waited for Jan and Nick. They wore the school uniform—green jacket, white shirt, black tie, black pants. They came down the stone stairs, shouldering each other and laughing, Jan solid and wide, Nick taller, leaner, very blond Dutch boys.

"Look at the lucky dog," Jan said, "outside while we're stuck inside. No wonder they call them the Chosen People."

It disturbed Nick that I wasn't wearing the star. "It's not only you who take the risk. It's six months in Westerborck if we don't report it."

"Report me, Nickie. Maybe there's a reward."

"There are Nazis around. You know that."

"It's probably a big reward. Report me. It's even a crime if I hire you to wipe my ass."

Jan clapped his forehead. "Damn! That used to be easy money. Well, you'll finally have to learn to do it yourself."

Nick didn't like the insinuation that he might betray me. "Everyone should wear the star, Jew and gentile alike."

"Volunteer, Nickie. Someone has to be first."

"Would you do it for me?"

"I won't even do it for myself."

They came to see me the next day but there were too many Chernitzes around and I didn't invite them in. They could be in trouble if someone recognized us. We walked to a cafe where we weren't known.

They asked about the Jewish school I attended. Nothing special, I told them. Just like the Dutch school but under different auspices. The same history, the same math, the same literature. The curriculum didn't acknowledge the invasion or occupation or the exclusion of the Jews. The old history continued without us as did the old literature and the eternal calculus and football and gymnastics. The instruction was still directed toward examinations and the unveiling of destinies.

Father, too, warned me about wearing the star. "I appreciate your outrage, Willy, but please, son, don't be foolish."

He said, please, because it had become a battle whenever he tried giving me advice. We were both dismayed by our conflict. I'd been his greatest fan and we were unused to the bad feeling that had developed between us. Till things went wrong for him he'd always been adored. His friend Vanderzee once said to me, "When Peter Frucht enters a scene it becomes a party. It doesn't matter how dark it was, everything lights up."

At the beginning of the occupation something serious happened to his back and the doctors couldn't find what was wrong. The illness spread to his legs. The one time boulveardier, a graceful dancer, was barely able to walk with a cane. There had been a plan to get to England via Portugal. It would have meant a hike in the Pyranées but his illness made flight impossible. When he compounded the damage by listing us as Jews on the census questionnaire I felt betrayed. I told him I knew it would be helpful to the Nazis if I wore the star. Then when the time came to send the Jews to market they could easily sort me out from the Jans and Nicks, but I didn't intend cooperating. "Forgive me," I said, in the voice of Isaac Chernitz. "Forgive me, I'm sorry, it's just not in me to be one of your good Dutch citizens."

Mother worked out the cleaning assignments and the schedules for bath and kitchen. The rules and schedules made it impossible for the Chernitzes to feel at home; nonetheless, Isaac Chernitz was endlessly grateful. If it wasn't for our generosity he and his family would be in a camp.

He fattened every statement with, "I'm sorry," and, "Forgive me, Sir." He would never say anything to offend us. If he misspoke he apologized. "*Entshuldigen mir.* I speak the language poorly. I don't have the exact word."

I mimicked him when he was gone. "Excuse me, Lords and Masters. Wipe your feet on me if it pleases you. And if there's afterward dirt on your feet, forgive me, I'm sorry. I'll lick them clean." I put a whine in my voice, and the cringing, submissive smile of a lesser dog on my face.

"You are cruel," Mother said.

It was the hypocrisy I found intolerable. The man had abandoned his public voice for a wheedling baritone. At night we heard the authentic Chernitz sound from their bedroom, a muffled bass thunder to which there were docile soprano responses. In his own insignificant space he was a despot.

I knew Mother was right and that they deserved my compassion, but Fanya was unbearably callow. She saw me as the young god of the house. It was a stupid reading of how things were in occupied Amsterdam where I had to be inside by eight in the evening. Her skin reddened at any provocation. A compliment from Mother made her blush. If I met her coming out of the bathroom she blushed. If I happened to see her on the street with groceries she turned red, lost her voice, stumbled. She had a klutzy way of walking, as if she was scared to be in anybody's way. She seemed stupid and vulnerable and what chance did a Jew have in 1942 if he wasn't on his toes? Her station in life was to be somebody's housemaid or the mother of a flock, a step above a barn animal. This condemned Jew had usurped my bed and my impulse was to shove her out of my way.

I was a miserable kid and no one can despise me more than I despise the memory of that boy. I tell how I was in order to make clear that when my feeling changed it was not something I desired.

One day I was supposed to be in school and instead went to the old neighborhood. I waited for Jan and Nick. Jan's mother saw me. "Don't be crazy, Willy. People know you around here and there's one or two I don't trust." She told me to go home and put on the star and not let any of the green police spot me loitering. These were homespun Dutch Nazis, not Germans.

So I went home where I wasn't expected and there was Fanya, alone in the apartment, in the kitchen washing her hair. Her blouse was off. She wore a tattered chemise, her hair down. She gathered her hair, held it bunched, looked at me.

It was a Fanya I never anticipated, roseate skin, soft shoulders, an already womanly bosom, an unexpected grace in the slow turn to look at me.

"My mistake," I said. "Forgive me."

"No harm," she said in a saucy tone. "I forgive you."

She condescended to forgive me and I stewed about it and later I followed her out in the street, thinking I'd stop her and make clear she had no right to saucy looks that challenged the way things were between us.

She wore a shabby cape and a plain shawl and big shoes. She took clumpy, peasant strides. She entered a bread queue, at the end of a long line of ragged people, most of them from the East. There was a dumb quality to their waiting. They wouldn't dream of complaining about whatever miserable pittance they received. It wasn't only language and dress and bearing that marked them. They carried identity cards of low priority and were first in line to be sent East for labor. I passed her by and said nothing. I didn't return home that night until long after curfew. I put my folks through hell but I couldn't bear the idea of that crowded apartment with its smells and its dampening gloom, light kept low to conserve electricity. I entered the dark corridor, barely lit at either end. The folks were in the front parlor. The Chernitzes were in the kitchen at the opposite end. The kitchen door opened, a halo of light around a shadow figure. Fanya came toward me, headed for the bathroom. I waited for her to pass and again that saucy look—you are not my master—and I grabbed her arm. I meant to shake her up. She whispered, "Not here!" and somehow the scuffle became an embrace. "Please, Willy," she said, as if there was an understanding, "not here."

"No one will see. No one will hear. A kiss."

She pushed me off. "Find a place and I'll do anything."

She invented my feeling, put desire in my heart and everything was changed between us.

Every inch of that apartment came alive as I searched for a place where we could be alone. There always seemed to be a Chernitz around or one of my folks. We bumped in the corridor and groped. "Not here," she said. I grabbed her in the kitchen. "This is crazy. They're in the next room."

The nights were forbidden. Curfew began at eight and lasted until six in the morning. I said to hell with curfew, let's go out. She said, we'll be caught.

Jews weren't allowed in the parks night or day and with her clodhopper shoes and heavy stockings and shapeless dress and drab shawl we would probably have been spotted immediately.

I visited them in the kitchen and Chernitz saw I was interested in Fanya and became easier with me. He said, wasn't it my good fortune not to have Jewish features? "A regular *shagetz*, no, Mamma?"

Mamma nodded eagerly.

I told him I was a certified Jew with yellow stars sewn onto my outer garments.

"A Jew, yes, but a lucky Jew with blue eyes and light hair and a small schnoz. When you walk in the street who can tell there goes a yidel?"

"I'm not a yidel."

"Forgive me. I beg your pardon. My language is not exact. I mean it's very fortunate for you that you look to be a regular Dutch boy."

I couldn't bear her in the company of her parents. I saw his eyes and nose and toadying smile mirrored in her face. The beaming old lady—moon faced, massive bosomed, enormous hips—was her inevitable blossoming.

Then a touch in the hall and I was again snared.

I wanted to borrow clothes from Jan's sister—a school uniform, dark blue pleated skirt, white blouse, tan blazer jacket. Fanya with her hair up, wearing a school beret, could pass for Dutch.

"I can't do it. They'll find out as soon as I open my mouth."



"You don't have to say a word. We'll slip into Jan's room. His mother won't even see us."

"Forgive me. I can't do it."

One day I cut school, returned home and for once everyone but Fanya was gone, no Mother, no Dad, no Chernitzes.

I pulled her into the bathroom and latched the door. She begged me to stop but I kept on. She asked did I love her and I said with all my heart.

"Then, please, Willy. Not here. This is not the place."

"Where is the place? Anywhere in the Netherlands?" I pulled aside her dismal clothes while she braced against the wash basin. Blouse and skirt gathered at her feet. She wore heavy, dark stockings with frayed garters.

"You love me then?"

Yes, I repeated and then, unbidden, I love you, Fanya. I kissed her breasts. I lay my face against sweet plump flesh that had never before accepted such intimacy and would never again. Before we were done her sister Sophie pounded on the door. "Are you in there, Fanya?"

I'd only heard Chernitz servile and ingratiating, but that night he unleashed Yiddish tirades, some of which

I understood. He called her the names of animals. Cow! Ass! Wild hyena! She had brought shame on his head. Mrs. Chernitz called her Stupid! Idiot! Born Yesterday!

She wailed like a child.

Chernitz came to our parlor. He ignored me and spoke to Father. This wasn't his home. Our language wasn't his language. He could understand if we regarded him as a fool and a clown. When he looked at himself through our eyes he saw a beggar with no claim to dignity. Nonetheless, though he was dependent on our goodwill and had every reason to be grateful for our hospitality, he refused to be treated with contempt.

Father said, "Isaac, I have the greatest respect for you."

Chernitz had prepared his speech and spoke with clarity. He said he wasn't an ignorant man. He'd gone to cheder, studied Torah and Talmud. Without any other schooling he'd learned bits and pieces of six languages. In Yiddish and Polish and Russian he was fluent. He knew Hebrew, of course, and a base German. His Dutch was passable.

Dad said he welcomed the Chernitzes into our family. Isaac was like a brother and Bessie a sister.

"It's true," Chernitz said, "that we are one people, the Chernitzes and the Fruchts. All the more shameful to be slighted by one of your own. From the goyim I expect nothing more."

In another time, Father said, the children would have had a proper courtship. In these terrible times, old traditions were neglected. Still, wasn't it a small comfort that such fragile human feelings between boys and girls survived?

"To me it's no comfort."

"Forgive them, Isaac. It's youth. They'll get over it."

An easy thing for a man without a daughter to say.

Father had the highest regard for Fanya, a gentle, lovely, young woman, exactly the kind of daughter he would cherish. He gave Chernitz the impression that a declaration of a formal connection was only a matter of time and after Chernitz left Mother bawled him out. "They're children, for godsakes, Peter. How could you let the man think they're engaged?"

"What difference does it make? Let the poor fellow think whatever brings him comfort." It was his opinion that the Chernitz prospects were dim. They were foreigners with no useful skills, bound to be deported East.

I told them I regretted what happened and it wouldn't happen again but I refused to be connected to the Chernitzes and their bleak destiny.

Mother said, "Heartless Willy. You hurt people so."

I said it wouldn't happen again, but I couldn't forget

HEROES & HORRORS



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that unfinished moment when she stood naked in front of me, my mouth on her flesh. I caught her alone outside and she shook loose.

"If this is a proposal I'll listen. If it's not a proposal, I won't listen."

"You're fourteen years old. I'm sixteen. Who are we to talk proposals?"

"Then I'm not listening."

I promised when the occupation was over and Hitler kaput, we'd marry. I meant what I said with all my heart. We went to Vondel Park, damning all the risks. There in the bushes we made love. I was dazzled by the power of my feeling. For a few moments all humiliation faded away. Afterward she cried, "I'm lost."

How lost? Didn't I make a promise?

She said, "I loved you from the first look."

"I'm nothing special."

"Can't you say something nice to me?"

"My mother calls me heartless and she's right."

One day a notice arrived from the Jewish Agency. Samuel Chernitz, his wife Bessie, his daughters Sophie and Fanya, were scheduled for rehabilitative labor in the East.

What could be rehabilitated? His poor accent? His big schnoz? His yokel clothes?

He had to resume a journey that began in Galicia two years before. The new move promised to be the most dire, the labor most severe, the rehabilitation ominously scrupulous.

Still, they were ready when the day arrived. They wore their best clothes. Mother prepared sandwiches. They were packed and waiting when a polite Dutch policeman rapped at our door and called the roll. "Isaac Chernitz? Bessie Chernitz? Sophie Chernitz? Fanya Chernitz?" He told them only one suitcase was allowed. Mother promised to send along what was left behind once she received an address. She passed some gulden to Fanya and told Bessie, "Prepare the way. We'll join you soon," as though they were pioneers, headed toward an unexplored Eden.

Fanya said, "I want to say goodbye to Willy. We didn't say a proper goodbye."

The policeman said a special tram was on the way, collecting Jews for transport to the Central Station. "We'll probably have to wait anyhow. Take a few minutes."

She led me to what had been my bedroom and closed the door.

"Are we a couple?"

Hadn't I promised?

She was ready for love. Here and now. The place and time were right. I pushed her away. "When Hitler is kaput."

Esau's Curse

What do they mean they won't come to my wedding?
My bride is Uncle Ishmael's daughter.
They told me to take a woman from among our kin.
How was I to know she wasn't the kin they meant?
I know they despised my first wives, Adah
and Oholi-bamah, being local Canaanite girls.
They didn't want me putting up my tent
next to one of their altars.
OK, so I didn't take a local girl this time.
I went across the river Jabbok
and met with Uncle Ishmael. I arranged it all
so they would approve. Why have I never understood
what they want? They won't spell it out, at least
not to me, but Jacob has always understood.
Jacob this and Jacob that. Why can't you be more
like Jacob? Why can't you sit quietly and learn
to read and write? Why can't you be a good boy and
follow the sheep, like Jacob? Well, I'm no
sheep-follower, not now, not ever.
I'm happy when I'm on my own, tracking a deer
along the edge of the plain, carefully
taking aim, my arrow hitting home.
I've brought them my venison countless times.
That they like, they can't deny it,
prepared with spices from Uncle Ishmael's trading.
And there'll be more of those when I marry
Basemath!

Let Jacob grow beans behind your tents.
Let his beans fill your old age with wind.

Herb Levine

Here is the worst about me. I felt to hell with the meek and their suicidal faith in the myth of relocation. If they chose to be blind, let them be purged.

I received kisses from Sophie and Bessie. Isaac kissed me on both cheeks. "For the time being it's goodbye, my son."

Fanya lingered behind, claiming me with brimming eyes, a loaded paper bag in one hand, her suitcase in the other.

What choice did Chernitz have? He couldn't use the information that in going East he entered hell. Without the least resistance he followed the Dutch cop, his three women trailing behind.

Mother said, "Don't worry, Willy. You'll be together again and now she'll have time to grow up."

Mother really believed the fairy tale of relocation and rehabilitation. The *Jewish Weekly* published letters from those who had gone East. The letters reported hard labor in service to a new life.

She felt, why not a new life? The old life was nothing to shout about. Rations were scant. We spent our days in queues. We had no choice, so why not take a positive attitude toward changes we couldn't resist? Nor was the idea of redemption terrible. Work might make us better people. We'd grow our own food, achieve new bodies, become simple peasants and obedient sons.

When I mocked these fairy tale beliefs she said, "How will you survive if you believe in nothing?"

I asked how she would survive if she believed in everything.

Father invited me into our newly released second parlor where we could speak alone. "Willy," he said, "I rejoice in you. I take comfort in your skepticism. I know when an opportunity comes you'll have the courage to seize it."

It was then I asked why he'd listed us as Jews on the census questionnaire. Did he feel obliged to be a good Dutch citizen?

"What else could I admit to, Willy? We're connected fore and aft to generations of Fruchts. The sign is in our flesh."

"We're not the only ones cut that way."

He told me all was not lost. "Be ready. A time is coming when we'll need you."

The time was over-ripe. The ghetto was being drained. The Chernitzes were at the center of a large exodus. The Green police raided the neighborhood. Their green vans pulled up after midnight. I awoke to hear engines running, boots on pavement. They poured into the buildings, beat on the doors with their truncheons. "Jews, out!" They grabbed whom they could, shoved them into the vans, and a few days later returned to loot the vacated apartments. We watched them take everything portable, furniture, clothes, food. From the Goldman apartment in the building next to ours, I saw a green-clad bruiser with a swastika arm band carry a red wicker bird cage with a spectacular macaw named Smart Alec who squawked, "L'chaim. Down the hatch."

The *Jewish Weekly* advised all Jews to keep a rucksack packed. Notice of departure might come with a rap on the door and a command, "Jews out!"

Jan and Nick urged me to go underground. I could be shunted from friend to friend until they could figure how to get me to Sweden.

Still, there didn't seem any need to rush. We weren't in the same fix as the Chernitzes. Though Father could hardly work, our friend Vanderzee kept him on the factory rolls as a gem cutter, a high priority job.

But the time had come when priorities no longer mattered.

One morning a sound truck came through the neighborhood and a blaring voice ordered us to assemble in the plaza the following noon for transport to the East. Anyone absent from the roll call would be subject to summary punishment. The notice was also published in the *Jewish Daily News* with the usual promise of relocation and rehabilitation. It was a day we had all expected and dreaded but when it arrived all plans for escape went out the window. There we were, all who remained, ready to go.

Mother wanted us to dress in our best clothes. If status no longer counted, appearance could mean everything.

She put on her brown tweed suit with black velvet trim and a brown pill box hat with a short, stiff veil, the star sewed over her heart. Father wore a striped, double breasted grey suit, a peaked monogrammed hankie in his breast pocket alongside the yellow star. I wore my usual corduroys and an old sweater. Mother begged me to cooperate and wear my tweed jacket with the star.

"I won't put on the star. They can take me as I am."

Father pleaded with us not to quarrel.

She was afraid that if we didn't get to the plaza early we might not be able to sit together.

I couldn't hide my despair at being caught with the old folks. I should have been with Jan and Nick. I told her she was wearing the wrong outfit. What use did the Nazis have for a fancy lady like her on their Polish pig farms? Did she imagine she could plant potatoes and feed pigs in her elegant brown suit? Did she think she was going to walk through pig shit in those beautifully polished shoes?

"You're too clever for me, Willy. Why does a clever young man like you allow his foolish mother to make the decisions? Take over, Willy. I won't object. Maybe a little responsibility will ease the burden of your bad conscience."

"What bad conscience?"

"What you did to that child, a guest in our house." She burst into tears and I told her to calm down. I'd keep my mouth shut, put on my tweed jacket, carry the luggage, make sure Father got to the Plaza on time.

Father congratulated us on resolving our quarrel. "Now everything is settled. For a few minutes we can make ourselves comfortable and discuss our future."

Mother cried, "Is this a family of madmen? Are you trying to make me crazy, too? Silent all these weeks, and now—when it's too late—you want to talk?"

"Now is exactly the time to talk. But first an urgent

(Continued on p. 75)

The Future of Auschwitz

James E. Young

Amidst the tumult of events during the fall of 1989, Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki quietly convened a commission to consider the future of the museum and monuments at Auschwitz-Birkenau. All too aware of his own fragile tenure as head of state, Mazowiecki dared to acknowledge openly what other leaders often prefer to hide: the change in official memory that comes with a new government regime. And then, in a bold and conciliatory move, the prime minister called on a number of Jewish Holocaust scholars for guidance in the official remaking of public memory at Auschwitz.

Although now only a memory himself, Mazowiecki set in motion a complete restructuring of the memorial at Auschwitz. Under his direction, the Polish Ministry of Culture appointed an International Auschwitz Council, composed of Jews from Poland, Israel and other western nations, and of Polish Catholic intellectuals and government ministers. Charged with redesigning the museum and monuments at Auschwitz and reorganizing the exhibits to strip them of their previous Stalinist cast, the council has met three times since its formation two years ago. With little fanfare, it has already begun to redefine—literally to reshape—both memory of the Holocaust in Poland and its contested historical significance.

In preparation for this task, and at the behest of the Polish Ministry of Culture, Oxford University's Centre for Hebrew Studies invited a group of Jewish intellectuals from nine countries to meet at its Yarnton Manor to consider "the future of Auschwitz." Under the direction of Jonathan Webber, who teaches social anthropology at the Centre and is examining the cultural life of memory at Auschwitz, this group, which met in May 1990, would serve as an unofficial advisory board to the council.

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The 1990 Yarnton meeting itself was a remarkably congenial affair: Whether this was due to the tempered and gentle ambience of the manor and its gardens, or to the afternoon sherry hour, I don't know. But after three days of vigorous discussions, this group of twenty-seven Jewish academics, editors, religious leaders, and Holocaust survivors formulated a list of six general principles and fourteen concrete proposals to guide the reorganization of the museum and monuments at Auschwitz. When finished, the group hand-delivered this document—"The Yarnton Declaration on the Future of Auschwitz"—to Poland's Deputy Minister of Culture and Art.

"The Yarnton Declaration" may never rival the Yalta Accords in significance, but it did seem like a treaty of sorts, a framework for settling the unseemly "memorial wars" conducted so long on the mass graves at Auschwitz. In its apparent consensus, this symposium might be regarded with cynicism. But in fact, unanimity was never its aim. It was simply the first time Jews had been invited by the Polish government to sit down and define precisely the kind of memory they wanted preserved at Auschwitz, their first opportunity to offer the Poles a public set of recommendations.

Nearly two years later, in April 1992, a slightly reconfigured Yarnton group met again, this time *in situ* at Auschwitz and at Krakow's venerable Jagiellonian University, under the auspices of the Research Centre on Jewish History and Culture in Poland. They followed up on the Yarnton symposium and verified which of their earlier recommendations had been adopted, which deferred. What follows is a brief description of these proposals and their aftermath by one who was there, a glimpse into the process of this group's "memory work."

In the Yarnton declaration, we had recommended that the museum and monuments at Auschwitz-Birkenau show clearly that:

- 1.6 million men, women, and children were murdered there;
- over 90 percent of those murdered there were Jews, that aside from the Sinti and Roma, Jews were the only people condemned to death for "the crime" of having been born;

• there were huge numbers of non-Jews who died at Auschwitz, especially Poles, as this camp played a key role in the Nazi campaign to destroy Polish nationhood;

• both Jews and non-Jews murdered there came from all walks of life and all political persuasions, from dozens of cultural, religious and national traditions; and that

• the atrocities committed at Auschwitz were perpetrated by the German National Socialist regime and its collaborators. Finally, we suggested that in reorganizing the museum and memorial, the commission established by the Polish government consult as widely as possible with survivors' organizations and other Holocaust research institutions.

In addition to these general principles, we agreed (with far less unanimity) on a number of practical, concrete suggestions concerning the day-to-day operation of the memorial. These ranged from setting up a shuttle bus between Auschwitz-I and Birkenau to providing a historical orientation for visitors entering and leaving the memorial; from reviewing existing inscriptions and signs to creating a "hall of names," where a continuous tape of the names of victims would play. We also proposed the standardization of guides' recruitment and training, the provision of cassette players and headphones for those without a guide, and the permanent establishment of kosher food facilities at the museum restaurant.

At one point during the 1990 meeting, after viewing slides of boisterous young tourists munching on ice cream and candy among the barracks at Auschwitz-I, one of the British participants demanded a dress and behavior code. "No way," shot back an irritated American. "How are we going to force your stuffy modes of dress on seven hundred thousand tourists a year from all over the world? How are these tourists supposed to dress?" The American acknowledged that a dress code might pose no hardship on British visitors, or even on the Poles, who often travel in their Sunday best. But by forbidding shorts and sandals, for example, we might automatically exclude half the Israeli visitors. As a compromise, we recommended the posting of a general invitation to decorum to remind visitors that this memorial is, if not a holy site, also not just another tourist attraction.

Another participant asked pointedly just how one goes about preserving ruins, which by their nature grow more ruinous every day. Or, short of reconstructing the gas chambers, just how much renovation should be permitted? Someone responded that perhaps we should seal the camp off altogether, call it a "city of evil," and thereby make it a place set apart, to be contemplated from afar. Or perhaps we should treat it as a cemetery, profaned ground, never to be trod upon by the *cohanim,* the Jewish priestly class. Others wondered what to do with the vendors hawking concentration camp trinkets and memorabilia. Coming from a culture of "Memorial Day Sales," we Americans wondered how we could ask the Poles to restrain their own entrepreneurial spirit.

A few of the group had come prepared to join the battle against the convent set up by Carmelite nuns in 1988 outside the gates of Auschwitz I. But because plans were already underway to move the Carmelite convent from the camp's perimeter to its new home in the Catholic education center being built nearly a kilometer away, the group at Yarnton was relieved not to have to address it. All of us were shocked, however, by slide images of decaying movie sets and broken fences left behind by film crews for *The Triumph of the Spirit* and "Winds of War." Jonathan Webber reassured the group that the ersatz gas chambers and crematoria had, in fact, been dismantled within days of his vociferous objections. Nevertheless, the group proposed that no material changes or innovations be allowed on the Auschwitz-Birkenau grounds without approval of the council and museum administrators.

As academics and historians, in fact, most of us were acutely aware of the potential abuses of historical artifacts. Ruins, in particular, tend to collapse the distinction between themselves and what they evoke. Crumbling crematoria and barracks invite visitors to mistake remnants of the past for the reality of the events, physical evidence of almost any accompanying explanations. If, as was the case until recently, it is erroneously engraved in stone that "four million people suffered and died here," then this is what the ruins corroborate.

But as Michael Marrus, a historian, reminded us in his report to the group, four million people did not die at Auschwitz. While historians agree that the exact number of people murdered here will never be known, they believe the most accurate count is 1.6 million victims, of whom about 1.3 million were Jews. The remaining three hundred thousand victims were Polish Catholics, Gypsies, and Soviet POWs. The figure of four million was as wrong as it was round, arrived at by a combination of the camp commandant's self-aggrandizing exaggerations, Polish perceptions of their great losses, and the Soviet occupiers' desire to create socialist martyrs. It is a number that may have diminished Stalin's own crimes, even as it created millions of Polish and Soviet victims at Auschwitz. Ironically, by assenting to this inflated number over the years, Jewish researchers had unwittingly assisted in the Polish nationalization of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Therein lay several more bones of historical contention. After Stanislaw Krajewski, a Polish-Jewish leader, informed the group that the old inscriptions had already been effaced from the tablets at Birkenau, we were faced with the dilemma of shared memorial

space. For, as Marrus went on to explain, in its first two and a half years of operation, Auschwitz was primarily a concentration camp for Poles. Between 1939 and 1942, the barracks at Auschwitz-I (formerly for the Polish Army) were used to intern Polish political prisoners and POWs. Only in its last two years, from spring 1942 to the end of 1944, after the village of Birkenau was razed and a death camp built in its place, was this complex devoted to killing Jews. While Poles remember that Auschwitz was the beginning of the end of their nationhood, Jews recall Birkenau as the end of Jewish life in Europe. Where Poles remember that one of every two Poles was enslaved, injured, or killed during the war, Jews recall the extermination of 90 percent of Polish Jewry.

How then to create a commemorative space big enough to accommodate the plural memories and symbols of disparate, occasionally competing groups? How are the correct proportions of space and significance allotted? Is this, or should it be, the function of a memorial site? On the one hand, it seemed intolerable that Jews who died as Jews should be buried beneath the crosses of the Carmelite order, a sign of Christian triumphalism in Jewish eyes. But on the other hand, if we deny to Christians their traditional forms of remembrance, we may also thwart their memory of Jewish victims.

We agreed that Auschwitz-Birkenau was the site of the greatest mass murder of Jews in history. But it was also in Poland, where some six million Poles died (half of them Jews) during the German occupation. Auschwitz would be, by geographic default, a Polish memorial to both Polish and Jewish victims, a shared shrine to both Jewish and Polish catastrophe.

Last April, the Yarnton group resumed its deliberations at Auschwitz-Birkenau, reinvigorated and given new urgency by the sheer power of place. The group would now see for itself what was remembered and what was lost at Auschwitz; what had been left to decompose and what had been reconstructed. On the first day, we experienced a typical Polish-led tour of Auschwitz-I and its museums before exploring the vastness of Birkenau on our own the next day. Two full days of workshops and plenary sessions followed, during which we discussed the current state of the memorial grounds and debated additional recommendations. On the fifth and last day, we called a press conference attended by the Polish national news and television media, at which we issued new recommendatons, dubbed the "Krakow Proposals."

In the gentle yet persuasive language of an experienced memorial diplomat, Jonathan Webber proclaimed our gratification at the changes that had taken place since our last meeting: A bus now connected Auschwitz-I and Birkenau; the visitors' guidebook had been improved and updated to reflect previously suppressed historical facts; new markers in Hebrew had sprouted, as had signs exhorting visitors to maintain the dignity of the site. At the same time, Webber underscored our dissatisfaction with the slow pace of other changes. The museum still does not show clearly that 90 percent of those murdered were Jews; nor is there a policy in effect to govern the erection of markers or the removal of unauthorized plaques. Nothing had been done to show the richness of European Jewish life before the Holocaust or the continuation of life afterward in Israel and America.

On its tour of Birkenau's far reaches, the group saw that the movie sets were indeed gone, but that other unauthorized markers continued to bloom in the landscape. One set of markers erected by young Polish volunteers provoked astonished gasps and incredulous headshaking from the group: Arrayed across a great green meadow, site of former burning pits and mass graves that were the burial sites for tons of human ashes, were large, whitewashed Stars of David and crosses. In two spots, the young Poles had attempted to create a symbol of solidarity between Jewish and Polish martyrs by nailing Stars of David to the crosses—in effect, crucifying the Jewish star. The memorial volunteers had hoped to perform an egalitarian "marriage" of Jewish and Christian symbols, but Jewish eyes found an ironic and bitter reference to the martyrdom of Jews at Christian hands.

With these images in mind, we returned to the seminar room in Krakow. Everyone agreed that the grounds should remain preserved as they are, with a policy to prevent the further vandalization of Auschwitz-Birkenau—whether by well-meaning volunteers, tourists looking for souvenirs, or American museums foraging for artifacts. (The sawing in half and removal of one of the last remaining wooden barracks at Birkenau by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington struck an especially raw nerve among the group.) We reiterated our previous recommendation that nothing from the site be carted off and none of the grounds be altered in any way without the approval of the entire Auschwitz Council.

At the same time, several members of the group expressed intense uneasiness with the obsessive, almost fetishistic veneration of these same relics. The literary historian David Roskies warned passionately, for example, against Jews turning Auschwitz-Birkenau into so many stations of the cross, its remains into so many pieces of the cross. We debated whether to conserve the artifacts as historical evidence or as remnants of the past, meant to evoke in visitors the sense of having been there. Do we let the ruins age gracefully, to show the ever-widening gulf of time between ourselves and the past

(Continued on p. 77)

Beyond Mitzrayim: Egypt, Israel and Middle East Peace

Letty Cottin Pogrebin

They laughed when I sat down to write about Egypt's role in the peace process. A friend said, "At last—your first one-paragraph essay." My editor simply asked, "Why Egypt? Why now?"

The answer is, whether or not Americans happen to focus on Egypt, she is never irrelevant to the Arab world or the State of Israel. But especially now that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has jump-started the peace process, friends of Israel owe it to themselves to decode Egypt's behind-the-scenes role at the talks and explore her potential as a mediator whose efforts might benefit Israeli interests. We need to ask what Egypt's stake is in the process and what she can be expected to accomplish.

Egypt sees herself both as central in the negotiations and as the architect of a radically new concept of regional sovereignty and security. Rather than a nationalist delusion, this self-image is edging closer to reality due to recent geopolitical upheavals. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have left Syria, Egypt's age-old rival, without her weapons source and have deprived the region of a countervailing balance to the influence of the United States. The Gulf War deeply affected inter-Arab relations. And the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism threatens secular governments throughout the region. But with a new Labor government in Israel, there are suddenly new openings for a political solution to previously intractable conflicts. In the wake of these profound changes, Egypt has emerged as a force for stability, moderation and compromise—especially when contrasted with other Arab nations that are, in the words of Tahseen Bashir, former spokesman for the late President Gamal Abdel Nasser, "only tribes with flags, or rich families who own their countries."

Of the twenty-one Arab states, only Egypt has signed a peace agreement with Israel. Regardless of its inadequacies, that treaty places Egypt in a unique position. According to the *New York Times,* Rabin's visit to Cairo eight days after taking office "underscores Israel's belief ... that circumstances are now ripe for Egypt to assume the go-between's mantle."

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Then there is the matter of "honor," a concept that seems anachronistic to western observers yet figures significantly in the leadership hierarchy of the Arab world. For nearly ten years, Egypt was castigated and isolated by other Arab nations for making peace with Israel. But in 1988, Yasir Arafat announced his willingness to trade land for peace as Egypt had done. And by 1990, as most Arab states came to accept the necessity of dealing with Israel politically, they reopened relations with Cairo.

Egypt now portrays herself as the role model for Arab peacemakers even as she shoulders lingering guilt for being the only member of this elite club. In the fifteen years since the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat went to Jerusalem, conflicts have worsened among the Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians, other Arab states and Israel. Rivers of blood have been shed by all. Meanwhile, the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli agreement has passed its Bat Mitzvah year almost without incident. If the bilateral talks succeed, it would prove that Egypt was right all along to choose negotiation over confrontation.

Unfortunately, however, Egypt's role-model status is compromised by the fact that the treaty with Israel has never blossomed into a "total peace" of the sort that Rabin is now demanding from Syria. Israel and Egypt display one another's flags, receive each other's aircraft, and claim to conduct the *pro forma* diplomatic, travel, and trade relations dictated by international law. But in reality, what exists between the two nations is a "cold peace," a phrase I'd heard but never comprehended until I went to Egypt last June with a small delegation from Americans for Peace Now (APN).

In a week of meetings with Egyptian government officials, military strategists, scholars, business people, and policy analysts, we heard ample evidence of the chill. Tourism, for instance, is virtually a one-way street; seventy-five thousand Israelis visit Egypt every year but only a trickle goes the other way. Our Egyptian sources offered many defenses, some disturbing, some disingenuous. They told us the asymmetrical traffic flow made sense because "there is more to see in Egypt than Israel; we have the Cairo Museum." They said Egyp-

tians can't spend as much on travel as Israelis can. Or, those who can take vacations prefer to go to Paris or Rome just as Americans do. When we asked for a more candid explanation, the truth emerged. The environment in Israel is "not appealing" to Egyptians: "Our people might see Israeli soldiers roughing up Palestinians on the West Bank. It's too humiliating."

Whatever the merits of these excuses, the fact remains that Egyptians need a permit from their government to visit Israel, and 99 percent of those who apply are turned down.

As with tourism, the volume of other relations is small. Israeli ambassador Ephraim Doweck told APN that Egyptian-Israeli trade is down to $15 million a year from $85 million in 1981. Exchanges of students, journalists, literati, and professionals have never flourished. More than a thousand Egyptians are studying Hebrew at Egyptian universities, but they cannot go to Israel to practice the language. Publicly funded firms have been under instructions not to buy, sell, or go into partnership with Israelis. The government of Israel was, until recently, not invited to any trade, industrial, or cultural fairs, perhaps as a rebuke to the Likud government. The few agricultural deals arranged person-to-person receive no government assistance.

The Egyptian media have, for the most part, been unremittingly hostile to Israel, so much so that two leading Israeli journalists recently issued an open letter to their Egyptian counterparts—many of whom still refer to Israel as "the Zionist enemy"—asking them to stop pouring "cold water on every dish likely to warm up peace." When Israeli Davis Cup star Gilad Bloom was accepted into the Cairo Challenger Cup competition in 1991, he became the first Israeli tennis player to compete there in ten years. Other sports connections are virtually nonexistent. This is not admirable international behavior; it is the behavior of a government trying to have it both ways—to keep Israel and the United States happy while neutralizing the stigma of her Camp David "betrayal" by refusing to put flesh on the bones of the peace treaty. Many Egyptians told us they are tired of giving Israel the cold shoulder just to prove their pro-Arab credentials. They know Egypt would benefit from vigorous intellectual and economic relations with the Jewish State, but they said they need some dramatic breakthrough, ideally on the Palestinian issue, before their country can stop punishing Israel and create a fully functional peace.

Several thinkers went even further. They shared their vision of a vast Middle East collaborative marked by open borders, free trade, full economic and environmental cooperation, water sharing, proliferating democracy, arms control, and mutual defense treaties among



President Hosni Mubarak addresses the General Assembly of the United Nations.

all the nations of the region, including Israel. Ironically, Israel could be the biggest beneficiary of all this. "If the Arabs open their borders, Israel's whole concept of sovereignty and security will change," said Dr. Osama el-Baz, Mubarak's national security adviser and Egypt's coordinator and top strategist for the peace talks. "Israel will no longer be a ghetto or a garrison state."

Many analysts echoed the need for a Middle East in which each nation's security is not guaranteed by weaponry but by neighborly relations. "Today, Israel, Syria, and Jordan are stuck in the military concept of security," explained General Ahmed Fakr, a former general and director of the National Center for Middle East Studies. "They keep saying, 'What if there's a war?' They talk about satellites and AWACS. As long as they think about the coming war, their values are limited. It takes a different psychology to talk about the coming peace and to understand that a military solution is no longer possible."

Listening, one felt a surge of hope—not the hope of utopian longing, but that which takes root when you realize the other side has found its own self-interest in the outcome you desire.

Other reasons for Egypt to invest in the peace process spring from her internal problems. A combination of dire economic distress, a runaway birth rate (an increase of one million babies every nine months), and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism has created a sense of national emergency that regional peace could ameliorate. The volatile mix of economic frustration and militant rabble-rousing confounds Egypt's politicians. But it also has inspired them to look to the peace talks for some achievement that

would prove their worthiness to lead, while defusing the inflammatory attacks and stemming the hopelessness on which extremism is based. Dr. Mohammed Abdullah, chair of the parliament's foreign relations committee, insisted, "We must solve the Arab-Israeli conflict while it is still a political issue and before it becomes a religious issue. Once fundamentalists are facing each other on both sides, military supremacy will not help anyone."

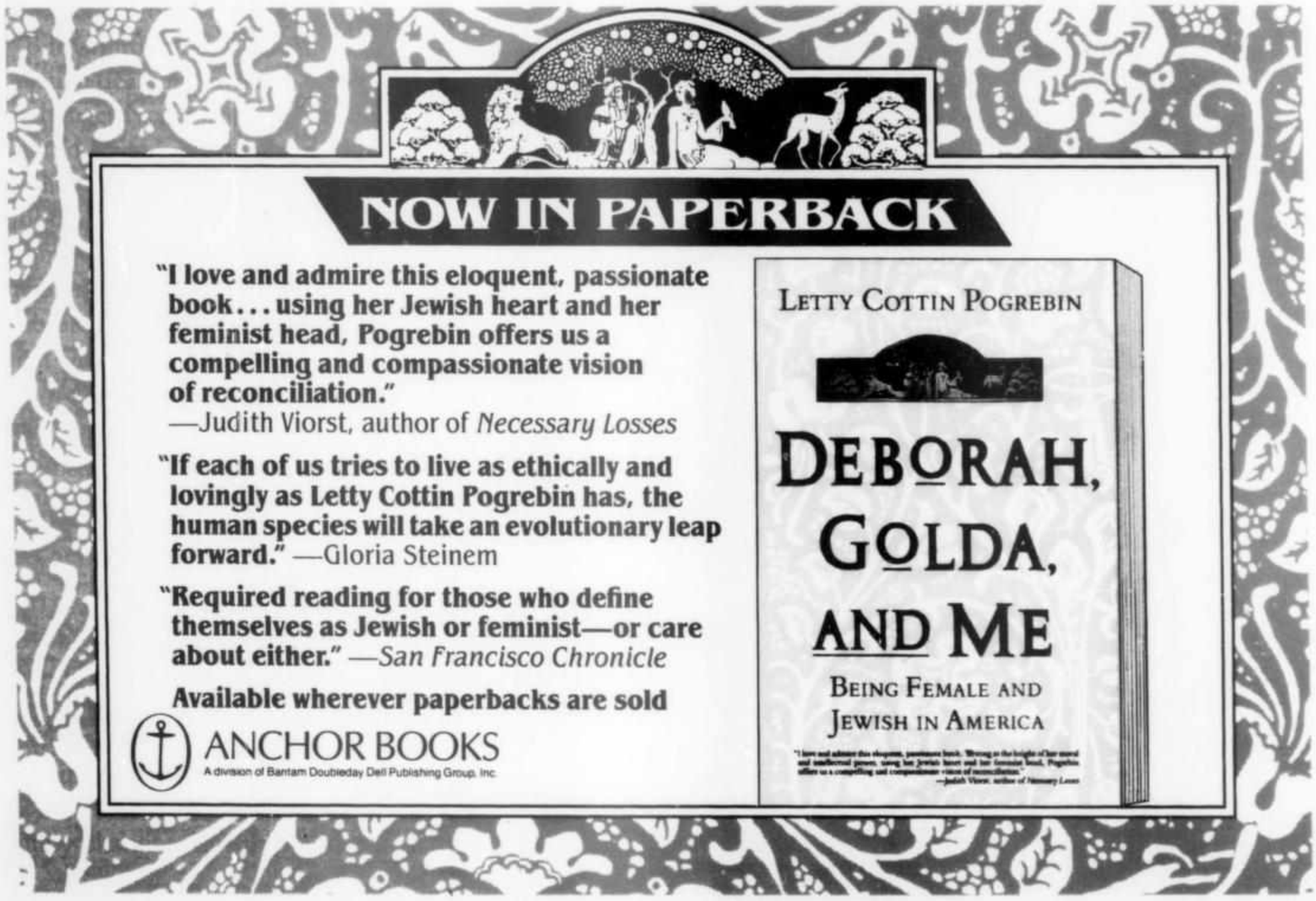
For Mubarak to midwife a permanent peace between Israel and her neighbors would accomplish many things: It would eliminate some of the major regional conflicts that imperil Egypt's security. It would enhance the president's image by demonstrating his effectiveness and the rightness of the secular government's programs for change. It would restore Egypt's honor, end her inter-Arab isolation, justify further reductions in military spending and redirection of this money to civilian needs, and stimulate the economy by opening new markets.

It would also enable Egypt to solidify her ties with the United States, which have been weakened by an American recession that has aroused isolationist tendencies and increased domestic pressure for Washington to abandon its international responsibilities. America gives Egypt $1.3 billion in military aid and $800 million for her domestic needs. In 1990, the United States forgave Egypt's $6.7 billion military debt, which will save her about $1.6 billion in interest and arrears payments and up to $1.6 billion in annual debt service in the future. Obviously, Egypt wants to keep the Americans happy.

Beyond these motivations of self-interest, however, I sense an inchoate, almost mythic reason why, despite her current frailties, Egypt has chosen to play a prominent role in the peace effort: She believes deeply and profoundly in her own greatness. I can't count the number of times we heard Egyptians describe their nation's uniqueness—as an "old and enduring" civilization, a "survivor" even when conquered, a "pacesetter" for the region, an "island of stability" in a raging sea, or a "trailblazer" for human values and political philosophy.

"Our power is not measured in tanks, aircraft, or earnings but in the product of our ideas," said Ambassador Mohammed Hafez Ismail, a former national security adviser. "We inspired the liberation of other Arab countries. We've carried the ideas of the French Revolution to the Persian Gulf, to Yemen, to the Sudan. We send our doctors and lawyers to other countries."

No matter what happens or how bad it gets, Egyptians find something positive to say about themselves. They put their trust in the ineffable Egyptian character, in an inherited wisdom so ancient and infinite that it can make



the impossible possible. And who would disagree? If Sadat could sign a peace treaty with Likud's Menachem Begin, is it any less possible for Mubarak to broker a peace between Hafez al-Assad and Labor's Yitzhak Rabin?

Given both the concrete and mythic motivations for Egypt to invest in the peace process, the question remains: What might she accomplish? In the multilateral meetings, which address long-term issues such as water resources, demographics, and missile reduction, it is obvious that, in General Fakr's words, "without Egypt, nothing will happen." Already, something that did happen with Egyptian help was Israel's decision to attend multilateral sessions (dealing with refugees and economic development) in which diaspora Palestinians participate. This shift came about as a result of a surprise visit to Israel on the 8th of October by Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, the first such visit in nearly a decade, after which Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said, " ... the active involvement of the Egyptians, as mediating agents, has been secured."

As for the bilaterals—which focus on past disputes and conflict resolution—Egypt's role as a buffer and back-channel facilitator renders her an asset to both Israel and the United States. American officials have acknowledged that without Egypt, the Syrians would not have come to Madrid. And it was combined pressure from the Egyptians, Americans, and Saudis, that kept the Syrians at the bilaterals in the early rounds.

El-Baz, the lead strategist, said Egypt's contribution will be to encourage "open-mindedness" in all parties. He recalled for APN how Egypt influenced Palestinian thinking: "They used to imagine all Israelis were equally hard-line. We had to educate them to address the full spectrum of Israelis. Now, we tell them it isn't feasible to talk about final status up front. Everything depends on their ability to convince Israelis that Palestinian autonomy will not threaten Israeli safety. We can push everybody. We can insure that the Golan Heights not be used to attack Israel. For the purpose of meeting Israel's real security concerns, we can address their legitimate fears as we did when we took back the Sinai. But we will not be a party to appeasement."

As I write this in October, Mubarak is trying to raise the negotiations to top strategic levels and broker a summit meeting between Rabin and Assad. Not surprisingly, there is stiff competition for the *schadchan* (matchmaker) role. The French and the Americans also would like the credit for bringing about such a meeting, or for crafting specific compromise proposals that strike fire with the parties. Even the Russians have anted up a tripartite solution for the Golan.

In these next crucial months, Egypt could help the Arabs understand Rabin's problem with simultaneous pullbacks on two Israeli fronts, the Golan and the West Bank. She could help the Israelis understand once and for all that regardless of the complex enmities among the Arabs, neither Assad, Arafat nor Faisal Husseini, the Palestinian leader from East Jerusalem, will get too far ahead of the others. Egypt's experience in the Arab world attests to the high costs of a unilateral peace with Israel.

Many Egyptians told us they are tired of giving Israel the cold shoulder just to prove their pro-Arab credentials.

Egypt should use her back-channel powers to help the parties compromise on a plan providing for symmetry but not simultaneity: that is, Israel would accept a timetable for negotiations to give back Golan territory on a step-by-step schedule similar, but not parallel, to the phased plan for Palestinian interim self-government. Syria would agree to the principle of a total peace in return for Israel agreeing to the principle of Syrian sovereignty in the Golan. Each territorial pullback would be linked with specific steps toward normalization of relations. Without such linkage, Israel will find herself in the same boat with Syria as she has been with Egypt. A cold peace is not good enough in a hot neighborhood like the Middle East. Furthermore, if Egypt expects to be a credible advocate for "total peace" between Israel and Syria or anyone else, she will have to activate aspects of her relations with Israel as an incentive to others, rather than waiting for full peace in the region to spur a rapprochement. What are the prospects for this to happen?

Ambassador Bashir sees characteristics in Mubarak and Rabin that augur well for "a creeping peace." He says the best thing about the Egyptian leader is that he loves stability, while the best thing about the Israeli leader is that he has failed in the past, and like Sadat, he has the drive to succeed now that he has another chance to do it right.

During our meeting, El-Baz offered a bemused description of the typical American: "If you visit a foreign country for a week, you write a book about it. When you come for a month, you publish an article. But stay for a year and you'll discover how complex we are and you'll write nothing at all."

I stayed a week. It didn't spawn a book, but it did reveal enough complexities to fuel this conclusion: To ignore Egypt in these next crucial months is to miss a big piece of the action. □

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The Missing Melody: What We Don't Hear When We Read

Gershom Gorenberg

Walking through downtown Bangkok one day, I came upon a shrine to the Hindu god Brahma. Behind the four-faced idol sat a trio of percussionists, two with boat-shaped wooden xylophones and one with a fat bamboo drum. In return for donations, they played to the deity, the elfish song of the xylophones hovering above the dark drumbeat. I pulled out my pocket recorder. When I played back my tape, I found my microphone caught only the bright high xylophone notes, divorced from the deeper drumming. It's still a pleasant tune, worth keeping even—but only half what the musicians hoped for.

That sundered song came back to me recently, when I read a front-page piece on Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* in the *New York Times Book Review*. The reviewer, Alison Lurie, read Rushdie's superb tale of a storyteller battling the forces of silence as an allegory for the author's own travails since the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. She also pointed to parallels with *Alice in Wonderland, The Phantom Tollbooth,* and "the classic folk tale in which the hero travels to strange lands to lift a spell." So far, so good.

But when Lurie mentioned the book's "updated Arabian Nights background" and leapt onward without another word, I had to wonder if she'd missed half of Rushdie's music. And that led to wider questions: How much does a reader miss when he or she lacks the tradition of stories that matters for the writer? And how much do each of us lack when we are poor in stories in whose terms we can write our own lives, or when our stories are chosen from but one cultural storehouse?

Look at *Haroun*: Most of the action takes place during a night spent on a Kashmiri houseboat called the "Arabian Nights Plus One," and that's clearly how Rushdie sees his story. From the boat, the boy-hero Haroun Khalifa and his father, Rashid the storyteller, travel to the hidden moon of Kahani (story), where the lands of Gup (gossip) and Chup (quiet) do battle. Naturally, the capital of Gup is built on an archipelago of 1,001 islands. And note the names: "Rashid," as Alison Lurie says, is a near anagram for Rushdie. But the caliph Harun al-Rashid is also the central figure in *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*; using this name is as subtle as calling the hero of an odyssey Ulysses or giving the name Hamlet to a man whose uncle killed his father.

But details like these are only signposts to the shared meaning of the books. *The Thousand Nights and One Night* is a story about stories. To save "the daughters of the Mussulmans" from a king who marries and murders a virgin each night, Shahrazad (Scheherazade) tells him stories—stories in which, again and again, people spin yet more stories in order to convince kings or demons not to kill them. A storyteller will become grand vizier if he brings a king the perfect tale or will be impaled if he fails. Storytelling, to paraphrase Proverbs, saves from death.

In Rushdie's 1,002d night, storytelling itself faces a death sentence. Its enemy is the Cultmaster; but he is, rather than an Ayatollah, "a snivelling, drivelling, mingy, stingy, measly, weaselly *clerk*"—a bureaucrat, in short, the ultimate *modern* creature, who wants to control the world and sees no point in stories "that aren't even true." His hope is to plug up the wellspring that feeds Kahani's sea of stories, a job made easier because the Source is located beneath the Old Zone of the sea, "an area to which hardly anybody went any more" since "there was little demand for the ancient stories flowing there." The danger to storytellers comes when there is a failure of wonder—and when no one knows or cares about the tradition through which they create new stories. If people don't visit Harun al-Rashid anymore, how will they understand Rashid the storyteller?

To be fair, Lurie may have heard the drumbeat of the *1,001 Nights* running through Rushdie's story but chosen not to write about it; a reviewer doesn't have room for everything. Still, there's an irony in practically ignoring this connection when so much of *Haroun* is a plea for the importance of the old stories, and particularly of the *Nights*. And if Rashid is Rushdie, he's also the ancient caliph, the storyteller and the hero of his stories becoming one. It's a lesson in how someone who has a treasure of tales can use them to spin the story

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that is his or her own life in heroic dimensions—tragic and laden with meaning. Though many western readers are likely to know the *Nights* only from a thoroughly bowdlerized children's tale or two, Scheherazade's epic isn't exclusive Muslim property. Still, Rushdie has a problem, and not just in *Haroun.* With one hand he taps the xylophone of European literature, but with the second he pounds a drum his readers hear far less well. How much of the bitter satire of the Koran in *The Satanic Verses,* how much of Rushdie's wrestling with faith, resonates for his western readers? Rushdie is aware of the problem; in *Shame* he refers to himself as "a translated man," and writes: "It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion ... that something can also be gained."

How much does a reader miss when he or she lacks the tradition of stories that matters for the writer? And how much do each of us lack when we are poor in stories in whose terms we can write our own lives, or when our stories are chosen from but one cultural storehouse?

In that hope is a note of despair. This isn't just Rushdie's dilemma. It belongs to anyone who knows a tradition of stories that his or her readers don't. The storyteller lives by his store of tales; to leave them out of one's own stories is to choose a kind of silence, but to use them and not have them heard is also to choose silence.

The problem is also evident in those Jewish writers whose Jewishness goes beyond immigrant ethnicity to delve into Jewish literary tradition. When two characters in I. B. Singer's "The Tale of Two Liars," talk about the River Sambation, it makes sense as the banter of con-man and con-woman before their victims—even to a reader who doesn't know the legend of the river that hurls stones six days a week and rests on the Sabbath. But the dialogue resonates better if you know the crooks are quoting a legend that dates back to the Talmud and early midrashic collections; playing on their victim's piety, they build their own credibility.

Elie Wiesel cites the same legend in *A Beggar in Jerusalem,* explaining it well enough that any reader can understand—and so well that the tale becomes a literature lesson rather than a story.

In that novel, in fact, Wiesel seems terribly unsure of how to deal with a tradition that readers don't share, overexplaining one image, underexplaining another. Much of the plot is based on the metaphor of the separation of the female Shechina, or divine presence, from the male God. A soldier missing in the Six Day War is named Katriel, "the crown of God"—a variation on Kater, the highest emanation of God in the kabbalistic hierarchy. His wife is Malka—Malchut, the lowest emanation, another name for the Shechina. In contrast to the traditional idea of the Shechina going into exile with the Jews, both Shechina and the Jews have returned to Jerusalem—but God himself has been lost in the battle. Wiesel, though, gives no explanation of the names, leaving the allegory as shrouded as he leaves Katriel's fate. Still, one has to sympathize with Wiesel rather than criticize him. Any Jewish writer who wants to allude to traditional sources today knows this unhappy choice: whether to provide Rashi to his or her own allusion, thereby interfering with the reader's interpretation, or to say nothing and risk having the reader's reference go altogether unnoticed.

Wiesel's *Night* provides an example of the ideal solution, a story that is powerful even when half-heard, though resonating better when the tradition is known. In Auschwitz, a young boy is hanged by the S.S. before thousands of prisoners, and slowly strangles for over half an hour. Wiesel writes:

> Behind me, I heard [a] man asking: "Where is God?"
> And I heard a voice within me answer him:
> "Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows...."

When I first read this, when I was seventeen, I was both overwhelmed and a bit confused. Was Wiesel, in fact, saying God had died in Auschwitz? Could he, despite his Judaism, be making the boy into an unresurrected Christ figure?

The older tale, which my American Reform Jewish upbringing hadn't given me, I learned years later. One night in Jerusalem, my wife came home from a class on Tractate Sanhedrin of the Talmud and reminded me of Wiesel's account. Then she opened the heavy volume before me to the section explaining why a person who has been executed must not be left hanging, lest God's name be desecrated:

(Continued on p. 79)

The rampage of violence in the former Yugoslavia and in Somalia, the ethnic tensions throughout Eastern Europe, the reemergence of neo-Nazi activity in Germany, France, and other Western European countries are but the latest indications that nationalism and ethnic particularism will be critical factors in international politics of the post–Cold War era.

Those of us who opposed communist totalitarianism must acknowledge that many decent people in Eastern Europe supported communist regimes after the Second World War because they saw no other way to curb the racisms, anti-Semitism, and ethnic hostilities that reached their fullest expression in the Nazism and anti-Semitic nationalism that was embraced by so many in Central and Eastern Europe. Yet repression never works. Ethnic hatreds may often be the only publicly sanctioned outlet for people's frustration and anger at living in a world of oppression. The attempt to suppress that anger is as misguided as the impulse to channel it into ethnic or religious conflicts. But there will be no end to these destructive dynamics until we build a world in which people's basic human needs are met.

In the meantime, racism and ethnic hatreds will continue to flourish. The communist ideologues were right to insist that racism and religious and ethnic hatreds could only be eliminated when people lived in a social order they perceived to be just, moral, and humanly fulfilling. They were wrong to think that such a world could be achieved through totalitarian methods, because one essential part of making a world humanly fulfilling is for people to feel that they are playing a decisive role in shaping the contours of their daily reality. But the conservatives are equally wrong to think that ethnic or religious strife is inevitable. It's only inevitable in a world in which people feel deeply unhappy about their own daily lives.

In the Sept./Oct. issue of Tikkun *we called for immediate military intervention to stop the fighting in Bosnia. There's one more thing that requires immediate action: The United States should open its doors to the tens of thousands of refugees seeking asylum. It is unconscionable that the U.S. government would allow these refugees to be forced into Germany, where they face neo-Nazi attacks, rather than allow them to come to the United States. Haitians and other similar refugees should also be given safe haven here. It is imperative that our government act now—it can't wait until the inauguration of a new president in January.*

In this special section on the conflict between nationalism and internationalism, between particularism and universalism, we continue to examine how these tensions are being played out in the realm of thought and in the realm of international politics.

Nationalism and Identity in (Former) East Germany

Marla Stone

Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves in, the narratives of the past.

—Stuart Hall

Over the past year, as the world focused on Yugoslavia's descent into self-immolation and hypernationalism, the domestic struggle of the new Germany has received only intermittent attention. Now, however, the spectacle on the evening news of neo-Nazi youths armed with molotov cocktails has returned our focus to the German Question. This German turn to nationalist and xenophobic extremism is rooted in the collapse of East Germany, the reunification process, and the crisis of social integration and national identity that these two produce.

Marla Stone is a lecturer in European history at Princeton University and co-editor, with Harold James, of When the Wall Came Down, *Rutledge, 1992.*

November 1992 marks the third anniversary of the opening of the Berlin Wall. Beyond the disturbing, evocative resonance of the neo-Nazi violence—ironic in contrast to the scenes of expansive celebration from 1989—the civil contest over the future that is raging in Germany holds important lessons for our understanding of nationalism, identity, and the transition from state socialism to capitalism.

Germans, both western and eastern, are struggling in search of a common national identity and stable polity. The vacuum produced by political, economic, and social disintegration in eastern Germany is being met with a re-nationalization of politics—a turn to the politics of resentment. The extremist violence of the last months raises the question, for progressives, of how to achieve these goals without resort to solutions of violence and communal hatred. Why, indeed, has the response to German reunification taken the form of xenophobic action and discourse?

The people of the former German Democratic Republic (G.D.R.) repudiated the "old ways" of the defunct regime, yet new integrating belief systems and

forgers of community do not exist. The East Germans have torn down the Marx– and Lenin-based national myths of their immediate past. Given the taint of the Nazi era national myths, the new citizens of the united Germany need literally to fashion an identity and sense of belonging. In their attempt to make sense of the situation, eastern Germans have turned, variously, to right-wing extremism, materialism and conformism, G.D.R. nostalgia, and grass-roots political mobilization.

While images of the breakdown of social order in eastern Germany have reached the American public (mostly through televised clips of skinheads replete with swastikas), there has been little attempt at a deeper causal understanding or discussion of the larger implications. In order to move toward social peace and coexistence, however, we must ponder the fact that the unrest is rooted in the shortsighted manner in which the West has chosen to fill the void left by the collapse of communism.

The global realignment brought about by the end of state socialism presented Western Europe and the United States with a moment of possible self-reflection, but it thus far has passed unnoticed. The West, now in the position of dictating to these debilitated nations, might have taken the opportunity to consider the options facing societies in transition. Instead, the West Germans moved into the former East Germany with condescendingly applied answers and prescriptions.

By bailing out its sister nation, West Germans differentiated the East German experience from other post-communist societies. Nonetheless, there are phenomena common to the transitional experiences of all the former communist countries that encourage a turn to right-wing extremism: a complete delegitimation of the pre-existing state and society; a privatization crusade, with little attention to social costs such as massive unemployment and the disappearance of the social net; and a climate of witch-hunts, accusation, and fear. In a period of scarcity, the logic of economic austerity turns neighbor against neighbor, former colleague against former colleague.

The cornerstones of the transition to capitalism, decommunization and privatization, are being effected with little attention to long-term consequences. The "cowboy" privatizations will leave the remnants of state industries in the hands of the few, in most cases those who formerly held positions of power. With the overnight creation of a class society, some will be able to navigate the market but some will fall through the cracks.

Engineered at lightning speed, German reunification in 1990 aimed to rescue the benighted former Easterners. Its coordinators hoped and believed that an influx of Deutsche Marks and market principles would lead these Germans smiling into the new day of German unity.

Fairy tales, particularly when recounted by ruling political parties rarely come true. By mid 1992, much of the hope for freedom and prosperity that reunification would bring has soured. In the heady months of late 1989 and early 1990, many East Germans saw reunification as the solution to the crisis and collapse of the communist government. The March 1990 elections, which gave the Christian Democrats and their allies a majority, quashed alternatives to merger with the Federal Republic, such as a confederation or a "third way" between "real existing socialism" and "real existing capitalism."

Reunification rested on the premise that two states, which over forty years had evolved antithetical social, political, and economic systems, could be seamlessly sewn together. Yet Eastern economic recovery is far slower than expected. Unemployment rates officially set at 14 percent, are unofficially close to 50 percent when underemployment and forced retirements are considered. Capital attraction is sluggish. Chancellor Helmut Kohl's 1990 election promise that reunification would offer "more for everyone," with limited costs for all, has proven false. The cost to West Germans, exponentially higher than Kohl's estimate, will mean tax increases and budget cuts well into the future.

The attempt to submerge and discredit four decades of national and personal experience (during many of which there was no Wall and many people did support the socialist project) has produced a collective nervous disorder among former East Germans. The citizens of the former German Democratic Republic must act as though every aspect of their life since 1945 has been one vast mistake to be forgotten and purged without trace. Every detail of daily life has been transformed and westernized: citizenship, ruling elites, street names, consumer products. The familiar signposts of daily life—newspapers, television and radio stations, theaters, stores, schools—are all under new, western management.

Even a foreign observer can feel the consequent anguish. The faces of eastern Germans, from S-Bahn riders to waitresses to fired professors, reveal anxiety and disorientation.

They had been born into, and lived in, a society with a rigid ideology and set of values that inculcated anti-individualism and passivity in the face of an all-knowing caretaker state. The German Democratic Republic rewarded those who kept quiet and played by the rules with a paternalist government that provided the necessities of life—jobs, apartments, health care, media, and consumer products. East German Marxism taught that in exchange for commitment to the state and its program, the citizen would get cradle-to-grave protection from the hazards of a market society.

The new reigning ideology of the West Germans,

bringing in much-desired freedom of expression and travel, has also opened the door to the carpetbaggers of individualism, self-promotion, and competition. Between October 1989 and October 1990, one all-encompassing world view replaced another. What was bad—personal accumulation and lack of solidarity—is now the key to survival.

There is no clear solution to the identity crisis, since most former East Germans would not and could not return to the past. A sense of belonging and connection has been severed. The birth nation disappeared on October 3, 1990, replaced by an unfamiliar government, culture, society, and economic system. One former instructor from Berlin's Humboldt University described his crisis of national identity: "I was born into an occupied [the Soviet] zone in 1948; I later became a citizen of the G.D.R.; and now, against my will (because I voted against the reunification), I am a citizen of the Federal Republic."

For a former government functionary, now in his mid-forties, the confusion is generational and political: "I was born in the G.D.R.. I believed in it, worked for it, and, when the time came, I worked to reform it. It no longer exists: I have no country." He believes that the transition will be easier for younger generations whose identity was still in formation at the time of the collapse of the G.D.R. and for the elderly, raised in the old united Germany.

Through a policy of rigid imposition of its model and by generally excluding Easterners from the process, the West German government stokes the flames of the social crisis and deprives Easterners of a sense of control over their own lives. The legal process of unification under Article 23 of the West German Constitution brought the five regions of the G.D.R. into the Federal Republic as separate states, rather than as the accommodation of two sovereign nations. Today they are referred to as "the five new federal states," in order to deny the fact that they had once constituted a separate nation.

The G.D.R. merger with the Federal Republic overwhelmed ideas proposed by the Left in early 1990 for a confederation of the two states or the drafting of a new constitution. This completely delegitimized the G.D.R. and allowed the Kohl government to renege on concessions made during the unification talks and in the unification treaty. The government now claims that the cost of retooling the eastern economy has been so high that the promises to retain social protections from dental care to child care are too costly to be kept.



West German hegemony has become increasingly tangible in the last year. Critics in the East have accused the Treuhand Agency, the West German–dominated trust commission established to sell off former state property, of single-mindedly dismantling eastern industries and of selling them to western monopolies. Ironically, this process echoes the fate of eastern German industries at the end of World War II, when the Red Army dismantled the industrial plant in its zone and exported it to the Soviet Union. Worker buyouts or eastern ownership are so rare as to be inconsequential.

Over twenty-five thousand West German administrators have moved east to run local and regional governments. Three of the heads of state of the "five new lands" are from the west. So many managers at reconstructed eastern firms are from the west that workers in the east now refer to their bosses as "our Wessie."

The grey, drab streets of the East are now dominated by West German and western chain stores. The Kaiser supermarkets, Benettons, and McDonalds tower over the empty shells of the former government shops. Western products, coded as better and trendier, have driven the eastern ones out of the market. One prominent cigarette ad on eastern streets depicts a fashion model offering a lit cigarette to a robot, declaring (in English): "Test the West."

In almost two years since unification, mutual east/west stereotypes have intensified. The Easterners see Westerners as arrogant and condescending, ready to dictate to embattled and impoverished lessers. One group of former East German academics told me that they "could talk to everyone about their problems with the changes—Americans, Dutch, French, other Eastern Europeans—except the West Germans, because they never listen. They have all the answers." The West Germans, on the other

hand, find their new compatriots lazy, naive, and underconfident. As Günter Grass has written, "unified, the Germans were more disunited than ever."

Easterners across the political spectrum refer to their "occupation" and "colonization." Many former East Germans see a consistent attempt to destroy any vestiges of a separate eastern identity. This destruction of distinction and forced adaptation will prolong the pain and cost of unification, leaving disorientation and depression. East Germans live in the no-man's-land between a past they are forced to deny and a present they cannot yet enjoy. Caught between old and new ordering principles, many East Germans find meaning in nationalism.

The general crisis is exacerbated by fear over what level of accommodation to the previous regime will constitute grounds for dismissal. This has divided former colleagues and mitigated against solidarity. Witch-hunts and purges of East German officials and of the extensive secret police, the Stasi, are well-documented and extensively publicized. Firings, accusations, and recriminations continue, producing a new culture of lawsuits and animosities. Some are played out in high tragedy. Earlier this year two professors of social philosophy at the Humboldt University, Michael Brie and Irene Runge, decided to preempt their "political outing" by publicly confessing to past contacts with the Stasi. They were fired, but when the time came to try the cases, no Stasi files could be found. The court reinstated them later, but the university committees refuse to allow them to teach.

The struggle for identity is now a battle over history and representation. The urge to move forward and embrace new realities, while also rejecting the excesses of the past, leads to contestations over street names, monuments, and museums. Should the physical remnants of the G.D.R. be swept away or should some accommodation be made with the past?

Elements in the Kohl government have promoted a policy of associating the G.D.R. with Nazism, thereby authorizing the total suppression of socialist legacies. In East Berlin, the Kaiser-era name of Harkishers Markt replaces the Marx-Engels Platz, and the Lenin Allee is now the Landsberger Allee. In the name of redressing the abuses of the past, the past is eradicated.

Even the Left's historic struggle against fascism has become a political bargaining chip. Since many of the heroes of European and German anti-fascism were communists, purging the communist tradition includes a purge of the Left anti-fascist tradition. In Erfurt, in southwestern Germany, the city government changed the name of Lilo Hermannstrasse, named after the first mother executed by the Nazis, because she was a communist. Only after strident popular protests was a second, much smaller street dedicated to her.

The West is a particularly conscientious victor; the need to impose the new order leaves no stone unturned. Hurriedly, displays and exhibitions in the memorials and museums of eastern Germany are "updated" and "reconceptualized." The state dismantles art collections devoted to the anti-fascist culture of the 1920s and 1930s such as the Otto Nagel Haus in East Berlin because of the artists' association to communism.

At the entrance to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, which imprisoned Jews and political prisoners, a recently posted sign reminds the visitor that with the western victory in the Cold War, we have the prerogative to equate Stalinist crimes with Nazi ones. The Sachsenhausen museum now concludes with rooms discussing the Soviet use of the camp for prisoners of war. Recently, the newly appointed administrator of the memorial outraged a group of French communists who had experienced the Nazi camp firsthand by comparing the camp's uses under the Nazis and the Soviets.

At the concentration camps in East Germany, the displays once emphasized, with obvious heavy-handed political intent, "the people's international struggle against fascism and militarism." New "nonideological" displays have replaced "the forces of reaction, nationalism and militarism" as the evil catalysts of fascism with "the Hitler clique." The new message offers the more restricted interpretation of responsibility for Nazism, which sits more comfortably with the Federal Republic.

The strongest material manifestation of the destruction of the past is the fact that it is up for sale. At the epicenter of the Cold War, the Brandenburg Gate, the artifacts of the defeated are sold as tourist souvenirs. This historical flea market sells the debris of history to eager western tourists. Now, the summer backpacker can go home with his or her very own Red Army uniform. Every imaginable bit of failed past is available for purchase—the currencies of the East Bloc, war and commemorative medals, G.D.R. flags, Lenin statues, old license plates and passports, the constitution of the G.D.R., books on Marx and Engels. This commodification of what was once the stuff of daily life is a particularly powerful reminder to Easterners that their past is devalued. Overnight commodity fetishization of communism proves the power of the market and reduces a people's history to the level of kitsch.

In the last weeks of August 1992, an explosion of right-wing extremist, skinhead, and neo-Nazi violence across eastern Germany riveted the world's attention. The unrelenting violence finally brought home the gravity of the German situation and its implications for stability in central Europe and for the future of European unification. Is the violence a German issue, one tied to

the specificity of German political culture, or a larger and growing turn to national, racial passions in the wake of failed universalist ideas?

What is so disturbing about the situation in Germany is the conflation of the two factors: It is a response to a larger moment of crisis that makes use of forms and languages of protest seen in Germany before. Once again, some Germans want to reconstruct the national community through the deliberate exclusion of others.

During the German reunification debate of 1989–1990, politicians and intellectuals emphasized the need for the new, unified German state to build a progressive national identity based on the successes of the Federal Republic. Jürgen Habermas, who claimed "the citizens of the Federal Republic had developed a non-nationalist self-understanding," wondered how West Germans would sustain the resurrection of the national question. For him, the national identity of the Federal Republic was a "Deutsche Mark nationalism" based on economic prosperity. How would this restrained identity, so disconnected from Germany's imperial and Nazi past, fare in the light of an all-German movement?

Critics of reunification doubted the strength of a German nationalism founded on postwar democratic institutions and the "economic miracle." Yet there is no way around the issue for, as Saul Friedlander has written, West Germans are now reunited "not only with the eastern parts of their country, but with their pasts, with their national myths." The German government's challenge for the next few years is not to pass stricter immigration laws but to find usable national myths that encourage peaceful coexistence.

Meanwhile, destructive nationalism, which binds its followers in shared hatred, has raised its head again in Germany. Between August 24 and the September 7, rightist rioters attacked foreigner asylum-seekers and their hostels in as many as forty clashes in two dozen eastern towns and in a handful of western ones. The violent outbursts began when approximately one thousand youths attacked and burned a hostel in Rostock from which Romanian refugees and Vietnamese guest workers were forced to flee for their lives. Five nights of violence in Rostock produced 250 arrests, 180 police injuries, and a serious political crisis for the new Germany.

Throughout Germany, the numbers of attacks have risen 500 percent in the past year. Since the beginning of 1992 there have been 2,380 recorded crimes of violence against foreigners, including 338 fire-bomb attacks, 219 cases of assault, 1,813 instances of vandalism and 10 deaths. Both German and international observers allot Germany's liberal asylum laws partial blame for the violence—the federal constitution allows anyone fleeing oppression respite in Germany, at government expense, while the validity of the claim is determined. In the first eight months of 1992, 274,000 refugees took refuge in Germany—many times more than in any other European nation. Yet a scaling back of the law, which was originally enacted in 1947 as a counterweight to Nazi racism, is currently being debated in the German parliament. This represents a concession to the criminals and makes the point that hypernationalist violence produces legislative action.

Among the most haunting aspects of the neo-Nazi attacks are the less than reassuring responses of police and local crowds. During the five nights of attacks in Rostock, the police failed to quell the violence and at one point retreated, allowing the youths to set the building ablaze. In Rostock, as many as four hundred townspeople cheered attackers and in some cases hid them from the police. When interviewed by reporters, many of the townspeople explained that, while they are living on government dole, these outsiders are "riding around in taxis."

By attacking foreigners and their asylums, these teenagers attempt to control their social reality. The violence against foreigners relieves the tension of paralysis and provides a tangible enemy against whom to direct anger. Neo-Nazism and right-wing youth extremism represent not so much an articulated political movement as a search for identification and purpose in the face of social breakdown. The Right, as it is so good at doing, offers a national community and a clear delineation of insiders and outsiders. This time, the targets are primarily people of color—Africans, Asians, and Arabs.

A segment of the numerous and various groupings and political parties that compose the extreme Right in Germany do consider themselves explicitly neo-Nazi in ideology. The extreme nationalist and xenophobic Right includes both youth gangs of neo-Nazis and skinheads and established political parties, such as the Republikaner and German People's Union. According to a German Interior Ministry report, 39,800 people identify themselves as extreme right-wing, and 6,300 as neo-Nazis. Of the 4,400 who the Interior Ministry defines as violent skinheads, 3,000 live in the eastern states. The youth gangs, some of whom existed in the last years of the G.D.R., share a loose philosophy of violent nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Leftism. Since the opening of the Berlin Wall and the reunification, West German, European, and American neo-Nazi and extremist groups, including the Klu Klux Klan, have united and formed coalitions with their counterparts in the East. Many of the hard-core members and organizers have traveled from west to east to coordinate the riots.

Reports in the press have focused on a lack of democracy and an authoritarian tradition to explain the skinhead attacks on foreigners. Analyses have asserted that the violence represents youth protest at unemployment and a latent racism and nationalism produced by communism. Although unemployment is an important causal factor in the attacks, it accounts for only part of the problem. The active members of neo-fascist organizations are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, and come from the cities of eastern *and* western Germany. Many of them are socially integrated and not, as is generally assumed, unemployed. The neo-Nazi reaction to the unification crisis is a German problem, not solely an East German one. In the May 1992 local Berlin elections, the far-right Republikaner Party polled 8 percent of the vote in West Berlin and 5 percent in East Berlin, showing that the language of resentment plays well on both sides of the old border.

Since many of the heroes of European and German anti-fascism were communists, purging the communist tradition includes a purge of the Left anti-fascist tradition.

Ten days after the Rostock violence, a broad-based anti-fascist demonstration was held in Rostock. Organized by the western and eastern Left, the march attracted fifteen thousand demonstrators of various stripes, from peace activists to anarchists. They came to Rostock chanting slogans, such as "Stop the Pogrom" and "Stop the Racists." These groups draw on an East German anti-fascist discourse and hope to convince people that the politics of hate are not the solution to the crisis. The resonance of their message remains inconclusive. Without the easy answers available to the Right, the Left is caught in a bind. It must address the anxieties of Easterners while condemning the methods and messages of right-wing extremism.

What remains of the Left in the former G.D.R. has responded to the social crisis by reconstituting itself as the representative of eastern interests and a separate eastern identity. In a climate where none of the former structures exist and people feel themselves without representative institutions, the reformed communist party, the Party of Democratic Socialism, has found a following. During the Berlin elections of May 1992, the PDS polled 32 percent of the city's eastern vote and 7 percent of the western vote.

The PDS's charismatic and popular leader, Gregor Gysi, is committed to shaping the party along western European social democratic and socialist lines. The inheritor of the old communist party has also made itself the protector of eastern and progressive concerns such as women's rights and gay rights. It draws its membership from segments of its historical membership and those searching for a group that will represent a G.D.R. identity.

In the summer of 1992, the citizens of eastern Germany began to organize themselves, under the auspices of ninety-two prominent Easterners from across the political and professional spectrum, such as Stefan Heym and Pieter Michael Diestel (the eastern Christian Democratic leader), into bipartisan Committees for Fairness, in an effort to assert themselves and deal with issues from rent control to property rights. The grass-roots local committees, pledged to defend Easterners in their conflicts with the West, are a sign that resignation and depression can be translated into political and collective action—perhaps a fortuitous legacy of socialism.

Images of Germans shouting "Germany for Germans," "Foreigners Out," and "Sieg Heil" elicit disturbing memories of a not-so-distant German past. Americans—and certainly American Jews—must ask themselves how to respond. How should we make sense of the renationalization of German politics? Do we fall into older fears of Germany or see it as a larger international crisis of tolerance? The recent offer of the German government to help the Romanian government with the resettlement of forcibly repatriated Gypsies raises frightening memories of past deportations. It is imperative to question such policies and call for a visible crackdown on the abusive behavior of the right wing.

The world has spent three years without the Berlin Wall. In these three years, the West, in its triumphalism, has missed an opportunity for self-analysis. What might have been a process of reconsideration for the capitalist West and compromise for the Germans, of addressing eastern concerns and of learning from the failures and successes of their compatriots' experience, has turned instead into conflict.

In his presidential campaign, George Bush celebrated an American, and Republican, victory in the Cold War. But this victory is pyrrhic if the transition from communism to capitalism leads to social reintegration through exclusive and destructive nationalism. If communism is replaced by the lowest common denominator of ethnic or racial nationalism, then democracy will be a long time in coming.

In many ways, the Berlin Wall will stand until Germans, western and eastern, address the important questions of their coexistence and work to channel the search for a common national identity in nondestructive ways. □

Jews and Latinos

Tsvi Blanchard

The headline in the Spanish daily *La Prensa* read: "Hispanic Triumph." The occasion: the victory in the newly drawn Twelfth District of challenger Nydia Velazquez over nine-term congressman Stephen Solarz in the Democratic primary.

Although Solarz attempted to appeal to the district's Hispanic majority on the basis of his seniority in the House and his consequent political clout, the race became an uncomfortable example of "ethnic identity politics," 1992 style. To the Hispanic community, Solarz was an outsider who did not speak their language or share their culture. During his tenure in Congress he had identified himself heavily with Jewish—primarily pro-Israel—issues and had little in his record that bespoke concern for Hispanics. Despite the incumbent's attempts to learn Spanish and his pitch that he could best represent the district, Solarz was cast as a member of the political establishment bent on keeping ethnic newcomers politically voiceless.

During the campaign, the Latino opposition to Solarz unfortunately devolved into friction between the Latino and Jewish communities. Armando Montano, a Hispanic lawyer, gave expression to what must have been, and may still be, on the minds of many Latinos when he was widely quoted as saying, "It is time for the Jewish community to share with the Latino community, because they can't have everything."

Despite the deeply troubling nature of these words, Jews need to empathize with the feeling behind them and focus on what they imply for Jewish-Hispanic relations. They signal that the traditional liberal, ethnically neutral position of the American Jewish community vis à vis its neighbors is too narrow a vision. However well-intentioned Solarz and his supporters in New York and elsewhere—including the English-language *Forward* and the *New Republic*—are, they are profoundly mistaken that alliance building, as usual, is an adequate response to the new ethnic identity-based politics.

Re-envisioning the ethnic dimension of Jewish politics means transcending the universalist/particularist dichotomy that has dominated enlightened Jewish discourse about our place in the world since the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment's vision of a universal humanity guided by reason toward a higher social order captured the imagination of many emancipated Jews of the time, who fled their religious and cultural particularity in search of this more universal identity.

Since the emerging European nationalism that helped end the Middle Ages did not disappear, however, the political concept of the "citizen" represented the compromise between a Europe that was increasingly leaving religious particularism behind, while still retaining regional identities. For Jews, too, mediating positions existed between complete assimilation into "humanity" and isolation. In the countries where it was possible, many Jews opted for the new national identity offered them, knowing that to be French or German was far safer and more profitable than remaining "only" Jewish. Some Jews allied with progressive forces to work for a more humane universal social order. Social democratic Jews advocated, in theory far more than in practice, the coincidence of national identity and a universal moral vision.

In America, Jews found a country far more open and fluid in its categories than those they left behind in Europe. Merit seemed to replace earlier anti-Semitic rules and policies grounded in the inherited privileges of class or clan. Bringing with them the baggage of the Enlightenment, American Jews felt that to be socially liberal meant supporting a society of merit over one where power and opportunity derived from class, race, or religion.

But America's melting-pot ethos has been a double-edged sword for Jews. Many recognize that they have paid a heavy price in meaning for the surrender of their particular identity: while escaping the danger of oppressive conservative nationalism, Jews have been deeply wounded by the consequent loss of their culture and history. Progressive Jews—perhaps the staunchest holdouts for the eighteenth century universalist ideal—are now ready to reconsider the role of ethnic identity in both politics and civil society.

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Particular identities provide the richest context of meaning for otherwise isolated individuals born of modern capitalist and postcapitalist societies. The critically supportive mutuality implied in the notion of "living together" grows within the womb of ethnic and regional institutions. A truly progressive approach must preserve the moral vision of universalism while recognizing the value of particular identities.

Judaism traditionally has valued community. The Mishna puts it directly: Do not separate from the community. Individuals share a common fate and should cooperate to ease life's burdens. The fundamental Jewish commitment to loving kindness (*hesed*) is expressed in myriad acts of comfort and support expected from the community as a whole. Whatever the roles assigned to individuals and families, Jews have also expected the community to provide a structure to ease the vulnerabilities of human existence.

Thus, we meet the world as members of communities. Our identity and self-esteem derive in part from the community to which we belong. At their best, communities offer their members a vision of a well-lived life and the resources to achieve it.

If we wish to retain and encourage the nurturing qualities of particular identities yet prevent them from devolving into the conflicts that historically have accompanied strong ethnic, national, and religious commitments, we can start by reconsidering the concepts of identity and society that previously have shaped the debate. The assumption has been that individual and group identity are fixed and static, each with inherent prejudices and misunderstandings of the "others." In this static model, society is a collection of these fixed identities. Even in such progressive models as Jesse Jackson's "quilt" or New York mayor David Dinkins's "mosaic," the parts do not interact or influence each other; they simply stand side by side.

But the present socio-political realities demand new metaphors and a new approach. Neither individual nor group identities are static—they develop and change over time. And, in a multiethnic society, groups must be able to work together, often in situations in which there are competing needs. Thus, the model of society must be dynamic, the metaphors those of communication and interaction.

In genuine conversation, there is interchange and mutual influence without submersion of individual identity. Drawing on the work of the German philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas, I believe we should seek a progressive, noncoercive model of effective intergroup communication.

In this model, universalism derives not from an empirically given set of shared human characteristics, but from the normative demands growing out of intergroup discussion. Because conservative ethnic and nationalist movements lack the noncoercive mutual recognition of a progressive socio-political "discussion process" that can move us toward universality, they are drawn into violent conflict. To put it simply: They may be able to bargain and negotiate, but they can't really talk to each other.

Jews should reject the "look out for number one" vision of American ethnicity, the conservative canard that if we let "them" in, there won't be room for us.

I want to suggest three values of progressive conversation for the Jewish community in its dealings with other ethnic groups:

•Human dignity. In a progressive discussion, participants leave with their dignity intact. This requires giving everyone an equal voice. For example, we now understand that wealth, property, or literacy should not keep anyone out of the political process. To have dignity is to have a voice.

•Freedom. The heart of conversational freedom is noncoercive discussion. Progressives have long understood that such freedom demands relative equality of opportunity, wealth, or any other endowments that might give one speaker power over another. The histories of union organizing and the feminist movement, for example, have taught us that people are not free to speak their minds or enter the discussion to begin with when they fear the consequences.

•Shared Fate. We talk to one another out of recognition that we live in the same world and share the same fate. For example, it was instructive to watch otherwise competing ethnic groups in New York City come together recently in opposition to the shared threat of an environmentally hazardous incinerator. An ethnicity that constitutes a fortress may seem secure, but it blinds us to our commonality with those on the outside.

The new progressive paradigm for a multiethnic politics must be collaborative, not competitive. In the case of Jewish-Latino relations in New York, the implications are clear. Jews must articulate a vision that assures the Latino community that we refuse to compete for housing, health care, education, and jobs. We need to rewrite the political ground rules: From now on, nobody has enough if somebody doesn't have enough.

(Continued on p. 76)

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The Ritual

Each night of Chanukah we light candles, starting with the *shamas* (used to light the others) and one candle, and then adding one additional candle each night for a total of eight nights. The tradition is to sing, dance, rejoice in our liberation and our freedom.

The traditional blessings over the candles:

All nights:

1. *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu bemitzvotav, vetzivanu, lehadleek ner, shel chanukah.*
(Blessed are you, the force that rules all of existence, who sanctifies us by giving us a way of life directed by holy commandments, and commanded us to light the lights of Chanukah).

2. *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, she'asah nisim la'avoteynu, bayamim hahem, bazman hazeh.*
(Blessed are you, the force that rules the universe, who made possible miracles for our ancestors, in those days, and also makes the same possible for us in our own times).

Add on the first night:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, shehechiyanu, vekee-imanu, veheeg-iyanu, lazman hazeh.
(Blessed are you, the force that rules the universe, who has kept us in life, made us flourish, and made it possible for us to reach this happy occasion).

Now tell the story and do the "Making It Real" exercise described below.

The Story

(The non-mythologized version you may have never heard)

When King Cyrus of Persia allowed the remnants of the ancient tribes of Judah and Benjamin to return from the exile imposed upon them by Babylonian conquerors in the seventh century before the common era (B.C.E.), they formed the kindgom of Judea. As part of the Persian empire, and later as part of the empire of Alexander the Great, Judea had relative autonomy to shape its own internal religious life.

When Alexander died at the end of the fourth century B.C.E., his empire split into three rival factions, and Judea was caught between two of them: the Seleucids centered in Syria and the Ptolemies centered in Egypt. For the next hundred and fifty years these two kingdoms warred, and each sought to incorporate Judea as part of its empire.

Although the battle was largely military, there was an important ideological dimension. Alexander had introduced the Jews to Hellenistic Greek culture—its philosophy, its literature, and its impressive technology and power. Forcibly dragged into the larger Mediterranean world, many Jews could see that "the real world" was dominated by wealth and power. Some Jews, primarily those who lived in and around the larger cities, saw an opportunity to join this larger world by becoming merchants and traders, or by establishing political and economic relationships with others in the Hellenistic empire. It was apparent to these Jews that their tribal religion would have little meaning to those who had conquered the world. The religion of their fathers seemed irrelevant in a world reshaped by the "modern" realities of science; and they were drawn by the allure of a society that worshipped the body and saw reality in terms of what could be tasted, touched, and directly experienced by the senses.

These Jewish Hellenizers saw no point in resisting Greek rule. Their goal was to live in peace with the powers that ran the world. They could benefit from the connection to the expanding trade of the Hellenistic world. On the other hand, the vast majority of the Jewish people were small, independent farmers, who lived on the land and brought its produce to Jerusalem three times each year to celebrate their hard won freedom from slavery, bore the brunt of the oppressive taxes imposed first by the Greeks, and then, alternately, by Seleucids and Ptolemies. These Jews resented foreign rule and detested the city-dwelling elites who seemed to be culling favor with the Hellenistic conquerors, imitating their ways, abandoning the religion of the past, and becoming worshipers at the shrine of political and cultural "reality."

Judea's plight worsened considerably in the early part of the second century with the ascendence to the throne of the Seleucid Antiochus IV. Claiming that he wanted to "protect" Judea from the Ptolemies, Antiochus invaded Judea and marched toward Egypt, where his armies were defeated. He turned back to Judea, and attempted to impose Hellenistic culture by force. He ordered the Temple in Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Greek gods and forbade the practice of circumcision, kashrut, and observance of the Sabbath.

To the already assimilated elites of the city, the new rules were insensitive, but did not constitute a major crisis. Perhaps Antiochus was a boor, but the culture he represented was "happening," while the Jewish religion he forebade was a remnant of the past.

Yet many of the people in the countryside, burdened by Seleucid taxes that expropriated more of their wealth, found the Hellenists' narcissistic fascination with their own power repugnant. The essence of their now-banned religion was its insistence that there was a single God governing the universe who made possible freedom from oppression. It was in the name of that God that they joined a rebellion against the Seleucids under the leadership of a country priest named Mattathias and his five sons (of whom Judah became the most famous, known as "the hammer" or Maccabee).

These Maccabees, as they came to be known, rejected the notion, shared by their contemporary Jewish establishment, that it would be pointless to fight, that one would do best by appeasing the ruling class, learning their language and ways, and accepting their system of oppression. The Maccabees understood Judaism as teaching that "the spirit of the people was greater than the man's technology," or, in traditional Jewish terms, "not by power, and not by might, but by My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."

To fight against superior military force was totally illogical and unrealistic from the Hellenizers' standpoint. But the Maccabees rejected assessments of "realism" that derived from the framework imposed by the imperialists, and drew instead upon the Jewish religion and the stubborn spirit of a people who had come to believe that every hu-

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man being was created in the divine image, hence had a right to be treated with respect and decency. These were people who could not submit to the rule of the imperialist, and whose religion taught them that they need not, because the central power of the universe was a power that rejected the reality of oppression. Their Torah told the tale of their origins in a slave rebellion against another imperialist power thought to be invincible—Egypt of the Pharaohs.

Armed with these stories, the Maccabees and their followers used guerrilla tactics to win the first national liberation struggle in recorded history. In 165 B.C.E. they retook Jerusalem, purified and rededicated the Temple (Chanukah means dedication), and rekindled the eternal light that was to glow therein. The fighting continued many years more, but eventually the Maccabees and their descendents (called Hashmona'im) set up an independent Jewish State.

Unfortunately, that state degenerated as the Hashmona'im tried to become a nation like all other nations, adopting the same perversions of state power that other nations adopted, and becoming "realistic" and hence spiritually and morally corrupt. (Some right-wing Zionists made Chanukah their central observance precisely because they thought Jews could only be secure if they became as ruthless and immoral as everyone else. They did not realize that the whole point is that the victory was made possible because the Jews would *not* accept the logic of everyone else, otherwise they could just assimilate into the Hellenistic world, as so many other peoples did.)

The Rabbis who shaped Rabbinic Judaism, themselves depressed at the defeat of Jewish rebellions against Rome and, aware of the moral degeneration of the Hashmona'im, tried, by focusing on a story about a miracle of a pot of oil that kept the Chanukah lights burning for eight nights, to downplay Chanukah's importance and reframe it into a minor "religious" event. But the Jewish people intuitively recognized that something miraculous had happened. The miracle was this: a critical mass of people had come to recognize that there was a force in the world that made possible the transformation of *what is* to *what ought to be* (the force that we call God, and the recognition that we call revelation). This is what Torah is about and this is why the Jews have been witnesses to God's potential presence in the world. That recognition, when it takes hold of large numbers of people, becomes a manifestation of God's presence, and in that presence "the power of the people" becomes greater than all the technology and manipulations of the most sophisticated forms of oppression.

Making It Real

In the contemporary world, Jews have turned Chanukah into a Christmas clone, trying to give their children and each other gifts to approximate the gift-giving frenzy that has been particularly promoted by the capitalist market. While there's nothing wrong with gift giving (the kids in the TIKKUN community made me point out that they also like this focus), it can become a substitute for confronting the holiday's rich spiritual message: *What is* does not define *what can be*. So don't get discouraged if the craziness and evil in the world seems overwhelming at times, because it can be changed through our activity as partners with God.

What follows is a spiritual exercise that you can try with your family as a way to give this message more immediacy in our lives.

Each evening, pick a theme (like one of those suggested below) in which you allow yourself to imagine how things could be if they were the way they ought to be. Then, tell in detail what would have to happen in order for your vision to actually be made real, and how you might participate in some way in its actualization. Everyone in the family, chavurah, TIKKUN discussion group or salon, circle of friends, or any other group observing the ritual will share his or her answer to the question for the evening.

The First Night: Imagine your life free of the need to accommodate to people with more power than you. How would your life be different?

The Second Night: Imagine your life if in the world of work (for children: the world of school) you could fully use your talents and creativity, your desire to cooperate with others, your sense of humor, and your playfulness.

The Third Night: Imagine your relationship to your parents if it could be the way that you really would want it to be.

The Fourth Night: Imagine the kind of Jewish community you'd like to have, if the Jews were to pray together, do acts of charity and struggle for social justice together, and if in every other way the community supported your highest spiritual, ethical and aesthetic ideals, and did so in a way that was fun and emotionally nourishing.

The Fifth Night: Imagine what your neighborhood would be like if people really connected with each other as caring neighbors. Now imagine what you'd have to do to get others in your neighborhood to talk about what they'd want, and how they'd go about getting it, so that everyone would live in a friendlier and less-alienated neighborhood.

The Sixth Night: Imagine the kind of social change movement you'd like to be part of.

The Seventh Night: Imagine the kind of America you'd like to live in. Now imagine that there was a new president coming to power whose agenda had not yet been totally set. Imagine what you could do, together with others, to help influence the direction being taken, and to strengthen the voice of those who seemed to be pushing in the same direction and sharing parts of your vision.

The Eighth Night: Imagine what the world might look like if it were to embody the principles that you'd like to see actualized in the world.

Each night: Share your vision with others and listen (without criticizing) to theirs. Then rejoice and sing praises to the God of Israel who makes a world in which our visions may yet become the reality.

Try these exercises and you will see how Chanukah can have a different focus than a mere fixation on who has received the best presents.

Please reproduce this and encourage friends to use it as a guide for constructing their own meaningful Chanukah observance. And urge them to subscribe to TIKKUN magazine, so that we get the support we need to continue to develop ideas for how to deepen Jewish observance. To subscribe: send $31 to Tikkun, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619. *Written by Michael Lerner, editor of* TIKKUN, *in memory of his beloved mother, Beatrice I. Hirschman Lerner.*

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ROUNDTABLE

Nationalism and Ethnic Particularism

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Editor: There has been a renewed outcry against ethnic particularism in the light of ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe and in Somalia. It's not unusual to hear, particularly in liberal and progressive circles, calls for a renewed commitment to universal values that can transcend all the narrow particularisms that some say crawled out of the woodwork in recent years. Yet the call for international solidarity may seem jarring to some, because the academic defenders of liberal and progressive social change movements have spent so much of their intellectual energies in the past couple of years challenging the possibility of any universal standards. Theorists in women's studies, African-American studies, and deconstructionists in literature and the social sciences have argued for the primacy of particularity and perspectival views of morality, and for a theory of incommensurability of discourse that suggests that every ethical claim is merely the articulation of the needs and interests of a particular group or ethnic tradition. By implication, those who speak from their particular perspective, for example, white males in the West, have no basis from which they could possibly articulate a universal moral critique of anyone else's behavior. Given that approach, originally articulated as an attempt to protect minority cultures and women from the hegemonizing power of male discourse, but now increasingly an impediment to the possibility of forming any universal moral perspective, what exactly do liberals and progressives have to contribute to the discussion of national conflicts in the world today?

Michael Walzer: I want to put forward three theses related to the politics of particularism:

1. Particularist identities and the commitments and passions that go with them are simply a fact of human life, whatever we decide to think about them.

2. The political expression of this particularism can be repressed or controlled, and has been pretty successfully controlled by imperialist and authoritarian regimes. National and religious communities can live quietly and peacefully when they are ruled by imperial bureaucrats or by disciplined agents of a vanguard party.

3. Men and women of the Left can't endorse that kind of a rule. So we have to look for political ways of accommodating the particularist realities; and that, it seems to me, should be the topic of this discussion, and not the value of this or that particular identity or even the value of particularist identities in general.

Jean Bethke Elshtain: I just returned from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. What I was told was that these countries faced for decades communist regimes that used nationalistic rhetoric when it suited their interests. Nationalism was not suppressed but encouraged within this framework. These regimes fueled nationalist sentiments and even anti-Semitism when it was useful for their purposes.

I would distinguish between ethnic nationalism and what I would call civic patriotism that emphasizes citizenship, universalist in the sense that everyone can become part of the civic identity without effacing their own particular identities.

Gail Kligman: I am troubled about the notion that what we are facing in Eastern Europe is the reemergence of a kind of inevitable set of ethnic conflicts. Ethnic identities were always manipulated by Party elites, not suppressed while some kind of international or "socialist" identity was being constituted.

Nationalist discourses are always manipulated by elites; we need to pay attention to the internal dynamics of power interests. In Eastern Europe, anti-Semitism was so manipulated, and so too other ethnic hatreds—e.g., in Romania, a hatred of Hungarians, Gypsies, etc. Ceausescu spent years nurturing nationalist feelings and fears—often suggesting to his people that the Russians were massing on one of their borders and the Hungarians on another; this was an effective mobilization tactic for regime support, at least initially.

Many in the West have paid too much attention to *official* rhetoric and not enough attention to actual practices. *Too many* ignored the way that particularism was

in fact a part of the everyday lives of most people in those allegedly homogenized societies.

Bogdan Denitch: Some people who discuss the issues of ethnic particularism and nationalism mix up legitimate ethnic pride with the murderous, manipulated right-wing chauvinism that we witness today in many parts of Eastern Europe. They are treating this chauvinism as if it were some variant of democratic, nineteenth century Mazzinian nationalism. But what we are seeing is not that, but rather "blood and soil" nationalism and you cannot sign on.

In the case of the former Yugoslavia, the nationalists are quite clear: you cannot opt to become a Croat or a Serb, you have to be that by blood. They are intent on creating states that are states of the dominant national group that exclude others or that render the minorities second-class citizens. *Any* yielding to that on the part of democrats or people on the Left is a *major* mistake. There will be hundreds of thousands, if not millions, dead before this issue gets straightened out.

I don't believe that the nationalism we are seeing sprung up organically from the masses who were just waiting for the opportunity to get at each other's throats. I think it was manipulated nationalism, first by the communist elites, and now by the post-communists who can only attempt to manipulate these kinds of feelings since they have nothing else to offer in the current catastrophic economic situation.

I believe that there are universal ideals like human rights—and I reject any view that suggests that these are merely white, male, or Western. Human rights and democracy are not particularistic ideas, they are fought for all around the world, and there are universal attempts by local elites to suppress these ideas and to impose right-wing dictatorships as an alternative. Human rights are more important than a politics of identity. But a politics of identity, as long as it doesn't mobilize the resources or power of the state, is okay. But that's not what we are talking about in Eastern Europe—we are talking about nationally based states who do use the power of the state, and that's different.

Todd Gitlin: I agree with Michael Walzer that particularist identities are a fact of life, and I'm not sure there has ever been a form of life in which that hasn't been true. But universal aspirations, beliefs that one belongs to all humanity, are also a fact of life. The mission of the Left is to look for, call attention to, and insist on commonalities that cross particularist tribal or national boundaries. The Left is a boundary crosser. In a world in which the centrifugal forces of separation are rampant, a world in which those separate identifications often become lethal, at the very least because they are manipulated from above, it behooves us to insist upon the universal condition, and to do so in all circumstances, whether we are in the big tribe or the small tribe, whether we are facing tribes that are most recently ruthless or tribes whose ruthlessness was manifested further back in history.

It's the mission of the Left in particular to overcome all these forms of hatred and ruthlessness. That entails stating and holding to a common standard in two respects: first, it requires a commitment to human rights as a prerequisite to a civic patriotism that transcends the boundaries of one tribe and insists among all tribes that coexistence is the prerequisite of civilization. Second, the Left must promote the recognition that the world is interdependent, both socially and ecologically. This is a central universal fact: that all peoples share one earth and we are facing a common condition.

Marshall Berman: Several things strike me. One is that connected to the surge of particularist politics is an explosion of aggressiveness, rage, and liberation from the superego—"we don't have to listen to you anymore, we don't care what you think, to hell with you." There's a tremendous exhilaration in saying those kinds of things to people who seemed to have the power to define what is "rational speech" and "rational behavior" for the society; a position that gives the definer a certain kind of power. On the other hand, when someone says "It's a Black thing, you can't understand it," that claim is meant to be understood. A lot of the discourse of "your language is incommensurable with mine" is actually meant to be commensurable; it is, in fact, a reaching out to the other while simultaneously denying the possibility of doing so, a reaching out for the humanity of others that it simultaneously denies. That's the good side.

One of the things that I noticed when I read a rant from a West Bank settler and then compared it with a rap from a young Black man in Los Angeles is how sexy they both sounded. I think the Left has to find a way to make humanism sexy. What's the way? There's actually some pretty sexy humanism in Jewish tradition: for instance, if we imagine Isaiah's animals as signifying different races or types of human beings, there's his vision of the wolf and the lamb and the leopard and the calf and the lion and the kid all "lying down together": or take Second Isaiah's vision of an "open city" where the gates stay open all night, where all the peoples are gathered together, where the wealth of nations never stops pouring in. These are pretty good images to nourish our imagination. But we can find this imagery actually embodied in the flesh, if we check out the crowds in any American metropolis today. Take a walk on Broadway—or at your best local mall—some Saturday or Sunday afternoon, and look at the families out shopping: you'll



see men and women of every color and complexion with their arms around each other and their children in strollers or carried on their backs; and look at those kids, they are bringing new colors and complexions never seen or even imagined into the world. For anyone who can see and feel, this is one of the sexiest sights of the late twentieth century. (This is what Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever* was supposed to be about, but its pregnancy was aborted.) I believe that one of the primary human rights is the right to belong to a family like this. One of the nicest things about America today, maybe even *the* nicest thing, is its capacity to incubate and nurture millions of multiracial and multinational families. Green lines violate this right and stifle this capacity; I know there are times and places where we have to live with them, but I don't think the Left should promote more green lines or see them as anything but a desexualization and emptying-out of life.

Denitch: One of the problems that gets in the way of some Jews thinking clearly about these issues is their confusion between the problems associated with Zionism and the quite different problems emerging in Eastern Europe. It is as if Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia all happened to be asserting now the right of return. I happen to think that there are special reasons why that right makes some sense in the case of Israel, but it makes no sense in the case of Eastern Europe where I am for states being states for all their citizens, not just for one national grouping. In Croatia a third generation Croat who lives in Australia or New Zealand and doesn't speak the language today is being given the right to vote in the Croatian election, whereas a Moslem, Albanian or Serb who has lived all his or her life in Croatia may or may not get a citizenship. This cannot be what a democratic polity is about.

Editor: The argument that each of these groups makes is that the reason that members of their own national groupings now live outside the country is the result of past oppression by one or another of the other national groupings in the area.

Denitch: The whole area has had emigration. I do not think that there was national oppression in the former Yugoslavia for any group except the Albanians—except communist oppression, but that wasn't focused on nationality.

Editor: Each of the groups has memories that go far beyond a hundred years—and each of those groups can point to historical moments in which they were in fact victims to the imperializing tendencies of some of the other groups.

Denitch: All nationalists make the claim that their nation is the martyred nation. In the case of Poland and in the case of Ireland they use Catholic iconography to bolster this sense of martyrdom—but these are used in antidemocratic ways.

Editor: Can't there be truth to these claims, and can't there be legitimacy to the desire to want some redress, without these claims or desires necessarily being antidemocratic?

Denitch: I don't think an average Pole, Croat or Irishman suffers today for what was done in the eighteenth century—I think that perception is merely an illusion, but it is an illusion that makes these people act in hurtful ways and sometimes kill others. I do not think national oppression centuries ago justifies murdering people who weren't even born or whose ancestors weren't even around when this occurred. This mythology of the past functions as a killer today.

Editor: Absolutely. But it may be that jumping to various internationalist or universalist positions may not work until each national tradition is willing to publicly own up to the pain that it has caused others as well as the pain it has received from others, to validate the pain that it has caused others, and mourn its own pain. Without working through the past, the pains may continue on an unconscious level, transmitted from generation to generation, and become the focus through which the anger people are feeling today about living in social arrangements that prevent a deeper connection between them gets expressed. That is, since there are no contemporary social movements that can embody and express people's deepest desires for connection with each other, the anger and alienation that is central to daily life gets expressed in this perverse way, because the community within which one lives seems to legitimate the expression of anger at the "other"—who can now be seen as the embodiment of the historical forces that have prevented us from achieving the kind of nonalienating social life that we seek.

Kligman: Historical memory is very selective and is *readily reinterpreted* by elites. Take a look at Bosnia where mixed populations were living side by side *reasonably enough*—and now they are slaughtering each other. Not to romanticize prewar life at the local level, relations were constantly negotiated, contested, etc. But people do not live simply in harmony. There are tensions that erupt into violence in nonethnically mixed villages. In the case of mixed populations, cultural difference enables "otherness" and "identity" to be more sharply differentiated. This is where the politics of culture comes into play. Some of what has happened in Bosnia is fueled by the ongoing manipulation of the past in the service of present political interests of diverse elites.

Denitch: A mythic past!

Kligman: A mythic past, and one which is embedded in *cultural* practices about the dead, lineages, "obligations" to the dead. Bogdan spoke of blood ties—ties that bind. There is a saying in the Balkans that blood ties are thicker than milk ties. Anyway, the past informs the present, to be sure, but the past is also interpreted through the lens of the present.

Editor: If it's so easy for people to live together, why has it become so easy for ruling elites to manipulate these antagonisms? Why should it be so easy for people to be moved into these feelings of hate?

Denitch: It wasn't easy. It took at least five years for the Milosevic regime to get things to the point where fighting occurred. There were massive demonstrations against it; 85 percent of the young men in Belgrade refused to serve in the army during the war in Croatia. There was hardly massive support for the desire to kill. Over a hundred thousand young people from Croatia and Serbia now live in the greater New York region in order to get out of the conflict. In fact, fighting between Croats and Serbs in that area only occurred during World War II—it's *not* the case that these people have been killing each other for centuries. They've actually been living in peace. In Croatia the right-wing nationalists did *not* win a majority; and since they took power they've been banning independent newspapers precisely because it's not easy to get people to agree with their policies. The Bosnian majority too was actually opposed to ethnic strife. It doesn't take a majority to create ethnic strife: the IRA in Northern Ireland was a small minority, but it managed to polarize the whole society. There's some kind of myth that there's some biological urge in Eastern Europe that makes people want to cut each other's throats, but that just isn't true.

Walzer: These people lived together peacefully under Ottoman bureaucrats, Hapsburg bureaucrats, and communist bureaucrats. The question we have to face is whether the kind of peace that allows for this living together can survive democratization. I don't think it can unless there is also separation, division, some new political recognition of difference.

The great multinational empires, in which different ethnic or religious groups lived together and which we

now remember rhapsodically, were authoritarian structures. Sure, different groups lived together in one village—but that was when they were ruled by someone else, and neither ethnic group had the upper hand. When those authoritarian structures are shattered, we may have to draw boundaries between the different groups. You can hope to make it not a hard line but a dotted line on the map, you can hope eventually for boundary crossings of various sorts, but *first* you've got to draw some lines.

Berman: Walzer's point also suggests to me that there may be some conflict at times between the principle of self-rule and the principle of human rights. If self-rule means that you have to constitute yourself as a Serb or a Croat or an Israeli or a Palestinian, that may lead to a conflict between those who draw such lines and others who don't want to be part of those kinds of boundary lines at all.

I have a student who is part Serb, part Croat, part Jewish and part Gypsy. Such people are in trouble as the world gets divided according to these kinds of boundaries.

I don't think many people's identities are adequately described by these nationalist categories. As individuals people are procrustean beds of complexity.

Gitlin: Michael Walzer is more emphatic about the tragic fact of tribalism than about the possibility of accommodating tensions within a common frame. He offers us terrible either/ors: either partitioning—at its worst, multilateral ethnic cleansing—or imperial universalism at bayonet point. While I accept the tragic view of society that acknowledges that people have long, bloody memories that elites know well how to stoke, and that they are lying there ready to be stoked, embers always red, I also think that the blessings of the partitioned life are overshadowed by the potential curse. The main curse today is warlordism, from balkanized campuses to balkanized elites to balkanized Balkans.

Editor: But on Walzer's position, that problem exists because we don't have good boundaries.

Denitch: There have never been good boundaries.

Gitlin: That's just it—everyone has a claim to different boundaries. Some people were nomadic, so it was false to enclose them in a boundary in the first place. Other people have sometimes been on one side of a boundary, sometimes on another. Irredentism seems to me to be a fool's game.

Berman: One of the great delusions of the nineteenth century was the notion of "natural frontiers."

Walzer: I don't want to be saddled with ethnic cleansing or even necessarily with any commitment to the idea of partition. I am open to any arrangement or pattern of accommodation that works on the ground. If you can get away with decentralization, or regional autonomy or cultural autonomy in some functionalist setup, that's fine. Partition only when there is no alternative. And I think it's important to insist that even when there is partition that we don't give up our interest in the awful things that may go on across the boundary that we have just drawn. The German decision to recognize the Croatians without insisting that they first guarantee the rights of their own minorities was a terrible mistake. The international community has to sustain an interest on both sides of the lines that it draws.

Elshtain: By pointing out that order between minorities was maintained by unjust rule, you have to put to yourself another important issue: which is the higher political good, order or justice? We have to provide for the expression of "wounded identities" while hopefully taming and chastening them with universal aspirations. There are people in each of these spots around the world who do emphasize constitutionalism and human rights—and they are not without a space to speak in these new nations.

Berman: But they are without guns.

Editor: Perhaps what we are suggesting, then, is that we are committed to holding universal principles which limit what we allow people to choose democratically.

Gitlin: Exactly. Consider the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These are principles that limit the prerogatives of nation-states. This is potentially a thrilling moment in world history, a moment when the prerogatives of superpowers have been dampened. There are institutions in place, particularly the World Court, and occasionally the United Nations–organized policing operations, which have both legitimacy and power to enforce the rights of minorities against tyrannical majorities, or the rights of small nations against larger ones, or of distinct national groups against those who would deny them. As we inch towards the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and then the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, there is an opportunity to change the discourse about what is possible on a global scale. One could start to imagine the creation of institutions that would counter the worst depradations of nationalism. It is exciting that when ethnic groups and political prisoners are being assaulted or tortured virtually anywhere in the world, or rain forests and other ecologically sensitive sites are being threatened,

the world now knows about it, and hence cannot pretend not to know. It is horrible that what happened in Yugoslavia happened, but the universal knowledge of violations may be the precursor of some kind of institutionalized commitment to stop all this and defend the rights of embattled minorities.

Editor: You are made happy because there is someone to intervene externally, perhaps an international force that replaces the imperial forces that Walzer referred to as having previously established world order and peace between groups. But once one has such an empowered intervener in the lives of each society, do you worry that they might intervene in ways that you might not like (e.g., in the case of Israel, intervening in ways that accorded with the view of Third World countries that saw Israel as more one-sidedly a human rights violator than we, who support the Israeli peace movement, but also see the one-sidedness of some of the critiques of Israel)? What if the "higher rational" force that you look to to intervene is really just a bunch of human beings, with all the normal sets of interests and irrationalities, but now empowered in the name of justice to enforce their own particular views and their own particular interests?

Gitlin: I don't mean to suggest that the world is yet ready for some kind of super-court. But I do think that a somewhat more empowered World Court, empowered on the basis of the Universal Declaration, is something that we ought to be moving towards, though not at one stroke. There have to be safeguards, and, in the worst case, there remains the force of civil disobedience. I know that there are tremendous difficulties—but I think we should take the difficulties as part of a conversation that the world needs to be involved in, the conversation about how constitutionalism and rights-liberalism can be strengthened, recognizing that there are going to be obstacles and built-in limits, but we don't know where those limits are going to be.

Walzer: I'm not sure that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the right basis. It is enormously detailed and far longer than the American Bill of Rights. If you think seriously about the historical prerequisites and sociological entailments of all the rights on that list, I think you have to conclude that the only form of life or political regime that that document would legitimate is Western liberal democracy, *our* form of life. Everything else would be ruled out.

We need a much more minimal conception of universalism which would enable us to respond to ethnic cleansing or genocide or religious persecution or enslavement. But within the limits set by some kind of minimalism, there are going to be a lot of different kinds of regimes in the world. There are going to be nation-states and multinational states and federations and unions of different sorts, and they will have different degrees of state neutrality and different ways of recognizing and supporting ethnic and religious traditions. That is part of what I think a decent minimalism has to accommodate. Certainly, it will rule out ethnic cleansing and genocide, but it's going to allow a range of practices of the sort that might be offensive to some of us, for example the kinds of practices that accompany the creation of an Islamic republic in Iran.

An Islamic republic could not conceivably meet the requirements of the Universal Declaration, but so long as it does not persecute the Bahai and Zoroastrians and Christians and Jews who live there and grants them a minimal set of rights to their own cultural life, we probably should be prepared to recognize its legitimacy.

Berman: There is a wide public that doesn't want to see other people killed and that worries about people in Somalia or Bosnia—and these feelings are the basis for some commitment to universal human rights. The mass media has made it much harder to hide mass murder—and that could be a source of progress for this minimalist agenda. I feel optimistic about the fact that a lot of people care about people with whom they have absolutely no ethnic links, but they don't want to see them killed.

Kligman: To make this more concrete, perhaps we should be considering "preventive intervention" in Macedonia, for example, to forestall the kind of bloodshed that seems likely to erupt there in the near future. Is there a role for "symbolic peacekeeping" in this period of radically global restructuring that would also redefine the roles and authority of international institutions (e.g., UN, NATO, CSCE, etc.)? Might these international bodies invoke the minimal universalist principles as the source of their authority to act? How can such principles be elevated beyond interest politics without institutional authority? Might this be an aspect of redefining the "world order," reconstituting it as a "new world order?" Presently, past and familiar practices continue to be used in response to unfamiliar, new and highly disordered, circumstances.

Elshtain: Let's assume that we accept Michael Walzer's conception of a minimalist universalism; i.e., accept regimes that are organized in ways that we wouldn't wish them to be organized. But we may have to rethink the grounds of intervention. Walzer's book *Just and Unjust Wars* makes the argument that aggression is the one clear crime that a state can commit against another state that

justifies intervention, say, a border crossing of a violent sort. But we are talking about things here, as in the case of the former Yugoslavia, within the borders of a state, that nevertheless violate basic, fundamental norms that we want to nourish in international society. So it raises the possibility of intervention to protect some basic human rights, e.g., the right not to be killed and not to be tortured because of one's race, religion or historic identity. So we may be facing a world of more need for intervention in the name of human rights.

Gitlin: You are right about the dilemma: we can't wriggle away from it with the kind of rigid isolationism that has been adopted in certain quarters of the Left. I opposed the Gulf War, yet I was very uncomfortable with the way that some of the people who opposed that war settled for moral isolationism. I think the collective security framework was the correct one within which to debate whether the war was wise.

Of course, when we think of collective security, the principle of regional responsibility ought to be taken more seriously—so I wish that this discussion was happening in Europe.

Walzer: I agree with Gitlin and Elshtain that intervention looms large now in Europe, though the issue of intervention in the Third World has loomed large for a long time. Tanzania to stop Idi Amin, for example, or Vietnam against Pol Pot in Cambodia. What's new now is simply that it's happening in Europe, where we didn't think that humanitarian interventions was going to be an issue ever again.

Editor: Why the interventions that you mention, but not interventions in an Islamic fundamentalist society that takes away all rights from women and puts them in prison for exercising what we consider basic human rights in the West? Why draw the line at the denial of the rights of women?

Walzer: It would make a big difference if the denial of the rights of women in Iran was taking place against the background of opposition by the majority of women, and if they were engaged in a struggle against the regime, and if the regime was murdering and torturing them, then, yes, intervention would be justified. But we all know that the Iranian revolution was carried out with overwhelming support from the women of Iran and that has got to count for something.

Editor: What about the case of Algeria if a majority voted in Islamic fundamentalism but a sizable minority of women opposed it, and fought against it because it was going to deny them rights that we in the West take for granted?

Walzer: A lot would depend on the quality of the repression. There is no way to quantify it. Our comrades in Algeria will be those men and women resisting an Islamic fundamentalism, but whether we would be prepared to invade the country to assist our comrades is going to depend on what exactly their situation is.

Elshtain: It's simply impossible to come up with an abstract yardstick for intervention. There is a difference between people being rounded up and massacred and people being told that they need to wear the chadorra which, for many Iranian women does not seem to violate their rights.

Gitlin: When western women have denounced cliteridectomy at international conferences, some Third World women have told them to mind their own business.

Elshtain: There are practices that *we* find abhorrent, cliteridectomy being one. Western feminists have made a strong issue of it, and the women from societies that practiced it told them that this was *their* issue which they would deal with in their own way over time, it was a custom in the hands of women and enforced by women and would be changed as they saw fit. In those circumstances you keep making your own case. Arguments travel in the kind of world we have today—and in some cases that may be the best we can do. Yet in other cases some kind of military intervention may be demanded—if there are massacres or genocide.

Editor: Ought we not acknowledge that some manifestations of nationalism and ethnic particularism embody pathology? People's daily lives are filled with pain and frustration, and their attention is diverted from the pain through the creation of a fantasized community—the "nation" or "the people" or "the church"—that does little to change the social relations that caused the pain in the first place. So national or religious traditions may sometimes serve the purpose of turning people's attention away from the ways that their real needs are not being met in the actually existing social order in which they live.

Walzer: Beyond the family and neighborhood, all communities are imagined—but there are better or worse forms of imagined communities. Insofar as I value political relationships that are relatively communal in form, warm but not overheated, I would want to work for ways to connect reality to the imagined reality, and to overcome the alienation between the two, but I don't think

we will ever escape the need for imagination in our understanding of our relationship with others. The ties that bind me to someone in Tennessee or California more closely than to someone in Mozambique or China are imaginary ties—they have to be evoked, they reflect a certain history in which I've been socialized, they reflect the holidays of a specific calendar, the rituals and ceremonies of American political life. We make it more real if we make America something more like a participatory democracy, but it's never going to be as real as my relationship with the people who live next door.

Gitlin: As the world gets more complicated and intricate, there are plenty of other relationships that make claims on us beyond, and sometimes against, the claims of family and neighborhood. I feel closer to some people with foreign citizenship than to some who share my own national citizenship. One thing that is developing is what Charles Nathanson calls a global civil society that is self-contradictory, unevenly developed, but felt to be as real as the more formal bonds of political citizenship. And in many ways this is auspicious. The fact that hundreds of thousands of people around the world are willing to write letters to one dictator or another at the behest of Amnesty International to oppose unjust jailings is another sign of this, as well as what Benedict Anderson calls "fax internationalism," say, with respect to repression in China.

Editor: The talk here is very different from that of those on the Left who support a form of particularism that insists on noncommensurability of discourse, a particularism that challenges universal values.

Gitlin: When you said particularism, I thought you might be saying "protectionism," and that is exactly what we are opposing: the notion that one has no other obligation but that imposed by one's primary tribe. All of us have embraced a meddlesome ideal: alongside our ethnic, religious, and gender identities there is a transcendent identity, a membership in humanity, and part of what we honor in the American ideal is the idea of rights that are inalienable. So we are intrinsically interested in the contact between different groups, so while difference is real and should be honored, so is commonality real and to be honored. We should be very careful before granting supreme powers to any particular identity unit.

Every once in a while something happens that makes one remember why tribalism is fierce: I tuned in to the World Series and I saw the Atlanta fans performing the "Tomahawk Chop" and I immediately imagined the public reaction if a team from Germany, say, calling itself "the Düsseldorf Jews," had a ritual of public davening or waving dollar bills. So Indians have a total right to be horrified and to feel that this is abominable. But it is not just up to Indians to protest this—it is incumbent upon us as Jews to protest it, for the ADL to protest it, for the NAACP to protest it. It's important while defending the rights and dignity of one's own tribes, to think about what is owed to the peoples of other tribes—and that is a thought that has been submerged with the fascination with particularism. That concern separates most of the people in this discussion from the focus of many of those on the Left or so-called Left in recent years.

Elshtain: I do think we are talking about a so-called Left. There is a particular kind of academic politics that claims the mantle of the Left, but I don't think that it deserves that designation. It strikes me as not a particularly liberal idea to talk about incommensurability—it's a kind of resegregation. With that way of thinking we are suddenly given permission to not engage one another: we can issue manifestoes, but we are not required to engage one another. But what we are talking about here is the necessity of engagement.

I've fought all my life against the notion that there is a particular way that women are supposed to think *qua* women; and now we are hearing that very idea in the name of one brand of feminism. There's a notion today that my identity is exhausted by my gender. My view of feminism is one that says that our identity is not totally defined by our gender, though our gender may be the ground of our identities. There are many situations in which I have more in common with a male political philosopher of good will than I have with a feminist of a certain kind of ill will preaching this kind of exclusivity and teaching the notion of male as the ineradicable "other" with whom I can have nothing in common. This is a completely anti-democratic idea. Democracy requires that we can and do engage each other as citizens, a category that makes it possible to engage in alliances with diverse groups of people depending on what the issue is in any given instance.

We get disempowered from making the kind of case that we need to help shape a humane international community if we align ourselves with those tendencies on the academic Left that have advocated the kind of brittle exclusivity I've been describing. We can't have it both ways.

Kligman: I agree with Elshtain. Identity is not "fixed," nor biologically determined. Exclusivity excludes, contradicting fundamentals of democratic ideals and practices. Engagement is a critical term here. The "so-called" Left must re-engage not only with itself, but with others as well. □

Sport, African Cultures, Value For Money: A Return to South Africa

Jenefer Shute

As the plane begins its descent into Johannesburg, I struggle with the arrival form, finding its blank squares—just so many letters per answer—as good a place as any to pose the problem. **Country of Birth:** South Africa. **Country of Citizenship:** the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. **Country of Residence:** the United States of America. That about sums it up: citizen (through paternity) of a place I have never lived, nonresident in my native land, and resident where I'm neither native nor citizen.

But the question I can't answer comes next. **Main Purpose of Visit?** I hesitate—**Holiday?** well, I hope to enjoy the landscape this time; **Business/Professional?** I carry my laptop like a shield—but then I check **Visiting Friends/Relatives.** It is only half-true. Relatives, yes (my entire immediate family awaits me) but there aren't any friends left, after thirteen years away.

What motivated you most to visit South Africa? the form then wants to know. **None of Your Business** isn't on the list; neither are **Political Change, Guilt, Nostalgia** (more precisely, the nostalgia for nostalgia), or **Intimations of Mortality.** I waver between **Friends/Family** and **Previous Visits,** then check the latter, though that twenty-two-year previous visit was what drove me to leave.

(The other options, by the way, are **Climate, Scenic Beauty, Sport, African Cultures, Value for Money.**)

At 7:45 a.m., July 16, 1991, the jet touches down on the African earth. All I can see from the window is the lion-colored winter grass.

I thought I would cry but I don't.

I try to feel something appropriate to the occasion, but what do you feel when you are about to step back into a reviled and imaginary land? You don't feel anything; you're afraid your ghost-foot will slip through the dream-earth into the past.

Two weeks later, on the waterfront in Cape Town, I'm taking a short cut through a parking lot when a man sticks his head out of a van and, in the thick jazzy local accent, shouts "Hallo sweetie, long time no see!" For a moment, I wonder how he knows.

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My two-year-old nephew, whom I have never seen, toddles out, smiling and trusting, from under the guardrail that cordons off the arrival area, so, crouching instinctively, he is the one I kiss first. Then, so he won't feel neglected, I kiss his shyer four-year-old brother, familiar from photographs that somehow failed to capture the little-old-man quality I sense now. Then my sister, whom I have seen once in these thirteen years, before her incurable illness was diagnosed. Then my mother, then my father, both of whom I saw in London in 1983 and 1987. I suffered the shock of their aging then; are they suffering the shock of mine now?

Nobody cries. That is the way we are.

As we walk out to the car, Durban's damp subtropical air fingers my face with a remembered feel. It is an hour's drive from the Durban airport to my parents' house in Pietermaritzburg, a sleepy mid-sized Victorian town in the province of Natal. I have never lived there: they moved there after I left home, left Johannesburg for the University of Cape Town (stormed away, more accurately, in seventeen-year-old self-righteousness). Hyperalert, I strain my eyes staring out of the car window. Nothing looks familiar, but nothing looks strange either; I don't recognize anything, but it all seems normal, unremarkable, the way the light and colors of a foreign country never do at first.

On the roadside, near a sign for the Lions River Polo Club, Black women are cutting the long dry grass to thatch their huts.

I have never seen my parents' house. It could be anyone's: small, neat, anonymous, not in the best of taste. I don't recognize a single thing, which frightens me. Gradually, over the next week or so, I begin to recover odd objects: a battered tea tray, a blue-and-white creamer, a china figurine of two lovers. But they're just objects, old, recognizable, long-lost; they carry no charge of association.

What will? I wonder, having hoped for instant epiphany.

Weeks later, in Johannesburg, the taxi turns a corner and there before me is a curve of road where, I realize, accidents still happen in my dreams.

Dora, my mother's Zulu maid, is washing dishes in the kitchen when my mother introduces me, the legendary daughter from America. I confuse and embarrass her by trying to shake her hand (it is wet, she can't think what to dry it on).

The tone my mother uses to speak to her—slow, deliberate, over-enunciating, as if to a child—is painfully familiar, and, when I hear it again, I begin to recall where my politics come from.

Dora is raising six children alone on $125 a month. Her grown son, laid off from the mines, works one day a week in the garden.

She calls me "Nkosikaan": princess.

I ask her not to and merely add to her humiliation as she stumbles, tongue-tied, over my first name, which she cannot quite bring herself to say.

There is cake and champagne, flowers, gifts, talk, a daylong effort to impersonate a family rather than the collective hallucination we feel ourselves to be. That night, when I go to bed in the guest room, I hug against me the hot-water bottle that my mother, not knowing how else to offer comfort, has insisted upon.

I have never felt lonelier in my life.

My parents, the privileged ones, live in a cage. The entire house is barred, with metal grilles on the doors and windows that have to be locked and unlocked every time anyone passes through, even a child going into the garden to play. When we leave for the day or the evening, it takes at least fifteen minutes to close up the house, with an elaborate ritual of shutting windows, securing the metal gates, turning on lights and radios. My mother also locks the drawers against Dora's (alleged) depredations. What she dreads is not, as one might expect, ANC or Inkatha guerrillas rising from her nightmares to claim what is theirs: it is common-or-garden burglary, assault. Her every thought twists back to some threat, some news report of neighbors whose houses have been broken into, who have been bound, raped, shot. The image of her own victimization thrills and obsesses her.

There is, in fact, a high rate of violent crime against white suburban householders in Pietermaritzburg, as in South Africa as a whole. The surrounding Black townships have, in fact, been the site of some of the most gruesome clashes between Inkatha and the ANC. But what my mother suffers from, I realize, is paranoia. An empty paper bag on the street is enough to scare her.

After a while it begins to infect me too.

I have lived alone all over the world, had close calls in strange cities, bolted my own door in Boston. Like other women, I manage most of the time to keep my fear at a subliminal, background-radiation level. But after a week in Pietermaritzburg, returning from dinner one night, I unlock the metal gate and am suddenly too frightened to go in.

In the bookstore, *Time* and *Newsweek* sit next to *Mayibuye,* journal of the ANC, which in turn sits next to *Shooting Times.* In the suburbs, houses cower behind high walls adorned with barbed wire, icons of attack dogs, and signs warning that the household is protected by an alarm system (usually named something macho—*Predator, Power Force*—though there is also the humble and reassuring *Mike's*). At The Workshop, a Durban shopping complex, families can enjoy one-stop shopping: a modest storefront, between Joe's Radioland and The Bead Factory, houses The Arsenal—which is exactly that.

A few months after my visit, my parents come out of the house one morning to find both cars propped on bricks, all eight wheels stolen during the night. They're moving.

During an afternoon visit to the Durban city centre, my mother is very uncomfortable and, as she puts it, "claustrophobic." She keeps complaining about the crowds, can't wait to leave. At first I assume it is because, as she approaches her sixties and strays less and less often from the suburbs, she finds the urban bustle overwhelming. But later my sister tells me that she complains about the number of Blacks downtown, now that most forms of segregation have been abolished. Although I didn't recognize it at the time, she was experiencing culture shock—disorientation, panic, a sense of her own unreality. (I know the symptoms.)

She tells me that since the beaches have been integrated, they're so crowded that "nobody goes there any more."

Hamish, age four, on noting the rust-stained bathtub in the maid's bathroom: "Mum, why do Zulu people have brown baths?"

At an official function in Pietermaritzburg, where my father is awarded civic honors, the city councilors file in their royal-blue robes and tricorned hats, and I'm astounded to see that about half the faces are of darker pigmentation (Indian and so-called "colored," no Blacks). Later I'm told that they aren't full voting members of the council—just as, in South Africa as a whole, there are separate, powerless "parliaments" for Indians and "coloreds." The person who tells me this is Yvonne Spain, the newest and youngest council member, a small, dark, intense woman of about my age. We recognize each other as similar types: she is a long-time activist now committed to working within the system. She spends most of our short talk trying to convince me that it is time for people like me to come back.

I want to leave it all behind me. I want to shed it like a skin.

At the end of a week in Pietermaritzburg, spending all my time with my mother and sister in their self-enclosed suburban bubble, the only people of color I have spoken to are:

1. My mother's Zulu maid, Dora.

2. My sister's Zulu maid, Mavis. (These aren't, of course, their real names. They are the English names, smacking of the mission school, that Black workers use around white people so they won't have to exert themselves by wrapping their tongues around anything foreign—i.e. African.)

3. Mrs. Naidoo, an Indian labor organizer I meet briefly at the civic function.

4. An Indian woman with a small child, with whom I strike up a conversation in the airport departure lounge.



At the South African Airways check-in counter, a large red poster implores me, in English and Afrikaans, to "Look and Save A Life." Beneath the heading "Terrorist Weapons" are arrayed 3-D plastic models of a limpet mine, a mini-limpet mine, a TM 57 Land Mine, an anti-personnel mine, and four types of hand grenades. At the Cape Town post office, a similar display shrieks "The Look of Death!"

The first time I hear Afrikaans again is on the plane from London, where the South African Airways stewardesses are chatting in the galley. I can't understand a word they say. But within a week, I'm listening to the news without even noticing whether it is in Afrikaans or English (they alternate). I am, after all, bilingual; I am, after all, a South African.

I thought I would be traumatized by how much things had changed. Instead, I'm traumatized by how little they have.

The only real difference I notice at first is how drastically my family's standard of living has dropped. Inflation and economic sanctions (which I fought for, a world away) have done their work. My folks are hardly poor, but they're feeling the pinch, and the luxurious way of life I took for granted as a child is gone forever. My sister longs for Lego, lingerie, butterscotch, and bath gel; my parents dread retirement because their savings are worth so little now. I fought for years to achieve this effect, because I believed economic pressure was the only way to force change; I believe it still, but it pains me to see them like this, old and worried before their time—even though I know it is just.

On the plane to Cape Town, a middle-aged Black man in a pinstriped suit sits down next to me. Progress, I think—this could never have happened before. His other neighbor, an English-speaking businessman type, strikes up a conversation with him over the white wine and gin-and-tonics. The engine is making too much noise for me to hear what they're saying, but—definitely progress, I think. After a while, my Black seatmate turns to me and we make small talk (I'm from America, I tell him: not exactly a lie). I'm having a little trouble understanding him because of his accent, but we're communicating expansively all the same. Progress, I think, elated.

Then I need to go to the bathroom. "Excuse me, please," I say, rising from my seat, indicating that I need to squeeze past him. "Sorry madam!" he stammers, flustered, springing to his feet.

At the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, a political balladeer sings of "the year of false hopes and euphoria/The year we thought the struggle had been won." At these words, a profound sadness overcomes me.

I used to think that what I felt was guilt. Now I know it is sorrow.

Graffiti on a power station wall: *The Human Cause.*

Cape Town is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, as moody and intoxicating as a lover. I was afraid that when I went back there I would feel something I have never felt before, a pull on my soul from a piece of the earth. I long for, and dread, a voice that says "you should stay here" when I arrive somewhere; I have drifted around the world listening for it, relieved and bereft because I have never found it.

Instead, I spend the first two days shivering and feverish in a darkened hotel room.

Then I rent a car and drive down the incomparable coastal route to Cape Point. I stand on the tip of Africa, where the oceans meet—or as close to it as they let you get, anyway—and say to myself, theatrically, without much conviction, "I am an African."

My sister buys her gardener a new set of work clothes, a two-piece outfit in heavy blue drill. For some reason this combo is called a "Continental Suit." I wonder which continent the manufacturers have in mind.

I revisit the University of Cape Town, nestled on the mountain slopes, and see the first really startling change

of my trip. Most of the students strolling from building to building are Black now; in my undergraduate days, you would have had to sit on the steps all day long to glimpse even one. I had precisely one Black classmate, who was later unmasked as a government informer.

Wandering around the Rosebank and Rondebosch areas that flank the university, I have the most clichéd experience of all: everything looks smaller, shrunken, a few shabby blocks instead of a whole world. This happens to everyone revisiting the past, I know, but I thought it had something to do with childhood (everything looks smaller because you have grown bigger). But now I see that it has nothing to do with size. It has to do with inhabiting a place fully, living in a saturated world: never seeing it from the outside, never seeing where it ends, that it ends.

I keep waiting for an epiphany that doesn't happen. Maybe it is not going to—and that is the epiphany.

Roedean hasn't shrunk, it has grown. Roedean is the exclusive British-style private school in Johannesburg where I was schooled in Latin and field hockey and advanced mathematics. We called the teachers "Madame," we wore navy blue pinafores with knee socks and panama hats; I remember it as a prison, site of some of my most spectacular adolescent acting-out. But when I pass through the gates, scarcely able to breathe, I see that it is lush and florescent and green. It looks like a country estate, not a jail.

Then I notice the six feet of barbed wire on top of the walls. I find a staircase that still serves (don't ask me why) as a stage set for my anxiety dreams, epics of entrapment. For the first time since setting foot in South Africa, I cry—but not from nostalgia.

Graffiti: *Did you vote Nat* (Afrikaaner Nationalist)? *Don't worry, be sorry.*

I discover that I still hate white South Africans. I hate the way they think, the way they talk, the way they live. I hate them, and I'm one myself. This causes problems with pronouns, among other things.

What hasn't changed, as far as I can see, is the mean-spiritedness of their culture. I find that an Afrikaans word keeps recurring to me: *verkrampte.* Nowadays it is used mainly to mean conservative—as opposed to *verligte,* enlightened—but, in its literal sense of cramped, narrow, pinched, it is the best description of the world white South Africans have created for themselves and of their minds, deformed to fit it.

I know this is unfair, a gross generalization, mean-spirited in its own way. I know that, but it doesn't make any difference; my attitudes toward South Africa—Mother country, Fatherland—are frozen in late adolescence. A five-week visit scarcely penetrates the personal mythology I have cultivated, in a vacuum, my whole adult life.

Victor Ntoni, a Johannesburg jazz musician, on the subject of revenge: "I don't have time for that, man—there is such a lot of living to do out there."

Over cocktails, my mother tells the story, approvingly, of a Pietermaritzburg woman who owned an expensive dress shop but refused to allow Black or Indian women to try on the clothes. They could buy but not try. When the local newspaper made an issue of this, rather than change her policy, she emigrated to Australia.

There used to be red buses and green buses (red for whites, and green, jam-packed, for Blacks). Now there are only red buses, jam-packed, for everyone.

Just when I think this is the only kind of change I'm going to see, I spend ten days in Johannesburg with my brother, who manages the Market Theatre. The Market is an island in the worst part of the city, a small, miraculous world where the future, somehow, has already happened. It is a bubble with enough air for me to breathe: three performance spaces plus an art gallery, a shopping precinct, a restaurant, a jazz club (where Mandela celebrated his seventy-third birthday), and a pub, the Yard of Ale, where, if you hang out long enough, you'll meet everybody in politics and the arts. After two days, I spend most of my time there: the rest of Johannesburg is bleak and violent, and revisiting the suburban wastes of my childhood fills me only with emptiness.

My brother has a Black boss, Black staff, Black friends. He treats them all with genuine color blindness (which I would have thought impossible in a white South African raised as we were: at the very least, I'd expect a hint of self-congratulation). He works long hours and smokes a lot; he knows everything that is going down, and is quietly cynical about the current politics of convenience. No one on the Left, he says, knows what is going to happen next.

Graffiti: *Mandela Unites, Bad Organizing Divides.*

He has been in exile, too: in London for five years, returning to the Market after Mandela's release (the post-February period, people call it, shorthand for a whole cycle of euphoria and letdown). I try to explain to him my confusion, my lack of revelation, my sense of everything being familiar but not meaningful.

He understands. "As if you have seen it all before in a movie, right?" He shrugs. Either this is what happens to people who have been away too long, or, being siblings, we have developed the same mechanisms of denial.

But now there is something else: cognitive dissonance. The more time I spend talking and listening in the warm, crowded Yard of Ale, the less I can recapture the sour, sealed world my parents inhabit. I can scarcely believe it exists in the same time and place. Yet it does: it is real, too.

Which is more real?

Which is "South Africa"? (As in, "So, how was South Africa?"—the question I'm supposed to be able to answer when I get back to the States.)

I develop a pat answer: Political discourse has changed, I say—you can see Mandela's face on TV—but daily life hasn't. Also, I add, you can read books and see movies that would have been censored before. For instance? *Henry and June.*

I go back to Pietermaritzburg, where my mother, a nervous driver, is involved in a near-miss with the car. Shaken, she crawls home at twenty miles an hour and tells us the story again and again over cups of strong tea. She keeps emphasizing that everything happened so quickly she didn't even catch a glimpse of the other driver's face. At first I assume this detail is for dramatic effect, but on the fourth or fifth telling, she rephrases it: "It happened so quickly I couldn't even see if he was Black or white." Then I realize that, without this piece of information, my mother is unable to interpret what happened to her. Without it, she cannot make sense of her experience.

John Kani, actor and co-director of the Market Theatre: "Some people are unteachable. That is why we have to pin our hopes on the next generation."

My nephews, Hamish and Andrew, watch the English, Afrikaans, and Zulu programs on TV. When I was growing up, there was no television in South Africa. They speak a few sentences of Zulu to Mavis, the maid. I can't say a word in any African language. My sister has taught them to call Blacks "Zulu people." I squeeze hope from that word, people. They call any Black male "the man"—in my childhood, he would have been "the boy," "the kaffir," or "the coon"—but Mavis is still "the girl."

Charlotte Bauer, Arts Editor of the *Weekly Mail:* "But tell me, why did we ever think it wouldn't be complicated?"

My brother invites me to attend the South African Breweries Mini Arts Festival at the Market Theatre one Sunday afternoon, a celebration of what he calls "corporate guilt-money." In honor of a senior executive's retirement, all the arts groups funded by South African Breweries are showcasing their wares, and, as the program unfolds, I see that the corporation has adopted the American model, spreading its funding neatly across the spectrum, picking out one group per color as if selecting a fistful of M & Ms. There is a Soweto jazz company, a group performing Indian dance, the Transvaal Chinese Association's Harmony Dancers, an all-Black orchestra (with no conductor), and so on, through the rainbow.

The audience, consisting of local arts figures, proud parents, and corporate white-hairs, sits politely through a sharp dressing down by a "colored" professor, who attacks private-sector funding as a cosmetic, conscience-



easing measure. Then the Black poet Don Mattera, banned for nine years, leaps up to read a passionate indictment of white South Africans. After he has catalogued our collective crimes, we applaud politely. He reads one more poem, dedicating it to his young son beaming shyly in the third row. We applaud again.

Next, the arts groups present a gift to the retiring executive. It is a carved wooden figure in traditional African style, about two feet high, outfitted for war and brandishing a large club. As the figure is handed over, its club (called a *knobkerrie*) appears to be aimed right at the recipient's head. A coincidence, I wonder, or a subtle joke?

The program ends with a huge massed choir from Soweto, whose motto, they tell us, is "We will sing until justice reigns in our country." They begin with traditional African songs that bring people to their feet, dancing and ululating, and then, without skipping a beat, modulate into western choral music. More cognitive dissonance: the conductor in his African robes drawing forth Mozart from these African throats. Colonialism, carps the cynical part of my brain, but for once I tell it to shut up. In my heart at that moment, I understand something about transcendence: that such sounds should come from Soweto....

It takes more courage and generosity of spirit to live in South Africa now—really live there—than I will ever be capable of.

On my last day at my parents' house (we're all relieved and exhausted and achingly sad), I say goodbye to Dora and leave her a fairly large tip. When she gets around to counting it, she thinks that I, being unfamiliar with the currency, have miscalculated, and that she will somehow get into trouble for accepting so much cash. So she shows it to my mother and asks her what she should do. My mother is outraged, taking my gesture not only as vulgar ostentation but also as a reproach to her (which it is, in a way); Dora is humiliated (again); and I am unmasked in the act of trying

(Continued on p. 77)

PERSONAL ESSAY

Mikveh

Shira Dicker

It is the fourteenth day of my menstrual cycle, and I am frantically removing red nail polish from my toenails, scrubbing at the corners of my cuticles with uncharacteristic zeal. Countless cotton balls later, saturated with lemon-scented polish remover, my toes are now stained a smeary, illicit red. The scarlet outline is an unholy aura, an intimation of the temptress.

Giving up on my toenails, I hastily remove my earrings, two from the left lobe, one from the right, force my engagement ring over the knobby knuckle of my right ring finger (there is no simple gold band to remove from my left hand, since a few months before my wedding ring was devoured by a wood chipper), and unclasp the fine gold necklace my husband surprised me with the night he proposed marriage. I wriggle out of denim cutoffs and throw on a gauzy white sundress. It settles around me loosely, billowing as I walk.

I rush to the bathroom mirror. Free of makeup, my face looks startlingly young and androgynous. Wincing at the sight of my freshly washed hair drying into cowlicks around my head, I grab a pastel madras scarf from my closet and wind it three times around my head, fastening it with a knot. There. I am transformed from a bare-legged gamine into a true daughter of Zion, save for the red-rimmed toenails.

It is in a white Chrysler convertible that I careen down the Henry Hudson Parkway en route to my first mikveh visit since my wedding eight years ago. While it was my mother who drove me the night before my wedding to the nondescript facility in Kew Gardens, my chauffeur tonight is my brother-in-law, who looks like he stepped out of the pages of GQ and listens to loud rock music as he drives. With Eric Clapton wailing over "Layla," I draw inward and contemplate the ritual I am about to perform.

To the great surprise of my husband and the bemused skepticism of my friends, I decided to "try out" the Jewish precept of *taharat ha-mishpacha,* or family purity. It is something I learned about only in adulthood, despite my day school education and *shomrei shabbas* upbringing. Nevertheless, after more than a decade of sexual activity unencumbered by any temporal restrictions, I resolved to restrict my sexual relations to approximately two weeks out of every month—the days following the period of menstruation, plus seven "clean" days. No great religious awakening inspired this decision. Rather, it was a multiplicity of intangibles—curiosity, the longing to become a link in the vertical chain of Jewish female history, the hazy recollection of an oddly sensual experience the night before my wedding, a taste for adventure. That, and the recent revelation that two highly intelligent and independent-minded female friends of mine observed *taharat ha-mishpacha,* despite the fact that they were unmarried.

If my single friends had come to impose this religiously sanctioned restriction on their sexual activity of their own volition—and rather daringly, I thought, out of wedlock—did that not provide ample evidence of the potency of the act? I needed to see if the ritual held any power for me.

So here I am on a Saturday night, celibate for fourteen days (two over the prescribed twelve, but that was due to the unavailability of child care), on the way to immerse myself in waters that will render me fit to resume sleeping with my husband.

Of course, I know that I have already violated several ancillary requirements of mikveh attendance—modesty, for one. Before deciding to take the mikveh step, I consulted numerous friends, both male and female. I weighed their reactions as I revealed my intentions. But from what I understand, Jewish women are supposed to go about their mikveh-dunking quietly, almost secretively—that's why women are permitted to attend mikveh only after nightfall. And although I am uncomfortable with this particular prerequisite (for going about something under cover of darkness implies shamefulness), I have a feeling that talking about impending mikveh attendance the way that I have done is tantamount to not only going during the day, but inviting a television camera crew along.

And then there is the matter of my driver. Let's face it: If talking about going to the mikveh is immodest, being driven there by your brother-in-law is downright brazen. I had planned to go by myself, but with Shabbat being over so late, and my brother-in-law dropping over and my husband freaking out about my going alone to Riverdale on a Saturday night ... well, that's how it happened. So, here we are, me feeling somewhat guilty and he no doubt thinking of all the other ways he might have passed the evening. But we joke about it; he tells me mikveh stories from his own experience and nearly guffaws at the prospect that I, the sister-in-law he has known for more than eight years, could ever come to regard *taharat ha-mishpacha* seriously.

With nervous anticipation settling in my fingertips, making me take small, shallow breaths, we pull off the highway and wend our way through a maze of streets to the Riverdale mikveh.

I have been told that the mikveh is located next to the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale and that it is open almost until midnight on summer nights because Shabbat ends so late. Still, I have neglected to ask for the address of the building, so I spend ten minutes wandering around a deserted street corner at 10:30 p.m. looking for the right place. I hear the music from my brother-in-law's car radio recede as I walk north along the Henry Hudson service road toward a nondescript squarish building that must be It.

I have the right spot, but the wrong

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entrance. "Come around the back," a Brooklyn-accented voice instructs me over the fuzzy intercom. I go around the building and discover a commodious parking lot, nearly empty. I wonder about the parking lot, a rare commodity in Riverdale. Is it here so that women should have no impediments to performing the mitzvah of mikveh? Is it placed in the back to ensure total modesty? Or was the amenity just a happy coincidence?

I bound up the back stairs, filled with a feeling of impending adventure. I am a five-year-old running up to her room to see her birthday presents. I am a ten-year-old sneaking into the neighborhood "haunted house." I am a journalist on the verge of a scoop, a scientist on the cusp of a medical breakthrough. I am a cynic about to relinquish her skepticism.

When I reach the facility proper, I am surprised to see that the receiving area looks not unlike a beauty parlor, the type frequented by women who come once a week for a "wash and set." There are hair dryers that you sit under, cushioned chairs, and women's magazines. The room is empty and utterly quiet, save for the humming of an electric generator. I am immediately greeted by two women. The one apparently in charge, who says her name is Esther, smiles easily. She is wearing a housecoat and slippers, and her hair is covered with a simple cloth scarf. She is the vision of maternal comfort, all softness and amorphous folds. Her skin is very fair and her eyes are slightly magnified behind thick lenses. As she speaks, directing me to my private bathroom, I feel my shoulders relax, my facial muscles loosen, my adrenaline-driven eagerness transformed into alpha wave calm. I feel very safe.

Inside the bathroom, I unwind my scarf, take off my clothes, and stare at my body in the mirror. Although I have been at the mikveh only a matter of minutes, I feel myself inexplicably relieved of the burden of my sexuality. Or is it my sexiness? Yes, I am here for reasons having to do with sex, but the sex in question is married and extremely kosher, charged with reproductive potential, sanctioned by Jewish tradition, and Esther herself.

In the frank frame of the mirror, my body looks naked, not nude. My eyes are not sly with innuendo; I stare at myself with a direct, somewhat startled gaze. My lips, which have always seemed to me embarrassingly voluptuous, now look modestly full and a little pale. The sexual heat I absorb and radiate in the outside world is nowhere in evidence in this room. Here I am a wife, not a lover, here I feel protected, more daughter than mother. In this room, in this place, my sexuality is irrelevant, and that recognition soothes me.

I move my gaze from my lips along the length of my neck to my torso. I note the intersecting tan lines, the jut-



ting hip bones, the flat stomach, the silvery stretch marks on the back of my hips. I contemplate my breasts and take note of the ravages nursing has inflicted. Pinching a bit of skin atop each breast, I lift my bosom and consider plastic surgery one day—nothing too costly or dangerous, just a little lift on each side, half an inch at most, to restore my body to its pre-childbearing shape.

I take several steps back from the mirror and consider my legs, thin until the very top, where they puff out on either side, creating what women's magazines call "saddle bags." The word flits through my brain and I feel instantly horsey. I jump once and watch my saddle bags bounce. I vow to begin a program of spot-reduction as soon as possible, maybe even tomorrow.

With great reluctance, I drag myself away from the mirror and begin to examine the neat array of grooming paraphernalia on a shelf over the toilet. There are Q-tips, cotton balls, gauze pads, alcohol, peroxide, nail polish remover, lotion, baby oil, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, tooth picks, and other items.

A printed instruction sheet is posted above the shelf, reminding women of all the steps they must take to ready themselves for immersion in the mikveh. One must not only clean every crevice and fold of one's body, but also remove all extraneous accessories, including false teeth and prosthetics. A good rule of thumb is, if you weren't born with it, take it off. I fantasize for a moment about hanging up my saddle bags on the hook inside the door and stepping into the mikveh with legs like Linda Evangelista, impossibly long and thin. Maybe the mikveh of the future will have an adjoining liposuction room.

Although I cleaned and groomed myself at home, I go through the process again, a little girl playing with Mommy's cosmetics. Why not? It's here, I've paid for it, and there is something enjoyable about grooming oneself without children breaking down the bathroom door. I gaze up at the chart, looking for an area I have forgotten to clean. My nose. Taking a Q-tip, I swirl it around inside each nostril and am surprised by how pleasant it feels. I look down at my feet to check between my toes for dirt and see the red polish.

Sighing, I take some of the mikveh polish remover and scrub at my toes, but to no avail. The polish is indelible. I consider calling up the Maybelline customer service line and complaining bitterly. I will say that their nail polish ruined my sex life because the mikveh lady would not permit me to go into the mikveh with that stuff on my toes. I will threaten to start a boycott within the Orthodox community, to take out ads on the front page of Friday's *New York Times* reminding Jewish women and girls to avoid using Maybelline. I will grudgingly accept an out-of-court settlement and use my hush money to finance a trip to Europe.

Snapping out of my reverie, I throw the cotton balls in the garbage and run the water in the bathtub, hoping that soap and water will do the trick. The tub is large and very clean. My great relief makes me realize that I have been worried about the hygiene of the place. With the water still running, I step inside and slide my body all the way down so that only my head, shoulders, and knees poke out. I close my eyes and let the water cover me.

The roaring sound of pouring water bounces off the tiled walls of the bathroom and the heat rises in misty clouds.

My eyelids open slightly and then droop; thoughts roll through my mind easily, leaving behind no residue. I am blank, happy, relaxed. Just before I totally drift off into Nirvana, I am reminded of my mission. I sit up, give a few futile scrubs at my toenails with a nail brush and soap, and then emerge dripping out of the tub, hoping that my cosmetic transgression will be forgiven by the beatific Esther.

Wearing a thick terry cloth robe and ridiculous paper slippers, I sit on the toilet top, waiting to be summoned. Without moisturizer my skin feels dry and tight, and I make a mental note to slather myself with lotion after I'm through in the mikveh.

There is a small buzzer inside the bathroom that one presses when one has completed preparations. The buzzer impresses me. It is so much more dignified than sticking one's head outside the door and announcing tentatively, "I'm ready."

After a short while, Esther opens the door and steps inside. "Do you want to be checked?" she asks, smiling. "Yes," I murmur, filled with a delicious happiness. When was the last time someone had checked me, making sure I was properly outfitted, cool for summer, warm for winter? Yes, oh yes, I would so like to be checked.

Esther goes down the list, asking me if I have clipped this, scrubbed that, removed those. An obedient girl, I answer each query affirmatively. Esther asks me to hold out my hands, and she checks my fingernails. Okay. Now my feet. I kick off my flimsy paper slippers and begin to apologize—I tried three times, I'm sorry, I usually never even polish my toenails, what timing.... Esther listens patiently and smiles, waving away my explanations. It's alright, she assures me. She'll get the polish off.

Really?

Esther reaches for a cotton ball and the polish remover. "Let's see those *feetsaluch,*" she instructs. *Feetsaluch!* I could melt away I'm so happy. Here I am, a thirty-year-old mother of two, being mothered. Being cared for. Having her *feetsaluch* cleaned by a nice, soft, patient Mama, one that does not scold ("What were you doing playing with that nail polish, young lady?"), but who forgives, understands, and helps. I am willing to hand over my life to this woman; I want her to dress me in the mornings, feed me lunch, and tuck me in at night.

Esther is making progress on my toenails and we talk as she scrubs. I confide that this is my first visit in eight years and her face opens up; she has a wellspring of sustenance to share with me and I am so thirsty. We make a perfect symbiotic pair—her pleasure is in providing and mine is in receiving.

Bending her head closer to mine, Esther speaks eagerly about the benefits of observing *taharat ha-mishpacha*. Her sales pitch is familiar to me, but coming from her, I am ready to believe every word. Improved sex life. Lower incidence of cervical cancer. An opportunity to perform breast self-examination. And in fact, I do believe that, if nothing else, the ritual gives women one night a month to take a bath in peace. And to be ministered to by Esther.

After nearly half an hour, my nails are reasonably natural-looking and I spill over with apologies and thanks. Esther smiles them away, good-naturedly, and opens the second bathroom door. To my surprise, it leads directly into the mikveh.

The room is small and boxy and very surreal. I am filled with a sudden and powerful emotion. I endeavor to name it ... it must be awe. Or maybe just fear. In any case, I am seized with a sense of magnitude, of a serious business about to happen.

I open my robe with my back to Esther. She holds it open as I walk down the stairs into the water. It feels thick and warm, a bit unpleasant. I descend the steps until I am standing neck-deep in the water. I look up at Esther, standing at the top behind the railing.

"I don't know what to say," I confess. Esther nods, and she leads me in reciting the *bracha,* slowly, never taking our gaze off one another. I am so naked, so open to whatever force is in this room—Esther's benevolence, the thickness of the water, the chain of Jewish tradition, the presence of God. I stand in the tepid water, letting the force wash over and through me. Cleanse me, I think. Make me believe.

Esther instructs me to dunk myself and I do so; it is more difficult than it seems because the water is highly buoyant. I feel fragile and too thin, in danger of being crushed by the water's pressure. But I lean forward and dunk down, cutting the surface of this resistant liquid with my head. Dunking is a relief, so I do it again, swishing my arms and legs underwater, trying to keep from rising to the top. My breath runs out and I surface, gasping for air. I wipe my bangs out of my eyes and nod my head. I am coming up, I communicate silently to Esther, who waits at the top of the stairs, still holding my robe open, eyes modestly averted.

I climb the steps slowly, hair slicked against my scalp, an amazing walking seal. I feel a gummy residue on my skin that the terry cloth robe does not absorb. Although the possibility of showering it off occurs to me, I put on my street clothes unshowered, skin still damp with mikveh water.

Back in the car my brother-in-law is affectionately peeved. What took you so long? Sorry, I say. I'm really sorry you had to spend your Saturday night like this. Oh, it's okay, he says, starting up the car. So, what was it like, anyway?

He is waiting for the roll of the eyes, a wink, a nudge. He is waiting for me to cast an irreverent look at Jewish tradition, as I have done many times in our shared past. He is familiar with the punch line, the caricature, the parody. He knows about some not-so-holy adventures I have had, knows that I've gloried in being the bad girl, the rebel, the heretic. He is waiting for me to do the predictable, reveal my true colors.

He waits and there is no reply, so he starts up the car and instantly, Mick Jagger yells his dissatisfaction. I cast a glance up at the mikveh building and wonder if Esther sees me taking off in the white convertible with the glamorous guy behind the wheel. I wonder what she thinks of me, if she saw me as alien or as kindred spirit. I remember her maternal warmth and long for the homey peacefulness she embodied, her soft ease, her very rootedness. What is it like to sink into your religiously ordained role like that, to be utterly unambivalent? I yearn for respite from inner turmoil—the wild urges and fears, the need to fly free and the desire to fuse with one's lover, the quest for solitude and the joy of one's children cuddling close. Could observing mikveh give me that peace, or is turmoil just an unavoidable function of being me?

We headed north up the parkway, toward Westchester County. Janet Jackson is rapping, and I feel the encroachment of the music. It is unbearably banal, obscene, loud. I want to turn the radio off, but to do so would be to invite conversation about my experience. Come on, my brother-in-law would say, tell me about it. Was it weird?

It was weird and it was wonderful, but right now I opt for the cover of silence, keeping my modesty intact. □

BOOK REVIEW

The Mother of Pro-Choice

Regina Morantz-Sanchez

Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and The Birth Control Movement in America by Ellen Chesler. Simon and Schuster, 1992, 639 pp.

In 1957, at the end of her career as a founder and spokesperson for one of the most significant social movements in our century, Margaret Sanger was invited by Mike Wallace, then a crack young investigative journalist, to appear on his nationally televised interview show. Wallace promised an unrehearsed and uncensored treatment of "an adult topic ... that we feel merits public examination."

In soliciting Sanger for the appearance, Wallace had been less than candid. It was not assessing the significance of birth control that interested him, but rather Sanger's presumably unconventional attitudes toward sexuality, marriage, the family, and God. Wallace relentlessly gravitated to the sensational, accusing Sanger of leaving her husband and children to pursue her own elusive "freedom." "Now, what was this joy, this freedom that you craved?" he demanded.

Inexplicably caught off guard, Sanger replied, somewhat apologetically, that it was humanitarian concern—particularly the suffering of women and children—that motivated her to pursue what became a "calling." When the discussion turned to religion, Wallace managed to expose Margaret's long-nurtured hostility to the Catholic Church.

But he saved his most devastating salvo for last. Wasn't Sanger responsible for eroding public morality? Did she not offer women freedom from responsibility by enabling them to avoid the consequences of questionable sexual behavior? "Could it be," he insisted, "that they have followed the lead of women like Margaret Sanger by neglecting family life for a career?"

What is significant about this event is not Sanger's uncharacteristic reticence in defending her cause (she was seventy-eight and ill, and the dialogue left family and friends shocked and in tears at her meekness) but Wallace's savage attack. One need only compare the interview to retrospectives with countless public *men* at the time who had also generated controversy—Normal Mailer, Harry Truman, Richard Nixon, Henry Miller—to know that Sanger was singled out for special treatment. Indeed, the incident reveals a deep-seated American ambivalence about women heroes. We like ours dignified, motherly, and self-less—witness our long love affair with Eleanor Roosevelt. But here was the individual who fought relentlessly for women's right to unqualified sexual and reproductive freedom, a right even today Americans grant only with hesitation. Wallace was not going to let her off the hook.

Fortunately, Ellen Chesler has no intention of allowing Margaret Sanger to remain trivialized and forgotten. Her finely textured and comprehensive biography supplants the sometimes unflattering treatment Sanger has received from other historians, none of whom pursued, as Chesler did, the voluminous sources on three continents or conducted personal interviews with Sanger's family members, friends, and birth control associates. The work of a skilled storyteller, this masterfully detailed and penetrating social and political analysis reframes many of Sanger's most controversial decisions—her move from leftist to centrist politics, her connection with eugenicists, her détente with the medical profession, and her support of an international birth control movement whose methods and outlook she continually questioned. Here, too, is a perceptive psychological portrait which celebrates Sanger's strengths without papering over her considerable shortcomings.

Born in 1879 to a working-class Irish family in Corning, New York, Sanger's first memory was, at the age of three, of being banished kicking and screaming from the room where her mother, Anne Higgins, lay ill from the complications of tuberculosis and too many pregnancies. There were eleven children in all, and Higgins carried the burden with a gentle stoicism suffused with a Catholic piety that her daughter never fully acknowledged. Years later, Margaret remembered her mother simply as an uncomplaining hostage to the endless cooking, cleaning, and emotional demands of a huge family. Michael Higgins, Sanger's father, was an affectionate husband but a dismally poor provider. His attraction to socialism, labor militancy, and the anticlericalism of Robert Ingersoll energized him considerably more than the mundane task of earning a living. While he may have served Sanger as an early intellectual mentor, Chesler perceptively argues that his most enduring legacy was teaching her never to become dependent on, or defined by, a man.

Sanger's craving for autonomy led to the pursuit of nursing as a career, a common choice at the turn of the century for rural and working-class daughters who wished to better themselves. She relished the work as well as the self-esteem it gave her. But at the end of her second year, she met and impulsively married a handsome young architect after a passionate courtship that left him ecstatic and her in some confusion at her willingness to forgo the coveted degree. William Sanger, a socialist refugee from an orthodox Jewish family, shared Margaret's religious iconoclasm and still embryonic critique of class relations. Chesler interprets the event as a temporary surrender to passion, conventional romance, and her need for the emotional and material security her father never

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gave her. The marriage proved a bit of a detour, but it was the last time Sanger would allow herself to be thrown off course while in pursuit of her goals.

Though she once confided to a friend that she learned everything she knew about romantic love from Bill Sanger, the union was not a success. Despite his radical politics, Bill Sanger's expectations of marriage were wholly conventional. For a time the couple lived in Hastings-on-Hudson, where Margaret tried to be a proper suburban wife, and gave birth to three children in eight years. A self-absorbed and inefficient mother, she was indifferent to the household tasks that intruded on her time, recalling candidly years later that "thrifty, good housekeeping neighbors" took her children "into their laps, remove[d] the safety pins that held their clothes together, and sew[ed] on a proper button." Like her father, William Sanger turned out to be an unsatisfactory breadwinner and, in 1910, the couple was forced to move to a railroad flat in Washington Heights.

Already registered Socialists, they plunged into the exciting world of radical politics. William took up painting and Margaret lectured on health matters under socialist sponsorship. They participated in two IWW strikes. The young couple were frequent visitors at Mabel Dodge's Greenwich Village salon and in their tiny living room hosted meetings of such famous agitators and bohemians as John Reed, Big Bill Haywood, Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman.

To make ends meet, Margaret worked part time as a practical nurse for the Visiting Nurses Association of the Henry Street Settlement. This experience with squalid conditions, hauntingly reminiscent of her own childhood, gave a practical cast to Sanger's political enlightenment. For her the suffering of women was particularly vivid. It was while working as a midwife and physician's assistant on the Lower East Side that she encountered the tragedy, mentioned often in her speeches and writings, of Sadie Sachs. A young Jewish mother, Sachs died from the complications of a self-induced abortion after her doctor met her pleas for reliable contraception with the advice that she "tell Jake to sleep on the roof."

Sanger began plotting her own course of action in 1912, when she initiated a controversial Sunday column on sex and health education entitled "What Every Girl Should Know," for the Socialist newspaper, the *Call*. She briefly visited Europe with Bill in the summer of 1913, where she researched the technology and theory of contraception and met with French syndicalists and socialists who had developed a sophisticated defense of family limitation. "With this background," she later wrote, "I had practically reached the exploding point. I could not contain my ideas. I wanted to get on with what I had to do in the world."

The incident reveals a deep-seated American ambivalence about women heroes. We like ours dignified, motherly, and self-less.

Upon her return to the United States, she rapidly became the major spokeswoman for birth control and women's sexual emancipation. She assembled a diverse collection of supporters and initiated publication of the *Woman Rebel,* a politically flamboyant magazine that disseminated information on sexuality and birth control in direct violation of the repressive Comstock laws. Before long, she was receiving letters of encouragement and requests for information from thousands of women. In 1914, she was arrested for sending "indecent" material through the mails and fled to Europe rather than stand trial. In her haste, she didn't even say goodby to her children.

While in Europe, her marriage disintegrated, and she began a love affair with Havelock Ellis. Then at the height of his influence, Ellis's multivolume study of the variety of human sexual response had helped liberalize discourse about sexuality, both in medical circles and in the popular press. Sanger found Ellis's belief in the union of the physical and the spiritual, his enthusiasm for female eroticism, his tolerance of sexual diversity, and his support of complete sexual freedom for both sexes a powerful validation of her own thought and behavior. He, in turn, was captivated by her, as a cache of some fifty love letters now in the Library of Congress attests. Her affair with Ellis was not the only one she conducted during this period—she also enjoyed satisfying and intellectually stimulating relationships with H.G. Wells and the radical Spaniard Lorenzo Portet. In 1920, she even experimented with group sex during a subsequent visit with a circle of English intellectuals linked to Ellis. The affair with Ellis was a short one, but for the rest of his life he remained her intellectual mentor, advisor, and friend.

When Sanger returned to the United States in the fall of 1915, she discovered a marked shift in public consciousness on the issue of birth control. In her absence, Bill Sanger had been arrested and briefly imprisoned for handing out one of her pamphlets to an undercover police agent. Respectable newspapers and magazines viewed this legal harassment as a threat to free speech. One by one, the *New Republic, Harper's Weekly,* and even the *New York Times* began to defend the advocacy of contraception. Suddenly, Margaret Sanger was a celebrity and could set about building a movement. The task proved a formidable one to which she devoted the rest of her life. Believing that contraception should be controlled by women themselves, she founded the nation's first birth control clinic in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. She began publishing the *Birth Control Review* and, with the help of middle– and upper-class feminists, established the Birth Control League, which eventually became Planned Parenthood. She struggled with critics and detractors on all sides, including secular guardians of Victorian morality, the Catholic Church, and the medical profession. The latter at first opposed contraception entirely and then demanded it be provided only by physicians.

The compromises she made during this phase of her life have elicited censure from influential historians like Linda Gordon and David Kennedy. From different vantage points, both have accused Sanger of abandoning her radical heritage and watering down her commitment to working-class women. Gordon has even questioned her feminism. In rebuttal, Chesler demonstrates that Sanger's obsession with women's right to control their own bodies grew out of an unmitigated feminist idealism from which she never wavered, even after conserva-

tives seized leadership of the movement in the early 1940s. She may have been naive, but she always believed birth control would generate fundamental social change. She dreamed of a vast socialized network of "health clinics" offering comprehensive care to women. The tepid response of socialists and some feminists to her cause contributed to her readiness to court financially well-off supporters (one of whom, the millionaire J. Noah Slee, became her second husband).

Critics have also cited Sanger's willingness to enlist endorsements from eugenicists and her refusal to publicly repudiate right-wing spokespersons who used the movement to limit reproduction among the ethnically and racially "unfit." Chesler is clearly uncomfortable with Sanger's eugenicism. She notes that, no simple racist, Sanger was an equal-opportunity supporter of genetic engineering who argued that the defective of all races—even whites—should be sterilized. She concedes that Sanger paid a price for this alliance, but does not sketch out the implications of Sanger's misjudgments.

Sanger's willingness to allow the medical profession to control the new contraceptive technology has also irked feminist critics, who see this as a betrayal of her commitment to female-run, female-centered facilities. Even her farsighted internationalism, which occasionally led to alliances with male population controllers whose cultural paternalism she deplored, has proven controversial. But Sanger never hung back from difficult decisions just because they required compromise. Ever the pragmatist, she was always ready to hold her idealism in check in order to accomplish her larger goals.

Chesler's political experience as chief of staff to former New York City council president Carol Bellamy gives her a special sensitivity to the political realities and social obstacles Sanger faced. She is more tolerant of the concessions others have condemned, judging Sanger's pragmatism to be perhaps her greatest asset as a leader. In a more conservative era than the early 1970s, when scholars first revived interest in Sanger, we are, unfortunately, better acquainted with the power of state repression and popular inertia to undermine social change. Perhaps we need to take an object lesson from Sanger's ability to content herself with partial solutions while digging in for the long haul.

Ironically, when Mike Wallace blamed Margaret Sanger for being a bad influence on American women, he could hardly have known the sensational details of the life Chesler meticulously reconstructs. Sanger's independence was striking. She subordinated her role as wife and mother to the public cause that preoccupied her for half a century, and her children suffered because of it. Like many male public figures, she took love and sexual pleasure where she found it. Charming, vivacious, and alluring, she left lovers yearning for her wherever she went, allowing them no claim on her and asking none in return. Her life deliberately engaged all the major issues her cause has come to symbolize for Americans: the transformation of the family, gender roles, and sexuality.

Sanger found Ellis's belief in the union of the physical and the spiritual, his enthusiasm for female eroticism, his tolerance of sexual diversity, and his support of complete sexual freedom for both sexes a powerful validation of her own thought and behavior.

It was Eleanor Roosevelt who first called Sanger a woman of "valor." The biblical representation from Proverbs is of a woman who uses her power to serve others. Perhaps there is a measure of irony in Chesler's title, suggesting that it is time to modernize this ancient symbol of female strength. Chesler presents Sanger as the quintessential "new woman," someone who understood that in serving others one must first learn to serve oneself. Not all of us would make her personal and professional choices, but we can surely learn from, and admire, her autonomy and direction of purpose, her relentless energy, her zest for life and its bodily pleasures, and, most important, her dogged loyalty to a cause that has altered the lives of us all. □



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BOOK REVIEW

Japan Bashing

Daniel Lazare

Rising Sun by Michael Crichton. Alfred A. Knopf, 1992, 355 pp.

A tightly-knit band of aliens plots to take over the United States. They buy up real estate in the cities and vast cattle spreads out West. Where others engage in trade, they engage in protracted siege warfare. Once a week, their elders gather in a secret strategy session, a kind of Saturday Sanhedrin, to decide their host country's fate. Along the way, they also cheat, bribe, steal, and, oh yes, force white women to engage in unspeakable sexual acts.

This is the premise of *Rising Sun,* Michael Crichton's latest best-seller (after *The Andromeda Strain, The Terminal Man, Jurassic Park,* and others) in which the author charges the Japanese with striving to do economically what they couldn't do militarily in 1941–45, i.e., conquer and subjugate the United States. A detective yarn and an intellectual journey of exploration, *Rising Sun* features, among other things, a dead call girl, a semiretired Los Angeles police detective well-versed in Japanese ways who ferrets out her killer, plus any number of arrogant Japanese business executives and their innumerable American apologists.

If the idea sounds at all familiar, it is not surprising. The most remarkable thing about *Rising Sun* is how closely it resembles the literature of fifty or one hundred years ago concerning another villainous race said to emanate out of Asia and be supposedly bent on conquering the world—namely, of course, the Jews. Like the Japanese in *Rising Sun,* Jewish arrivistes tossed around money in the most gauche possible manner, cornered the urban real estate market, and, in the countryside, threw honest peasants off the land ("the proudest palaces of our cities belong to the Jewish masters," lamented the anonymous authors of the *Antisemites' Petition* in 1880). Crichton's Japanese are clannish, aggressive, and sexually malignant as, needless to say, were the Jews in the eyes of countless anti-Semites. *Rising Sun's* Japanese holler racism whenever an American threatens to expose their misdeeds, just as "the international Jew" raises "the ready cry of persecution" whenever "his hand [is] revealed," according to Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent* in 1920. *Rising Sun* calls the Japanese "the most racist people on the planet," much as Wilhelm Marr, a German writer and politician who is credited with coining the term "anti-Semitism" in the 1870s, asserted that "a race consciousness par excellence" characterizes the Jews.



The Japanese also bribe politicians and spread their tentacles of corruption into the press and the universities, as you-know-who was said to do a century or so earlier. More importantly, the Japanese are engaged in a conscious, centrally directed conspiracy (in Crichton's fevered imagination, that is) exemplified in *Rising Sun* by what the author describes as a secret weekly gathering by Japanese corporate elders in a Los Angeles hotel to decide "how the American economy should be managed." In countless anti-Semitic works, similarly, from Hermann Goedsche's 1868 short story, "The Jewish Cemetery in Prague," to "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (the czarist forgery which drew heavily on Goedsche's classic), Jews operate as a single unit under the control of rabbis or tribal leaders. They may have changed their methods over the centuries. Instead of the ritual murder of Christian children, they may have assumed the more modern role of financial manipulator, Bolshevik agitator, pornographer, etc. But the timeless essence of what Wilhelm Marr called Jewry's eighteen-hundred-year war against Christendom, of course, carries on.

Rising Sun is a pamphlet in novel's clothing. It is so mechanical and soulless one can almost hear the gears grinding as it downshifts through various plot twists and turns. This is not to say it is entirely unenjoyable. Crichton, who's been at this game for years, knows how to turn out a book that is lean, well-paced, and so easy to read you can practically get the gist by putting it under your pillow before going to sleep. Thinly-veiled lectures on Japanese philosophy and business ethics pop up continuously, broken up every couple of hundred words or so with perfunctory exclamations along the lines of "What?" and "That's outrageous!" Trademark Crichton technobabble concerning high-definition video tapes, the enzyme content of Japanese seminal fluid, and so on abounds. All this aside, *Rising Sun's* real value is political. It is an example of the persistence of racial stereotypes and an indication where thinking on such topics seems to be heading in what might be called the age of Sarajevo. Anti-Semitism is no longer in favor in polite circles. "Jew jokes" are no longer a music hall staple. Yet if *Rising Sun* is any indication, the underlying methodology that gave us anti-Semitism in the first place is very much with us still.

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Why? The problem is not that people don't learn from history, but that the lessons they draw are narrow, incomplete, and all too easily twisted into the opposite. In the wake of such events as the Holocaust and the rise of Israel, middle-class American opinion has apparently concluded that (1) the persecution of any national minority is bad, (2) the persecution of the Jews, however, is uniquely awful, and (3) the doctrine of collective national or racial guilt is utterly impermissible except in cases when it is not. (See, for example, Alan M. Dershowitz's brief in *Chutzpah* in support of collective punishment of the Germans, presumably even children and babies, for Nazi crimes during World War II.)

This is the sort of ideological muddle that allows all sorts of sins to escape. The first point is good as far as it goes, except that it doesn't speak to such tricky modern situations as minority attacks upon another minority (e.g., Blacks versus Koreans in Los Angeles), or when two majorities begin hurling slings and arrows across an artificial line in the sand known as a national boundary. World opinion frowns when, say, Romanian nationalists assail members of Romania's Magyar minority, but takes it much more calmly when the same propaganda is directed across the border at Hungarians in Hungary. The second point may seem true historically, except that treating anti-Semitism as an evil *sui generis* ghettoizes it, in effect, and serves to obscure the close relationship between anti-Jewish hatred and allied phenomena such as hatred of Asians. The third point, meanwhile, leaves the door wide open for the sort of virulent nationalism that World War II was supposed to have wiped out. If Germans merit collective punishment for Nazi war crimes, why not whites for racism? Men for sexism? Heterosexuals for homophobia?

The result is an escape clause big enough to let through a phenomenon like *Rising Sun*. The Japanese, after all, are not Jews, are not a minority in somebody else's homeland, and in fact are well ensconced in their own secure, highly affluent nation-state. They're not poor, oppressed, or otherwise worth feeling sorry for. The Japanese military also committed numerous crimes during World War II, yet got off even more lightly than their allies in former West Germany. If "a minimal appropriate response to the collective responsibility of the German people for the crimes of their leaders ... should have been a generation of poverty" (to quote Dershowitz), then something similar should have been appropriate for the Japanese. Bottom line: If you're furious with the Japs for getting off with a slap on the wrist after the war, for buying up our real estate, engaging in predatory trade practices, and just generally acting as if the world was their oyster, then go ahead, give vent to your anger. You're entitled.

It is a very short step from proclaiming that Japanese are racists..., to proclaiming that all Koreans are racist (the rallying cry among Black boycotters in Brooklyn) and, finally, to proclaiming that all Jews are racist (the rallying cry of Black rioters last year in Crown Heights).

More than that, in fact, you are obligated. As one of the characters puts it in *Rising Sun,* "This country is in a war and some people understand it, and some other people are siding with the enemy." Under such conditions, hatred of the enemy becomes morally necessary, a point of duty, like flying the flag on the Fourth of July. Since other enemies, such as Jews and Blacks, have been declared off-limits by the prevailing middle-class moral order, conditions dictate that the scapegoat this time around, during the latest long-term economic contraction, will have to be the Japanese. The times demand it. Capitalism, which is predicated on the nation-state and leads to rising trade conflict in times of decline, insists on it. Simultaneously, though, liberal capitalism fears it, since such forces, once unleashed, are not easily controlled. For those who aren't used to making fine distinctions, Japan-bashing has a way of shading over into Asian-bashing in general. It is a very short step from bashing Japanese-built cars in Detroit, to boycotting Korean-owned shops in Flatbush and burning them down by the hundreds in Los Angeles. It is also a very short step from proclaiming that Japanese are racists, as Crichton does in *Rising Sun* (without bothering to distinguish between statements by certain right-wing Japanese leaders and Japanese *in toto*) to proclaiming that all Koreans are racist (the rallying cry among Black boycotters in Brooklyn) and, finally, to proclaiming that all *Jews* are racist (the rallying cry of Black rioters last year in Crown Heights).

Which brings us full circle. As conditions deteriorate, all the old moral baggage goes out the window, including the above-mentioned prohibitions against anti-Semitism and persecution of minorities. Once gaining entrée by way of the back door, racism will inevitably begin chipping away at all the ideological and moral impediments that kept it from entering by way of the front. Racially speaking, the coming fin-de-siècle is looking more and more like the previous fin-de-siècle, marked as it was by the Dreyfus Affair in France and the Mendel Beilis ritual-murder trial in Russia.

This may seem like an awful lot of baggage to hang on a mystery novel. But the fact that *Rising Sun* was able to open to rave notices (see Robert Nathan's enthusiastic front-page review in the *New York Times Book Review* on the 9th of February), spend weeks on the best-seller list, and become a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, all without anyone blowing the whistle on what is in fact one of the most neurotically racist novels in years, suggests something serious is wrong. While liberal middle-class opinion remains outwardly pious on the subject of anti-Semitism and prejudice against Blacks, a surge of racism may be welling up beneath the surface against the Japanese. □

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BOOK REVIEW

Tripping the Light Fantastic

Christine Stansell

In Pursuit of Gotham: Culture and Commerce in New York by William R. Taylor. Oxford University Press, 1992, 272 pp.

Unlike the French or the English, Americans have long enjoyed heaping contempt on their greatest city. Yet ironically, while the provinces so zestfully deride New York, images of the city's streets, architecture, manners and speech have come to serve as a cultural repository from which, for a century, all Americans have habitually drawn to portray modern life, both in its brightest and darkest manifestations. New York and New York–like images waft persistently through the dreams and desires of the country's populace.



It is impossible to understand the pervasive New Yorkism of the American twentieth century unless we comprehend the power and fertility of the city itself. This is William R. Taylor's enterprise. *In Pursuit of Gotham* contains ten essays on assorted aspects of New York culture in what could be called the age of early modernism, from 1890 to 1930. At the most general, Taylor is concerned with questions of representation and form, and with how the city came to be known and charted in particular ways. How did the New York skyline become a quintessential icon of urbanity on the eve of World War I? How did such images come to identify New York identity, an identity reproduced and sold in millions of photographs, cinematic takes and anecdotes?

Taylor incorporates a series of finely delineated social histories into an overarching cultural interpretation of great sophistication and power. He never strays far from the large questions about urban imagination and the big money—the pervasive effects of capitalism in shaping both cultural renditions of New York and an audience for them. But he composes his analysis through an inlay of smaller studies of writings, images, and locales—a close look at particularities quite different from the overwhelming stress on monolithic "discursive" forces which dominates cultural studies today.

Taylor shows how early New York modernism—the broad social milieu in which artists began to conceive of themselves and their subjects—heightened and multiplied an experience of polyglot detail.

Canonical interpretations of modernism have tended to stress formal experimentation and disdain the study of context as a crude "sociologizing" of art. To give one example: students of Picasso have long been transfixed by the artist's rendering of women's bodies into planes and quite uninterested in the Barcelona prostitutes and bordellos from which Picasso drew his inspiration. Taylor's account opens up a different perspective, from which we can understand the relationship between society and art in historically fascinating ways. He illuminates a widespread New York fascination with the "jumble" and "miscellaneity" of the streets, with a "culture of pastiche" of heterogeneous social "types," ethnic groups, languages and stories. This analysis helps to conceptualize the interest of some American modernists—an interest sometimes sustained, sometimes only momentary—in capturing and fixing urban flotsam and jetsam in their art, in responding to metropolitan culture rather than suppressing it: the painter Stuart David, the writer Djuna Barnes, the poet Langston Hughes and even, in a very different way, the stringent avant-gardiste Marianne Moore.

Taylor terms this milieu a "commercial culture," localized in the city itself and quite distinct from the nationally based mass culture which was to emerge in the 1920s. Commercial culture, still rooted in nineteenth century street life, became a medium for entrepreneurship which, artistically, was both "high" (as in the case of Alfred Stieglitz) and "low" (as with vaudeville, nickelodeons and eventually movie houses). Commercial culture took the oddities, encounters and eclectic perspectives of the New York streets, repackaged them in new images and narratives and sold them back to a public comprised of both working-class and bourgeois urbanites "keenly attuned to the panorama of goods and people" provided by public life. Thus Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, pioneer of sensationalist yellow journalism, offered something for everyone: crime stories, hard news, advice to working girls, household hints,

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sporting news and, on Sundays, color comics legible to English and non-English speakers alike.

After World War I, commercial culture went national. Tin Pan Alley songwriters, for example, reworked snatches of melody from Harlem, the Lower East Side, Little Italy and the Tenderloin into sentimental ballads deracinated from any particular social reference. "Bei Mir Bist Du Schön" ("To Me You're Beautiful") was a typical transposition: one of Tin Pan Alley's greatest hits, it was originally a tune sung in Yiddish by peddlers on the Lower East Side, later set to swing by Black musicians at the Apollo Theatre, then set to English lyrics by Jewish musicians, and finally introduced nationally on the radio by the Greek-American Andrews Sisters.

First New York businessmen, then New Yorkers gone to Hollywood, made piles of money from such translations and homogenizations. This process, which involved the unfathomable psychic attractions of Americans to an urban life which on a conscious level they mostly repudiated, has been difficult for critics to understand. At the point in American history when culture becomes "mass culture," scholars usually separate into the declensionists, who deplore the narcotizing effects on the masses, and the populists, who stress mass culture's supposedly liberating effect. Taylor sidesteps this debate by emphasizing a more civic-minded point—the absolute centrality of New York to America's imaginative life. Conversely, he deplores the damage successive waves of huckstered images—made increasingly palatable for armchair provincial tourists—have done to New York's ability to represent itself fully in even its own imagination.

In characteristically reflective fashion, Taylor puzzles through just how this happened: how commercial culture, grounded in a set of more or less democratic cultural brokerages, was packaged successfully and sold to a voyeuristic nation. By the 1930s, the "bright and possessive vision" of the first generation of New York modernists had disappeared and "the city experienced by those who lived and worked there" had been replaced in the national media by one "abstracted from history, a city for tourists, a city frozen in time, and hence part of a national mythology about big cities." Mass culture commodified sections of the city and "types" who lived in them. Times Square and its "guys and dolls," Greenwich Village and its "bohemians."

The consumption of city life from afar, via mass culture, has supplanted the living of city life.

Taylor unravels the process through careful histories of these neighborhoods as well as the writers who fixed them in print. It's a considerable task to pry open sealed modernist narratives which so ostentatiously advertise their transparency and truth-telling qualities, and it's a pleasure to follow Taylor as he does just that. Considering the ostensible "rebellion" of the Greenwich Village bohemians from commerce, for example, he wonders why "this freedom from mercenary taint" was so central to their identities when, in fact, many of them made such a commercial success out of being bohemians. He shrewdly dissects the career of H.L. Mencken, showing how Mencken rose to the top of the "New York opinion factory" by compressing a new middle-class, midtown style of scathing cleverness—a sort of Jazz Age, masculinist (and far more talented) Camille Paglia. And in an essay on Damon Runyon, one of the book's best, he demonstrates how the journalist detached the slang of Broadway from the milieu in which language enacted itself: "the *way* people talked *was* the story." "It is ironic," Taylor concludes, "that the very circuitry of press, radio and film that delivered Broadway slang and all the other freshly minted lingoes to the nation at the same moment deprived us of the vital communal impulses that made Broadway itself possible."

With these final reflections, Taylor suggests that the *consumption* of city life from afar, via mass culture, has supplanted the *living* of city life. This has happened, it seems to me, in several ways. Those neighborhoods most harshly plundered for representations of the metropolis—Times Square, the West Village—have sunk into a half-life in which they exist primarily to excite the imaginations of the out-of-towners who flock there to ogle the urban characters (street preachers, gay couples), absorb the energy of the streets (ever suckers of the three-card-monte dealers), and shop for clothes, sex or drugs. This kind of cultural parasitism has existed since the 1920s, but gentrification in the 1980s introduced a new variety, as entrepreneurs packaged entire neighborhoods as "neighborhoods" and sold them to the highest bidders. A new class of residents, instant New Yorkers, then became live-in tourists in their new domains. On the Lower East Side, in Soho, and in Tribeca the gentrifiers purchased the elements of a New York life, all familiar through media renditions—ethnic diversity, funky housing, a hip-hop street life, and urban characters—and all carefully kept at a distance. Gentrification fostered a sensibility often immune to "the passion for city life and the excitement of other subcultures" which Taylor believes once informed the metropolis; rather, it promoted a notion of New York as backdrop to the dramas of one privileged class—Woody Allen's *Manhattan*.

Taylor is wonderfully impious about New York, if always caring; he never lets the reader forget that New Yorkers themselves have been the chief hustlers in the representation racket, forever hawking themselves and their experiences to the rubes. His interpretation is too complicated and deep-going to translate into political prescriptions. But his acute sense of our present imaginative impasse, the ways in which the "circuitry" of mass culture has short-circuited the city, is critical in understanding the metropolitan desolation which surrounds us.

Taylor began his intellectual career as a Young Turk of the American Studies movement, which in the 1950s set out to free American cultural criticism from its deadening insecurities vis-à-vis Europe by examining our art and literature within its own web of myths and symbols. Mostly Harvard-trained, many of these scholars, for all of their radical impulses and groundbreaking work, never quite left genteel New England—intellectually or emotionally—in their search for America's soul. They needed to look outside Boston. How satisfying that William R. Taylor should have set out on his own quest for America and found it in New York City. □

BOOK REVIEW

Androgyny and Beyond

Arthur Waskow

He, She and It by Marge Piercy. Alfred A. Knopf, 1991, 446 pp.

I began to read science fiction when I was twelve years old, just a few months after the atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima, and I've never stopped. It wasn't gee-whiz gadgets that attracted me; it was the dark visions and the rainbow cloudbursts of imagined social transformation, dystopian and utopian. My commitment to healing the world has been shaped as much by science fiction as by Isaiah, Marx, or Buber.

All that time I have been waiting for Marge Piercy's new book. Not quite consciously waiting, you understand. Not even in my dreams could I have created this book, but in my heart and *kishkes,* I've been waiting.

Nu, what is so delicious? First of all, it's Jewish science fiction. Not just casually Jewish, but rooted in the sardonic Jewish mysticism of the Kabbalah and the profoundly Jewish spiritual wrestle about what social justice means in a world where the Messiah is ever-coming, ever-vanishing.

And it's feminist Jewish science fiction. The story of the Golem of Prague is at the heart of Piercy's tale, but the Golem takes a different form when his tale is told by a woman, Malkah, one of Piercy's heroines. The communitarian ethos of the kibbutz is the air that Piercy's story breathes, but the kibbutz is a different place when it is transformed by a feminist politics and culture.

Piercy's kibbutz arises not in Israel but on the surviving hills of what we know as Boston. Surviving because much of the American coastline has been inundated by a new Flood, a surge of ocean from the melted ice caps, the result of global warming. It's the mid–twenty-first century, and a lot we take for granted is gone.

The United States, for instance. It collapsed, like the—what was it?—Soviet Union. The world is ruled by several gigantic corporations that have divided it into feudal fiefdoms. There are a few free cities, and the free Jewish town of Tikva (Hope) is one of them.

The Middle East has also vanished. Not just a government or two, a sovereignty or two, but the entire region, oil fields and fig trees and mountain goats and peoples. It's the Black Zone now, an empty blotch on the map. Jerusalem is a wilderness of fused green glass, the thermonuclear casualty that set off a totally ruinous bio-chemical-nuclear war.

It turns out that there may be secret survivors—is anybody as stubborn and tenacious as Israelis and Palestinians? As women? But that's a thread for you to follow when you read the book.

Piercy does give us some gee-whiz gadgets: computer networks deft enough to create planetary virtual realities, through which the corporations can struggle to invade Tikva, through which Tikva can struggle to defend itself, and through which people who explore them can transform themselves—and die. And cyborgs—cybernetic organisms, fusions of computer programming and biology, real live quasi-humans, with intelligence for sure, and maybe, just maybe, with free will. Or maybe not.

Can a cyborg be a citizen and vote in the town meeting of Tikva? Can a cyborg be a Jew and count in a *minyan?* And here is the neat and powerful question posed by Piercy's fusion of feminism with science fiction: Who or what is a creature that is programmed with both a woman's and a man's mentality? Can a spiritual androgyne be a human? Or is the real question whether anyone who is not androgynous can be fully human?

Piercy's androgynous cyborg may be the only fully human creature in the world. His name—in outward anatomy this cyborg is fully male, though inwardly also the He/She/It of the title—is Yod, the name of the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. (This model was the tenth in a series of attempts to build a useful cyborg) But Yod is also the first letter of God's name, which is sometimes written as Yod-Yod. And it is close to the Yid that in Yiddish is the generic word for Jew.

Note the wonderful linguistic problems that Piercy introduces. Yod is the newest model of a cyborg, like the latest car, clearly an invention, a machine. Yet Yod has overtones of the ultra-human, much more fully in the Divine Image than anyone since the original Adam, who was made in Our Image, said God, in the Image of God, male and female, androgynous as God is androgynous. He, She and It.

This is a novel of ideas, but not only of ideas. By introducing a being who is both male and female, both human and machine, Piercy has jiggled and joggled the relationships of all the characters. Not only the ideas, but the people, are delicious. They make love, they get jealous, they fight for custody of their children and for control of their creations, they rebel against their bosses and comply with the rules, they take risks and die and go half-mad with grief.

The book is told from the alternating standpoints of Malkah, a tough and gentle grandmother who is sexually alive and technologically ingenious, and Shira, her bright and frightened granddaughter who is relearning her way toward love and a sense of her own power in the world. It is Malkah who has made sure that Yod has a full womanly as well as manly programming, and who searches for some way to tell him of his own ancestors. (Notice how Jewish is this desire: Tell it to your child on that day, says the Passover Haggada.)

But who, or what, is the ancestor of a cyborg? Malkah decides it is the

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Arthur Waskow is the author of Seasons of Our Joy *and* Godwrestling, *and the director of The Shalom Center, which works to involve Jews in thought and action to prevent environmental disaster.*

Golem of medieval Prague, that doomed subhero to whom, in Jewish legend, the great Rabbi Judah Loew gave life and a mission to protect the Jewish people from pogroms. The story enters Yod's consciousness at a level quite different from computer programming, a level that involves what seems to be free will; and after hearing the story, Yod assumes the triumph and tragedy of carrying the Golem's being to a higher level.

This transmutation of the Golem story becomes a metaphor for Piercy's own work. If the Golem is Yod's ancestor, then the Golem story is ancestor to Piercy's novel. Piercy in effect both locates the Golem story as a kind of early Jewish science fiction, and places her own work in the stream of mythic Judaism.

The Golem story operates at a philosophical-existential level as well as at a social-political level. Philosophically, it puts the human race in the role of Creator God—shaping a quasi-human creature as God shapes humans in the divine image. By confronting our thoughts and feelings about the quasi-human Golem, we face, in a profound way, the question of what it means to be human. Are we merely robots programmed by the universe, by billions of years of chemical and biological and social evolution? Do we somehow replicate within us the grandeur of that process? Are we free and sacred, or are we mere blind products of that blind production? Piercy's book, with its Golem beyond the Golem, its quasi-human who may even be ultra-human, poses an even sharper question. Do we, facing Yod, feel admiration? Fear? Disgust? Love? Laughter? How, then, do we look to the infinite, ironic Eye of all the universe?

For powerless medieval Jews, the story of the Golem served as a wish-fulfillment fantasy of a world in which Jews could defend themselves. Similarly, *He, She and It* is a fantasy of a world where women can shape society. Such works can become more than a wistful fantasy; they can serve a political purpose, pointing the way toward action. *He, She and It* provides that inspiration; along with the rest of Piercy's fiction and poetry, this novel is a constant encouragement toward the repair and healing of the world. In the past fifteen years, a number of such works have emerged from the feminist ferment, so many that Marleen Barr, the critic and scholar of science fiction, has suggested that they constitute a new kind of writing that she calls feminist fabulations.

Piercy has worked in this genre before: *Dance the Eagle to Sleep* (1970), written before the Weatherpeople existed, imagined the joy and the disaster that the emergence of a million such people would bring upon America. And *Woman at End of Time* (1976) spoke from the standpoint of a Chicana who is experiencing three worlds simultaneously: the oppressive present in a New York mental hospital, a glorious feminist future, and a nightmarish ultra-male–fascist future.

What is new about *He, She and It* is the organic fusion of these themes with a Jewish consciousness that is both cultural and spiritual. I say organic because Piercy does not just plunk down the Jewish and the feminist alongside each other. Her depiction is more complex.

Piercy's poems and novels celebrate the most intimate matters of bedroom, kitchen and workplace—places that embody and give rise to the repair and healing of the public world.

See it this way: If her novel were a photograph, feminism and Jewish renewal would not only be seen side by side, but could be cut apart to create two separate photographs. But the kind of image that comes to a reader's eye as it takes in Piercy's work is more like a hologram than a photograph.

In every section of a hologram, information is encoded about the entire picture. If you cut up a hologram, each part can replicate the whole. What you see will be a fuzzier image, since some information is lost; but the missing elements will consist of fine detail throughout, rather than a section in its entirety.

In Piercy's picture, we do not simply see feminist Judaism over here and Jewish spiritual renewal over there. Feminism has suffused the new spirituality, and the new spirituality has suffused feminism. And this is true about the wider society as well as its Jewish microcosm. Tikva's feminism is presented as the sort of feminism that would speak not only to Jews but also to Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, or secularists; not only to women but also to men.

Why? Because Tikva's feminism has been infused with an earthy spirituality that has itself been infused with feminism. The very fact of Tikva's Jewish specificity is seen as earthy and rooted rather than imperial and ethereal. The Jewish concern for what is intimate, communal, practical, celebratory, now enriched by feminism, beckons to the larger society to create its own earthy, rooted, feminist spiritualities.

In Piercy's science fiction, the utopias and dyspepsias exist alongside each other; they are, indeed, intertwined. It is the computerized corporate feudalism of the global-warming world that has given rise to Tikva. This is perhaps more like a messianic than a utopian vision, for Messiah is always in flow: As the dreadful danger changes, it gives rise to a transformative alternative. So her worlds are neither prettified nor merely apocalyptic. Always, there is both the Flood and the Ark, both a need for change and space for change.

In this sense, Piercy's approach recalls the two-sided mission of Jeremiah: to uproot and tear down, to build and to plant. But she tries to inspirit the building and planting in a way that Jeremiah and most writers of science fiction do not: she speaks in the idiom of everyday life. Her poems and novels celebrate the most intimate matters of bedroom and kitchen and workplace. She knows that these private places both embody in the present and give rise in the future to *tikkun olam,* the repair and healing of the public world. That is why this novel of ideas is also a novel of relationships, bodies, and people.

What effect does this have upon readers? In most science fiction and in most prophetic writing, the life experience of the readers is deeply distant from the lives of the actors in the story; but not in Piercy's work. Her characters are recognizably human, not Wonder Women with magic bullet-deflecting bracelets or prophets fortified by God's walls of brass and iron. Piercy lets her readers see people like themselves, who can make change happen, so her readers can come to see themselves as agents of change.

It is precisely when Piercy's work is at its earthiest that it is the most political. If politics is the process by which people are moved to change society,

then Piercy's approach lets her reach out with a loving political touch to those who read her work.

Many readers of the 1990s will recognize in this approach the feminist teaching that the personal is political. But Piercy's vision is more communal, and less individual than most feminist thought has taken the personal to be. In this way, Piercy's world echoes the history of Jewish life during much of the last two thousand years, the ghetto life of a shared communal practice in the private, everyday spheres of home and neighborhood. She acknowledges that world with her free Jewish town of Tikva and her tale-within-a-tale of the ghe: .o of Prague.

But just as Yod the cyborg is the Golem-with-a-difference, so Tikva is the ghetto-with-a-difference. For the ghettos of the Middle Ages had no hope of transforming the world. That ancient Jewish vision, the prophetic vision, had been turned inward: in the face of Rome, the Church, Islam, it is hopeless for us to change the world; let us build a decent society of our own, within the ghetto walls. But Tikva sees itself as a ghetto with a mission, a part of a world struggle, not only vulnerable to the feudal corporations, but challenging them as well.

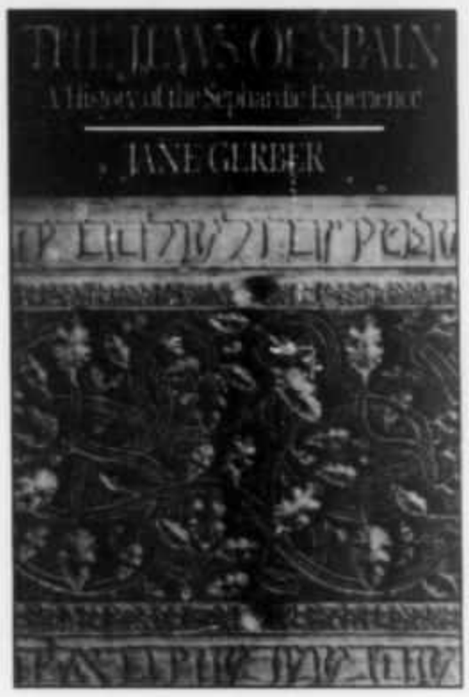
How can Piercy dare to see a tiny Jewish town in such a bold light? I think it is because her Jewishness and her feminism fuse into a new vision. The Jews are too few to shake the world; women are many. Women are too diffuse and too diverse to make a counter-community; Jews know how. Counting noses on the face of the earth, the Jews are just about the tiniest imaginable community with a transformative vision; women could be the largest. But they cannot transform the earth alone, and they cannot transform it if they work alone, as individuals.

Piercy is saying that women must create communities of women and men in conscious connection with the earth, communities that are intimate and participatory, that so thoroughly share an approach to work, sexuality, money, and spirituality that they can stand together against the powers that be.

The struggle to heal the world may well take generations, Piercy warns, during which time even more of the world may be deeply wounded. An ancient Jewish wisdom for a wider human future. □

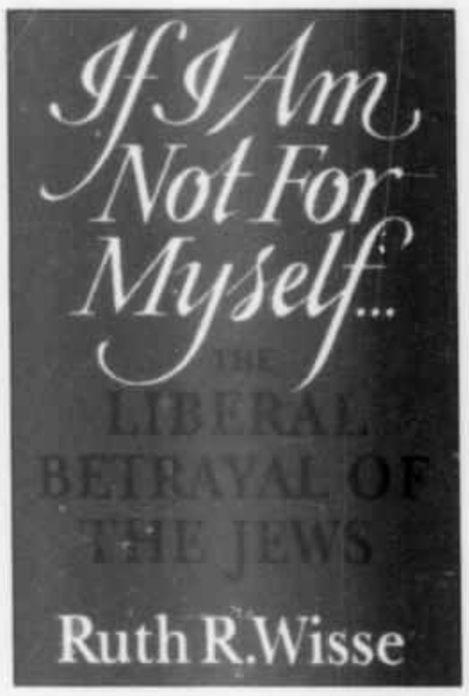
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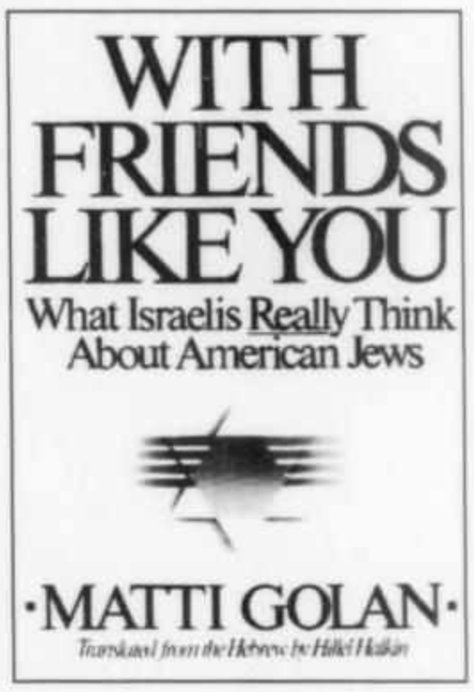
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LETTERS

(Continued from p. 6)

times, is simply too nerve-racking and, I hesitate to admit, too demeaning, to be sustained permanently, no matter how great one's devotion. I can't live with always being afraid.

That nowhere in this debate did the above objection arise is just further evidence of the patently heterosexual nature and bias of that debate. If the Conservative Movement is serious about its statement of nondiscrimination, then it must open up the floor for more discussion, this time including their homosexual sons and daughters, colleagues and friends. Anything less will render their fine statements empty rhetoric.

Dawn Rose
Jewish Theological Seminary
New York, New York

RETHINKING SYRIA

To the Editor,

Larry Cohler misrepresents my position on Syria. My argument in the *New York Times* Op-ed last July was precisely that in order to "drive a hard bargain" the Syrian-American rapprochement under the Bush administration must be slowed down through congressional pressure, and that one such form of pressure would be for Senator John Kerry to resume the (indefinitely postponed) hearings he had planned on Syrian involvement in narcotics and terrorism.

Cohler, on the other hand, does not supply even one example in his *Tikkun* article of how the United States should be more forceful in its dealings with Syria, save for a casual aside that the latter's refusal to abide by the last accord requirement or redeploy forces from Beirut to the Bekaa should be more vigorously opposed.

Cohler urges us to *not* look at Assad as another Saddam. I fail to understand what moral distinction Mr. Cohler finds between the two mass-murdering Ba'athist dictators. Mr. Assad is arguably a shrewder political leader. His mass executions have been largely domestic. He has ventured beyond his own borders into Lebanon and, in 1973, against Israel. He has a far better instinct for self-preservation and has, since 1973, usually adhered to the written and unwritten agreements he has made with Israel.

Mr. Cohler is pleased with the Assad regime's new policy allowing Jews to emigrate. And he warns against Israel losing what might be a historic opportunity. I have no disagreement. If the Rabin government reaches an agreement with Syria involving territorial concessions on the Golan, that is fine with me. But Assad is playing an American game that Mr. Cohler refuses to see, or discuss. The rewards reaped by Assad include a virtually frictionless, de facto annexation of Lebanon; a massive re-arming involving chemical weapons, Chinese and North Korean long-range and unconventional warhead-ready SCUD C missiles, tanks and planes. The missile buildup, described by ultra-dove Matti Peled to me as a significant strategic danger for Israel, is dismissed by Mr. Cohler as a "serious current effort to achieve some measure of deterrence."

Mr. Cohler ignores assessments like the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's report, written by, among others, Clinton campaign adviser Michael Mandelbaum, that "the hostile nature of the Syrian regime" including its support for terrorism and its expansionist policies in Lebanon, "make it, at best, a severely limited participant in the peace-making. The report recommends a U.S. policy not of "rapprochement but rather containment, while his policies are tested. Only if Assad changes Syria's behavior, in all these areas, will he be a serious candidate for peace-maker."

Fortunately, if Bill Clinton wins, the next administration will be committed to opening the Syrian file in connection with Pan Am 103; to backing a full Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon as well as to the peace talks. Arguing for a harder line toward Damascus from Washington is quite consistent with supporting a Syrian-Israeli deal based on UN resolution 242. It would be ironic if *Tikkun,* which championed President Bush's linkage of loan guarantees to Likkud's settlement policies, failed to support a similar two-track approach with regard to Syria, a regime which claims far fewer (if any) of its loyalties. U.S. policy should isolate and oppose these elements of Syrian policy which contradict the peacemaking goal, while simultaneously encouraging Damascus to stay at the table.

David Twersky
Washington, D.C.

HEARTLESS WILLIE

(Continued from p. 30)

trip to the bathroom."

"There's no time!" but he was already on his way without his cane, bracing against the wall.

Traffic downstairs had started and we heard the sound of motors. A convoy of trucks entered the Plaza, carriages mounded with camouflage canvas.

Trucks! She had thought we were going by tram like the Chernitzes. "How will he manage in a truck?" We heard a crash in the toilet. "Peter!"

He came out and collapsed in a chair. He said nothing had happened, a slight accident but he was fine. He told her to sit down and listen. He promised to be brief. "Admit what you know in your heart, Helen. There's no relocation. Once we go downstairs we're finished."

"Everyone's downstairs. In seconds they'll come for us."

"Let them come. You won't be here."

"Where will I be?"

"You'll be next door, at the Goldman's."

"How will I get there, you crazy man? You expect me to fly?" The Goldman apartment was across the airwell from ours, boarded up since the Goldmans were sent East.

He had waited till the last moment to reveal his plan. Solomon, the custodian of the building next door, had

agreed to unlatch the shuttered window of the Goldman apartment. He'd brought over a ladder and the ladder now spanned the airwell, from our bathroom to the Goldman's. We were to cross over and hide in the vacant apartment until the transport left. Vanderzee would see that we got to England. It was all arranged.

"You made plans and said nothing to me?"

"It's arranged. There's nothing to discuss."

"You expect me to walk on air into the Goldman's?"

"With Willy to help it will be no problem."

"And how will you get across?"

"You heard the easy part. Now the hard part. One of us has to stay and explain where the others are. I'm the logical one because there's no way I can cross over to the Goldman's. Our only chance is to separate."

"Never!"

"Think clearly, Helen. Vanderzee will see that you get to England. There you'll find my cousin Landesman and, I promise, in a few weeks we'll be together."

"How can that be?"

"Landesman is rich. Money makes everything possible. I assure you, it's arranged."

"No," she said, "If you cross on the ladder, I'll cross on the ladder. If you go down to the Plaza, I'll go down to the Plaza. If you go East, I'll be on your heels."

"There's no time for discussion. We have to move right now, this second."

"If Landesman can rescue one he can rescue two."

The loudspeaker warned that anyone who didn't come down immediately would be severely punished.

It was his intention from the beginning to come around to me. "It has to be you, Willy. You're our only hope." He wanted me to cross over to the Goldman apartment by myself and set in motion the arrangements for their rescue.

She sloughed off the fantasy of Polish farm life in an instant. She begged me to obey my father. "Go now, Willy. For our sake, go."

They hustled me into the bathroom. The window was wide open. A wooden ladder extended across the airwell into the Goldman apartment. The shutter had been left ajar by the obliging janitor. Father stuck a roll of bills in my pocket and pushed me to the window.

"We'll be together in a few weeks."

"And the relocation?"

"A fairy tale."

I climbed on the commode, then climbed down again and held them both.

She said. "Quick! They're coming!"

We heard them beating on doors on their way upstairs.

"They'll call my name at the roll call."

Father said he would tell them I left on an earlier transport. "They want this business finished. They won't investigate."

They hammered on our door and father shouted, "HOLD YOUR HORSES! I'M ON THE TOILET!"

I stooped under the window, crawled out on the unsteady ladder, three floors up. It was only a few feet to the Goldman's. The bottom of the airwell was loaded with debris. I saw a stuffed animal, perhaps Hanna Goldman's teddy bear.

I crossed on hands and knees, stepped down into the Goldman's bathroom. Father pushed my suitcase out on the ladder and I brought it in. The ladder crashed on the debris below.

"I'M COMING, YOU IDIOTS! I'VE GOT NO LEGS!"

Mother strained to pull down the window, her hat awry, the brown jacket of her suit streaked with grime from the outer sill. "Take care, my lovely boy," and that was the last I saw of her.

To stay alive I crawled a few feet through air into a bare room infiltrated by slats of light coming through the seams of a closed shutter. I stayed until all sound stopped.

In my dreams, Fanya says, "Find a place and I'll do anything." I run after the tram. I catch it before it reaches the Central Station. I yell, "Get off! There is no relocation." She pats the seat reserved for me and fifty years later I still lack the heart for the journey.

"Heartless Willy, how will you survive?" and I say, "Not well, Mother," and ask to be forgiven. Forgive me, Mother, forgive me, Father, forgive me, Fanya and Isaac and Bessie and Sophie, but the abandoned dead give me no relief. □

Jews and Latinos

(Continued from p. 48)

Jews also need to support social and economic policies that enable the Latino community to participate freely in the political process. In New York, such policies include programs to encourage jobs, provide adequate housing, and foster protective rather than abusive policing. It also means recognition of the importance of Latino culture and language.

Hispanics must have an equal voice in the political discussion. Thus, when 25 percent of the city's residents are Hispanic, they must be seen and heard. While equity cannot be ensured by a quota system, it is nevertheless a fact that having someone else speak for you is at best ventriloquism, not true voice. Progressive Jews may not revel in the defeat of Solarz, but we can nonetheless celebrate the election of Nydia Velazquez.

Finally, Jews should reject the "look out for number one" vision of American ethnicity, the conservative canard that if we let "them" in, there won't be room for us. There is a venerable tradition in Jewish thought for

a more expansive notion of who and what we are, beginning in the Bible, amplified in the Talmud, and prevalent in the works of modern Jewish thinkers. The great mystic Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935) expressed it well:

> One cannot reach the exalted position of being able to recite the verse from the morning prayer (I Chronicles 16:8), 'Praise the Lord, invoke His name, declare His works among the nations,' without experiencing the deep, inner love stirring one to solicitousness for all nations, to improve their material state, to promote their happiness. This disposition qualifies the Jewish people to experience the spirit of the Messiah. □

AUSCHWITZ

(Continued from p. 33)

terror here? Or do we restore them to their historically accurate, original forms to convey the full horror of the enterprise?

While most of the group voiced warm appreciation and admiration for the job done by the museum's overworked, undercompensated staff, all agreed that it was time to address the training of the young Polish guides. In her command of the facts, our Polish guide, Wanda, had been exemplary. But hers was not—could not have been—a Jewish narrative of Auschwitz. We thus proposed that teachers from Holocaust education centers such as Facing History and Ourselves in Boston or Israel's Yad Vashem be recruited to conduct training seminars precisely to teach the Jewish narrative of events, which is still not being adequately told.

We then looked to the preparation of the Jewish guides who often accompany groups from Israel and America and found that, in fact, they rarely told the *Polish* narrative to their Jewish charges. In open sessions with the Auschwitz Museum staff, we were alerted to this problem when Wanda, polite and extremely reluctant to offend her guests, painfully related stories of being verbally abused by angry Jewish youth groups.

In their frustration and memory-ignited rage, Jewish visitors to the camp had begun to confuse their Polish tour guides for SS guards. We tried to explain to Wanda that for many of the Jewish visitors, the nearest objects of rage and frustration were too often their guides, the surrounding Polish population, and the country itself. We also resolved to improve the preparation of Jewish groups to make sure that they knew enough of the Polish narrative to distinguish between Nazi killers and Polish victims.

Indeed, given the overwhelming proportion of Polish and Christian visitors to Auschwitz, we had to recognize that Auschwitz-Birkenau would necessarily function as a shared memorial space, where Polish Catholics will remember as Polish Catholics, even when they remember Jewish victims. As Jews, we do not locate the victims in a Polish Catholic martyrological tradition. But neither can we expect Polish Catholics to recite the mourners' Kaddish. As Jews recall events in the metaphors of their tradition, so will Poles remember in the forms of their faith. The problem may not be that Poles deliberately displace Jewish memory of Auschwitz with their own, but that in a country bereft of its Jews, these memorials can do little but cultivate Polish memory. In this light, we realized that Auschwitz is part of a national landscape of suffering, one coordinate among others by which both Jews and Poles continue to grasp their present lives in light of a remembered past.

With all this in mind, it is clear to me that any prescription for institutional memory at Auschwitz would be, like memorials themselves, provisional. Most of our proposals will be adopted, others debated further, refined, augmented, and perhaps elided altogether. Indeed, the process itself reminds us that as much as we desire it, no memorial is really everlasting: Each is shaped and understood in the context of its time and place, its meanings contingent on evolving political realities. Perhaps the wisest course, therefore, will be to build into the memorial at Auschwitz a capacity for change in new times and circumstances, to make explicit the kinds of meanings this site holds for us now, even as we make room for the new meanings this site will surely engender in the next generation. For once we make clear how many people died there, for what reasons, and at whose hands, it will be up to future commemorators to find their own significance in this past. □

SOUTH AFRICA

(Continued from p. 61)

to stanch a yawning, irreparable guilt—a lifetime's worth—with a wad of paper money.

My sister tells me that she and her husband have given Mavis R1000 (about $400, a substantial sum in that economy) to build a new mud-brick house, because her family was left homeless in the township violence. But, she adds, "Don't tell Mom."

What did I learn from my return to South Africa? I learned that I don't have a well-developed sense of place: that is not how I remember things.

I learned that I will never understand South Africa because I don't want to: I just want to reject it.

I learned that there are some things in life, in fami-

lies, that can never be repaired.

On the very last night of my visit, my brother, in an ironic gesture, takes me to the Doll House, a classic fifties-style drive-in restaurant where we used to go as children—but rarely, because the whole experience offended my father's sensibilities. He would sit in the driver's seat like a condemned man, radiating finicky distaste, while the car filled with the odor of fried grease, and some accident always befell the upholstery.

The garish neon lighting in the parking lot hasn't changed, and neither have the fake doll-house dormers on the restaurant facade. My brother orders a burger and chocolate milkshake, as before; as before, I order a toasted cheese and ginger beer. For realism, we should be squabbling and spilling food in the back seat, but he is a suave thirty-one-year-old now, and time has begun to trace the same fine lines on his English skin as it has on mine.

We sit side by side in the pink and cobalt glare, playing at nostalgia, when something that looks like a huge armadillo crawls into the parking lot behind us. A flap opens in the side, disgorging a stream of humanoid creatures in camouflage gear. That, my brother tells me, is a Casspir, an armored vehicle full of police, probably on its way to Alexandria township to quell "disturbances" there. After a while, the armed men wander back, and vast quantities of coffee and burgers begin to appear, served on those little red trays that are supposed to hook on to car windows. But this menacing pachyderm has no windows, and so the flap opens again, and the trays disappear inside, as if the machine itself were ingesting them.

I'm leaving in the morning, but there isn't much to say, so we sit side by side in silence: my brother and I at an American-style drive-in somewhere in Africa, pretending to relive a childhood neither of us can recall, sharing the neon intimacy of the parking lot with real families and real children and this obscene machine. The moment is surreal—and that is why, for the first time, it seems to make some kind of sense. □

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Hiking to Sky Meadows

We leave the children, take a bus down
a mountain road into the national park,
hoping to condense into two hours what
we gave up so willingly: privacy, solitude,
that part of us we now ignore.

The Hassids believe each soul is pleaded
with to come down from heaven. The other
souls sing to ease its burden.
First a gentle hum, then more demanding.
Always a melody you think you've heard before.

Here among the wildflowers, a jarring quiet
isolates us. I strain to remember the names:
elephant head with its perfect pink trunk,
the purple flowers of monkshood, so appealing
and so poisonous.

The smell of swamp onion lingers over the meadow.
If I could stay here forever, the melodies would
come back to me, flooding and tripping each other,
finally stacking into a ladder, where the souls
would tumble down.

Now we start up a different route, enticed by rumors
of great beauty. There is a choice of two paths,
as in fairytales. One follows the twisting waters
of Cold Creek and is fairly steep, the other wanders
through
the lodgepole forest along a horsepath.

We hike up towards Blue Crag past Emerald Lake,
where a fisherman dozes, his pole bobbing in the water.
Up the drier slopes swamp whiteheads and striped tiger
lilies part for us. Then the path climbs a low
hemlock-covered ridge.

We are ascending now and the air thins.
I want to stop but my legs refuse.
The sky clears and flattens, but thunder, louder
and fiercer, presses against me, the higher we go.
I recognize the sound of water rushing. Maybe
it's just the singing and the whir of black coats.
The bride is toasted now and then her future children.
She is lifted in a chair and passed in a circle
above the heads, a tapping of feet and a hum swathe her.
I am sure it's a melody I know.

Carol Davis

Rights in the Workplace

(Continued from p. 24)

closings could unite around a comprehensive "worker's rights" proposal. As a long-range program, it could give unity and structure to current organizing efforts around various components of the package. And this package ought properly to be the first of many aimed at broadening the fundamental rights of Americans vis-à-vis the private sector, in commerce, education, communications, housing, and so on. The framers of the Constitution, even at their most timebound, had a broader vision of the Rights of Man [sic] than the mere opportunity to be equally exploited.

Beyond fundamental rights

But that fundamental rights model in turn falls short of a covenantal relationship between employer and employee which recognizes workers as whole human beings, on and off the job. It is time to go *beyond* a "worker's rights" theory to look at on-the-job life as an integral part of the whole life of every working person. The radical inequality between the worker who (like most of us) defines her– or himself largely in terms of what s/he "does," and the employer who sees her/him as a unit of non-fixed labor cost, poisons the worker's whole life, and, ultimately, the family and community s/he lives in. Employers must be held accountable for how they handle the tremendous psychological and social power that this relationship gives them. The "rights model" limits the powerful in very specific ways. But it also assumes that everybody will use all the power they have and are not specifically barred from using. From the worker's point of view, having a set of specified fundamental rights as an employee is certainly better than merely being equally exploited; but it is still a starting point on the way to being able to function in the workplace as a whole, respected human being.

A new administration will be in a unique position to implement this vision—in the shorter term, a comprehensive code of fundamental rights in the workplace, and, in the long term, a revision of relationships between worker and management. The presidency's potential as a pulpit has already been commented on far beyond my poor power to add or detract. The emphasis of Clinton's campaign on increasing the numbers of good jobs while simultaneously improving the skills and aptitude of workers, dovetails with our vision of empowered, respected work-life. That vision has the marks of American legislative style at its best—simultaneously a near-transcendent set of goals, and a concrete program of laws and regulations. It is consistent with the demands of many unions, but it goes far beyond them—far enough to ward off the usual accusations against a Democratic administration of being a "captive of special interest groups." A case can be made that labor unions, representing less than 20 percent of the work force, comprise a special interest group. But working Americans as a whole (plus would-be workers) constitute nearly three-quarters of the population. To empower them/us is to shape the entire polity into a free and mutually responsible community. □

Sharing Stories

(Continued from p. 40)

> Rabbi Meir said: They told a parable about this. It's like twin brothers who lived in a town. One was made king and one became a robber. The king commanded that he be hanged. Everyone who saw him said: "That's the king hanging." So the king ordered that he be taken down.

The image of God hangs on the gallows, says the Talmud. And if God did not die at Auschwitz, certainly the divine image within humanity was executed.

From old tales a storyteller makes new ones; with old stories a listener can better hear the new. With a rich store of stories, a person can read his or her own life as a grander tale. Or to choose another parable: In *The Thousand Nights and One Night,* in the Tale of Ala al-Din (or Aladdin), the magician proclaims: "New lamps! New lamps for old!" People think him a fool, but by this trick he trades a mere piece of copper for the magic lamp that is home to Ala al-Din's generous genie. Old tales, like old lamps, have great power.

I would submit, though, that those of us who grew up in America in the last generation or two use newer but less magical tales as models for our lives. Our stories are likely to come from *Leave it to Beaver* and Alka-Seltzer commercials, not Shakespeare, the Bible, Shahrazad's tangle of tales, or rabbinic legend. That makes it easier to read our own lives as sitcom or soap opera, with their meager meaning, than to see ourselves as King Lear, or Shahrazad, or Israelites leaving Egypt.

Is this an argument for a "Great Books" curriculum? Not in the restricted sense that the term is often used, in which "great" means only books in that chain of tradition that leads from Homer through Shakespeare. Western Civ. 101 is only one of the jugs of gold in the storeroom of stories, and I'm greedy. I recommend such greed. I also want fistfuls of legends from the Talmud and Bereshit Rabba—Rabbi Akiba entering paradise, and Alexander the Great traveling beyond the mountains of darkness. But I'm not satisfied with that jug alone, either. Let's grab fistfuls of stories, let's shower them on our children and our students. Let's bathe in a sea of stories. □

Letter to Clinton

(Continued from p. 18)

million people ranging over three thousand miles is the wrong scale. Like Moscow, Washington presides over far too large a population and land mass. Everyone knows "Washington" can't solve most big problems.

Many American states (like the Baltic nations), however, are too limited in scale and too underpopulated to do much alone economically. Only a few states—California, Texas, perhaps New York—are large enough "regions" to become important focal points for comprehensive decentralization.

In Europe many of the most successful political-economic achievements have been in smaller nations where the politics of coherent, democratic decision making is easier. Even the so-called West German miracle took place in a polity that could easily have been tucked within the borders of Oregon.

This suggests a vision of the United States in the new century as a democratic confederation of semiautonomous regional units, each large enough for serious economic management, but none so large that it would dominate. If you were to emphasize real decentralization, you would be wise to encourage smaller states to work together in regional units, organizations, compacts, or special new institutions.

If you begin to sketch a vision of such longer-term decentralization for the American system, you can draw upon numerous precedents, which include several historical regional compacts, regional planning commissions, earlier ideas of grass-roots regional authorities such as the original conception of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Roosevelt's proposals for seven regional "TVAs." In contrast to the current TVA, these early proposals were strongly influenced by principles of ecological planning. In the future, large-scale public enterprises might also logically be anchored in such regional democratic institutions.

Eventually—probably after you leave office in the first decade of the next century—amendments to the Constitution, and perhaps a Constitutional Convention, would probably be necessary to restructure American federalism to give real power to the decentralized units, which would ultimately begin to form a new political-economic system.

Let me stress a couple of points about dangers and opportunities.

The first stems from Gorbachev's failure: His brilliance was in his understanding that when a system is in stalemate, there is no way forward without fundamental restructuring. He made some very serious errors, however, for which he paid a heavy price.

Gorbachev's primary mistake was his failure to move aggressively and fast enough. He temporized, hoping to muddle through without losing the support of those whose position he was inevitably undermining. He also failed to take the political offensive against his enemies before they did it to him. Given your own well-known proclivity for compromise, I suggest you ponder both his fate and his mistakes very carefully.

In opposing what ultimately and inevitably became the radical decentralization of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev demonstrated his blindness to one of the characteristic political forces of our time. Although it is sometimes confused and overlaid with the issue of ethnicity, the trend toward decentralization—from Quebec to Scotland, from Brittany to the Ukraine—appears increasingly as an inexorable global force. It is the essential form the democratic ideal is taking as we approach a new era.

I mentioned at the outset that you might *at best* end up in the situation Carter and Bush faced if you did not grasp the full implications of the ongoing deadlock in our present political-economic system. This, I believe, is a conservative judgment. The situation may be far more dangerous, since Washington has very little room to maneuver on the economy and on spending.

If the economic situation worsens, you will inevitably be faced with rising racial antagonism and violence. Los Angeles was almost certainly just a beginning. Unless you have set the strategic stage very differently by offering a compelling new political vision and strategy, your response can only be reactive: you will be forced to put down the violence. While you already have accepted capital punishment as a political necessity and as governor allowed several men to go to their deaths, we both know you detest this. Woodrow Wilson presided over the Red Scare; Franklin Roosevelt presided over the Japanese internment. You may well end up the president who presides over the vicious repression of Black America unless you can get ahead of the politics and the economics of the profound issues now facing America.

On the other hand, the opportunity you face is clear. Your administration just possibly could crack through the stalemate and shatter the old myths. People sense the difficulties we face and know in their hearts there are no quick answers. What they need to know is that you are moving in a serious and meaningful new direction, even if the road may be long and the journey difficult. In offering a new vision and a tough-minded strategy to achieve it you might possibly be able to pave the way, establish the conditions, and lay the groundwork for an explosion of American creativity, meaning, and economic and moral fulfillment in the new century.

If so, you will be remembered as a great President and a world leader of real substance. □

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