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

TIKKUN

Todd Gitlin on Irving Howe
Michael Strassfeld on a Torah of Zion
Naomi Seidman on Lamentations
Alice Chasan on Leonard Jeffries
Stephen Hanan on gays
Elazar Barkan on Cultural Studies,
and more...

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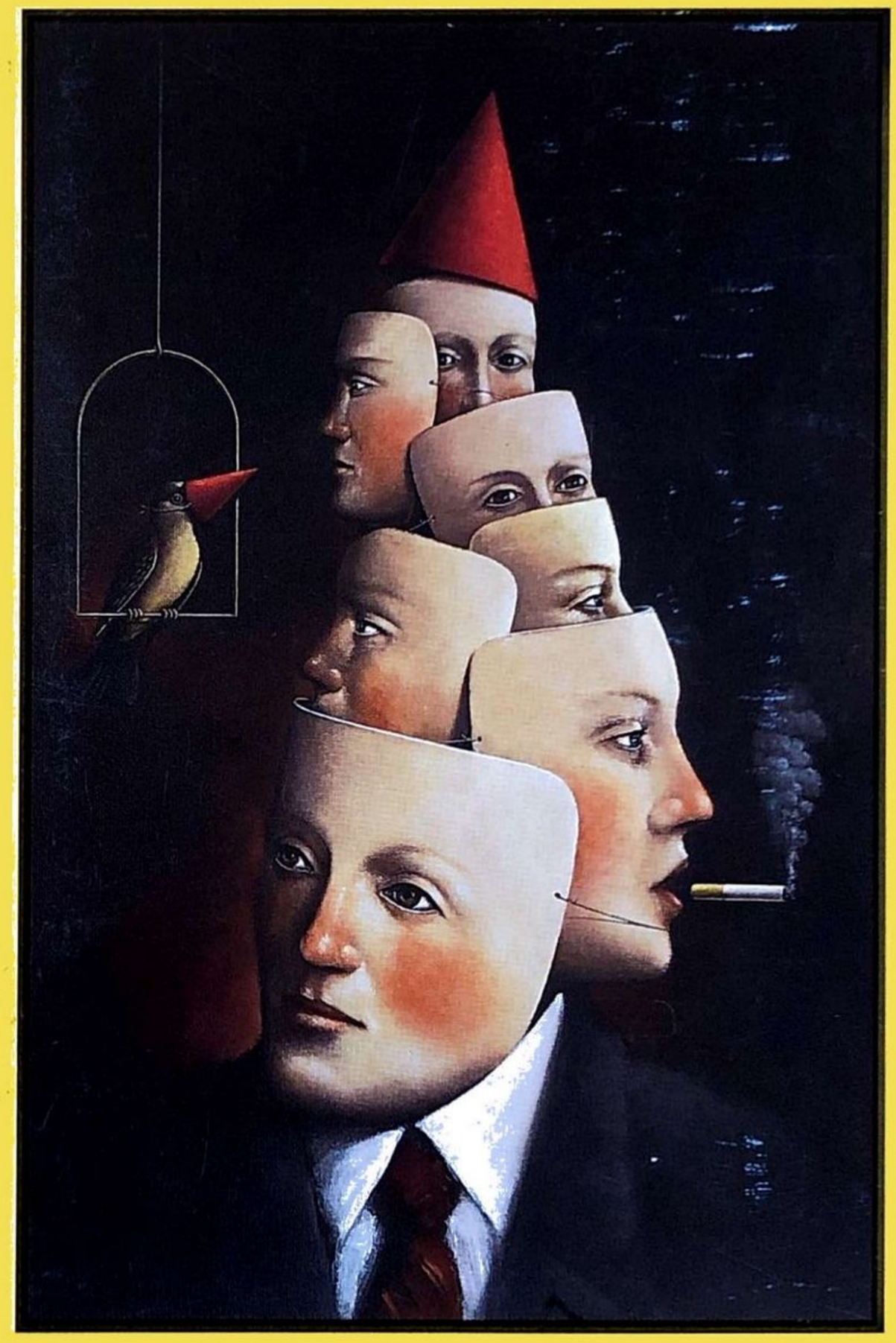
Press Cynicism

Meaning vs. Media Mush

Jay Rosen

Communitarianism & Its Limits

Charles Derber



...panalytic Update
...chael Bader

Suburban Orthodoxy
Vanessa Ochs

ADLgate
Chip Berlet & Dennis King

MEMOS TO CLINTON

Michael Lerner: *How To Regain Your Popularity*
David Bollier: *Fiber-optics & Community*
Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman: *Health Care & Meaning*

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What is a Politics of Meaning?

Human beings have psychological, ethical, and spiritual needs that transcend the normal liberal agenda. Liberals have tended to focus exclusively on economic entitlements and political rights. But most people need something more: We need to be part of loving families and ethically and spiritually grounded communities that provide a meaning for our lives that transcends the individualism and me-firstism of the competitive market.

Hillary Rodham Clinton made this point decisively when she said in her Austin, Texas speech that "The market knows the cost of everything but the value of nothing." What counts in life transcends the materialism of the marketplace. So, too, does it transcend the "rights-oriented" focus of so much traditional liberal politics.

An economistic focus for the Democrats worked well in the '30s, when most Americans were economically oppressed, and a rights-oriented focus worked well in the '60s, when most Americans responded to the demands for equality of the civil rights and women's movements. But by the late '70s, most Americans were experiencing a different kind of pain—a pain related to the breakdown of values, a crisis in relationships, an escalating divorce rate, a growing frustration with the alienation people were experiencing in the world of work.

It was the Right, not the Left, that recognized the crisis of meaning and went about the business of creating a new politics of meaning. Nobody claimed that Ronald Reagan was talking "psychobabble," as they now do about Hillary Rodham Clinton, when the Republican standard-bearer announced the crisis in families and the decline of values. The media never renamed his wife "St. Nancy" when she tried to persuade high school students to "just say no" to drugs or premarital sex.

What the Right recognized, but the Left would not, was that the society was in a deep ethical and spiritual crisis, and that crisis had everything to do with how the society and government are organized. The Right understood that it was impossible for individual families or churches to withstand the heavy assault on the values they were trying to teach their children.

But the Right's politics of meaning was severely flawed, because it's a solution to the deprivation of meaning which was a fantasy of an ideal community and ideal family, neither of which had any reality in people's daily lives. The Right's answer to this complaint was demagogic and dangerous: Our fantasy doesn't work because of some Other (gays, Blacks, feminists, tax-and-spend liberals) undermining our otherwise wonderful society.

The Right ignored the role of the competitive marketplace, the way our daily lives in the world of work lead us to subordinate all values to the struggle for material success. Nor could the Right acknowledge that an economy whose bottom-line mentality rewarded those who were most effective at manipulating or controlling others would necessarily produce narcissistic personalities who were unable to sustain loving relationships in family life. The Right fails to understand that its defense of the right of corporations to plunder the resources of the world and pollute the environment not only threatens the physical survival of the planet, but also our moral lives, because it models an ethos of looting that shapes everyone's consciousness about "how the real world works." Addressing the crisis in values and the crisis in families without making significant changes in the values that govern our economic life is ultimately futile.

Nevertheless, most people felt grateful to the Right. They intuitively understood that their children's rejection of ethically and spiritually sensitive values had something to do with outside influences, and that the reason relationships and families were harder to sustain had something to do with social realities outside the family.

The Right was able to get away with blaming feminists, Blacks, gays, etc.—and ignoring the impact of the competitive marketplace—because the Democrats and the Left simply had no understanding whatsoever of the crisis of meaning. Ethical and spiritual issues? For the liberals, these were purely personal, to be dealt with through psychotherapy, or Sunday-only religion, for the left, they were nothing but a smokescreen through which Rightists would assault liberal programs.

Fearing that the First Amendment would be undermined if a debate about values entered into the public sphere, oblivious to the fact that values already had entered the public sphere and that right-wing values were triumphing because liberals refused to enter the debate, the Democrats buried their heads in the sand, imagining that if they offered another middle-class entitlement or more highway construction they would win back the American people.

It took Bill Clinton to weave a politics of meaning subtly but consistently into his economic program for the Democrats to win back the White House.

Although we've published a twenty-page explanation of the policy implications of a politics of meaning (some of which is summarized in this issue in Michael Lerner's "Memo To Clinton"), the key is not the details. The politics of meaning represents a paradigm switch from a discourse of materialism and selfishness to a discourse of caring and community. The psychological, ethical, and spiritual needs, though not reducible to something quantifiable or easily subject to scientific observation, are validated as equally important with material needs and quantifiable data.

Why a *politics* of meaning? Because the economic, political, and social structures of the society reward selfishness and narcissism, while disadvantaging caring for others and ethical behavior. A politics of meaning aims to encourage collective action to shift these societal priorities and to restructure economic and political institutions. It also seeks to encourage a shift in the dominant discourse, so that ethical, psychological, and spiritual needs are no longer seen as "soft" or irrelevant, but rather as fundamental to what it is to be a human being. □

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 8 NUMBER 4

2 **Letters** Clinton; the politics of meaning

5 **Editorial** Reflections on Leonard Jeffries

Special Focus: Press Cynicism

7 **Jay Rosen** *Who Won the Week? The Political Press and the Evacuation of Meaning* The cynical misrepresentation of the Clintons reflects the media's huge stake in the denial of meaning and in a narrow conception of savviness.

Memos To Clinton

11 **Michael Lerner** *How To Regain Your Popularity* It's not centrism, cuddling up to the cynical media or to the conservatives of both parties, and downplaying the yearning for community and caring that got you elected.

20 **David Bollier** *The Information Superhighway* Ensure that the government's multi-billion dollar investment in fiber-optic technology is guided by a visionary, public-spirited plan.

23 **Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman** *First, Make Meaning* You won't win serious reform unless you foster an ethos of mutual responsibility and ethical sensitivity.

Articles

27 **Charles Derber** *Coming Glued: Communitarianism to the Rescue* We need a bolder communitarian agenda with solutions that speak to all Americans.

31 **Dennis King and Chip Berlet** *ADLgate* Founded to fight bigotry and extremism, the Anti-Defamation League's activities seem to have veered dangerously close to those of their foes.

37 **Stephen Hanan** *Lavender Woodstock* Attending this year's Gay Rights March in Washington heals old wounds.

39 **Todd Gitlin** *Irving Howe (1920-1993).*

41 **Michael J. Bader** *That Old Psychoanalysis Just Ain't What It Used to Be* Is the contemporary analyst less like Sherlock Holmes than Detective Columbo?

44 **Don Futterman** *How to Build Utopia in Only Minutes a Day in The Privacy of Your Own Home* (Part II).

48 **Jonathan Graubart** *Podhoretz's Complaint* The editor of *Commentary* explains why it's suddenly okay for Jews to object to the Israeli government's policies. How convenient.

49 **Elazar Barkan** *Fin de Siècle Cultural Studies* The oppositional mood on campuses is fading as marginality gives way to the latest academic fashion.

52 **Vanessa L. Ochs** *Not in My Backyard* The impending opening of an Orthodox Jewish school for girls in a posh suburb is too close for their more assimilated brethren's comfort.

56 **Michael Strassfeld** *Toward a Torah of Zion* The spiritual alienation of the Jewish people exists everywhere, even in Israel.

59 **Naomi Seidman** *Burning the Book of Lamentations* A young woman spends Tisha B'Av with her parents.

63 **Howard Schwartz** *Tales of the Great Jewish Mystics* Three stories offer glimpses into a world of spirituality.

67 **Richard Landes** *Justice, Work, Study, and Protest: The Biblical Contributions to Modern Democracy* Ancient Israel rather than classical Greece spawned our democratic values.

Reviews

43 **Ernestine Schlant** on Albert Drach's *Unsentimental Journey.*

79 **Kai Bird and Gar Alperovitz** on Melvyn Leffler's *A Preponderance of Power*; **Mark Shechner** on Nessa Rapoport and Ted Solotaroff's *Writing Our Way Home*; **Linda Simon** on Sue Miller's *For Love*; and **Eric Alterman** on Robert C. Cottrell's *Izzy*.

73 **Fiction** **Gary Krist** *Uncle Isaac.*

Poetry: p.6: **Stuart Kestenbaum**. Inside back cover: **Ruth Behar**, from a collection in progress titled *Next Year in Havana*. **Cover art:** *Gone with the Smoke*, Rafal Olbinsky, 1991, acrylic on canvas, courtesy of the artist. **Photography:** Cecilia Schmidt: p.11, p.13. Impact Visuals: p.5 (Brian Palmer); p.7 (Linda Rosier); p. 25 (George Cohen); p.29 (Francisco L. Conde); and p.37 (Marilyn Humphries). Associated Press/Wide World: p.8(Joe Marquette); p.33(Marty Lederhandler);and pp.22 and 40. **Illustration**: Edward Briant: pp.20,27. **Cartoons:** Jimmy Margulies: p.16. **Sculpture:** *p.65, Acts of Power*, Lynne Avadenka, 1988, mixed media (photo credit—Detroit Institute of Arts).

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Letters

CLINTON

To the Editor:

President Clinton doesn't know the difference between economic and social policy. Or I should say that his social policy is really a kind of economic policy, as education, welfare, health, and other reforms are presented as "improving efficiency and competitiveness," not teaching people how to govern themselves, how to define and live up to high civic values, etc. It will be interesting to see if the politics of meaning shows up in Hillary's health care reform proposal in any substantive way, not just as rhetorical flourish.

The basic theoretical problem is that it is not possible to live by Kantian ethics today. "Never see anyone merely as an instrument of your own ends, always see people as ends in and of themselves," said the old man. This worked fine in Kant's age of self-earned property, customers rather than consumers, apprenticeships rather than Manpower's temporary employment, etc. You treated the shoemaker from whom you customarily purchased your shoes not only as bearer of a commodity but also as an individual. Try that in a Safeway check-out line, where the worker's labor time is being electronically monitored.

Once the passage is made between self-earned property/small commodity production (and associated habitual moral behavior—recall that Kant was a creature of habit) and capitalist property and wage labor, Kantian ethics (which is just a secular form of biblical ethics) loses much of its meaning. This is why Niebuhr has to make the move toward "the legitimate use of power" and why Hillary Clinton, who must be a most remarkable person, is judged as intellectually incoherent.

Yet the fact remains that Hillary is

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talking about values, meaning, civic virtue, etc., which is a good thing. But she'll never get to first base against the pitching of the conservative Right without deepening her critique of the conditions of life in capitalism today—where instrumental thinking and behavior rules, not because of any failure of the moral imagination, but because of the structure of wage labor, capital, competition, world market, etc.

James O'Connor
Dept. of Economics
University of California, Santa Cruz

To the Editor:

In light of the attacks that you and Hillary Rodham Clinton have received for espousing the politics of meaning, I can't help notice the prescient brilliance of your "Memo to Clinton: Our First Hundred Days" (Tikkun, Jan/Feb, 1993). In that memo you observed:

"Much of the problem will come from the media. Every time you try to frame a program in terms of the large idea, they will attempt to reduce it to a narrow, self-interested goal on your part. The media are filled with people who at one point in their lives yearned for the possibility of morally transcendent order, became disillusioned about its possibility, and now feel threatened by anyone who seems to rise above their own cynicism. They will do their best to misconstrue every attempt you make to reach beyond 'politics as usual.' You will only succeed if you can build a politics of meaning, a politics based on a sense of shared purpose and moral vision."

Jerome G. Baiman
South Orange, New Jersey

To the Editor:

As someone who values her privacy and tries to respect the privacy of others, I am distressed by several proposals in your May/June issue. First, Jeremy Rifkin's ideas about promoting "wellness" through workplace programs and perhaps even "mandatory participation in workshops and seminars on nutrition as a condition for receiving universal health coverage" ("The Clinton Dilemma," TIKKUN, May/June 1993) shows little regard for the many people who would consider it an unwarranted (and stressful!) intrusion into their private lives to be subjected to compulsory indoctrination sessions about their personal habits. Many people favor chocolate over broccoli for a reason anyone with taste buds can figure out and would feel most "empowered" if the government would grant them "the right to be let alone" when it comes to anything as personal as eating and exercising. Physical fitness isn't everyone's top priority!

Similarly, I am concerned about Michael Lerner's proposal that "the Department of Labor should create a program to train a corps of union personnel, worker representatives and psychotherapists...to assist developing a new spirit of cooperation, mutual caring, and dedication to work" (May/June 1993). This sounds dangerously close to a leftist version of the "organization man" approach where employees' attitudes are to be molded to meet present specifications. Lerner's remarks about the success of *kibbutzim* leave out a crucial factor: Kibbutz life is voluntary. Those who don't appreciate the communal spirit are free to leave, or not to join in the first place, and 97 percent of Israelis do *not* live on *kibbutzim*. But what will happen in the society Lerner envisions to

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What is the place of Jewishness in the emerging multicultural world? Is there a way of embracing our Jewish particularity without falling into the kind of ethnic chauvinism whose manifestations in Bosnia and Eastern Europe we find abhorrent? How do we overcome the compulsive individualism of contemporary American culture and reconnect with what is exciting and nurturing in our Jewish cultural heritage? We invite novelists and poets, writers for magazines, television, movies, and academics. There will be a special focus on the needs of new writers just beginning their careers.

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workers who want to be paid and evaluated in the workplace solely on their work and would feel intruded upon rather than empowered by having their attitudes and emotions monitored?

Finally, I would like to know more about Michael Lerner's views about political disagreement. His remarks about how people adopt right-wing views as as a means of assuaging psychic pain makes me wonder whether he regards conservatism as a psychiatric symptom, sort of like agoraphobia. But this would hardly be a respectful way of dealing with one's intellectual opponents. How are conservatives (and liberal individualists) to be regarded in the sort of society Lerner favors...as wounded souls in need of therapy, or as citizens exercising their constitutional right to hold, express, and promote dissenting views?

Felicia Ackerman
Dept. of Philosophy
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

Editor Responds:

Privacy is one of many competing societal goods, and its claims have to be balanced against other claims. Most of us tend to be skeptical about those with contagious diseases who demand their right to enter public space and infect others on the grounds that requiring them to inform others would violate their privacy rights. Nor do we think that privacy is grounds to insist on our right to drive an automobile without taking a test to prove we know the rules and know how to apply them. Though philosophy departments may not be among them, many workplaces require a spirit of cooperation and caring for the kind of teamwork necessary to make them function. Unlike the philosopher who writes articles in isolation, many workers depend on each other's work to complete their own, and their own ability to function is impeded if they constantly have to heal themselves from the consequences of others' negativity. The degree to which they can claim a privacy right in this circumstance depends on the degree to which their behavior and performance on the job affects everyone else. The model of independent workers doing their work in isolated little units that don't impinge on each other has little to do with the realities of most workplaces. How people treat each other can be just as toxic as the germs they carry. While more caring behavior can't be legislated, it can be encouraged, taught, and rewarded—as opposed to the current situation in which the most competitive and least caring behaviors are often rewarded by the competitive market.

If we are to provide health care for everyone, it seems perfectly reasonable to ask something in return—namely, a minimum level of people caring for themselves. If it's reasonable to require students to learn certain things that the society wants them to know, it may be equally reasonable to require everyone to learn behaviors that will enhance their health, whatever their age. But there should be an option: Those who don't wish to participate in the coverage need not participate in mandatory health education.

Political disagreement, even when based on various psychological distortions, must be protected. But when I hear people denying the Holocaust, or supporting anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, or homophobia, pardon me if I not only think about how to convince these people to change their minds, but also think about what kinds of psychological strategies may be necessary to heal them of "views" that represent, in my mind, an outcome of psychological pain and not just a mistaken argument. Having been a professor of philosophy myself for several years, observing first-hand how ineffective good arguments were to sway people who held on to various prejudices and hatreds and never could quite recognize when they had been defeated in an argument, I began to realize that healing and repairing the world required an understanding of feelings and emotional distortions. But since, in my view, everyone (myself and all other social-change agents included) is, as I explain in my forthcoming book on Jewish renewal, a "wounded healer," I'll insist that we must both heal wounded souls and at the same time preserve everyone's constitutional right to hold, express, and promote dissenting views—even when I believe those views can be seen as pathology.

Melvin Jules Bukiet,
TIKKUN's fiction editor,
is the winner of the
1993 Edward Lewis Wallant Award
for Jewish-American fiction
for his book,
Stories of an Imaginary Childhood
(Northwestern University
Press, 1992),
which was also nominated
for the 1993
National Jewish Book Award.

To the Editor:

The work of Robert Karasek and Tores Theorell (*Healthy Work*, Basic Books, 1991) shows that work-based stress is a direct outcome of how work is organized, specifically the lethal combination of low control of work and high demand placed on workers.

Except for fleeting and incidental references you totally ignore the fact that fewer than one worker in eight (in the private sector, one in ten) has any kind of union representation. The remedies on which you rely cannot possibly succeed without some effective form of worker representation. Some equality in the bargaining relationship is a precondition for systemic—as against incidental or anecdotal—reform of the workplace. American employers prefer and actively seek a union-free environment. With the active support of the Reagan-Bush administrations, and facing labor leaders more interested in winning the anti-communist war than in dealing with the anti-union onslaught, they succeeded.

The larger reality is that the transformation of the U.S. economy continues to erode job security, reduce real wages, deny basic benefits, and consign increasing numbers to or beyond the margin of employability. The psychological deprivations on which you focus matter, but the context is critical.

Sumner Rosen
School of Social Work
Columbia University
New York, New York

Editor responds:

Among other things, the politics of meaning is a strategy to transform the

(Continued on p. 103)

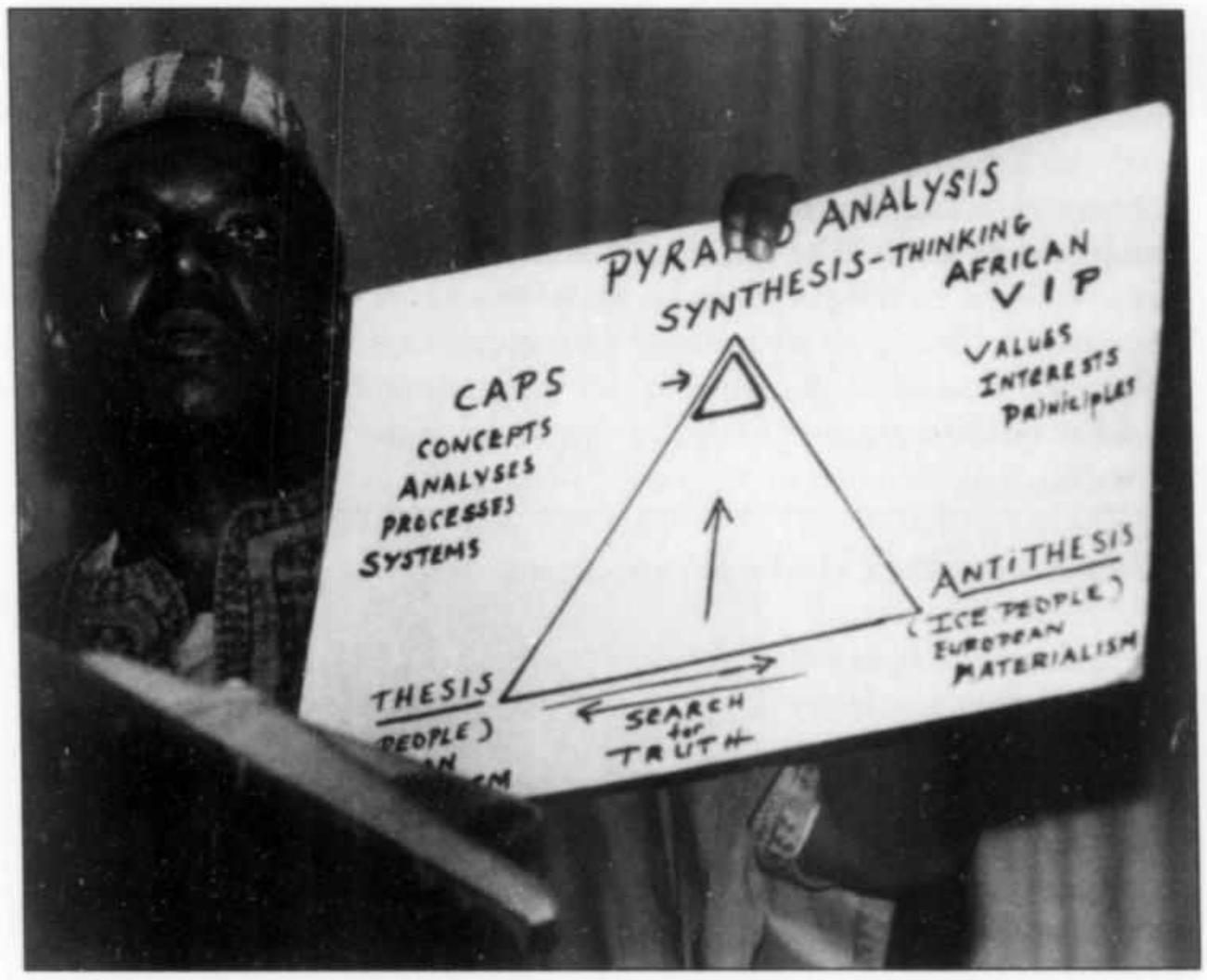
EDITORIAL

Walk Like an Egyptian
Reflections on Leonard Jeffries

Alice Chasan

All we wanted was our day in court. And we have been given that day in court, and our ancestors and the Almighty, they are satisfied.

—Leonard Jeffries, upon learning of a federal court verdict in his favor in his suit against City University



Seeing Leonard Jeffries on page one of The *New York Times*, resplendent in his African robes, sporting a large pendant of ancient Egyptian design, I was bemused, but I nevertheless understood. Who wouldn't want to claim the ancient Egyptians as kin?

I did. When I was a child, I went, as often as I could get across the Hudson River, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bathed in shadow, in the hush and majesty of the museum's monumental marble-floored galleries, I walked among the sarcophagi, the mummies, the graceful, elegant sculptures and reliefs, the fabulous, hybrid human-animal forms. The spirits of the ancient pharaohs and their queens communed with me. I felt the kindred vibes.

Unlike other kids whose romance with the pyramids and the treasures of Tutankhamen ended at puberty, my affinity for the ancient Egyptians endured. I chose a college where I could study Near Eastern archaeology. While my fellow Bryn Mawrters were reading Marcuse and Vonnegut, I sat in darkened lecture halls watching slides of tombs and temples and artifacts from Karnak and Luxor. I knew the nuances of Old Kingdom sculpture from those of Middle or New at a glance.

Ancient Egypt was my passion; Leonard Jeffries doesn't need to explain to me why he wants to believe he and his people descend from the creators of so magnificent a culture. It's not true, of course, any more than was my certitude, at ten, that I was the lineal and spiritual heir of Nefertiti. But that's not the point.

The hundreds of hours I spent devouring the Egyptians' images of self and others provided convincing evidence that the pharaohs were not Black; the reliefs and paintings clearly differentiate between the caucasoid features of the Egyptians, and the negroid features of the Cushites (later known as Nubians), neighboring people whom the Egyptians—as most ancients did with their vanquished enemies—enslaved. Those god-kings were slave-masters: How ironic that Jeffries wants to claim descent from his people's oppressors, while railing against the "rich Jews" he says financed the slave trade.

Pharaoh oppressed my people, too, Professor Jeffries. I came to the realization—perhaps not so

coincidentally around the time we went on strike, in the spring of 1970, to protest the U.S. government's invasion of Cambodia—that I could not admire a culture that oppressed the common people, that maintained an unbridgeable gulf between the elites and everyone else. I would always feel breathless in the presence of their incredibly beautiful sculptures and paintings, but I no longer wanted to claim sanguinity with the ancient Egyptians and I didn't need to; I had my Jewishness, a rich and equally venerable heritage, to nourish me, one that helped me make sense out of the need to oppose injustice when I encountered it. And we were slaves in Egypt, after all.

There's a sadness I feel when I look at Jeffries's regalia; it's the outward manifestation of the ardent wish to be connected to something grand and substantial, a tradition that carries cultural weight in the world at large. The impulse is authentic, and universal: In finding ourselves, etching out our identities, the ability to connect historically and culturally is essential. But therein lies the profound paradox of the Leonard Jeffries of the world: Their need to proclaim the inherent worth of blackness has gotten tangled with the inclination to appropriate identities that do not fit.

And to proffer theodicies that have no real explanatory or cathartic power. Why does Leonard Jeffries need to demonize my people in order to elevate his own? How can he hold to his racialist typology of "sun people" and "ice people" when racialist arguments have fallen so onerously and hideously upon his own brothers and sisters? As a Jew, I find it almost amusing to see myself grouped among the "ice people"—almost, except for the deep sorrow that wells up underneath the sense of absurdity.

I pity Jeffries's plight as a cultural orphan, if that he truly is. He certainly harbors the fantasies, so common among motherless children, of superhuman parentage. Wherever Jeffries's ancestry is really rooted, Amenhotep was no more his ancestor than he was mine. Nevertheless, one thing is clear to me, and it's a tragedy that Jeffries can't see it: We've both come out of Africa, and that's just one of many places for his people and mine to connect. □

When I was Ten I Had a Prayer Answered

The fireflies send their yellow beacons
into the humid New Jersey air
as dusk surrounds each house
pushing its way through our screen windows,
mingling with the blue light of the TV.
In this glow we sit watching
the Yankees play the Detroit Tigers.
It's an away game, so even as the sky
begins to rumble, in Michigan
the lights haven't come on yet.
I love Mickey Mantle with a passion.
I know when he was born, what's wrong with his knees
how great he is, and how he still isn't
as great as he could be.
He steps up to bat as the thunder and lightning
begin in our suburban sky. I send off a prayer
for the Mick as Mel Allen announces what
his batting average is. Oh
dear God, let him hit a home run.
He's got bad knees, he's from Oklahoma,
his father is dead...let him do well,
thinking all this quickly and fervently
so that it will be sent before the pitch
arrives at the plate. And his bat connects
and the ball sails into the stands of Tiger Stadium.
How did this one small prayer
find its way into heaven so quickly?
How did it rocket past the prayers of children
sick with malaria in the UNICEF films, the old women
next to the husbands in metallic white wards
of Beth Israel hospital, past the prayers of my
next door neighbor whose mother dies
of cancer, past all the prayers
of the children in concentration camps,
a forest of eyes behind unscalable fences.
So many prayers they must
have sent up, so many unanswered.
The prayers cling to the gates of heaven
like butterflies, wings trembling in the celestial breeze
made every time a soul breaks free.
What was God thinking to let mine in and
leave the other ones at the Gate.
A home run, that's an easy one,
let the kid have it. And the
uncountable prayers on the way up
fighting through the thick air,
so many it sounds like a swarm of bees in the spring,
a desperate hum of hope. Mickey circles the bases
on his bum knees. Outside thunder rolls and
the rain begins, raining hard, pounding on
the windows and the shining black street.

Stuart Kestenbaum

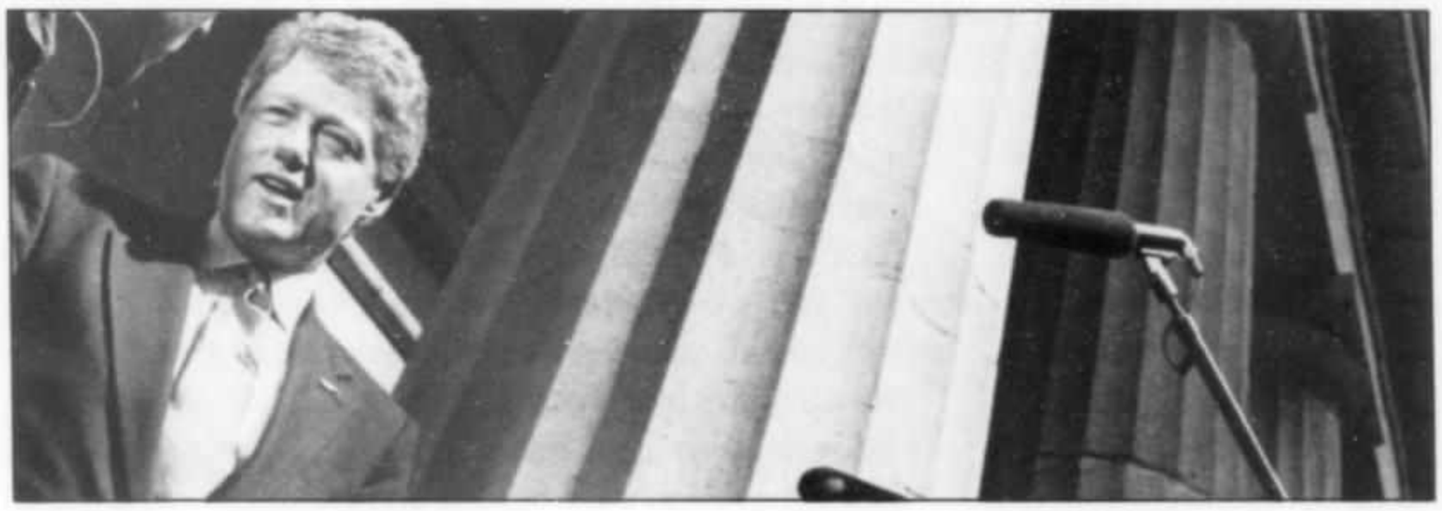
MEMOS TO CLINTON

Who Won the Week?

The Political Press and the Evacuation Of Meaning

Jay Rosen

One of Irving Howe's last pieces before his death was a short essay in *Dissent* on the theme of "diminished expectations" in politics and intellectual life. In it, Howe returns to a favorite line of argument in praise of "utopian" thinking. As practiced not by the state but by independent minds, utopianism is a "necessity of the moral imagination," a way of seeing beyond the "provincialism of the immediate" to the "possibilities of renewal." It won't lead to a plan of action, nor can it guarantee wisdom. But:



> What it does provide is a guiding perspective, a belief or hope for the future, an understanding that nothing is more mistaken than the notion that what exists today will continue to exist tomorrow. This kind of utopianism is really another way of appreciating the variety and surprise that history makes possible—possible, nothing more.

In that favorite sport of certain journalists and intellectuals—seeing through the illusions of others—Howe's credentials were unsurpassed. He had seen through the biggest and most deadly illusions of Left and Right, and he had done so when it mattered a great deal—during the fight against Stalinism, the rise of McCarthyism, the birth of the New Left. But with all his achievements as a demystifier, Howe had remained a self-declared utopian, dedicated to a political possibility he consistently called socialism, "the name of our desire." If his example taught anything, it was the connection (at birth) between heroic acts of skepticism and persistent acts of faith, between sound judgment and a political vision in which, as the philosopher Sheldon Wolin once wrote, things may appear in their "corrected fullness," with the extraneous removed, the essential highlighted. One may call this approach the higher realism, a view of politics grounded in "the practicality of yearning," as Howe described it. It was one of the enduring messages of his life.

Around the time of Howe's memorial service, Washington was in the grip of its May media frenzy (one has come to expect them monthly). The President was getting battered for the bungled investigation of the White House travel office and for tying up traffic at the Los Angeles airport while he got a custom haircut. William Safire, who never misses an opportunity of this sort, had christened two new "gates" in his column—Travelgate and Scalpgate. The *Washington Post* asked, ominously, "Another Failed Presidency?" Clinton's economic program was beginning to crumble in Congress He was dropping in the polls. Then came the disaster of the failed Lani Guinier nomination. These facts were duly registered, and the appropriate conclusion drawn: Four months into his term, Clinton had already become a joke.

As we observed this scene, the editors of TIKKUN were engaged in some provincialism of our own. We were preoccupied with a series of attacks on the

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On May 29, President Clinton named David Gergen (center) to the post of counselor to the President.

politics of meaning, on Hillary Rodham Clinton, and on Michael Lerner in such high-profile places as The *New Republic*, The *Washington Post*, *Time*, The *Wall Street Journal* and The *New York Times Magazine*. What, we asked ourselves, should we do about the undisguised hostility coming from the prestige press? Do we shrug and hope that all publicity turns out to be good publicity? Do we respond with heated letters to various editors? Do we turn over the next issue of the magazine to a defense of ourselves? Or do we refuse the bait and move on to other matters?

My own inclination was to move on, but for some reason Howe's passing argued against it. For it is clear that what Michael Lerner calls the politics of meaning is a utopian project in the noble sense of the term, a way of expanding our sense of the possible, reclaiming "the value of desire" as against "the deadliness of acquiescing in the 'given' simply because it is there," to quote Howe again. As it moved from the pages of TIKKUN to the words of Hillary Rodham Clinton, the politics of meaning provoked a reaction among those who consider the meaning of politics their professional domain, the elite press in the capital. This reaction—unmistakable contempt—needs to be understood. So does the almost gleeful surrender of hope that overtook the capitol in late spring, extreme enough that a *New York Times* editorial described June 4 to 6 as "The Weekend Everyone Gave Up on Bill Clinton."

Political reporters and Washington pundits specialize in what might be called the lower realism, a way of knowing about politics that tries not to be a way of questing. Listen sometime to the manner in which journalists employ the adjective "political," as when a panelist on "Meet the Press" says, "Senator Dole, let me ask you a political question." What comes next is invariably an inquiry about upcoming elections, poll results, interest group pressures, or partisan wrangling. This is what politics is "really" about in the minds of most journalists: process and tactics, the flow of money and the narrow defense of interests. Most of all, it's about who's up and who's down. Politics is a continuous election, a method for separating winners from losers. Polling is one instrument by which this understanding of politics is enforced. The TV pundits' Friday night question, "Who won the week?" is another.

Almost everyone has noticed how the press reduces the discourse of politics to the language of sports. But we rarely focus on the logic of this reduction. A basketball game is entertaining because it has no real purpose higher than itself. "The thrill of victory and

the agony of defeat" are enjoyed for their own sakes, and it would be foolish to ask for more "meaning" in basketball. Sports also create a realm of conflict in which the media's role is relatively benign. When the Knicks play the Bulls, what the reporters in attendance say or do has little bearing on the outcome. They may be sloppy, inattentive, or unfair, but the game exists independently of their excesses.

The habitual use of sports metaphors in political journalism is an attempt to borrow some of the innocence of sports reporting. "Who won the ballgame?" is an innocent question. It can be answered with facts, supplied by journalists but produced by athletes. When John McLaughlin or Jim Lehrer asks "Who won the week?" the question only sounds innocent. No "facts" exist except those produced by the journalist's angle of vision, which causes certain events to look significant or praiseworthy, while others appear irrelevant or dubious.

But the art of developing a sound political vision is absent from the journalist's training or self-image. It conflicts with a professional culture that stresses "objectivity" and the pursuit of scandal over acts of imagination. The "vision thing" has never been included in the official description of what the journalist does. So when it's done badly—when journalism's vision is cramped, insidious, or inadequate to the times—the press tends to escape responsibility.

It is rarely acknowledged, but asking "Who won the week?" is a political act. The question telescopes our vision downward; it sets a rhythm to politics that permits the media to play timekeeper, umpire, and finally, judge. The question would not occur to an ordinary citizen, but it remains a favorite of pundits and reporters because it appears to place the press on the outside of a process—the shaping of perceptions—that is profoundly affected by what the press itself does. By speaking of politics as a weekly contest of winners and losers, journalists thus avoid any conscious reckoning with their own influence on politics. They avoid, as well, their troublesome need for a more productive political vision, a way of looking at the world that will render it meaningful for others.

In their hearts, most journalists know that the sports analogy is misleading. They understand that politics, while it can be enjoyed for its own sake, is fundamentally about choices and values and the direction a society takes—not who's up and who's down. Journalists are capable of seeing "statecraft as soulcraft," as George Will did in a book of that title. But in their professional routines, their day-to-day view of the scene, their linguistic habits, reporters and pundits have accumulated a huge stake in the denial of meaning, the hollowing out of politics into a game of perceptions, to be played inside the media itself. Thus Margaret Carlson of *Time* acknowledged that the haircut flap was a "trivial event." But she added that it "resonated because it served as an emblem of Clinton's troubles." Resonated with whom? An emblem for whom? The best answer is the media.

Ultimately, the savvy style is the method by which politics is spirited away from us, and then returned for our consumption as farce.

By now even the denizens of the White House think they've achieved something by "winning the week." They fret and fuss when the week, according to the pundits, has been lost. The vacuum of meaning at the heart of Washington's political culture has become a social ill in its own right, a weakness from which the entire polity suffers. It is partly responsible for the dismal repute in which the federal government and the national media are held across the land. It is related in complex ways to gridlock on Capitol Hill and the glaring absence of political will symbolized by the federal deficit. It feeds the "pox on all your houses" sentiment that is skillfully manipulated by Ross Perot.

None of these developments can be blamed on the Washington press corps. But all of them are held in place, elements in an interlocking pathology, by a professional culture in journalism that simply refuses to change, despite the abundant evidence pointing to its own demise. Journalists have dwelt for so long in a realm of moral luxury that they cannot see how expensive their habits have become. They believe they can inflate a haircut into a political crisis and that the costs will be borne by the White House alone. They are pathetically in error. In fact, it is their own influence, their own status, the meaning of what they themselves do that evaporates when Americans are led to conclude that yet another president is a bumbling clown, that government is a hopeless mess, that politics repays no serious effort to attend to it. Mindlessly, the press contributes to these perceptions and then stands back to survey the damage as if it were some naturally occurring disaster.

Under these conditions, serious journalism itself

becomes a joke, but the "serious" press pays little mind. Here and there a damaging admission is made, as when Anthony Lewis observed at the height of Scalpgate, "The press is ravenous, ready to see scandal in a speck of dust." But no routines are altered, no reforms proposed. "What does it mean to be a journalist?" Hillary Clinton dared to ask in her much-quoted Austin speech. No one in the press took the question seriously.

The damage done by the evacuation of meaning in political journalism extends well beyond the press, of course. Frenzies take their toll, not only on the President's poll ratings, but on the reservoir of hope from which the Clintons expected to draw. Here, the White House must take some of the blame. Clinton has not grasped the need to practice both realisms at once—the higher form (of which the politics of meaning is one version) and the lower, which is necessary to avoid decapitation by the press and political opponents.

Low realism holds that politics is the art of the possible—what's possible given the power of interest groups, the me-firstism of most Americans, the short attention span of the media and the public, the grubby facts of partisanship. What low realists prize above all is a quality we can label savviness—an insider's knowledge of how the game is played. The moral universe of the Washington press virtually begins and ends here. Praise goes to the savvy operators who are shrewd, hyper-informed, unsentimental, and above all, tough. (These, of course, are the qualities journalists prize in each other.) For those who prove themselves unsavvy, the response is severe disapproval, which Clinton learned almost immediately after assuming office.

As Leslie Gelb of The *Times* noted in February, "My colleagues and I, like journalistic Dr. Strangeloves, are ready to nuke Mr. Clinton at the slightest provocation." One reason for this itchy trigger finger is that the press was accused of favoring Clinton during the campaign. The charge is ludicrous in several ways—the Gennifer Flowers frenzy is the best example—but there's a sense in which it was true. Journalists were in awe of Clinton for the mastery he and his advisers showed in winning the election. But precisely because they felt this way, they also felt a need to distance themselves at the first opportunity. They had to demonstrate to us (but mostly to each other) that it was Clinton's savviness they appreciated during the campaign, not his politics, or beliefs, or the promise of a president elected on a modest surge of hope.

In February, a front-page story appeared in The *New York Times* under the byline of R.W. Apple, one of the best exemplars of the savvy style in the press. The headline read: "Clinton's 2nd Setback Over Attorney General Is Calling His Political Savvy Into Question." Apple began with a quote from Casey Stengel, former manager of the New York Mets, who said, famously, "Can't anybody here play this game?" The withdrawal of a second candidate for United States attorney general, Kimba Wood, was called a "painfully public, politically devastating failure." Apple went on: "The new president now desperately needs a victory, as quickly as possible." (This after fourteen days in office.) "Part of the problem may be the absence from Mr. Clinton's inner circle of most of the savvy crowd that surrounded him as a candidate," Apple wrote. Translation: Bring back James Carville, Clinton's campaign strategist, who knows how the game is played.

Here you see all the values I've been describing: politics as a game, the emphasis on victory and defeat almost as abstractions, the admiration for the campaign winners, the supreme values of toughness and political savvy, the eagerness to convict Clinton for being unschooled. In May, when Clinton tapped pundit and former Reagan aide David Gergen to overhaul his media strategy, *Newsday* described it as a "cross-party reach for Washington savviness." Translation: We approve.

As a political style—the only style admired by the press—savviness responds to our desire not to be fooled, to know how things really work in the corridors of power, to be disenchanted grown-ups rather than naïve children. What makes TIKKUN an unusual (and, one hopes, an interesting) forum is that it attempts to clear a space for a discussion of politics in which alternatives to the savvy style are acceptable—indeed, encouraged. That is one reason the politics of meaning provoked such a strong reaction among journalists. Neither Michael Lerner nor Hillary Rodham Clinton tried to sound like savvy operators in advancing their case. They opted instead for what can only be termed sincerity, a laughable value in the journalist's universe but one entirely appropriate for acts of moral suasion.

Savviness is amoral suasion, a propaganda of the uncommitted. It teaches us to favor detachment over enlistment, shrewd technique over strong belief, the apprehension of what is over the imagination of what might be. The savvy style also plunges us into what Howe called the "provincialism of the immediate," for as long as our attention is confined to that province, the media's outsized influence is guaranteed.

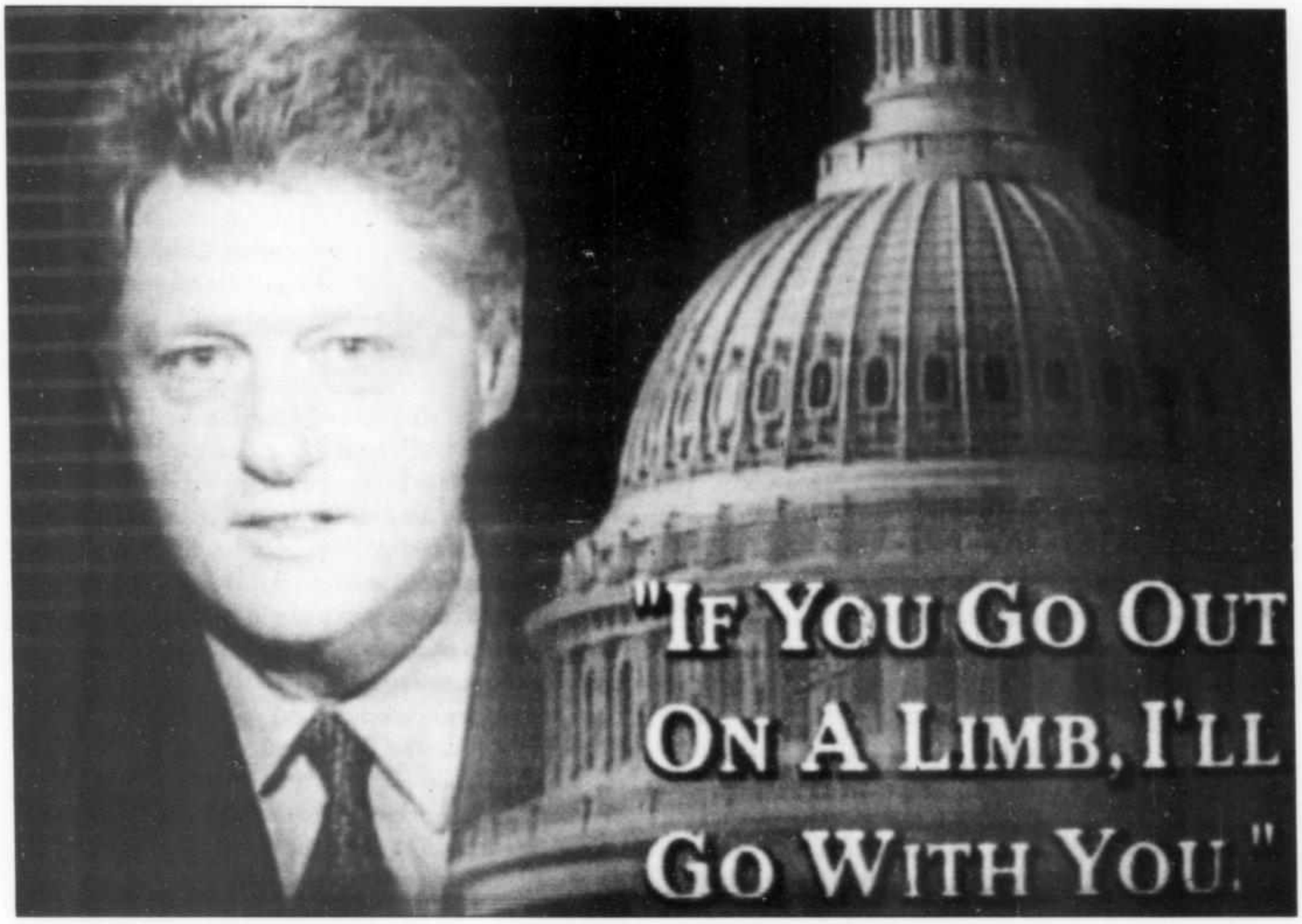
The trouble, of course, is that politics loses its meaning when it is viewed this way, its relevance to

(Continued on p. 94)

MEMOS TO CLINTON

How to Regain Your Popularity

Michael Lerner



When Hillary Rodham Clinton invited me to meet with her at the White House on April 26, I was delighted. The First Lady had recently given a speech in which she said that what this country needed was a new politics of meaning, and she went on to define that need in the same terms that we had been using in TIKKUN since we started this magazine. Since that meeting with the First Lady, there have been a flood of articles about the politics of meaning in the media, many of them caricaturing the position. By the time you read this, you may already have decided that it is too politically costly to push on with a language and a worldview that have provoked considerable antagonism from the media, particularly at a time when you see your administration as badly in need of repairing that relationship. Nevertheless, since Hillary assured me that you and she have been carefully reading the magazine and share important elements of our perspective, and since I am convinced that the political problems you are facing at the current moment have more to do with the degree to which you've *failed* to embody a politics of meaning rather than the degree to which you've identified with this approach, I want to ask you to consider this interpretation of the current moment in Summer 1993 and consider the strategy that flows from this analysis.

You yourself had written to me in 1988 to tell me how our analysis of politics had influenced your thinking, and you told me that in person again in 1992 when we spoke during the presidential campaign. Yet in the pressure of Washington events, the truths you once knew may seem hazy compared to "the realities" that are being impressed upon you by a cynical media and an obstinate Congress. And since Hillary specifically suggested I use this format to convey some of my thinking to you, I'm having this conversation with you in TIKKUN even though I'm aware that we have other channels for the discussion.

If you show people how your specific programs will encourage a societal shift from selfishness to caring, you will legitimate a discourse of optimism and idealism that will have a profound impact in the '90s—just as Reagan's discourse of selfishness helped produce the '80s.

I saw unmistakable signs of your ability to adopt our politics of meaning and to skillfully weave it into your economic themes as you ran for office. The press and the pollsters convinced themselves that "it's the economy, stupid," as the explanation for why your message was working. But I listened to your speeches, and what the press did not understand, then as now, is that you talked about the economy in a way that addressed the underlying crisis of meaning. You talked about a caring society in which people would be there for each other, a society in which workers would not have to fear that any moment they might be losing their jobs because the rest of us would be there for them and help them get new work. You framed issues in a way that seemed to recognize that there was an underlying hunger for social meaning, connection between people, a sense that we could take care of each other. You seemed to understand that the economic crisis is so frightening because people know that when they face unemployment they are really alone—because the sense of social solidarity that existed in this country during the Depression and World War II has been replaced by a deep feeling of alienation and aloneness. A word, a gesture, a manner of speaking—all conveyed a sensitivity to the underlying pain in Americans' lives, a pain that went far beyond economic realities and that sprang from the deep hunger that Americans feel for a community of meaning and purpose that can transcend the extreme individualism and me-firstism of the competitive market.

Yet once you took office, those themes began to decrease dramatically in the way that you presented yourself and your presidency. They reappeared briefly during your State of the Union address, when you talked to the American public of all being in this situation together, of equal sacrifice, alluding to the community we might create together—and for that moment, to the extent that you were clear, the American public rallied. They were even willing to consider higher taxes as long as the sacrifice seemed to be shared equally, and as long as they were framed in terms of a communal effort.

But in the ensuing months, that way of thinking, about America and its problems has virtually disappeared from your language. In its place, you put your primary focus on the deficit—the issue that has been central to the concerns of the conservatives, but not to most other people in the society. You did not convince Americans that fighting the deficit was worth raising taxes—and you did not address the American public's concern about spending programs that have never seemed to make sense to them.

The press depicted your consequent decline in the polls as a result of your "lunge to the Left." But this is mistaken. Your decline in the polls is a result of several factors.

First, the assault on you and your programs is from sectors of America's ruling elites that feel threatened by what you do or might stand for. Just as John F. Kennedy faced disinvestment and a capital strike by sectors of the ruling elite who decided to destabilize his presidency before he could do the same to them, and despite the fact that he kept on trying to reassure them that he was really a fellow supporter of the capitalist system who meant only to strengthen their power, so you have faced a powerful and well-orchestrated assault by sectors of America's ruling elites who believe that they might be threatened by your success. Those interests include important elements in the energy industry, the military-industrial complex, those who might be negatively impacted by more serious pollution or environmental measures, and some sectors of the health industry.

You may be saying to yourself, "Wait a moment—I've done everything possible to reassure these people that I wouldn't approach them in a confrontational

manner, that I would include their concerns in my programs! Didn't I back away from radical cuts in defense? Didn't I back away from confrontation on environmental restrictions? Didn't I and Hillary decide to frame health reform in terms that would ensure continued power and profits for insurance companies, doctors, and drug companies? Didn't I go out of my way in my pre-inaugural 'economic summit' to do everything I could to show business that my plans would be sensitive to their interests?"

My answer: Sure you did. But they are not being irrational. They understand that the very aspirations for change that you helped articulate would eventually lead to a repoliticization of the American population. Just as JFK stirred into existence social forces that pushed for social change far beyond his own rather narrow agenda, so too your program will inspire people to move further than you've called for. And those whose interests might be further threatened understand that. They are not literal-minded. They understand, perhaps better than you yourself have understood, that the logic of your presidency can only go in two directions: toward greater change involving the mobilization of millions of Americans ready to fight for your programs, or towards demobilization of the hopes that you raised and accommodation to existing interests.

Unfortunately for you, to the extent that you choose this latter accommodation, you have a no-win situation. Once people's hopes are demobilized, once they believe that the possibility of building a larger community of change is really not going to happen, people will abandon ship very quickly. Everyone will go back to the older mentality—the mentality of self-interest. As the hopes of changing things in a dramatic way fade, people will ask themselves, "Why should I be paying higher taxes for something that won't really change that much in my life? Shouldn't I fight for my narrow self-interest, given that everyone else is doing that also?" And so, even your scaled-down programs will seem too much. It will then be possible to paint you as a tax-and-spender, because that language will again seem relevant.



George Mitchell (on monitor) and other Democratic leaders have struggled to clarify Clinton's message to the media.

The willingness of people to sacrifice is directly related to the degree to which they think that something dramatic will change. One of the reasons that they got resentful about Democratic programs aimed at the poor was that these programs did not *end* poverty. Why, reasoned many, should I pay higher taxes if the pain and misery of the poor continues? In fact, many Americans would have been willing to pay considerably *higher* taxes if that would have produced an end to poverty. But if the taxes simply produced a continuation of the status quo, why bother? Why not keep the money for one's own needs?

So, you will find that scaling down expectations *does not work* for you. On the contrary, once people have given up on hope, they will find that the logic of self-interest embodied by the Republicans sounds more logical. There will be more electoral defeats, more scaling down of your programs, more disillusionment, more scaling down, and finally people will wonder what they've gotten from a Clinton presidency.

Second, enter the Republicans and the Right. Your State of the Union speech came close to isolating and disempowering them. Had you kept up the politics of meaning perspective, had you said in a clearer way that your programs were aimed at changing this society from an ethos of selfishness to an ethos of caring, had you shown people how every specific program followed from that goal, the Republicans would have had less leverage. But instead, you moved too quickly away from that kind of language, away from a politics of meaning perspective. You began to talk in a more technocratic language, to address the Washington insiders, and you ceased to focus on mobilizing your own constituency. At this point, the Republicans became obstructionist. In order to weaken your momentum, they focused on the parts of your program that reminded people of the Old Democrats—your caring for the poor, for African Americans, for gays, for women. They understood that there were various ways in which you were vulnerable

with parts of your constituency that resented the way that the Democrats had tilted toward the needs of these people in the past.

As you may remember, my analysis of that resentment focuses on the fact that the Democrats have seemed to give out the message to the American people that *their* issues and concerns have already been addressed, that things are fine for them, that they have no reason to complain, and that now they ought to take care of the interests of those who have been "left out" of the American triumph. But, as I discovered when doing research with middle-income Americans, most Americans *don't* feel that they've made it, they know that their lives are fragmented, their families unstable, their society dominated by a ruthless pursuit of self-interest that undermines loving relationships and makes people feel that values are in crisis, their own physical safety always partly in doubt, and their relationships continually under the cloud of possible betrayal because people are always putting themselves first above loyalty to others. They don't feel good about their lives, and they don't see why they should be made to feel guilty about how good things are supposed to be for them and how bad it is for others.

To the extent that you embodied a politics of meaning in your election campaign, you were able to transcend these issues. To the extent that you seemed to hear people's pain, to validate it, to speak to it, they were able to transcend the appeals to division about the social issues and about your concern for the various minorities. But since you've been in office, most people don't hear that kind of language or concern being articulated, and they begin to feel that they've been tricked, that you've forgotten that it was this, *not* policy wonkery or budget-wizardry, that won you their trust.

Once that happened, the Republicans began to bash in an unprecedented way. Since you had not won a majority in the election, they felt that they had the right to challenge your direction. And since you were focussing on reassuring Washington insiders that you were going to be "savvy" and reassuring ruling elites that you wouldn't go "too far," you were not paying attention to the need to mobilize your own constituency and speak to the pain that you had previously addressed (which would have increased that constituency). Instead, you seemed to back away from your commitments to gays, to African Americans, to environmentalists—without adopting a language or strategy that could win the rest of the population.

Your own constituency was not mobilized. You did not talk to them explicitly, tell them what you were going through, explain to them what you wanted from them or listen to their questions and their doubts. You appeared to be making compromises, but you didn't explain to those who supported you why you were doing it and what we could hope to gain by supporting those compromises.

This was certainly the worst of both worlds. On the one hand, you seemed unwilling to fight for principles. On the other hand, you were not abandoning your old friends for new ones, but only temporarily placating the very people who could never actually be placated. It would have made far greater sense politically for you to have taken one or two courageous stands and fought them to the finish, articulating in one sentence why this battle was worth fighting even if you had to lose it, and why you would intend to fight it again and again until you won it.

Without that willingness to fight to the finish around a principle, you only gave encouragement to the Republicans to attack more and more of your program. Once they sensed that you would capitulate and not fight to the finish, they were given nothing but incentive to fight ever more ruthlessly.

Third, you have been defined for the American public by a cynical media. Cynicism is all they have to sell. The *New Republic* and its former and future employees, like Charles Krauthammer at The *Washington Post* and Michael Kelly at The *New York Times*, have been at the center of an orchestrated campaign to disempower you. Some say that it has to do with their closeness to Al Gore and their resentment that he and they are not in the White House. I doubt it. The *New Republic* syndrome of elitist cynicism is only a more refined case of the disease that dominates most of the media.

The media are full of people who originally hoped for a sense of meaning and purpose in politics, and who found instead an American political arena dominated by manipulators and unscrupulous people. Having been burnt by this early disillusionment, and feeling within themselves the pull toward community which they now perceive to be a treacherous mistake, they lash out in an unforgiving way at anyone who suggests that politics could be about principles. They construe their task as the unmasking of the pretense of principle and the revelation of the truth of self-interest. Indeed, their highest principle is that people are motivated by nothing more than self-interest. This is the primary reason for their concerted disdain once Mrs. Clinton articulated a politics of meaning. They were not being quite honest when they said that they

couldn't understand what she was talking about or diagnosed her as naive. What they really meant was this: Hillary Rodham Clinton, and TIKKUN magazine, were articulating biblical values about the nature and objectives of human life that violated their own religion of cynicism, and they wanted to remind the American public that cynicism was really the only thing that anyone could trust.

The complicating factor, of course, is that the media can always succeed in unveiling the element of self-interest, because every one of us has such an element. We each have a part of us that seeks to embody our own highest ideals, and an other part that aims at our self-interest and self-promotion. How much we go for our highest ideals versus how much we go for self-interest is always a complicated decision that we make and remake with every interaction, as we assess how much we can count on others to act according to their ideals or their self-interest.

And this is why people have such an ambivalent relationship to the parts of you that do seem to embody a politics of meaning. I wish I could say that the moment that you articulate it more fully, the moment you talk about reshaping your program so that it all flows from the desire to move our society from an ethos of selfishness to an ethos of caring, that all the ambivalence will go away and everyone will jump on the bandwagon. Unfortunately, there will still be many bumps on the road. Most people want to believe in the possibility of life being about something

The Politics of Meaning
The Reviews (ugh) are In

The press certainly took notice when Hillary Rodham Clinton borrowed from TIKKUN's "politics of meaning" platform. Most of the reports were negative; some were openly hostile. All were revealing of the dismissive attitude journalists commonly take toward ethical and spiritual discourse in politics.

Leading the charge was reporter Michael Kelly in a May 23 *New York Times Magazine* cover story titled "Saint Hillary." With undisguised animus, Kelly portrayed the President's partner as a dangerous do-gooder on a grand crusade "to make the world a better place—as she defines better." Saint Hillary, according to Kelly, is searching not for answers but for "The Answer… something in the Meaning of It All line." Her "politics of virtue" is grounded not only in her religious faith, but in "the conviction of her generation that it was destined (and equipped) to teach the world the error of its ways." But the crusade cannot work, Kelly argues. Why? Because any "serious attempt to do anything to improve public values runs immediately against the fundamentals of social liberalism that are the guiding ethos of Democratic policies," and the legacy of Hillary's generation of "liberal activists." In other words, virtue and "values" are the terrain of the Right, the Clintons are creatures of the Left. They made their bed—rights-based liberalism, according to Kelly—now they'll have to govern from it.

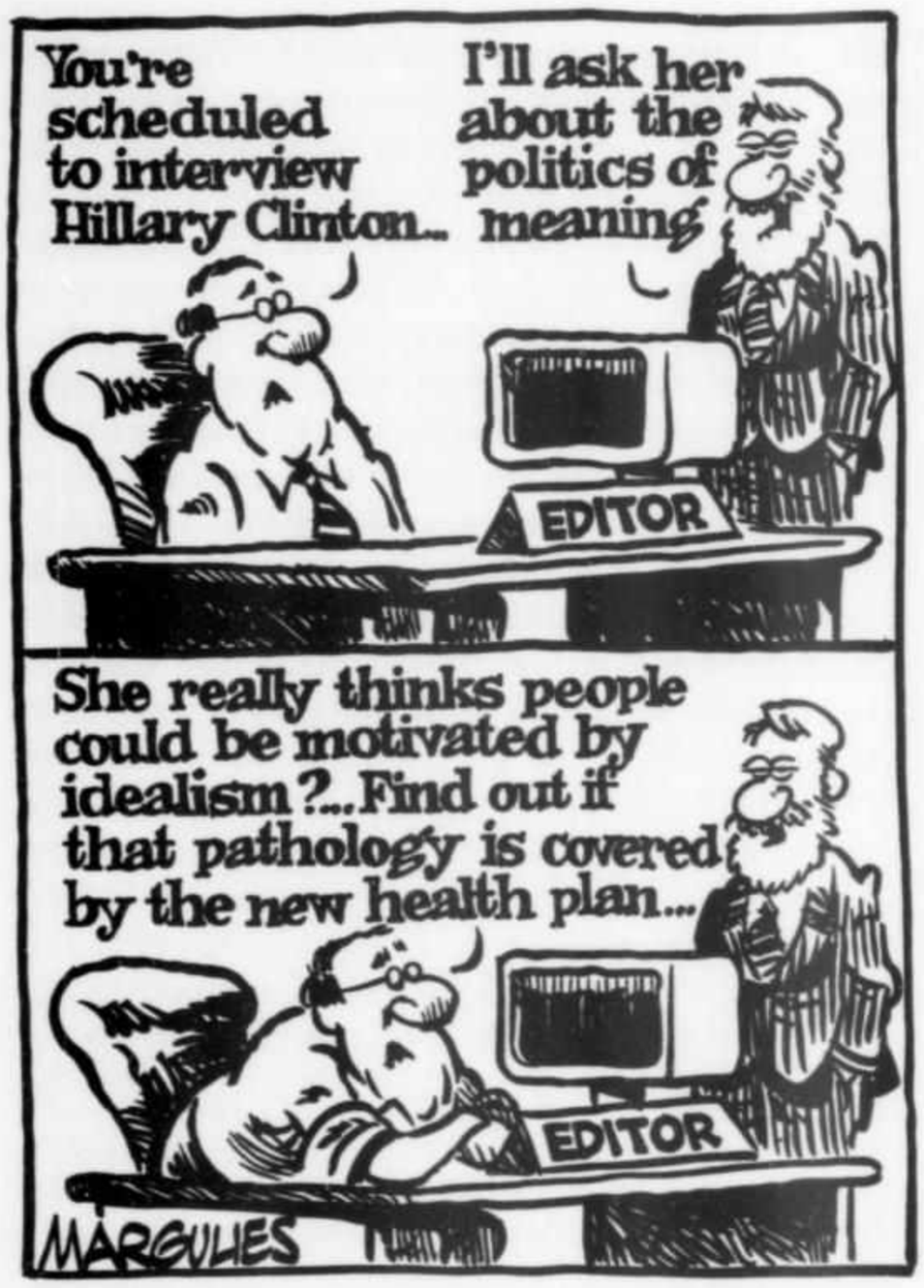
In his May 29 column, "Beliefs," Peter Steinfels, a *New York Times* religion reporter, offered a reply of sorts. Steinfels made the simple observation that Americans are generally a religious people who do not regard the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments as relevant only to Bible classes. Journalists troubled by the eruption of religious beliefs into presidential politics show their ignorance of "the weekly exhortations from a million American pulpits, exhortations about caring, searching for meaning, applying old values to new problems, transforming society, etc, etc." Hillary's concern with "spirituality and moral values fits comfortably within this genre," Steinfels noted. He also added a fact overlooked by Kelly—that Lerner's politics of meaning attempts a critique rather than a celebration of sixties radicals and liberals.

"The politics of what?" asked *Time* magazine in its May 31 issue. But the headline was a bit misleading; *Time* held its hostility in check. "Here is a First Lady with a complex moral and political philosophy who not only tries to articulate it, but also believes it could be useful to the nation," the magazine observed. Real animus came from Jacob Weisberg of The *New Republic,* (where Kelly will soon be employed), quoted as a representative of the "pundit class," which he surely is. Weisberg cooperates: "If she wants to talk about the discontents of her own climb, and the spiritual emptiness *she* feels, congratulations to her for rare candor. But that doesn't mean everyone else is a moral failure."

The *New Republic*, for its (large) part, quoted sections from Lerner's editorials and Mrs. Clinton's Austin speech, then observed snidely, "It's good to know the First Lady is pro-meaning. But before signing on, one question: What on earth are these people talking about?" Later, in their June 7 issue, they pronounced themselves "still mystified" by Mrs. Clinton's "spiritual quest."

Denouncing the Clintons as believers in "activists" government," Paul Gigot, in the May 28 *Wall Street Journal*, described Michael Lerner as "an aging 60s radical who still sees only a Government of the Good." Lerner and Hillary's approach is a "mentality that gives far too much meaning to politics," said Gigot. Most Americans, he added, "seek 'meaning' through their families, their churches, and their daily lives, not the good intentions of the state."

Charles Krauthammer, in The *Washington Post* of May 14, drew a comparison that appealed to a number of journalists, likening Mrs. Clinton's "politics of meaning" speech to Jimmy Carter's "malaise" talk, the latter an icon of foolishness among political reporters and other insiders. His main point, however, was not that Hillary Rodham Clinton was wrong in her search for meaning and moral purpose. She was just being immature. "Most Americans," he wrote, "have come to these thundering truisms early in life." Krauthammer worried that the White House had been turned over to college kids or their intellectual equivalents, asking, "Aren't there any proctors in this dorm?" **-J.R.**



more. But as our associate editor Peter Gabel has pointed out, people are simultaneously terrified of the realization of what they desire. First, we would have to reevaluate all the moments in which we convinced ourselves that to be realistic we had to privilege self-interest over principles. Second, most people are scared to get burnt again by believing that what they really most deeply want is actually possible. They have lived lives in which repeatedly they chose to hope that something could be different, and repeatedly they have been disappointed by others. One escape from this cycle of hope and disappointment is to embrace the cynical worldview promulgated by the media. So people tell themselves, "We knew it, we knew we were being tricked, all this talk about principle is always just a manipulation." And with that, people will return to their lives of self-seeking, ever more depressed, but ever more resigned to the fact that there is no alternative.

Not that people will give up their own desire for meaning. Rather, they will then move toward right-wing versions of a politics of meaning, versions that tell them that they can find community through attacking some Other (gays, feminists, Blacks, Japanese, Jews, liberals, Arabs, etc.), or a version that tell them that the *real* way to serve the common good is to serve themselves (the logic of the '80s). The right-wing version of a politics of meaning will always have a resonance, because it seems to promise *both* things: the possibility of community without the substance of having to challenge the self-interested dynamics of the marketplace.

The only solution is for you to fight for a progressive politics of meaning, to do so in language that people can understand, and to talk openly about this issue. You've got to confront the media cynicism head on, and to do that you've got to own up to the part of the cynical view that is true—the fact that we all, yourself included, are always involved in this struggle between the two parts of themselves, and that's why the media can always succeed in unveiling the self-interest part of you. You've got to explain to the American people that if they insist on having leaders that are not supposed to have that more negative and self-interested part, all they will guarantee is that they get leaders who are liars, people who have to pretend to be something more than any human being can be.

You've also got to talk to America about your bottom-line principles—those upon which you are willing to go down to defeat because you believe in them so strongly. I suggest that your message is simple: changing the society from an ethos of selfishness to an ethos of caring. But if not that, some other principle that you really do believe in, and then some specifics about what fights you are going to fight for those principles, and when you'll be willing to suffer political defeat for the sake of those principles.

Then you've got to challenge the media to overcome its cynicism. On the one hand, all of us have a stake in a strong media that challenges those with power. Tell the media that you want them to point up the contradictions between your stated goals and your actual practice or the actual practice of people inside your administration. The media play an important watchdog role that should not be undermined. But at the same time, you want to distinguish between a healthy skepticism and a hard-nosed cynicism or a religious attachment to the belief that human beings can never be motivated by anything beyond self-interest. Encourage the American public to scrutinize media cynicism, to recognize that the media are indoctrinating them, and that it is up to them to insist that the media change their orientation to one that does not always ridicule principles or find the search for meaning and purpose in life simply hilarious. We at TIKKUN will start running a column detailing media cynicism, but it would be much more effective if your office issued a weekly media cynicism report, providing specific examples of that cynicism. As I said,

Americans somewhat sympathize with that cynicism, because they are fearful that the community of meaning and purpose that they so deeply desire is really unrealizable and that they are simply being fools to hope for it, but they are also even more deeply desiring such a community, so to the extent that you can help them understand how media indoctrination undermines the possibility of people acting on their own highest ideals, they will deeply resonate with your critique of media cynicism.

Let's say that you do what I'm suggesting. First, you would articulate this perspective on why your popularity had waned. Second, you would apologize to the American public for the failures of some of the tax-and-spend programs of the past, explain why they had failed, and explain why compromise programs such as those being forced on you by Congress are not going to work. Third, you would talk to people about the real pain in their lives, why that pain is not their own fault but a product of a social order that rewards selfishness and makes it hard for people to choose to live a life consonant with the values that they really hold. Fourth, you would articulate a politics of meaning framework, focusing particularly on the aspects that make it a progressive pro-family perspective and a framework for understanding the frustrations people experience in daily life. Fifth, you would instruct your administration to begin to frame its programs in these terms, to prioritize new programs and legislation in terms of the degree to which they do in fact add to the struggle to switch the society from an ethos of selfishness to an ethos of caring. You would ask your administration to accompany new programs and requests for funding with an ethical-environment impact report that would describe in detail how any given program was likely to either increase or decrease the total amount of cynicism and selfishness or the total amount of social responsibility and caring in the society.

To focus your politics of meaning, I suggest you announce that you are going to delimit it to the following specific programs:

• *Expand your national service program*

You've announced a realistic version that would be based on what can get through Congress. But realism is peculiar—the more you scale down, the more you scale down others' expectations, and then you have to scale down even more.

People want to serve their country if they are given a way to do it. I suggest that you call a meeting of the nation's governors and mayors and non-profit sector organizations and ask them to provide strategies by which America's citizens could donate a portion of their time to national service within their own communities. Make it clear that the federal government won't have any funds to offer for this kind of service, but ask them to create programs to harness the desire of Americans to volunteer and serve.

Organize and personally attend regional gatherings of those people willing to donate five hours a week to public service. Encourage those people that they need to spread their enthusiasm for service. Once a month, volunteer five of your own hours at a community service program to set an example for the nation.

If people are rewarded for manipulating others all day in their work world, they can't be expected to be magically transformed into loving and ethically sensitive beings in their few hours each day outside the world of work.

Within a year of this effort, you will have built enough support for national service to turn to Congress and ask for expanded funding, far beyond your current expectations. Your current gradualist strategy will have the opposite effect: the program will lose momentum and end up being further scaled back by congressional cuts. Instead, circumvent the Congress and the budget process, get people mobilized to do service, and they will find ways to pressure Congress not only to fund the part of the program tied to college loans, but that also provides expanded funding for people of all ages who want to be involved.

• *Create a Department of Families*

America's families need government institutions that advocate their interests. The Right will complain that this constitutes government interference in the private sphere, that what families really need is less government. But they will find this a difficult position to defend, because you will be advocating a pro-family perspective.

The Department of Families will coordinate all pro-family programs of the government. It will seek to

support and honor those tens of millions of Americans who are already involved in building families, including single parents, gays or anyone else who has taken on the responsibility of raising the next generation or caring for elders. The projects that the Department of Families should support include:

• Parenting and family support education. The Right may argue that these skills never needed to be taught before—true enough, but that was before the competitive marketplace had broken down communities, undermined extended-family living, and so severely isolated and nuclearized the family that people could no longer count on neighborhood and intergenerational support systems. In any event, these skills would be offered, not required—so that only those who needed them would take advantage of them. And given the degree of crime and social irresponsibility, even the Right must admit that some parenting isn't being done very effectively.

To ensure that the federal government does not impose a monolithic view of family life, the Department of Families would support local initiatives and community-controlled family-support and parenting-skills programs. There should be no mandatory family structure, nor mandatory orientation of family-support programs.

Support services for people whose families are experiencing difficulties. While many people can already seek these services through local churches or synagogues, many more do not have access to counseling and assistance in working through family tensions.

The Department of Families should facilitate the expansion of the availability of counseling through religious and communal organizations. Separation of church and state should not prevent government from encouraging people to seek support from existing counseling already available in religious networks. It should also encourage an increase in the number of marriage, family, and child counselors, including these services as part of the administration's health care reform plan and financing more training programs. The administration should aid localities in the creation of neighborhood family-support networks in which peer counseling can provide support for working through family tensions.

• Establish a National Families Day to honor those who have been giving their energies to building families and simultaneously to provide a public arena for celebrating the rewards and exploring the difficulties of family life.

• *Health Care Reform*

You're courting disaster with any plan that relies excessively on big bureaucracies delivering services. Of course, many people will initially support any plan that you come up with that extends coverage to the 40 million people who lack health care protection. For those of us who are talking about "caring," a primary goal is to care for those who have been left out. By including them, even in a flawed plan, you coerce our support. But on the other hand, if people are forced to endure the alienating experiences typical of HMOs and other health-care bureaucracies, you can be sure that eventually people will rebel against your plan. They will see it as the final proof that government can't deliver.

That's the principal political reason to push for a Canadian-style single-payer plan. It doesn't matter how wonderful your proposals are—if people feel that they have been pushed into a bureaucratic maze of the sort that they've hated before, they will not be grateful for the service, but resentful of it. They'll start to idealize the old market system of health care, and more will get discredited than just your health care plan.

Solution: Pull out the stops. Make care the bottom line, rather than profits for the insurance companies or doctors. You'll face their opposition one way or the other—so better to face it while arguing for a system that could really work rather than for one that may not.

It's not too late to switch to a single-payer plan modeled on the Canadian version. If this seems too risky, because you've already invested political capital in legitimating the managed competition plan, you might consider presenting two competing models to the American public and call for a national referendum. Present the best version of the managed-competition plan, the best version of the single-payer plan and leave it to the people to make the decision directly. Involving people in this way would heighten their understanding of the issues and would create a constituency for whichever plan gets their approval, and that constituency will be strong enough to push the plan through what might otherwise be a reluctant Congress. To make sure that the referendum is meaningful, hold a series of nationally publicized debates between proponents of each model. Then call for a one-day national focus on this issue—a "national health day" during which the country considers our health-care reform priorities, culminating in a national referendum.

• *Teach Empathy in Schools*

You've set a series of national goals for education. You should add an additional one: developing empathy.

Values clarification is not enough—schools should

give priority to educating students about how to identify with the cares and experiences and pain of others. Every day, we read about needless violence among young people, or about "well-educated" young people who have learned to work some scam or other that will rip off others to enrich themselves.

The typical reaction to the amorality among kids is to say that this is a problem for parents and churches, not for schools. But the schools are *not* neutral conduits of information. As currently constructed, schools reward competitiveness, encouraging a Darwinian model of success—one student will make it only if another does not.

This is not the only possible educational model. In Israel, students are often encouraged to work on projects together and to develop the capacity to provide mutual support. Far from producing lazy or unimaginative students, the system produces some of the most creative thinkers and doers in the world. And the students learn to care about each other. In fact, many affluent public school systems and private schools have already moved in this direction; encourage more of it.

There could also be more explicit programs to teach empathy. For example, local school boards could elect to require a course whose goal is to teach empathy. In early grades, students might seek to establish empathy for other cultures and ethnic and religious groups. In junior high, they might practice empathy for fellow students, in later grades, empathy with "the other" (whichever group is being stigmatized that year in popular or media culture). One might even try to teach empathy for parents and family! And in the final year of high school, this course of study would focus on "obstacles to empathy," with students designing projects on how to overcome those obstacles.

Just as we do not yet know how to teach math and reading, although we've been working on it for hundreds of years, so too it may take many years to formulate successful methods for teaching this skill. Nevertheless, a national focus on teaching empathy would give an unmistakable signal that the society had decided that this trait has importance equal to the other skills taught in school.

You can implement all these ideas if you recognize that you are most likely to save your presidency and strengthen your ability to enact your programs by articulating a fundamental set of values and demonstrating how the specifics are embodiments of those values.

I'm well aware that the press attacks on the politics of meaning may make you reluctant to use this particular language. In fact, you may even decide that you need to distance yourself from our formulations publicly. That might make sense, from a pragmatic standpoint, but only if you take the substance of what we are saying and implement it. You don't have to call what you're doing a politics of meaning, and you don't have to acknowledge your connection to TIKKUN, although it would be more principled if you did. It would show people your integrity and intellectual honesty, even when there is a political cost. After your withdrawal of Lani Guinier's nomination as head of the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, many Americans, including those who welcomed the withdrawal, are reluctant to stand up for you in public because they have the feeling that they could go out on a limb for you but that you can't seem to do that for anybody else. Of course, that same fear characterizes many Americans' attitude toward the entire liberal program, the feeling that they'll end up taking the risk of trusting, only to find that they are getting screwed while everyone else has been "at the table" figuring out how to advantage themselves. Whether or not you choose to reject the specific programmatic ideas of our politics of meaning, I urge you to adopt the approach:

- Speak to the pain that people are experiencing—the lack of opportunity to use their intelligence and creativity in the world of work, the instability in family life, the way that the economy rewards selfishness and undermines idealism and social solidarity, the hunger that people have to be part of a morally defined community of meaning and purpose that transcends the me-firstism of the competitive marketplace, and the desire that people have to be able to participate creatively in shaping a moral world.
- Create a new public discourse of caring, social responsibility, idealism, and commitment to ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity. Explain to people why thinking in these terms will enable them to make a contribution to the larger society and to each other. Encourage people to reject the notion that human beings are only motivated by material self-interest.
- Fight for your fundamental principles and programs, even if that means experiencing defeat. Encourage Americans to follow your example—to fight for principles even if that means that at some points they won't win.
- Finally, publicly reject the cultural ethos that leads to ridicule of psychological sensitivity or ethical commitments. Attack media cynicism head on and try to explain to the public how they can detect the difference between a reasonable skepticism and The *New Republic* disease of elitist cynicism. □

MEMOS TO CLINTON

The Information Superhighway: Roadmap for Renewed Public Purpose

David Bollier



The American media system stands on the threshold of a new era. Within the next decade, telephone companies, cable operators, and others plan to build a high-capacity, high-speed national information "superhighway," using fiber-optic and other new technologies. The Clinton administration is pushing for accelerated development of this next telecommunications system as part of its economic stimulus package, earmarking billions of dollars for the rapid construction of the national information highway, which is expected to be a boon to the economy, creating new jobs and keeping the United States economically competitive with the rest of the world.

The information highway will dramatically alter the way all businesses and institutions conduct their work. It will change the production and distribution of television programming, as well as the viewers' range of choices. Existing communications media—telephone, computer, television, and VCR—will converge into a single medium, capable of transmitting and receiving enormous amounts of information. Hundreds and eventually thousands of interactive programming and information services will be flowing into American homes and businesses.

The actual character of this brave new world, however, will be shaped less by the technology itself than by the economic and policy structures that govern it. The decisions made in the next few years will be pivotal, affecting the nature of television and telecommunications services for decades to come. Ultimately, these choices will alter the ways that future generations of Americans come to interact with and understand the world; public consciousness will almost literally be rewired.

It is the ideal moment for the Clinton administration and Congress to develop a public-spirited vision for the next media system, harnessing these powerful technologies to tackle many of the nation's most critical problems. We need a policy framework as visionary as the new electronic technology itself—one that asserts a fresh public purpose within a framework of vigorous market competition. As Professor Jay Blumler, director of the Centre for Television Research at the University of Leeds in England, has urged, telecommunications policy must shift "from managing and regulating scarcity to protecting and promoting potential."

The *quid pro quo* of the Communications Act of 1934, granting broadcasters the exclusive right to use the public's airwaves in return for their service as public trustees, must be reformulated for the fiber-optic age. In return for government subsidies, tax breaks, and legal privileges needed to build the new information highway, the proprietors and major commercial users of the emerging communications system must give due consideration to the public. The federal gov-

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ernment, while it still retains bargaining leverage, must negotiate a new legal structure of reciprocity to serve public needs that the market will not.

The opportunities for revitalizing democracy and developing a more socially constructive brand of television are great. In addition to ensuring fairness in the commercial marketplace, it is imperative that the federal government help create a vigorous new public sector in the telecommunications system—one that honors and promotes diversity in ways that the current television system does not.

If bold steps are not taken soon, however, the new electronic superhighway will intensify, not ameliorate, the current deficiencies of television and other mass media. And once new investment begins, the commercial imperatives of this media system will be virtually irreversible; its corporate guardians will fiercely resist policy intervention. The abundant channel capacity and interactive capability of fiber and other new technologies will no doubt expand the number of telecommunications services. But, as history has shown time and again, the unfettered marketplace will not produce a telecommunications system that adequately serves the full spectrum of society's needs.

As we've seen in the existing media system, much of the excellent television programming which has been aimed at education, civic participation, and the arts has not been able to survive the forces of marketplace competition. Commercial imperatives too often favor the sensational, the immediate, and the superficial. A highly commercialized milieu will not provide sustenance to national political life or promote community development. Nor will it serve those sectors of the population whose demographic profiles are unattractive to advertisers and pay-per-view providers. We need federal policies that intelligently shape the structure of the telecommunications marketplace to ensure the most robust, open competition—while also supporting a well-funded, post-PBS system of noncommercial television.

In crafting new policies for the next generation of telecommunications to serve the American people, the Clinton administration needs to address three broad goals.

First, the First Amendment rights of citizen-viewers must be fully restored. The paradox of modern mass media is that free-speech rights originally intended for individuals and the community are becoming the exclusive private property of business entities. At the same time, public forums—open spaces accessible to strangers who have an opportunity both to speak and respond to each other—are becoming less and less available to citizens as we evolve into a society dependent on access to telecommunications technologies.

Despite pockets of spirited public dialogue heard during the 1992 presidential campaign, the various media industries have little enduring institutional interest in maintaining public forums. They have shown a greater interest in privatizing and controlling channels of communication for strictly business purposes. Broadcasters have successfully challenged the Fairness Doctrine, the federal rule that once required them to cover controversial issues and air contrasting views. Broadcasters complained that the rule reduced the amount of their saleable airtime. The cable industry has fought to emasculate the leased access provisions of the 1984 Cable Act, a regulatory regime intended to provide nondiscriminatory access for independent programmers. But for the cable industry's meddling, this too might have been a vehicle for fresh voices. When subscribers to Prodigy, the interactive computer service, protested rate hikes, the company banned them from the electronic bulletin board on which the issue was being discussed. And Time Warner, in its recent constitutional challenge to the 1992 Cable Act, demonstrated that it regards the First Amendment chiefly as a business weapon to be used in defending its market access.

Even as channels of communication have been expanding through new technologies such as cable and satellite, the control of the media system has tightened significantly, with disturbing implications. As Michael N. Garin and Thomas A. Redmond recently observed in a paper on the future of the entertainment industry:

> The consolidation in the media and entertainment industry in the 1980s was not a temporary stage, but the beginning of a sweeping trend that will result in an industry dominated by several large, vertically-integrated media giants with vast resources and world-wide interests.

The transition to newer forms of telecommunications technologies offers a historic opportunity to restore to millions of citizen-viewers some measure of the First Amendment rights that proprietors of media systems have always enjoyed. Technologically, it is entirely feasible to find niches in the fiber system for a wide diversity of expression—political, cultural, religious, artistic—provided federal policy makes this a priority. By facilitating new noncommercial channels, greater viewer access, and genuine competition, Congress can give vital new meaning to First Amendment principles in telecommunications.

Second, the telecommunications system of the twenty-first century must be designed to facilitate full participation by the nation's civic sector. If given a platform from which to communicate, the energetic, resourceful constituencies of the nation's civic sector could greatly rejuvenate our troubled democratic culture. This nonprofit sector—including educators, writers, artists, civic leaders, volunteers, citizen-advocates, trade unionists, religious organizations, self-help groups, independent producers, and dozens of others—is the very portrait of American pluralism.



The nonprofit community must have the opportunity and resources to become active players in this new communications environment. Such participation is essential if nonprofits are to take on the responsibility for providing many vital services traditionally delivered by government entities, as David Osborne and Ted Gaebler argue in their influential book, *Reinventing Government*. But while elaborate plans have been drawn up for designing the vast private sector of the future communications infrastructure, very little thought has gone into developing the public or "civic sector" of the system.

A top priority of telecommunications policy in the Clinton administration should thus be the establishment of an administratively sound, well-funded system of public telecommunications entities—from local civic networks to national systems eventually linked to global partners. Just as we have established public libraries and public highways, we will need to create public arenas, or "electronic commons" in the media landscape.

A vibrant telecommunications civic sector could serve as a counterbalance to the commercial forces of the media marketplace. It could address a number of critical societal needs which have not been well-served by the existing media system and are unlikely to be addressed effectively by future market-driven services. The most urgent needs are to:

• Strengthen community life. If the undeniable power of television were better deployed in communities, it could do a great deal to enhance community identity, participation, and responsibility. Programming that can serve the community has long suffered at the hands of national programmers beholden to advertisers. Airtime has been too valuable and production costs too expensive (relative to other commercial uses) to develop substantive, original programs of local interest. Local programming has too often been limited to prosaic, low-budget productions on cable access channels. Given the proper structure and funding, a new genre of local video communication could be developed which would serve educators, parents, businesspeople, artists, activists, and other regional community leaders.

• Support and nurture families. Telecommunications could offer a rich array of services and programs designed to support and sustain families—from "parenting channels" to noncommercial children's channels. These new services must be both affordable and accessible for all children and families. They must also be free of excessive commercialism. Children of the next generation will not acquire the personal values or educational skills they need if the electronic media insist on regarding them primarily as passive, easily manipulated consumers.

• Invigorate the democratic process. Fiber optics and other new technologies promise rich possibilities for direct citizen-candidate and citizen-to-citizen dialogue. Many new formats and services could contribute to the revitalization of citizen participation in government, both locally and nationally. These could include electronic town meetings, interactive video and computer bulletin boards, affinity group programming, channels that serve as "video publishers" for independent producers, and similar innovations that commercial media

(Continued on p. 89)

MEMOS TO CLINTON

First, Make Meaning

An Ethics of Encounter for Health Care Reform

Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman

The Clinton administration will soon release its long-awaited answer to the profound crisis in the American health care system. The problem of reforming the chaotic world of national health care is so large, so mesmerizing in its detail, so vulnerable to technological and mechanical jerry-rigging, that the moral questions may be lost in the ensuing debate. But the necessary ground for moral choices and paradigmatic changes must be addressed prior to the mechanics of access, delivery, or payment. It is with the language of ethics that justice must begin, and in the insistence on justice that health care reform must be rooted.

We tend to describe as a crisis in health care what would be viewed in other historical periods as a crisis of the social order, of the moral integrity of a people, and of a people's relationship to God. In the language of the biblical tradition, the widows and the orphans go untended, "The tongue of the suckling child cleaves to the roof of his mouth with thirst..." (Lamentations 4:4). It has become a commonplace to describe the grotesque reality of inadequate health care, the nearly 40 million people who have no access, the 20 million more who are only marginally covered by health care benefits, the number of children without immunizations, the number without prenatal care, the lack of adequate resources to address the fundamental problems of public health, the daily losses from the simplest of causes: infant diarrhea, malnutrition, and asthma. But it is the moral significance of these facts that we have allowed to become obscured.

The Jewish tradition offers a language of community that can name and place the crisis in terms of an ethics of encounter in which we can understand our lives as lived in relationship to others. Despite the powerful social rhetoric of American individualism and limitless individual rights, the crisis in our country mirrors a truth upon which the Bible insists: We are deeply and fundamentally in relationship to one another. The health care debate is quickened by this reality.

Unless one is prepared to build a fully equipped hospital with a separate blood product supply on one's own premises, there is no escape from the collective fate that crisis and scarcity imposes on all of American society. To need a blood transfusion in New York City in the 1970s was to draw from the very blood of the poorest and most desperate. To travel on the freeway across Los Angeles in the 1990s is to share in the risk that an accident could bring you to the doors of the nearest emergency rooms, the ones that serve as outpatient clinics to the poorest and the uninsured. They might well be closed, full beyond capacity, or inadequately staffed, no matter how exquisite your car, or provident your health care coverage. To walk in the subway, or shop at your supermarket means that your child will share the very air with the homeless one and her child.

There is no escape from our mutual responsibility. Our discourse about health care must begin by the recognition of the face of the stranger. In the language of talmudist and philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, it is the face-to-face encounter that makes possible the ethical choice. The selective survey will not do, the advice of many experts will not be enough. The debate must be grounded in the radical recognition that what I choose for the body of another will happen also to my body.

This tradition would have us remember that the basic assumption of the society must be provision for the vulnerable. The ethics of encounter implies a process that is most elegantly illustrated in the biblical Book of Ruth, which centers on such a moment of encounter. On the road from the death and chaos of exile, the women stand: Orpah weeps and expresses her sorrow, but the stranger Ruth turns to her mother-in-law Naomi "and clings to her." The Hebrew root *dbq* (to cling) in the text is the same as that which is used to describe the first encounter of Adam and Eve. It is a term of ultimate solidarity. But such initial recognition will mean little unless each member of

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society can count on the community for a basic, decent minimum. The question of the justification and content of such a basic, minimum share can be answered by the response of the community to the vulnerable in the Ruth text. In the story, the provision for the poor is assumed by Ruth, by Naomi, and by the community. Unlike the society of Moab, where there is nothing and no one in the field, when the stranger Ruth returns with her mother-in-law Naomi, she finds that the fields have a mandated portion, a corner in each that is reserved for the poor. It is not out of pity that Ruth is allowed to glean, it is out if the halachic requirement that a fixed percentage of the crop belongs to the poor, given from God's hand, via the work of Boaz, the temporary (all rights to ownership are seen as temporary) owner of the property. Access is universal, and guaranteed to all, the citizen and the resident alien. The response pattern between the women in the story, the language itself, and the tradition of discourse support a principle of respect for community that must be adhered to if we are to be faithful to the centrality of the encounter that is prior to all justice.

Restructuring health care must begin with this consciousness. The discussion of what we want in health care must begin in small, moral communities in which we recognize the stranger as sister, as daughter—to see the stranger who sits across from you as the fellow traveler on the road. We must see justice and experience the language of justice as intimate and familial, as an obligation beyond the law and a formal equality, an obligation to include relational ties to the specific other, to trust that friendship will make redemption possible, and that this action is mutually a duty and a right.

Such moral communities formed the basis of the Oregon Health Decisions movement that reshaped health care in that state. Over a ten-year period, in small group meetings, unions, PTA's, churches, and synagogues, people met and struggled to articulate which community values would shape a package of basic benefits that would be guaranteed to all residents of the state.

Cleaving to another, recognizing that the other is the bone of the bone and the flesh of the flesh that is given in common, locating the mutual body as the site of the moral gesture is fundamental to ethical reflection. First, because it pulls the discourse to the specific, the limited, and the mortal self, insisting on mortality as the inescapable frame for all moral gesture. Next, because it requires a radical rethinking of all that occurs to the other: All of the yearning, all the loss, is in fact my loss. This responsibility for the narratives great and small, for the dreams of the other, for the temptations of the other, for the responsibility of the other, creates a mutual commandedness. The encounter is intensely personal. The death of the other, the illness of the other, her vulnerability, is your own ("and where you will die I will die"). *Dbq* is a requirement of intensity that precedes and deepens the language of "citizenship." It insists that citizenship, even with the stranger most foreign could be, ought to be, experienced with the intensity of family. Unlike citizenship, the term *dbq* suggests to us that human beings are, by absolute definition and design, relational. Justice is then personal: It calls for no less than the totality of re-membering, of re-call, of the woman who walks at your side.

It is in the language of community, not of individual rights alone, that the discussion of health care must be apprehended.

The ethics of encounter is the language of community. Rather than living in a world described and defined by the necessity of autonomous choice, freely made, most people actually live in the relational, obligatory, and interconnected world, a world far messier and heavily freighted, far more passionately loving and passionately hating than that described in philosophic texts. Prior even to the conceptualization of the "self," of the autonomous being with rights and bodily integrity, there is a self-in-relation, a self-in-connection, a child born from the body of a woman into the waiting hands of another. Community is prior to autonomy. We know that is true from the most common details of an ordinary life and it is from these details that the language of justice must be created.

Similarly, when reflecting on the conscience that we need in order to think rationally about the just allocation of scarce resources, we recognize that conscience is shaped by the human experience of relationality. There is no atomized self that hears only its own voice and its cause. The entire possibility of internal, reflective dialogue of a self that is capable of response assumes a relational being. Conscience involves a self that struggles with the problem of the effect her choice actually has on tangible, identified others.

It is in the language of community, not of individual



rights alone, that the discussion of health care must be apprehended. Our discussion of health care has a prophetic responsibility. It must move beyond that which is and point to that which ought to be. This is not to depreciate the first step toward the future, as the Clinton program will undoubtedly be, but it is to insist that in the discussion there is an imperative never to lose sight of the vision of what is most fully just and appropriate for an ethics of community—because it is only by keeping this vision clearly focused that we can determine whether any specific proposal really is a first step toward the realization of a just society.

The central question of the debate cannot be, "What can I get?" but rather, "What is just?" Health care certainly puts burdens on a community. The vulnerable, the elderly, and the helpless will burden a society, and we construct societies in large part to bear precisely these burdens. We depend on one another. The template for this is the dependability of the family, but the social extrapolation dictates that as the stranger, we could still count on society's compassionate response to our need. A just health care reform must start by recognizing our need to depend upon, and to be dependable to one another. It is that need, not the claim that persons are primarily independent and entitled, that is the moral foundation upon which to build health care reform.

In light of the public discourse for which I am arguing, the approach to health care reform that has been called "managed competition" is troubling. Rather than using the reclaimed language of community, this approach uses the language of the marketplace. It reifies the competition of capitalism with an odd mix of metaphors. We are to imagine the hearty entrepreneurialism of the nineteenth-century businessman, seeking through earnest enterprise and industry to win in a free-trade market. This vision of competitive practice is overlaid with the powerful metaphor of a mutual fund, the quintessential financial instrument of the 1980s. In a mutual fund, many individual investors with no particular relationship between them are artificially pooled into groups that share the risks and benefits of larger group buying power. Diversified investments are selected by experts in money management who seek the best deals, based on the goal of long-term financial success for each investment. What matters to the expert manager is the outcome of the financial result, not the individual stories of the investors, nor the actual quality of the products or properties in which he has invested.

In managed competition, individuals are "pooled" into risk groups in the same fashion. There are experts who negotiate the package of benefits. The outcome is what is valued, and outcomes are judged successful or not by the cost-benefit analysis. Plans are rewarded

with "investment"—by offering the most health care commodity or product for the lowest price per unit. Physicians and hospitals are encouraged to consolidate into cooperative ventures because that is the best way to manage them as a commodity.

Managed competition assumes that the few large competing entities will compete honestly. It might be reasonable to make this assumption if the differences in the products in question were primarily aesthetic—one might see the sort of minor cost and content variances one notes in American cars or soft drinks. But in the case of health care it is more likely that these companies will develop community standards that are virtually identical and similarly reimbursable. The alternative is for one system to outbid all the others, resulting in a single-provider system with multiple payers, which would maintain the forest of insurance coverers while reducing the choice among health plans and providers that competition is designed to preserve: just the opposite of what most Americans say that they want.

We have to change our perceptions about health and illness, cure and death, starting with honesty by physicians and other providers about their limits. They need to learn to fail in public, in full view of their patients and society.

The market value that sets cost is based on what it is possible to charge. Since there has been no external limit on this number, no record ever kept of health care expenditures at the national or state level, there is no mechanism for knowing if this number is just. We cannot even judge if it is even relative to the labor involved in the actual construction and development of technology. Even the construct that says that ill persons ought best be cared for in large medical centers emerges not out of a reflection on what is best for their healing, but on what made profitable sense at a certain historical period.

Because of the link between medical and financial efficacy, the issues of both the facticity of outcomes and the origins of cost must be questioned. Consider the common discourse about neonatal care. It is often mentioned that for every dollar spent on prenatal care, there is a savings of $3 on neonatal intensive care. But while this basic conception means to reinforce a valuable truth, the cost figures themselves cover a variety of practices that might be challenged. What is the cost of a day of neonatal intensive care, and on what is it based? Further, if it were more costly to provide a package of careful prenatal care, enriched nutrition, extensive counseling, and screening than to provide intensive care to the few babies at the margin, would this be sufficient reason not to offer it? The point is that it is a social good, not simply profitable, to support healthier births.

As long as cost/benefit is uncritically used as a definitive measure, the problems of language, of cost, and of limits will persist. Inevitably, as limits in the basic benefit package are set, they will be experienced and referred to as "rationing." What is really at stake, however, is not the need to create parameters, but the questions of who sets them, and what is affected. If only limits on care and not the reasonable limits on profits are addressed, the burden of health care reform will likely fall disproportionally on those least able to bear it. The income of physicians, the cost of pharmaceuticals, and the hegemony of the insurance companies all will need to be examined and debated. All of this and more must be on the table if we are to talk seriously of reform.

For a plan that will reflect a politics of the deepest meaning, there must be a change in the ideological paradigm of health care itself, along with a change in the process and language of the discourse of public policy. There must be a change in how Americans perceive health and illness, cure and death. We have been encouraged and have come to believe that an entitlement to health care is equivalent to eluding death. Central to the American collective understanding of medicine is a yearning for the miraculous, the redemption once sought in religion and now promised by medical science. The last fifty years in medicine have been remarkable. But we must nevertheless face the plain inescapability of death and abandon our persistent efforts to deny its force and power.

A change in this perception ought to start with honesty on the part of physicians and other providers as they confront their own limits. They need to learn how to fail in public, admitting that they are at the limits of understanding, ability, or courage. They need to do this in full view of their patients and a society that pays them very well to keep us from death.

The discourse needs to be continued in a central way by the religious community: The blessings of friendship in the human endeavor, the responsibility

(Continued on p. 89)

Coming Glued: Communitarianism to the Rescue

Charles Derber



In *Falling Down*, his latest hit movie, Michael Douglas plays a character who has "double trouble." He has been laid off from his job as an engineer, and his wife has left him. There is no neighborhood or friendship network to help him get through the day. Douglas is a man with no community and nothing left to lose. Feeling abandoned by society, he strikes back in a torrent of senseless violence.

Most middle-class Americans don't have such serious trouble, but they nevertheless feel threatened. Few can assume that their jobs—or their marriages—are secure for the long term. And, as the foundations of their own lives seem shakier, Americans can see all around them the signs of a spreading social and moral breakdown. There is more violence on the streets, more violence in the bedroom, greed in the corporate boardroom, corruption in government, frightening fragmentation of racial and ethnic groups, and the growing sense that it's everyone for him- or herself.

When community begins to erode, communitarian movements sometimes arise to offer solutions. Recognizing the fragility of society, communitarians are centrally concerned with the "social glue" that binds people together. Communitarians understand that personal fulfillment and social order depend on the secure attachments and moral frameworks which only communities can offer. In periods of great social dislocation, a communitarian politics may be the only viable alternative to such dangerous phenomena as nativism and fascism which spring up proffering the illusion of relief from economic or spiritual pain. Communitarianism, in contrast, is a politics of meaning, which speaks to our need for belonging and purpose. At its best, it produces new values and institutions that can bring us together with greater civility and humanity.

America is ripe for a communitarian awakening. The Reagan-Bush free market magic failed to solve our social problems. Bill Clinton's election—after a campaign calling for a "New Covenant" in America—signalled that the Reaganite gospel of rugged individualism had had its day. Clinton, who many view as a closet communitarian, said in his victory speech and again in his inaugural address that he would ask all Americans to be interested "not just in looking out for yourselves but in looking out for others too. . . .We need a new spirit of community, a sense that we're all in this together." In the subsequent months, Hillary Rodham Clinton has begun calling for a "politics of meaning," and a new ethos of caring and responsibility. (See TIKKUN, May/June 1993.)

Well before the 1992 presidential election, however, the discourse of communitarianism had begun to gain intellectual currency. In 1990, Amitai Etzioni, a leading sociologist who had served in the Carter administration, and William Galston, then a policy analyst with the "New Democratic" Progressive Policy Institute and now a domestic policy adviser to President Clinton, gathered a group of fifteen influential academics to discuss America's moral malaise. In January 1991 this group launched a new communitarian journal, *The Responsive Community*, which elicited a flood of favorable comment from *Business Week*, *Time*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. In November 1991, the group organized a

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teach-in whose participants included not only notable academics but Democratic senators Bill Bradley and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Republican senators Dave Durenberger and Alan Simpson, and then-senator, now-Vice President Al Gore. Early in 1993, Etzioni published a new book, *The Spirit of Community*, the group's public manifesto and call to arms. Thus has a new communitarian movement burst onto the American scene from a surprising source, our elite and highly individualistic universities.

The rise of a new communitarian movement is suddenly something to be taken seriously. In *The Spirit of Community,* Etzioni makes an eloquent case for the potential of American communitarianism. His movement, he tells us, is a harbinger of a new American politics that has the potential to transcend old Left-Right divisions, bring together the classes, and heal the moral decay of a civil society in disarray. Etzioni's remarkably accessible volume succeeds in pinpointing the problems of morality and social commitment that are gnawing at the American soul. But Etzioni's readers will find a sharply limited perspective on solutions, for his is what I shall call "PMC communitarianism," the communitarianism of the professional middle class. It offers some profoundly important insights, but it does not speak to the needs of all Americans.

In his analysis, Etzioni speaks to the social and spiritual anguish of Americans across the class spectrum. We confront, he suggests, a collective crisis of morality and social responsibility. Our spiraling rates of violent crime, divorce, child neglect, elderly abuse, and the climate of greed and "me-firstism" are all symptoms of the same underlying malady. We are losing our sense of what binds us together as we compulsively pursue our own needs and dreams. Individual conscience and social solidarity are yielding to unbridled self-aggrandizement and the ethos of instant gratification.

Society, Etzioni warns, will not forever survive such degraded individualism, which I have described elsewhere as a national culture of "wilding." The slippery slope from civil society to the Hobbesian state of war is real, as bullets on the street and guns in the schools attest. Etzioni concludes that we need a communitarian movement to catalyze a national moral revitalization and preserve civil society.

Etzioni's diagnosis of our moral crisis is flawed mainly by his inattention to the role of the elites. After the 1980s, it is hard to ignore the spectacular corruption at the top—from the flamboyant white-collar crime of Savings and Loan outlaws to the rampant greed of government officials on the take—which has been the inspiration for so much of the wilding further down the social ladder. While he lambastes "special interests," including wealthy and powerful corporations, Etzioni situates our moral decay among the millions of ordinary Americans who are obsessively pursuing their "rights" rather than respecting their obligations to others. This is not entirely misguided, but it signals his reluctance to make class distinctions or criticize privileged elites.

The real limits of Etzioni's communitarianism become manifest in his solutions, which are largely cultural and micro-institutional, involving family, school, and neighborhood. While necessary—indeed, crucial—to societal well-being, Etzioni's prescriptions are ultimately insufficient, for civil society cannot be saved without deep changes in our underlying economic and political arrangements.

Etzioni begins with a call for a momentous cultural shift away from the exaggerated individualism of recent decades to a renewed concern for others. Unapologetic about his focus on morality as a subject of politics, he argues that while it is legitimate to guard against the tendencies toward puritanism, overzealousness, and coercion that often accompany a moral political perspective, a politics that ignores morality altogether cannot speak to America's crisis. In contrast to far Right and fundamentalist political moralists such as Pat Buchanan, or the Moral Majority's Jerry Falwell, Etzioni proposes a tolerant public moralism that is respectful of difference but insistent on common standards such as abhorrence of stealing, lying, and violence. While there is merit in Etzioni's emphasis on these shared values—particularly in our current deeply fragmented and divisive condition—communitarian politics, to be truly effective, must also insist on values that are less consensual, related to equality and social justice.

Many civil libertarians have faulted the authoritarianism that creeps into Etzioni's discussion of consensual values. For example, assuming a consensus that drug use is bad and dangerous on the job, Etzioni advocates selective drug-testing to protect community interests, a position that is worthy of discussion and on which Etzioni's communitarianism offers useful insights. But a significant minority of Americans disagree that drug use should be either tested or banned and view the official "war against drugs" as ineffective, coercive, moralistic, and invasive of privacy, suggesting the extreme difficulty of making claims for consensual values. In fact, in a healthy democracy, almost all major social values are contested and clash with other values.

"Consensual" values are, in reality, the voice of one part of the community—usually the majority or an elite minority—against the others. This is not an argument against the communitarian ideal of seeking shared values, but it points to the need for a greater sensitivity than Etzioni displays to the role of power (including professional expertise) in defining our "common ground."

Central to Etzioni's cultural politics is a new discourse about rights and responsibilities. We subscribe to a culture of entitlement, Etzioni writes, one that underlies a national obsession with individual rights at the expense of obligations. Increasingly, all of us feel entitled to a well-paid job even if we haven't prepared for it, generous public services for which we are unwilling to pay, and civil and nondiscriminatory treatment by friends, strangers, or authorities that we are not prepared to reciprocate. This inflationary riot of rights is reinforced not only by the culture of greed, but in the individualistic bent of our entire legal apparatus and political discourse (an argument that Etzioni has gleaned from Mary Ann Glendon, a fellow communitarian who teaches at Harvard Law School and the author, most recently, of *Rights Talk*). To curb this explosion, Etzioni proposes a "tight lid on the manufacturing of new rights," and a new commitment to focusing instead on what we owe each other.

There is great merit in the concern with the decline of an ethos of obligation, for a politics of rights without obligations is, in fact, an individualistic seduction that will end in social collapse. And, yes, many Americans are infected with entitlement fever, threatening to weaken our most cherished rights by endlessly adding frivolous or unwarranted ones, although this is as much the legacy of the capitalist culture of consumerism as the liberal pursuit of rights. But if there is good reason to assess the impact of individual rights (such as the right to carry guns, smoke, or drive at high speeds) on the community—and to recognize explicitly the social obligations that inhere in each new right—Etzioni's critique is profoundly flawed by his focus on personal rights at the expense of property rights.

Our culture is a battleground between these two opposing sets of rights; individual rights are far from ascendent and certainly not the greater threat to community. The expansion and abuse of property rights—now exercised by multinational corporations on a global scale—has produced abandoned plants and ghost communities all over America, yet Etzioni makes scant reference either to property rights or to corporate social obligations. Nor does he explain that the struggle for expanded personal or social rights—



Tenant Patrol, Red Hook, Brooklyn

such as health care or day care—is partly a survival response to new corporate arrangements, such as low-wage part-time and temporary labor, that are undermining earlier forms of security and community.

The tone of the new communitarians' critique of rights sometimes harkens back to the neoconservative politics of the 1970s, when Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington wrote of the dangers of "excess democracy," decrying the participatory movements that were "overloading" the system with their demands. While Etzioni advocates responsive citizen action, he shares with Huntington a visceral fear of unruly, grass-roots democratic activism which burdens the system and its elites with new claims. This is another sign that Etzioni subscribes to a PMC communitarianism profoundly ambivalent about participatory democracy and predisposed toward consensual management by experts.

The micro-institutional solutions of the PMC communitarians stress the revitalization of family, school, and neighborhood. Etzioni powerfully communicates the sociological perspective that individual conscience is largely a social creation of these primary institutions; when they break down, so do people. The majority of Americans probably would agree that a moral politics starts at home and would find much that is instructive in Etzioni's approach to rebuilding the family, particularly his passionate call for a new personal and national commitment to children. Etzioni argues compellingly that children are the ultimate victims of our new culture of entitlement, for it has led adults to value their own careers and personal fulfillment more highly than those of their kids. Parents, he argues, have cut the time they spend with their children over the last generation from thirty-five

to seventeen hours a week on average—an inattention magnified by high rates of divorce and single parenting. All this, Etzioni believes, yields a family system that is ill-suited to the intensive love and discipline that produces moral fiber.

Etzioni calls for a communitarian family that can regenerate meaningful parent-child "bonding." He advocates laws making divorce more difficult, such as waiting periods that slow down the process and require those involved to wait nine months before remarrying, and family-leave policies and other incentives to encourage parental care over day care or other forms of child "institutionalization," especially for infants and toddlers. Most of all, we need a "change of heart," he argues, in which parents recommit to parenting.

All Americans should support Etzioni's call to "put children first," and the communitarian movement should work to make our children's needs for love, care, and moral development an urgent national priority. But if the call for new parental commitments strikes a resonant chord—and should be meditated upon in living rooms across the country—the policy framework Etzioni proffers is seriously flawed. The concept of "bonding" that underlies it is problematic, perpetuating such highly debatable notions as the argument that day care for infants undermines character formation, and that the nontraditional family (lacking two parents of opposite sexes) is less conducive to moral development. Etzioni ignores the reality that throughout most of human history, children were raised in hugely diverse extended kinship systems—many resembling a form of tribal day care and socialized parenting—that did not demonstrably injure the souls of the young. In her recent book, *Mother-Infant Bonding,* Diane E. Eyer concludes that the bonding concept—one of the most ideological and controversial in the history of science—has now broadened "to describe the successful development of babies being raised by multiple caretakers—a situation originally thought to cause maternal deprivation."

The class bias of PMC communitarianism emerges clearly in the economics of Etzioni's family policy. On the one hand, there is little discussion of the financial and workplace pressures that have sliced into parental time, making it problematic for many ordinary Americans to provide the generous parenting that Etzioni rightly values. As the one-wage family yields to the two-, three-, or four-job family, with parents shuttling from one part-time job to another just to pay the bills, the "change of heart" that Etzioni seeks becomes a cruel illusion. At least sixty million Americans—the poor and the working poor, the unemployed and underemployed from the working- and lower-middle classes—do not have the luxury of the trade-offs that Etzioni envisions. When he argues for six months' paid parental leave and another year and a half of unpaid leave to ensure that every child under two can have a parent at home, he is speaking to his PMC neighbors and obviously not to the vast majority of Americans whose wallets are far too thin to entertain the fantasy of eighteen months without pay.

This brings us closer to the core deficits of PMC communitarianism, which is startlingly blind to the major structural economic and political transformations necessary to create a real option of community for ordinary Americans. Ultimately, the unraveling of the social fabric is rooted in the radically individualistic market system that reached its unholy apotheosis in the Reagan-Bush years. Except possibly for the PMC and other elites, there can be no communitarian haven until we recast that system in a radically new "kinder and gentler" foundation.

The PMC communitarians recognize the need for national political change, but their vision is astonishingly thin, focusing mainly on campaign finance reform and curbing the influence of lobbyists and other "special interests." Limiting the role of money in politics would help clean up Washington, empower new voices, and potentially contribute to a broader vision of the common good. But it is only one of a host of structural changes in our capitalist system that demand urgent attention, and while campaign finance reform is currently a hot issue, it will not happen meaningfully without a broad-based assault on the entrenched powers whom the lobbyists and "special interests" represent.

Etzioni devotes lengthy chapters to family and school, but there is not a single chapter on the economy and no mention of the "C" word: capitalism. Etzioni, an accomplished sociologist, is fully aware that morals and values are anchored in the economic and political arrangements that determine how we make and distribute our daily bread. Indeed, *The Moral Dimension*, Etzioni's earlier book on economics, forcefully makes the argument that our communities are in peril precisely because of the radical individualism of our economic thought and practice. But if he earlier portrayed our "free market" logic as almost scarily sociopathic, Etzioni seems now to suggest that if we simply resolve to recharge our moral sensibilities and reform our families, schools, and political campaigns, we will not have to attend to the explosively divisive issues of economic transformation.

Here we see the political essence of PMC communitarianism laid bare. Class conflict is off the

(Continued on p. 95)

ADLgate

Dennis King and Chip Berlet

The headlines could hardly have been more surprising: On April 9, newspaper readers across the nation learned that, the day before, police had raided the San Francisco and Los Angeles offices of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), founded in 1913 as an organization to fight bigotry in America, and long considered a liberal defender of victims of oppression, was accused of acting like its worst enemies. It is now the focus of a mushrooming scandal which involves alleged possession of stolen police intelligence files and alleged spying on liberal social-action organizations.

A former San Francisco police inspector has been indicted on charges of theft of confidential government documents—he is alleged to have provided information to both the ADL and the South Africans. According to newspaper reports, other indictments may be imminent in a probe of the ADL's alleged receipt of confidential data from up to twenty police law enforcement agencies in California alone. The ADL may also face numerous criminal charges for allegedly concealing payments to ADL operatives in violation of California unemployment insurance laws.

The *San Francisco Examiner* has reported that the local district attorney's ultimate targets in this investigation are high-level ADL officials, including Irwin Suall, the New York-based director of the ADL's fact-finding department. Even if the ADL manages to avoid criminal charges, it must contend with a lawsuit brought by nineteen alleged victims of ADL surveillance, including several Arab-American activists and Yigal Arens (the dovish son of Israel's former defense minister, Moshe Arens).

As large as the ADL's legal problems appear, they are dwarfed by the public-relations disaster and the long-range political problems these accusations may create for this far-flung organization with its thirty-two regional offices and an annual budget of more than $30 million. The San Francisco DA has released about 700 pages of police and FBI interviews and documents seized from subjects of the investigations, providing a detailed picture of an organization whose monitoring of extremists has veered out of control.

Roy Bullock has been an ADL operative since 1954. He also appears to have sold information on anti-apartheid activists to the South African government while simultaneously keeping tabs on the same activists for the ADL itself. There is evidence that Bullock had compiled "pinko" files on hundreds of liberal social-action organizations with no relationship to bigotry, including Greenpeace, the NAACP, Act Up, New Jewish Agenda, and the Center for Investigative Reporting. According to the transcripts of police interviews with Bullock and David Gurvitz, then an ADL staffer in Los Angeles, the two discussed revealing the identity of Rick Eaton, a Simon Wiesenthal Center researcher, to the Aryan Nations after Gurvitz was passed over for a Wiesenthal Center staff job.

Unraveling who did what for whom in California will take months, perhaps years, and ADL spokespersons have repeatedly stated that the ADL has done nothing illegal or improper. Allegations are not indictments or convictions. Much ADL fact-finding is legal, and the organization has produced substantial reports on neo-Nazi organizing and other hate-group activity in recent years. Yet the fact that the ADL would become involved with a public/private spying ring that tracked liberals as "pinkos" is a symptom of a much deeper problem which can be discerned in the organization's recent political activities. The ADL, once the nonpartisan defender of victims of hate, has itself been seduced by a subtle intolerance, leading it to shift to the Right and develop a hyperbolic brand of neo-conservative ideology. Today, neoconservatives control the ADL's policies and practices through a system of croneyism and internal staff

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authoritarianism, using the organization for purposes far removed from its original mandate. Much of their ideological advocacy is done behind the scenes, or involves sins of omission which have often allowed dangerous bigots to flourish unchallenged. Little of this is known to most ADL contributors, who still regard the ADL as the bastion against prejudice that it once was.

The ADL's shift to the right began in the early 1970s, when the State of Israel faced strong challenges. The Yom Kippur war, increased Soviet military aid to the Arabs, dramatic acts of anti-Israel terrorism, and the "Zionism is racism" resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly all created a grave concern among many American Jews for the very survival of the Jewish state. Their worry was exacerbated when the international criticism of Israel—in which anti-Zionism often served as a cover for anti-Semitism—began to gain widespread sympathy in American society, primarily among Blacks and on the Left, but also among liberal Protestant groups disturbed by Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. In particular, Black anti-Zionism—developing in the aftermath of the widely publicized Black-Jewish verbal clashes during the 1968 New York teachers' strike—was felt as a betrayal by many Jews who had supported the civil rights movement.

In 1974, Arnold Forster and Benjamin Epstein of the ADL published *The New Anti-Semitism*. Although their previous books had focused mostly on the right-wing threat, over half of this book was devoted to criticisms of leftists, liberals, Arab lobbyists, and Black militants. At the time, the far Right in America was in a period of relative quiescence—it was easy to believe that the politics of anti-fascism (of which the ADL's concern with exposing the John Birch Society in the 1950s and 1960s had been an extension) was as outdated as the jitterbug.

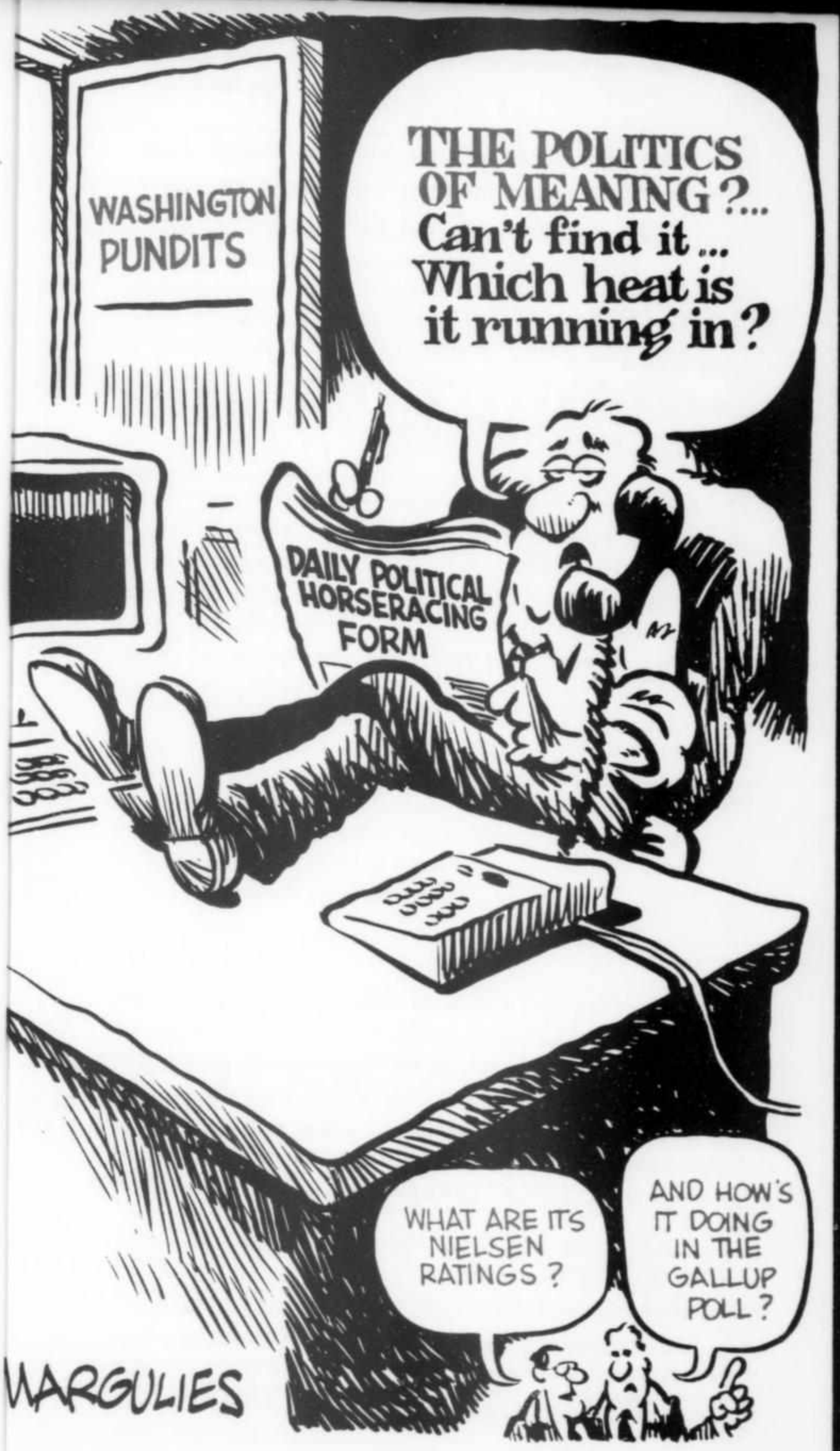
Neoconservatism, with its militant anticommunism, support for high defense spending, and distaste for the social protest movements of the 1960s—as well as its strong support for Israel—was already being nurtured in the pages of *Commentary*, published by the American Jewish Committee. As this outlook deepened its influence on the ADL leadership in the 1970s, Nathan Perlmutter, who later became the national director of the ADL, began to urge a "dialogue" with traditional conservative groups toward which liberal Jews had long felt suspicion. When the New Right went to Washington victorious in 1981, Perlmutter advocated an acceleration of this rapprochement.

In *The Real Anti-Semitism in America*, written in 1982 with Ruth Ann Perlmutter, he argued for a strategic alliance with the forces of the Christian Right, calling them (in contrast to the liberal National Council of Churches) "friends in deed...friends in need" of American Jews and "comrades-in-arms" of Israel's Jews. While acknowledging that the theology and social views of the Christian Right were far out of line with the thinking of the majority of American Jews, the Perlmutters nevertheless gave what is probably the classic argument for single-issue Zionist politics: American Jews "can live with restricted abortions" as advocated by the Christian Right, just so long as they can "praise the Lord and pass the ammunition" to Israel.

An extra ideological dimension was added to Perlmutter's outlook by Irwin Suall, a former national secretary of the tiny Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. Both the United States and Israel, Suall believed, were locked in a life and death struggle with world Stalinism, and he tended to view all political decisions chiefly by how they might affect that central struggle. In many conversations with us during the 1980s, he spoke of the supposed dangerous machinations of the Communist Party USA and other left-wing groups (especially in the Black community) and affirmed his strong support for a Cold War hard line both at home and abroad. Suall was so obsessed with Cold War objectives that he was willing to give a partial clean bill of health, on the ADL's behalf, to the fascist-infested and intensely anti-Semitic World Anti-Communist League while the latter was helping Nicaragua's contras.

Suall's outlook reflected not only the influence of Reagan-era politics but also the intensely sectarian world of the anti-Stalinist New York Left from which he had emerged—a world of factions, splits, expulsions, denunciations, and correct lines. A former official of the Socialist Party, Kenneth L. Burg, recalls the atmosphere of the party during the late 1950s and early 1960s when Suall was in charge, as being "rule or ruin, not live or let live... the leaders were all vanguardists, they believed in discipline." Applicants for membership were expected to sign a pledge to abide by the party's decisions in all of their political actions. Suall, who was closely allied with the "Shachtmanites" (a faction headed by Max Shachtman, a charismatic, ex-Trotskyite ideologue) practiced a combative leadership style that helped to trigger the exodus of over half of the party's youth branch.

When the party's final split occurred in 1972 over the Vietnam War, Suall joined with the Shachtmanites and other pro-war elements to form the Social Democrats USA and thus continue their struggle against such enemies as the "Abzugites" and the "New


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Politicsniks." Although most of the Social Democrats USA's younger leaders dropped these sectarian obsessions as they entered mainstream politics (they became frequent writers for *Commentary*, and in the early 1980s gained control of Reagan's National Endowment for Democracy), Suall remained trapped in the mindset of an earlier generation. Although he dropped any active role in the Social Democrats USA as he continued to move rightward, Suall operated inside the ADL fact-finding department as if it were the old Socialist Party and he its national secretary imposing the Line. In short, the fact-finding department, as remolded by Suall, became an accident waiting to happen.



Abraham Foxman (center) meets with former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney (left) and Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin (right).

The ADL's new concerns in the 1970s were not imaginary. Perlmutter was right to call attention to an increased threat to Israel and to recognize that Israel's stated policies required good relations with the Reagan administration. Suall was right in pointing out that the Soviet Union was the chief bulwark of Israel's enemies, an anti-democratic oppressor of its own Jewish citizens, and a major source of anti-Zionist propaganda that often veered into anti-Semitism. The ADL's mission, however, its self-proclaimed raison d'être, was not to be a lobbying organization for Israel (a job performed with relish by the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee) or a Cold War spy agency (a task carried out with great zeal by the official U.S. intelligence community); its mission was to fight anti-Semitism and bigotry within America on behalf of American Jews and other victims of discrimination.

Within the United States there is only one force with the potential to rob Jews of their fundamental security: mass-based, right-wing anti-Semitism among white gentiles supported openly or covertly by people in high places. That has held true from the days of Father Coughlin and the America First Committee down through Lyndon LaRouche and Patrick Buchanan and is likely to remain the case well into the twenty-first century. Black anti-Semites cannot pose such a threat on their own; largely isolated from white America, they can only feed feebly off a community preoccupied with survival in the face of pervasive discrimination. The predominantly white and middle-class radical Left, although it sometimes tolerates anti-Semitism woven into its anti-Zionism, is and always has been a relatively small force in American politics. It has no visible base of support in the rural heartland, where white supremacists and survivalists have stockpiled enough automatic weapons to equip several paramilitary divisions.

By the early 1980s, the ADL leadership, preoccupied with the concerns properly handled by other institutions, had begun to neglect, indeed to work at cross-purposes with, its duty of containing the radical Right. Although the ADL continued to issue research reports on a variety of Klan and skinhead activities, the ADL leadership had clearly decided these were minor, *pro forma* duties. As Perlmutter said in 1984, "I am more concerned by an isolationism that may deprive America's strongest ally in the Middle East of needed support, than I am with some Klansman in a cow pasture in central Missouri."

As to the problem of anti-Semitism in high places, the ADL simply pretended it didn't exist. The most obvious result was an invidious—indeed, a racist—double standard in the treatment of various forms of anti-Semitism. In 1984, the ADL went after then-Democratic presidential hopeful Jesse Jackson because of his hostile pronouncements about Jews and Israel (and Democratic party leaders, for not denouncing Jackson with sufficient vigor). The objective was apparently to stampede Jews out of the Democratic

Party and into the Reagan-Bush camp. But anti-Semitism was also rampant among the Republicans, as evidenced by the appointment of Buchanan as Reagan's White House communications director; Reagan's trip to Bitburg; the letter of praise from Reagan to the notorious Aryan supremacist Dr. Roger Pearson; the dealings of National Security Council and Pentagon aides with Lyndon LaRouche (something that disturbed even Oliver North); and the presence of former Nazi collaborators in the Republican Heritage Groups Council. None of these warning signs, with the sole exception of Bitburg, evoked more than the mildest of protests from the ADL. Indeed, when the story broke in 1988 that Bush campaign aide Fred Malek had once collected lists of Jewish-sounding names for the Nixon administration, the ADL came to Malek's defense saying he had only been following orders. (In contrast, Nathan Perlmutter remarked in 1984 about Jesse Jackson that "He could light candles every Friday night, and grow sidecurls, and it still wouldn't matter... he's a whore.")

The ADL's chief failure during the Reagan-Bush years was in not fighting back vigorously as the ultra Right, breaking out of quarantine in the electoral arena, rapidly penetrated both major parties, mastered the art of raising millions of dollars, and developed a new political style of "coded" anti-Semitism and racism linked to open homophobia.

This electoral mainstreaming of hate went through three stages, associated with the political ambitions of three men: Lyndon LaRouche, David Duke, and Patrick Buchanan. Throughout the process, the ADL's response was usually tardy, frequently ineffectual, and sometimes nonexistent.

Lyndon LaRouche, now in prison for loan fraud, is the leader of the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC), a formerly leftist group which lunged to the Right in the mid-1970s and formed alliances with Klansmen and other white supremacists. After breaking with Marxism, LaRouche crafted a racialist theory of history in which the "British-Zionist organism" (the conspiratorial rulers of the world, in his view) must be militarily crushed to make way for a new superrace of "golden souls."

In the early 1980s, LaRouche launched a concerted campaign to bring his new version of fascism into the mainstream. He organized a candidates' movement that ran almost 2,000 candidates—including farmers, small business owners, senior citizens, and readers of *Spotlight* (an anti-Semitic weekly published by the Liberty Lobby)—in the 1984 Democratic primaries. This movement scored impressive vote totals in every region and won its first contested congressional primary in Ohio. LaRouche also developed a political fund-raising network which, through sly appeals to bigotry mixed with fraudulent promises of prompt loan repayments at high interest, netted in the mid-1980s as much as $30 million annually.

If these inroads had been masterminded by Louis Farrakhan, the ADL would have sounded a rousing alarm. Yet LaRouche's grass-roots fund-raising and electoral breakthroughs, even in 1984, triggered no special attention from the ADL fact-finding department. The ADL did, from time to time, issue statements about LaRouche, but these avoided any focus on the neo-fascist characteristics of his movement, or the neo-Nazi content of his personal ideology. So far as the ADL was concerned, LaRouche was just a kooky conspiracy theorist.

The ADL's bland analysis of LaRouche was adopted without question by most of the mainstream media. Thus, when the LaRouchians cultivated contacts in the Reagan administration, the Republican Party, the CIA, the Pentagon, and the Teamsters Union—offering to be helpful as gatherers of intelligence and crusaders for various conservative causes—the individuals so approached could deal with them without fear of the kind of embarrassment that might result from an alliance with, say, the Ku Klux Klan. The LaRouchians were naturally quick to use each new contact to open doors to higher contacts, while artfully suggesting to potential grass-roots recruits that LaRouche was in the loop with Ronald Reagan.

In 1986, LaRouche's minions won major Democratic primaries in Illinois, stunning the media. An internal memorandum from the ADL Greater Chicago regional office was quick to call the victories a "fluke" and to blame the media and mainstream Democratic candidates for not warning the public about the LaRouchian candidates. But the ADL had, in fact, routinely advised the Chicago press simply to ignore right-wing extremists on grounds that lack of publicity would cause them to wither away. Prior to the 1986 primary, several experts on the far Right and local politics had warned of a possible breakthrough by the LaRouchians and/or other right-wing extremists; the ADL had taken the position that the people issuing such warnings were exaggerating the facts.

Over the next few months, the LaRouchians gathered hundreds of thousands of votes in every region of the country in spite of intense media attacks. Out of 234 candidates in 26 state primaries, almost half won over ten percent, and 13 picked up either contested or uncontested nominations. It should have been clear that for candidates plainly identified as

extremists to achieve this was more than a fluke. Yet the ADL, applying the misleading yardstick of mainstream politics, announced in a special report on the LaRouchian candidates that they had registered "just enough gains to give the appearance of remaining a meaningful factor" (this was translated in other ADL statements into "battering defeats" for the LaRouchians). The ADL's message was clearly that the Jewish community should forget about LaRouche and get back to worrying about neoconservative-approved targets such as Jesse Jackson. Indeed, the ADL proceeded to soften still further its designation of LaRouche; his ideology was often described as "eccentric," even "eclectic."

Indirect support for this message came from the ADL's March 1986 announcement that media reports of rising hate-group influence in the Farm Belt (where the LaRouchians would get their best response later that year) were "grossly exaggerated." As proof, the ADL cited the results of a Louis Harris poll it had commissioned. But the poll, in fact, revealed a highly significant level of anti-Semitism: 43 percent of respondents agreed that "when it comes to choosing between people and money, Jews will choose money," while 27 percent agreed that "Jews in this country have too much power."

The American Jewish Committee and farm activists held a press conference to dispute the ADL's interpretation of the poll, but the ADL's 1986 spin-doctoring was successful in most respects. Attention was diverted away from LaRouche and other growing right-wing tendencies; the very serious phenomenon underlying the LaRouchian vote totals—the anger in the heartland—went unanalyzed and unfought. The stage was set for Jewish unpreparedness when the next wave of ultra-Right hate erupted in the electoral arena.

This second wave came in Louisiana, where David Duke and his Populist party and white supremacist allies had carefully studied LaRouche's successful tactics and developed their own variation. In 1988, Duke mounted a campaign for the presidency modeled closely on LaRouche's earlier campaigns. The ADL's tactic was basically to ignore Duke; indeed, when Jewish militants in New Jersey succeeded through a barrage of phone calls in persuading a Paramus restaurant to cancel a scheduled Duke campaign appearance, ADL regional director Jeffrey Maas was quick to voice concern over Duke's First Amendment rights in an interview with the *Jewish Standard*, a regional newspaper. (In fact, no First Amendment rights were at issue, since no arm of government had been involved in the cancellation.) The ADL dismissed criticisms of its lack of involvement in fighting Duke in New Jersey by observing to the *Standard* that his following was quite small.

Although Duke failed to win significant vote totals nationwide, in part because of lack of funds, in Louisiana he received over 23,000 Democratic primary votes (about 4 percent of the total)—no mean feat for a candidate whose Klan affiliation was widely known. It should have been a warning for the local ADL, yet when Duke ran for the State House of Representatives in early 1989, the ADL simply argued that public opposition to him would create a blacklash. When Duke won, the head of the ADL's New Orleans office, A.I. Botnick, stated that "ADL has seen no evidence that the result...is indicative of a broad turn toward racism among the American people."

Botnick blamed Duke's victory on an anti-Duke rally held by Mordechai Levy of the small Jewish Defense Organization, suggesting that this event, attended by fewer than 100 people, may have created a backlash. Later that year, Botnick supported a policy of nonintervention by the Republican national leadership in the state party's acceptance of Duke and criticized the media's attacks on Duke, arguing that the effect was only to give him "a stage and spotlight." (A very different view was argued by Republican national committeewoman Elizabeth Rickey, who supported vigorous exposure of Duke's bigotry and was shocked by her party's tolerance of him. "When [the late GOP strategist] Lee Atwater looks in the mirror," she told a reporter, "he sees David Duke.")

In 1990, Duke ran for the U.S. Senate against Democratic incumbent J. Bennett Johnston, receiving over 60 percent of the white vote. He would have won except for a united Black vote and the aggressive organizing among white voters by the Louisiana Coalition Against Racism and Nazism, a bipartisan, grass-roots group founded by Rickey and others based on a strategy the opposite of the ADL's. Although the ADL did provide the coalition with valuable information from its files, it took a back seat in other respects.

Even when Duke declared his candidacy for governor in 1991 and began to raise millions of dollars nationwide, the ADL remained passive. Its excuse was that it might lose its tax-exempt status if it attacked a political candidate, although it had shown no hesitation in attacking presidential candidate Jesse Jackson in 1984. (The ADL is exempted from taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, which covers charitable organizations; IRS regulations prevent such organizations from taking sides in election campaigns.)

After Duke lost the gubernatorial race (thanks, in part, once again, to vigorous media exposure of his

ideas and the grass-roots work of the anti-Duke coalition), the ADL's leaders complained to the media about how they had been "sidelined" because of their 501(c)(3) status. Indeed, their complaints reached an almost hysterical pitch in the statement by ADL public relations director Myrna Shinbaum that if Josef ("Angel of Death") Mengele "showed up in Louisiana and called himself John Smith and declared he was running for City Council, we could not say, 'Excuse me, that's not John Smith, that's Mengele.'" (One might ask why, if the tax laws were indeed so draconian, the ADL's leaders had not urged the Jewish community, years before, to establish a non-tax-exempt entity capable of effective intervention in electoral campaigns.)

In the 1992 presidential campaign, the Duke constituency was largely captured by Republican primary candidate Patrick Buchanan—a man more dangerous than Duke because, as columnist Jack Newfield put it, "He is the more legitimate and attractive messenger. But his underlying message is no different." Indeed, Buchanan's message remained consistent with his views in the mid-1980s, when the ADL failed to protest his appointment as White House communications director; and his views in the late 1980s, when the ADL was mostly silent about his newspaper columns filled with hate against Blacks and gays as well as with innumerable sly digs at Jews and Israel. Although the ADL strongly condemned Buchanan in 1990 (after he wrote a column personally attacking Abe Foxman, the ADL's national director), the condemnation came too late to be very useful in stemming Buchanan's major challenge to George Bush in the 1992 primaries. Buchanan emerged as the hero of the Republican Party's right wing at the national convention, where the ADL's strategy of alliance with the Christian Right finally imploded: Under the eyes of millions of T.V. viewers, these erstwhile ADL friends cheered during Buchanan's bilious oration.

The key to Buchanan's success was that he induced much of the media to treat him as a legitimate candidate representing conservatism rather than the radical Right. In part, this resulted from his artful phrasing of his most extreme ideas in a code language hovering just below the threshold of offensiveness. For instance, he frequently referred to an "America First" policy, thus adopting as his slogan the name of the pro-Nazi coalition in America prior to Pearl Harbor. The media would have been less apt to shrug this off if the ADL had fought during the previous decade to persuade them to decode rather than accept at face value the rantings of the LaRouchians. By taking the path of least resistance with news reporters regarding LaRouche, the ADL lost the chance to prepare them for the more artful and dangerous euphemisms of Buchanan.

The ADL played no role in opposing Buchanan during the primaries, again citing its tax-exempt status. The fight against Buchanan was left to Rabbi Avi Weiss—a New York activist long associated with the fight to free Soviet Jewry—who frequently appeared at Buchanan campaign rallies to display signs reading "Pat Equals Duke Without the Sheets." The ADL did, however, find time to launch a fight that summer to protect Time-Warner's profits when two Columbia University students, writing on The *New York Times*'s op-ed page, accused the movie '*Batman Returns*' of proffering anti-Semitic stereotypes. Foxman argued in a letter to The *Times* that the students were wasting the "precious currency of concern" over a non-issue. The issues Foxman listed as more worthy of concern dealt chiefly with Black anti-Semitism; Buchanan wasn't even on the list.

The ADL is certainly not responsible for the bigoted beliefs of Buchanan's hard-core supporters. Yet the ADL's minimal response made it easier for Buchanan to reach out to a broader audience and thus position himself to launch a full-scale right-wing drive for the presidency in 1996—a drive that cannot take power but that *can* polarize society in an extremely dangerous way. Buchanan himself senses that the fourth wave is coming: In a May 22, 1993 column, he wrote of the "gathering Middle American revolution, as radical as it is conservative, that will one day manifest itself, dramatically, in national politics." If Buchanan is right, the Jewish community may pay a heavy price for the ADL's 501(c)(3) status.

It should be noted that in the years of ADL passivity regarding the perils of the Right, others attempted to fill the void. The Louisiana Coalition Against Racism and Nazism was the most successful, but there were also many other organizing efforts in every region. In 1986, a coalition formed with the backing of the American Jewish Committee and the Center for Democratic Renewal (CDR) sent human relations teams throughout the Farm Belt to combat hate groups (after the ADL had denied the problem was a serious one). Earlier, an anti-racist coalition in Idaho succeeded in politically isolating the Aryan Nation, which had set up its headquarters in that state. In 1991, Boston activists organized a vigorous ad hoc protest when David Duke came to town to test the waters for his presidential candidacy (predictably, the ADL concentrated on defending Duke's freedom of speech, although most protesters were concerned only to express their own freedom of speech).

(Continued on p. 100)

Lavender Woodstock

Stephen Hanan



Whether the 1993 Gay Rights March in Washington was the largest, second-largest, or tied-for-third-largest social-cause assembly in history is a statistic that may or may not matter in the greater scheme of things. To all who participated, or even looked on, it was a proceeding of evident momentousness, never to be forgotten. But to this eye, this heart, the previous day's events on the Mall were even more instructive.

I was born and raised in Washington, exposed from childhood to its monumentality. One afternoon in high school, I had my first plunge into history. What started as an innocent half-hour bus ride from upper Sixteenth Street to my father's downtown store grew increasingly surreal as a sobbing woman entered the bus, followed by another at the next stop, two weeping men at the next, and so on, until word spread through the bus of President Kennedy's assassination. As we passed by the White House, the bus passengers were muted, breathless, gaping, and when I got off at Fourteenth and K, the extra editions verifying the unbelievable had already hit the street.

Five to ten years later, I joined with the hundreds of thousands whose call for an end to American violence in Vietnam rang across the greensward until two more presidents fell, not to bullets but from the fallout of war and deceit. But no public spectacle has ever moved me more deeply than the sight, the day before the march, of two young men of late high school age walking hand in hand down Constitution Avenue and winking at me as I smiled at them.

In a jump of memory, I returned to my own desperately closeted high school days. For all the epic impact of Washington on my teenaged imagination, the possibility of experiencing first love with someone of my own disposition never entered my mind. To do so even vicariously, fleetingly, with those two anonymous boyfriends, stamping their bold fondness upon the heart of my native city, healed a wound in me of thirty years' standing.

The joke on homophobic fundamentalists is that the hellfire with which they threaten their human targets is a Key West breeze compared to growing up gay. Every gay adult I know, male or female, compounded the universal agony of adolescence with the added burden of believing "There's nobody like me," and "If they knew what I am, they'd hate me." Those two ideas have the power to create an internal hell for which mere theology has no rival. No belief system can cure it. One might just as effectively slap religious icons on the walls of

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Auschwitz and pronounce the place redeemed.

But here, that Saturday, was the cure. Everywhere I looked, all along the Mall and throughout its attendant buildings, in pairs and groups and solo, ogling the Cézannes, the Rodins, the dinosaurs, and the space capsule, lining up for ice cream, with strollers, with wheelchairs, with frisbees, by the thousands, everybody was like me, and they knew what I am and they didn't care, because they were, too. And the most amazing thing of all, the thing of greatest portent for straight America, was that this profound sense of kinship wasn't based on any surface appearance. The gayfolk on the Mall, from Chicago and Bridgeport, Santa Cruz and South Bend, Denver, Atlanta, and Honolulu, were of the formulaic ethnic diversity you'd expect in a forties Hollywood bomber crew (directed by George Cukor, maybe). In terms of race, education, gender, age, size, class, coloring, style, and religion, we were as unlike each other as any million people could be.

But we kept recognizing each other all the same, glance after glance, wave after wave. The kinship we experienced is a function of who we are, within, a quality that can be sensed but not actually seen, a quality that, despite a hundred fulminating preachers, I can only call spiritual, because it is written on the heart and must be read there. It is inherent, neither good nor bad unless society compels us to conceal it. It is not primarily about desire. Male and female, the hunky and the hare-lipped, the buffed and the bedraggled, shared a similarity far deeper (and more intriguing) than looks, the similarity of being "different." It's a quality formed by many struggles: to affirm one's own worth in a stigmatizing culture, to celebrate Eros in a materialist culture, to be gentle in a violent culture. In the end, it's a quality that transcends even the issue of preference, for I surely discerned it in the married couple from Minnesota who flew East to march in matching T-shirts that proclaimed, "Straight But Not Narrow."

It wasn't Paradise. There were lone wolves with hungry eyes searching compulsively for that Special One. There were defensive whippersnappers refusing to return a warm smile for fear of being hit on. There were howling babies making both their moms anxious. There was the Quilt. And yet even that symbol of plague and terror has become a metaphor for the journey into healing that all gayfolk must make to claim their place in a world that withholds approval.

Hidden inside the lonely outcast adolescent boy or girl is a beautiful being who wants to love, help, and be joyful. Hidden inside the ruthless corporate raider, the unbending Pentagon inquisitor, the violent, self-anointed messiah, or the genocidal Serbian rapist is the same being, under many more layers of scar tissue. We cannot afford, as a nation or as a species, to foster any longer the repression that breeds such monsters. If gay men and women can step beyond their conditioned isolation to find purpose in community and dance in diversity, why not gay and straight together? If the gay tribe, comprising as it does every other category of human being, is already the melting pot that America claims to be, why not encourage its visibility? Why not learn from it?

One urgent priority is to bury the practice of justifying homophobia on religious grounds. Patriotism may still be the last refuge of scoundrels, but the Bible has unfortunately become a runner-up. One never hears other Levitical no-nos like shaving the beard, wearing mixed-fiber clothing, or charging interest described as morally abhorrent. The suspicion hovers that biblical authority is being invoked to support a personal repugnance.

An amoral society is a dismal thought, but so is the compulsion to define morality as cramping our behavior to suit the demands of the most uptight. There wasn't a whiff of amorality at the march, nor even at the Dupont Circle love-in. Only joy. The tenets of the religious Right must be countered by the religious Left, one of whose foremost avatars has admonished us to judge not, lest ye be judged, and also, whatsoever trip you lay on the least of my brethren, you lay on me.

Someday, if His will be done, there'll be no more armies, but there will still be gay people, revealing their Buddha-nature like everyone else. How ironic that military service should be the issue to galvanize this latest surge toward gay liberation. Tolerating open homosexuals is every bit as dangerous to the Pentagon as the Joint Chiefs insist, but not for the reasons they rattle off. When the smoke around the persuasion gap clears, we'll see the outlines of a greater battle yet to come: between democracy and militarism. The aspirations of the one are necessarily subverted by the methods of the other, as the opposing arguments about gays in the military make clear. Militarism is a religion, fundamentalist to the core: It demands unquestioning obedience to authority and suppression of dissent; to justify force, it fosters intolerance. By its own standards, it has every right to resist gay people and their allies. Only with nonviolence can democracy fight back, by raising an insistent public demand for fairness and justice.

My comparatively brief life span has seen the law of violence undo three presidents. What hope I have for my country's (and planet's) future lies in the unsung applications of the law of love that ordinary people–"mainstream Americans"–practice daily. The Gay Rights March was a walking illustration of that law, and a challenge to all Americans, high and low and in-between, to read the message written on their own hearts. □

Irving Howe (1920 - 1993)

Todd Gitlin

At the memorial service for Irving Howe at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA in New York, two speakers, John Hollander and Irving's son Nicholas Howe, independently told the same joke—not because of bad planning but because they equally understood its significance: In the village of Chelm, the man whose job is to watch for the Messiah complains about his pay. "Sure, the pay is low," he's told, "but the work is steady."

It was Irving's story, actually. He told it in the introduction of a book of his essays, *Steady Work*, in 1966. When I first heard the title, back then, I hadn't read the book or heard the joke; I took the phrase straight, as if it meant: *devotion, endurance, the long plod through the institutions*. Only years later did I hear, and therefore get, the clang of the irony.

It's hard—no, impossible—to talk about the presence and the loss of Irving Howe without getting personal. In 1966, I was a twenty-three-year-old half-hothead who admired his *Politics and the Novel*, agreed with him about the depredations of communism and the wrongness of capitalism, but thought he made too much of the former and not enough of the latter. In principle, I could appreciate the idea of steady work: the long haul and all that. But cool principle was one thing, and moral passion seemed to require another when napalm bombs over Vietnam were flaming: Do something now! Everything, preferably!

Within a year, the idea of steady work, as I then misunderstood it, implied time that the New Left was sure we didn't have. You might as well announce in advance that you were settling for perpetual defeat. Portents of desperation were everywhere—not least in the White House, where the perpetrators of the Vietnam War were rehearsing their own rendition of apocalypse now. They claimed they were saving the world. We who hated the war thought *we* were. *Steady* work? A lifetime of slogging away? Hell no to a handful of New York intellectuals and their ancient scruples, their political refinement, their quarterly for part-timers, their reluctance to condemn the war straightforwardly, their boring insistence on organizing coalitions! We had grander and purer designs. We were bound for heaven, we were bound for hell, in any event we were bound for glory and contempt. It was our mission, we thought, to break out of the cloister of the bedraggled if noble anti-Stalinist Left. We were off to jump-start the mass movement. We were called, we thought, to break away from mannerly dissent and obsolete decorum. The New Left couldn't bear to lose, and Irving looked like a loser.

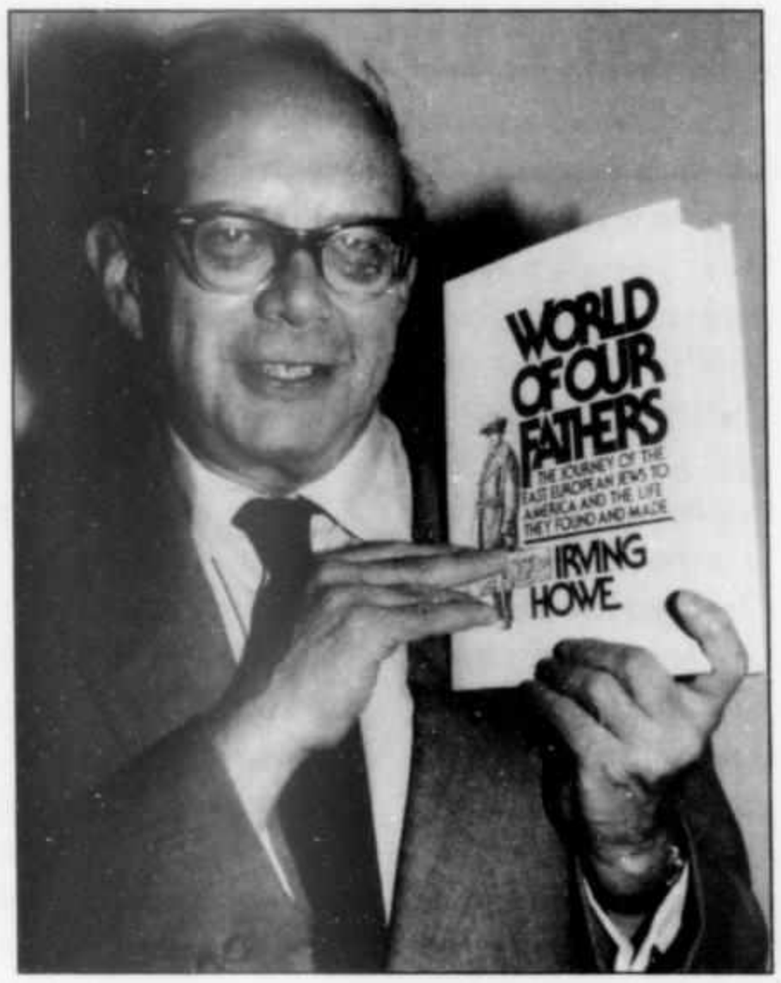
Mere dissent! As if a life of dissent is easy. When all else fails, Irving knew during the miseries of the McCarthyite early '50s, start a magazine. With the Old Left bankrupt, his group thought it their mission to keep alive the idea of a left. As a result, two generations on the Left can summarize their political lives in relation to *Dissent*—that is (no disrespect to many co-editors and devoted collaborators along the line), to Irving. So that when the likes of me got into politics, in 1960, *Dissent* was already there, deep into the necessary conversation about such subjects as the Cold War and the worth and meaning of socialism after Stalin. Later, in the sixties, it—he—was still there, irate at the careening New Left for good reasons and not-so-good. Around 1968, I stopped reading: The attacks on the no-longer-so-New Left were too brutal, too uncomprehending. When I came back to reading *Dissent* regularly, in 1972, I thought it overly obsessed with enemies on the Left just when the Right was settling in for a long reign. But *Dissent* was there to come back to from the wild red yonder of the maniacal Left. And it is still there, even as Irving is no longer—a home and a forum for prodigals, a guide to perplexed refugees from the politics of brainlessness and futility

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in various incarnations.

Irving's life was a triathlon, an engagement with the three angels of politics, Jewishness, and literature. Jewishness was to be measured by—completed in—democratic socialism, for Judaism as such meant little to him. (He nettled some Jews when, accepting a TIKKUN award in 1989, he deplored the smug suburbanism of official American Judaism.) (See TIKKUN, May/June 1989) And Yiddishkeit, well, that was the glory of the fathers and mothers, but there was never going to be enough life in a murdered language to hold together the disparate parts of modern life.



Howe's life was a triathlon, an engagement with the three angels of politics, Jewishness, and literature.

Only democratic socialism stood a chance of squaring the circle. Some of his friends thought his attachment sentimental. Irving was not naive on this score. The corruption of socialism by communism was not something he discovered in 1989. He still carried enough of Marxist method around with him to know that socialism would have to be more than "the name of our desire," as he (with long-time co-editor Lewis Coser) wrote in the 1950s. It would have to be both more and less than an institutional arrangement—though in recent years Irving solicited many an article for *Dissent* on the utopian possibilities of "market socialism," in which democratic decision-making about the core of the economy would coexist with the free exchange of goods and services.

I think what Irving meant by socialism was not an economic system or a governmental arrangement alone, but an ethos, a spirit by which a society lives. It meant taking seriously the fundamental equality of humankind, while refusing to level the terms of that equality to the degraded conditions of a commercial or a totalitarian society. It meant cultivating the refusal to knuckle under. It was a commitment to wresting solidarity out of the desert. To carry the tattered banner through most of a murderous century was his burden, but also his joy, the test of a serious life in a country that came to regard seriousness as the dullness of the unhip.

Irving hated capitalism and loved literature. He kept up a wall between his domains. He rendered unto Dostoyevsky what Dostoyevsky needed, unto Marx perhaps more than *he* needed, but he kept them apart. Some of his critics on the farther Left suspected that he loved literature *more* than he hated capitalism. Possibly they were right. Any serious political person—make that any decent person—loves more than she hates. Irving knew the only remedy for capitalism was more equality, which in turn both required and extended democracy, for which not only economic arrangements were necessary, but a wiser people entitled to the best of everything, including the best literature, which was not necessarily—not even necessarily—the most popular. Popularity meant little to him—or to *Dissent,* the journal he edited for into its fortieth year.

Forty: no typo. Forty was just the number of years to spend with his companions—"followers" isn't the right word—in the wilderness while they tried, failed, and tried again to shake off their bad habits. Today, the wilderness extends as far as the open eye can see, and Irving was no Moses. What he said was: Stare at reality. Face it.

He could be maladroit, he could be fierce, and he didn't stop learning—thus, in his last fifteen years, he came to see the justice of feminism. A polemicist can be a hard man to please, which made him a splendid critic. He wasn't always nice—a sin in our squeamish America where niceness ranks far above cleanliness. But during four decades, as Michael Walzer pointed out at the memorial, he averted splits in *Dissent*—no small achievement on the Left, or anywhere.

Irving Howe leaves neither a factory nor a cult. He was not a star. His portrait is not a national icon. He earned, enjoyed, and refused to overvalue a renown that was worlds apart from the glitz of celebrity. He leaves a steady workshop: craftsmen and -women at work, the sound of hammers and chisels in the night. □

That Old Psychoanalysis Just Ain't What It Used To Be

Michael J. Bader

There are lots of good reasons for socially conscious, critical thinkers to be cynical about psychoanalysis. For instance, psychoanalysis reproduces certain relationships of authority within the clinical setting that mirror social asymmetries involving gender, power, and science expertise and yet, historically, analysts tend to lack awareness about these authority dynamics. The unself-conscious belief of psychoanalysts that, because of their neutrality, professional boundaries, and scientific theories of the mind, they therefore have a privileged capacity to understand that the psychic reality inside their patients is another of the many versions of "Father Knows Best" that intellectuals on the Left distrust and continually attempt to deconstruct.

Another reason for skepticism about the psychoanalytic enterprise is the extent to which people are viewed as driven mainly by dark passions that, if left to their own devices, lead them toward maladaptive and anti-social activity. As progressives attempt to critique and transcend the prevailing political cynicism that assumes that the citizenry and their leaders are driven mainly by material greed and self-interest, the pessimism that historically has suffused the Freudian view of human motivation has categorized psychoanalysis as part of the problem and not the solution.

These images of psychoanalysis on the Left have always frustrated me because they are not informed by the tremendous upheavals and paradigmatic changes and debates within psychoanalysis over the past twenty-five years that have addressed these very problems in the classical vision of analytic authority and the nature of motivation. The social world has changed and psychoanalysis has changed with it. I believe that these changes derive from and are expressive of the same intellectual and cultural climate that has given birth to TIKKUN and, therefore, can potentially contribute to the debate about authority, values, and meaning that so often marks these pages.

Stephen Mitchell has made a major contribution to defining and synthesizing the emerging new paradigms within psychoanalysis in his book, *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis*. Mitchell, a psychoanalyst, has a unique ability to weave together the threads of modern debates about how analysts think and what patients want and links both to changing cultural and intellectual contexts. He not only renders these debates accessible to the lay reader but he demonstrates how each voice in the modern analytic conversation represents a partial truth that tends to become unnecessarily totalized. Mitchell, on the other hand, always sees the big picture, viewing analysis as both a specific, evolving discipline and a constituent of broader historical changes in our intellectual environment.

For instance, Mitchell shows how Freud's vision was essentially renunciatory. It counseled the patient to give up certain wishes or sublimate these longings into more adaptive, reality-oriented activity. The implied ideal was that the patient renounce illusion and achieve greater rational control over his internal emotional life. Modern psychoanalytic authors, on the other hand, talk more about personal authenticity. The assumption among popular theorists such as D.W. Winnicott and Heinz Kohut, for instance, is that the patient is seeking greater meaning in life, a deeper and richer sense of personal experience, and a more empathic sense of recognition from the social milieu. In therapy, patients seek—and the analyst should provide—a space within which they can feel safe enough to gradually give up the false compliances and adaptations that have restricted them and establish a more authentic relationship to their inner life.

Mitchell links this shift to the growing social recognition that control and scientific rationality have brought our society to the brink of ruin, both in terms of the risk of nuclear holocaust and environmental disaster. The shift from Freud's celebration of self-control exercised by a rational ego to the current emphasis on personal meaning and authenticity

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reflects in theory, then, an actual social disillusionment with the failure of science, economic growth, and material acquisition to meet our personal needs for recognition, creativity, and authenticity. The current call for a new politics of meaning speaks to this same recognition that a life worth living is one that feels purposeful, creative, and has meaning within a community. When psychoanalytic theorists such as Christopher Bollas write about the attempt of the patient to express her own personal "idiom" through her character and her peculiar way of making use of the analyst and the immense clinical importance of the latter's recognition of this movement, he is describing the same phenomenon as Peter Gabel and Michael Lerner when they argue in TIKKUN that the desire for a non-alienated experience of recognition is more important to address politically than are certain material needs for commodities. Mitchell is smart enough to understand that our new theories about what patients need have something important to do with our sharpening awareness of the centrality of our need for a sense of personal continuity and meaning.

Mitchell shows a similar contextual and social sensitivity in his discussion of changes in the nature of the psychoanalyst's knowledge and authority. He likens the role of the classical analyst to Sherlock Holmes, tracking down a singular Truth that lay within the patient, using his privileged position—due to his greater objectivity—eventually to uncover and interpret that Truth. Increasingly, however, analysts are describing their role as more akin to that of the T.V. detective Columbo—gently questioning the simplistic self-understandings of the patient, sensitive to and respectful of the latter's autonomy, and positioning him- or herself more as a fellow-traveler on a mutual journey rather than a detached authority insisting on some absolute truth. This movement toward a more relativistic, perspectival view of truth has its proponents within psychoanalytic orientations ranging from hermeneutics (Roy Schafer, Donald Spence, Richard Rorty) to the interpersonal school (Edgar Levenson, Lewis Aron), to the more radical social constructivists (Irwin Hoffman, Donnel Stern). They argue, in different ways, for the importance of accepting that there are multiple truths, multiple narratives in therapy, and that the patient is never expressing a pristine inner reality but is always partially responding to the unique psychology and influence of the analyst.

Mitchell takes up the various ways in which the intrinsically social reality of the therapeutic interaction and the relative rather than absolute view of truth is subtly denied or misunderstood, even by critics of the classical model. For instance, he argues that some theorists believe that the answer to the problem of truth in psychoanalysis lies in infant and child observation research, or empirical psychotherapy outcome and process studies. We can get to the truth by scientifically studying it. And some theorists, such as Evelyn Schwaber, argue that the only way the analyst can avoid contaminating the clinical field and imposing her authority and personality on the interaction is by putting herself entirely in the shoes of the patient, repositioning the analyst's role so that the interaction becomes entirely patient-centered.

Enter the deconstructionist and post-modern cudgel that has become increasingly familiar in contemporary intellectual life. These modern solutions, while offering important insights and providing useful correctives to the classical model, still mistakenly seek to find ways of *directly* contacting the patient's experience, of believing the analyst can "know" the patient's "real" experience, either through importing empirical techniques from other fields or by getting rid of the analyst's subjectivity in favor of the patient's. Mitchell reflects a growing sensibility in psychoanalysis that rejects these possibilities because of the belief that the analyst can *never* hear or see reality through a lens that is free from the distortion and imprint of her own subjectivity; the psychic reality that is being seen is always ambiguous and never unitary, waiting there in the patient to be "seen."

In this sense, the current debates about the nature of the analyst's knowledge derives from the same social context that spawned a shift in the psychoanalytic understanding of what the patient needs. We just don't trust authority any more. We have felt betrayed by experts who, in all their guises—scientific and otherwise—have let us down, misunderstood us, defined us in ways that were against our interests, and were indirectly reproducing the existing relations of social authority. To the extent that psychoanalytic authority draws from the same wells of paternalism and idealization of expertise as do other institutions such as medicine, academia, and government, the current revolution in metatheory that Mitchell outlines with such sensitivity shares many of the intellectual assumptions of both the current deconstructionist fashions in academia and the growing popular cynicism toward the promises and claims of our leaders and so-called experts.

Mitchell's subtle and thorough treatment of these phenomena within psychoanalysis maintains an appreciation of the problems and paradoxes that a relativist or constructivist paradigm can generate, including leading the analyst to a quasi-paralyzed state in which she feels that because she can't know the

truth, she can't act to help the patient. My own experience is that psychoanalysts can deconstruct themselves right out of the helping professions, in the sense that they are so modest and cognizant of what they shouldn't presume to know that they shy away from developing and testing out hypotheses about what's troubling the patient and therefore don't make use of their capacity to influence the patient for therapeutic purposes. The patient, after all, comes into therapy or analysis for help with a problem and expects the analyst to know more than he or she does. While the patient certainly wants to have her/his experience appreciated and validated and expects the analyst to be open-minded, the patient also usually wants the analyst to be confident, authoritative, and to embody an ethic of caretaking responsibility. As Mitchell notes, the analyst sometimes responds on a practical level to the theoretical issue of the nature of truth by retreating from her interpersonal and emotional authority vis-à-vis the patient. This is a misstep, since in the mind of the patient, the analyst is always an authority figure, and, in fact, the analyst always relies on that relationship to aid the patient's self-exploration and therapeutic progress.

Psychoanalysis has historically been pilloried for its obsession with the nuances of self-understanding over symptom-relief and its privileging of a focus on the relationship with the analyst over changes in the patient's real life. The new call for modesty about analytic authority and an increased emphasis on the interpersonal construction of truth within therapy, rather than its objective discovery, can lend itself to a similar picture of therapeutic inaction and psychoanalytic navel-contemplation. Columbo, after all, in spite of his diffidence about his expertise and authority, does always get his man!

The prevailing social cynicism about authority contains similar contradictions, and an appropriate political response to this distrust of authority runs similar potential risks. Political leaders, like therapists, should not only appreciate their own limitations and deeply respect the ultimate authority of people—and not experts—to define their needs and reality, but they also have to take responsibility and exert leadership and caretaking authority. Like the "patient," the "people" are not privileged authorities about their own needs; their self-awareness has been warped by various social pathologies and experiences of alienation. Political activists and leaders sometimes have to articulate and advocate for people who can't always speak for themselves, or don't fully know until they see it modeled or hear it described, what kind of new reality they want and need.

Mitchell has gone a long way toward bringing psychoanalytic theory in line with the rest of world. Of course, it has never actually been out of line, but analysts have always tended to wish that it embraced a set of truths about reality that were revelations to its patients and to other intellectual disciplines. In fact, as Steven Mitchell argues, psychoanalytic theory has changed along with its patients and its cultural context. Its modern ferment, as was its classical past, is rooted in the world around it, even as it can help us understand and change that world. □

BOOK REVIEW

A Holocaust Escape

Ernestine Schlant

Unsentimental Journey by Albert Drach, translated by Harvey I. Dunkle, Ariadne Press, 1992.

In this fictionalized autobiography, the "unsentimental journey" goes through the detention and deportation camps of Southern France during the years of the destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis. The Austrian writer Albert Drach's alter ego relates his escape from the camps and his hiding in the Maritime Alps until the arrival of the allies in 1944. Written while he is part of the events, this is not a memoir, but the recording of human behavior in situations of extreme distress. The immediacy of anger and outrage are used to cover up deep-seated, constant fear, at the same time that ironic distance serves as the observer/narrator's only protection to guard him against breaking under the impact of the events he witnesses. In the controversy over whether speaking about the Holocaust is compatible with artistic expression, this highly stylized, fractured, yet intimately coherent narrative argues convincingly for the affirmative. □

How To Build Utopia in Only Minutes a Day in The Privacy of Your Own Home

Part II

Don Futterman

For David z"l

In Part I, Don and his best friend from summer camp, Silent Marty Samuelson, join Young Judea and learn the Zionist movement principle of "dugma ishit," setting a personal example. After putting the Jewish people on trial for failing to be a Light to the Nations, Don gets inspired by a slide show about a new kibbutz in the south of Israel. But work as a kibbutz volunteer convinces Don that manual labor will drive him crazy, and he decides he must create a new kind of exemplary community.

I felt like Kanbei, the leader of the Seven Samurai in the movie by Akira Kurosawa. Kanbei was a great leader who nevertheless was willing to risk his life to save one tiny, ungrateful village. And he knew he had to take the time to search, to find comrades one at a time, to assemble twelve warriors to assist in his effort.

I kept thinking how in the beginning of the movie Kanbei shaves his head to disguise himself as a monk. He keeps pushing back the hair that's not there anymore and growling. All through the movie that's what he does when he needs to think. He finds one old ally he knows he can trust, and then each time he has to decide if a new candidate is worthy and reliable enough to join him, he polishes his newly shaved head and growls. Hhoooooo.

Hhoooooo.

So I called up my friend Arthur Katz. Arthur had been my protégé in Young Judaea. I had trained him to succeed me as regional programmer of Queens.

Arthur had an incredible mind. By his junior year of high school he had read and absorbed all twelve volumes of Will Durant's *History of Civilization*. Arthur was an intellectual. He loved talk—he loved to joust verbally and he had conversational stamina. We would ride the rise and fall of conversation, and reach our ultimate pleasure—getting in sync so we could finish each other's sentences.

And Arthur had this curly, kinky hair, which he tried to comb down flat on the sides but it didn't work and his hair looked like a triangle. We used to call him Pyramid Head; you'd get a sense of history just by looking at him.

Arthur and I would be the intellectual architects of the group. We paced my basement slamming ideas off the ping pong table.

Arthur: Our community will be like a kibbutz, but it will be in the city.

Don: We'll call it a city kibbutz.

Arthur: City in Hebrew is Ir, —Ir—Ir—Ir—we'll call it an Irbutz.

Don: An Irbutz. I like that. And we'll share everything.

Arthur: Voluntary socialism is essential. We'll share food, clothing, money, work.

Don: But more importantly, ideas, love, experience!

Arthur: Because we must never get bored.

Don: We'll study. Study as part of life, every day. We can't be bored if we're always learning.

Arthur: This community must be based on something uniquely Jewish. The Torah.

Don: The Torah will be like the SUN for us.

Arthur: We will orbit around the TORAH.

Don: But we must have moons as well.

Arthur: YES! Joyce!

Don: And Faulkner!

Arthur: And Hegel!

Don: These will be our moons!!!!

Arthur: We'll watch movies and do politics.

Don: Movies! Politics! This is really going to work.

Arthur: We have a plan!

Don: Dammit we do!

All we needed was people.

I thought of Kanbei, checking out every Samurai who passed through town, scouring the marketplace for potential partners.

Hhhhhooooooo.

Kanbei wouldn't take just anybody.

So I called up my girlfriend, Alison, and she joined the group.

Then I called my best friend, Marty Samuelson. He

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and I had sworn we were going to stay together for the rest of our lives.

So we had four people. It wasn't enough.

We got together and we called everyone we knew in New York City.

And we got two more people, Eleanor and Lanie.

We were never going to get a community if we had to pick up members one at a time. This was not the way. We needed to find people in a bunch, in a clump. We needed to find another group.

And now I knew just who to turn to: Jackie Fein. Jackie Fein was a man of action. Jackie Fein had been the national programmer of Young Judaea. And Jackie was working up in New Hampshire as a community organizer. I thought, fantastic, community organizing, that's just what I'm doing.

So I went up to New Hampshire. And Jackie trained me to go door to door on the community organizing night route.

Jackie: Dondi, [he always called me Dondi], first thing you gotta show them we've done something real for them—like, Hi there! I'm from New Hampshire People's Alliance. We got you that cut in the electric rate last month—Then you gotta get them to do something—something concrete—

Sign this petition to tear down that abandoned house and take this street back from the junkies—look, your neighbors already signed it—

And with a common problem a street becomes a community.

And Jackie has this goofy charisma that makes you follow him.

So I learned to go door to door. I charmed my share of people into joining the movement, but I felt like a Fuller Brush man for radical causes. Empowerment of the poor. Decentralizing control. Local leadership training. It was all right on.

Don: But Jackie, we're gypsies. When we get one neighborhood together we just start somewhere else. Don't you want a community for yourself?

Jackie: The only thing I want is a community. But I can't live in the city. Look at this place, look around you.

We were in the White Mountains National Forest. It was the peak of the fall foliage. Yellow and orange and a deep, lush red. We were running back and forth on an endless turf of fallen leaves, playing one-on-one tackle football, trailing frost breath behind us, making diving catches or eluding tackles until we collapsed, exhausted, onto the ground.

Jackie: Don't you feel better here, Dondi? Don't you feel alive?

Don: You're right. This is where human beings belong. Our community will be in nature.

Jackie: Everything begins with the land, Dondi.

Don: Then there's one thing we know. This community, whatever it is, this new form of community will be on the land.

Jackie: So where are you going to get this land from?

Now that was a good question.

So I went to Israel to find out about getting land for our new kind of community.

And everybody was willing to talk to me but nobody knew what I was talking about.

Then I met Yaron, from the United Kibbutz Movement. Yaron had been living on kibbutz for thirty years, but he was actually from Brooklyn, and he talked very deliberately but without ever taking a breath between sentences.

Yaron: What's going on here? I don't understand. You guys haven't decided what you want. Do you want to live on a kibbutz or do you want to live in the city? You're talking about kibbutz life but you want movies, you want stimulation. We know Americans. You guys are fickle. You come, you got a lot of great ideas, a lot of enthusiasm but after six months everybody gets bored and goes home to law school. It costs two million dollars to set up a kibbutz, to build a road, to put in the plumbing. We're not gonna do that unless we really believe in you. Decide right now. You want a kibbutz or you want a city. One or the other. You're trying to walk on both sides of the street at once, and you know what happens when you walk on both sides of the street at once? You end up walking in the middle of the street, and you know who walks in the middle of the street? The horses walk in the middle of the street and it's filled with horseshit!

So I went back to America and I told the remnants of my group, and I told Jackie, that we were going to build a... a... kibbutz.

Don: I mean we'll call it a kibbutz but we'll really do whatever we want. I mean whose going to check what we're doing once they've put the plumbing in?

Jackie: A kibbutz! I like the sound of that. And if we're really leaving, we ought to take the best of America with us. I got this *Utne Reader*. Let's look around.

Don: Check out this adobe house. Cheap building materials. Right out of the earth. Solar panels wedged into three-foot-thick walls, smooth and round, mmmm, these walls, they're so sensual and so efficient—what a turn on—I mean this house is exciting.

Jackie: It's appropriate technology. Technology appropriate to the task at hand and appropriate to the earth. And don't forget organic agriculture and wind energy.

Don: Wind energy! Fantastic! With these wind generators we can power the whole country. That'll be our industry. We'll build wind generators and sell them. It's clean, it's efficient, it's politically correct.

Jackie: I wonder if there's any wind in Israel.

Once Jackie joined there was a whole group of people from Boston who followed him. We were all into the same progressive causes. Organic agriculture. Appropriate technology. Alternative energy. Community organizing. And feminism. I wasn't too sure what feminism was all about but I knew the women were taking it up with real passion. One new guy called himself a feminist, and we generally let him speak for the men on this subject.

We were growing in ideas and members but we were losing people too.

It was emotional truth time and we didn't do very well. In our first run-in with our personal passions for each other, it turned out there was a lot of unrequited love coursing through the group. Declarations of new love and no love seemed to proliferate simultaneously across the country. There was no communal catharsis, just the usual private disasters. Some couples broke up with more grace than others. Some neglected to inform the rest of us about the new facts. And a few members simply vanished.

Alison and I split up. I believed at the moment that it wouldn't change our relationships to the group but in time Alison found new commitments and moved on, and I found a new girlfriend, Rebecca. And although Rebecca came to all of our meetings, she never signed up.

So we got everyone who was left together—the Boston progressives and the New York Jews—for one big convention with yet another group, some Young Judaea artsy types living in a group house in Austin, Texas.

I had been hearing about Elliot, one of the Texas artists, for years. He was Arthur's best friend. He had been Alison's pal in Israel. Elliot loved love. There were two women in Texas who were in love with Elliot and they both joined our group. Elliot wanted to be a tree farmer but he was a sculptor and read Wittgenstein for fun. He was a leader who loved his body and his mind.

Elliot: You folks just drove across half of America and I bet you were talking the whole way. What's say we shut up for a while and use our hands. I thought we'd bring our vision a little more into the light with the help of some clay. Let's build models of our community. Let's give this dream a specific shape. Every one of us is an artist, remember that. Art is not a commodity. It is your life.

This made me very happy. I was not used to paints and materials—words and images were my tools—but I very much wanted to be an artist. If somehow, tragically, our group did not succeed, I knew I would be a writer or a filmmaker. (Fighting for progressive causes, of course.) But here Elliot was telling me that it could be part of our community life.

We spent days building miniature villages. I wanted to talk some more, but I closed my mouth and began to construct my ideal society out of colored paper and clay and wood and small stones. I yearned for the meticulous detail that would make it come alive, but all I could get was a vague and general vision. My dream wasn't rooted in the shape of the buildings and the layout of the neighborhoods. I wished we were talking. I could have talked about plans forever.

But we did finish our models. The Texas artists made an artists colony with studios and art galleries. And the New York Jews had a cosmopolitan shtetl, centered around a synagogue and a house of study with a movie theater. Marty had learned auto mechanics so we put in a garage for him. The Boston progressives had a Mother Earth organic farm with women's consciousness-raising groups and they had windmills, there they were, spinning in the breeze off the Texas wilderness.

Conflicting visions? That's a narrow way of looking at things. They all made sense to me. Why not put them together?

We spent a week hashing out our ideas. And finally we had crystallized our vision to such a degree that we could fit the entire thing on the space of a brochure.

And now we chose a name for our group. We were Garin Pardes, a seed of paradise.

There were thirteen of us. Hardly enough to start a community. But I was like Kanbei. "Hhoooo." He was looking for twelve Samurai, but when it was time, seven had to do.

And now it was time to go. To get to Israel we had to go to New York first, and to get to New York, we got a Volkswagen minibus driveaway. We had forty-seven hours to get to the George Washington Bridge, where the minibus owner would meet us to take it off our hands.

There was one problem with this minibus. It had a standard shift, and the only person in our entire group who knew how to drive a standard shift was Arthur Katz. Nobody wanted to learn with a bus full of people, but I knew Arthur couldn't handle it alone. Hhhhooooooooo. "All right. I'm a leader of this group. Teach me."

So we're driving. Arthur and I are splitting the driving, Arthur's talking me through every upshift and downshift. And I'm repeating everything he's saying out loud, as if by announcing the play-by-play, I'll be driving better. "Okay, we're moving, hit the clutch, off the gas, second gear, bus is shaking, okay, third gear, hey, we're driving, I'm driving the bus."

And we have these guys in our group forming a rock band and they're singing their song, "Liquid, Liquid Plumber!" And Marty and Jackie are playing poker. And Arthur and I are up in our little bubble in the front seat, taking turns driving, and to keep ourselves going we're singing Phil Ochs songs, "And the Ship sets the sail," and every once in a while, just to keep ourselves honest, we'd throw in a Hasidic niggun: "Ya dee di di di di ..." and this is going on for a day and then a day and a half—and when I'm not driving I'm in the back sleeping but whenever Arthur isn't driving he's sitting next to me in the

front seat and talking me through the shifts—and then after thirty-seven hours Arthur finally konks out.

Don: Okay folks. We have eleven hours to go and it's just me now, so keep talking to me, if I'm talking I know I'm awake and you'll keep us alive. Okay? Okay, here we go, who wants to talk to me first?

It was my new girlfriend.

Don: Rebecca. God, Rebecca, I'm glad you're here.

Rebecca: I think we need some space.

Don: You're not coming to Israel?

Rebecca: I'm going to come, but I never wanted to be in the group. I found this funky art school in the middle of the desert, in the middle of this tiny town, it's nowhere, no one will ever find me. I want to be alone.

Don: Alone? Fantastic. That's a good basis for a relationship.

Rebecca: We'll only be four hours apart.

Don: Four hours. Oh that's nothing.

Rebecca: We'll see each other.

Don: I thought we really had something. We should be together.

Rebecca: I'm not trying to get away from you. I just want to be alone.

Don: Oh. Oh. Where you going? Oh, good night, have a good nap, Rebecca, sleep well, sweet dreams.

And then two guys from the Boston group came up to sit next to me. The Rock and Rollers.

Rock and Rollers: Hey Don, you know what we've always wanted to do? Our dream has always been to be in a rock and roll band. And now we've finished college and this is the time. It's now or never. We're going to play rock and roll!

Don: You mean, you're not coming to Israel.

Rock and Rollers: We're coming to Israel but we're going to play rock and roll, don't you think that's what Israel needs, rock and roll?

Don: We're trying to build a community that will set an example to the whole world and you guys want to play in a rock and roll band? What are your priorities?

Rock and Rollers: HELLO TEL AVIV! We are Liquid Plumber and we're here to clean your tubes! Jerusalem is rocking all the Arabs and the Jews!

Don: Let's go, who's going to talk to me?

And up comes my friend Silent Marty Samuelson.

Don: Marty? You want something? Sit down, go ahead. Hey, Marty, Marty, what's happening? There was silence. Marty. Marty! Now Marty listen. You have to talk to me. You have to keep me awake.

Marty: I hate being in a group. When I'm in a group I feel invisible. I'm going to leave right now.

Don: Marty, I'm sorry, I'm not mad at you, I'm just exhausted, Marty, what are you doing? CLOSE THE DOOR! Where are you going?!

Marty: I'm going home.

Don: Marty, Marty, don't leave me... Marty....

Oh my God, he left. He's gone. Can he do that? He did it. The door's open. HEY, THE DOOR'S OPEN! Anybody else want to leave? This is your chance! Someone get the door.

Okay folks, is somebody gonna sit next to me? Do I have to sit up here alone? But in the rear-view mirror I see there are only a few us of left, and oh no, they're all asleep.

Okay, I can do this, I can do this. "And the Ship sets the sail." "Ya di di di di di di."

Ohh. Shit. It's snowing. Snowing. I'm from New England, I can drive in the snow.

Weather report. Radio. Okay, the radio. Blizzard conditions.

It's not real, just snow, Providence, Rhode Island, Blizzard of '78, my one perfect week, college, can't see the world just the snow, ice sculptures on the lawn, so pretty, no cars, all cars banned from the streets of Providence—it's quiet, all cars buried under four feet of snow, illegal to drive, the blizzard, campus covered with snow, everybody out talking, building ice sculptures, perfect little village in white, silent, no classes, perfect—to be in love in New England in the White Mountains National Forest—to live in a house with Rebecca—that's all that I ever wanted—to be a gentleman farmer—not a real farmer—out of a pastoral English novel—loving the woman of my dreams—loving my sweet children—no pioneer of the sand—I don't want to go so far away....

WHOA!!!

Stay with the road, we're going to be fine, the road is curving, don't get hypnotized. I'll just open the window... [whoosh] I'll just close that. "And the ship sets the sail."

Oh shit, we're going the wrong direction. We're headed out to western Pennsylvania. Somebody wake up Arthur, I don't remember how to downshift. Arthur? Okay, we'll just keep going, I'll deal with it, we'll just find someplace where I can turn around at 60 miles an hour. We'll just keep going, everything's going to be fine. "And the ship sets the sail..."

I'm fine I'm awake I'm awake I'm awake I'm awake I'm awake I'm awake Okay I'm fine, what's happening? What's happening? What is this? This is a skid! A SKID! What do you do in a skid? You steer into a skid. Okay, I'm steering into the skid, no we're going too fast, let's steer out of the skid, let's steer out of the—oh we're going back across the highway there's a huge wall of snow on the divider of the highway we're going for the wall of snow everybody hold on we're going to hit!

And the bus hits the wall and goes soaring up in the air and spins around 180 degrees and lands in the middle of the snow, facing east, facing Israel, still going in the right direction. □

Podhoretz's Complaint

Jonathan Graubart

Readers of the April 1993 issue of *Commentary* got a special treat in the form of editor Norman Podhoretz's remarkable comments on the Israeli peace talks. One of the most strident defenders of the "pro-Israel" line, Podhoretz has dropped his long-standing position of refraining from public criticism of Israeli government policies, a position that has been an article of faith in mainstream American Zionist circles. The present Rabin-led Labor government is proving too accommodating to the Arabs for Podhoretz's tastes. Putting aside Podhoretz's overly generous assessment of Rabin's commitment to peace, I am grateful to him for unwittingly demonstrating in five perversely enjoyable pages the intellectual and moral bankruptcy of the nondissent principle he has so long upheld.

Podhoretz begins with the standard rationale for nondissent. American Jews have no moral right to criticize Israel's "security policies" because our lives are not on the line. This would seem to suggest that we, and indeed American gentiles as well, have no right to criticize the "security policies" of any country other than our own. Podhoretz, however, has had no qualms about criticizing "security policies" of such countries as the former Soviet Union (wasn't its invasion of Afghanistan justified on "security" grounds?), Iraq (ditto its invasion of Kuwait), and Syria. The reason we Diaspora Jews must exercise unique moral restraint, Podhoretz argues, is that we could become Israeli citizens under the Law of Return: in short, make *aliya* or shut the hell up. Does this mean that if, say, Iraq or Poland wished to replenish its Jewish population by offering all Jews full citizenship rights, we would have to refrain from criticizing them as well?

Podhoretz's nondissent principle does not oblige American Jews to keep out of Israeli affairs altogether; on the contrary, we must be cheerleaders, providing unconditional support to Israel state actions. In practice, this has meant defending the forces of intransigence—as represented by the Likud party for the past fifteen years—over the voices of peace. Why it is okay for those of us whose lives are not on the line to support policies that have exacerbated hostilities between Jew and Arab, Podhoretz does not explain.

Podhoretz complains that "very few, if any" American-Jewish opponents of Likud's expansionary policies abided by the noble principle of nondissent. Would that his contention were true. While American-Jewish criticism grew in the 1980s with the emergence of TIKKUN magazine, Americans for Peace Now, the New Jewish Agenda, and other dovish Zionist groups, the norm of nondissent has dominated the Jewish mainstream, reflected in the public stance of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and the Anti-Defamation League. Their official silence is all the more remarkable given that repeated surveys and a recent study by the Wilstein Institute demonstrate that a solid majority of American-Jewish leaders not only prefer Labor to Likud (as is the case with American Jews in general) but are open to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

After complaining that the Jewish critics of Likud emboldened then-President George Bush to stand firm on linking U.S. loan guarantees to a freeze on Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, Podhoretz proceeds to his most damning indictment. By publicly criticizing Israel, he charges, Jews "provided cover for ideological enemies of Israel and even outright anti-Semites." Assuming for the moment that such an unintended effect justifies suppression of speech, shouldn't Podhoretz and other "pro-Israel" promulgators of nondissent provide evidence that this causal connection exists? Are there any studies, for example, showing a correlation between increased American-Jewish criticisms of Israel and growing anti-Semitism, much less an active cause and effect? Why not also speculate on what effect Podhoretz's belligerent, hard-line stands and support for an interventionist U.S.

(Continued on p. 93)

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Fin de Siècle Cultural Studies

Elazar Barkan

If you think feminism is a radical movement in the academy, you may have missed the academic headlines of the last few years. No longer do generic feminists lead the onslaught on the established patriarchy. Feminism is now deemed too generic, overlooking the multiplicity of "voices," entangled by polarized opinions. Many traditional feminists thus find themselves compelled to defend their position against criticism from women of color or lesbians, who decry earlier feminist critiques for obscuring differences among women. One could almost say that "vanilla feminists" are now swallowing the bitter pill of radicalism they prescribed for mainstream academia a generation ago. But on that later.

Reconfigured feminism as an academic discipline is most likely to find its intellectual allegiances within "cultural studies," a field that has been spreading in the academy like wildfire, and is seen by practitioners as an amalgam of certain methodologies, approaches, subject matter, and rhetoric which goes beyond any specific discipline. Traditional departments such as English, history, anthropology, art history, and comparative literature have been changing the content of their curricula in recent years to fit a "cultural studies" perspective. The trend gained currency during the 1980s in academic journals such as *Critical Inquiry* and *Representations* and has been picked up by the university presses, which suddenly cannot commit themselves fast enough to new titles in the field. Academic job openings are advertised in a way to signal openness to applicants in cultural studies, and departments expect job candidates to have cultural studies' characteristic interdisciplinary expertise.

How is one to explain the extent and scope of this academic fad? And what may we say about its immediate and midrange future? To understand this phenomenon, we must first look at the history of the last wave of nontraditional disciplines, those which more often than not are still "programs" rather than full-fledged academic departments (that is, they lack tenured budgetary lines). These programs, which one might call "identity studies"—ethnic and gender programs in their various configurations—are characterized by their oppositional nature combined with a professional and social highbrow inclination, and they have been at the forefront of intellectual innovation for a generation. While specific ethnic or gender-based political backing has often been crucial for the success of identity studies, their adopted French texts, including the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, lent them an intellectual panache typically lacking in America among groups that suffered discrimination. It had rarely been cool to be poor.

The synthesis of traditional disciplines and identity studies resulted in what identity studies' opponents came to denigrate as "victimology," but which in effect turned into the renovation of "the master's house with the master's tools"—using acceptable methodologies to challenge traditional scholarship. What ultimately determined the academic standing of identity studies was their intellectual success. Suddenly (by academic chronologies, which are somewhere between historical and biological time-scales), disciplines were overturned, canons were being questioned, and prestige was being challenged. If in earlier days ethnic minorities and women were denied credentials because of their identities, identity studies in contrast contested the legitimacy of the traditional hierarchy (white males) to speak in the name of everyone else.

Such a challenge to the dominant forces in the academy was nothing short of revolutionary; it erupted in the notorious cultural wars of the late 1970s and the 1980s. In the midst of the supply-side economic prosperity of the Reagan-Bush era, academia was divided into hostile camps: On one side were the

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conservatives, who lamented the passing of the great Western culture; on the other were liberals and radicals who condemned dead (and live) white males as responsible for all past and present evil.

Although pushing diverse agendas, the various ethnic and gender-based studies' unifying claim was frequently that a position can best be represented by its subjects. Only Blacks can authentically write about Blacks, the argument goes, women about women, gays, lesbians, etc. "Subject position," "positionality," "essentialism," and "reductionism" were some of the buzzwords of this debate. Within a short time, the participants in these debates have multiplied dramatically, their publications have proliferated. Altogether, identity studies have enjoyed a success which, due to the sheer number of practitioners, has undermined the bare argument about exclusive authenticity.

Cultural Studies have undergone gentrification, and this success has a price: They must move from marginal studies to true multiculturalism.

Perhaps inevitably—but certainly ironically—the proliferation of these "new" fields led to disagreements among their practitioners. No longer could there be a single women's, Chicano, African-American, or gay perspective. In a society that privileges multiple identities, many students of identity studies found themselves with conflicting alliances. Is a writer first a woman, a Hispanic, or a lesbian? How is one to mediate among such various claims of knowledge?

The battle over academic standards continues to rage, even as we head into the 1990s. Students of history and religion may wonder whether there is a connection between the anxiety of the conservative response to changes in the academy and the approaching turn of the century, coupled as it is with the end of the millennium. This is a fortuitous time to discover the ominous signs of an approaching apocalypse, a time when Western civilization is said to be dismantled as the barbarians are clamoring at the gate. The scenes are all too familiar; we all have been watching the combatants on the talk shows and the evening news, embroiled in the "political correctness" cultural wars.

Alas for these conservative doomsayers, just as the 1990s approached, the cultural wars reached a point of absurdity, and identity studies suddenly came of age, transformed into cultural studies. Scholars in identity studies have inadvertently established a canon, and perhaps even more important, a tradition. The signs of cultural studies having "made it" are manifest: a recognizable academic jargon, a familiar roster of founding mothers and fathers, the appearance of new fields of research. But what happens to an oppositional group whose identity stems from its challenge to authority, once it becomes part of the establishment (even as it refuses to admit it)?

Cultural studies have undergone gentrification. The field's elders are now reaping their rewards in the form of prestigious chairs in elite, and not so elite, universities. And it seems that the demographic news (which by now is a truism) is finally reaching academia: So-called minorities—women, people of color—are really world majorities, and those majorities are beginning to have an impact in academia in a substantial way by providing significant intellectual leadership. Among the new intellectual elite are such minority scholars as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Cornel West, all of whom attract attention and a following outside of their particular discipline and group.

But such success has a price. In this case, the price is a responsibility to integrate identity perspectives into the mainstream, to move from marginal studies into a true multiculturalism. Hence, while identity studies as the politics of validation was being ever more fragmented, scholars were impelled to engage in coalition building. It is in these efforts of building bridges that one may locate the intellectual roots of cultural studies.

Consider Edward Said, who in 1978 published his seminal work, *Orientalism*. In it, Said argued that Orientalists (all Westerners who studied the East) constructed the Orient as the inverse of their own image: irrational, exotic, sexual, and mysterious. Despite its shortcomings—primarily, seeing all Western writing on the East as a unified message of exploitation—*Orientalism* has charted a new discourse. Specifically, it initiated a novel way to think and write about the relations of the West to its Others and challenged traditional disciplines to question venerable presuppositions. Said had a clear and explicit agenda: to expose the biased attitudes of scholars in the West toward the Middle East. Many have argued that his partisan agenda obscured his perspective. But to understand the significance of Said's work, one has to look not merely at his substantive claims, but at how much farther the

intellectual ripples of his work reached. In fact, they engulfed everything that matters in contemporary multicultural writings as well as in traditional disciplines, from the classics to philosophy.

Critics claimed that *Orientalism* ignored the "real" Middle East—that geographical space which generated the "trope" of orientalism. In Said's scheme, they observed, it really did not matter whether one hated or loved the Orient, whether one was a classical scholar or an imperialist agent, or for that matter a Hollywood director; everyone was implicated and denigrated by "orientalism." Said's critics faulted the book for failing to prescribe a better way of writing about the Orient that would have corresponded to an "objective" reality.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, his recently published work, Said presents his long-awaited sequel to *Orientalism*, in which we can see both substantive and methodological implications for the field of cultural studies. Said argues for the centrality of "Empire" to every facet of Western culture, even when the action takes place off stage. For example, in discussing Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Said points to the fact that it was money earned in the colonies which provided the resources for the affluence of English life; characters in this and other novels suddenly appear from the colonies to shape the narrative. In this sense, the Empire is central even in its absence.

Said defines his subject, in *Culture and Imperialism*, as "the general pattern of relationships between the modern metropolitan West and its overseas territories," that is, the reciprocal impact of Europeans and non-Europeans. Paradoxically, however, the book is a *tour de force* in affirming culture in Matthew Arnold's nineteenth-century sense of "the best that is thought and known." Said broadens the traditional literary pantheon (including Conrad, Austen, Kipling, Yeats, Gide, and Camus) to include representatives of both the West and the rest. But in the final analysis, Said's main focus remains a small, elite group of writers who have enjoyed international recognition (Achebe, Fanon, Naipaul, Rushdie, Negugi), or in other instances are among the most prominent in their own academic sub-field (such as Ranajit Guha in 'Subaltern' studies).

Said's move from an us-versus-them perspective to a more nuanced vision is the most significant modification of his earlier stance in *Orientalism* and is emblematic of the shift in cultural studies. For Said, post-colonialism is a call for inclusion, not destruction; it is a richer study of the cultural treasures of the West and its Others; and most of all, it depends upon developing the historical context of the Empire and its aftermaths.

Said no longer approaches his subject with the dismissive attitude that characterized *Orientalism*. For a "reformed" Said, every writer has to be understood on her own terms. This new intermediate position, a kind of a post-anti-colonial critique, takes into account the anti-colonialist/post-structuralist sensibilities while examining them in light of more traditional pragmatic, common-sense approaches. This new synthesis is informed by highbrow theoretical criticism, but privileges the need to view culture from several perspectives over a commitment to any absolute truth. Affirming the Canon even as he reinterprets it, Said sounds more like a statesman, a leading professor in a major university, and a preeminent scholar in his field than a representative of marginal "resistance" voices.

In the decade and a half between Said's two books, a growing number of people of various marginal alliances have been incorporated into the center and have become part of the very power structure which we/they had criticized and often continue to challenge in our work. The centers as institutions, in contrast, have changed very little. American universities retain their world superiority better than any other sector of the economy and face no real competition from elsewhere in the world. Within academia, traditionally prominent campuses have preserved their preeminence by opening up to new groups (even if the pace is far slower than any member of these groups would find satisfactory).

One could therefore say that the traditional method of mediating among conflicting notions of truth—through power—has been upheld. Power clearly belongs to certain Ivy League and major campuses' professorships and not to others. While the centers remained essentially the same, some of their occupants have changed. Representatives of marginal groups have moved into positions of power and have been crucial in the reconfiguration of the intellectual agenda. The current situation may still be far from satisfactory, but a sufficient number of "resistance voices" have enough of a stake in the system to come to terms with the consequences of being the new owners of "the master's house." It is from these positions of power that cultural studies are now charting their future.

But the ability of the center to incorporate (some would say appropriate) the opposition should not cloud the merits of identity politics. Although essentialism can go only so far before it becomes an obstacle to communication, it may be beneficial to pause for a moment and reflect on the shift in the last two generations. It was only fifty years ago that the supposed objectivity of scholars was so entrenched

(Continued on p. 92)

Not in My Backyard

Vanessa L. Ochs

When I was thirteen, my parents moved to Hewlett Harbor, New York, a neighborhood of costly homes and suburban palaces, some so large they looked like motor lodges or catering establishments, all surrounded by perfect landscaping manicured by an ever-attentive army of Italian gardeners. If you could live in Hewlett Harbor, so I gathered, you had arrived.

My parents routinely explained that, unlike some people, we didn't move to Hewlett Harbor for the sake of the fancy address. We moved there from Cedarhurst, one of Long Island's "Five Towns" (of these, Lawrence, Hewlett, and Woodmere were classiest; Cedarhurst and Inwood were the poor relatives), so that my sister and I could go to school in District 14, famed for its excellence. I never understood in what way District 14 was, educationally speaking, so exceptionally excellent. In those years, there were no special programs, techniques of instruction, or pieces of audio-visual equipment that any other suburban school system didn't have.

Unless I'm mistaken, the excellence of District 14 lay—according to the parents' perspective—in its ethnic make-up. When I was a student at Hewlett High School in the late sixties, the common wisdom was that 90 percent of the student body was Jewish. I recall a single black student. Whether it was true or not, kids said that lone black student was the child of someone's "help."

When we students staged modest rallies championing the cause of busing to cure our school's racial imbalance, most of our parents went quite berserk. These were the generation gap years, and we nascent do-gooders did not listen when our parents told us that what we perceived as our problem of racial and ethnic isolation was the very blessing they were paying sky-high taxes to bestow upon us. Parents would shout, "We moved here so you wouldn't get knifed in the bathrooms at Lawrence High!"

Realizing they could talk no sense into us, most parents showed up as an angry, vocal mass at town meetings in the high school auditorium, intending to protect us from our ideals and to preserve our white Jewish neighborhood from school integration. The problem was that integration would surely lower our educational standards, and, even worse they were convinced, it would bring violence. They could not tolerate putting our precious lives at risk, even for the sake of justice for all.

To enter my neighborhood from the main road, we'd pass the Lawrence Country Day School of Hewlett Bay Park, a stone and brick Tudor mansion surrounded by expansive playing fields. The itinerary of my parents' local sight-seeing tours for guests included certain yachts moored on the harbor behind houses that were (according to gossip) Mafia-owned; they would also point out the Lawrence Country Day School, which they said was so exclusive that it didn't take Jews.

While I was sure my parents didn't approve of organized crime or religious discrimination, both were curiously tolerable in our midst, as if they gave our good address even more cachet. My parents never seemed disturbed to have the Mafia living among them or to have an anti-Semitic private school in their backyard. I tried to make sense of it all and this was the best I could do: We all lived together in peace by ignoring each other. You could do that in America; even here in Hewlett. That's what made America a great place for Jews.

On graduation days at the Lawrence School, my parents would drive my sister and me by so we could observe the strange ways and customs of wealthy gentiles. On these anthropological field trips, my parents pointed out that well-to-do gentiles drove beat-up station wagons and wore tattered L. L. Bean clothes, which, my parents explained, told their whole story: They were rich, they sent their children to an expensive school, but they chose to drive pieces of junk and wear *schmattas*, as if it

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didn't matter (as it clearly did to us) what other people would think.

More than twenty years later, the thought of school busing in Hewlett once again has grown-ups going berserk. If busing in black children once seemed risky, the newest prospect of busing, involving Orthodox Jewish girls, appears life-threatening, particularly because it will surely come to pass. As my mother aptly describes it, "This is an ironic twist of fate." While I continue to feel it was a great pity that the citizens of my town were unable to accept the busing in of black students, I surprise myself by understanding why they find busing in Orthodox girls a cause for fear and not, as it seems at first glance, an expression of prejudice.

Two years ago, the Lawrence Country Day School merged with another private school, Woodmere Academy. Because of the merger, the sixty-two-year-old Lawrence School—a three-story manor house on 9.29 acres of land—was put up for sale. Several potential buyers wanted to raze the building and build homes, but those deals fell through. A firm that runs senior-care facilities was ready to buy the property, but the community protested. On May 13, 1992, the Lawrence Country Day School was put up for auction. My father, who drove down to the auction out of curiosity, reported that there were "yarmulkes"—his word for Orthodox Jews—there. Not normal yarmulkes, he added, meaning the crocheted kind. Nice black satin ones, by which he meant Orthodox Jews with money to spend. The school was purchased for $2.2 million by the Hebrew Academy of Long Beach, which plans to use the facility as a high school for 200 Orthodox girls, who will be bused in.

It would not be exaggerating to say that quite a few neighbors—for the most part, assimilated Jews—were horrified. "The traffic! The noise!" they wailed, although these same problems plagued neighbors of the Lawrence School all the years it was open.

Some people feared a domino effect: the girls' yeshiva was just a beginning. After all, who would dare complain about sweet, religious girls in long skirts studying Torah? But does a girls' yeshiva need acres of playing fields? In a blink of the eye, perhaps under the cover of darkness, they would sneak in a boys' yeshiva, then a men's yeshiva, which would mean wives wearing kerchiefs and many, many children wearing yarmulkes, their *tsitsit* flying, and slapdash bungalows for the families, and then a *shul*, and another *shul* and a *mikva*, an *eruv*, a kosher pizzeria, an all-night glatt kosher falafel stand.

One neighbor complained that she already had escaped the Jews of Brooklyn once when she came to Hewlett Harbor; why should she have to be surrounded and embarrassed by them again? Some feared property values would plummet, although in Lawrence, a nearby town that has seen an influx of Orthodox residents, property values have risen. Others expressed concern that once Orthodox Jews began to fill the neighborhood, they would look down upon the non-Orthodox, particularly when they confronted non-observant Jews driving cars on the Sabbath. There were predictions of unsafe road conditions, as the Orthodox walked *en masse* to synagogue on the Sabbath, and worries about pressure on local storekeepers to close on Saturdays. One resident (who later denied her remarks) was quoted in The *New York Times* as saying that she would rather see a Catholic or Protestant school on the site: "The Catholics and Protestants are not going to look down on us as not good enough Jews."

In a blink of the eye, perhaps under the cover of darkness, they would sneak in a boys' yeshiva, then a men's yeshiva, which would mean wives wearing kerchiefs and many, many children wearing yarmulkes, their tsitsit flying.

One gambit to head off the impending Orthodox invasion involved a plan for the town to acquire the property through eminent domain and turn it into a park, despite the fact that the acquisition would result in a doubling of village property taxes. But a group of seventeen local rabbis, alarmed by the Jewish community's exclusionary mentality, formed an interdenominational coalition, held an emergency meeting, and produced a statement chiding the intolerance of those in the community who would prefer to keep out the girls' yeshiva. They urged the community to welcome the school and affirm religious diversity.

Some of Hewlett's Jewish residents were as outraged as the coalition of rabbis by the display of what was being called Jewish anti-Semitism or Jewish self-hate. Mildred Levine of Hewlett Harbor wrote, in a letter to the *Nassau Herald*, "I am a Conservative Jewess and proud that a group of Orthodox Jews have reached the point of affluence that they can continue the education of young girls in an atmosphere that not too long ago was restricted—Are they attempting to

restrict it now? Our very own people? Shame! . . . Wake up—my friends and neighbors, your obvious actions remind me too much of the Jews in Germany who thought they were the elite." Writing to the same newspaper, Susan S. Warner of Woodmere chided assimilated Jews for standing in the way of Orthodox Jews. Her reasoning: "Without the Orthodox segment of Jews in the United States, Jews nationwide would be hard-pressed to remember and to pass down the traditions of their religion. To accuse the Orthodox as perceiving us as 'not good enough Jews' is a reconfirmation of one's inadequacies."

Visiting Hewlett Harbor, I bicycle down and lean against the newly erected sign that reads "Yeshiva High School for Girls at Hewlett Bay Park." Classes are scheduled to start in September 1993. I try to figure out the deep, true meaning of this controversy.

Many possibilities present themselves. Is it about Jews of different backgrounds finding it impossible to live side by side? Our inability to co-exist is certainly a problem, but I don't think that is the origin of the fracas in Hewlett. I don't believe the local Jews fear that the Orthodox will influence their children and turn them into *ba'alei teshuva* who reject their parents' values.

Is it about the rights of any Jew—assimilated or observant—to move into a certain kind of community and to expect that the homogeneous nature of the community will be preserved? Or the right of a special-interest group to define the tone of public space? If we assume it is appropriate for Orthodox Jews in America and Israel to ban from their neighborhoods cars or blaring televisions that can interrupt the serenity of Sabbath, are assimilated Jews equally entitled to "Shabbos-free" space? When it comes to controlling the aura of our neighborhoods, there is essential agreement in our society that keeping out McDonald's franchises and preserving green space are possible but keeping certain kinds of people out is unacceptable.

The Jews of Hewlett Harbor are not just having a hard time accepting the presence of Orthodox Jews in their midst. The level of their anxiety is sky-high. In fact, they seem to find the Orthodox presence literally life-threatening. I identified the nature of their terror the moment I recalled Philip Roth's 1959 short story, "Eli the Fanatic."

This remarkable story (in the same volume as the novella "Goodbye Columbus") concerns the assimilated Jews of a "progressive" suburban New York town called Woodenton, who have hired a Jewish attorney, Eli Peck, to do something about the sagging old mansion that has become a yeshiva for eighteen boys rescued after World War II from Europe's displaced-person camps. The Jews of Woodenton have myriad problems with the yeshiva: One character, Mr. Berger, complains, "If I wanted to live in Brownsville. . .I'd live in Brownsville." Mr. Shaw concurred, "When I left the city. . .I didn't plan the city should come to me."

Woodenton's Jews fear that 100 "little kids with little yarmulkes chanting their Hebrew lessons on Coach House Road" would somehow disturb their own children, God forbid, even coming after their daughters. The townspeople simply want the yeshiva out.

Eli, the lawyer, reaching for a compromise, explains to the head of the yeshiva that what most aggravates the neighbors is the ubiquitous presence of the bearded old man who goes downtown to make purchases for the yeshiva dressed in a black coat and "wide-brimmed Talmudic hat." He is different. He is unsightly. He sticks out as a Jew.

This fear that Eli expresses on behalf of the Jews of Woodenton is the fear the Jews of Hewlett have left unexpressed, yet I think it is the one that affects them most deeply. The Jews of Woodenton, who insist they live together with gentiles in "comfort, beauty and serenity," believe that they have avoided pogroms in their town and maintain the blessing of peace with gentiles precisely because they do not behave like fanatics. They do not stick out. They do not act like Jews or look like Jews. They blend.

Eli tries to convince the head of the yeshiva that for Jews and gentiles to live together happily in suburbia, both groups have to give up "some of their more extreme practices in order not to threaten or offend the other" even though it is not clear what the gentile neighbors have given up besides overt anti-Semitism. Eli goes further, suggesting that if the Jews in Germany had followed this advice—if they had been more invisible—they might not have been persecuted.

If only the old man from the yeshiva would wear twentieth-century dress when he came downtown, Eli proposes, things would be better. Eli provides the old man, who has no other garments, with his own clothes. But even as Eli seems close to solving Woodenton's "Jewish problem," he is increasingly drawn to the yeshiva's inhabitants. Finding the old man's discarded clothing, he puts it on, becoming the visible Jew he had participated in eradicating. In his heart, he senses a truth: Jews who become invisible to others risk becoming invisible to themselves.

It seems to me that the assimilated Jews of Hewlett are eager to keep the Orthodox Jews out of their midst

neither for the reasons they vigorously proclaim nor because they are self-hating. Just because Jews choose not to affiliate with synagogues or donate to Jewish causes does not indicate that they do not feel pride in being Jewish. Just because Jews aren't excited by the possibility of living among the Orthodox does not indicate they are wicked, intolerant people.

I believe that many of my former neighbors of my parents' generation, like the Jews of Woodenton, harbor a deep-seated pogrom mentality that defines them. Having achieved what feels like temporary asylum in Hewlett, they are terrified that their cover of assimilation will be blown by the much-too-close-for-comfort presence of Orthodox Jews who will look every bit as Jewish as they are. Jews who might wear their *talitot* on their backs as they walk to synagogue. Jews who might dance in the streets. Jews who will be picked out in a crowd. I do not believe they wished to deny every vestige of their Jewishness but they did wish, deeply, to blend in as Americans. As Joan Weimer writes in her memoir:

> "Why do I...squirm when I see Orthodox Jewish men in long black coats over their hollow chests and black fedora hats above their wispy beards? It can only be because I'm afraid people will think I'm like them. And I want everyone to know I'm a nice assimilated educated mannerly American whose parents happened to be Jewish. A person they'd like."

These parents prepared their children, my classmates, to be good assimilators. None of my high school classmates was named Avi, or Moshe, or Shira. They were given American names such as Dale and Jill and Stuart; they were taught American sports such as tennis so they could make the grade athletically in the gentile world; some had nose jobs, discreetly, during Easter vacation. If they could blend in as Americans, they'd have a better shot at American-style upward mobility—the best colleges, the most lucrative jobs. But the parents wanted more than an easy, affluent life for their children; above all, they wanted them to be safe. To stick out as Jews, they believed, was to court danger.

My mother's Jewish neighbors once told her she was a fool to consider investing money in a Steinway grand piano. "And what will you do with your grand piano when we Jews have to run away?" they asked. "Carry it on your back?" Perhaps these neighbors keep pouches of uncut gems under their pillows to take with them when the day comes that Jews have to escape Hewlett and run for their lives. Perhaps they keep their assets liquid and their passports always valid.

While I might scoff at such paranoia, while I want to tell my former neighbors, "Control your fears and welcome the yeshiva," even I, a second-generation American, carrying only a historical memory of terror against Jews, constantly feel the precariousness of our safety. While I am most casually overt in my Jewishness, while I never think to tell my daughters to take off their Hebrew Academy of Morris County jackets when they're not in school, I must admit that when I move to a new town, I give great thought to whom, among my gentile friends, I might entrust my children, should that ever become necessary. And I admit how dismayed I was when I discovered that not a Jewish man or woman in the small town where I once lived knew how to shoot a gun or to fight. I chastised all of us for holding the illusion that there would never be a time we Jews would need to protect ourselves and our children with weapons.

I am told that American Jews of my generation believe there is a greater anti-Semitic feeling in the United States than sociologists' figures warrant. Who can say that such extreme fears—the conscious ones, and the ingrained, quiet, rumbling ones—are unjustified? Who, knowing Jewish history, can confidently predict a harmonious future? Those who oppose the yeshiva in Hewlett may be absolutely right. Its vivid presence, which says "Jews are here and doing well! Jews are taking care of themselves!" might, one day, jeopardize the well-being of every Jew in Hewlett.

We have to work beyond such fears, finding other ways of assuring our safety than hiding our heads in the sand. While I can spell out no plan for our safety, I do know, as Roth's story demonstrates, that if we let ourselves be ruled by our fear and proceed to protect ourselves with invisibility, we will disappear. The terror we have been made to feel is a potent anti-Semitic weapon that only confident and vibrant identification as Jews can disarm. We need to have the courage to build Jewish schools, synagogues, Jewish community centers, Holocaust monuments, Jewish bookstores, and repertory companies. And if we choose to remain bystanders instead of builders, we must have the courage not to condemn those who do the building, or to stand in their way.

My mother, defying her own terror, bought a Steinway grand piano that fills her living room. On occasion, she plays the only piece she knows, the first two pages of "Rhapsody in Blue." I have come to view that piano—which passes its days protected from dust under an enormous blue bedspread—as her private symbol of belonging. □

Toward a Torah of Zion

Michael Strassfeld

In the last one hundred years, Zionism and its subsequent fulfillment in the founding of the State of Israel have raised challenges to our identity as Jews. Classic Zionist thought emphasized the centrality of Israel, the negation of the Diaspora, and the solution of the "Jewish question" through the "normalization" of their existence in the creation of the Jews' own nation-state. After the founding of the state, Israelis' attitudes toward American Jews were typified in the often-heard question (and assumption), "When are you making aliya?"

For more than a decade, however, Israel's image has been devalued in the eyes of many American Jews; it has gone from the mythologized heroicism of Masada and Zionist ideology to an all-too-flawed realpolitik. Depending upon political perspective, American Jews feel closer to or more distant from an Israel that has become narrowly identified with its current government. From the Israeli end, the question of "When are you making aliya?"—one that used to cause considerable discomfort to American Jews, and was fraught with moral superiority on the part of the Israeli questioners—is no longer asked. The Diaspora hasn't withered; the "Jewish question" is not solved. Instead, Israel itself has become the focus of anti-Semitism, and Zionist rationalism seems inadequate as a myth, even for secular Israelis. This welter of political crises, emblazoned on the American-Jewish psyche through the daily headlines from the Middle East, obscure Zionism's original question: What is the place of Zion and the State of Israel in the formation of our Jewish identities?

I propose a new model of Zionism based on religious symbols. With the exception of the messianic fanaticism of Gush Emunim (Israel's ardent proponents of Jewish settlement in the Occupied Territories), the religious Zionists of the past lived their Jewish lives no differently than religious non-Zionists. With the founding of the state, they seemed more concerned with consolidating secular power and maintaining the political status quo than with promulgating a coherent religious Zionist vision. The new Reform and Conservative Zionist organizations also seem more concerned with power than with articulating a Zionist vision.

A new religious Zionism would reflect the beliefs of those for whom the Diaspora will not and even should not wither away. This Zionism would recognize that *galut*—literally, exile, but metaphorically, the spiritual alienation of the Jewish people—is a condition that exists everywhere, even in Israel.

Yet, after affirming the legitimacy of a Jewish life in the Diaspora, we still must face the question: what of Israel? Is there no difference between living in Boro Park or Des Moines and living in Jerusalem? Do Eretz Yisrael, Zion, and "If I forget you, O Jerusalem" have no special meaning to us?

The challenge, then, is to create a metaphor that takes seriously both the Diaspora and Israel, one that posits both as being of equal importance, that accepts the creation of an equality not of sameness, but of difference. The struggle is to speak of two centers, of two paths, or two Torahs, without implying even subtly the superiority of one over the other.

The solution to this challenge is suggested by an enigmatic phrase chanted when we take the Torah from the Ark during services. "*Ki mi-tzion tatze Torah*—For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem." Doesn't Torah come from Sinai? The verse, in fact, points us to a metaphor of two Torahs.

To serve as symbols for the two Torahs for the Diaspora and Israel, let us choose the two mountains in Judaism that are centers of religious experience and revelation—Mount Sinai and Mount Moriah, or more simply Sinai and Jerusalem.

Mount Sinai represents for us 2,500 years of Diaspora Judaism. The revelation on Sinai is the single most important event in the history of the Jewish people. Yet we know that the establishment of the covenant between the Jewish people and God took place not in the land of Israel, but at Sinai. Thus, Sinai serves as a reminder that the experience of exile predates the establishment of the first Jewish state.

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Actually, three revelations took place at Sinai. The first was to Moses, at the burning bush. The bush that burns and is not consumed is a multivalent symbol of Diaspora Judaism. The bush has been interpreted to represent God who suffers with us in exile. "*Be-khol tzoratam lo tzaar*," means "In all their sufferings, God suffers." Even at our lowest moments, as symbolized by the humble bush, God is with us.

God is everywhere, even in the most humble bush, and not just in one particular mountain or country. The bush was chosen because it was in a "*makom hefker*"—a place without any owner, therefore freely available to anyone who turns aside to seek it. The choice of an ordinary bush shows that revelation can take place in simplicity and humility, not just out of majesty and awe.

Finally, God is revealed through shalom—peace—that is through the coexistence, in harmony, of two different, seemingly antagonistic entities. The fire and the bush exist together yet neither is consumed. Until the Jews are accepted in every place of the Diaspora and are no longer seen as alien, Jews everywhere, even in Israel, are not safe. For that matter, no minority is safe until the world learns how to live with its foremost minority, the Jews. Fire and bush, Jew and Gentile, and all other disharmonies must coexist in peace for God to be revealed.

The second revelation at Sinai—that of God's bestowal of the Torah—is the formative experience of the Jewish people. Sinai proclaims that the covenant between God and Israel is expressed in Torah. The Jew lives in the "*daled amot shel halacha*"—the four cubits of Jewish law—which have been the portable home of Jews everywhere, even in Israel. All of us stood at Sinai; each of us heard that revelation, each in her/his own way. The struggle to understand that Torah and to make it our Torah has been the occupation of Jews for centuries and has been the meaning of Torah from Sinai.

The third revelation at Sinai is the least well-known, that experienced by the prophet Elijah (as recounted in I Kings ch. 19). After his dramatic defeat of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah, threatened by King Ahab, flees to the desert. Elijah despairs; even after his great victory over Baal, he still faces danger at the hands of Ahab. God tells Elijah to stand upon the mountain and then, the Torah says:

> And behold, Adonai passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before Adonai, but Adonai was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but Adonai was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

This too, is the revelation of Sinai. No longer the trumpets and thunder of the revelation to the whole people, but rather the still, small voice piercing all the noise and confusion to reassure the lonely person of faith. This revelation to the individual, obtainable by each of us on rare occasions, is also part of the metaphor of Sinai.

Thus Sinai comes to represent the suffering of the Jewish people and of God in exile. It stresses the necessity for the acceptance of Jewish otherness by the nations. It bespeaks a revelation out of humbleness, the quiet revelation to the individual, a revelation free to all who seek it. Foremost, Sinai is the revelation of the Torah, a blueprint for the individual to live in and help create the "*darkhei ha-shem*"—God's ways.

Two sets of symbols are associated with the other holy place of Judaism, Jerusalem. The first set is that of the *Akedah*—the binding of Isaac by Abraham on Mount Moriah, which traditionally has been identified with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The *Akedah* stands for sacrifice—the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son, and the willingness of Isaac to be sacrificed. "*Va-yeilkhu sheneihem yahdav*"—the two halves of the people, Abraham (the present harking back to the past) and Isaac (the present becoming future) go up to Mount Moriah together. Because Isaac is saved, so, too, are the people, and yet the sanctity of the willingness to sacrifice transcends the sanctity of the mitzvot (commandments), for that one act will prove more about Abraham and his love for God than all his previous deeds.

The second set of images includes all those associated with Jerusalem as the city of David. Jerusalem's eternity is linked with that of the Davidic dynasty, and thus the city represents political sovereignty. With all the ambivalence of the tradition toward kings in general and to the Davidic kings who succeeded David in particular, Jerusalem remains the city of David, a symbol of Jewish independence.

But Jerusalem is also the site of the Temple, God's dwelling place. It is a place of magnificence and grandeur reflecting God's greatness and power. It is the place where animal sacrifices were offered up. Most of all, for almost 2,000 years, Jerusalem has symbolized the messianic future—its very name contains the word shalom—denoting completeness and peace.

For in that messianic time, the Temple will be called "a house of prayer for all peoples," and we will see the fulfillment of the verse "*ki-mi-tzion tatze torah*"—For out of Zion shall come forth the Torah, and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem." This verse comes from the prophets Isaiah and Micah, both of whom place it in the context of their visions of the future redemption:

> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the

> mountain of the house of Adonai shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up among the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Adonai to the house of the God of Jacob; that God may teach us God's ways and we may walk in God's paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem. God shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit every person under her vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of Adonai of the hosts has spoken.
>
> (Micah 4:1-4; see also Isaiah 2:3 ff.)

This is the dream of Jerusalem. This is the Torah of Zion—a Torah of sovereignty and of peace, a Torah that encompasses all the nations of the world and as such is no longer just the Torah of the Jews. Emphasizing a physical place, Jerusalem symbolizes independence and sovereignty. It stands for supreme sacrifice. But most of all, it is the metaphor of the messianic future.

Each of these Torahs, the Torah of Sinai and the Torah of Jerusalem, has its strengths and dangers, and each requires the other for completion.

The great sin of the land of Israel, as proclaimed by the prophets, is that of idolatry. There is a temptation to think that other gods, objects, or the land itself are to be worshipped. Boundaries become walls marking the end of your domain, your concern, and of your God. Ownership becomes everything. The other temptation is to think that in the sword rests salvation—to trust in the slender reed of foreign alliances or one's own power rather than in the Almighty.

The great sin of the Diaspora is idolatry of the self. Here it is easy to think that feelings and thoughts are everything, materialness is nothing. We easily drift into realms constructed solely out of ideas, where animals fall into pits and one ox gores another, where castles float on air until a catastrophe brings them crashing down.

Thus the Diaspora can revel in the realm of the imagination, revel in powerlessness. Israel can revel in earth and blood, revel in power.

The Diaspora strives to establish an eternity in time. Shabbat comes to free us from the prisons of time that we have created; to release us into a period of timelessness.

Israel, on the other hand, tries to create an eternity in space. Jerusalem comes to free us from the prisons of space because of its universality. The Temple was built on land belonging to two tribes, not one, and therefore, it symbolically belonged to all the tribes. The Levites, who served the Temple, were the one tribe who had no inheritance in the land. Jerusalem symbolically belongs to everyone, for it will be a house of prayer to all nations.

Without the Diaspora, it would be too easy to trust in our might, and in politics, and in the land. But the Torah of Sinai cries out: Trust not in princes nor in your armies. "Not by strength, nor by power, but rather through My spirit, says the Lord."

Without Israel and the Torah of Zion, we would continue to glory in powerlessness, championing our persecution as a sign of our moral superiority. We would continue to hold high the failure of the nations (particularly during the Holocaust) as proof of our righteousness. We blame the faults of history on the gentiles and retreat to battle only on the plain of ideas rather than on the plains of Abraham.

In Israel, the Jew must proclaim the universal amidst the particular. Therefore, the Jewish state must be unlike all other states.

In the Diaspora, the Jew must proclaim the particular amidst the universal. Therefore, the Jew must always be partially the alien Other.

The Torah we received at Sinai is the Torah we have lived for 2,500 years. It is a teaching of how to live in an imperfect world. The Torah of Sinai is laden with compromise.

The Torah of Jerusalem looks to the future. It is a teaching of how to create a perfect world. The Messiah, then, will come to Jerusalem, not to Crown Heights, or Washington, D.C.

The Torah of Sinai is much clearer, having been explored and observed by us for so long. The Torah of Jerusalem needs to be created. It is in Israel, in the Jewish state, where each decision is ours—from sewage to peace—that most of the Torah of Jerusalem will be created. In Israel, the Jews bear responsibility for the nature of the state. It is the flip side of the majority/minority equation of the last 2,000 years. Others' fates now lie in our hands. The treatment of the minority, the barometer with which we continue to measure the nations, is now the barometer to judge us. This shall be the Torah of Jerusalem or its failing.

After all, Mount Sinai is the mountain that one cannot ascend; its boundaries are marked forbidden. Mount Moriah is the mountain one must ascend to affirm the love of God and the willingness to sacrifice. Sinai is open only to individuals such as Moses or Elijah, and only as

(Continued on p. 92)

Burning the Book of Lamentations

Naomi Seidman

What is a Jew, a woman, when she is alone?
Adrienne Rich

Tisha B'av, the ninth day of the month of Av, comes at the claustrophobic center of the tightening chokehold of the siege of Jerusalem, 587 B.C.E.—first the Three Weeks, and no weddings, no trips to the Bronx Zoo, no music; then the Nine Days, and no meat, no showers, either. The walls of Jerusalem have been breached, the fires rage; boorish and lustful Babylonian troops tramp down the narrow streets toward the Holy of Holies. In the dining rooms of the Diaspora, women set the table for the final meal before the long fast. As the summer dusk falls, the mournful cadences of the Book of Lamentations will begin to fill synagogues and float across bungalow colony lawns. Wooden benches will be turned over so the mourners can sit on their splintery backs, low to the ground. The curtain of the Ark will be taken down and folded, the Torah scrolls stripped of their velvet cloaks, their gold-embroidered lions.

For me, having almost forgotten Jerusalem, there is only the monotonous stretch of summer days melting in the blurry heat rising from the city sidewalks. I walk in a haze of unmemory, my tongue dry, if not cleaving to my palate. But even broken clocks are right twice a day, and sometimes I catch myself where I thought I would never return. One summer evening, around twenty-five hundred years after the Babylonians had packed up and gone, I take the F train toward Coney Island and let myself into my parents' house just in time to see my mother pull two pairs of sneakers from the back of the closet. For a second, I have the absurd thought that my parents have started some sort of exercise regime. But then I remember Tisha B'av, and the heat outside makes a certain kind of sense now, as if someone had told me that the next neighborhood was in flames.

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I may need to explain the sneakers. My Orthodox parents were refraining from wearing leather because leather, for the first barefoot Jewish exiles, meant comfort and the good life. In the absence of sackcloth and ashes and dung heaps, they remember Jerusalem through thin rubber soles and in the splinters of upended benches and their proximity to the ground. Every once in a while, it's important to touch bottom.

For me, it's a little different. Wearing sneakers or going barefoot and sitting on the floor, that's what I do year-round. In my parents' book, maybe this makes me a perpetual mourner.

"Come to *shul* with us," my mother says, a far from innocent invitation.

I mutter something about being on my way to a poetry reading. Of all possible non-synagogue-going activities, this is among the least reprehensible.

My mother chuckles, "This *is* a poetry reading."

I grumble, but mostly for form's sake. I joke to my friends that I get religion around Purim and Simchas Torah, when piety and partying go hand in hand. But the truth is that Tisha B'av sometimes brings me home too, whether I actually make it to a synagogue or not. Tisha B'av, for the Orthodox, is also "Holocaust Memorial Day," set in the context of the destruction of the First Temple, the Second, and the long chain of national catastrophes since. In short, Tisha B'av is about Jews first and God only a distant second. I take this as a kind of boarding pass.

The synagogue is only half-full. The younger couples are in the country, in bungalow colonies, their kids in camp. The seasonal migration has swept them into the shade, leaving behind only the older people in the sweltering New York streets among the radios and firecrackers. My mother introduces her baby daughter to the three women in identical wigs sharing our bench as if my awkward presence needed no comment; she insists that they must remember me, and I remember them, from the bungalow colony, the dress shop, the candy store. The women have tucked Kleenex into the wrists of their dresses, though no one makes a show of

being somber. They talk about what they cooked their husbands for the last meal, nothing too heavy on such a hot fast day. The woman from the dress shop swears by fruit soup. In a few minutes we will be in a different landscape altogether, one that is announcing itself in the dread that tightens my chest. I hope my mother won't cry. This is not an unselfish wish. I know full well that I am bound to figure somewhere in the list of grievances my mother airs on Tisha B'av and those she recites every Friday night as she stares into the candles, beckoning the flames toward her heart. The complaints may begin with the destruction of the Temple, but they go on from there, in jagged spirals of shrapnel and disgrace, getting closer and closer to home.

Tisha B'av is an event of the body, creaking bones settling down on solid wood, the rumble and gnaw of an empty belly.

My mother has brought me a copy of the latest Artscroll edition of the Tisha B'av prayers, with an English translation and commentaries and a historical introduction. Until I turned twelve I would arrive at *shul* on fast days with nothing more than an emergency care package—a small baggie filled with raisins and pretzels and sour candy to eat out of sight of adults. We gobbled handfuls in furious overanticipation of our imminent initiation into the rites of hunger. One Tisha B'av, someone's mother came out to the concrete rectangle of courtyard to tell us a story. In a certain small town in Poland, right after they broke the fast, the Jews would light an enormous bonfire. They would throw the Tisha B'av liturgy with all its sad poems about the destruction of the Temple into the fire and dance and sing the midsummer night away. You see, they didn't have any use for them anymore, since this was sure to be the year the Messiah would come and take all the Jews off to the Land of Israel and instead of fasting and sitting on the floor there would be juicy portions of the Leviathan all around. But it was only a story. Those books, I knew even then, had gone up in a different kind of bonfire, and still the Messiah had failed to show up. And when we were finished for this year the Artscroll Lamentations in my lap would go right back onto the bookshelf until next year.

From the other side of the sheet strung across the archway to separate the men from the women, an invisible fist pounds an invisible lectern. The women quiet down and open their books. I know the first lines by heart: "*eicha yashva badad ha'ir*,"

> How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people!
> how is she become like a widow!
> she that was great among the nations,
> and princess among the provinces,
> how is she become a vassal!

Movie child that I am, I watch the sheet to see the shifting silhouettes of my father and his black-suited friends. The shadows on the curtain reward my attention, forming for a second the monstrous shape of a lopsided-breasted figure, as if we were seeing our own reflections mutated into a single enormous woman. Jerusalem sways and shakes her big skirts, crooning in the hoarse voice of the men on the other side of her veils. Then she splits into two amorphous bodies, black hats, a lectern in between.

He-she sings a mourning dirge, falling empty and flat at the end of each phrase. The tune has no resolution, accrues no meaning. This is not Yom Kippur—the tune, the overturned benches, the fasting are not meant to spiritualize. Tisha B'av is an event of the body, creaking bones settling down on solid wood, hard pavement under thin soles, the rumble and gnaw of an empty belly. Even the naked Torah scrolls have a share in the cruelty and vulnerability of physical existence. And Lamentations, I understand now, reinvents the picture-perfect princess, Zion as God's beloved daughter or bride, as a physical woman, a woman with all her fleshly sorrows. Whatever the Babylonians did to turn Jerusalem the city into rubble, it is the Jewish poet, I can't help feeling, who rips the bride Jerusalem's jeweled veils from her forehead, stripping the embroidered robes away from her genitals, "*ervatah,*" rendered by the squeamish or modest translator as "her nakedness":

> Jerusalem has grievously sinned;
> therefore she is become loathsome:
> all that honoured her despise her,
> because they have seen her nakedness:
> she herself sighs and turns backward.
> Her filthiness was in her skirts. (Lam. 1: 8-9)

My mother sways as she murmurs along, a ready sorrow propelling her words. My own spine is rigid with insult and distance, my thighs clenched with the usual impotent rage. I may be squeezed onto a bench with these Jewish women. I may be growing the shape of my mother's body inside my own, but my

overeducated brain strains to lift above this breathing mess of cracking voices and aging bodies. I know full well that I take offense the way a woman might grab a towel to cover herself, and my proud impiety is only a makeshift dam against the insistent words of the reading.

Reciting the R-rated shots of the naked Jerusalem from two sides of a white sheet strung across an archway, we sweat through more layers of clothes than most New Yorkers would dream of wearing past Memorial Day. Nevertheless, the words have an accuracy that belies the long-sleeved shirts, the shiny-black jackets. Underneath them, we (they, I) inhabit a nakedness clothes cannot begin to cover, and which these words only start to suggest. Inside the synagogues, within the circles of singing voices, in the midst of the comforting or stifling refrains of dress and speech, there are those unfortunate spaces where grandparents and cousins should be, where parents throw dishes at ghosts of the enemy, where the mother and father in their strange old-fashioned accents speak to children with even stranger ones, where the shapes of family and neighborhood warp and curl at the edges like an old photo. It's not just me, a foot taller than the woman who is my mother, one-and-a-half missing generations younger than the old man who is my father. To say we are a community of survivors and children of survivors is only half-true. Survivors maybe; community—that is something else altogether. The voices in unison, the thigh next to mine on the bench, the crowded room takes us to where we are most alone; for we are alone when the shapes of those others, called for or not, unfailingly press.

King James calls the account of the destruction of Jerusalem "Lamentations." In Hebrew, though, it is "The Book of How," "*megilat eicha*," for the opening:

> How does the city sit solitary,
> that was full of people!
> how is she become like a widow. (Lam. 1: 1)

Behind the declarative "how" lurks an interrogative one, questioning the means, the possibility of telling a catastrophe which evades description or comparison: "What shall I take to witness for thee?" the poet asks, "What shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem?" The ragged structure of the book tells us that the poet found no ready words. Not knowing how to speak of what he has seen, he begins and stops, begins anew, three times in all. First his unrecognizable hometown appears to him to have sunk as low as only a woman could, widowed through her bad luck or abandoned because of her loose morals. Then, in the central portion of the book, the poet abandons his pungent combination of pity and revulsion and speaks of his own pain. The city-woman is gone, and now the story is of an anonymous and solitary survivor in a landscape which is the nightmarish negative image of the green fields through which God the Shepherd led the Psalmist:

> I am the man who has seen affliction
> by the rod of his wrath.
> He has led me, and brought me into dărkness,
> but not into light. (Lam. 3: 1)

Only in the final chapters does the poet step back far enough to see the destruction of Jerusalem through the misery of its community of survivors:

> They that did feed on dainties
> are desolate in the streets:
> they that were brought up in scarlet
> embrace dunghills. (Lam. 4: 5)

I imagine the poet of Lamentations, moving from the empty lanes of the first morning after the siege, waking only weeks later to his own bruises, brushing the soot from bleary eyes to witness the survivors crawling out of caves and from underneath piles of rubble. My father says that he came out of hiding one morning alive enough to think of reciting the blessing for "He who has granted us life and sustained us and brought us to this day." My father, looking around at an emptiness I can only imagine, did not recite the blessing, he says, because it was in the plural. I think of him now, counting his own losses on the other side of the curtain. Has he moved to the plural yet, as the poet of Lamentations does in the final chapter?

The three versions tell the same story, but they also do not. The solitary city-woman dissolves into the isolated survivor who gives her voice. Jerusalem is a city-woman because she contains the women, because we can see in her the women who roam through her echoing streets in search of food for their children. But how many of those women walked with outstretched necks and painted their eyes in shades the prophets so abhorred? As many as now are laid low? The sin written large catches too much, and too little, in its broad outlines. We are like and unlike the myths of national destiny, we are given voice and betrayed by the poets and prophets and leaders who share our fate; we are determined but not explained by these terms: Jew, survivor, woman.

In the synagogue, the raspy baritone of the reader floats over the curtain and the murmured voices of all

of us mourners, men and women, come together in the words of the city-woman and the words of the man-survivor. But the city-woman and poet who repeats "I am the man" are separate, and not only because each is as necessarily isolated as the individual suffering human must be. Lamentations records a collective experience stripped of all the business and shared truths of the common life, a cattle car in which each and every body is utterly alone. I refuse to see that the menstrual blood on Jerusalem's skirt is just a way of saying that her inhabitants have committed murderous acts. The city-woman's disgrace is a poor allegory for the sins of her men who take cover under these skirts:

> It was for the sins of her prophets,
> and the iniquities of her priests,
> who shed the blood of the just in the midst of her,
> They wandered blind through the streets, polluted with blood,
> so that none could touch their garments.
> Away! unclean! they cried at them:
> away! away! do not touch. (Lam. 4: 13-14)

The blood of the priests and prophets is the trace of what they have done; the blood of Jerusalem, who is "like a menstruous woman," tells us nothing more than that she has a woman's body. However much the poet may imagine the city to be his larger self, he also lets us know that her blood is something utterly alien. There may be men, and even women, for whom nakedness is beauty or truth, Adam and Eve before the Fall. Adam and Eve, though, were not Jewish, and even they covered up eventually. To be a naked Jew, a naked woman, a naked Jewish woman, may be something else altogether. Reading Lamentations in the divided synagogue, hearing a male voice intone the complaints of the widowed Jerusalem, are we really a community of mourners, the men and women who recognize how much a woman's truth has to say about the broader experiences of national degradation? Or is Lamentations itself yet another outrage, heaping a man's distaste for women onto the already painful enough outrages of Jewish history?

But if the poet's identification with the stricken city is sometimes stretched thin, his relation to her marked by revulsion and horror, maybe it's because catastrophe not only brings us back to what we most fundamentally are, but also shows us ourselves as alien. The body in disease and hunger pits us against ourselves, and the vision of extreme suffering can never seem other than inescapably foreign. For the poet, the unreality of horror created a monstrous woman; how different would it be for any of us, inhabitants of female or male bodies that can become, given the right or wrong circumstances, the most nightmarish of enemies.

The sickening waste, the dirt and garbage, people's bad behavior and the madness of hunger, even the dread that fills me as I listen to each new grim verse are familiar enough. They are mine, but also not mine, as the city-woman both was and was not the prophet. If I feel my own distance from the twisted wreck of Jerusalem as a kind of comfort, there is also discomfort and danger in this distance. If I am also a broken down, lonely survivor of a disgraced city, if I can feel the shame of her nakedness, feel myself caught with a telltale patch of blood on my skirt, the equally terrible possibility exists that my part in the story is also the revolted lover slamming the door, the jeering witness. Worse, I am the stupid child bawling for her supper while the city burns, I am the wicked child who wants to know why I was dragged here, what all this twisted stuff has to do with my life. Is Lamentations my story, as a woman or as a Jew? I don't know. Until I was twelve or so, I thought I would be exempt, both from history, which meant Nazis, and from being a woman, which meant menstruation. In summer camp, the Kaplan girls and I set up a fort in an old shed at the far end of the lake, where a few mattresses and a rusty canoe had found their final resting place. If the Nazis came to the Catskills, we were ready. The twins had a Swiss army knife and I had a week's supply of chocolate. We talked about which of the other girls at camp we would save, and for what price. There was room for one more at the very most. The summer I was twelve I was always hungry and always afraid, afraid of my first fast, afraid of getting fat. I couldn't believe that after all those years of wrapping sandwiches, roasting casseroles, ladling out soup, filling paper bags with apples, mailing boxes of cookies to camp, adults would fail to put food on the table for me. Naturally, I checked to make sure I had a bag of Goldenberg's Peanut Chews in my closet right before Tisha B'av started. I wasn't completely stupid.

The play that summer was *The Wall*, and the Kaplan twins were in it. I sat on the floor in front of the first row of seats and watched jealously as they stomped across the stage in their galoshes and arm bands. A divider, painted to look like peeling bricks, set them off from the right half of the stage where five or six Jews huddled and cowered. One of the girls from Bunk 6, her hair covered in a kerchief, hushed the sniveling teddy bear she held in her arms so that the sound wouldn't betray them. The twins looked cloddish and stupid. Couldn't they hear the crying? Couldn't they see how flimsy the wall was? The girl with the kerchief

(Continued on p. 91)

Tales of the Great Jewish Mystics

Howard Schwartz

In the past, the definitive test for a true believer in Judaism was whether or not he or she believed in the parting of the Red Sea. In the famous story of the widow of Safed, a dybbuk possesses a woman because of her lack of faith in this miracle. But these days it seems that even Orthodox rabbis have difficulty in believing in dybbuks. The Satmar Rebbe, according to a tale in *Legends of the Hasidim* by Jerome Mintz, once advised someone said to be possessed by a dybbuk to see a good psychiatrist. Likewise, few among the followers of the modern branches of Judaism believe in the literal parting of the Red Sea, much less the existence of angels.

Along with our belief in miracles, we have lost much of our spiritual faith. But in recent years many Jews have begun the search for ways to restore the lost spiritual realm. Restoring some of the ritual aspects of Judaism, or creating new rituals, are two avenues in that quest. Another is to rediscover Judaism's legendary traditions, especially the tales of the great spiritual masters, for these tales can provide an entrance into the forbidding subject of Jewish mysticism, which, in turn, can unlock many of the secrets of spirituality. Traditionally, only a Jewish man who had reached the age of forty, was ordained as a rabbi, and was married was permitted to study the *Zohar* and other kabbalistic texts. And even though these barriers do not exist for contemporary, non-Orthodox Jews, the difficulty of the mystical texts has served to keep them well-hidden. The tales, on the other hand, are far more accessible.

In the past, the patriarchs and rabbinic masters were the primary spiritual models in Judaism. As recorded in a wealth of mystical tales, they lived in a world of signs and symbols, a world of mythic proportions in which the forces of good and evil were engaged in a continual struggle. And, according to this worldview, a heavy responsibility hung on the master and his disciples to repair the world so that the Messiah can be freed from the chains that have held him back for so long. Thus, these masters function as shamans, going into trances, communing with angels and spirits of the dead, confronting evil spirits, and, in general, demonstrating their mastery of all the spiritual and physical realms.

There are many sources for these mystical tales, among them rabbinic, kabbalistic, and Hasidic literature, medieval Jewish folklore, and the oral tales collected during this century in Eastern Europe and Israel. Virtually all the mystical experiences are presented as true accounts, not only of mystical union, but of visions, dreams, soul travel, encounters with angels and demons, possession by both good and evil spirits, miracles, and experiences out of body and out of time. Despite these disparate themes, the common thread running through these tales is the revelation of or interaction with the divine realm.

The majority of mystical tales concern renowned mystical masters such as Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Ari), and the Baal Shem Tov, who draw on their knowledge of the divine realm to fulfill a mystical purpose. Some masters are depicted in search of personal enlightenment; others thirst for knowledge of the divine mysteries; some seek divine intercession to protect the Jewish community from one danger or another; still others seek to hasten the coming of the Messiah.

Of the three tales that follow, "The Cottage of Candles" is a folktale that exists in many versions, and "The Souls of Trees" and "The Sword of the Messiah" are Hasidic tales from the circle of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, who was one of the great mystical masters.

"The Cottage of Candles" is an example of a divine test, similar to the one to which God subjected Abraham when he commanded him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. The identity of the old man who tends the soul-candles and conducts the test remains a

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mystery, although his supernatural aspect is quite clear. As the Keeper of the Soul-Candles he echoes the Elijah prototype, or that of the *Lamed-Vav Tzaddikim*, the thirty-six hidden saints who are said to be the pillars of the world. One way of reading the tale is to see that in arriving at the cottage, the man is on the verge of completing his lifelong quest to find justice, but he is first tested to see if he himself is just. The man's quest in this tale is in many ways parallel to that of the man from the country who comes seeking justice at the gates of the Law in Kafka's famous parable, "Before the Law," in *The Trial*.

The tales of Judaism's great spiritual masters can provide an entrance to the forbidding realm of Jewish mysticism.

"The Souls of Trees" is remarkable for the prescience of its environmental awareness. Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav exhibits such sensitivity to the existence of souls that he even perceives the cries of the souls of trees that have been cut down before their time. He employs a method of divination known as *sheilat sefer* in the tale to discover the meaning of his dream, consisting of opening a sacred text at random and pointing to a passage, which is understood as a reply from God. In this case it gives Rabbi Nachman the essential clue linking the dream with the trees, and he has no difficulty understanding the meaning of the oracle. The third tale, "The Sword of the Messiah," very closely resembles the early *Hekhaloth* texts describing heavenly journeys, as well as the famous talmudic legend of the four sages who entered Paradise. Rabbi Shmuel Isaac was one of Rabbi Nachman's close disciples, and this tale describes one of his prophetic visions. In this vision, Rabbi Shmuel Isaac ascends Jacob's Ladder to the Messiah's palace and has a meeting with the Messiah. The tale not only links Rabbi Shmuel Isaac to Jacob, but to the rich tradition of heavenly journeys in Jewish mystical lore. Further, it confirms the belief in the Messiah, while the Messiah himself confirms the importance of Rabbi Nachman's teachings. The vision thus affirms the role of humans in the mystical quest to bring about the messianic era.

Although our modern worldview lacks the spiritual framework that shaped the lives of these mystics, their stories still convey the essential ethical and mystical truths of their teachings. We too seek justice and are ourselves sometimes unjust. We too have become aware of the souls of trees and the delicate balance of existence. And we too want to have a meaningful destiny to fulfill. Thus, these tales can be understood purely as story, or as mystical texts to be contemplated for their hidden truths. So too do they convey the rich tradition out of which they emerge, and, at the same time, draw the reader into their spiritual realm.

The Cottage of Candles

There once was a Jew who went out into the world to seek justice. He looked in the streets and the markets of cities but could not find it. He traveled to villages and he explored distant fields and farms, but still justice eluded him. At last he came to an immense forest and he entered it, for he was certain that justice must exist somewhere. He wandered there for many years and he saw many things—the hovels of the poorest peasants, the hideaways of thieves, and the huts of witches in the darkest part of the forest. And he stopped in each of these, despite the danger, and sought clues. But no one was able to help him in his quest.

One day, just as dusk was falling, he arrived at a small clay hut that looked as if it were about to collapse. Now there was something strange about this hut, for many flickering flames could be seen through the window. The man who sought justice wondered greatly about this and knocked on the door. There was no answer. He pushed the door open and entered.

Before him was a small room crowded with many shelves. And on the shelves were a multitude of oil candles. Together their flames seemed to beat like wings, and the flickering light made him feel as if he were standing in the center of a quivering flame. He held up his hand, and it seemed to be surrounded with an aura, and all the candles were like a constellation of stars. Stepping closer, he saw that some of the flames burned with a very pure fire, while others were dull and still others were sputtering, about to go out. So too did he now notice that some of the wicks were in golden vessels, while others were in silver or marble ones, and many burned in simple vessels of clay or tin. These plain vessels had thin wicks, which burned quickly, while those made of gold or silver had wicks that lasted much longer. While he stood there, marveling at that forest of candles, an old man in a white robe came out of one of the corners and said: "Shalom Aleichem, my son, what are you looking for?" "Aleichem Shalom," the man answered. "I have traveled everywhere searching for justice, but never have I seen anything like all these candles. Why are they burning?"

The old man spoke softly: "Know that these are soul-candles. Each candle is the soul of one of the living. As

long as it burns, the person remains alive. But when the flame burns out, he departs from this life."

Then the man who sought justice turned to the old man and asked: "Can I see the candle of my soul?"

The old man led him into a corner and showed him a line of tins on a low shelf. He pointed out a small, rusty one that had very little oil left. The wick was smoking and had tilted to one side. "This is your soul," said the old man.

A great fear fell upon the man and he started to shiver.

Could it be that the end of his life was so near and he did not know it?

Then the man noticed that next to his tin there was another, filled with oil. Its wick was straight, burning with a clear, pure light.

"And this one, who does it belong to?" asked the man, trembling. "That is a secret," answered the old man. "I only reveal each man's candle to himself alone."

Soon after that the old man vanished from sight, and the room seemed empty except for the candles burning on every shelf. While the man stood there, he saw a candle on another shelf sputter and go out. For a moment there was a wisp of smoke rising in the air, and then it was gone. One soul had just left the world.

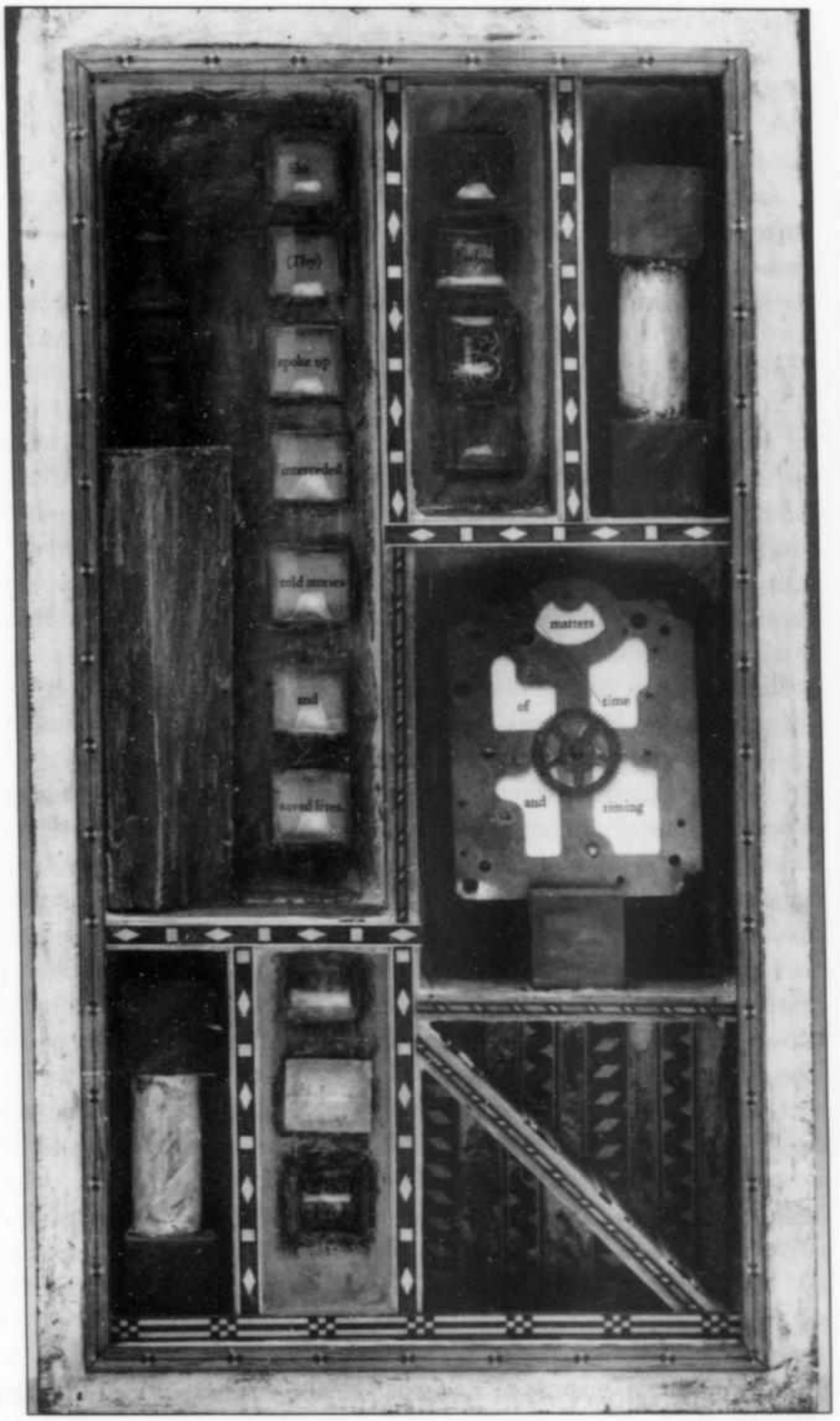
The man's eyes returned to his own tin. He saw that only a few drops of oil remained, and he knew that the flame would soon burn out. At that instant he saw the candle of his neighbor, burning brightly, the tin full of oil.

Suddenly an evil thought entered his mind. He looked around and saw that the old man had disappeared. He looked closely in the corner from which he had come, and then in the other corners, but there was no sign of him there. At that moment he reached out and took hold of the full tin and raised it above his own. But suddenly a strong hand gripped his arm, and the old man stood beside him.

"Is this the kind of justice you are seeking?" he asked. His grip was like iron, and the pain caused the man to close his eyes.

And when the fingers released him, he opened his eyes and saw that everything had disappeared: the old man, the cottage, the shelves, and all the candles. And the man stood alone in the forest and heard the trees whispering his fate.

Afghanistan: Oral Tradition



The Soul of Trees

Reb Nachman was once traveling with his Chasidim by carriage, and as it grew dark they came to an inn, where they spent the night. During the night Reb Nachman began to cry out loudly in his sleep, waking up everyone in the inn, all of whom came running to see what had happened.

When he awoke, the first thing Reb Nachman did was to take out a book he had brought with him. Then he closed his eyes and opened the book and pointed to a passage. And there it was written, "Cutting down a tree

before its time is like killing a soul."

Then Reb Nachman asked the innkeeper if the walls of that inn had been built out of saplings cut down before their time. The innkeeper admitted that this was the truth, but how did the rabbi know?

And Reb Nachman said: "All night I dreamed I was surrounded by the bodies of those who had been murdered. I was very frightened. Now I know that it was the souls of the trees that cried out to me."

Eastern Europe: Nineteenth Century

The Sword of the Messiah

Among Reb Nachman's best-known disciples was Reb Shmuel Isaac. Like Reb Nachman, he had great prophetic powers. Not only could he see into the future, but he also had visions in which he ascended into Paradise. Several of these visions were recorded in a small notebook that was lost after his death. Only one of Reb Shmuel's visions was preserved.

In this vision Reb Shmuel found himself walking at night through a snow-covered forest. There he saw a light glowing far off, as distant as a star, and with nothing else to guide him, he followed it. He made his way through that dark forest, ignoring the icy wind and the howling of wolves. He kept his eyes fixed on the distant light, certain that it held his salvation.

At last, deep in the forest, Reb Shmuel came to a clearing in the shape of a circle. That clearing was filled with light, and when Reb Shmuel came closer, he saw that a ladder of light rose up there. Reb Shmuel looked at it in amazement, certain that it was none other than that seen by Jacob in his dream. But while Jacob had seen angels ascending and descending that ladder, Reb Shmuel saw none.

He stood at the base of it and peered up into the sky. He saw how the ladder ascended as far as he could see, into the very heavens. And at the top of the ladder he saw the light that had guided him to this place, the heavenly star that drew him ever closer. And he knew that he would have to ascend that ladder, wherever it would take him.

When Reb Shmuel stepped on the first rung, he found that it somehow held him, though it consisted only of light. Indeed, the ladder felt very secure, as if it were anchored in the most solid of foundations. Then Reb Shmuel lost his fear and climbed from rung to rung, determined to reach that distant light. Reb Shmuel climbed until he finally reached the top of the ladder. There he saw that the source of that light was a magnificent palace. Outside that palace grew a tree with branches that seemed to reach into every corner of heaven, and in the branches he saw a golden nest, with a golden dove in it. The song of that dove filled the air, and it was so beautiful that he felt like weeping. Then Reb Shmuel realized that he had ascended to the very palace of the Messiah, and that the bird he saw was none other than the golden dove of the Messiah, whose heavenly song is immortal.

When Reb Shmuel realized that it was the light of the Messiah's palace that had guided him there, he was overwhelmed. And he was drawn to that incredible palace like a moth to a flame. He came to its door and saw that it consisted of black flames burning on white, and he drew in his breath and walked through that door, knowing full well that it might be impossible to turn back. Inside he found a chamber of awesome beauty, and while he marveled at its uniqueness, he suddenly saw that a gateway had opened leading to another room, and from there to yet another room, and so from room to room and from story to story. Thus he found that every entrance led to the next, and everything was connected to everything else with the profoundest wisdom and beauty.

Reb Shmuel moved from room to room in that fiery palace, until he came to a door with a flame that burned much brighter than any other. And somehow he knew that he had come to the end of his quest, that behind that door he would find the Messiah, who had guided him to that place.

Gathering all his courage, Reb Shmuel stepped through that fiery door into the inner chamber. There he was blinded by a brilliant light that filled every corner of the room. Shielding his eyes, Reb Shmuel could make out an old man with a white beard, seated on a throne before him. He was holding a sword, and Reb Shmuel saw that his face was the source of the light that filled the room. Then he knew with certainty that the old man must be the Messiah, who has waited all these years for his time to come.

"Do you see this sword?" the Messiah asked. Reb Shmuel nodded that he did, for he was speechless. "With this sword I shall conquer the world!"

Bewildered, Reb Shmuel could not comprehend what the old man meant. Then the Messiah said: "Go to your rebbe. He will explain everything to you."

At that moment Reb Shmuel's vision ended, and he found himself standing before the House of Study in Bratslav. In great confusion he entered, knowing that his only hope was to ask Reb Nachman to explain his vision. As he stepped inside, he saw that Reb Nachman was teaching a lesson. And the first words Reb Shmuel heard Reb Nachman say were: "And the sword of the Messiah is prayer!"

Eastern Europe: Nineteenth Century □

Justice, Work, Study, and Protest: The Biblical Contributions to Modern Democracy

Richard Landes

Between its introduction in the first century C.E. and its use today, there has been a remarkable inversion in the meaning of the term "theocracy," "the rule of God." Flavius Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, first coined the term to describe Israel's egalitarianism in contrast to the imperial tyrannies of the gentiles. It meant that there was "no king but God" and that His law applied equally to all people—His was the rule of *isonomia*, a Greek term synonymous with democracy. Today, theocracy is synonymous with the opposite—with tyranny, repression, hierarchical authoritarianism, even totalitarianism. This curious linguistic development reveals a still more extraordinary blind spot in the self-awareness of the West: an exaggeration of the Greek, and a corresponding devaluation of the Jewish roots of democracy. But when we shift our focus from democratic institutions to the underlying values of such institutions, the picture, like the terminology, inverts. To Jews, the political implication of monotheism is "No king but God"; to philosophic Hellenists, monotheism means "One God in heaven, one emperor to rule on earth."

This shift in perspective sheds light on the long and painful process out of which modern constitutional democracies first arose. The forces opposing aristocracy in medieval and early modern Europe turned not to the model of Pericles in their editions of Thucydides, but instead looked to Genesis, Exodus, the Judges, and the Prophets—even to the structure of the Jewish communities in their midst—for their inspiration. Accordingly, the threatened elites viewed the Bible as a dangerous text that lent itself to subversive, heretical readings. In their efforts to repress such tendencies in the population, the ruling elite burned Bibles (vernacular) and people. They hated and feared any community—Christian or Jewish—organized without the use of violence and authoritarian rule to maintain order. Indeed, I would argue, the most abiding sources of anti-Semitism in the West have arisen in reaction to the ability of Jews and their Bible to foster the values that underlay democracy and undermine authoritarian forms of government.

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Proto-Democratic Foundations

From a social viewpoint, there is a constellation of four elements that constitute the essential preconditions to democratic forms of government, preparing the terrain for the seeds of democratic institutions to take root and flourish: 1) *isonomia*, or the principle of equality before the law; 2) widespread alphabetic literacy; 3) the freedom to protest inequities; and 4) the positive valuation of manual labor.

Isonomia. To aristocrats (the vast majority of former and present-day rulers), the principle that all should stand equal before the law—what the Athenians called *isonomia*—strikes at the heart of their privilege. One need only look at the violent resistance by the patrician elite of fifth-century B.C.E. Rome to the "Twelve Tables of the Law," even though they were not isonomic, to realize how threatening ruling groups find "permanent laws, permanently exhibited where all can see them" (Livy, History of Rome, III, 32-60).

Literacy. *Isonomia* involves literacy; reforms instituting it publish written laws as part of their program. Only an informed citizenry, aware of the law, could hope to protect its legal rights against the constant encroachments of those in power. Throughout history, texts have played a central role in shaping new, voluntary associations; "textual communities" formed around an often very brief text whose moral and spiritual demands constituted their "law and discipline." Authoritarian regimes (before printing) made every effort to restrict literacy, especially religious literacy, to a small group of specialists.

Free Speech. Citizens who see violations of equity must have the ability to denounce them without excessive fear of reprisal from those in power. This ability is guaranteed primarily by an active public, by public lawcourts,

open forums for debate and discussion (today's press), and by rulers who must obey the law rather than make it up.

Manual Labor. Aristocratic societies typically view manual labor as degrading, as a kind of brutalizing and mind-numbing activity fit only for slaves and others incapable of real thoughts and feelings. It often serves in these cultures as a mark of disgrace that excludes the laborer—who comprised the vast majority of the populations of pre-industrial societies—from participating in political and cultural life. For Aristotle (who must be deemed a moderate in the Greek political tradition), manual labor dulled a man's mind and made him incapable of true (philosophic) thought. The liberal was a man "freed" by his slaves to think and discuss "the beautiful and the good"; and only such men deserved the rank and rights of a citizen (Politics, III, 5). On the other hand, a society that holds that all men should earn their bread by the sweat of their brow applies the same kind of principles to questions of economics and status that *isonomia* applies to the law.

These four elements—*isonomia*, literacy, free speech, and manual labor—were frequently present in the places where democracy emerged in European history. The communes of eleventh-century Europe; the peasant rebellions of the late Middle Ages (e.g., England, 1381) and early modern period (e.g., Germany, 1525); the Puritan revolution of the seventeenth century; the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century; and the socialist and Zionist movements of modern times all made appeals to the notions of equality before the law, all spoke of manual labor as the foundation of human dignity, and all leaned heavily for their support on the existence of a class of commoners who could read or cared about the contents of texts and debated them openly.

Once we shift our attention from institutions and political thought to the social and cultural values outlined above, Athens finds a serious "democratic" rival in the ancient world: the Ancient Hebrews. In fact, Hebrew culture emphasized *isonomia*, mass education, and manual labor with greater consistency than Athenian society.

Isonomia. Despite a lack of democratic institutions, no polity in the ancient world so systematically pursued the principles of judicial *isonomia* as ancient Hebrew society. However one dates the Decalogue, it was certainly promulgated before Athenian legislation. These commandments, published on stone tablets, applied to all the members of the (textual) community regardless of status or wealth. The doctrine of the *lex talionis* ("An eye for an eye..."), so commonly invoked as a primitive notion of vengeance, in fact meant equality. Unlike the Hammurabi Code before, or the Germanic codes after, the biblical code asserted that the eye of a commoner was worth (always in monetary terms) the same as the eye of an aristocrat. The biblical admonitions to judges insist on impartial justice regardless of the status of the defendants: one should favor neither the rich (and take bribes) nor the poor (out of pity) (Ex. 23:1-9; Deut. 16:18-20). The privilege of Sabbath rest applies to all, including non-Jews, servants, slaves, even animals (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15). The principle of equal treatment on these matters of social privilege (as opposed to ritual obligation) is explicitly enunciated at a number of points in the Bible, in particular with reference to the poor, the defenseless, and "the stranger in your midst" (Lev. 19:33f). "You shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land" (Lev. 24:22).

Judaism's later, rabbinical tradition elaborated on all of these biblical passages and insisted that the pursuit of justice "without respect of person" [i.e. status] constituted a central task of the Chosen People. "To every judge who judges truly...the Scripture reckons it as if he had been a partner with God in the work of creation." Moreover, clearly any decision Jewish judges handed down applied to themselves as well as to others, gentiles as well as poor Jews.

The political implications of this notion of justice are clear: Rulers are not privileged before the law; they had no right, for example, to dispossess or confiscate property from individuals. Both Moses and Samuel, when faced with objections to their rule, invoke in their defense the claim never to have taken another's ox or a donkey (Num. 16:15; I Sam. 12:3); conversely, the image of the unjust king is one who takes from his subjects without their consent (David and Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, II Sam. 12; Ahab and Nabot's vineyard, I Kg. 21). These actions would scarcely be viewed as transgressions by most rulers of the ancient world; and still fewer of their subjects would dare criticize them for it. As the twentieth-century Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel pointed out, the Prophets stand as among the few voices of the ancient world who denounced the "idolatry of power."

Literacy and Education. Although true literacy did not reach high proportions in Israelite society until relatively late, access to the text of the law, and encouragement of public knowledge of the law constitute two of the highest priorities of the community. By the time the Israelites returned from the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century B.C.E., public readings of the Torah—the Law—took place not only on the Sabbath, but also on Monday and Thursday, the two main market days, accompanied by translations into the vernacular of the day (*targumim*) in

order to reach the workers. Josephus insisted on the importance of these customs in fostering God's isonomic rule. With this oral transmission of the law and its commentary involving the whole of Jewish society, the "people of the Book" constitute the largest enduring isonomic "textual community" in recorded history.

Freedom of Speech. One normally does not think of the Bible supporting freedom of speech; to the contrary, it prescribes death for blasphemy. But that is a religious matter, whereas the vital political issue is the freedom to denounce the abuse of power by those who wield it. In that sense, despite all the difficulties that the prophets encountered in ancient Israel, the fact remains that the communities to whom they addressed their virulent denunciations of the rich and the powerful preserved their words and deeds with more care and approval than those of the ruling elite.

Manual Labor. Throughout the Bible runs the theme of the paramount value of labor, so central that it defines human destiny. In fact, the book of Genesis describes God's first actions, the creation of the heavens and the earth, as labor, from which He then rests on the seventh day, thereby establishing a model for human behavior. Of all the cosmogonic myths that describe a past Golden Age, only in Judaism's Garden of Eden do we find work (Gen. 2:15). Similarly, the biblical depiction of the future age of perfection envisages a world where justice means each man enjoying the fruits of the labor of his own hands (Is. 2:4, 65:21-22; Jer. 31:5; Micah 4:3). All the great biblical leaders worked: Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Isaiah, Elijah; and the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David, went from the stable to the throne. The wisdom literature (the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, and the extra-canonical Wisdom of Solomon) repeatedly contrasts the well-being of the worker who eats from the labor of his own hands, and the rich man who lives off the labor of others (Eccl., 2:10; 15:12; Wsdm. Sol., 22:29; Ps., 104; 128:2). The commandment to keep the Sabbath embodies the combination of manual labor and *isonomia*:

> Six days shall you labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work, you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maid servant, your cattle, nor the stranger within your gates...

First it commands work (presumably a reminder necessary for the rich and powerful, and a sharp contrast to the behavior of the ruling class in Egyptian society); second, it explicitly commands rest to all including servants, gentiles, even animals. The variants between the first and second statement of this commandment underline its inverse symmetry: Exodus gives as the reason for the Sabbath (the only commandment explicitly explained) the remembrance of Creation, thereby underlining the parallel between man and God's work. Deuteronomy invokes the Exodus from slavery and the memory of what life was like as a stranger/slave, underlining the importance of rest not only for the individual but for all over whom one has power.

As opposed to the Greeks, who cultivated logic and philosophy, the Hebrews and their later descendants the Jews emphasized morality and ethics; thus manual labor—an involvement in the messy aspects of toil and compensation, honesty and fairness—far from excluding one from participating in the intellectual life of the culture, was a necessity. Hence, alone of cultures of the ancient Mediterranean, Hebrew society considered manual labor appropriate for all its members, including the intellectual class: Even rabbis needed a self-supporting trade. And accordingly, the social world prescribed by the biblical text is one in which the central figures are simple, honest, working people. Legislation specifically protected the powerless, providing a safety net for the poor, mandating compassion and charity toward the disadvantaged, forbidding the exploitation of hired hands, or providing a periodic enfranchisement and a roughly egalitarian redistribution of property and status through the sabbatical and jubilee years (Lev. 19-21; Ex. 21-22; Deut. 15, 24).

But biblical and later Jewish tradition go beyond merely articulating these values; they also undergirded them with moral and ritual injunctions. For example, as Rabbi Akiva said standing on one leg, "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you." This "golden rule," echoed in so many other ethical systems (e.g., the Stoics), in fact has enormous political implications when legally binding. It is as hard for a society to live, as it is simple to express. And in that sense the rituals, liturgies, and regulations of Halacha, primarily inculcated through the family, may be seen as a form of discipline, of moral muscle-building that permits one to say no to oneself in those moments when convenience and profit dictate otherwise. It is a classic aristocratic argument that commoners are incapable of disciplining themselves and that, hence, democracy means anarchy. Only a self-regulating people can hope to create an enduring democracy.

One might consider the ban on idols in a similar light: As the story of the golden calf in the book of Exodus illustrates, idols fill a void in leadership, they answer an anxiety that comes upon people when they are "free from," in psychoanalyst Erich Fromm's famous phrase, but not yet "free to." They are a form of spiritual slavery in which concrete and visual symbols grant license

and blot out the heard, the interpersonal dialogue that demands maturity and self-restraint. Praying to a God one cannot visually conceive is a form of intellectual discipline that emphasizes the complexity of moral thought and social organization. Politically, the implications are decisive: Iconic monotheism is imperialist—One God, One emperor, image of God on earth; aniconic monotheism is isonomic—No King but God, for no man can be the image of an unimaginable God.

The adoption of the Hebrew Bible by Christianity—a religion which at least at its origin, and in many of its subsequent reforming movements, developed still more radical notions of egalitarianism—guaranteed a wide dissemination of the proto-democratic elements in biblical culture. The mere availability of the text, however, did not guarantee an isonomic reading (witness the difference between a Greek or Russian Orthodoxy, which hallows the ruler, and a papal Catholicism, which sanctifies him; between hierarchical Catholicism and an egalitarian Anabaptism), raising the question of why various cultures (and groups within cultures) "read" the biblical text differently. Nevertheless, in the West, the more radical interpretations of both New Testament and Hebrew Bible maintain a strong and continuous tradition over two millennia.

Despite the importance of the politically radical elements of the biblical texts, there are other, more conservative and hierarchical strains in both the Hebrew scriptures and Judaism. And Christianity in its dominant form (imperial or papal) looked especially to those hierarchical elements in the Old Testament to buttress a stratified and authoritarian political structure. As a result, modern readers are most familiar with those aspects of Jewish thought stressed by the triumphant Church, fostering the dominant, if ironic, association of "theocracy" with priestly hierarchy, authoritarian rule, and inquisitorial persecution.

But in every generation there have been Christians who also understood theocracy in the radical, "Judaizing" sense. And the history of Western societies reflects the influence of a number of these biblical themes:

• Classlessness. In 1381, participants in the Peasant Rebellion in England sang, "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman." This ditty, which appears in most European vernaculars, expresses a characteristic reading of Genesis by the Christian lower classes. It combines the memory of our collective ancestors, commanded to work (Adam plowing, Eve spinning), with the ideal of *isonomia* (no gentlemen, i.e., no group with a privileged status).

• Liberation from tyrannical oppression. The Exodus, as both Michael Walzer and Adam Wildavsky have recently shown, contains fundamental teachings on how to pass from oppressive hierachies to autonomous self-regulating societies. The revolutionary potential of the Exodus tale has inspired generations of political activists, and continues to do so today. Most particularly the elements of collective liberation, the passage from a slave class with a slave mentality to a free people capable of the rewards and responsibilities of freedom, the notion of a "covenant" uniting the entire people has made this text politically dangerous over time.

• Anti-monarchism. Samuel's reaction when the children of Israel demanded a king (I Sam 8:7-8) reveals a basic stance of Hebraic political thought: Monarchies and courts are breeding grounds for the abuse of power characteristic of the other nations; God's chosen should be capable of regulating their own communities without the need for centralized institutions of rule. To want a king was a moral failure on the part of the children of Israel and a rejection of God as king. Even when it accepts monarchy, the Bible does not envisage a king above the law (Deut 17:16-20). These principles stood at variance with other, more pro-monarchical passages in the Hebrew Bible, from which the pro-monarchical ideologies in the Middle Ages drew their imagery. From the twelfth century if not earlier, however, Christian exegetes looked to the Bible for passages bridling royal power, a process that culminated in the frankly anti-monarchical reading by the Calvinists in the sixteenth century which so contributed to the development of constitutional theory in the early modern period.

• Social Justice. The call to care for the poor, the helpless, the stranger in your midst, which forms one of the main themes of the social legislation in the Mosaic code, reaches a climax of emotional and rhetorical insistence in the prophets. Their denunciations of both political and economic forms of oppression provide the most potent texts for the rejection of inequities in society. Most of the inversions in medieval political thought in which the power of the mighty was restricted and the rights of the commoner protected, derive from the value given to the powerless by Hebrew and Christian scripture.

• Revolutionary Upheaval. All of these radical tendencies in Hebraic moral thought, contrasting God's will for a just society with the abuses of those in power, culminate during the period of domination by external empires (Babylonian, Greek, and Roman) with the emergence of millenarian expectations of a violent, total upheaval that will produce a reversal in the nature of power: The meek and oppressed enjoy peace and prosperity while the oppressors burn in Hell. Its blanket condemnation of imperial authority made Jewish millenarianism particularly dangerous to the ruling authorities; and from as early as the Maccabees, such be-

liefs repeatedly fostered nationalist guerilla uprisings against imperial rule. This revolutionary tradition reached a fever pitch in Palestine around the turn of the Common Era under the violent leadership of the Zealots who, in Josephus's words "...have a passion for liberty that is almost unconquerable, since they are convinced that God alone is their leader and master. They think little of submitting to death in unusual forms... if only they may avoid calling any man master." And this millenarian madness "which infected the nation to an almost incredible degree," generating the "Jewish War" of 66-70 C.E., which ended with the destruction of the Temple and the present diaspora, was the crucible out of which Christianity—partly in feverish enthusiasm, partly in reaction—arose.

How, and in what circumstances, do "democratic" ideas manage to take root in various socio-economic groups so that viable alternatives to "aristocratic empires" emerge in community and state organization? And under what conditions do such alternatives endure as they grow and develop over time? The example of communist revolutions turning totalitarian, within decades if not years of victory, underlines how fragile egalitarian rhetoric proves in the face of challenges to survival; and the contrast with four decades of beleaguered but democratic Zionism makes an eloquent case for the present argument.

The significance then is not in the mere articulation of these values, but how far they have penetrated both into the upper echelons of society (where access to isonomic texts is high and receptivity low) and into the lower ones (where receptivity is high, but access limited and limitable). On this basis, Hebrew society was much more profoundly committed than Greek: While imperial Hellenism arose from the ruins of democratic Athens, out of the ruins of the Second Temple, Israel produced the autonomous, consensual communities of rabbinic Judaism. Indeed Greece's short-lived democratic experiment may have been premature precisely for lack of this cultural base. And if Rome (and other "complex societies") fell because too vast a chasm opened up between ruling elites and subject populations, then the strength and continuity of Judaism may owe much to the solidarity of its communities throughout the ages, themselves grounded in a commitment to *isonomia*, biblical learning, and manual labor for all.

If the presence of isonomic values and texts are only significant when they disseminate throughout a society, then what role did the example of Jewish community structure play in communicating the more egalitarian aspects of the Bible? In the early eleventh century, at a time of considerable social and religious turmoil, Frankish bishops expounded an idea with a long future in medieval political thought, a stratification of society into three orders—the prayers, the fighters, and the workers. The first assured salvation, the second, defense, the third, food. This worldview provided a neat and enduring justification for a hierarchical system that profoundly favored the aristocracy. It was challenged by two different groups: openly, by "heretical" peasants who believed that their salvation was assured by belonging to a pacifist apostolic community where everyone earned their food by the sweat of their brow; implicitly, by Jewish communities which were built around the notion that everyone should study and pray, everyone should work, and where prestige went to scholars rather than warriors.

The disparity between Christian aristocratic society structured by war and the exercise of power and a Jewish communitarian society based on learning and the law did not escape the attention of less martially inclined Christians. As one disciple of Abelard commented:

> If the Christians educate their sons they do so not for God but for gain, in order that the one brother if he be a clerk, may help his father, his mother and his other brothers... But the Jews, out of zeal for God and love of the law, put as many sons as they have to letters, that each may understand God's law... A Jew, no matter how poor, if he had ten sons would put them all to letters not for gain, as Christians do, but for the understanding of God's law, and not only his sons but his daughters."

While such disparities may have elicited nothing but contempt for an effeminate Jewry among the warrior class, it apparently had quite a different impact on the populations which began to people the new towns of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, possibly inspiring such egalitarian movements as communes and apostolic "heresies."

But if the Hebrew Bible and the Jews played so important a role in the emergence of democracy, what accounts for their absence from most treatments of the subject? First, the documents (commentaries, sermons, political treatises) emphasize the more conservative meaning of the biblical texts—something aristocrats (Jewish and Christian) have done, but also something many Jews have found necessary in order to appease Christian authorities who resent the egalitarian elements (e.g., Rashi's pro-monarchical reading of Samuel's "the ways of the king"). Second, successful democracies emerged in the aftermath of murderous Christian religious wars in which the Bible served as a warrant for mas-

sacre—tolerance in the West arose from a revulsion against religious fanaticism, from secularism and philosophical deism. Finally, our modern proclivity for privacy, for a strict division between public and private morality, has given biblical legislation an unsavory and intrusive quality: Good citizenship, we hold, has nothing to do with adultery, or cursing God, or what you eat. In a sense, however, all this adds up to a variation on the anti-Semitism of the Enlightenment. Men like Voltaire rejected everything Christian except the Christian view of Judaism; similarly, political historians reject the theocratic authoritarianism of Christianity, but at the same time they assume that this is a correct reading of the Bible.

As a result, most analyses of anti-Semitism have overlooked what may well be its major cause, that is, an aristocratic reaction to the "democratic" influence of Jews on Christian populations. The infamous anti-Semitic tract, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, incarnates the aristocrat's *ressentiment*, in the face of *isonomia*. Here, the natural rulers of mankind—the gentile aristocracy—have been secretly robbed of their rightful place by capitalists and constitutional democrats who are the unwitting dupes of a Jewish conspiracy to enslave the world. The true order of society—an authoritarian hierarchy where Christian noblemen dominate a peasant majority—has been subverted, and only the destruction of the Jews and their anti-aristocratic agents will permit a return to health. For people who find the *Protocols* a "true" warning, *isonomia* is a kind of cancer cell, and the Jews (through their control of the press, public opinion, the market, and parliamentary bodies—i.e., all forums where the aristocracy has lost control) are the chemical agents that permit it to metastasize throughout the body-social.

It is no accident, therefore, that authoritarians ever since —the Nazis, communists, and Arab nationalists—have found the *Protocols* an irresistible text to use in rallying those people threatened by modernity. Indeed the spectacle of a United Nations where a majority of dictatorships ostracize Israel recapitulates on a global scale the anti-Semitic policies of medieval church and state. Just as the strong and free Jewish communities of the central Middle Ages (900-1200) had a subversive effect on Christian commoners from the perspective of the dominant elite, so a modern Israel at peace and unslandered would offer too threatening an influence on the "Fourth World," those groups (lower classes, ethnic, and cultural minorities) whose rights and autonomy are denied by an imperialist "Third World."

This apparent tangent on the anti-democratic origins of anti-Semitism brings me to my primary conclusion. The real agents in the "creation" of democracy, a task which some think we have yet to achieve even in the West, much less around the globe, are not texts expressing "democratic" values, whose meaning and impact are strongly influenced by a culture's interpreters, nor blueprints for democratic institutions. On the contrary, the necessary groundwork for such achievements lies in the commitment of a society to equality before the law and all the cultural values that implies—the dignity of manual labor, the importance of learning for all, the rights of ordinary people written in publicly displayed law codes, the language of protest, notions of fairness and justice, and open courts committed to them. Perhaps it is here that we need to focus our attention at the dawn of the third millennium of the common era: not on spreading the institutions of modern democracy to societies that are unprepared for them, but on the more modest yet more culturally profound effort to implement *isonomia*.

In 1989, as the Berlin Wall came down, a reporter for National Public Radio asked one of the spokespeople for the "democracy" movement, "What do East Germans want?" His answer was elegantly short and deceptively simple: "Equality before the law." As I have suggested, however, such a goal reaches deep into the social relations and values of a society. In the short run, it may change little of the dominant political structure, but in the long run, it undermines aristocratic dominance and lays the groundwork for a just and enduring society with or without democracy. And to that end, much in the way of cultural values that make such a system viable can be found in the Hebrew Bible.

Am I suggesting that we promulgate some equivalent of Halacha to the rest of the world? If one understands this to mean "social Halacha"—*isonomia* and its accompanying social legislation—yes. If, however, by "Halacha" one intends "some version of the religious and ritual laws about food, purity, etc.," the answer is no, or rather, that it is up to the societies in question. I believe that the two kinds of legislation are in fact linked, as I indicated earlier, although nothing could be more counterproductive than imposing religious legislation on another society. On the other hand, were we to encourage "social Halacha" among societies that have long suffered at the hands of authoritarian elites, we should not be surprised to find them linking such efforts with more ritual or religious legislation. It is noteworthy that when tribal peoples (such as nineteenth- and twentieth-century Africans and Melanesians and fifth- to tenth-century Germans) first learned to read the Bible, they found the "Old Testament," as the Hebrew Bible is known in Christianity, much more appealing than the new, in part because of the discipline of its laws and taboos. In any case, all that is commentary; go and study. □

Uncle Isaac

Gary Krist

On the way to pick up Uncle Isaac for his semi-annual dental checkup, Michael Spielberg stopped on the Avenue to buy flypaper. He had a little difficulty finding some at first. The man in the hardware store said they hadn't carried flypaper since 1978, and the apathetic teenager at the Rite-Aid just looked at him as if she had never heard the word before (which, now that he thought about it, could possibly have been the case). But Michael persisted, retracing his steps up and down the busy commercial street crowded with early holiday shoppers. He knew that when his Uncle Isaac asked for flypaper, it was flypaper that Uncle Isaac wanted.

Finally, in the chaotic back aisles of the County Discount—among the half-unwound balls of string and the plastic water pistols in rainbow colors—he found a dusty roll of the paper, wrapped, appropriately enough, in brittle, fly-specked cellophane. "You're lucky," said the wiry middle-aged woman who checked him out, "we usually only sell this in summer." Her hair was a muddy red color that somehow reminded Michael of tropical river deltas. He thanked her kindly, and told her not to bother putting the roll into a bag.

His task accomplished, Michael walked back to his car and drove the rest of the way to his uncle's. Uncle Isaac lived in a pleasant garden-apartment complex not far from the school where Michael taught seventh-grade geography. The low brick buildings were surrounded by London plane trees—large, elegant trees that in summer shaded a central courtyard and a small fountain illuminated by colored lights. Now, on this last day of November, the trees were skeletal but still impressive, the bark shearing off in curved, brittle chunks.

Michael climbed the five brick steps to his uncle's front door and knocked. After a moment, he heard a voice calling "It's open!" from deep within the apartment, muffled by several layers of wall.

Michael sighed. Despite numerous lectures over the years about burglers and psycho-killers, Isaac persisted in keeping his door unlocked. But Michael still refused to resign himself to his uncle's intransigence. Turning the knob, he entered the apartment and locked the door firmly behind him.

"I'll be a few minutes yet," said Uncle Isaac from another room. "Did you get what I asked for?"

Michael held up the roll of flypaper, as if his uncle could see through walls. "It took me three tries! Nobody stocks this stuff anymore. They all tried to sell me No-Pest Strips!"

"Aaak! Chemicals!" Michael could hear his uncle banging around in his bedroom closet. By the sound of it, Uncle Isaac would be late again—his usual fifteen or twenty minutes.

Michael shook his head. He crossed the apartment and put the flypaper on the gray formica counter that divided the dining nook from the kitchenette. Three large-format cameras stood on tripods in a corner of the room, looking like some kind of hopeless tri-legged extraterrestrials. Uncle Isaac, formerly a studio photographer specializing in baby pictures, had stopped taking photographs years ago—ever since his less than successful cataract operation—but he still liked to be surrounded by his gear.

"Call me old-fashioned," Uncle Isaac said then, continuing the conversation as he came out of the bedroom, "but I don't trust those No-Pest Strips. Besides, I like to watch my flies dying slowly. I think starvation is an appropriate death for vermin, don't you?"

Uncle Isaac was a short man—five-foot-five, if Michael had to guess—with a bulbous nose and a slight pot-belly. He was wearing one of his more emphatic outfits today: a royal blue turtleneck with matching jacket and pants, rose-tinted glasses, and a large brass medallion around his neck. The medallion, which Uncle Isaac had picked up at a market in Cancun years ago, depicted a gold sun surrounded by a border of zodiac signs.

Gary Krist's first collection of stories, The Garden State, *received the 1989 Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. "*Uncle Isaac*" is from his second collection,* Bone by Bone, *to be published next year by Harcourt Brace.*

Uncle Isaac held a pair of white calf-skin loafers in his hand. "I've just got to put these on and do a few more things and then we can go," he said.

"What time is the appointment?"

"Not till 2:15, but we can be late. God knows I've sat around in that man's reception room enough times waiting for him. All of that laughing gas must have done something to the old bird's sense of time."

"I like your shoes," Michael said.

Uncle Isaac flashed him a bright, ironic smile. "Thanks, they're new." He collapsed into the couch and started putting on the shoes. "Your Uncle Howard thinks they're hideous."

Uncle Howard, Isaac's older brother, lived in a high-rise old-age home across town. Of Michael's three maternal uncles, Uncle Howard was the most conservative, the most likely to disapprove of things like white calf-skin shoes. Uncle Isaac and his younger brother Sam usually made Howard miserable, taunting him with their unapologetic flamboyance, but they both loved him fiercely and were clearly in awe of his position as the family patriarch.

"Since when have you listened to fashion advice from Uncle Howard?" Michael asked then, glancing briefly at his own shoes—oxblood loafers whose studied casualness he liked.

Uncle Isaac, having slipped into the new shoes, pulled up his socks and glanced at his nephew. "Who says I listen to him? No, child, your eldest uncle still wears the same clothes he wore back in the forties, after the war. The more successful he became, the less his wardrobe changed. Rumor has it there's an old portrait of Howard in his attic that keeps getting nattier." Isaac snorted at his own joke, which was not new. "How much do I owe you for the flypaper?" he asked then.

"My treat," Michael said, staring fondly at his uncle. Isaac already owed him a thousand dollars, so another $1.95 seemed hardly to matter. Michael had lent him the money—secretly—that spring. In earlier years, of course, Uncle Isaac had been a great philanthropist, giving large chunks of his earnings to all sorts of lefty causes (including, to Uncle Howard's annoyance, a radical kibbutz somewhere in the Negev), but nowadays Uncle Isaac couldn't afford to be so generous. His nephew knew for a fact that he often fell behind in his rent.

"You're so good to me," Isaac said, getting up from the couch. He clapped his chubby hands once and rubbed them together. His problem eye looked lurid and enormous behind the thick tinted lens of his glasses. "OK, I'll just find my wrap and we'll be gone."

Isaac got his coat—an incongruously drab mackintosh—from the hall closet and slipped into it. Then he pulled a blue fisherman's cap over his thin reddish-gray hair. "Ready," he said in satisfaction to his nephew, "and hardly late at all."

They left the apartment and walked out to the car. As they descended the stairs from the raised courtyard to the street, Michael noticed a brittleness, a cautious hesitancy, in his uncle's step. He was tempted to grab the older man's elbow as they went down, but didn't. Uncle Isaac, he knew, was sufficiently embarrassed by the fact that he now had to be driven everywhere. The thought that he also had to be helped down stairs would probably not be pleasant for him.

They settled into Michael's battered Corolla and waited while Michael raced the engine to warm it. Uncle Isaac pulled on a pair of suede gloves, his breath vaporizing in the cold, closed space of the car. "So tell me about your love life," he said then, flashing his nephew an impish grin.

Michael laughed aloud—a hearty, spontaneous laugh that felt good in his chest. "You're a very nosy person, Uncle," he said.

"Of course I am. It's part of my charm."

Michael reached forward and wiped his side of the windshield with a bare hand. "I'm seeing somebody," he said. "This woman who also teaches at my school. Karen."

"Oh," Isaac said, pursing his lips, "a woman."

Michael frowned. "Let's not start this again."

"Start what? If you insist on perpetrating this myth of bisexuality—"

"You say it's a myth—you and your queenie friends."

"Watch your tongue," Uncle Isaac said, slapping his nephew backhand on the arm. He was enjoying this. "A bisexual is somebody who can't make up his mind. That is all."

"You can't imagine it yourself," Michael said, enjoying it somewhat less, "so you don't believe in it. You probably don't believe in heterosexuality either." Michael looked over at his uncle, who was just sitting quietly now, his eyebrows up and a faint, knowing smile on his lips. "Sexuality," Michael intoned carefully, and with quotation marks, "is a continuum."

"Aaagh!" his uncle cried. He covered his ears with his gloved hands. "You sound like that brother of yours. What does he call himself nowadays?"

Michael looked out the windshield. "Pansexual," he said.

"Pansexual!" Uncle Isaac shook his head at the roof of the car.

Michael's brother Josh, an artist/plumber's assistant, lived in the city. Two years ago, Josh had decided to dye his hair platinum and wear only white clothing. His studio in Chelsea was now all-white as well—with no fur-

niture except for a few wispy canvas chairs and dozens of silver-framed mirrors. "To be honest," Michael said finally, "I think Josh has no sexuality at all. I think he's asexual."

Uncle Isaac was nodding. "I agree with you there, child." He put his fingertips up to his bad eye and carefully rubbed it, his gold pinky ring catching the dull winter light. Then: "Pansexual!" he said again. "Sounds like something to do with little boys playing flutes, if you ask me."

The two men looked at each other. Then, almost in unison, they began snickering, their shoulders bobbing cheerfully. It went on like that for seconds, almost a minute, until Michael, wiping his eyes, said, "Put on your seatbelt, you old thing," and slowly pulled the car away from the curb.

Michael found a parking place in the large Shop-More lot behind the dentist's office. Dr. Shriver, whom every member of the Ellerman and Spielberg families had patronized for years, practiced in a street-level storefront a few steps off a major shopping avenue. The street was almost identical to the one Michael had scoured earlier in search of flypaper, only this one was a few miles south, in an older, more congested part of the New York metropolitan sprawl. Dr. Shriver's office held horrifying childhood memories for Michael, and even now he couldn't help shuddering at the thought of that anonymous waiting room. The image of its coarse brown carpeting, antiseptic-smelling rest room, and rack of bent-up, months-old magazines still held for him a stubborn aura of sheer terror.

Uncle Isaac, as if sensing something of Michael's revulsion, paused as they approached the small maroon awning. "What time is it?" he asked, glancing nervously up the street. Above, dark tentacles of cloud were creeping stealthily across a gray sky. It would rain soon.

"Just past two," Michael said.

"Well, then, we're early. Let's not give the smug man that satisfaction. I have to pick up some tomatoes anyway."

"Tomatoes?"

"Whatever. Come along, there's that Shop-More back there. We can go in from the street up ahead." Uncle Isaac, hunching his raincoat higher on his round shoulders, pushed past his nephew and started heading toward the shopping street. He stopped when he noticed that his nephew was not following. "Come along, will you, child? He won't see us until 2:45 no matter what time we decide to waltz in there."

Michael, recognizing the justice of this, heaved an exaggerated sigh and followed his uncle's hurrying figure to the corner.

"This way," Isaac said, barely pausing.

They made their way down the busy avenue, Uncle Isaac moving along the center of the sidewalk with the regal confidence of a parade float. Michael caught a few people staring—a teenaged mother with a tiny child on her arm, an older man outside a barber shop who gawked at them with unconcealed amazement. Uncle Isaac seemed not to notice. His uncle walked in public, Michael thought, with the same self-conscious casualness that he had seen in celebrities on the streets of New York. The thought made Michael suddenly, irrationally, proud.

The automatic door of the Shop-More hissed as it opened for them. "Now make yourself useful, Michael," Uncle Isaac said, looking around, "Find the produce aisle for me."

Michael read down the line of signs his uncle could not see. "Aisle Seven. At the end," he told him finally.

They pushed past several overloaded carts and found themselves in front of a wall of vegetable and fruit bins. Michael was surprised at the quality of the cold-weather produce—rows and rows of smooth-skinned eggplants, oranges, apples, each touched by a spot of reflected light. He remembered something he had told his geography students one day, how any aisle in any American supermarket represented the produce of countless countries and climates. "Modern transport!" he had exclaimed at the front of the class, trying vainly to infect them with some semblance of enthusiasm for the world. "We live in an age of variety, of diversity, of plenty! Do you realize that?" They had all just slumped lower in their seats, looking down at their textbooks for the answer.

"Oh, these tomatoes look dreadful!" Uncle Isaac said now, clucking his tongue. He picked up a few of the lumpy pink spheres and tossed them higher on the pile. "Absolutely awful! Oh young man!" He was approaching a blond-haired man, hardly young, who stood in shirtsleeves and loosened tie at the swinging doors to the storeroom. The man was chatting with the scale clerk, an enormous Hispanic teenager. "Are you the manager?" Uncle Isaac asked.

The blond man turned and saw Uncle Isaac. A faint grin creased his face. "Yeah, I'm the manager. What can I do you for?"

"Have you had a look at those tomatoes? They're a disgrace!"

Michael saw the manager sneak a quick, conspiratorial look at the scale clerk. "Are they really? Well that's a shame, a damn shame."

"Aren't there any others?"

"We only got the kind of tomatoes you eat," the man said, sending the scale clerk at his shoulder into faint giggles. "I don't even want to think of what kind you're

looking for, honey."

Isaac spun around suddenly, stepping back toward his nephew. "We'll get nothing sensible from them, I'm afraid," he said, only slightly flustered.

"Hey," the manager called out after him. "I like those shoes."

Michael was glaring back at the two men, a rigid band of anger tightening around his ribs.

"Forget it, forget it," Uncle Isaac said to him in a different tone of voice. He turned his nephew bodily toward the front of the store. "Come on, Michael. I'll live without tomatoes for a day." He pushed his nephew through the checkout lines to the exit.

It was 2:20 when they got back to the maroon awning in front of the dentist's office. "Well, we'll have to wait after all," Uncle Isaac complained. He nodded politely when Michael opened the door for him. "What a well-brought-up boy you are," he said, letting his nephew know that everything was just fine.

The waiting room, Michael noticed immediately, was just as it always had been, only now, in honor of the season, a yellowing poinsettia sat in a pot on the central table. The room was empty except for a small child—a pre-school girl in a neat white shirt and tiny overalls. "My mommy's inside," the girl said to them as they entered, just to make sure they knew.

"I'm delighted to hear it, sweetheart," Uncle Isaac said, honoring her with his most charming avuncular smile. Michael helped him off with the old mackintosh and hung it in the closet, jangling the metal hangers. Then he took his uncle's cap. "Mr. Ellerman?" the receptionist asked from the sliding glass window.

"In the flesh," Uncle Isaac said. He stepped over to the window. "You're new here, aren't you? I haven't seen you before."

The receptionist, a tired-eyed brunette with studious, black-framed glasses, nodded. "My third week," she admitted. Then, in an awkward, businesslike tone, she said: "Dr. Shriver can see you right away."

Uncle Isaac's eyes grew large. "Be still, my heart!" he said, putting a hand to his chest. "My ears must be deceiving me."

"Yes, but—" The receptionist shuffled a few papers on her desk. "We have a new pre-payment policy. I'll have to ask you for a check in advance of treatment."

"Well, dear," Uncle Isaac began calmly. He leaned against the sill and put his head through the open window, making his sun medallion clatter against the wall. "I'm afraid I haven't brought a check with me. No one told me of this new policy."

"We accept Visa and Mastercard."

Uncle Isaac threw up his hands. "I have nothing with me, I'm afraid. You'll just have to trust me this once."

"There is already an outstanding balance of $147.48, past due."

Uncle Isaac's jaw stiffened. "May I speak to Dr. Shriver, please?"

"The doctor has specifically instructed—" she began, and then stopped suddenly. "It's the new policy. No exceptions. As simple as that."

"May I please speak to Dr. Shriver?" Isaac's voice was beginning to take on the high-pitched, droning quality that Michael recognized as a harbinger of trouble.

"Just a moment," the receptionist said. Her hand went up to the window and slid it shut. "Harridan," Uncle Isaac said under his breath, but then turned to the little girl on the couch. "I didn't mean you, dear, don't worry."

"Uncle Isaac," Michael said then, moving closer to his uncle, "I've got a few checks with me—"

"Don't even think about it, Michael." He was twisting his gold chain around his index finger, thinking. "I'll talk with Shriver and everything will be all right. Hunky-dory."

After a moment, the door to the inner office opened. Dr. Shriver, a graying but still trim figure in a spotless white coat, stood rubbing his hands together. "Hello, Isaac," he said. "And Michael, how are you?"

Michael nodded and mumbled something, feeling the familiar uneasiness.

"Dr. Shriver—" Isaac began.

The dentist held up his two palms. "Let's talk about this in my consulting room, shall we?" He stepped to the side and gestured for Isaac to pass into the inner office.

Uncle Isaac turned to Michael. "Wait here!" he commanded. Then he turned back and hurried past Dr. Shriver into the shiny corridor beyond. Dr. Shriver smiled once at Michael and let the door shut behind him with a tiny whoosh.

Michael, trying to calm his own agitation, took a seat in the armchair across from the little girl. She had opened a magazine on the glass-topped table and was now kneeling in front of it, turning pages. Michael watched her, rubbing his forehead, his uncle's cap on his knees. He was worried. It was obvious that Uncle Isaac was floundering. He had worked for himself for most of his life; his photo studio on the Avenue could not have been particularly lucrative. Michael wondered if his uncle had put aside a retirement nest egg, and then worried some more. Maybe he was giving money to obscure causes again. The family would be furious.

The little girl across the table sighed and turned another page. Michael noticed the magazine she was reading: *Cosmopolitan*. This observation made him slightly ill. He wondered whether children still read the maga-

zines he had read in dentists' offices as a child—*Ranger Rick*, and *Highlights for Children*, with the Goofus and Gallant comic strip. He remembered once telling an uncle—it may have been Isaac—that he liked the naughty Goofus better than the perfectly-mannered Gallant, that Goofus was smarter, not such a goody-two-shoes. He remembered the uncle approving, smiling and patting him on the shoulder, saying that Michael was right, absolutely right, to think so.

Suddenly, the door to the inner office sprung open again. Uncle Isaac came cruising through, his teeth grasping one side of his lower lip, his medallion clanging. "Uncle Isaac?" Michael asked, rising from his chair.

Isaac made a beeline for the closet and began fooling with his mackintosh on the hanger.

"Here, let me get that," Michael said.

"I've got it, I'm fine, I'm fine. Put your own coat on." Isaac grabbed the cap from his nephew's hand and pulled it down around his florid ears.

"Uncle—"

"Don't say a word!" he commanded. Then he pushed past his nephew and pulled open the door. "Bye now," the little girl called out from the couch.

Outside, frozen rain was already falling. It pattered the sidewalk like tiny white spitballs, bouncing on the concrete. Michael hurried down the street after his uncle, who, despite his age, was moving at an impressive clip around the building toward the parking lot.

"Uncle Isaac," Michael shouted after him. He thought of the image they must be creating—two grown men slipping on the slick pavement, holding onto car hoods for support.

Finally, they reached Michael's car. "You've locked the goddamned door!" Isaac wailed, pulling at the handle. Michael quickly unlocked the passenger door and opened it for his uncle. Isaac lowered himself into the front seat. He waved Michael away impatiently. "I can close it myself, thank you."

Michael rounded the front of the car and got in on the driver's side. Frozen rain sizzled on the metal roof.

"Say nothing," Isaac pronounced then. "Start the car and drive me home and say nothing."

Michael stared across at his uncle for a long moment before obeying. He turned on the wipers, which swept away the half-melted pellets of rain with an almost brutal efficiency.

"You need money," Michael said.

Uncle Isaac sat with his arms crossed over his chest. The windshield wipers began making lewd rubbery sounds as they swept over the half-dry windows. "Of course I need money."

Michael nodded at the windshield. "I can help you out," he began. "We can arrange something."

"That's exactly, precisely, what that dentist said to me!" Isaac shouted. He pulled off his cap and knocked the wetness from it. "Damn you and him both."

"There's a difference," Michael said. "I'm family."

"I don't care, I don't care, I don't care." Isaac was biting the thumb of his suede glove.

"I could lend you another thousand..."

"Why is the automatic assumption that I need your concern?!" Isaac screamed toward the ceiling.

Michael, alarmed, turned toward his uncle, who was clenching his fists at his temples. "What's wrong with you?" he shouted.

"Nothing, nothing," Isaac said, calmer now. He took off his glasses and began cleaning them with a scrap of tissue. "I'm a blind old man, that's all. That's what's wrong with me."

Michael watched his uncle rubbing furiously at the lenses.

"Drive away now," Uncle Isaac said. "I'm ready to go now."

After a moment, Michael obeyed. But when he put the car into drive and tried to pull away, the front left wheel flapped and rumbled. "Shit," he muttered.

"Oh lovely," Uncle Isaac said. "Now we've got a flat tire on top of it all."

Michael turned off the engine. "I'll work as fast as I can," he said quietly. "But it's going to take a few minutes. A few minutes minimum."

When Michael was five years old, the summer before he entered kindergarten, the Ellerman family threw an informal reunion in the backyard of Michael's eldest uncle Howard. This was when all of the Ellerman siblings lived in houses—two-bedroom ranches and small colonials, all within a ten-minute walk of each other. Grandma Ellerman, seated majestically in a lawn chair, presided over the occasion, while Howard and his best friend Pete turned hamburgers and sausages on the grill. It was a hot day—the Fourth of July—and people passed the afternoon drinking beer, playing lawn darts, and listening to Howard's collection of Peggy Lee recordings on the cheap stereo with one burned-out speaker.

Uncle Isaac took pictures that day. He hovered around the periphery of the back yard with his cameras and tripods, "capturing moments," as he called it. He caught Michael's mother sitting at the picnic table with her boss from the board of education; he caught Uncle Sam holding three-year-old Josh on his shoulders. Afterwards, as the sun got lower and the party began winding down, Isaac asked Michael if he wanted to help develop the pictures. Michael, who was getting bored with the reunion anyway, agreed, and so the two of them walked the few short blocks to Isaac's house.

In the basement darkroom, after Isaac had gone through the dull process of developing the film, Michael stood beside his uncle in the eerie red glow of the safelight. Isaac was taking some of the more promising negatives and printing them on 8x10 paper. Michael watched as his uncle projected the images—unrecognizable in negative—onto the stiff sheets of glossy paper. He would project each negative for seconds at a time, occasionally dodging or burning in parts of the image with gestures that seemed almost dancelike to the young boy. After exposing a few dozen sheets, Isaac turned off the enlarger and handed the blank-looking sheets to Michael. "Just stick them one by one into that developer tray, child," he said quietly, "and see what happens."

Michael did what he was told. And after a few moments, he was amazed to see figures appearing out of nowhere on the paper. Likenesses of his family—scenes he had witnessed just an hour earlier—assembled themselves, emerging from the white mists. Michael began laughing. "It's remarkable, isn't it?" his uncle said, standing behind him. Michael threw more sheets into the developer, one after the other, the images appearing faster and faster. He couldn't stop laughing. It was all so astonishing, that his uncle could do this thing, this magic. His own Uncle Isaac.

Now, as he began changing the flat tire on his car in the Shop-More parking lot, Michael found himself thinking about that Fourth of July. He recalled most vividly the surge of rapture he felt, watching those pictures develop. It was the same feeling he now tried to instill in his geography students. That hunger for the world around them. The delighted surprise of what is.

"Are you sure you've got that jack-thing positioned properly?" Uncle Isaac asked, hovering behind him as he spun off the lug nuts with a cross-shaped wrench.

"It's fine. Why don't you go shopping or something?"

"Hold on. Something's happening by the supermarket. Over behind Shriver's building. Looks like a demonstration brewing."

Michael stopped work to see what his uncle was talking about. Isaac was right. There seemed to be a crowd assembling, mostly teenagers, unfurling makeshift banners and handing around placards. Michael could just make out what a few of them said: "More Work, Less Pay—NO WAY!!" and "Shop-More Equals Shop-Poor!"

"It's a picket," Michael said. "Somebody's on strike."

"Indeed." Uncle Isaac pulled his cap lower over his ears and buttoned up his mackintosh. "You get back to that tire, child. I'll amuse myself."

"Just be careful," Michael said. "They look pretty rowdy. And the whole parking lot is like a sheet of ice."

"I'll skate then," Uncle Isaac answered, stepping awkwardly toward the little crowd.

It took Michael fifteen minutes to change the tire. When he had pounded the hubcap back into place, he straightened up and looked around for his uncle. Isaac was not difficult to find. His rotund form in the cap and raincoat was clearly distinguishable from those of the two dozen or so lanky, leather-jacketed teenagers. It looked like Uncle Isaac was arguing with a few of them, waving his arms energetically. The teenagers around him seemed to be in a subtle turmoil, on the verge of turning ugly.

"Oh God," Michael muttered to himself, hurrying across the parking lot to his uncle.

One of the teenagers was shouting as Michael approached. "Fuckin' right!" the boy was saying. He held a crumbling brick in his hand. "The bastards won't listen to anything else!"

A couple of the others picked up stones and bottles and pieces of shattered crates that lay strewn around the Shop-More's dumpsters. They moved forward, streaming toward, then past Uncle Isaac. As Michael broke into a trot, a few of them started heaving rocks and sticks at the large side windows of the Shop-More. Most of the debris bounced off the heavy plate glass, but then, with a loud splintering sound, one of the poster-covered windows collapsed. Someone on the street screamed.

"Uncle Isaac!" Michael said, reaching his uncle at last. "Let's get out of here!"

The teenagers were getting louder now. Three of them began turning over the huge green dumpsters. Another big window, struck by a clump of brick, shattered to the ground.

"Uncle Isaac!"

His uncle was watching with gloved hands pressed delightedly to his mouth. People were streaming in panic out the front entrance of the Shop-More. Then, as Michael watched in disbelief, Uncle Isaac bent over shakily and picked up a small stone. He made as if to throw it at the Shop-More, but he stopped.

"What the hell are you doing?" Michael shouted, grabbing his uncle's arm. "Are you crazy?"

But Uncle Isaac pulled away. His cheeks were flushed; his breath created puffs of vapor around his head. "Leave me alone, child," he whispered, stooping to pick up another, bigger stone. "Can't you see I'm starting something?"

Uncle Isaac turned and tossed the stone straight at one of the back windows of Dr. Shriver's office. It passed through the smoked pane, leaving a hole the size of a golf ball. "Louder, boys!" he shouted then to the rioting teenagers. "Louder! Let them know you're there!" □

—for A.B., in memoriam

BOOK REVIEW

Was the Cold War Necessary?

Kai Bird and Gar Alperovitz

A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War by Melvyn P. Leffler, Stanford University Press, 1992, 609 pp.

Joseph Stalin ruled a totalitarian system that killed millions of people throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and deprived millions more of their liberty. His successors repeatedly crushed peoples' uprisings in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

But does this mean the Soviets were to blame for the Cold War? What do we know now about Stalin's intentions and military capabilities with regard to Eastern and Western Europe, and what does this tell us about the origins of that strangely psychological conflict—a war that was not?

By the traditional account, the forty-five-year conflict can be traced to Stalin's implacable drive for communist empire. But this simple view was always dubious history. As more and more documents have come to light, it has become obvious to serious scholars that many of its elements derive, in part, from unsupported official myths (and sometimes outright lies) which were regularly passed off on the press, retailed to the people, and repeated by court historians.

Having seen the Soviet Union collapse from within, in fact, historians are now asking a number of quite fundamental questions. Was the militarization of the Cold War necessary? Was Moscow the strong and implacably aggressive threat that American Cold Warriors depicted forty-five years ago? Or was the Soviet system at the end of World War II capable of evolving into a society that the West could tolerate? Might a Gorbachev (or Khrushchev) have come along much earlier if the West had pursued different policies? These and other jarring possibilities come into focus as old myths collapse.

Kai Bird, a contributing editor of The Nation, *is the author of* The Chairman: John J. McCloy/The Making of the American Establishment. *Gar Alperovitz, author of* Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam, *is a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies and president of the National Center for Economic Alternatives.*

Washington policymakers made a calculated decision to exaggerate Soviet military might to "scare the hell out of the American people."

For scholars writing their monographs, the steady flow of new archival documents has raised major doubts about what might have been. On the crucial question of Soviet intentions with regard to Western Europe, for instance, the evidence now suggests to many scholars that Soviet policy was primarily defensive in character, as revisionist historians always claimed. In 1945, roughly half the transportation of the greatly demobilized Soviet army was still horse drawn and would remain so until 1950. In 1948, President Harry Truman was warning in near-apocalyptic terms of the Soviet threat. Yet, at the same time, his secret military briefings stressed that "the Russians have dismantled hundreds of miles of railroads in Germany and sent the rails and ties back to Russia. There remains, at the present time...only a single track railroad running eastward from the Berlin area and upon this the Russians must largely depend for their logistical support. This same railroad line changes from a standard gage going eastward, to a Russian wide gage in Poland, which further complicates the problem of moving supplies and equipment forward." The essential point—as George F. Kennan fairly shouted to a deaf nation, during the years of greatest tension—is that, contrary to Cold War dogma, very few policymakers ever feared a Russian assault on Western Europe.

Professor Melvyn P. Leffler of the University of Virginia is a skillful archaeologist of the archives, and he has written one of those rare books destined to create its own consensus. *A Preponderance of Power* is so definitively researched, so careful in its arguments and so comprehensive in its scope that it will almost certainly become the standard work on the origins of the Cold War.

Its only significant weakness is a tendency to offer occasional homilies about "prudent men with great power and wealth." Leffler gently says American leaders "were partly wise, partly prudent, and partly foolish." However, he fills his 689-page text with dozens of examples of the "foolish" part—of aggressive men taking enormous risks at great danger to the world and great expense to the public treasury. Leffler's exceedingly careful book is, in fact, a devastating vindication of the revisionist position on virtually every major issue of the early Cold War.

Not only does Leffler unequivocally document that Washington policymakers did not fear Soviet military capabilities, he shows they made a calculated decision to exaggerate the potential for war systematically, to "scare the hell out of the American people," as Senator Arthur Vandenberg put it, in order to broaden the constituency for more defense spending. At the same time, Leffler notes, the Truman administration privately

"showed a shrewd understanding of Soviet weaknesses..."

What the early cold warriors really worried about was the economic situation in Europe. The Soviets' only real strength was the appeal of their ideology to a devastated Europe exhausted by war. And even here, policymakers feared not communist "revolution," but a mixed left politics along the lines of the British Labor Party or perhaps the parliamentary Communist Parties of France and Italy. Even a social democratic alternative, though anti-communist, was unacceptable because its domestic economic agenda did not fit the U.S. mold.

A major source of Washington's concern, Leffler shows, derived from the fact that at the end of World War II America's establishment defined power largely in economic terms—as the control of resources. Acting on this definition, policymakers attempted to control access to markets and such raw materials as oil throughout the globe. There is now an enormous case-by-case literature supporting this once-controversial view. Leffler also demonstrates that much of the policy was driven by a long-term worry that if the United States did not act boldly, its access to markets and resources would shrink over time. Consequently, U.S. national security interests were worldwide, while Soviet capabilities and intentions were primarily limited to Eastern Europe.

Unfortunately, the archival flow from Eastern Europe is still very sketchy. Information on Stalin's personal views especially is extremely hard to come by. But it now seems increasingly clear that up until early 1947, he permitted considerable autonomy within the Soviet sphere of influence. The Red Army withdrew from Czechoslovakia in December 1945, and free elections produced a non-communist, coalition government. Important rail links from the Soviet Union to Germany were also ripped up at this time, and coalition governments functioned in Hungary, Bulgaria, and, to a lesser extent, even in Poland. Both Poland and Czechoslovakia exercised their semi-independence by vigorously seeking World Bank loans to loosen the grip of Moscow. In the spring of 1946, Soviet troops also withdrew from the Danish island of Barnhol, and both Finland and Austria were allowed to remain neutral states. Far from fomenting revolution, Stalin withheld aid from the Greek communists—a point even Churchill had to acknowledge.

Outside of Europe, Soviet troops pulled out of neighboring Iran after a brief, and, in retrospect, modest international dispute over a nation roughly as important to Moscow as Mexico is to Washington. In the Far East, Red Army troops also withdrew from Manchuria in May 1946. At least until the end of 1946, Stalin even gave strong support to Chiang Kai-Shek, much to the chagrin of Chinese Communist Party leaders.

As Leffler shows, at no time in the early Cold War did Moscow have the kind of superiority necessary to launch an attack against Western Europe. Beginning in 1947, however, the Truman administration confronted the Soviets with the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and eventually NATO. Such measures (as George Kennan also repeatedly noted) reinforced the climate of fear within the Soviet Union and helped convince the paranoid Stalin to reverse field and clamp down on Eastern Europe.

Leffler also makes it clear that it was U.S. policymakers who took the initiative to divide Germany—a point that would shock most Americans and Europeans if they fully grasped the import of the new evidence. Stalin had repeatedly offered to let unification occur so long as Germany remained neutral and demilitarized. He wanted guarantees against a resurgent Germany, and if possible, reparations or some other kind of reconstruction aid. But the men around Truman feared such a resolution of the German question would encourage a tide of neutralism in Western Europe and eventually, the peripheral nations of the developing world. They were determined to use a divided Germany as the keystone of a new Western military and economic bloc.

American occupation policy toward loyal Germans who winked at Nazi brutality and the Japanese who supported their militarists was coldly pragmatic: "Instead of punishing wartime criminals and instituting progressive social reforms, occupation officials turned more of their attention to forging mutually rewarding linkages with moderate business leaders and conservative reformers," writes Leffler. "The goal was to co-opt German and Japanese power by demonstrating to local elites that their national aspirations could be fulfilled within a U.S.-led orbit." From this perspective, NATO was less a military force than it was a way "to convince ambivalent allies to go ahead with the risks that accompanied Germany's and Japan's revival."

George Marshall, Dean Acheson, and other "wise men" such as John J. McCloy were quite aware that the consequence of the decision to divide Germany and arm the Federal Republic would be continual Cold War. In November 1947, for instance, just five months after Marshall proposed his plan for a European Recovery Program, documents now available reveal that the Secretary of State privately told colleagues the Soviets would probably respond by re-asserting their control over Czechoslovakia. This, he admitted, would be a "purely defensive move."

The Americans could persist in a strategy that risked continued tension and an escalating nuclear arms race in part because West European elites welcomed U.S. economic aid and a general expansion of American influence. Truman and his "wise men" could also take big risks because they had an atomic monopoly. Above all, the Bomb gave policymakers their "preponderance of power" and the confidence to construct an American order in Europe without any real fear of precipitating war.

Leffler often is rather sympathetic to the U.S. elites whose activities he documents. Although they were quite willing to work with right-wing totalitarian dictators around the world, they wanted (when possible) to extend democracy—and U.S. influence. One cannot read his narrative, however, without concluding that many of these people were simply narrow-minded and fearful. Truman in particular comes off as a small man full of simple prejudices, who was easily manipulated by such ardent cold warriors as Dean Acheson, Averell Harriman, and James Byrnes. "For Truman," writes Leffler, "the United States represented innocence, integrity, and morality; its adversaries were sullied, deceitful, and evil." There was very little room for nuanced diplomacy of the kind Kennan and men like Walter Lippmann, and even Winston Churchill, soon came to urge.

Given the preponderance of U.S. power, it should be no surprise that Washington prevailed in the early Cold War against a devastated Soviet Union nursing its horse-drawn army. But unexpectedly, the Cold War turned into a protracted confrontation which, in Lippmann's phrase, required "a blank check on the Treasury." It also fueled a nuclear arms race and produced bloody, unsuccessful interventions in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and dozens of other unfortunate locations. It finally ended when Gorbachev acknowledged not only that the system he ruled could no longer waste resources, but that there was no longer any reason to contest the West. The Soviet Union did not have any serious capacity to threaten the West for many years—and once it acquired a credible nuclear arsenal the strategic result could only be a stand-off. Nearly a half-century earlier, Henry L. Stimson, Franklin Roosevelt's eminently conservative Secretary of War, had come to a similar judgment. In early 1945, he noted in his diary that Russia and America had "gotten along for a hundred and fifty years.... Our respective orbits do not clash geographically and I think on the whole we can probably keep out of clashes in the future."

The notion that the Cold War may have been unnecessary and unwise—and that because the United States had "preponderant" power, it also bears preponderant responsibility—are so at odds with the conventional wisdom that many who study these issues fear saying out loud that "the Emperor has no clothes." With the Cold War over—and popularly presumed to be won by the United States—some people, for the moment, may think these issues are settled.

The fact, however, that such a prolonged conflict could end with a whimper suggests that the Cold War may have simply postponed the inevitable accommodation men such as Stimson judged likely at the very outset. Melvyn Leffler's prodigiously researched book will likely pave the way for a radical reassessment of the origins and meaning of the Cold War. □

BOOK REVIEW

On Our Way Back Home

Mark Shechner

Writing Our Way Home: Contemporary Stories by American Jewish Writers. Edited by Ted Solotaroff and Nessa Rapoport. New York: Schocken, 1992. 380 pp., $23.

The anthologies with the longest shelf lives are not simply collections; they are maps, and political maps at that. They concern themselves not only with salient features but with boundaries, with whatever it is that distinguishes this land from another, this locale from its neighbor. The study of literature these days is in a feverishly political mood, which has it busily correcting borders; the latest publication of the Modern Language Association is something called *Redrawing the Boundaries*, a whopping gazetteer to "a period of rapid and sometimes disorienting change." It is hard to miss the parallels between current geopolitics and literary studies, in which some Cold War of the imagination seems to have lifted, and aggrieved parties everywhere are maneuvering for their share of the literary turf. It's the Balkans out there. It is in this context that a new anthology of Jewish writing, *Writing Our Way Home: Contemporary Stories by American Jewish Writers,* has to be understood. It is an act of literary nationalism.

The title of Ted Solotaroff and Nessa Rapoport's anthology, *Writing Our Way Home*, gives some indication of what the new province of Jewish letters is supposed to look like. They call it Home, and Home is all that exile and diaspora were not. It is a place where one is culturally central, rather than "marginal," where one makes history as opposed to suffering it, where one may be "Jewishly educated and culturally confident" (Rapoport), and where "diversity" and "eclecticism" (Solotaroff) are the chevrons of cultural self-assurance rather than badges of cultural shame. There are no dangling men there, and no one raises the banner of "alienation." Does Home mean Zion? Are Solotaroff and Rapoport promoting a brand of literary Zionism? Not in any simple sense. *Writing Our Way Home* is not a pitch for aliya to Israel nor even for a revival of life under Halacha. Indeed, Solotaroff celebrates an "open literary community" where "the religious and the secular, the experimental and the traditional, the realistic and the surreal cohabit, and even sometimes nuzzle, more or less peaceably." Nevertheless, both editors make it clear that without Zionism and without Zion, the new province of the literary imagination would be different. And Home would not be its name.

The argument has been made before, although nowhere with Ted Solotaroff's elegance and concision. American Jews were shaken in the 1960s by events. One was the Six Day War in 1967, which altered the psychic balance of power for Jews worldwide and ushered in an era of psychological, if not always political, nationalism. Citing Arthur Hertzberg, Solotaroff observes, "Israel henceforth became the

Mark Shechner has written widely about Jewish writers in America. His most recent publications include two books, After the Revolution: Studies in the Contemporary Jewish-American Imagination *and* The Conversion of the Jews and Other Essays. *Most recently he contributed the essay, "The Jewish Novelist in America," to* The Schocken Guide to Jewish Books.

religion of American Jews, the transcendent object of their politics and philanthropy and pilgrimages and as such a new source of loyalty and solidarity, and in time of dogma and controversy." At the same time, American Jews were dealt a blow back home—a collapse of Black-Jewish relations precipitated by a struggle over curriculum, patronage, and turf in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school districts of New York City. That confrontation shattered the progressive Jewish dream of a Black-Jewish united front against racial and ethnic oppression.

It is plain that Writing Our Way Home *is a gender-sensitive anthology, not incidentally, but in its essence.*

Those upheavals disclosed cleavages within the Jewish community, as an older generation, assimilationist in temper and nurtured on the milk of "Yiddishkeit," found its values challenged by its own children. Taking cues from Israel on the one side and Black nationalism on the other, a "post-assimilationist" generation began to question its parents' relations to both Judaism and America, criticizing what it viewed as a tepid and routine Judaism laid as a Torah cloth over a compliant American materialism. From this ferment came the stirrings of a cultural renaissance, marked by a vigorous engagement with Talmud and Torah, sentiments of solidarity with Israel, and a desire to learn Hebrew. From women, in addition, came challenges to the patriarchal practices that older generations of Jews had accepted as the natural order of things. This is a barebones precis of an argument that Solotaroff conducts with discrimination and mastery, born of a lifetime's immersion in issues of Jewish literary sensibility.

There is no denying this analysis, and literary texts abound to illustrate it, as they do to illustrate almost any generalization you'd care to make about Jewish culture. Paul Breines's earlier and more rough-hewn survey of the territory, *Tough Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), which examined the flurry of "Rambowitz" novels that appeared on supermarket bookracks in the years following the Six Day War, left readers wondering if there were Jewish writers anywhere who did not keep rocket launchers beside their word processors or truck the kids to Little League in anything other than the family halftrack. We can be grateful to Solotaroff and Rapoport for reassuring us that at the core of American writing "the hardy, bronzed kibbutznik, the Israeli paratrooper, and the Mossad agent" (Breines's catalogue) are still recessive figures and that a kinder, gentler Jewry prevails.

Writing Our Way Home is anything but a monotonously concept-ridden book, and with two editors whose sensibilities are at variance, it was bound not to be. (How I would love to have eavesdropped on the editorial meetings. What rows there must have been.) For one thing, the evidence for a new sensibility is ambiguous, and the fiction itself reveals a pluralistic Jewish world in which the centrifugal and centripetal, Hellenizing and Hebraizing forces are as much in contention as ever. Rapoport even predicts an improved pluralism yet to come, as we hear more from "children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, converts to Judaism, Sephardim, descendants of *conversos* in the American Southwest, lesbians, and gay men. Each of these groups has an idiosyncratic experience and a point of view out of which imaginative writing may prosper." The editors could hardly be more receptive to "variousness and possibility" (Lionel Trilling's phrase) than that. Still, we might ask how accurately their map describes and how much it prescribes, how much their construction of "what is" has been assembled in the dream factory of "what should be."

Some portion, I believe. Both Solotaroff's and Rapoport's introductions lead one to anticipate a go-with-the-flow anthology, a free-wheeling scale model of Jewish-American spiritual resources and imaginative potentialities. It is that, up to a point, although the anthology is not without a program, which is unannounced but is scarcely hidden: gender balance. Of the twenty-four contributors, thirteen are women, and try as one may to explain that in literary terms, it is plain that *Writing Our Way Home* is a gender-sensitive anthology, not incidentally, but in its essence. A case can be made that in the context of our time such an anthology must be sensitive to gender issues, and it would carry considerable moral weight. The editors fail to make it; it is so very touchy to disclose to your contributors that they've been slotted in. Solotaroff does an end run around the issue in protesting that "[the preponderance of women writers] is not an outcropping of literary P.C., but rather a reflection of the general literary situation today in which woman writers enjoy two distinct advantages: an accession of fresh, aggressive consciousness and an engaged audience."

Would that it were always so, but the writing does not always bear out Solotaroff's claim, and the gender balance imperative has given rise to an awkward commingling of stories. Since the stories are alphabetical by author, consider the following arrangement: Marsha Lee Berkman juxtaposed to Saul Bellow, Allegra Goodman to E.L. Doctorow, Deirdre Levinson to Bernard Malamud, Robin Roger to Philip Roth, Joanna Spiro to Isaac Bashevis Singer. The juxtapositions can be cruel. These men are the gray eminences of Jewish letters, represented here by some of their best work, while of these women, only Goodman and Levinson have books in print; the others are novices whose stories may have an "aggressive consciousness and an engaged audience of [their] own" but are also undeveloped and sometimes a bit raw. Whatever can one think reading Robin Roger's "The Pagan Phallus" cheek-by-jowl with Philip Roth's " 'I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fasting'; or, Looking at Kafka"? Roger's saucy vignette of a young Jewish woman in search of a man with an uncircumcised penis has its own audacious charm—reminiscent, in fact, of Roth's own earlier libidinolatrous performances—but Roth's story is arguably the finest short story he has ever written. Roger has had one of her early pencil sketches hung at the Museum of Modern Art alongside a Matisse.

One may say the same of Berkman, Levinson, Goodman, and Spiro: They are not inevitable choices for an anthology if writing alone is the test. There are substantial presences among the women: Cynthia Ozick, Grace Paley, Johanna Kaplan, Lore Segal, and Lynne Sharon Schwartz, who have written their way into the Jewish pantheon. (I do have problems with some individual stories. I'm not persuaded that all are represented by their best work.) I miss others who might have strengthened their ranks—Susan Fromberg Schaeffer and Anne Roiphe, in particular. But some authors are

beneficiaries of a quota system; their stories drop into this anthology with the "thunk" of slots being filled.

The editors' intent clearly was to make *Writing Our Way Home* not a museum piece for the ages but a demonstration that Jewish writing in America is thriving in all its diversity and schism, a demonstration that demands fresh voices and something more, the appearance of a dialogue between generations, between men and women, and between literary modernists and literary nationalists. The book is in fact a document of its time, whose tensions are hard-wired right into the table of contents.

What are the highlights? The gray eminences: Bellow, Doctorow, Malamud, Roth, Singer. All contribute splendid stories. Bellow's "Something to Remember Me By" and Doctorow's "The Writer in the Family" are new to me and happily discovered. The Bellow story, about a young man's misadventures on the street while his mother lies dying at home, is a gem. Robbed by a prostitute who makes off with his money and clothing, he roams the bitter Chicago streets in a woman's dress, searching for carfare and pants to get home. The Doctorow story finds a young poet drawn into a family conspiracy, as manipulating aunts plot to deceive his grandmother about his father's death and enlist him to fake letters from her dead son. The Roth story, a fantasia on Franz Kafka's adventures in Newark as the young Philip Roth's Hebrew School teacher, is a masterpiece of rueful comedy. All three are the late work of masters who possess sure command over the medium in which they work. That in the Bellow and Doctorow stories the Jewish content is occluded, embedded in family situations rather than confronted openly, is a generational marker (modernist, cosmopolitan) and a backdrop against which younger writers have elected to work. Roth's Jewishness is more self-conscious and tormented than Bellow's or Doctorow's and symbolized here by the figure of Kafka, who once lamented, "What have I in common with the Jews? I have hardly anything in common with myself . . . ."

Among younger writers I would single out Lynne Sharon Schwartz and Daphne Merkin. Schwartz's story "The Melting Pot," about a Jewish woman who falls in love with an older Indian man, is a study in the intricacies of identity. In a reflective and sinuous fashion it plots the curve of her attachment to a man who seems initially so different but is revealed to be steeped in the very ethics of family loyalty that she herself cherishes. Schwartz's writing bears the mark of a penetrating intelligence that evokes in the reader confidence that she knows what she is about.

The same might be said of Merkin's "Enchantment," a chapter from her novel of that name. A young woman's reminiscences about her mother, it is tender, poetic, and vivid with observation. Perhaps it is the melodic line in Merkin's prose, the inviting verbal languorousness, but one quickly develops an appreciation for her sensory intuition:

> My mother has learned to drive late in life, so there is a chance for me. When I am a passenger in her car, I point out oncoming cars and stop signs. She does not pay close enough attention, although she is very skilled at last-minute maneuvers. While she concentrates on twists in the road I watch her profile—the faint freckling of her skin, the straight line of her mouth, which makes me think of a child's drawing. I know her face by heart. Sometimes I think nothing will break her spell.

Allegra Goodman, on the other hand, whom I have heard celebrated as the *wunderkind* of Jewish writing, publishing her first stories while still an undergraduate, strikes me as severely "smart" in an innocent way, too unacquainted with turbulence to turn her gifts into visions. In the story "Variant Texts," her portrait of synagogue politics (in Honolulu, of all places) is rather harshly unsympathetic to everyone in the story. That is in contrast to Adam Schwartz, a young writer who seems to have had his heart softened by misery—or is it only the power of art to make it seem so? "Where is It Written?," his story about the son of divorced parents who desires to leave his mother for his father, is told with precocious gravity; it torques the heart as few things I have recently read. And Michael Chabon, whose father's first cousin, we are told, was Abraham Cahan, checks in with "S Angel," about upscale California heartache, as a young man attends his cousin's wedding looking for love and winds up in the arms of the married and disconsolate cousin. Chabon's name-brand savvy and post-drug nonchalance recall Jay McInerney, only without the *Weltschmerz* and cynicism.

There are disappointments too. Stories by Cynthia Ozick, Grace Paley, and Lore Segal don't hold up well. Ozick's "Bloodshed," about one Bleilip, who enters a suburban Hasidic synagogue armed with two guns, one fake and one real, and is exposed by the rabbi, is a willful performance, stage-managed from without and lacking a life of its own. One neither understands Bleilip's motives nor is enlightened by his fate, since he never comes across as anything other than a didactic instrument for an ambiguous moral. This may point back to Ozick's well-known suspicion of what she called the "idolatry" of texts and her discomfort with what she described in *Art and Ardor* as "the minute sensuous perceptions" of modernist literature. Certainly she seems to be more at home in the essay than in fiction, whose aesthetic demands are sometimes in collision with her moral commitments.

Paley's "Zagrowsky Tells," the dialogue between a grandfather and his friend, on the subject of his racially mixed grandson Emanuel, is burdened by a mannered delivery that prevents its tensions from checking in at their own weight. All is told in the same monotonous pitch—an agitated scherzo. And Segal's "The Reverse Bug," about a device that pipes mysterious screams into a scholarly conference on the Holocaust, did not become clear to me until the third reading, an effort that few readers will make.

However, it was not to satisfy any single taste that this anthology was assembled, not even those of the editors, I'd guess. It was to register a claim for the continued vigor of a literature that was supposed to pass out of phase with the Jews' passing into the homogenized mass of the suburban middle class. We now know that such a wholesale homogenization did not take place and that a fiction rooted in a distinctive Jewish consciousness continues to be written and to merit serious critical attention. *Writing Our Way Home* has done its job if it leads us back to the authors, those in it as well as those left out, with a renewed understanding of what they are doing and a revived curiosity about where this literature might be headed. With all its frayed edges, its surprising inclusions and unfortunate exclusions (not a single author named Stern?), its imbalances and clumsy juxtapositions, it succeeds in being the affirmation of a living and restless Jewish imagination that the authors intended it to be. □

The Crowded Mattress

Linda Simon

For Love by Sue Miller. HarperCollins, 1993, 320 pp.

Why are there no great love stories any more? Where is our Anna, our Emma, our Catherine, or, for that matter, our Heathcliff? We have novels about sex, surely, about loneliness, tragic encounters, troubled relationships, about ordinary and extraordinary families. But when was the last time a fictional heroine announced, joyfully, "Reader, I married him." Not lately.

In Sue Miller's new novel, Lottie Gardner, journalist, wonders about the scarcity of twentieth-century love stories. Lottie, who is doing research for an article about love, reads Tolstoy, Turgenev, Kate Chopin, John Donne, among many past writers. But her contemporaries fail to provide her with material. "Wonder why not?" she asks herself. "It still orders our lives—amidst all this chaos, machinery. Abandonment. Casual betrayal." This is also the question Sue Miller takes up in this novel and in her other works as well. How do we invent, how do we narrate, love stories in our post-modern, post-Freudian age?

For Love intertwines the stories of two pairs of lovers: Lottie and Jack, her second husband; and Lottie's brother, Cameron Gardner, and Elizabeth Harbour. Cameron will remind readers of Jacey in Miller's story "Inventing the Abbotts," a young man from the wrong side of the tracks who yearns for the love of one or another of the wealthy Abbott daughters. No one really understands why he is so ardently attracted to the Abbott women; but, as his mother explains, if Jacey didn't have the Abbotts, "he'd have had to invent them, one way or another. There is no end of Abbotts in the world, if that's what you need." What Jacey needs is not really the Abbotts' money, but "the sense of place, of knowing where you belong, that money can give you."

Cameron Gardner, the son of an alcoholic mother and an imprisoned father, apparently never had that sense of place. The Gardners lived in a crumbling old house in a section of Cambridge, Massachusetts, where most people lived in huge Victorians with expansive lawns and yards. Although Lottie and Cameron grew up across the street from the Harbours, they clearly belonged to a lower class. The difference never bothered Lottie, but, as she reflects on their childhood, she sees that Cameron suffered more—or at least differently—from their poverty and shame than Lottie did. Elizabeth, and the Harbours themselves, offer Cameron something he needs.

Without this explanation, it would be difficult indeed to understand why intelligent, literate Cameron is attracted to Elizabeth. She may be pretty, but she is also spoiled, self-indulgent, and, really, not very interesting. As Jack puts it, Elizabeth may be "a nice enough woman. But also a particular version of a pain in the ass." Nevertheless, she long has been an obsession for Cameron: Their intense romance, begun in high school, picked up again some time during college, when Cameron followed Elizabeth to the West Coast convinced he could persuade her to make a commitment. When she refused, he became violent, frightening Elizabeth enough to cause her to go to the police. But as the novel begins, Elizabeth, now back home, agrees to see Cameron once more—and, inevitably, their affair revives. Lottie is in Cambridge, too, with her college-aged son, Ryan, preparing her mother's house for sale. She, too, is seeking refuge from her marriage, although her problems are different from Elizabeth's. Unlike Elizabeth's husband, Jack is no sexist philanderer. Instead, he is obsessed with his first wife's death; and his need to idolize Evelyn oppresses Lottie. Jack and Lottie had begun their affair while Evelyn was dying of multiple strokes. When they married, Lottie moved into Jack's expensive home and tried to befriend his hostile daughter. But, increasingly, she felt like an outsider. "You're in love with Evelyn," Lottie accuses him. "More in love with her than when she was alive."

But not only Jack's grieving troubles Lottie. She also finds it difficult to adjust to the solid, middle-class life that Jack, a physician, has built for himself. Lottie, whose wardrobe and furnishings usually come from thrift shops, describes her life as "Marginal, sloppy. Bohemian—economically anyway." She feels that by assuming Jack's way of life, she will be giving up something essential about her own identity. She is more comfortable than Jack in celebrating the "secret, dark, locked-up" part of her life and more likely to discard the past than to try to build upon it. She believes that if she and Jack could only rid themselves of "the detritus of our previous lives," they could somehow begin anew, lightened if not enlightened. But Jack patiently reminds her, "We are the detritus of our previous lives, Lottie." Eventually, Lottie becomes reconciled to that wisdom, and she returns to Jack; Elizabeth returns to her husband, too, and Cameron is left to long for an impossible romance.

We are so used to considering one

Linda Simon's biography of Alice B. Toklas has recently been reissued by the University of Nebraska Press. She is now at work on a biography of William James and teaches writing at Harvard University.

another in cultural, sociological, and psychological contexts that we simply would not believe in characters extricated from the detritus of their lives. Narratives about love, in our time, need to be contextual in ways that nineteenth-century novels did not. We know about one another not only from Freud, but from Jung and Adler, B. F. Skinner, Carl Rogers, Havelock Ellis, Kinsey, Laing, and scores of other researchers and theorists. We know about love from feminist and Marxist points of view. We know that when two people go to bed together, the mattress is uncomfortably crowded. All these observations about love have complicated our already tangled feelings as we involve ourselves with another person, and they complicate the ways we can explore love in fiction.

During the nineteenth century, Lottie observes, "people could feel their emotions without second-guessing themselves all the time. They didn't have to realize that there was something ridiculously predictable and culture-bound—mundane—about even the most grand of them." The narrative of love was simpler, less frayed by doubts and analyses. But for us, a belief in romantic love becomes one choice among many others that we may use to explain, defend, or narrate a relationship.

Lottie, for one, wonders if that choice is possible. "Didn't you feel, the moment you felt anything, that it was inauthentic?" Lottie asks Cameron and Elizabeth. "I mean, weren't we the first real post-Freudians? The first ones to live with that understanding of life? It was impossible to take yourself seriously. Every single thing was a dynamic. We knew everything was neurosis. And love in particular was made suspect forever, don't you think? Trivialized."

If we transported Jane Eyre into a contemporary novel, after all, we might not be cheering her on to marry Mr. Rochester. Having a mad wife in an attic is certainly a liability; and we might wonder if he did not contribute to her madness. And wouldn't he now have a few adolescent children, none of whom react too enthusiastically about Jane as step-mother? And wouldn't Jane, after years of being exploited working at the kinds of jobs open to women of her station, be having some second thoughts about whether or not she should be married? Is she able to separate clearly her feelings for Mr. Rochester and her own desire for security and financial ease? How does Jane define fulfillment? How does she see her role as wife? Wouldn't she reflect on the patterns of her past relationships and be afraid of repeating them? In short, the love story between Ms. Eyre and Mr. Rochester would not swell so inexorably to its finale, not in our time.

Instead, the tale of Jane Eyre's quest for love would be challenged by another narrative: Jane's struggle to define her identity as a woman. In *For Love* as in *The Good Mother* and *Family Pictures*, Miller is aware of that challenge, yet she does not allow her stories to focus only on women's self-realization. Like many contemporary female novelists—Jane Smiley, Rosellen Brown, and Alice Munro, for example—she prefers to explore women's lives within the context of the family. If there is a love story, it does not transcend that context but is imbedded in family life. When a woman chooses a lover, that choice alters the daily reality of her life and forces her to make many other choices—some of them difficult—that involve many other people.

Miller's enormous popularity reflects her many readers who understand, and do not regret, the compromises that shape women's lives.

Commenting on *The Good Mother*, Miller once explained she wanted to explore "the meaning of the heroic in domestic life—I mean, a life that's constrained by ties to other people." Lottie has many roles in *For Love*: mother, daughter, wife, sister, friend, writer, neighbor—and these roles sometimes seem to intrude upon what she sees as the core of her identity. Her final decision about her marriage results from her bold, and perhaps heroic, resolve to balance, rather than to relinquish, some roles, and to undertake others that seem dangerously risky.

Lottie's decision reflects Miller's abiding belief that women are deeply committed to their family, that the most profound crises they experience are those that threaten the integrity of the family, and that their need for independence is secondary to their need for sustaining relationships. While her women characters are aware of feminist views, they are not fighters.

Some readers were disappointed that Anna Dunlap, the good mother in Miller's first novel, did not wage a fiercer struggle for the custody of her daughter; and some readers may be disappointed that Lottie does not struggle more passionately against threats to her identity. But Miller's enormous popularity reflects her many readers who understand, and do not regret, the compromises that shape women's lives. These readers will empathize with Elizabeth when she "hears the reality of her marriage announcing itself, she hears the possibility of dailiness, of a life with only smaller joys, smaller heartbreaks. The life we all want more, finally, than the life we dream of at seventeen, or twenty-two."

There are a few false steps in this otherwise engaging novel, which seem generated by Miller's anticipation that this book, like her others, will be transported to the screen. Often she gives us details that would interest only a director (Lottie climbs the stairs, takes off one thing, puts on another, goes to the bathroom, comes out of the bathroom, and so on). A minor, pedestrian event in Lottie's life, presented early in the story, is revived later to create the kind of suspense that cues audiences to a film's climax. And the novel opens with a tragic scene more cinematic than necessary to the plot.

But let's forgive Miller these minor ploys. She has given us characters whose bewilderment and humanity ring true; and she asks questions worth asking about passion and responsibility; about our yearning for connection and our struggles for independence; and about the ways we define, create, and communicate love. If Miller does not, because she cannot, give us a grand tale of passionate love, she nevertheless conveys the texture of the fragile relationships that we post-modern, post-Freudian romantics experience and believe. □

Our Izzy: Right and Wrong

Eric Alterman

Izzy: A Biography of I.F. Stone by Robert C. Cottrell. Rutgers University Press, 1992. 388 pp, $25.95.

In 1988, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday and the publication of his final book, *The Trial of Socrates*, the mass media treated I.F. Stone to the kind of respect and veneration usually reserved for the deceased. The very establishment press organs that had shunned his reporting, ignored his scoops, and branded his views dangerously radical at best, pro-Communist at worst, joined in the celebration of what one article at the time called "Izzymania." When Stone's heart gave out eighteen months later, the entire process was repeated, with lengthy, respectful obituaries, op-ed page tributes, and two standing-room-only memorial services attended by the biggest names in the business.

Had Stone's politics, which shunted him off to the sidelines of American political debate for the previous half-century, mellowed into the mainstream? Hardly. A self-described "Jeffersonian Marxist," Stone's heart had always been planted firmly on the Left, although his head frequently forced him to cut through the thicket of laziness and piety that sometimes characterized leftist thinking in the United States. Thus, Stone's last article, published in The *New York Review of Books* shortly before his death, expressed his concern with the apparent dictatorial tendencies of Mikhail Gorbachev, a man who, at the time, was venerated by liberals and leftists alike.

Yet, neither can it be argued that the Zeitgeist of American politics and journalism had moved closer to Izzy. Stone and his opinions had enjoyed a brief vogue in the late 1960s, when the New Left adopted him as a patron saint, and his incisive reporting and commentary pushed the subscription list of his four-page weekly (later biweekly) newsletter up to around 70,000. Stone's unflinching eye for the crimes and blunders committed by the United States government in Vietnam not only forced establishment journalists to take such allegations more seriously, but it made his tiny newsletter required reading at the highest levels of the national security establishment—where the internal reporting processes were sometimes less than candid.

But it was not his antiwar muckraking that inspired all of the posthumous, dewy-eyed tributes. As one heard and read the evocations of Izzy's tireless gadflyism, wide-ranging autodidactism, and remarkable perseverance in finishing the Socrates project despite near-blindness in one eye and lousy vision in the other, one could not help but conclude that the political I. F. Stone had been forgotten. Stone, as Ben Bagdikian, the former dean of the school of journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, pointed out, fell victim to "the Norman Thomas phenomenon." Ignored or ridiculed as the head of the American Socialist Party for most of his life, Thomas was fêted at banquet after banquet once it became clear that he was about to die and nothing would become of his efforts to challenge the two-party system.

Stone, simply by turning eighty and writing a book on Socrates (rather than on, say, the Iran-Contra affair) had turned into a kind of mascot for professional iconoclasm and sheer survival: an Izzy bear, whose media portrayal had as much to do with his life and work as Sinead O'Connor has with Martin Luther King.

The task for any biographer of Stone, therefore, is to rescue for a new generation of journalists and students what it meant to be I.F. Stone when it was still unfashionable. How is it that Stone, virtually alone among journalists of his generation, managed to resist Washington's various seductions and inducements to discard the idealistic, socialist principles of his youth and embrace the "real" world of responsibility, credibility, and fashionable dinner parties?

The answer, alas, is not to be found in Robert C. Cottrell's new biography, *Izzy*. It is a product of dutiful research and generous intentions. Every fact or figure a person could sensibly wish to know about Stone is here somewhere. The author seems like a nice guy with sensible leftish politics not unlike my own. But Cottrell, an associate professor of history at the California State University at Chico, writes prose that reads as if it were mangled from the original Serbo-Croatian.

Nowhere does Stone, a friend I knew for nearly a decade, spring to life in these pages, and nowhere are his various intellectual and political metamorphoses explained with sufficient contextual and analytical detail to give the reader any sense of what was at stake.

In fact, Izzy Stone led one of the more fruitful and eventful lives in twentieth-century American journalism. Born in Philadelphia on Christmas Eve, 1907, Stone was a first-generation child of Russian Jewish immigrants. He began his sixty-seven-year journalism career at age fourteen, when he published his own newspaper, *The Progress*. In the three issues put out before his parents forced him to stop production lest he neglect his schoolwork, Stone thundered against William Randolph Hearst's "yellow peril" offensive and William Jennings Bryan's religious fundamentalism, while unabashedly

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calling for forgiveness of all war debts and the speedy approval of Woodrow Wilson's plan for the League of Nations.

Leaving college in his junior year to pursue a career in journalism, Stone moved through a succession of liberal newspapers in the 1930s and 1940s, writing from New York, Washington, Paris, and Palestine. Fiercely independent and stubborn-minded, Stone frequently quarreled with his editors, quitting one job or another over some issue of political principle. Yet he always landed on his feet, frequently combining two or three jobs in order to earn a decent living for his family. As a columnist and reporter for the daily *PM* in the 1940s, Stone belonged to a left-wing culture that was beginning to shrivel up under the pressure of the Cold War. When the *Daily Compass*, a fragile successor to *PM*, folded in 1952, there was no press organ willing to sponsor Stone's brand of left-wing reporting. The result was the creation of *I.F. Stone's Weekly*.

Staffed by his tireless wife Esther Stone and a series of happily exploited young assistants, the weekly lasted for nineteen years until 1971, when Stone's doctors forced him to give it up. Stone then joined The *New York Review of Books* as a contributing editor.

Whatever the forum, Stone's ability to apply both historical perspective and a self-conscious moral and ethical framework to his journalism gave his work a quality that distinguished it from that of his peers and lifted it into the rank of the most distinguished contemporary history. Among his fellow journalists, only Walter Lippmann could match Stone's skill at mining current events for larger historical trends—and Lippmann was no reporter. Interestingly, just as Lippmann's strengths and weaknesses as a journalist and social critic mirror those of the enlightened faction of the establishment for and to whom he spoke, so too did Stone's abilities and shortcomings echo those of the American Left.

Without admitting it, both Lippmann and Stone were responding to a fundamental flaw in the twentieth-century practice of representative democracy. Lippmann identified the problem back in the early 1920s. Journalism, he argued, works fine when it reports "the score of a game, a transatlantic flight or the death of a monarch." But news of more complicated matters reaches its already harried consumers "helter-skelter," in a fashion that renders it impossible to comprehend, much less synthesize, its disparate strands. The result is the enshrinement of what Lippmann termed a "pseudo-environment" where politics actually takes place. Voters become "inevitable victims of agitation and propaganda," vulnerable to "the quack, the charlatan, the jingo and the terrorist."

Today, writers in TIKKUN *speak to the same issues Stone raised in 1945 and use much of the same language.*

Lippmann spent a good part of his life trying, unsuccessfully, to come up with a workable solution to this problem and ultimately offered himself up as a kind of middleman between the jingo and the voter. I.F. Stone performed a similar role from the opposite end of the spectrum. In contrast to Lippmann, Stone assumed from the outset that all government officials were liars, and that the task of the journalist was to give the reader sufficient information and context to sift through these lies and make reasonably intelligent political decisions. Both men, it should be emphasized, rejected the hallowed doctrines of "objectivity" that allegedly guide the practice of elite American journalism.

In his capacity as both reporter and interpreter of the news, Stone by and large did a magnificent job—one that, incidentally, compares quite favorably with Lippmann's *oeuvre*. Because of his enormous intellectual curiosity, his insistence on digging into the heart of the matter, and his ability to identify with those he considered to be the wronged victims of any story, Stone's journalism gave his readers a unique perspective on the news that fulfilled, as well as had anyone in the history of American journalism, the promise of the First Amendment.

In my own research on early debates over Israel, I recently came across Stone's reports from a brief trip he took to Palestine in the winter of 1945. The prophetic quality of his reporting is as impressive as it is heartbreaking. Arriving in Palestine from Egypt, Stone found:

> In the once malarial marshes of the Emeck [sic], the Jews have done and are doing what seemed to reasonable men the impossible. Nowhere in the world have human beings surpassed what the Jewish colonists have accomplished in Palestine and the consciousness of achievement, the sense of things growing, the exhilarating atmosphere of a great common effort infuses the daily life of the Yishuv.

Yet despite his intense feelings of admiration and human fellowship for the Jews, Stone was pained by their unwillingness to give the Palestinian Arabs the same kind of decency and respect they were demanding from the British. Stone scored the leaders of the Yishuv for failing to devote "one-tenth" of the attention to Arab relations that they had for upbuilding the land. He continued in a later report:

> I understand why the Palestinian Arab, to whom Palestine is also home, who have fully as much right there as the Jew, does not wish to live as a minority in a Jewish nation. No one likes to be ruled by an alien people, and though I, a Jew, found the friendliest sort of welcome visiting with Arabs, I found no Palestinian Arab in favor of a Jewish state....The Arab does not hate the Jew, but he fears being dominated by him, and this fear must be allayed.

A year later, Stone was invited by the Palmach (the elite, leftist, kibbutz-led units of the Haganah) to be the first American journalist to accompany Jewish concentration camp survivors on an illegal sea voyage to Palestine. Stone's reportage, which formed the basis of his book, *Underground to Palestine*, is dedicated to "those anonymous heroes the *Shelikhim* of the Haganah," and was written "not as a newspaperman merely in search of a good story but as a kinsman, fulfilling a moral obligation to my brothers." Nevertheless, despite his overwhelming feelings of sympathy and kinship for the Palestinian pioneers, Stone could not paper over his disagreements with the Zionist mainstream. He once told me that because

he refused to excise a sentence calling for a binational state from the book, he sacrificed a promised $25,000 (in 1948 dollars!) advertising campaign.

Stone's unwillingness to temper his disappointment over Israel's continued mistreatment of its Arabs made him a pariah in the American-Jewish community. Although loathe to admit it publicly, this deeply wounded him. Stone called himself a "proud Jewish atheist" and never lost his devotion to the cause of the kind of Israel he could support wholeheartedly. Stone's early love for, and later bitter estrangement from, the kind of Zionism practiced by the Israeli government mirrored that of much of the Left—except that he preceded the Left's shifts in sentiment, in most cases, by a period of decades. Had liberals and progressives been able to open their eyes to the unpleasant realities Stone depicted, considerable heartache over Israel and its treatment of the Palestinians might have been avoided. Today, writers in this magazine speak to the same issues Stone raised in 1945 and use much of the same language.

But if Stone's record on the Middle East shows what a committed but honest leftist press could have accomplished in America, his inability, for much of his career, to come to terms with the true character of "socialist" regimes provides one reason why the Left had so much trouble convincing Americans to take it seriously. That the American government told many lies about Soviet intentions abroad and stood by silently while Joe McCarthy turned idealism into grounds for persecution is not grounds for assuming that the Soviet Union itself acted benignly within the borders of its own huge empire.

Stone defined himself as a man of the Left in the widest sense. He maintained a friendly, though distant, relationship to the Communist Party from the 1930s to the 1950s and found it extremely difficult to conceive of having any adversaries "on the Left." A dedicated Popular Fronter from the moment of its inception in August 1935, Stone attempted to excuse or rationalize Soviet misbehavior much longer than he could possibly have justified it intellectually. While he did not accept the purge trials at face value (as did the editors of The *Nation* and The *New Republic*), neither could he bring himself to condemn them outright. His mind at war with his heart, Stone wrote an editorial in the liberal *New York Post* with the baffled title "??????????." In it he seemed ready to excuse the purges, noting that "Revolutions do not take place according to Emily Post...." Stone was even willing to consider the possibility that, "Perhaps, as Stalin contends, a vast counterrevolutionary conspiracy has been uncovered. We don't know."

Stone began to back off from his fellow-traveling following the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, but he still tended to give the Soviets an enormous benefit of the doubt. Not until Nikita Khruschev made his "secret" speech regarding Stalin's crimes was Stone able to see the Soviet Union without rose-colored blinders. Thereafter, he did some of the most distinguished reporting of his career on the crimes of Soviet abuses in the field of psychiatry.

However egregious Stone's misreading of the Bolsheviks, were we really better off believing the likes of Whittaker Chambers and Richard Nixon?

Stone's long blindness to the character of Soviet society and intentions raises an important question. Did this one crucial misjudgment disqualify him from participating in the larger debate over America's role and purpose in the world? There are important intellectuals on the post-Popular Front Left—people such as Irving Howe and Diana Trilling—who argued that it certainly should have. But if everyone who was ever 100-percent wrong about the Soviet Union were barred from participating in the Left's debate about what our proper relationship to it should have been, the only people allowed to take part would be Dwight Macdonald and the staff of *Dissent*.

However egregious Stone's misreading of the Bolsheviks, it was hardly more so than that of the "Wise Men" who created an empire, fought unnecessary wars, and helped to bankrupt this country in a misguided effort to "contain" this inefficient monstrosity of human misunderstanding. Were we really better off believing the likes of Whittaker Chambers and Richard Nixon? Moreover, as the record demonstrates, Stone's reporting of other matters remained relatively uncorrupted. His love of the underdog, as well as his uncompromised intellectual independence, prevented him from following all party lines but one.

Still, I am uneasy about letting Stone off the hook entirely. While his mistake was, no doubt, an honest one, it is the same mistake that paralyzed the American Left for a generation. A great deal of intellectual and political energy was wasted arguing over the nature of the Soviet Union when what we should have been discussing was the proper response to it. The paradox was that Stalin, the century's most effective mass murderer, conducted a relatively conservative foreign policy. But American radicals and liberals failed to grasp that reality as they fought over such peripheral issues as the honesty of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs.

Meanwhile, the know-nothing strain of anti-communism remains a powerful one in American political life, even outliving the object of its obsession. I.F. Stone was recently involved in a posthumous controversy involving an alleged relationship with the KGB that spanned three decades. The allegation, ridiculous to anyone who knew Stone, has now been demonstrated by its original source to be a complete fiction. Nevertheless, Robert Novak and several other right-wing journalists continue to defend it.

Beyond the confines of the caveman Right, Stone is today remembered by those who once ignored him as a lovable gadfly and by those who revered him as a lonely voice for civil rights and free speech, and a prophet with regard to Vietnam. But what I will always remember about Izzy was the generosity of his spirit in the face of political, social, and physical obstacles that would have defeated the spirit of literally every other human being I have ever met. Cottrell's book may be a disappointment, but he did unearth a quote I think demonstrates Stone's political philosophy in a nutshell: "When Socialism comes," Izzy explained, "I'll fight for the right to spit in the nearest bureaucrat's eye. [But] I own a house in Washington and I won't want proletarians trampling petunias on their way downtown to overthrow the government by force and violence." □

First, Make Meaning

(Continued from p. 26)

for the bearing of collective burden of the ill and the vulnerable, must be borne by the theology and purpose of the faith communities. That each of us will die is inevitable; what must come to be understood as miraculous is our ability to love and bear the weight of the dying in fellowship.

The discourse also needs to be deeply political. The serious attention to the ends and the goals of medicine must be begun with a direct address to the denial of death in our culture, the devaluation of the elderly, the dishonoring of the bodies of the discarded and despised disabled. Only when the other person is understood as myself is it legitimate to speak about limits on her life. The dialogue about how much of our resources we can give to prolonging anyone's life is only moral if conducted with the understanding that all such speech is about one's own death as well. It must be conducted in face-to-face encounter in communities all over this country. To do otherwise, to allow the limits to be set by some corporate, neutral entity is to absent ourselves from what is at the core of our human existence.

Of course, we cannot expect the Clinton plan to be the fullest embodiment of all our concerns. But the discourse surrounding it will be the single most important moment in American health care in our lifetime. The best way to judge it will be to begin by asking: Does the plan open the appropriate dialogue? Does it allow for and encourage a serious national and local dialogue over the central value question involved in health care reform? If the plan is to be defended as meaningful in light of the ethics of encounter as found in the Jewish tradition, it must be the best example of a public reflection on what is just, and it must exemplify a serious attempt to encounter and take responsibility for the other in building moral community.

The outcome of the national debate over health care reform will represent a compromise, the result of victories and defeats along the road to justice. But the plan itself must clearly reflect the prophetic "ought," and it must provide a mechanism for truly democratic participation of all of us in the process of determining its final makeup. It will fail if it does not frame the issues in terms that remind us that we are part of a larger moral community, and that to do justice means to pay careful and sustained attention to the fact that people live among, are responsible for, and are obligated to others. This understanding itself will depend on the full and public encounter between our most private and vulnerable human selves and the extraordinary and actual human face of the other. □

The Information Superhighway

(Continued from p. 22)

interests are unlikely to find lucrative enough to initiate.

• Facilitate participation by all segments of our society. The full range of our nation's ethnic and cultural traditions has never been presented on television. Minority programming is usually confined to conventional commercial formats that filter and distort the authentic voices of those cultures. Our nation is enriched—as a culture and as a democracy—by hearing from all the voices in its midst. If the emerging telecommunications infrastructure fails to give access to such voices, despite it vast channel capacity, it will not live up to its real promise.

The paradox of modern mass media is that free speech rights intended for individuals and the community are becoming the exclusive property of businesses.

Third, federal policymakers must ensure a truly open and competitive telecommunications marketplace. The new media marketplace must be as open, fair, and competitive as possible. The importance of aggressive federal supervision of the marketplace is confirmed by the anti-competitive history of modern communications. Historically, rival industries have created artificial barriers, the better to secure long-term marketplace advantages and thwart broader competition. Their preferred tools have been regulatory policy, technology, and sheer market dominance through vertical integration. This dynamic is likely to plague the fiber-optic marketplace as well. The largest media companies already are entering into strategic alliances in order to dominate envisioned T.V. markets preemptively and erect *de facto* barriers to access.

Benign neglect of economic concentration in the media is a formula for an eventual political backlash, similar to the recent revolt of cable consumers. Yet by the time a crisis arises, policies which could structurally reform the marketplace are politically impossible because of the private sector's huge commitment of capital and entrenched business practices. At that point, the only available policy remedies are likely to be ineffectual.

As we enter a new era of technological change, no media industry or faction is "entitled" to anything; we can use this opportunity to introduce

more enlightened, long-term policy planning. For example, it is essential to designate the next generation of fiber-optic telecommunications networks as common carriers, offering fair, non-discriminatory access to all comers, at just and reasonable prices. The companies that own the networks should be prohibited from owning video programming in competition with other programmers. The temptation to discriminate against their competitors or cross-subsidize their own video networks with revenues from other lines of business would simply be too great. Without an absolute separation between conduit and content, monitoring for abuses would be extremely difficult.

Policymakers must also recognize that the convergence of once-separate media industries will only sanctify and accelerate the media's ongoing vertical integration. This inexorable trend, absent federal intervention, will result in even fewer and less accountable companies possessing even more concentrated economic power (with less interest in risk-taking programming). Although fiber's boosters argue that the new infrastructure will unleash a riotous diversity of free expression, this myth will never become a reality as long as major media corporations determined to insulate themselves from meaningful competition dominate the medium.

The history of cable television is instructive. The "blue skies" promises of limitless capacity made by cable boosters in the 1970s turned out to be hype. As a dwindling number of companies came to control the leading cable networks, the industry fashioned a controlled marketplace offering generically similar fare and broadcast reruns.

Policymakers must recognize that the free-market model has never been a reality in the media world. Because the various electronic media are interlinked in a daisy chain of marketing "windows" for the same programming (movie theaters—pay cable channels—broadcast/cable networks—videocassette—foreign release), the respective media do not necessarily compete against each other. Economically, they tend to complement each other and foster homogeneous programming that can sell in as many media windows as possible. Thus the existence of a limited-competition marketplace will not yield even a close approximation of the classic "free marketplace of ideas." Nor is the kind of limited program "choice" offered by the T.V. media in any way equivalent to the diverse kinds of expression that we witness in American pluralism and, indeed, in daily human experience. The new telecommunications infrastructure must serve as an instrument to liberate and reinvent contemporary television. But this will first require fresh, imaginative federal policy.

The most formidable challenge to designing a telecommunications system with bold public purpose may be our own imaginations. As long as advertiser-driven entertainment programming is the primary model for television, we ignore other innovative uses of video programming and information services. There are many administrative, financial, and political challenges to overcome, but the first priority is the desire to pursue this vision and to join in common cause with others who share this fundamental concern.

At the very least, a new policy framework for the emerging telecommunications infrastructure should provide for:

- Universal service—guaranteeing free or affordable access for all citizens to basic services, including news, public affairs, health, education, and electoral information;
- National public networks—providing a range of non-commercial programs and services, including news, documentaries, and children's programming;
- Local and state information networks—serving educational, governmental, health, and social service needs (including local and state versions of C-SPAN);
- Multicultural programming initiatives—encouraging authentic expression of our nation's diverse ethnic and cultural traditions; and
- New funding sources and mechanisms—facilitating the production and distribution of the widest range of programming and information.

Financing could come from a variety of fees on the commercial system, such as spectrum fees, bandwidth fees, excise taxes on VCRs, income-tax check-offs, special taxes on fiber-optics bills, or a tax on advertising revenues. One of the least intrusive policy options would be a nonprofit rate structure similar to nonprofit postal rates, to provide a fair and workable system of non-discriminatory access. Each fee system has its own political implications, which would need careful consideration. Yet the basic idea that commercial users of the telecommunications infrastructure have an identifiable *quid pro quo* with the government, as an agent for the public, is a sturdy principle.

Recovering a sense of common public purpose is one of the most urgent national challenges of the 1990s. The telecommunications infrastructure we create for the next century will profoundly affect our economy, educational system, communities, civic dialogue, democratic participation, and moral values. While there is still time, we must develop a national vision for telecommunications that embraces and promotes the values we hold dear in our society. □

Burning the Book of Lamentations

(Continued from p. 62)

clutched the teddy bear tighter until, from somewhere behind the curtain at the back of the stage, it gave its final strangled gasp.

The story of mothers killing their children is what we remember about the Warsaw Ghetto and what we remember from Lamentations. The horrors of the devastated city reach their anguished crescendo in the poet's question: "Shall the women eat their fruit, their cherished babe?" And later, sharpening the focus on this image, he relates that in the madness of hunger, "Hands of compassionate mothers have boiled their own children: they were their food." The figurative fruit of women's wombs becomes the literal fruit they consume, reversing the sacred direction of birth, of feeding a child from the mother's body. Lamentations, in its most grotesque vision, transforms the prescribed generosity of parents toward their children that we all take utterly for granted into a parody of the life cycle, where mothers eat children, and it is the dying body that feeds the ravenous earth:

> Those slain with the sword are better
> than those slain with hunger:
> for when pierced through,
> the former do ooze with the produce of the fields...
> Even the jackals draw out the breast,
> they give suck to their young ones:
> the daughter of my people is become cruel,
> like the ostriches in the wilderness. (Lam. 4: 3)

In this logic of the body, women are to blame for the end of domestic life, for the drying up of the sources of sustenance, since they are the ones who provided the food when it was there to be gotten, who sent their children off to school with pack lunches. The descriptions of female cannibalism not only set the outer limits of the horror, showing the lengths to which even "compassionate women" can be driven, they also stand in for the catastrophe as a whole. If the survivor has rejected the loathsome city-woman, it is because she rejected him first.

The Rabbis attempted to explain the apparent contradiction between compassionate maternity and cannibalism otherwise. The mothers boiled their already dead children to feed those still living. Or the mothers didn't actually boil their children, they just allowed their souls to burn because they were *too* compassionate with them, letting them sleep late and missing the morning prayers. Having saved the women from one charge, they plea-bargained for a lesser one. Obviously, there was no way these women could get off altogether.

Are all of us caught in the center of this twisted web of logic, this terrible cycle of effect and cause? Having cooked their husbands a meal, did the women tuck a roll of tissues into their sleeves and walk into the *shul* as into a tribunal? Was fasting penance for the madness of hunger, past or future? Is it a humbling reminder of how few hours away we are from hunger, and how few days away from madness? Or does our ability to look away from the life of the stomach reassure us that Messiah may not come this year, but neither will our hunger escape its limits? A cake for after the fast is already cooling in the refrigerator. Tomorrow night, my mother will need a hot drink to help it go down. My fasting is different, easier because I am young enough to imagine myself free of the restraints of nutrition, harder because I fast, loosed from the comforting bonds of law. And having felt them once, I could never believe in fasting to "clean my system out," or as spiritual therapy, or in invisible solidarity with people who need food rather than symbolic acts. There is a diner at the corner where I can sneak a burger after synagogue, though I still haven't decided if I will or won't. In the meantime, we have a language in common, my mother and I, in the faintest beginnings of a rumbling in our bellies.

The reader is coming to the hopeful, humble end. We join in with relief, the men more loudly, the women softly:

> You, O Lord, are enthroned forever;
> your throne is from generation to generation.
> Why dost thou forget us forever,
> why dost thou so long forsake us?
> Turn us to you, O Lord, and we shall be turned;
> renew our days as of old:
> unless you have utterly rejected us:
> and are exceedingly angry against us.

The tone of this coda is utterly different from what has gone before, a sign that the madness of devastation has begun to cede to the necessary unconsciousness of survival, the restrained complaints and humbled pleas of a dissipated rage. We have come back to the realm of piety and rhetoric. We are "we" again, collective-bargaining with a God whose terrible powers make such actions mostly symbolic. If we forgive him, it is because we are too exhausted to do otherwise.

A group of my mother's friends walk back with us toward the house. Their faces show the signs of what the Greeks understood to be the pleasure of tears. Me, I haven't cried, and so haven't earned the

comfortable talk about daughters-in-law who aren't fasting because they are still nursing, or the problem with getting a decent exterminator in the neighborhood. Even so, it is rare, even festive, to be walking down the street with a group of adults in sneakers.

My mother cheerfully turns to me. "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

"No," I answer reluctantly. Not nearly bad enough, meaning that indifference and recognition, guilt and rage had combined to keep me there, to keep me away.

In the distance, fireworks light up the still-not-completely dark sky. In Brooklyn, the Fourth of July hangs on at least until Labor Day. I hold my mother's elbow so that I can walk with my neck flung all the way back, the way she would lead me when I was very young. The street lights cast shifting shadows against the low clouds. I think of that bonfire in the little town in Poland. I wish we could have one now. I wished we could all, in our wickedness and in our faith, throw in the books we carried under our arms and join in the end-of-lamenting dance, the dance of the olden days, spinning and whirling the New York night away. □

Toward a Torah of Zion

(Continued from p. 58)

individuals can we make our way up that mountain. Jerusalem, on the other hand, is open to the whole people. It is the Jewish nation that is to ascend in pilgrimage—to make *aliya* by going up to Jerusalem.

And yet, in the Diaspora, we too make an "aliya"—*aliya la-torah*—to be called up in the synagogue for the reading of the Torah of Sinai. Both aliyot—ascensions—are necessary. As individuals, we must ascend Mount Sinai, and, as part of a people, we must ascend Mount Moriah.

Nationalism and spirituality, universalism and particularism, etherealness and concreteness, powerlessness and power, majority and minority: In each of these dualities, as in many others, Diaspora/Israel help keep the equilibrium. We must live in both. To use these metaphors is not to say that there cannot be spirituality in Israel, nor nationalism in the Diaspora. Within each of us there exists both Sinai and Jerusalem, but these metaphors do bear relation to the reality of our different existences. The Torah of Jerusalem, with its messianic striving, can exist here just as clearly as the Torah of Sinai already exists in Israel.

Remembering both *Torot*, we shall then merit to see the time when the word of Adonai shall go forth from Sinai and from Jerusalem. □

Fin de Siècle Cultural Studies

(Continued from p. 51)

that Jews were denied the right to argue for racial equality of any kind ("race" was too much of a "Jewish thing"). Clearly, identity scholarship can be a corrective and has been so in numerous instances. Bias (or in the current *patois*, "positionality") has always existed. The difference in the past, however, was that it used to be the privilege of the establishment and therefore was called "objectivity." At present, that objectivity is more contested and fragmented, and the task of cultural studies is therefore to mediate between identity and scholarship.

It is not easy to define the limits of subjectivity. But somehow common sense seems to work. It is reasonable to say that essentialist studies peaked several "academic seconds" ago, and that the trend is now being reversed. This is, however, neither a self-evident nor a non-controversial position—witness this spring's demonstrations and hunger strike at UCLA over the status of Chicano Studies. Identity politics is obviously still alive and kicking. Yet, in the coming decade, it would not be surprising if identity studies coalesced around coalition building, which in academic terms would mean umbrella departments of cultural studies.

The likelihood for such coalition building is greater because the impetus for it did not originate with university administrators or grand old white patriarchs, but among the participants in identity studies themselves. Faced on the one hand with a permanent revolutionary methodology, and on the other hand with an urge to protect newly acquired professional entitlements, the occupants of the academy move to counter the ever-greater challenges from the latest newcomers. As long as there were many interstices on the margins, identity studies did not collide with each other. But their proliferation has changed all that. The major identities—gender and ethnic—have been appropriated within academia, and the new challengers have to fight for occupied spaces, rather than create new ones. Having a particular identity is no longer sufficient, and one has to resort to traditional rhetoric in order to validate one's own position. It seems that the next phase of cultural studies, unlike the previous generation, will not find room for the discovery of new identities.

Instead, the newest identities overlap rather than collide. Which brings us back to feminism. It used to be that "the feminist" view was singular. Recently, the news that "women" is a heterogenous category has reached major campuses across the country, and

several new feminist perspectives have simultaneously emerged. Since contestation has been their esprit de corps, the feminists' response to the demands of women of color has been mixed, as has been the reception of women who advocate human rights over women's rights (with regard to pornography, for example). Thus, Third World women have to share a space with Third World ethnicities as well as with middle-class white women in Women's Studies.

Is Latina Studies as a wholly separate academic entity a likely proposition? Probably not. Latinas will have to create space within traditional disciplines, women's or gender studies, and Chicano Studies departments. We must wait and see whether the attraction of academic perks and status will supersede the oppositional character of identity politics, or whether "resistance" is too much of a good thing to give up. □

PODHORETZ'S COMPLAINT

(Continued from p. 48)

foreign policy (the rationale for which is that it is "good for Israel") have on encouraging anti-Semites and ideological enemies of Israel?

In five perversely enjoyable pages, Podhoretz unwittingly demonstrates the intellectual and moral bankruptcy of his nondissent principle.

But now, Podhoretz informs us, things have changed—well, sort of. He fears that Israel's new political course will eventually lead to Syria's regaining the Golan Heights and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Both events, argues Podhoretz, would endanger Israel's security by dramatically increasing the threat of a collective Arab onslaught against Israel.

For Israel's own good, Podhoretz insists, he has modified his principle of nondissent. It is still wrong to criticize Israeli intransigence and brutality but it is now acceptable to reproach Israel for having abandoned its earlier—and, implicitly, wiser—understanding of Arab intentions. Podhoretz distinguishes his criticisms from those offered in TIKKUN and other dovish Jewish voices on political and moral grounds. His criticisms are more politically constructive because they don't carry the risk of encouraging the U.S. government to "lean on" Israel. (Podhoretz's logic—that criticisms that have no hope of influencing U.S. policy are the only acceptable ones—is fallacious, to say the least.) Morally, writes Podhoretz, "There is all the difference in the world between accusing Israel of all sorts of heinous crimes and questioning the prudential wisdom of its policies." Translation: It is off-limits to criticize Israel for amply documented human rights violations but alright to criticize the state's diplomatic efforts at finding a peaceful solution.

However entertaining the distinction, Podhoretz's modified principle of acceptable dissent amounts to a shameless assertion that only he and like-minded "pro-Israel"ites are concerned about Israel's security. In truth, those of us who support the Israeli peace movement care deeply about Israel's security. We take the position that Israel's long-term well-being necessitates active measures to reduce tensions between Jew and Arab in the Middle East. Hence, we support a two-state solution and an end to human-rights abuses on all sides. If this seems naive or politically dangerous, consider what Israeli intransigence has accomplished: the spread of the Intifada to Israel proper, greater Islamic extremism both in the occupied territories and Israel, and a perpetual militarization of Israel with all the debilitating effects it visits on the country. Podhoretz's insistence on maintaining a hard-line posture recalls a similar brand of militant American Zionism earlier in the century that was castigated by Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann, for urging "other people to the barricades to face tanks and guns," noting that "the speeches are made in New York while the proposed resistance is to be made in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem."

Yet, while I find Podhoretz's views on Israel and his contempt for Arabs utterly repulsive, I do not condemn him for the act of speaking, nor would I dismiss him as a "self-hating" Jew. I would prefer to give Podhoretz credit for finally accepting what has, remarkably, been a radical view in the context of American Jewish discourse—that American Jews are not obliged to accept the Israeli government's interpretation of what is "good for Israel." American Jews do not deserve a direct role in shaping Israel's policies, but most of us feel a special attachment to Israel and naturally wish to help the forces in Israeli society we feel most contribute to its well-being. We should encourage one another in this pursuit; open discussion and debate are to be cherished in all communities, including our own. So thank you, Mr. Podhoretz, for your support. □

WHO WON THE WEEK

(Continued from p. 10)

things that matter deeply to most people: their families, their homes, their dreams of a better life. Politics becomes a game of power fought by clever insiders and master strategists, a running scorecard of winners and (mostly) losers, a theater of contempt, a nightly joke. Ultimately, the savvy style is the method by which politics is spirited away from us, and then returned for our consumption as farce.

A farce is what Charles Krauthammer tried to expose in The *Washington Post* on May 14. Remarking on Mrs. Clinton's call for a "new politics of meaning" that would help "redefine who we are as human beings in this post-modern age," Krauthammer wrote:

> Her speech carries the distinctive marks of adolescent self-discovery: the self-congratulatory didacticism; the belief, upon encountering some large universal truth, that one has uncovered the wheel; the conviction, upon experiencing some spiritual transcendence, that no one has ever been there before; and the breathless need to instruct the whole unlettered world about it. All delivered with the knowing self-assurance, the superior air of a college student manifesto.

Krauthammer's dismissive tone is sophomoric in its own way—Ivy-League sophomoric—and far less attractive (to me, at least) than Mrs. Clinton's felt if fuzzy idealism. I quote my savviest self:

> Krauthammer's column carries the distinctive marks of post-adolescent jeering: the self-satisfied smugness, the belief, after seeing through the illusions of others, that one has arrived at an adequate vision of the world; the conviction, upon ridiculing "naive" hopes, that intellectual maturity consists in just this act of ridicule; the breathless need to appear tough-minded and cynical. All delivered with the knowing smile of a board-score star, told too often how smart he is.

Bill Clinton has been around this type virtually his whole life. Indeed, he has probably been this type. But what remains interesting about him (and his partner Hillary) is their intuitive understanding of the limits of low realism. When Clinton told the country "Vote Your Hopes, Not Your Fears," he was practicing the politics of high realism. Here, politics is still the art of the possible—but the artistry consists in enlarging the territory the possible covers. One way to do this is by persuading people that things could be different: our horizons higher, purposes nobler, causes grander, lives larger. Part of the reason Clinton looked to John Kennedy for inspiration is that JFK offered a model of how to succeed at the higher realism—the art of creating new possibilities through politics. For this sort of challenge savviness is not the relevant style. A president needs a political approach capable of touching people on a deeper level, if not Michael Lerner's then another vision that can reach down to the underground springs of American idealism.

The Clinton White House has so far neglected this task. The President has not set the nation to chattering about the challenge he's laid before it, the Big Idea he's forced into public consciousness, the new principle he's invited the rest of us to debate and apply, the example he's set for others to follow. "The New Covenant" came and went with the campaign. The mantra of "change" is now an empty chant. Beyond pressuring Congress to vote with the President, what does Bill Clinton want the rest of us to do? What does he want dinner tables, dorm rooms, professional conferences, luncheons, churches, synagogues, faculty lounges, town meetings, computer bulletin boards, and, yes, weekend talk shows buzzing about? The vacuum of meaning in national politics must be filled, or Clinton will get sucked into it. That is the lesson to be learned from Scalpgate, and all the other gates Safire and his fellow keepers try to pry open.

"Nothing is more mistaken than the notion that what exists today will continue to exist tomorrow." Irving Howe's parting words ought to replace "It's the economy, stupid" in the war room at the White House. For the great hidden strength of the Clinton administration is the fact that many of us did vote our hopes rather than our fears eight months ago. And millions of Americans are now convinced that politics-as-usual cannot continue, that something in Washington, and in America, must, as the mantra says, change. These slumbering facts remain relevant, no matter how many media frenzies blur our vision or sink our sights. As for the politics of meaning, I'll happily side with Lerner's sixties kids over Krauthammer's jeering sophomores. And I'll add, as Howe did at the end:

> So to friend and foe, at a moment when the embers of utopianism seem very low, I'd say: You want to call us utopians? That's fine with me.

□

COMING GLUED

(Continued from p. 30)

agenda, as is any discourse that challenges power elites or calls for income redistribution. Those subjects are remnants of the old-style, Left-Right politics which the new communitarianism purportedly transcends. PMC communitarianism invites us to a new politics of the common ground, where the intelligentsia and enlightened policy experts elicit consensus and manage the country in the interests of everyone.

But while there is much merit in such a "new politics," it is not quite as new as it seems; a similar politics of consensus characterized the Progressive movement in the first decades of this century and re-emerged among the professorial advisers who helped manage and administer the New Deal of the 1930s. Both are earlier manifestations of PMC politics, dominated by privileged professional elites, and both shared with the new communitarianism the vision of a consensual common good that could unite all the classes and preserve capitalism. Not surprisingly, Etzioni identifies himself as a "neo-Progressive," claiming that his movement is like the earlier Progressive movement, which "appealed to all classes, since its emphasis was on formulating the proper rules of the game rather than serving the interests of one class."

From the perspective of our troubled, antagonistic society, there is something soothing and, indeed, healing about Etzioni's consensual, conflict-free vision. Communitarians of any stripe should strongly affirm the merits of a politics of common ground, as long as it does not bury divisions that need to be confronted to achieve a just community. Etzioni has articulated the virtues of a less polarized politics and is wise to avoid reading anyone in or out of the communitarian cause. But PMC communitarians, by shunning an analysis of the market forces that are eroding community, are defeating the aims they embrace.

Communitarianism must propose a structural politics that forthrightly addresses the economic foundations of our problems. It must, for example, challenge the system of income distribution that in recent years has promoted a radical division of rich and poor incompatible with community. A number of communitarians, such as Mickey Kaus, an editor at The *New Republic* and the author of *The End of Inequality*, have proposed the irrelevancy of money and its distribution to community. Etzioni, remarkably, ignores the issue completely. Kaus argues that it is far more important to mix the classes in public institutions—such as schools and hospitals—than to try to level their incomes. But it is hard to imagine a consensual civil society that will happily unite multimillionaires such as Donald Trump with the homeless sleeping on grates in front of Trump Tower. Our current obscene extremes of wealth and poverty sabotage any possibility of a morally viable community.

Closely related is the need for a wholehearted assault on the dreadful problems of our central cities, something that would seem to be an obvious priority for any communitarian, particularly after last year's riots in Los Angeles. Again, Etzioni is virtually silent about the connected crises of race and urban poverty, saying simply that the communitarian perspective on social justice is that "first, people have a moral responsibility to help themselves as best they can," and that "the second line of responsibility lies with those closest to the person, including kin, friends, neighbors and other community members." Etzioni recognizes the need for government aid as a safety net, and his perspective on self-help would make a great deal of sense if linked to a larger economic and political vision of empowering local, particularly poor, communities. A more robust communitarianism would devote itself to wrestling capital and power away from multinational corporations and federal bureaucracies and channeling it into the community.

We need a bold communitarian agenda on capitalism and the market system. Etzioni is no doubt partly reluctant to tread here for fear of being tarred as liberal, or worse, Left. But while communitarianism should not become a captive of any existing political tradition, the new movement we require must inevitably meld elements of the cultural and micro-institutional politics advanced by the PMC communitarians with elements of the structural politics of the democratic Left, historically the political tradition speaking most forthrightly about how the "free market" undermines social solidarity. It is liberals and the Left today, for all their limits, who have highlighted and contested the anti-communitarian logic of our new global capitalism—by showing how capital flight hollowed out Rust Belt communities, fighting the global "casino" capitalism that has enriched the affluent at the expense of everyone else, and speaking out against the new job arrangements which threaten to turn us all into unattached, disposable workers.

None of this implies that true communitarianism reduces to anticapitalism or leftism. For one thing, the Left—now largely a collection of dissident labor groups and profoundly fragmented "identity movements" of race, gender, and sexual orientation—has lost its own

sense of community; until it rediscovers its own common ground, it cannot effectively lead a movement for solidarity in the larger society.

Second, the Left has often ignored or been myopic about values and community. One of the great merits of PMC communitarianism is that it opens up political discourse on morality, "family values," and other cultural themes that have been dominated by extremely conservative forces in the last decade and proposes a new set of communitarian values that take us beyond the limits of both Left and Right on many such matters of the heart.

Third, the Left has been plagued by overly simplistic notions of capitalism and its alternatives, assuming, for instance, that capitalism cannot nurture social solidarity—which Japan clearly disproves—and viewing the public sector as the best guarantor of community, which has been brought into serious doubt by the apparent erosion of civil society in such enlightened Western European welfare states as Germany and Sweden. The PMC communitarians are thus not misguided in seeking a politics that transcends conventional Left-Right ideological distinctions; the power of communitarian politics is precisely that it can move beyond the limits of Left practice as we know it to embrace a more sophisticated understanding of our personal and cultural dilemmas and an innovative politics more attuned to their resolution.

I am not advocating that proponents of communitarianism should renounce a cultural, for an economic, agenda, but rather that they should recognize the essential synergy of the two: We cannot get the new values we so desperately need without new structures (or vice versa). Etzioni might respond that we have to begin with the less threatening changes in consciousness and then turn to economics. But the two kinds of changes are inexorably intertwined and must unfold together. Most individuals will not become less self-involved simply through a willed moral conversion, but only with the support and incentives provided by new institutions that permit living their lives according to a new script. While I call below for an ambitious new communitarian economics, it must proceed in politically digestible stages and should always be promoted in tandem with a cultural politics and moral discourse that are equally crucial; a purely economistic communitarianism will lose its soul and constituency.

A communitarian economics needs to integrate the class perspectives of Marx with Emile Durkheim's analysis of social solidarity—leading toward a "social market" and economic democracy. The social market—a term that has been used to describe such diverse economic systems as the capitalist German welfare state and Mondragon, Spain's system of worker-owned cooperatives—offers a practical communitarian alternative to the free market model. It incorporates in varying degrees and in different ways a social accounting system, involving, for example, the "social audit," by which a growing number of corporations seek to measure the human costs of their policy, for factoring social benefits into economic decisions; accountability mechanisms such as corporate social charters and councils (which define the social mission of the organization) and placement of community or public representatives on corporate boards, ensuring that businesses are responsive to community interests; distribution mechanisms that ensure a high level of equality in income and wealth (such as the Swedish solidarity wage policy which has successfully limited wage differentials in that country); social investment strategies, such as the use of pension funds to build affordable housing, to promote community development; and forms of economic participation and governance, such as employee ownership, that institutionalize the logic of democratic community inside business itself, speaking to employees' needs not only for control but for involvement, connection, and meaning.

No country has fully developed the social market, but the vision is hardly utopian, since it is being partially implemented in many different countries and is spreading, driven by moral and bottom-line arguments that speak to the concerns of both liberals and conservatives. For liberals, the payoff is more equality, power-sharing, and social responsibility; for conservatives, it is higher productivity, stability, and economic yield. But communitarians see the most profound virtue: a moral economics that links individual enterprise and profit-seeking with the common good.

The social market is, at root, a project for social solidarity, molding economic institutions that can help manufacture responsibility and community as well as profitable commodities. But this is more than idle idealism or "do-goodism." For an economy to prosper, it must respect and nourish the social bonds and moral concerns that make civil commerce possible. Indeed, social organization and solidarity are the great intangible ingredients of economic success. Japan, a relatively authoritarian form of the social market, has created its economic miracle by successfully melding the communitarian values of Confucianism with the market values of accumulation and profit. Social market systems in the West will unfold differently, infused by more democratic, Western visions of community. This cannot happen fully without a clearer vision of the democratic community we seek, pointing to the constant and profound dependence of

economics on our moral discourse and sensibilities.

Since the social market does not require the end of private enterprise, communitarian economics pushes toward a radically different capitalism than currently practiced in the United States and will likely synthesize elements of the Western European social democracies with elements of the worker-owned and community-based economies represented by Mondragon, as well as new American forms of worker participation, quality commitment, and corporate social responsibility.

In the United States, global capitalism is rapidly undermining the security and community traditionally enjoyed by the middle class; powerful counteractive forces are bubbling up that could steer our political economy in this new direction. On the one hand, management is dimly recognizing that productivity requires committed employees and that the mushrooming class of disposable workers it has created to cut costs is undermining labor-management cooperation and the flexible production system it needs to engage and mobilize skilled labor.

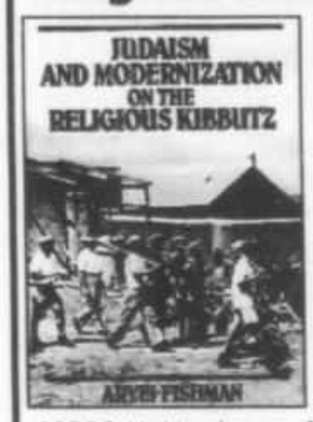
High on the communitarian economic agenda should be a national program to help resolve this managerial schizophrenia by using governmental incentives and financing to encourage high-commitment systems of worker participation, such as those at Saturn, the General Motors subsidiary in Springhill, Tennessee. Saturn vests employees with a version of lifetime employment and empowers workers to co-manage and share decision-making power from top to bottom of the company, while also making an unequivocal commitment to quality, which gives employees a sense of responsibility to customers.

In our low-commitment society, high-commitment workplaces such as Saturn speak powerfully to workers' social and emotional as well as economic needs, providing many who may be socially isolated or politically disengaged with their only stable source of attachment, efficacy, and meaning. Such workplaces, which reap bottom-line benefits with a communitarian human resources strategy, become both sanctuary and seedbed for new moral and social development beyond the job. Participatory workers, as the political theorist Carole Pateman argues, are likely to become more involved parents and citizens.

Social economics is thus good for business, but also crucial for the regeneration of civil society, as is evident in a closely related communitarian economic priority: the massive expansion and reform of employee ownership, an unsung strategy for countering capital flight and building community both in and out of the workplace. Co-ops and properly structured ESOPS (employee stock ownership companies) redefine ownership in communitarian terms, basing rights to

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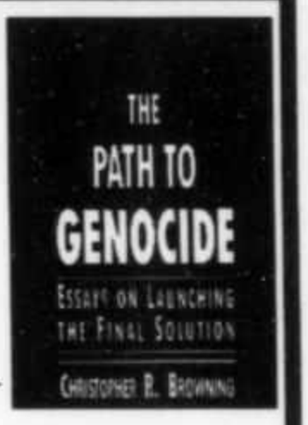
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control and profits on membership in a work community rather than capital investment. Beyond the merits of bonding workers in a common venture that offers substantial material and spiritual returns, employee owners are also far more likely to accept lower profits to preserve local jobs and to reduce pollution or other externalities inflicted on their communities. Employee ownership, as the experience of Mondragon shows, can nourish a sense of broader community responsibility; in Mondragon, co-ops work extensively with one another and invest a significant fraction of their profits and volunteer time in the community.

Communitarians should press for more attractive public financing and tax incentives for a Mondragon-like sector of co-ops and ESOPS, but only for ESOPs that make a genuine commitment to worker involvement and empowerment, including the right for workers to vote their stock on all corporate decisions and to define the mission and social responsibility of the company. President Clinton has endorsed both worker participation and employee ownership, and Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich is likely to open up opportunities to grass-roots, labor, and ESOP or co-op activists who can espouse a credible agenda of workplace communitarianism speaking both to the American worker's soul and pocketbook.

As Clinton's push for national health care suggests, the communitarian impulse emerging in American politics goes well beyond the workplace itself. The beleaguered middle class is now insisting that the government step in to protect its own standard of living and quality of life. In an era of tax revolts and deficit politics, Clinton has embraced a remarkably expansive social agenda—including universal health care, environmental activism, the physical and psychological health of children, expanded worker training and higher education, and urban and community development support, including block grants and a new community banking system. Communitarians should support these initiatives as baby steps toward a meaningful New Covenant which goes beyond the provision of material benefits to address our needs for civility, connection, and enhanced quality of personal and social life. And Clinton himself must defend and sell his program as a moral as well as economic investment, laying the essential grounding for building social responsibility in the next generation and saving civil society today.

The political prospects of a communitarian, social-democratic agenda are dramatically enhanced by the unexpected support that may come from corporations. The breakdown of civil society has become prohibitively costly to corporations in both familiar and surprising ways. Many corporations are converts to the cause of national health care, recognizing that only the state can relieve them of the devastating burden of escalating health costs. The same logic could conceivably lead corporations toward a reluctant support of some version of the Western European welfare state—not only in regard to health care, but child care, pensions, and training and education. While the Left may viscerally reject alliances with such "class enemies," the communitarian movement may be better attuned to the new forces that could turn sectors of corporate America into partial comrades in struggle.

But while communitarians should be prepared to ally with corporations that become champions of social democracy or worker participation, it remains likely that elites will strenuously resist much of the agenda of the communitarian movement. The structural agenda, after all, involves not only a new vision of corporate social responsibility but transferring the enormous concentrated power now resting in corporations and top management to employees and local communities. Even the most enlightened corporations are likely to accede to such changes at a snail's pace, and only under pressure from below. Moreover, in the new global economy, corporations can readily exploit the exit option and flee abroad to escape social responsibility at home. Thus, any communitarian politics will have to come up with innovative solutions to capital flight, including not only widespread employee ownership but international initiatives that will bind companies worldwide to communitarian standards. The North American Free Trade Agreement's side-agreements to protect labor and the environment as well as initiatives in the European Common Market to promote common social standards may ultimately prove fruitful models.

The Clinton administration is probably the most receptive White House to the communitarian cause that the United States has ever had. But since the President is himself a stellar product of the PMC—and would take enormous political heat if he pushed for the ambitious structural agenda proposed here—it is likely that he will only initiate a cautious PMC communitarianism, as proposed by the Progressive Policy Institute and Etzioni's group.

The President can probably be moved beyond this modest agenda only by noisy and sustained agitation from the grass roots. Zach Polett, national political director for ACORN, a community organizing group with experience in Arkansas, says "Clinton doesn't like to go out on a limb; he won't act on a measure, even if he agrees with it, until it has clearly demonstrated popular support." Polett concludes that Clinton sees himself as "progressive," but he needs to hear screams from the trenches before he will feel confident in taking

risks that could jeopardize his political future with Perot voters, conservative legislators, or corporate fat cats.

Communitarianism must move from the halls of academe to bowling alleys, pubs, and street corners if it is going to do more than absorb volumes of printing ink. PMC communitarianism is unlikely to take this path, despite Etzioni's explicit call for social movements and citizen action. The real test of any communitarianism is whether it can engage the hearts and minds of ordinary people, and it will require a more populist communitarianism to take the movement beyond the academic conference rooms.

The broad economic agenda reviewed here has to be a major part of that populist project, because it addresses the practical—and often desperate—problems of survival and powerlessness that ordinary Americans confront every day, along with many of their pressing problems of human dignity and connection. But a populist communitarianism also must offer its own cultural politics that speaks directly to the problems of values and community that cannot be resolved purely through economic change. PMC communitarianism has introduced many of these cultural themes, but they will have to be reasserted by ordinary Americans in a language and spirit that reflect their own experiences.

America has periodically bred populist movements which articulated ordinary Americans' longings for community. These included turn-of-the-century populism reflecting prairie state and rural farm visions of community, and the 1930s labor movements that evoked a vision of solidarity compelling to the new industrial workers dislocated during the Great Depression. The populist communitarian visions in the 1990s may come from unexpected quarters, including rehabilitated gang leaders in the inner cities, self-help recovery groups now proliferating throughout the country, women in the community organizing to stem the epidemic of male violence, and grass-roots citizen groups organizing for safe streets through crime watch groups, or for lower water and utility bills in neighborhood associations.

The communitarian language and sensibilities of the elites, including the PMC, will never square fully with those of ordinary Americans, whose lives are built around different forms of community at work and in neighborhoods. But even if PMC communitarians have articulated cultural and moral issues that reverberate across the class spectrum, their words are not likely to be widely attended outside the PMC itself. Less privileged Americans have always been distrustful of the words of elites, looking rather to their actions. In addition to all the barriers of concept and program already discussed, a principal obstacle limiting the spread of PMC communitarianism is that ordinary folk understand that, whatever they say, members of the PMC live by the rules of the radically individualistic professional career model. Indeed, there is hardly any more consensual finding in sociology than the notion that professions have been principal definers and carriers of the American Dream of individualism and are among its most privileged beneficiaries.

Ordinary Americans both admire and resent the freedoms and rights that the PMC enjoys and propagates; many feel shackled by their more traditional lifestyles, which, ironically, tend to be far less individualistic than those of the PMC communitarians themselves. Thus, Etzioni and his fellow PMC communitarians could spread the word most effectively by helping to model the new ethos in their own lives and professional institutions. Developing a more communitarian model of professions and reducing the individualistic fever of academic careerism would be a powerful signal that PMC communitarianism is serious. And when the PMC demonstrates through their personal lives that they are prepared to limit their rights and assume more social obligations, this would be the most convincing argument that others should heed their words.

PMC communitarianism ultimately reflects the PMC's own self-victimization and pain. No other class bought more fully into individualistic models of success and now suffers as deeply the consequences. If the PMC can wean itself from its own addictions to career, ego, money, and status, it will not only speak to its own deepest needs, but offer through example the embryo of the new culture that can inspire others and model a less self-oriented version of the American Dream.

Meanwhile, can grass-roots community organizations, unions, community development corporations, affordable housing alliances, parent associations, self-help groups, and the like step into the gap and mobilize their own communitarian movement—perhaps one that can appropriate the most universal ideas of the PMC communitarians? And are there possibilities that grass-roots groups on the Left—and perhaps even some on the Right—will be drawn to the most compelling visions of communitarianism as civil society continues to erode, thus bringing new coalitions together for discrete communitarian objectives such as secure neighborhoods, environmental stewardship, and corporate social responsibility? All of this remains uncertain but one thing is sure: If our civil society is to survive, communitarianism must become more than another intellectual pipe dream. □

ADLGATE

(Continued from p. 36)

The ADL also had to contend with many journalists and human rights organizations that were involved in full-time monitoring of the Right from perspectives different than its own. Taking advantage of its prestige built over previous decades, the ADL attempted to assume an unofficial hegemony over this community of hate-watchers. Through fiat, innuendo, and the spin, the ADL leadership attempted to impose a single interpretation of social and political events and even to decide what data were worthy of consideration. Meanwhile, the ADL leadership regarded itself as above criticism, lashing out at even the mildest of critics. For instance, Foxman told the *Jewish World* in 1989 that anyone who thinks the ADL is too close to the Republican Party "has a sickness in his mind." Those who persisted in disagreeing with the ADL could expect to be accused of harboring communist sympathies or have their integrity impugned in some other manner.

In 1984, the ADL publicly attacked the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Los Angeles-based organization which monitors anti-Semitic groups in the United States and Europe, for including in a fund-raising letter a sentence stating that the National Socialist Party of America (NSPA) had chapters in thirty-three American cities. ADL said the NSPA had been disbanded in 1982. True, but a national socialist coalition including former members of the NSPA was still active in many cities. Furthermore, LaRouche, whose objectives are similar to the NSPA's, had earlier listed chapters of his NCLC in thirty-three cities (by 1985, his organization was sponsoring electoral candidates in far more than thirty-three cities). The ADL, rather than making its comments about the Wiesenthal Center's letter in a constructive spirit, chose to attempt to undermine the center's credibility and to suggest that its concern over neo-Nazism was false.

The ADL's most unprincipled attacks were reserved for the Atlanta-based Center for Democratic Renewal (CDR), a group which monitored far-Right activity in the South and Midwest in close cooperation with the civil rights movement. By the late 1980s, the CDR had emerged as the ADL's chief rival in providing the media with information about white supremacists; the information was often more up-to-date than the ADL's and never underestimated the supremacists' ability to spread their hate. As the ADL's ability to gather information about such groups independently declined, the CDR became increasingly visible in the media.

The ADL began to spread the word that the CDR was ideologically suspect and that its information was unreliable. In 1989, the ADL's Southern counsel, Charles Wittenstein, complained about CDR's alleged "left-wing political agenda" in an interview with the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. For the CDR, whose staff members travel from town to town in the Deep South holding workshops in Black churches on how to resist the Klan, this red-baiting was no laughing matter. Sherry Frank, southeast area director of the American Jewish Committee, came to the CDR's defense with a letter to the Atlanta daily affirming the AJC's "close ties" with the CDR and "high regard for its work." The ADL never formally apologized for the allegations about the CDR; indeed, when anti-Duke activists from Louisiana went to New York in 1990 to search ADL files, they were treated to a lecture on the dangerous CDR reds.

Clearly, in the wake of the burgeoning California scandal, the ADL's neoconservatives will find it difficult to maintain their pretense of being the Jewish community's infallible civil rights watch-dogs. But for the moment, they have managed to persuade the major Jewish organizations to circle the wagons in their defense. Although in most organizations the persons responsible for such enormous mistakes would have been fired, impeached, or court-martialed, the ADL leadership has induced four major Jewish umbrella groups—the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the World Jewish Congress, and the American Zionist Movement—to issue statements expressing their full confidence in the ADL (meaning the current ADL leadership). Their rationale is that if the ADL is not defended strongly, the Jewish community may be robbed of its ability to monitor and defend itself against neo-Nazis and other deadly enemies. In fact, the ADL is in no danger of losing its ability to monitor hate groups and keep files: all of its activities in this field (with the exception of receiving stolen government documents) are constitutionally protected; these operations will cease only if the ADL chooses on its own to disband them.

What the ADL really faces is a massive political and public-relations crisis. With every month that it continues to stonewall the media while revelations about its activities emerge, the ADL loses more of its credibility. If the goal is to save the ADL as an institution (and not just the reported $200,000 annual salary of its CEO, Foxman), decisive steps should be taken: Fire Foxman. Fire Suall. Fire everyone who covered up for or encouraged Roy Bullock. Apologize

to the organizations that were the objects of gratuitous investigation. Adopt new, objective guidelines to redirect the ADL's fact-finders to real enemies of the Jews. Resolve to rebuild the ADL from the ground up, free of narrow ideology. By taking these steps, the ADL could draw upon the large reservoir of goodwill it still enjoys from past decades and thus easily isolate demagogic groups such as the New Alliance Party and the Liberty Lobby, which are attempting to take advantage of the ADL's discomfort for malign purposes. Although serious legal problems would remain, the hemorrhage of public confidence, at least, would end.

We believe that the ADL can rebuild. There are many ADL staffers who remain committed to the fight against anti-Semitism and bigotry and who want the ADL put back on track. Our suggestions are based on the assumption that the major Jewish organizations can be persuaded, especially in today's post-Cold War climate, to press for a housecleaning at the ADL. The organization can be made accountable to the entire Jewish community, not just to a handful of large financial contributors and institutional bureaucrats. The first priority is to remove the current ADL national leadership. But this must be followed by profound policy changes:

• The view of the ADL as a hegemonic organization with special rights must be rejected. We believe the Maginot Line of the ADL should be turned into multiple lines of defense against bigotry involving many organizations, large and, small working together, with the ADL's massive research files as an essential component. Within such a framework, the ADL should encourage other organizations such as the CDR, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and the American Jewish Committee to expand their monitoring activities in appropriate areas, rather than viewing such organizations as its rivals. The ADL should engage in honest debate over the proper analysis of problems rather than trying to impose a single preconceived line and backstabbing those who disagree. This would also mean learning to work more closely with groups fighting discrimination in minority communities (including those, such as gays and lesbians, who are scorned by many neoconservatives). The ADL must learn to practice pluralism, not just preach it.

• The ADL must reorder its priorities to emphasize the truly serious sources of bigotry. The test of who to monitor closely or denounce should not be based on ideology, whether conservative or liberal, but on factual evidence that a group is promoting anti-Semitism (including the forms that use anti-Zionism as a cover) or other forms of bigotry. We do not believe that the ADL should be restricted solely to monitoring violent hate groups. This would leave it powerless to oppose the political anti-Semites such as LaRouche and Duke, whose rise to influence could provide an indispensable cover (among other things) for future street violence against Jews, gays, and nonwhite minorities.

• Separate the function of monitoring and publicizing the threat of domestic anti-Semitism from the function of political lobbying (and tactical political maneuvering) for Israel's security. Although such activities are seen as necessary by most American Jews, there is a built-in conflict with the ADL's primary mission. To pull one's punches on anti-Semitism in the Reagan administration because of Reagan's support for Israel was understandable for lobbying groups such as AIPAC; it should never have influenced the ADL.

• Untangle the ADL's research and analysis functions from the undue influence of any ideology or partisan politics. The Left-liberal taboo against criticizing Black anti-Semitism and the neoconservative reluctance to attack Republican Party bigots are equally reprehensible. The ADL must adopt a firm policy: no double standard, and no subordination of the facts to political expediency or ideological sacred cows. ADL analysts have a right to their private views, but they should put such biases aside when they sit down to their job.

• Break with the long-standing but false political tactics that discourage grass-roots struggle against bigotry and racism. The lessons of the Louisiana Coalition Against Racism and Nazism should become standard operating procedure: Fight 'em early, fight 'em hard, seek maximum light of the media on any bigot who attempts to enter the mainstream, don't worry about "backlash," tirelessly decode and decode again the message of hate wrapped in euphemisms, take to the streets with rallies and demonstrations when necessary. The ADL should immediately and forever halt the policy of discouraging the media from printing articles or broadcasting reports about bigots for fear of giving them publicity; this policy amounts to censorship, reflects a profound distrust of the public's democratic instincts, and runs against the ADL's core mission-to bring the evil of bigotry out of its *demi-monde*—into the light of day and defeat it through the power of reason.

• Establish a special non-tax-exempt organization, entirely separate from the major Jewish organizations and with its own independent funding sources, to fight the crucial electoral battle nationwide, state by state, against extremist candidates such as Buchanan. In

addition, broaden nonpartisan efforts to keep Jesse Helms-style race-baiting and Gus Savage-style anti-Semitism out of local and national election campaigns (in Chicago, the American Jewish Committee helps to coordinate such a program.

• Change the ADL's relationship to law enforcement. The ADL is both a quasi-news organization, publishing newsletters and reports, and an advocacy organization. As such, it has every right to seek information from and to hold workshops on bigotry for police departments, and to warn police about unlawful acts by hate groups. But the special document-trading relationship the ADL apparently enjoys with some police departments and that apparently involves Joseph McCarthy-style obsessions on both sides, is not only ethically disturbing but compromises the integrity of the ADL's research findings. Clearly there is something wrong when the ADL's 1986 report on prison extremism didn't once mention Klan activity among corrections officers or their violence against minority prisoners; or when the ADL's special 1992 report, "The Los Angeles Riot—Extremist Exploitation," avoided the slightest criticism of the Los Angeles Police Department, or of the non-guilty verdict in the first trial of the four policemen accused of beating motorist Rodney King. (ADL might argue that a critical attitude to the police would hurt its ability to nudge the police on hate crimes; in fact, the ADL should mostly be nudging the *politicians* to nudge law enforcement, thereby preserving its own objectivity.)

• Replace the ADL's reliance on illegally obtained government records with reliance on legal sources of information. As journalists who specialize in tracking right-wing extremism, we believe that the ADL can largely compensate for its loss of special access to restricted records by gaining portions of the same information from the public record (felony and misdemeanor conviction data is publicly available in every state, while the motor vehicle records the ADL allegedly received unlawfully in California are public information in most states); training ADL staffers in investigative journalism techniques; using the federal Freedom of Information Act and state sunshine laws; intensive name-indexing of far-Right publications; and cultivating numerous other potential sources and techniques the ADL now neglects. Excessive reliance on the police over the past few years has only served to cover up the decline of the ADL's independent fact-finding operations and to encourage staff laziness and lack of initiative; it's time to break the addiction.

• Create a system of open files: The ADL should compile an index of its news-clippings files on organizations and individuals and publish this index on microfilm to be placed in public libraries. That way, what is in these files would be a matter of public record, periodically updated, without mystification or demonization. It would also be an invaluable research tool.

(Such an index should *not* include private working memos such as surveillance reports on hate groups, or any information that might identify a confidential informant.)

• Limit ADL's serious undercover infiltration primarily to hate groups and establish an oversight body to guarantee a respect for privacy and Constitutional rights. Beyond the world of hate groups, ADL's fact-finders have a legal right to attend public meetings of any community or social action organization, but we believe they should exercise the same restraints as news organizations might observe (i.e., identifying themselves unless there is a compelling journalistic or personal safety reason for not doing so). Obviously such a policy would require a drastic change in attitude for today's neoconservative ADLers, who persist in regarding Left-liberal social activism as part of an international Stalinist octopus.

In the 1990s, America has entered an uncertain new era; the fear of communism, which diverted so many marginal haters away from their traditional focus on Jews, is now ended. Economic prosperity, always a powerful antidote against social rage, continues to elude many Americans—it is no accident that anti-Semitism and racism spread most rapidly in the past decade whenever and wherever economic conditions were most desperate (for instance, among farmers nationwide in the mid-1980s, and later among white voters of varied backgrounds in the depressed state of Louisiana). We believe that the scourge of bigotry in the United States, which ultimately is a threat to *all* Americans (including the bigots themselves, if they only knew it), must be guarded against by people at the grass roots, not just by a few well-funded organizations such as the ADL.

Jews, Blacks, gays, and other minorities—as well as the overwhelming majority of white Christians who have again and again rejected far-Right extremism at the polls—need to cultivate a sense of individual responsibility when hate groups come to town or demagogic political candidates launch hate-filled campaigns. This sense of personal engagement should include holding key community organizations—not just the ADL but also the NAACP and the National Council of Churches—accountable for their action or inaction; when and if these established groups won't budge, individuals at the grass roots should act on their own. If such a spirit of responsibility and activism takes hold in America, the haters—whether of the KKK or the Buchanan stripe—will not stand a chance. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 4)

world of work in ways that could not be accomplished through liberal or leftish bellyaching about the denial of workers' rights or the failure of unions. A politics of meaning argues for increased workers' control at work not because of some intrinsic right to power, but because of the negative consequences to everyone in the society of having workers come home from work emotionally beaten down and morally deformed by the dynamics of a capitalist economy. While it is neither a Left nor a Right strategy, but one that derives from the Bible, it nevertheless coincides with some traditional left-wing goals, such as democratization of the economy and of the workplace, to such an extent that it is amazing that Lefties haven't acclaimed it, given the failure of their own strategies. But this is only one more indication, if such were needed, of the deep commitment of Lefties to being isolated, to losing, and to snatching defeat out of the jaws of victory whenever possible. So instead of them asking, "How do we use the politics of meaning to develop a fuller critique of this society—perhaps one much more radical than Hillary Clinton or Michael Lerner intended?" they instead ask, "How do we find the flaws in the particular formulations that Michael Lerner came up with so that we won't ever have to imagine that there might be an opening in the current political situation in the U.S. that would give us possibilities of transforming the given reality?" Better not to see such possibilities, to carp on the ways that Clinton is inadequate, because otherwise one might have a moral responsibility to do more than teach one's courses at the university, write one's learned articles and critiques, or hang out at coffee shops and in each other's living rooms bemoaning how little can change.

To the Editor:

Your policy recommendation no. 7 ("Work: A Politics of Meaning Approach to Policy," May/June 1993), raising unemployment insurance levels to support workers at full or median wage for at least one year after losing a job, has enormous costs

TO BE YOUNG, JEWISH AND ZIONIST.

They set out to change Jewish history by transforming young Jews into the working class of a new nation. These were the youths of Habonim, among them Golda Meir, Mordechai Richler, Leonard Fein, Saadia Gelb, Arthur Goren, Jill Benderly, Marion Magid, Yosef Goell, Fradel Freidenreich, David Twersky.

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Edited by J. J. Goldberg and Elliot King

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"I was personally intrigued, reminded and often moved." -- *Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg*

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for employers. These costs would further convince business managers to invest in mechanization rather than people, or invest overseas rather than domestically. We can receive the result you seek more effectively and permanently by changing the tax code to expand the type of, and tax benefits of, Welfare Benefit Trusts (currently permitted in a very restricted way). These trusts allow employers to set aside a severance benefit for employees. The benefit amount is fully deductible as an expense by the business, but is not taxable to the employee unless received after severance.

Imagine the reduction of tension that a benefit of this type provides employees. Imagine the benefits for businesses if they could create a worker job security fund with pre-tax dollars that can be accessed by the company when times are hard, rather than laying off workers in whom the business has invested. As a small business owner, my desire to set aside profits in one tax year to support our no-layoff policy in future years has been repeatedly frustrated by the tax code. We have never fully funded this policy because our accountants and financial partners (all of whom are thoroughly immersed in "socially conscious investing") have repeatedly told us that this would be poor money management. Consequently, our corporate no-layoff policy depends on the goodwill of the owners of our company. Clearly, goodwill is not enough in most instances. Until institutional structures exist which support people-first money management, even the most persistent and thoughtful among us will not be able to advance the policies you describe.

Gary Wolff
Hayward, California

To the Editor:

Congratulations on making a difference! Your ideas are all over the place now—in *Time* magazine, on T.V., etc. You deserve lots of support for raising the consciousness of so many of us to a higher level.

Florence Ross
Tamarac, Florida

To the Editor:

We remember TIKKUN salons in your Berkeley home when you sparred, passionately, with a number of intellectuals about whether the politics of meaning could impact on the rebuilding of our society. That you could have, after a few short years, gained access to the White House, that the Clintons could be looking upon your persuasive views so favorably, must be a source of great pride. Until the congressional defeat of Clinton's budget proposals and Clinton's waffling over Bosnia, I hoped that this administration had sufficient energy and gumption to effect some real social and economic changes. Clinton's conciliatory style, which seeks consensus for every decision, large or small, does not bode well for eventual success. Our hearts are heavy tonight, considering how many issues sizzle on the President's plate. Perhaps no one could be successful in American politics in this time of wrenching transition to the new millennium!

Marian & Gerry Blanton
San Rafael, California

To the Editor:

Those who try to convince you to abandon the language of love and caring because of the way it will be ridiculed by smart-assed *New Republic*-esque cynicism are mistaken. There's nothing wrong with using moral language in politics as long as one is willing to sweat the details, which, as I see it, is precisely what a politics of meaning needs to do: to imagine what one's deepest moral ideals and convictions entail politically. TIKKUN'S characteristic willingness to employ moral language without flinching goes a long way toward revealing the bankruptcy of the Right's appropriation of moral rhetoric—i.e., all the venomous talk about "values." The rhetoric of "love" and "caring," if used with diligence and rigor, will always have the advantage over the arid rhetoric of "values," for the simple reason that at some point one will have to spell out what "love" and "caring" will demand of us. "Love" and "caring" must have actual, meaningful content, whereas "values," which can mean practically anything, can just as easily wind up meaning practically nothing. So keep on course with the politics of meaning.

Michael J. Quirk
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

Your emphasis on ethical and moral awareness in politics makes me even prouder to be a Jew. It's comforting to know that small voices, speaking wisely, about goodness, consideration, kindness, can sometimes be separated from the noises of the crowd.

Beverly Myers Shapiro
Somers, New York

To the Editor:

I doubt if your politics of meaning is guiding the Clinton administration, since it has lost the confidence of so many middle-class people because it has turned its back on so many of the promises made during the election campaign. Your ideas are far better than their practice. You stress empathy, but they have not shown that very much in their first months in office.

Harry Weinberg
Long Branch, New Jersey

To the Editor:

Although I am joyful at the Clintons' connecting with the politics of meaning, I am less sanguine about whether this will get translated into policy. In particular, I am fearful about a sellout to the insurance companies through adopting a managed competition approach to health care that will not only bail the insurance companies out but will make them more powerful and influential in all areas of national policy. If we don't get a single-payer, comprehensive health care plan (Canadian style), I part company with the Clintons.

Harry Kohn
New York, New York

CORRECTIONS:

The author of *Death and Dying in Judaism* is Maurice Lamm, not Norman Lamm, as we cited inaccurately in the May/June 1993 issue.

The transliteration of the Arabic "God is Great" is "*Allahu Akba*" not "Allah al-Akhbar" as we mistakenly printed in the May/June 1993 issue.

Due to an editing error, the continuation of "Truth or Consequences: The 'Liberators' Controversy" (May/June 1993) was incorrectly headlined.

The Jewish Cemetery in Guanabacoa

Outside of Havana
are the Jews
who won't leave Cuba
until the coming
of the messiah.

There is the grave
of Sender Kaplan's father
a rabbi's grave
encircled by an iron gate
shaded by a royal palm.

There is the grave
in Hebrew letters
that speak Spanish
words of love and loss.
Ay kerida, why so soon?

There is the grave
with a crooked
Star of David.
There is the grave
crumbled like feta.

I go searching
for the grave
of my cousin
who was too rich
to die.

I despair.
I've promised a picture
to my aunt and uncle.
They're rich now in Miami
but not a penny for Fidel.

And then I find it—
the grave of Henry Levin
who died of leukemia
at age twelve
and money couldn't save him.

Poor boy,
he got left behind
with the few living Jews
and all the dead ones
for whom the doves pray.

I reach for my camera
but the shutter won't click.
Through ninety long miles
of burned bridges I've come
and Henry Levin won't smile.

I have to return another day
for Henry Levin's grave
with a friend's camera.
Mine is useless for the rest
of the trip, transfixed, dead.

Only later I learn
why Henry Levin
rejected me
a latecomer
to his grave.

My aunt and uncle were wrong.
Henry Levin is not abandoned.
Your *criada*, the black woman
who didn't marry to care for him,
tends his grave.

Tere tells me she can't forget
Henry, he died in her arms.
Your family left you, cousin,
so thank God for a black woman
who still visits your little bones.

Ruth Behar

Tikkun (tē-kün) ...to heal, repair and transform the world.
All the rest is commentary

תיקון

The Socialism of Fools

ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE LEFT

by Michael Lerner



This is a powerful and provocative book.

Michael Lerner is a major progressive Jewish intellectual who has been an outspoken critic of the conservativism in the American-Jewish community and of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. His critique should not be dismissed as an attempt to set Israel above criticism or to conceal conservative interests in the Jewish world.

Lerner's text goes far beyond the issue of anti-Semitism to put forward a creative and challenging interpretation of Jewish history and Jewish destiny.

—Cornel West, Professor of Religion and Director of African-American Studies at Princeton University

Anti-Semitism Even Pervades the Culturally Hip, the Psychologically Sensitive, and the Progressively Intellectual

Even Jews sometimes internalize the pervasive anti-Semitic attitudes of our culture and legitimate these attitudes in culturally hip circles. Jews often try to show that they are not "too" Jewish--by altering our noses, our hair, our bodies, our clothes, our manner of speaking—and we often put down others for being too intellectual or pushy or attention-seeking because we think these traits might identify us as fitting dominant negative stereotypes of Jews.

The need to disidentify with Jewishness even leads some Jews to be reluctant about subscribing to Tikkun although they know it's the best intellectual/cultural magazine in the U.S.

Many Jewish artists, writers, intellectuals, therapists, and social change activists are invested in playing down their Jewishness, certain that if they don't, they will be "marginalized" and not taken seriously by others (many of whom, in turn, are also Jews trying to assimilate).

Lerner is aware of the Right's tendency to accuse anyone who critiques Israeli policy of being an anti-Semite or a self-hating Jew. As a leading critic of Israeli policy toward Palestinians, Lerner analyzes the difference between legitimate and anti-Semitic criticisms. He also spells out a strategy to combat anti-Semitism in Third World communities. Lerner insists that the main problem of anti-Semitism still comes from the Right, not the Left—but he also insists that there is a real problem among culturally hip and liberal intellectuals.

This book is invaluable—for college students, for writers and thinkers, for therapists and teachers, intellectuals and social change activists.

To order: Send $12 to TIKKUN at P.O. Box 460926, Escondido, CA 92046-9914 or call 1-800-738-5571 for Visa, Mastercard, or American Express orders. Or get your bookstore to order from Publisher's Group West, 1-510-658-3453.