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

TIKKUN

Editorial

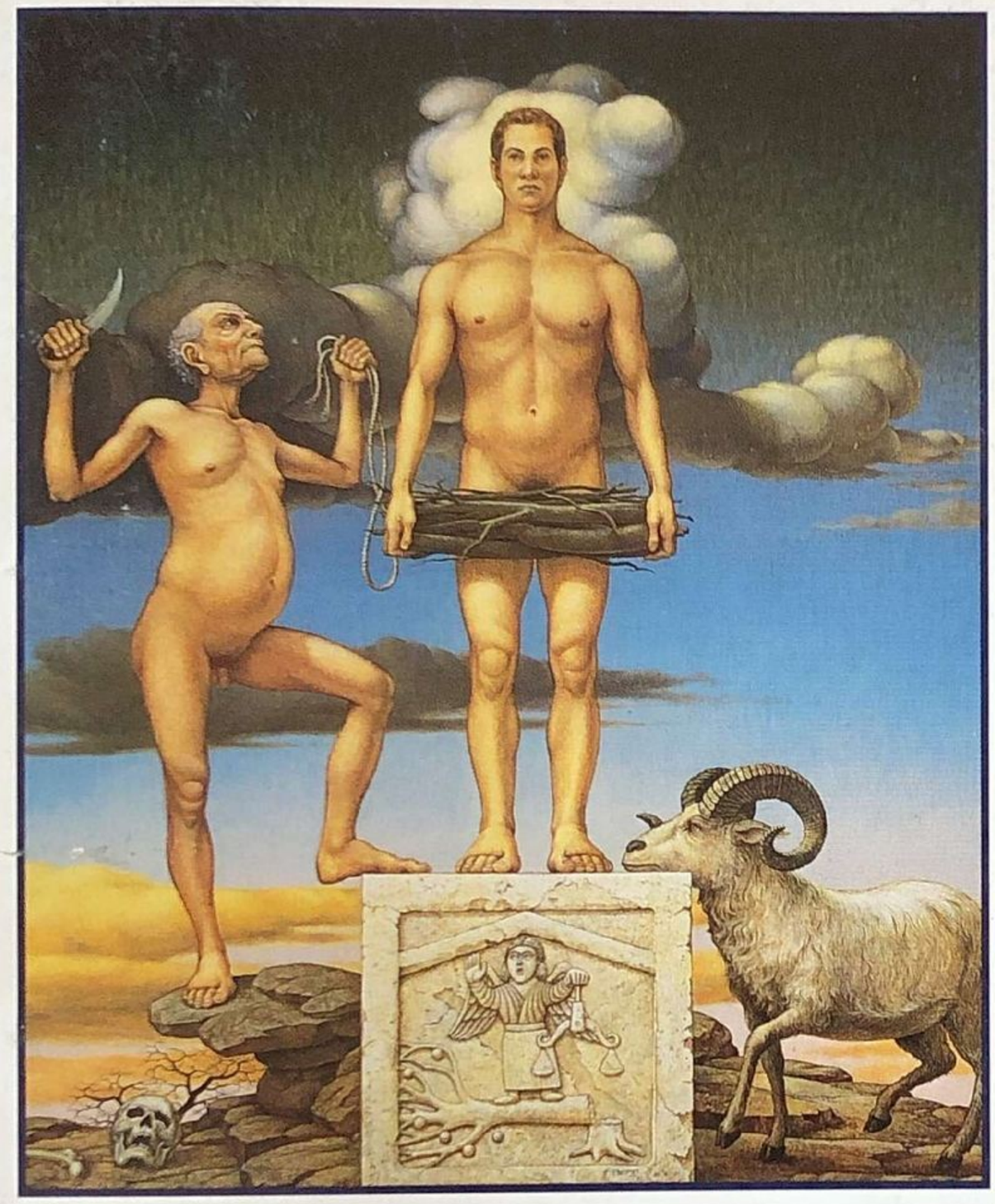
Forrest Gump and the Christian Right

Current Debates

Invading Haiti

Israel's Path to Peace

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1994 $6.00



Abraham and Isaac:

Cruelty Is Not Destiny

Michael Lerner

Clintradictions
Charles Derber

Domestic Violence
Paul Wellstone

Psychotherapy & Teshuvah
Estelle Frankel

Journalists' Dilemmas
Jay Rosen

Facing Cancer
Susan Shapiro

The Black–Jewish Thing
Bob Blauner

O. J.
Judith Mahoney Pasternak & Chris Seymour

Judith Plaskow on Troublesome Jewish Texts
Steve Stern on Jewish Identity • **Michael Eric Dyson** on Black Men
Danny Schechter on Helicopter Journalism
Amitai Etzioni on Redemption Hollywood-Style

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Lotswife

I am the no-name mother
of four no-name daughters.
The young ones, the virgins,
escaped with us.
But my first born, and
the second—the tall slim
one with the long auburn hair—
they were left behind.

He spoke to their husbands,
said we must go,
said, run away with us now.
But those two were rough
types, they scoffed and
turned their backs. My girls—
my first born and the tall
slim one with the long
auburn hair—

No one ever spoke
to them at all.

And then it was time
to go.
He said Now
Now we must go
and I ran after
him, after him as I
always had.

The heat was so intense
it licked at my heels
it burned my back
the heat was so intense.

I ran to keep up with him
At his heels I ran
as I always had
And then the tears
they flowed and burned
until finally
it wasn't a decision
to stop, to turn
it's that I couldn't see
him anymore, blinded as I was
by my tears, my burning tears.

And now it is my fate
for all time to appear
in the story, a bit player,
the scene after Abraham,
that famous scene where he
argues with God, talks with God,
enjoys the ear of God.

I come after that famous scene
blinded by my tears, my pain,
looking back, because I am
a mother and a mother
can't look away,
even when God commands it.

So I'm there in the story,
after eloquent Abraham,
without a name, without
my daughters
turning
into a tear
into a pillar of salt.

Merle Feld

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 9 NUMBER 5

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Letters

EDUCATION FOR MEANING

To the Editor:

Mr. Svi Shapiro's article in your May/June issue raises the age-old question, "What is the purpose of education," which we love to debate in this country. I completely agree with his assertion that the purposes of education are multi-faceted. They certainly include imparting democratic culture and social responsibility.

Mr. Shapiro suggests that the Clinton administration's education policy primarily serves the needs of corporate America. While corporate America will benefit from the administration's reforms, the real winners will be the future workers and the current workforce. Education that prepares young people for jobs is never divorced from preparing responsible citizens with a strong sense of community purpose. These goals are complementary, not contradictory, and both must be served by the education system.

The workforce of America is my primary concern and a major focus of the President's agenda. I believe that education and educational institutions are still the primary purveyor of education skills and occupational preparation. As I have written before, the problems with our educational system is not that schools changed for the worse, they simply did not change for the better. Today's workers need not only strong technical and problem-solving skills but what Mr. Shapiro calls "cooperative work, collective responsibility, negotiation of priorities, and conflict resolution." In America's best schools, the emphasis has shifted to precisely those interpersonal skills needed in the workplace.

Mr. Shapiro writes that the Goals 2000 Act relies too heavily on performance standards and testing. One of the reasons so many people are dissatisfied with education today is that we have

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failed to unite education goals with societal expectations. Goals 2000 does precisely that. States are encouraged to measure progress—to ensure that students have met high standards—before a credential is awarded.

Outcomes are about expectations. Only if we set the highest standards do we have any hope of attaining them. In all too many cases today, employers do not have confidence that current certifications like the high school diploma tell them what a student knows how to do. The skills promulgated by skill standards certificates will communicate to employers, students, teachers, and parents what proficiencies individuals possess.

As for testing, one of the most exciting areas in education today is in changes in student assessment. It is literally in the midst of a revolution. More and more, teachers are relying on the demonstration of skills and not paper-and-pencil tests. Goals 2000 supports just such innovation and teacher training to assist in using new tools.

In addition to the administration's commitment to national service, I would like to point out the recently passed School-to-Work Opportunities Act. It provides a systemic approach to ease the transition from school to work rather than the haphazard technique of wandering from job to job that so many young people use now. The Act ensures high academic standards, provides linkages with further education beyond high school, and affords young people with the opportunity to develop work skills by working in an industry. Research shows us that learning by young people (and adults) increases when education is linked to practical life skills. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is not incongruous with the many purposes of education.

Finally, I agree with Mr. Shapiro about the lack of connection between schools and the world at large. In fact, this is the heart of the problem as I see it. To infuse the classroom with meaning and keep students engaged, schools must change. We have to show young people the connection between what they learn in school and the rest of their lives. Without that bond, the search for meaning will fail and our nation will pay a terrible price.

Robert B. Reich
Secretary of Labor
Washington, D.C.

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If you are not in one, and would like to start one in your area, please contact us.

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PROGRESSIVE JEWISH PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS

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In the July/August issue of TIKKUN, the poem, "Mamaloschen," by Amy Wilner contained an error. The eleventh line of the last stanza should have read: "for keeping not just the dead but memory, …"

POLITICS OF MEANING

To the Editor:

Drinan, Edsall, Henderson, Gabel, and Lerner failed to answer Berman's and Gitlin's concern about the separation between private values and public policy ("The Boundaries of Politics: Values and Spirituality in the Public Sphere," July/August 1994). The answer, I think, is that there is no separation. Policy reflects values. The real question is, which values?

Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, the values most of us try to live by find their most forthright expression in religion. As a moderately observant Jew, I know not only that I should care, by why I should care. However derived—from literature, from one's work, from music or visual art, or, yes, from religion—it is this "why" that left politics is starved for. This analysis, it seems to me, is very different from calling for a state religion or for a politics that would enhance the power of a religion. It's about developing a value-based politics that adds dignity, consequence and meaning to people's lives. And making that politics manifest in public policy.

Dan Icolari
Staten Island, New York

To the Editor:

The choice is not between 'meaning' and 'absence of meaning'; it is between some values and other values. If we hold fast to our own values and stay "fired up," as Letty Cottin Pogrebin puts it, we will most assuredly find the community of purpose that cuts across the definitions that separate us. It happens all the time.

Alma Cahn
Richland, Washington

To the Editor:

I was amazed that Paul Berman and Todd Gitlin, two leaders of the liberal-Left whom I continue to admire, were so completely unable to comprehend the deep psychological sophistication behind the politics of meaning. I've looked in vain for a serious discussion of these ideas in The *Nation*, *In These Times*, *Z*, The *Village Voice*, or The *Progressive*, and now I see the problem—leftists seem irretrievably hooked on the old paradigm of economic entitlements and political rights, and can't quite "get" that those needs are only part of the picture. I remember when Michael Lerner proposed that the Left address the issue of "the family" and refuse to cede that issue to the Right, and how people like Barbara Ehrenreich and Ellen Willis and Stanley Aronowitz and the entire "hip" *Nation* crowd came down on him. At the time, in the mid '80s, I couldn't figure out why they couldn't understand the obvious political smarts in his idea to emphasize that the love and caring people want in the family are undermined by the logic of capitalism, and so the Left could be the most serious pro-family force precisely by helping people understand that the love they wanted was being undermined by the growing selfishness created by the market-society. But now I see why the Left couldn't get it: because they are stuck in a whole framework of thought that is hopelessly anachronistic.

What was even more amazing to me was that Todd Gitlin, who wrote an important book on the Sixties, really seems not to embody the Sixties consciousness, but merely to be a skilled and clever chronicler of it. For me, what made the Sixties so extraordinary was that a movement emerged that was not stuck in the one-dimensional thinking of the communist Left, and that could move beyond the narrow "we're for the unions" thinking that led so many former radicals to support the war in Vietnam as long as the working people in the U.S. got their share of the pie. Some people thought that what was radical about the '60s was that it went beyond this to acknowledge the needs of Third World people too. I support that, but it wasn't really the key to what was most amazing. For me, what was most amazing was the way that we began to talk about deeper human needs. I think that's what students were grasping for when they adopted the May '68 slogan of "power to the imagination." That kind of spirit, the reclaiming of the fullest implications of Marx's early focus on alienation, is what I feel when I read about the politics of meaning—and that's what gets me so excited about it. What a drag, then, to find that people like Berman and Gitlin, who in some ways have much more social power and influence than Lerner, Gabel, Edsall et al., are stuck back in the kind of one dimensional liberal pre-New Left thinking that you find in *Dissent* or in the tired lefties of the Democratic Socialists of America. What makes me all the more frustrated is that these people can dismiss TIKKUN as a

(Continued on p. 117)

EDITORIALS

Forrest Gump, the Christian Right, and the Deprivation of Meaning

Michael Lerner

Some American liberals are about to pass through another cycle of fear that the Christian Right will take over the United States, similar to that which dominated liberal media in the early years of the Reagan administration. The renewed concern was given greater visibility when the normally right-wing Anti-Defamation League (ADL)—perhaps seeking to repair its credibility among liberals after having engaged for years in witch-hunting against Jews who dissented from Israeli policy under Begin and Shamir, or to offset the bad press it received for its involvement in spying on liberal and progressive groups—issued a report a few months ago which called attention to the campaign conducted by the Christian Right to introduce its religious categories and concerns into American politics. In a rare public airing of internecine struggles with the Jewish Right, a bevy of *Commentary* crowd heavies, including Midge Decter and Elliot Abrams, sponsored a *New York Times* editorial page advertisement on August 2 reminding its traditional allies in the ADL that the Christian Right gives unquestioning support to Israel and insisting that the Christian Right is merely doing what Christians on the Left have always done—pushed their own religious ideals in the political arena.

The concern about the Religious Right is legitimate, not because it has no *right* to advocate for its policies, or because in some formal way it violates the Constitution (some of its agenda does, but much of it could be easily made to accommodate the tastes of justices that the Right could appoint to the Supreme Court should Clinton be defeated in 1996), but because the America that it wishes to see is one that would embody a mean-spirited repressiveness violative of humane secular and Jewish values (and arguably of the most humane and sensitive approaches to the Christian message as well). Rather than fight for their alternative vision of what a good society ought to look like, however, all too often liberals rally to the same old tired solutions: shore up constitutional restrictions on separation of church and state, preach tolerance, and pretend that these positions are somehow "value free," whereas the Right is illegitimately introducing values into public discourse.

This strategy never asks, "What is it that we liberals are failing to offer to people that makes them attracted to right-wing religious positions?" Instead, it assumes that the growing power of the Christian Right is a reflection of some fundamental irrationality or worse (sexism, racism, homophobia) that is mysteriously sweeping the country (perhaps because these Christians are so well organized? Or because they make effective use of television? Or because they are better communicators? Or because they have so much money to spend?)

Yet in my own work as a psychotherapist I found that many Americans who are attracted to the Right are seeking a framework of meaning and purpose that could provide them with an alternative to America's dominant ethos of selfishness. As families, friendships, and long-term relationships become harder to sustain, and as people see themselves as failures for not having "made it" in a market economy that valorizes the rich and famous and blames everyone else for not having made it, more and more are drawn to communities that provide a framework of meaning and purpose that will give them some sense of self-worth and some validation of their own inherent spiritual and moral sensitivity.

Communities of meaning that have the greatest drawing power are those that provide validation to people for *who they are* (Americans, Germans, Russians, Christians, Muslims, etc.) not for *what they have accomplished in the larger world.* Unlike those on the Left, many of whom report feeling "put down" for not being sufficiently politically correct, groups such as the Christian Right make people feel good about themselves without having to *prove* anything. This unconditional acceptance provides a welcome relief from the competitive ethos of the marketplace. Already feeling overly judged by a society that claims that "you can make it if you really try" (the correlate: and if you don't, it's your own fault), people feel most recognized

and appreciated in these kinds of communities. So you can't counter the pull of the Christian Right with civil liberties warnings—you have to acknowledge that what people are being attracted to is something that speaks to legitimate needs that have been systematically frustrated in their daily lives.

No wonder, then, that so many Americans are joyously celebrating the reconstructed image of themselves and the fantasized community of the innocent offered them through the personage of movie hero Forrest Gump. Still traumatized by the shocking revelations about sports- and pop-culture-hero O. J. Simpson, and on a larger scale, never having recovered from the trauma of Vietnam which has been conveniently sanitized from official public discourse, (see Edward P. Morgan's article on this subject on p. 66), Americans flocked in record numbers in the summer of 1994 to welcome a new redemptive vision of American history and of themselves. Gump is "less intelligent" than most people around him, but through dogged adherence to principles taught at his mother's knee and hard work at whatever task confronts him, he manages not only to get through but actually to do quite a bit better than his alleged "betters." He becomes rich, he "gets the girl," and he has a wonderful child. Gump becomes the embodiment of American's fear about themselves—that they are *not* enough, that they really don't measure up, and that their failures are deserved. And his victory (much like that of the Jew who Christians believe was resurrected from the cross), becomes ours.

Gump is a brilliant reconstruction of the guiding myth of America that was temporarily shattered in the 1960s: America as the well-intentioned though sometimes clumsy or stupid giant that muddled through the world, trying to do good, often shedding its own goodness in ways that it could hardly understand, yet ultimately the savior of a world that never could fully appreciate the benefits it was receiving.

Gump's America has no class divisions, no intractable history of racism, no genocide of Indians, no sexism or homophobia or anti-Semitism or fundamental alienation. So there is no need to struggle to change anything. Sixties anti-war protesters are portrayed as drug-crazed, women-beating monsters, or hostile and menacing Blacks, and the Vietnam War is remarkably free of the sadistic CIA torturers and the "good-buddies" turned rapists and murderers that were *also* part of the American expedition to stop godless communism.

Gump walks through life with an innocence and kindness that redeems all. Everyone touched by him is eventually transformed, without ever having to work on anything in themselves, without ever having to confront or challenge the evil around them, without ever having to question the assumptions of their society, without ever having to make inner or outer change. It just happens, much the way that Gump becomes rich by chance when a hurricane destroys all competing shrimp boats (we see nothing of what economic pain that may have brought to others), or the way Gump becomes rich through chance investment. Since everything is an act of God, nobody has to *do* anything to achieve salvation. One simply is, and by grace one is touched and favored.

We have here a modern and compelling civic religion that has served as the spiritual backdrop to much of twentieth-century American economic and political rapaciousness. Like Gump, many Americans have gone through the experience of the twentieth century without ever comprehending how their good fortune was connected to the oppression of others. They have seen those who talked of the oppressed and the oppressors as themselves the bad guys who messed up the sweet world from which they came, and they have turned to those who offered upsurges of cheeriness to ward off the collective depression that might otherwise threaten to envelop them were they to face reality without rose-colored glasses. They are not people engaged in historical amnesia—they never knew or understood the world in the first place in any other terms besides the naive terms and vacuous categories supplied them by the dominant culture which they cheerfully and frenetically embraced.

Moreover, understanding history or recalling parts of it that seem "unpleasant" would force many people out of their own self-enclosed universe dedicated to individual fulfillment. They would be forced to take responsibility for a world that seems, on the margins of their consciousness, to be out of control, overwhelming. Overwhelmed with what I call "surplus powerlessness," unable to even imagine the conditions under which they might join with others to change the world, many Americans feel angered by liberals, progressives, Black activists, feminists, or anyone else who would force them to confront the ugliness and pain of this world.

Yet this avoidance is not merely the selfishness of the self-satisfied, but the self-protection of people who feel in immense pain (and shame) about their own lives and have no inkling that their personal pain and the dysfunctions of their families have been conditioned by the distortions of the larger society. Surrounded by preachers and therapists who reenforce the self-blaming by interpreting psychic pain as a solely

personal problem (to be solved by faith, insight, or small adjustments of one's family system and its inner dynamics), many people rush to any philosophy, church, or social movement that can "cheer them up" with messages that the only thing wrong about their world is the people who are telling them there's something wrong. *Gump*, the movie, brings precisely this distorting cheerfulness to American history and to the misuse of American power, allowing us to celebrate how we got through it all and came out OK. It is Woodstock II in Southern drag, an opportunity to misremember and salve our beaten selves in the nostalgia that puts us to moral sleep.

Yet liberals are missing everything if they dismiss Gump's sweetness, integrity, and search for love as "nothing but" window-dressing for American power. Underlying all the ideological conditioning, Americans have an eradicably good and wholesome desire for loving and moral integrity, and they respond to Gump not in a deceitful attempt to hide from others the evil they have done, but out of a sincere need for a redemptive community that can make sense of the craziness that surrounds them. To be sure, there are some who self-consciously screw others all week long, and then join the choir at their local churches or synagogues without feeling any contradictions or ever allowing themselves to feel the pain of the others. But for many more, the contradictions are lived unconsciously and never understood, and the quest for meaning and purpose is heartfelt and desperately real.



Phil Caruso

Gump on his way to basic training.

Forrest Gump unintentionally highlights what so many Americans seek from the communities of meaning: a community in which market values are transcended by a higher goodness, and in which their own worth as individuals is not measured by their success in the world of competition, but rather is granted by virtue of their mere presence—"showing up" as Gump describes it. Using Torah language, we can put it this way: Americans want to be seen as valuable for themselves, as ends in themselves, because each is created in the image of God. If the only way they can feel this is to be part of a xenophobic nationalist or Christian rightist community, they will enthusiastically embrace those avenues.

In a distorted fashion, that same desire gets expressed in the right-wing valorization of the fetus. As TIKKUN's Associate Editor Peter Gabel has pointed out, the fetus is seen as an immensely pure and uncontaminated object, and destroying it is perceived by some pro-lifers as destroying the unborn potential within us, the Forrest Gump innocence that has never fully been given a chance, the decent parts within themselves that many people were unable to protect. The disgusting acts of violence against abortion doctors and clinics may be a displacement of the anger that these people feel at themselves and at a world that has snuffed out the innocence within them as they accommodated to the dirtying realities of contemporary life.

Rush Limbaugh's success in mobilizing anger against gays, feminists, and liberals may touch this same nerve: the frustration of those who blame themselves for having failed (either economically or morally) to embody their own ideals, who feel that they are being judged as inadequate by the dominant society, and who are grateful to right-wing radio commentators who allow them to overcome the self-punishing dynamics and externalize anger at some "evil Other." (The "Other" is typically an oppressed minority group that appears to be receiving the special treatment and caring that most people want for themselves but have no categories to justify. The anger at not being adequately cared for and recognized, an anger that might have more appropriately been directed against the ethos of selfishness had we a politics of meaning movement to mobilize it, is instead

turned by these radio commentators against America's contemporary underdogs who are now portrayed as the privileged recipients of unfair rewards.)

The constant hunger to be "born again" is another, much more humane and spiritually grounded form that this same desire to escape the pollution of the modern world may take—another avenue to validate the good within.

These are avenues that appeal not just to the selfishly self-satisfied, but to those (regardless of social class) who are feeling terrible about themselves and their lives.

Yet liberals continually ignore this pain and are unable to see the majority as anything more than a group of know nothings. It is this very fact that ensures that the liberal and progressive forces will never be able to be heard—because the vast majority of Americans would prefer to be Forrest Gumps than fast-talking elitists who, in the words of the right-wing fantasy, "don't know what love really is," and who have compassion for the poor but no compassion for ordinary working families.

The film's brilliance as a piece of political propaganda for the status quo is precisely in creating this kind of a dichotomy, so that salvation through "not knowing" is the only reasonable alternative to a world made filthy by those who seem so sophisticated and hip. But these are *not* the only alternatives. A progressive politics of meaning could provide a vision of community which *both* validates the inherent worth of each American, *and* also teaches about the social transformation that would be necessary for that worth to be recognized not only in private escapes from a destructive social world, but also in the process of reconstructing public life so that it could serve higher moral and spiritual goals.

To validate the American majority while simultaneously wooing it away from reactionary forms of meaning sometimes seems an insuperable task. Yet the instinctive goodness of so many Americans, reflected this past summer in the continuing commitment of the vast majority of Americans to universal health care as well as to real involvement in heading off the genocide in Rwanda, should remind us that moral concerns remain a bedrock of American politics. Thus, when people turn from a President Clinton, it is *not* because he is seen as too naively idealistic but, the contrary, because he is understood to be practicing a politics of opportunism rather than a politics of meaning.

Over the years, TIKKUN has suggested the form a progressive politics of meaning might take. It would include the creation of a progressive pro-families coalition and local family-support networks designed not only to help people engage in mutual self-help, but also to understand the crisis of love and caring as rooted in the psychodynamics of selfishness and materialism fostered by the competitive market society. It would create a national Ethics Summit designed to bring together all those who *already* seek to change the dominant discourse of American society from an ethos of selfishness to an ethos of caring, and thereby to create a movement for a more ethically grounded society. It would create think tanks and policy institutes committed to challenging the bottom-line materialism and power-orientation of contemporary society and to develop detailed ideas about what a society based on caring might look like. It would foster liberal appropriation of national holidays so that, for example, Veterans and Memorial Days are focused on the underlying nobility of Americans fighting against World War II fascism, Labor Day becomes a day to really honor working people, and July 4 becomes a celebration both of the revolutionary impulses that led to the formation of the United States and of the subsequent people's movements (including the unions, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the movements for civil liberties and human rights) that sought to extend the best impulses of the American people. It would publicly challenge the "common sense" of selfishness in every sphere of life, and create neighborhood groups in which people were encouraged to fantasize about what they wanted from the next millennium on the supposition that their hopes mattered. It would sponsor neighborhood study centers on philosophy, psychology, and history that sought understanding rather than the mere accumulation or ethically-neutral mastery of facts. And it would create weekly occasions for people to meet together and celebrate the grandeur of the universe, the mystery of being, and to reaffirm a commitment to act toward each other in ways consonant with our understanding that every human being is infinitely precious.

This is a much more plausible path for combating the dangerous aspects of the Christian Right than for liberals to figure out some new constitutional theory that will prohibit the rightists from arguing for their perspective in the public arena. But until we recognize that these rightists are addressing real and legitimate meaning needs, we are likely to see more victories for the Right and more panic and paranoia among the liberals. And while Clinton hammers away at his legislative agenda, a Forrest Gump or a Christian Rightist may be slowly making his way toward the White House in 1996.

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Holiday Prayers and Celebration

As we enter the New Year, 5755, we at TIKKUN:

*Congratulate Israel on its peace process, its courageous actions in moving out of Gaza, and its peace accord with Jordan. We urge Jews to recognize that this manifestation of God's presence in the world deserves to be celebrated as a religious occasion, and we urge synagogues to use the holiday season to introduce rituals of celebration into the services.

• Mourn the death of Jews in Argentina, England, and Israel, the victims of continuing terrorist acts. (You may send tax-deductible contributions to the Jewish Action Alliance-Argentina Fund, 61 E. 8th St., #176, NY, NY 10003).

• Condemn the Pope's latest act of moral incompetence: The decision to grant papal knighthood, and thus to further honor, Kurt Waldheim, the former president of Austria charged by the United States for his participation as an S.S. officer in World War II in shipping Jews to concentration camps.

• Take pride in the American Jewish community's generous response to the Rwanda relief efforts.

• Rejoice in being given the opportunity to continue to serve God through the publication of this magazine.

• Pray that our readers and supporters will enjoy a very happy, fulfilling, healthy, and peace-filled New Year 5795. *L'shanah Tova Tikateyvu ve Tikateymu.*

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Clinton's Health-Care Blunders

I hope by the time you read this some form of health care has already been passed by the Congress. But what it is will be far less than what it could have been had Clinton fought in a principled manner for the transformed vision of America he originally promised. Had the Clintons stuck to their original politics of meaning theme and insisted that their own programs flow from a central commitment to changing the dominant discourse of America from selfishness to caring, they would by now have built a much stronger political base that would have ensured a much better health-care plan.

"They had to compromise, because the country wasn't behind them," some observers may argue.

True, but the *reason* the country wasn't behind them was because of their own failure to articulate a morally convincing policy framework from which their specific policy proposals could be seen to flow. The most that they could come up with was "security for all Americans," with its consequence of "universal coverage." Though hardly the kinds of principles that would resonate with our highest moral vision, these ideas were still better than the technocratic language that dominated most of the health care debate, and to the extent that the Clintons kept them at the center of the discussion, the vast majority rallied to the cause. But since Clinton kept on vacillating in public about whether even *that* was really a "bottom line," cynicism intensified, and with it the immobility of the very people who could have been called upon to launch a nationwide campaign.

Imagine, for example, had the Clintons called for and organized youth volunteers to donate their summer of 1994 to going door-to-door canvassing for health care in congressional districts where there was opposition to universal coverage. Thousands would have been mobilized to explain to voters why the "Harry and Louise" T.V. commercials paid for by opponents of the Clinton health-care reform plan were lies. But this kind of idealism could only be activated if the Clintons had been willing to articulate an underlying moral vision. And this they could not do, since so many of the details of their plan flowed from their decision to appease the needs of the insurance companies rather than the needs of the American people. In this sense, it might have been *easier* to sell a Canadian-style "single-payer" plan of the sort introduced in the Congress by Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone. All the opposition to "socialized medicine" that the Clintons feared they would face if they took a principled stand for a single-payer plan turned out to be a factor anyway, although they supported a far less principled plan.

"Still, if they got something through, that's better than nothing," some people might still object.

My response: Yes, and I hope when you read this we are all celebrating that victory. But the reason he got less than he wanted was built into his strategy, and in the course of fighting for more limited goals, he undermined the possibility of building public support for the change that he originally promised America, and for this he and we will pay in the years ahead.

The strategy of compromise always requires yet more compromise. If "something is better than nothing" is your bottom line, then of course it's going to be harder to argue against a Dole or Cooper or Mitchell plan that calls for 95 percent coverage (leaving out many of the most vulnerable people in the society), or that "phases in" coverage over six or eight years, or that doesn't provide adequate care for abortions, or that gives too much power to the health-care conglomerates who decide what treatments people get based on their profit considerations. How can you argue against settling for a weak and possibly even self-undermining system of government-mandated care if your principle is "better

to win something with a compromise than nothing with an idealistic pose." You've given away the store once you no longer have a principle which is your bottom line—and then, of course, how are you going to get congressmen and senators to stand on principle when the President has already articulated that the only principle is expediency.

But the price Clinton has paid is even greater. To know how much, you only needed to listen to Clinton's paid CNN advertisement on August 4, the first of his series of two-minute advocacy ads for health-care reform. In it, Clinton told the nation that they should support his plan because it was truly "the conservative plan" for health care, and that it really reflected a commitment to the market and depended on the market, not on government intervention, to make it work. Here we find the progressive President telling the country that what is to be valued is what is conservative and what depends on market mechanisms.

Clinton's strategy might have been momentarily effective—until the Republicans and conservative Democrats come back with their own even more conservative plan, since conservativism is what is now being valorized!

In the process, instead of educating the country to a new discourse of moral idealism and the fight against selfishness, instead of articulating a politics of meaning vision of a society based on caring, the President reenforces the very ideological stands in the dominant discourse that are guaranteed to undermine not only this but all future programs he advocates. On what basis will he turn to the country to ask for a way to deal with homelessness or hunger in America? How can he be expected to address racism, or poverty, or human rights, or the needs of the unemployed or of children? Will it be on the basis of having the most conservative approach or one that relies most on the market? The answer, of course, is that he has undermined the moral basis for much of his future agenda by strengthening the very discourse of selfishness and self-centeredness that will inevitably lead people to vote for more conservative candidates in the 1994 congressional elections. Clinton can pretend that Republican congressional victories are just the predictable mid-term successes of the party out of power; but in this case, Democratic defeats will be linked to his low approval ratings, ratings that are low because people feel deeply disappointed and betrayed by his lack of idealism.

I've argued before that it's unfair to expect that a leader be on a higher moral plane than everyone else. I don't much care about Clinton's pre-White House sex life, and I've defended the Clintons against charges of alleged hypocrisy in making a killing in the commodities market (because I don't expect that anyone, no matter how committed to changing the dominant ethos of selfishness in this society, is going to give up opportunities to make money that are morally and legally acceptable). But what *is* of concern to me is what he is doing now, his moral blindness, his willingness to validate the most conservative discourse in order to win a partial victory on one particular (admittedly, very important) piece of legislation.

Don't forget Jimmy Carter. He, too, got lots of pieces of legislation passed—most of which were dismantled once the Right assumed power. What Carter failed to do was to build a political understanding in the country that could counter the growing appeal of the Right's positions. That is exactly what Clinton is failing to do, and even if he succeeds in getting health care reform passed and gets re-elected in 1996, he may be creating the ideological prerequisites for the triumph of a right-wing political consensus. If all Americans hear, from the Doles and the Clintons alike, is that conservative assumptions are right, that the market is the ultimate arbiter of truth, the ideas of liberals and progressives are effectively silenced in our political life. If liberals and progressives say of Clinton: "This is our man, our public spokesperson," then how are the younger generations to know that liberals and progressives have a more substantive vision of the good than opportunistic compromise? Watch how, in the next few years, the pundits talk about the country "moving to the Right." This will not be some mysterious process, but the result of people's frustration with a Clinton presidency that presented liberalism as vacuous and without moral backbone or compass. When we celebrated Clinton's victory, we recognized that he might not be able to pass very much in the way of legislation. But what we believed he could and would do was to challenge the dominant discourse of selfishness and to validate a vision of what a society based on caring could be. A president can set the moral tone and champion a new discourse, a new way of framing and thinking about our problems. It is his failure to deliver this, something he could have done without ever having to get permission from a Bob Dole or Newt Gingrich, that is the most frustrating element of Clinton's first two years.

Thus, while we should celebrate a partial victory on health-care reform, we should not ignore the far more consequential damage Clinton has done to himself and to the country to get us to this point. I still believe that Clinton is a good human being and a smart man. But it's time to insist that he also be a principled human being—one who articulates and fights for a moral vision. Without that, America is in deep trouble. □

Don't Do It

Zachary Karabell

As you read these words, the United States may already have invaded Haiti. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's democratically elected exiled president, may once again occupy his rightful place in Port-Au-Prince, thanks to the efforts of American troops. Newspapers and T.V. talking heads may be lauding the humanitarian intervention authorized by President Clinton, and they may even now be heralding a new era of progressive, democratic interventions, sanctioned by the United Nations and undertaken by the United States.

There's little question that if the United States intervenes in Haiti, it will rest on good intentions. There is no pressing economic interest there, and this administration is clearly committed to ethical international relations. But there is sometimes a problem with good intentions, and where they often lead.

No doubt the United States has the military capacity to topple Haiti's military junta and restore Aristide. But then what? If the junta is removed, the elites that supported them will still be there, still implacably opposed to Aristide and determined to retain their control. The elites will still have links to the army and still effectively control the economy. Aristide will serve out his term and be replaced by a successor in the near future. American troops will go home; the reactionary Haitian elite will bide its time, and then, as has happened numerous times in Haiti over the past two hundred years, it



Lynne Barbee, Impact Visuals

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will halt the democratic process and install one of its own, either a Papa Doc or another Cedras.

So the only possibly successful course is for the United States to intervene and stay. In a decade or two, American governors could erode the power of the army and the elite, develop democracy, improve education, and pump money in to develop the economy. It would be American imperialism with a progressive face.

The progressive interventionist argument is that a Clinton administration intervention would be different from American interventions of recent decades because the motives are pure. If it takes a generation to create Haitian democracy, so be it, goes the argument. Yet the progressive interventionists forget history and ignore the reality of the world we live in. Interventions always have unintended consequences, and these are almost always bad.

Haiti 1994 would hardly be the first time the United States intervened in the Caribbean. As recently as 1965, Lyndon Johnson sent 20,000 Marines to the Dominican Republic to "restore democracy." We had no economic interests in that instance either, and the stated reason was every bit as noble as those for going into Haiti today. Thirty years later, the man who became president of the Dominican Republic after the U.S. intervention, Joaquin Balaguer, is still president, eighty years old and thoroughly corrupt, having rigged every election save one since the departure of the U.S. troops.

Consider Somalia. We had no economic interests there either. "A humanitarian intervention" was how Bush and then Clinton described it. It even had the blessing of the United Nations. After eighteen months, U.S. and allied soldiers succeeded in alienating many of the Somali clans and making the rebel-without-a-cause Muhammad Aidid into a heroic underdog in the eyes of some of his compatriots. When the Clinton team announced that American forces were there for the long haul to construct a state from the bottom-up, the Somalis were not exactly jumping for joy at the thought of an American garrison stationed in Mogadishu into the next millennium.

Few would argue that Cold War interventions yielded any better results. Ostensibly undertaken to prevent the spread of communism, the success of overt and covert Cold War incursions into Guatemala, Iran, Lebanon, and Chile, to name a few, was at best short-term. That success consisted of removing duly elected governments with the connivance of local groups whose domestic goals accorded with the foreign policy goals of various Cold War American administrations.

Going back even further, imperial American interventions in Central America and the South Pacific were justified on the grounds of civilizing the barbarians and undertaken in the interest of American economic expansion. Neither Cuba nor the Philippines nor Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, or El Salvador seem to have benefitted much.

Clinton's defenders say that this administration has learned from the mistakes of the past and that with selfless goals, the United States of the 1990s can and must intervene in the name of democracy and morality. It is hubris to think old patterns can be broken so easily, and one wonders if the Clinton administration has truly learned the lessons of the past. And it is not just the weight of past experience that says no to the interventionists; it is also a sense that our government simply can't do it "right."

No matter how much public debate there is on the issue of intervention, the actual decisions are confined to a small number of policymakers and bureaucrats in the White House and the Departments of State and Defense, along with the intelligence agencies. These policymakers are by and large schooled in realism, a belief that morality is not nearly as important as state interests. Perhaps Clinton eschews such realism, but outside his inner circle, many in government embrace it. These are not individuals disposed to plan for twenty years of democratic "re-education" of Haiti or Somalia. They are good at planning for short-term goals, getting rid of the Haitian junta or policing food convoys in Somalia. Beyond that, they are not particularly interested.

And even if they were, what makes anyone think that such long-term intervention would necessarily work? The British empire embraced dozens of nations for decades, some for centuries. In the end, colonial peoples under British rule rebelled against what they perceived as oppression, and the British fought a losing battle for more the fifty years after World War I trying to retain their colonies. That fight helped bring down the empire. The same would happen to a United States which undertook long-term occupations; eventually the people we were supposed to be saving would see us as the obstacle to their progress. They would fight, and we would either fight back or withdraw. Either way, the legacy would be bitter and the cost high.

If the aim is to appease a national guilty conscience for our inability to prevent injustice in the world, then by all means, we should intervene at the drop of a hat. But there should be no illusions that guilt combined with noble aims will help the Bosnians, or Somalis, or people in the next hot spot.

Some say that arguments against intervention sound similar to conservative arguments against federal

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Journalism and the Production of the Present

Jay Rosen



AP/Wide World Photos

Imagination alone enables us to see things in their proper perspective, to be strong enough to put that which is too close at a certain distance so that we can see and understand it without bias and prejudice, to be generous enough to bridge abysses of remoteness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away from us as though it were our own affair. This distancing of some things and bridging the abysses to others is part of the dialogue of understanding, for whose purposes direct experience establishes too close a contact and mere knowledge erects artificial barriers. Without this kind of imagination, which actually is understanding, we would never be able to take our bearings in the world. It is the only inner compass we have. We are contemporaries only so far as our understanding reaches.

Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics"

ABC News: Uniquely qualified to bring you the world.

Promotional slogan

Journalists are people who make things. I like to begin my classes with this statement, in order to counter the common presumption (common among my students) that journalists are people who "find" things—the facts, the story, the truth. If it is too much to say that what journalists make is "the world," it is certainly true that they can have a hand in unmaking it.

"We are contemporaries only so far as our understanding reaches." This is Arendt's way of saying that the world we have in common, our sense of living together in a shared present, of traveling through time with other human beings aboard, is not inborn, automatic, or imperishable. It is a cultural (and personal) achievement, requiring more than "mere knowledge," more even than "direct experience." Far more than "information"—that ubiquitous commodity of our time—it is imagination that permits our "distancing of some things and bridging the abysses to

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AP/Wide World Photos

others," whereby we gain possession of a common world. An accessible means to this possession, which is the precondition of all democratic politics, is what journalists at their best "make," and if there is any meaning in the slogan "we bring you the world," it has to do with the opportunity that news affords us to exercise our imaginations in precisely the way Arendt describes.

The informed citizen is an imagining citizen. To "stay informed," we must keep abreast of the escalating challenge posed to our minds by a world that brings us together and splits us apart in subtle and unprecedented ways. The "global village" is also the desert of "information," the difficulty of "keeping up" with things is matched only by the impossibility of avoiding them. Have you ever noticed that when you stop "following the story"—say, the events in Bosnia—that the story has a way of following you? A headline here, a radio bulletin there, an occasional glance at the images on the evening news: Without conscious effort you remain vaguely aware that Bosnia is "still happening." Since the story is following you, it enters consciousness from the rear, lodging itself in what we usually call "the back" of the mind. Here is the media's storage bin. It is the place where pop songs register their prevalence, celebrities edge into view, headlines leave a hazy impression, ad jingles get stuck.

This territory is what imagination must overcome, pass successfully through, if we're to have any hope of actually living together as thinking creatures in a world where things like Bosnia occur. What I am saying has nothing to do with guilt, or pity, or even empathy for the population in places such as Sarajevo. It involves the perplexing prospect that "we will never be able to take our bearings" in a world awash with information and interconnected calamities, the possibility that the media age will define a new form of what Arendt called "worldlessness," the condition of living without the sense of a common world "in-between" us. What the environmental movement did for the Earth, making it into a common possession we've come to care for, a new politics (and a new journalism) must now do for the public world generally, because it is in danger of becoming no one's possession and thus in the care of none of us.

This is one meaning of the West's failure to "intervene" in places such as Sarajevo or Rwanda—or for that matter Los Angeles. Behind intervention's failure is imagination's. We cannot imagine what makes events like Bosnia or Rwanda significant occurrences in the political space we define as "ours," and so their very visibility in the media takes on a strangely opposite feel, as if events could be hidden within the powerful glare of publicity. When Arendt writes of the "weird irreality that human relationships assume wherever they develop in conditions of absolute worldlessness," she is describing that sense we have—at least, I have had it—when watching public horrors unfold from the misleadingly "safe" distance TV affords.

"We bring you the world." If only it were that simple. If only it were true.

Several months ago, the American Society of Newspaper Editors gathered in Washington for their annual meeting. Included in the week's events was a special tour of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, followed by a panel discussion of the "journalism of genocide," moderated by Ted Koppel. As a guest of the conference, I was invited to attend. Arendt's description of the Holocaust, "the fabrication of corpses," stuck in mind from the moment I entered the building, with its stark, industrial design. For anyone who has seen it, the production of a daily newspaper is one of the industrial

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Clintradictions

Clinton, Cooperation, and the Contradictions of Capitalism

Charles Derber

Despite a formidable array of legislative initiatives and accomplishments, President Clinton's approval ratings are sagging. As the 1994 midterm elections approach, Clinton is at risk of losing key political constituencies. Business groups and many Perot voters increasingly view him as a sponsor of big government. Industrial workers (the so-called blue-collar Reagan Democrats) distrust him as a social liberal. And liberals, progressives, and leftists, disenchanted by his free-market economics and conservative rhetoric on family values, crime, and welfare, increasingly view him as, at best, the lesser of two evils (the worse evil being the stomach-churning prospect of Dan Quayle, Bill Bennett, or Jack Kemp in the White House).

Yet despite the President's slump in the polls, the nay-sayers (such as The *New York Times*'s Michael Kelly, writing in a *Times Magazine* cover story last July) are wrong to argue that Clinton is politically doomed by his personal opportunism and Slick Willie image. Clinton can recapture all of his key constituencies—including vital sectors of business, labor, and the progressive community—if he rises to the historic opportunity of his presidency. But he must re-evoke the spirit of hope, created in his presidential campaign, that he could bring a new sense of values and unity to a cynical and divided nation and lead the country in a fundamental shift of direction from that of the Reagan/Bush years.

Clinton's campaign mantra, "it's the economy, stupid," can help point the way, but in a deeper sense than Clinton or most progressives have understood. In the Clinton era—a decisive period of transition to a world economy—American business is unexpectedly transforming itself, moving in two fundamentally contradictory directions. One is toward "contingent capitalism," which promises to intensify greed, social dislocation, ugly racial divisions, and extreme class inequality. The second is toward "cooperative capitalism," an internally contradictory and flawed development that nonetheless offers the seeds of a new idea of community in America and a potential solution to the specters of violence, family dissolution, poverty, and social breakdown that haunt the nation.

The President, then, is presented with a historic opportunity to help guide the nation away from contingency toward a new American vision and politics of cooperation. He has already rhetorically aligned himself with the cooperative values of responsibility and community on issues such as national service, health care, and the family, but his most important task now is to seriously apply these Clintonian principles to the economy itself. Clinton cannot afford to be indecisive here; he needs to assert a forceful new economic leadership that supports business in its steps toward cooperation, but also mobilizes progressive movements that can help business move beyond the form of cooperation it can envision on its own.

Clinton has pronounced the revived economic growth and job creation of his administration as his major success. But growth based on contingent jobs and compromised cooperation will not endure nor heal the nation.

A successful change in the country's economic course demands a new focus on the part of Clinton and progressive political forces on the contradictions and possibilities of cooperation—the newest and most surprising development in the business world. In recent years, progressives of all stripes, as well as much of the population, have been seduced by the politics of the "culture wars" and have left economics to the economists, with the attendant negative consequences. Fearful that economics is too technical, too boring, or too dominated by big money interests, progressives have lost an economic vision and movement at the very moment that it is most urgently needed and when business itself has opened the door to serious economic transformation by embarking on unprecedented cooperative reform.

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Cooperation is emerging as a fundamental new paradigm of business ideology and practice. As ideology, it represents a startling challenge to market orthodoxy from business thinkers, emphasizing values as vital to corporate behavior and success. Remarkably, the new business ideologues treat morality as the center of market behavior, and make business ethics a commanding feature of business strategy. Management guru Robert Waterman, who, along with Tom Peters, helped popularize the cooperative paradigm in business best-sellers over the last decade, argues in his new book, *What America Does Best*, that a company's culture—"the shared values that give its people a sense of purpose"—is by far its most important resource. Values "precede and drive strategy" and have a "grab-you-by-the-heart quality that speaks to everyone associated with the company and brings the whole enterprise truly to life."

In the new business ideology, values are not public-relations gimmicks, but fundamental elements in market success. Profits, in this view, flow from the consistent application of a value perspective toward employees, customers, and the larger community, yielding long-term paybacks in motivation, productivity, and quality. Waterman goes so far as to argue that companies facing "tradeoffs between values and profits should always favor values," which he argues is the case in highly competitive companies such as Levi Strauss. A direct challenge to traditional thinking about market priorities, the new ideology suggests that making meaning is the best path, if not the only one, to making money.

A second pillar of the new business thinking is the centrality of the human factor. In his new book, *Competitive Advantage Through People*, Harvard management theorist Jeffrey Pfeffer argues that "people and how we manage them" has become the source of competitive success. The "crucial, differentiating factor," Pfeffer argues, is "the organization, its employees and how they work"; motivation, loyalty, and commitment are now what count. The nurturing of people (or "putting people first," a mantra of the new managers that Clinton used as the title of a book he released during the presidential campaign) has become of paramount importance to the corporation; the current management literature reads like an ode to participation, skill development, and human development in general.

The third ideological pillar redefines the relative importance of cooperation and competition in business life. The view of the market system as the ideal form of pure competition is being replaced by a view of cooperation as the leading edge of strategy both within and across competitive firms. In their best-seller, *The Wisdom of Teams*, Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith argue that corporate performance now depends crucially on the art of bringing workers together in cooperative projects. Business needs self-motivated, highly committed employees eager to achieve maximum efficiency and quality. To achieve such internalized control (in contrast to the externalized control of the old Taylorist management system, which relied on money and close supervision) corporations must reconstruct themselves as charismatic communities that have transcended the old labor-management conflicts and, through closely knit quality- and performance-oriented teams, inspire powerful collective cultures and energies.

The new ideology is being slowly translated into a brave new world of corporate cooperative restructuring. Cooperation—in the real world as against the rhetoric of management gurus—involves a dramatic new array of "micro-cooperative" practices within the firm, and "macro-cooperative" practices linking different companies with each other as well as with government and local communities. The most familiar of these is micro-level shop-floor cooperation to enhance quality and productivity (through work-teams, quality circles, job enrichment, joint labor-management councils), embraced by companies such as Motorola, Shell Sarnia, Corning, Proctor and Gamble, and GM's Saturn. Saturn, the most famous prototype, has adopted a new participatory governance structure in which all employees are represented in decision-making teams and decide cooperatively about every aspect of their jobs. Upper-level organizational decisions are arrived at jointly and consensually by "partners" from both management and labor, a style more evocative of a Quaker prayer meeting than traditional business.

Workplace cooperation is emerging at the same time that business-led cooperative ownership arrangements are unexpectedly and dramatically spreading. Through both employee stock ownership plans (ESOPS) and a rapid proliferation of 401K and other pension, retirement, or profit-sharing plans that vest employees with corporate stock in lieu of wages or other benefits, employees are gaining a potentially controlling share in a growing percentage of America's largest corporations.

Employees now own over 10 percent of the average Fortune 1000 company, and have majority ownership of more than 2,000 firms, including giants such as Avis, Weirton Steel, and United Airlines. Conservative projections suggest that by the year 2000, more than a

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quarter of all public companies will be at least 15 percent employee-owned (typically, enough to control the company). In an ironic twist confirming Peter Drucker's 1950s prophecy of a business-inspired "pension socialism," employee ownership will continue to spread because it has proved useful to management as a means to ward off hostile takeovers, to construct flexible and deferred compensation packages, and to increase employee motivation.

At the macro level, we are witnessing the emergence of "network production," in which companies coalesce in strategic cooperative alliances for global production efforts. Networks are geographically clustered small firms cooperating in new "industrial districts," as some have characterized Silicon Valley, or world-wide alliances of large financial or manufacturing corporations and their satellite spin-off units, suppliers, and distributors. Sociologist Walter Powell has described networks as "socially embedded" firms that depend on and help create new industrial communities; they build trust, sharing, and long-term solidarities among competitive firms and, in the industrial district model, between firms and local communities. While networks are a new corporate strategy to gain flexibility and consolidate global control, they evoke nineteenth-century French "associational socialism" and the early twentieth-century British guild socialism.

A second macro development is the trend toward "social responsibility" in business and community-oriented financial practices, such as employee-controlled pension funds and other social investment. "Caring capitalism," in the language of ice cream entrepreneurs Ben and Jerry, or the "corporation with a soul," as Tom's of Maine, the ecological toothpaste mogul, dubs it, have functioned largely as a form of corporate philanthropy and public relations, but are producing a set of innovative social and ecologically oriented business practices which—in conjunction with the other levels of cooperative initiative—are primitive seeds of a new communitarian economics.

Communitarian-oriented business logic is far from new. In the 1920s, companies initiated ambitious corporate welfare schemes, including incipient employee-participation and ownership schemes, to encourage a sense of corporate community. In the 1950s, the era of the "organization man," another model of the corporation as family was advanced. What is new are the specific forms of quasi-democratic participation and cooperation now being advanced to simultaneously achieve flexibility, quality, and commitment, as well as the unprecedented scope of cooperative efforts to transform workplace and management relations both within and among enterprises and between firms and local communities. Also new is the life-and-death intensity of the new imperatives driving business to embrace cooperation in the service of flexibility and global survival.

Business cooperation resonates deeply with the pragmatic communitarianism that I have described ("Clintonism: Beyond Left and Right?" TIKKUN, January/February 1994) as central to Clintonism. Clinton's communitarianism has surfaced mainly in his policies of national service and universal health care rather than his economic policy, which has been dominated by individualistic, free-market principles. Economic cooperation gives him an opportunity to reconcile his pragmatic communitarian ideological inclinations with his political need to align himself with business interests. It is also a strategy to infuse the market system with a measure of cooperation and mutual obligation that he views as central to the reconstruction of the larger society.

The business model of cooperation is, however, increasingly strained by contradictions which threaten to either destroy it or catalyze deeper change than business currently conceives. The challenge for Clinton—which he is likely to undertake only through the prodding of labor and social movements that inject themselves into the politics of economic cooperation—is to exploit these contradictions and shift the economic order toward more genuine cooperation.

The most fundamental of these contradictions is between cooperation and contingency. Contingency involves three major new business-led strategies, each directly subversive of cooperation. The first replaces permanent workers with formally designated contingents—such as temps, "independent contractors," leased workers, and part-timers—who now constitute anywhere from 15 to 33 percent of the entire labor force. The second weakens the commitment to the remaining "core" or "permanent" employees as business embraces continuous downsizing and outsourcing; corporations withdraw the promise of lifetime employment from even their most privileged professional and managerial employees as they seek accelerated technological change and market flexibility. The third is generic corporate cost-cutting, which unburdens corporations of any long-term, fixed obligations to employees while slashing short-term wages and benefits and reverting to speed-ups, hyper-competitiveness, and "management by stress."

If cooperation reflects an embryonic capitalist communitarianism (inspired by Japan), contingency reflects a contradictory impulse toward pure market individualism in dealing with the same global competitive pressures and technological and market

uncertainties. Contingency achieves "flexibility" in exactly the opposite fashion of cooperation: It reduces the commitment between worker and firm and relies on coercive and instrumental rather than internalized control mechanisms. The contingent approach is a reversion to raw capitalism and Taylorism, further immiserating the unskilled, who constitute the bulk of the formal contingents, and increasingly stressing the middle class, who cling tenuously to high-pressure "permanent" jobs in ferociously competitive environments where everyone is expendable.

Clinton's presidency reflects a pivotal moment of capitalist transition. In the current, nascent stages of this transition, business is pursuing the two contradictory strategies simultaneously and could tilt decisively—with appropriate political intervention and guidance—toward either the contingent or cooperative paradigm. The resulting confusion is painfully evident in corporations such as General Motors, which has one of the most ambitious cooperative workplace strategies, exemplified in participatory plants like Saturn, but also has hired a huge number of contingents and turned much of its permanent workforce into migrants forced to move from one down-sized or closed plant and community to another. The distrust and anger among GM's labor force is subverting the potential of the new participatory arrangements, eliminating the trust, loyalty, and commitment necessary to make cooperation work, and threatening the viability of many of its new participatory plants.

If he wants to help consolidate the cooperative paradigm, Clinton's first challenge is to pursue public policies that will significantly reduce corporate incentives to move in the contingent direction. His primary economic strategies have been to encourage growth by driving down the deficit and interest rates and to increase security through new education and training initiatives. But his growth policy, while creating new jobs, has largely produced the contingent and low-wage, exploitative jobs which are incompatible with the new cooperative paradigm. His modest training initiatives may marginally increase employability among displaced workers (and for this reason should be expanded), but actually accept the contingency paradigm's assumption that jobs are impermanent and must chronically be recaptured by workers who endlessly reskill themselves for new opportunities. This assumption rests on the dubious proposition that the new jobs will be available, while also accepting an implausible psychology that workers can endure continuous job loss and discontinuity. Even if workers adapt to this challenge, it will create a gypsy mentality inconsistent with the communitarian logic of cooperation.

Advancing the cause of cooperation requires that Clinton intervene to stabilize and increase equitable long-term commitments between employer and employee. Japan, Germany, and other world-class economies (as well as some highly competitive companies in the United States) have used innovative policies to sustain long-term employment bonds. In Germany, for example, layoffs are discouraged by an unemployment insurance system that gives companies incentives to shift toward work-sharing or shorter hours during recessions. Clinton could make layoffs very costly and work-sharing or "short time" arrangements more attractive to corporations by increasing the maximum unemployment-insurance tax paid by business and reversing the current laws that give companies tax and benefit incentives to lay workers off rather than shorten hours.

Furthermore, Clinton could reduce the allure of contingent arrangements by initiating an even more far-reaching overhaul of U.S. employment and social-insurance policy. Since companies hire contingents to cut wages and benefit obligations, Clinton needs to encourage equal treatment of temporaries and permanents both in pay scales and benefit packages. This means changing civil rights legislation to ensure no wage discrimination against temps or part-timers based on their employment status, as well as amending the pension (ERISA), health-care, and other employee insurance legislation to ensure pro-rated and portable benefits for part-timers and other contingents. Clinton should also crack down hard, as the IRS has begun to do, on companies which falsely classify workers as "independent contractors" to save on benefit outlays.

Most important, Clinton needs to use his considerable rhetorical skills to awaken the public to the wider significance of the choice between contingent and cooperative capitalism. The contingent choice is a return to predatory capitalism and a hyper-individualism of competitiveness and greed. Contingency is a withering assault in the economic realm on values of obligation and responsibility, straining the abilities of most citizens to build long-term commitments in their families and communities as well as their jobs. Clinton needs to take to the hustings to explain the enormous social and cultural implications of the current crossroads of capitalism; his task is to mobilize the population against the hyper-individualistic market calculus of contingency and toward the communitarian logic of cooperation.

(Continued on p. 107)

Domestic Violence as a Health-Care Issue

Paul Wellstone

Domestic violence is a crime. Surely this statement is not a matter of contention or debate anymore—or it certainly should not be.

But it wasn't too long ago that we did have to make the argument, because domestic violence was a secret, something that happened behind closed doors, a "family matter." Police would be called; they would arrive; and they would leave. And then they would be called again. And again.

Now, of course, it's different, because everyone knows that domestic violence is a crime as pervasive—if not more so—than murder, armed robbery, or drug dealing. The only argument now involves what to do about this seemingly intractable problem.

Domestic violence is a health-care issue. Now this is something new. Once this perspective on the problem is introduced, however, informed opinion-makers pause a moment, think about it, and say, "Oh, yes, of course it is."

But what are the implications of approaching domestic violence in this way?

Evidence indicates that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women, more common than auto accidents, muggings, and rapes by strangers combined. Indeed, it is the most frequent cause for women to seek attention at hospital emergency rooms. Not surprisingly, the health consequences of domestic violence include bruises, broken bones, birth defects, miscarriages, and emotional distress, as well as long-term mental health problems.

Although domestic violence touches men as well as women, we know that women and children are the primary victims. We know that the very place in which a woman and her children should feel the safest and most protected—their home—is all too often the most violent, dangerous, and even deadly place. The emotional and physical well-being of women and children is compromised when they suffer or witness abuse. And the costs are staggering.



George Cohen, Impact Visuals

As a member of Congress, steeped in the current health-care debate, I can't and won't let this information simply be stored away to be trotted out as factoids for rhetorical purposes: Congress is on the threshold of actually doing something to address the domestic violence health issue.

In the course of the national debate over health care, we have been hearing the arguments for

U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., is a regular contributor to TIKKUN.

comprehensive reform. The prevalence of domestic violence and the toll it takes on the nation's health are two of the reasons we need health-care reform that includes universal coverage, and a good, affordable package of benefits.

The victims of domestic violence are living, breathing, suffering women and children. They, along with other Americans who need care, give a soul to this debate that goes beyond technical discussions of "employer mandates," "hard and soft triggers," and all the other process jargon that so easily takes center stage in a Washington debate.

Health-care reform—to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence—needs to include universal coverage, elimination of preexisting condition clauses, public-health efforts to prevent domestic violence, and training for health-care providers to identify, treat, and refer victims. It should contain a benefits package that includes a visit to a doctor who will routinely ask about abuse and violence in the family just as she asks about a history of smoking or heart disease.

Universal coverage would mean that a woman who stays in a relationship because she is dependent on an intimate partner for health coverage for herself and her children would know that coverage was guaranteed even if she left the relationship.

Leaving an abusive relationship is already terribly difficult; many of the women involved worry about not being able to support their children or themselves. Many are ashamed to let relatives know of the abuse. And, when women do leave abusive partners, they must worry that the rage behind the abuse will become homicidal. A woman seeking to leave an abusive relationship should not have to worry about loss of health insurance for herself and her children—especially when experience shows that victims of abuse are heavy users of the health-care system.

When congressional discussion turns to "universal coverage" as being only a goal, or meaning 95 percent (or so) of the population, I will be reminding my colleagues about these women and their children.

Along with universal coverage, we need to prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage to people because of preexisting conditions. Eliminating pre-existing condition clauses would protect women who are now denied coverage because their medical records explicitly indicate they have been battered, or because of repeated health problems that have occurred as a result of domestic abuse and violence.

The federal government should be a leader in developing and implementing innovative community-based strategies to provide health promotion and disease prevention activities for the prevention of violence by training providers and other health-care professionals to identify victims of domestic violence, to provide appropriate examination and treatment, and to refer the victims to available community resources.

This should include the development and implementation of training curricula that teach health-care providers to identify and name the symptoms, the promotion and importance of developing a plan of action should the abuser return, and how to refer their patients to safe and effective resources. Already we have taken some steps in this direction by adopting my Violence Reduction Training Act, which is now being implemented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A comprehensive benefits package would include clinic visits that gather a complete medical history and entail an appropriate physical exam and risk assessment, including the screening for victims of domestic violence, targeted health advice and counseling, and the administration of age-appropriate immunizations and tests.

This type of clinic visit would mean that a doctor would ask about a history or incidents of violence as part of her regular medical history interview. Doctors already ask about their patients' medical history with cancer, smoking, diet, or heart disease. Sadly, family violence is not something about which doctors, or other health professionals, often inquire.

Some of my congressional colleagues and my constituents will continue to remind me that passing this type of health-care reform is going to be expensive. Of course it is. But we are already spending the money one way or the other. The annual medical costs alone of reported domestic violence injuries are astounding: A study conducted at Chicago's Rush Medical Center found that the average charge for medical services provided to abused women, children, and older people is $1,633 per person per year. This would amount to a national cost of $857.3 million. Many of these costs are borne by emergency departments—the most expensive way to provide these services.

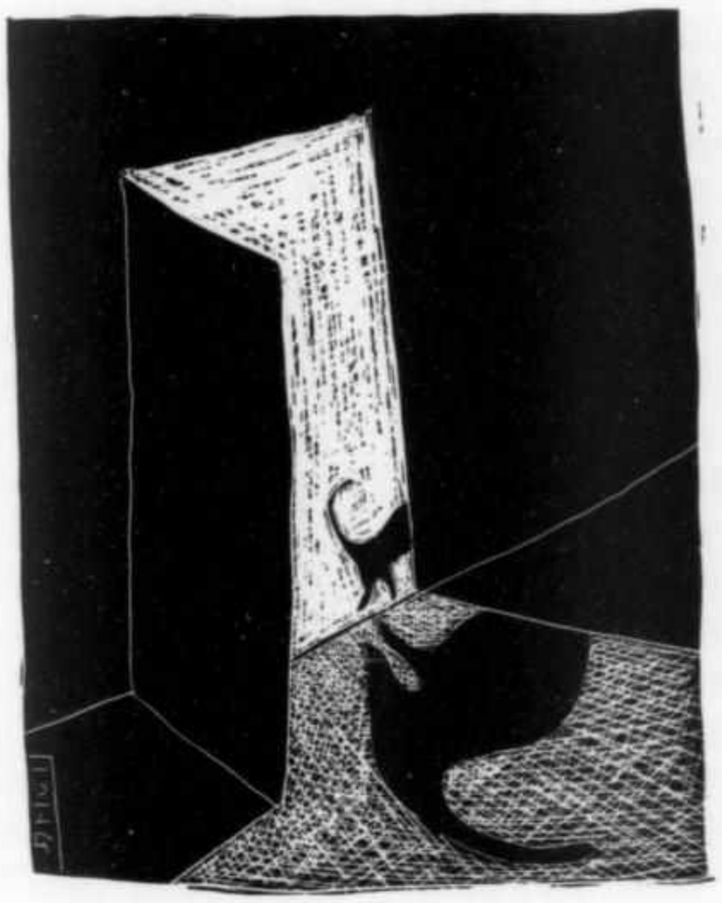
As with the current discussion surrounding the criminal nature of domestic violence, we are now at the point of asking: given that domestic violence is a health issue, what do we do?

One of the important things that we can do is to pass comprehensive health-care reform that is universal, comprehensive, and affordable. By passing comprehensive reform, Congress will be taking an important step to prevent and reduce the incidence of domestic violence.

(Continued on p. 106)

The Big "C"
A Saga of a Cat Burglar

Susan Shapiro



Suzanne Long

It is 4 a.m. With the setting sun, I ended my observance of Yom Kippur. With the impending dawn, I prepare to observe the first anniversary of my last radiation treatment for breast cancer.

It is not for these events that I am awake at this ungodly hour. I have just concluded a third altercation with a cat burglar. It all began three nights ago. I awakened to a series of loud meows, annoyed that a neighbor's cat was making so much noise. As they crescendoed to a fevered pitch, I noticed that they were accompanied by a slight creaking in the floor boards. I rolled over and met a pair of sinister eyes only inches from my own and a set of paws straddling the edge of my mattress. Startled and frightened, I shooed the cat from the room, slammed the door, and took stock. Eventually I opened the door and began flicking on all the lights in my normally empty apartment. The cat had been waiting for me outside the bedroom door and I calmly announced that we would be going out now. In slow motion, I searched the apartment for my keys— the cat shadowing me from room to room—unlocked the back door, and, to my surprise, the cat obediently departed.

Adrenalin coursing through my veins, my heart pounding, I returned to my bedroom, unable to sleep. Could this have been a dream? No, of course not. Instead of counting sheep (actually now I find it more effective to count the number of strangers in white coats who have touched my breast in the last year—I usually get well past thirty before I nod off), I opted to analyze this would-be dream.

The cat is the big "C" of course. It stole suddenly and surreptitiously into my life out of nowhere, stunning and terrifying me. Like my feline intruder, cancer sounded an insistent wake-up call. Its piercing eyes stared me in the face and goaded me to reexamine my life and decide what really matters. I dealt with both intruders surprisingly quickly and easily, then immediately began to have second thoughts. Will the cat freeze outside? Should I have opted for a mastectomy instead of a lumpectomy? Should I have read its tag and called its owner? What terrible devastation is this radiation doing to me? Will it simply come back again? And how did it get in here anyway? What did I do wrong? How long has it been in here? Could it have been when I went out to get the newspaper this morning? That would mean that it's been in the apartment for twenty hours. How could I not know? How could it have been in here for so long and I didn't know? Where was it hiding? And what has it left inside? Did it come in to have a litter of kittens; do I have a bunch of hungry dying kittens in here that I don't know about? The cat must have urinated or worse in the course of twenty hours. Where did it shed its hair, to which I am allergic? Will I be able to find it all?

I returned home from work the next day wary. I turned on all the lights, sniffing the closets and under the bed and couch, stalking my cat burglar and its debris. I slept with my bedroom door closed the next few nights, but soundly, assured of my solitude by the fact that I no longer left the front door ajar when I fetched my newspaper.

Tonight, as I got up to use the bathroom, I heard a

Susan Shapiro is a sociologist in Chicago, whose publications gravitate to white-collar felons more often than to feline ones. She also runs early-detection workshops as a volunteer for Y-ME, a national breast cancer information and support organization.

familiar whine. So we followed the old routine—locate the keys, talk to the cat, usher it out the door. I returned to my bedroom for the post-mortem analysis of how the cat managed to break and enter yet again. Within seconds, I realized that it must be through the space between the air conditioner and the window frame and ran off to the living room to check my theory. Two little eyes glistened in the dark. I found the feline felon luxuriating comfortably on an afghan on the couch in front of the air conditioner—greeting me with a Mona Lisa smile. In the time it took for a frightened paranoid who used to teach criminology to come up with a new theory, the cat had climbed a fence, run around the perimeter of a large apartment building, scaled or vaulted a fifteen-foot brick wall, and squeezed through the side of the air conditioner—I think.

I began our routine once again. But this time, the cat wouldn't budge, smiling in defiance. I cajoled. I threatened. I pleaded. I heaped insults. I choreographed dozens of body languages. I filled a bowl with half-and-half (the only dairy left in my diet) and lured the cat out into the entryway of the apartment (where it now sits, meowing plaintively).

I desperately began to barricade the theorized air conditioner route before the cat miraculously escaped and reappeared on my couch. Frantically, I rummaged through the apartment—cutting board, books—no: "books are our friends" I remember screaming out to a fireman who was hurling mine out the window in an effort to contain a raging house fire when I was six—vinyl loose-leaf, duct tape, electrical tape, scissors. My hands shaking, my heart pounding, tears streaming down my face, I feverishly struggled to find the end of the duct tape so that I could suture my new wooden/vinyl shield across the air conditioner. Pulling with all my strength, I finished the roll, criss-crossing every conceivable angle, and began another. How could my lumpectomy scar be so small, subtle, and delicate when this meatball surgery looked like Main Street in the aftermath of a tornado? And how could either set of sutures withstand so persistent an intruder?

Two weeks ago I had another mammogram. The radiologist assured me that it was negative and that, indeed, my breast showed little radiation damage. He then went on to echo the caveat that was racing through my mind, "Of course, your mammogram was negative when you had cancer." He missed the related fear — perhaps my breast has little radiation damage because the radiation didn't work.

Mine was the proverbial breast cancer story. None of the doctors could feel the lump I had found. (I later learned that the tumor was theoretically too small to be palpable by anyone, myself included.) The mammogram revealed nothing either. When a biopsy exposed the suspicious site, there was no mass to be cut away. I left the biopsy in celebration, with the surgeon's assurance that "everything looked fine." Only a faceless pathologist's microscope detected the malignant cells.

In the course of radiation therapy, they do an ultrasound to measure the depth of the chest wall, lest the killer rays attack too deeply. I relished this opportunity to finally "see" my cancer or at least the excavation from which it had been mined. Like an expectant mother, I stared transfixed on the ultrasound screen searching for some clue, some affirmation that something is or had been growing inside me. A medical student observing her first ultrasound blurted out excitedly, "Look, there's the heart!" But it was only mine. And that and a few ribs were all this hi-tech window was to reveal.

Living with early-stage breast cancer like mine is a no-win battle (in a protracted, if winnable, war). With every test, x-ray, or doctor's visit, the news can only be bad. Either they find something or fail to find it yet again. Today I celebrate the end of my first year as a prisoner of war. I will go to bed tonight, the first night of *my* New Year, with my bedroom door firmly shut, my wood and vinyl fortification checked and reinforced, my ears peeled for a rustle, a creak, a whine. I will count the white-coated hands that have probed my breast and wonder whether my theory of entry was right, whether the cat will persistently penetrate my barricade or find another way to break and enter, and, if it does, whether it will be tonight, or tomorrow night, or next Yom Kippur, or again when I least expect it.

According to Jewish tradition, the book of life is opened on Rosh HaShanah and sealed on Yom Kippur—the Day of Judgment. In the intervening ten days of awe, as Jews examine their lives, God decides who is to live and who is to die. Was this cat a messenger from God warning me of the impending judgment day? Had it come to remind me of what cancer and its forebodings of mortality had so painfully taught—that life is precious and to be delighted in and made sacred and honored, whatever the number of our days? Or was it instead the Angel of Death, notifying me of my new status in the book of life? Does that explain the cat's persistence? But would God select an Angel of Death with a golden coat, sky-blue eyes, and a Mona Lisa smile? □

Yom Kippur, Teshuvah, and Psychotherapy

Estelle Frankel

Since 1978, when I left the world of pious Jews and mystics in Jerusalem to study psychology in California, I have attempted to apply my knowledge of Judaism to my work as a psychotherapist. As I studied and later came to practice psychoanalytic as well as other more contemporary approaches to healing, the words of ancient sacred texts would often echo between the lines. In particular, Jewish mystical teachings on the practice of *teshuvah* (repentance or more literally returning) came back to inspire me both in my own personal journey of healing and in my work as a psychotherapist. The concept of "*teshuvah*" is probably Judaism's most relevant and unique contribution to the psychotherapist's work of healing the pain of the past.

Every year for the ten days encompassing Rosh HaShanah (the Jewish New Year) until Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Jews engage in a rite of personal and collective soul-searching, mending, and healing. Known as *Aseret Y'mai Teshuvah*, (the ten days of *teshuvah*), this period culminates on Yom Kippur. Despite its awesome mood, this is actually a day when judgment gives way to forgiveness; when *din*, God's letter-of-the-law judging quality, is replaced by *rachamim*, God's compassionate womb-like quality. These Days of Awe, as they are also known, offer a time for figuring out how our lives have steered off course, so that we can reset the inner compass that guides our moral and spiritual choices. They also provide a highly articulated procedure for letting go of guilt and beginning the new year with a clean slate—valuable therapeutic tools for a people known to be plagued with excessive guilt.

Yom Kippur, known as the Sabbath of Sabbaths, is considered the holiest day of the year in the Jewish cycle of time. Its power to heal and bring about at-one-ment derive from the memory of the first Yom Kippur that the ancient Israelites observed in the desert, when Moses descended Mt. Sinai with the second set of tablets. These tablets were given as a sign that the Israelites had been forgiven for the (primal) sin of worshipping the golden calf because of their repentance. Aaron, who had participated in creating the golden calf, was appointed the high priest in charge of all future rites of atonement on Yom Kippur. As the first wounded healer of the Jewish people, Aaron, himself a repentant sinner, was endowed with the power to heal all sins and sinners. Every Yom Kippur the transformational power of *teshuvah* is evoked. Through *teshuvah*, all that is fallen can be raised up; that which is far from holiness can be brought close to God; he/she who has sinned can be forgiven. Not only can sins be erased or forgiven: *Teshuvah* at its highest level can transform the energy of sin into merit, sinner into saint (as the Talmud says, "*zedonot nehefachim le'zechuyot*"). In fact, the *ba'al teshuvah* (repentant sinner, or more literally, the master of returning) according to the Talmud, is awarded a higher status than the *tzaddik gamur* (the righteous saint) who never strayed an inch from the path.

Teshuvah and psychotherapy have many parallels. Just as *teshuvah* involves a returning to one's true spiritual and ethical nature, psychotherapy aims at restoring a sense of psychic wholeness that was once there, but somehow was lost. Sin separates us from God, from each other and from our true selves. Similarly, unresolved psychic traumas can leave us feeling internally divided, isolated, and cut off from our full potential. Through psychotherapy we come back or "return" to our true self. This process often follows a similar course to the steps of *teshuvah* I am about to describe.

Maimonides, the medieval philosopher and codifier of Jewish law, was the first to outline the stages and laws related to *teshuvah* systematically in his monumental work the *Mishneh Torah*. *Teshuvah*, like psychoanalytic psychotherapy, begins with awareness. In order to change, we have to recognize that we have sinned, or as the Hebrew word for sin (*chet*) implies, we have "missed the mark." This step is referred to as

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"*hakarat ha'chet*" (awareness of the sin). Next we have to verbally confess the sin, through the act of *vidui* (confession). Telling our personal pain/secret conflicts/regrets/longings to a psychotherapist, as with *vidui*, enables us to face the truth about ourselves, no matter how painful that may be.

The experience and expression of regret (*charatah*) is another essential step of *teshuvah*, according to Maimonides. Regret enables us to learn the deepest lessons from our mistakes. Similarly, in psychotherapy, clients may express deep regret over certain life choices they made which have turned out to be unwise or even tragic, or they may weep in regret over years spent living their lives as emotional cripples. These painful feelings of regret often emerge just as the client is beginning to change and experience emotional growth. Feeling more open and loving can bring up feelings of regret for a lifetime spent shut down. This marks an important stage in the healing process, but it must be followed by work on self-forgiveness and acceptance in order to be complete.

The next step of *teshuvah*, according to Maimonides, involves the resolution not to repeat the sin in the future. In therapy, clients reach a turning point when they decide to rewrite the script that guides their lives.

These four steps are required for all sins. Sins against other people, however, require additional steps to rectify the wrong-doing. One must not only apologize and ask for forgiveness from the one wronged but also offer restitution whenever possible, i.e., return all stolen goods. *Teshuvah* for sins against others is not just an inward spiritual process—we also have to make amends and straighten out what we've twisted in the world.

Repentance is considered complete, according to Maimonides, when we find ourselves in a situation parallel to the one in which we blew it, but we resist from repeating the wrongdoing. Likewise, therapy is considered successful when the patient breaks old destructive patterns and resists the "compulsion to repeat." Short of this, both *teshuvah* and therapy are incomplete.

Reb Tzaddok Ha'Cohen of Lublin, one of the less known Hasidic masters of the late nineteenth century, approached the process of *teshuvah* from a more psychological perspective. Although his writings are very terse and difficult to understand, I have persisted in trying to decipher and translate his ideas because they are so psychologically astute. Reb Tzaddok expands on the notion that sins can be transformed into merits through *teshuvah* and focuses on the transformation of negative character traits into virtues through teshuvah.

In one of his works, *Tzidkat Ha'Tzaddik*, Reb Tzaddok says: "Through the very quality in which one is lacking or wounded, by that very quality one finds one's unique gift or strength." In other words, our most unique gifts and strengths often derive from our very weaknesses and vulnerabilities. To base his idea in traditional sources, he quotes a well-known midrash about Adam and Eve: "And they [Adam and Eve] sewed [garments] from the leaves of the fig tree. Through that which was their downfall they were rectified" (*badavar she'kilkelu bo nitaknu*). In other words, Adam and Eve clothed themselves with the leaves of the very tree which led to their temptation, sin, and subsequent exile from paradise. Sometimes our mistakes and personal limitations lead us to our most redeeming features.

Reb Tzaddok uses the example of the lustful person who is overly controlled by temptations of the flesh. When such a person does *teshuvah*, all the passion that was directed toward libidinal desires can be channelled into a deep passion for Torah and truth ("*chamido d'oraita*"). In another text he says: "Every person has a unique passion or desire, and that very thing which evokes the greatest amount of attachment or desire is also a vessel for receiving God's blessing, if one returns to God with all of one's heart." He cites Jonathan, Moses' grandson, as an example. In the book of Judges he is described as an opportunist who sold out to idolatry for the monetary benefit. Later, in the book of Chronicles, Jonathan is renamed "Shavuel" (literally, a returnee to God) where he is listed as King Solomon's appointee over the treasures of the Holy Temple. According to Reb Tzaddok, King Solomon recognized Jonathan's lust for money and helped him channel this passion to God:

> He (Shavuel) restored this particular passion to its source by recognizing that all wealth is God's....Also, a blessing fell upon the treasures through Shavuel because God had made him a creature whose passion was money. Therefore he possessed tremendous power in this realm. And once he returned with his entire heart, the blessing of God over money was channelled through him.

This story provides a wonderful example of how *teshuvah* offers transformational possibilities. In fact, *teshuvah* is a lot like recycling—nothing need be thrown out if we can find some new and better use for it.

When Reb Tzaddok's teachings are applied to psychotherapy, the client's woundedness or neurosis is

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What the Simpson Case Really Means

Judith Mahoney Pasternak and
Chris Seymour



AP/
Wide World
Photos

The Simpson case sits squarely at the place where racism and sexism intersect. O. J. Simpson is charged with what is both one of the most lightly punished crimes in America and one of the most severely punished: spouse (or ex-spouse) murder and Black-on-white murder, respectively. "If convicted, he may face the death penalty," trumpeted the media as soon as the news of his impending arrest broke—without ever acknowledging the interracial face of the accusation.

Yet some observers have asserted that the Simpson case deserves less attention than it's getting. Both The *New Yorker* (July 1) and The *Nation* (July 25-August 1) have run editorials suggesting that the case is merely occasion for a media circus with little redeeming social significance.

They're wrong. For the glare of the Simpson publicity may well illuminate not only how racism and sexism meet and interact, but how they intertwine, buttress, and support each other.

The Invisible Crime

Many were shocked to hear that long before the murders, O. J. Simpson had battered Nicole Brown Simpson; that she had cried out for help; that no one—not even her family—had helped her. But her story bears many of the hallmarks of thousands of unpublicized, ultimately fatal U.S. domestic violence cases.

And the criminal justice system appears to treat intimate murders more lightly than others. Had O. J. Simpson been white—or Nicole Brown Simpson Black—accounts of his arrest would have been very unlikely to mention the death penalty.

Few men accused of killing their partners are charged with first-degree murder. (The most serious homicide category and the one carrying the heaviest sentences, first-degree murder is the charge for premeditated, intentional killings.) Except in killings for financial gain, most partner murderers are charged with second-degree murder or voluntary manslaughter, the sentences for which often come to only a few years in prison. A July 4 *National Law Journal* article cites studies showing that 1.2 percent of current death-row occupants killed wives, ex-wives, or lovers. (In fact, as TIKKUN went to press, there were reports that the Simpson prosecution would not press first-degree charges.)

Our culture and our courts persist in regarding such murderers with more than a touch of sympathy—and sometimes their victims as having in part incited their own murders. Underlying those attitudes, suggests Elizabeth Rapaport, associate professor of philosophy and public policy at Duke University, is the notion that "there but for the grace of God go any of us who have been provoked and angered by the pain [of] domestic relationships." The "paradigm crime" in this country, Rapaport says, is street crime; crimes "where the parties are known to each other tend to be less heavily penalized, and family crimes tend to be relatively lightly penalized," she explains. Rapaport, who has done extensive work on gender, domestic violence, and the death penalty, believes "there's a sense in the culture that if a man is driven to kill his wife, he is, finally, the real victim, because of the intensity of his pain."

If O. J. Simpson did kill Nicole Brown Simpson, he has one more thing in common with many domestic murderers: He killed, not a woman he was living with, but a woman who had left him. A recent study shows

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Long-time left-feminist journalist Judith Mahoney Pasternak was formerly managing editor of the Guardian. *Brooklyn-based journalist and folksinger Chris Seymour was the* Guardian*'s news editor.*

that 56 percent of domestic homicides were fatal instances of "separation assault," a term coined by Martha Mahoney, a law professor at the University of Miami (and the sister of one of this article's authors).

"Separation assault," wrote Mahoney in the October 1991 *Michigan Law Review*, is an "attack on the woman's body and volition in which her partner seeks to prevent her from leaving, retaliate for the separation, or force her to return. ... It is an attempt to gain, retain, or regain power in a relationship, or to punish the woman for ending [it]."

It is often such separated murderers, notes Rapaport, who are most able to show the "provocation" by their victims that allows for a voluntary manslaughter plea: Juries—and even prosecutors and judges—see a man who has experienced "enormous pain in the form of humiliation, and to penalize him for attempting to reassert his manhood and purge himself of this agony is too much."

The Hypervisible Criminal

If the "paradigm crime" is street crime, the "paradigm criminal" in the American imagination is a Black man. "In the minds of many Americans, African-American men are crime-prone gang-bangers, dope dealers, drive-by shooters," says Earl Ofari Hutchinson, author of *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*.



AP/Wide World Photos

Time magazine, he notes, played on that deep-seated stereotype with its infamous "enhanced" Simpson mug-shot cover in which his skin was darkened. That image, he says, "on the one hand, reinforced in the minds of many African Americans that that's the way they see us, African-American men: as crime-prone, menace[s] to society. On the other hand, [it also] reinforced what many [white Americans] think about African-American men."

Another, less obvious, way American racism plays out is that many predominantly male abusive behaviors never arrive on the national agenda until a Black man is available to take the rap. "Because Black men are in a weak position relative to white men, when something about masculinity gets challenged, it's often Black men who are the first," observes E. Frances White, a history and Black studies professor at Hampshire College. Or as Hutchinson puts it, "Sex harassment—although it should have been of concern for many years—became an issue because of Hill-Thomas—two Black people. Child sexual abuse, which certainly should have been an issue for many years, became a national focus because of Michael Jackson—a Black man. Date rape—Mike Tyson, a Black man. Now we have domestic violence and maybe even worse, spousal murder—O. J. Simpson."

The Connections

Social structures don't exist in isolation. The sexism that makes wife-murder "forgivable" and the racism that criminalizes Black men are not parallel structures that oppress two different portions of the population. On the contrary, a close examination of the Simpson case reveals how they support and buttress each other and, particularly as they affect Black women, come together in a seamless whole.

Perhaps most significant, as American racism makes street crime by Black men against whites the archetype for all crime, so racism is woven into the fabric of the veil that obscures the nature and prevalence of domestic violence—in white and Black homes—and permits it to rage unchecked.

It is a veil that makes the women (mostly white) who live with and love white men appear safer than they are. "The lie," says Barbara Smith, writer and founder of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, "is that the only threat to white women is outsiders, Black people, marauding savages, and that within the home [they are] perfectly safe and everything is fine."

At the same time, argues Mahoney, the perception of Black men as inherently violent becomes "part of [the] resistance to taking seriously violence against Black women."

Thus, says Hutchinson, blaming Black men for more than their share of sexual violence denies the pervasive nature of such violence against all women. "You've got four Black men that have become symbols in the American collective psyche of sexual misconduct, abuse [and] violence. That's wrong—and self-defeating for society. As long as public-policy makers can say, 'Oh, well, it's just those Black guys over there, they're dysfunctional anyway, we know how they are,' society lets men in general—of all classes, colors and creeds and political points of view—off the hook. When the hysteria passes, it's back to business as usual."

White goes further. She argues that the stereotyping of Black men as macho studs plays a role in the

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That Black-Jewish Thing: What's Going On?

Bob Blauner

Late last May at San Francisco State University, in the week before final exams, an African-American artist named Senay Dennis unfurled a mural he had painted to honor Malcolm X and his legacy. The mural was commissioned by the Student Union Governing Board, and the artist was paid $1,500 in student funds. The idea that Malcolm was worthy of a major artistic monument was evidently universally accepted on this very multicultural urban campus, a place that pioneered "Third World" or Ethnic Studies in the late 1960s as well as faculty unionism on the West Coast. What was controversial was the fact that the artist had surrounded the image of Black nationalism's patron saint with Stars of David, which were next to dollar signs, skull and crossbones, and the phrase "African Blood."

The artist and his supporters argued that these symbols were anti-Zionist and not anti-Jewish, and that they faithfully reflected Malcolm X's vision. This so incensed an African-American English professor, Lois Lyles, that she got herself arrested in the act of painting "Stop Prejudice" on the mural. Robert Corrigan, the president of S.F. State, was criticized by some for waiting too long before he ordered the mural painted over and by others for a heavy-handed confrontational mode of operation, including "censorship" of a duly commissioned work of art. The president of San Francisco's Hillel Center, David Bergman, supported the idea of honoring Malcolm and therefore regretted that the mural was constructed in such a way that it had to be destroyed in its entirety in order to remove the anti-Semitic symbols. And it seems that most Black students at the school were as opposed to Dennis's exploitation of Malcolm X for his own purposes, as were white and other students.

The controversy evoked not only storm, but serious discussions of the meaning of multiculturalism, and how racially divided the campus really was. Many felt that the media exacerbated such divisions by portraying the mural story as a reflection of Black-Jewish conflict, rather than reflecting only the views of a tiny, die-hard minority.

The S.F. State mural incident is only the latest example of a disturbing pattern of events, in which certain prominent Black figures publicly express strong anti-Jewish sentiments. Since Black-Jewish tensions were exacerbated three years ago in New York City's Crown Heights, there have been many reports of anti-Semitic utterances, especially in campus appearances by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and his former lieutenant Khalid Muhammad. From Professor Leonard Jeffries, Farrakhan, Muhammad, and the students attending their talks have come such assertions as the Jews controlled the slave trade, Jews dominate American society today, and perhaps the most outrageous, that Jews killed Martin Luther King, Jr. (the latter reportedly from a recent event at Howard University). And on a number of college campuses, the pressure of Black student organizations and the fear of protest and rioting have forced cancellation of scheduled talks by such Jews as Jack Greenberg, the former director of the NAACP'S Legal Defense Committee, and the historian David Brion Davis, noted for his writings on racism.

This tendency of some African Americans to target Jews as an especially powerful and racist segment of America has evoked fear, anger, puzzlement, and perhaps above all a sense of betrayal in Jewish Americans. Many Jews have been almost as angry at prominent African Americans who have failed to speak out against Black anti-Semitism as they were at the perpetrators. But above all they cannot understand why Blacks, of all people, would be turning against them. The historical memory of Jews tends to be well developed, and people know that 50 percent or more of the white volunteers for Mississippi's 1964 Freedom Summer were Jewish, including both of the white martyrs, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner; that Jewish philanthropy made possible the "historically

Bob Blauner, author of Black Lies, White Lies: Three Decades of Race Relations in America, *has also written "Race and Radicalism in My Life and Work," a personal memoir in which he explores the connection between his life-long interest in anti-racism and his own Jewishness.*

Negro colleges;" and that their group has long been in the vanguard of movements for racial equality. Many of my Jewish students see their group and African Americans as the two most important historically oppressed peoples. With such "similar interests," they feel that today we should be allies rather than antagonists.

Particularly in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Jews are very sensitive to any cues that non-Jews are diminishing the importance of anti-Semitism. Thus, I was disappointed at a recent debate on multiculturalism on the Berkeley campus, when one of the panelists, Ronald Takaki, responded to fellow panelist Nathan Glazer's concerns about the anti-Semitism of Leonard Jeffries's public statements by deeming them "insignificant." Takaki, a professor of ethnic studies, was a major architect of Berkeley's American Cultures requirement, an innovative program exploring the experiences of European-American ethnic groups as well as racial minorities. As a personal friend, I know Takaki's concern about anti-Semitism, especially its impact on young Blacks who respond to the statements of Khalid Mohammad and others of his ilk. But because Takaki chose to emphasize the relative insignificance of Jeffries's distortions compared to the pervasive distortion of people of color in conventional scholarship, he missed a chance to denounce anti-Semitism clearly and strongly. As a Jew interested in building bridges between the multicultural movement and European Americans, I keenly regretted that missed opportunity.

Another way that Black anti-Semitism can be downplayed is to argue that because such feelings are shared by only a small number of African Americans, the importance of the problem is exaggerated, more a matter of media sensationalism than of substance. In a recent conversation with another friend, the sociologist Hardy Frye, the latter argued that the extremist promoters of anti-Jewish feelings lack substantial following in the Black community.

While it is true that the media do not give as much attention to the efforts that are being made to restore dialogue and reconciliation between Blacks and Jews as they do to provocative statements and divisive conflict, I think Frye is wrong on this point. All indications are that anti-Semitism has increased among African Americans in recent years, especially among the younger generation. And this includes not only streetwise youth of the urban centers, but those college-educated Blacks who have been influenced by Afrocentric perspectives. And it is the latter group that will produce many future leaders of the African-American community.

Having said this, I take recent poll data which indicates that African Americans are more likely to be anti-Semitic than other Americans with a grain of salt. It's my hunch that Black people tend to feel more strongly about Jews than most other Gentiles do because the histories and fates of the two groups have been so closely intertwined in America. So if there are more African Americans who dislike and resent Jews, there are probably also more who like and admire us. I agree with Cornel West, who implies in his recent book, *Race Matters*, that although on the rise recently, anti-Semitism among Blacks has been less pronounced in the past than it has been among other non-Jews. But despite the importance of these questions about whether Black anti-Semitism has increased and deepened, I don't think they are the most interesting or the most important questions for understanding Black-Jewish relations today.

Instead I would pose the following: First, why are the noisiest and most disturbing expressions of anti-Jewish sentiment in the United States today being voiced by some African Americans? Second, why have these attitudes been able to gain *some* legitimacy in their communities? Third, given that recent history makes African Americans particularly ready to scapegoat others for their frustrations, why have *some* selected Jews as the target? And finally, what about Jews? What is our responsibility in this conflict and how can we act constructively today?

The fourteen years since the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 has been a disastrous period for African Americans. Of all ethnic groups, Blacks have been most affected by the politics and the culture of conservative retrenchment, a climate in which a selfish mean-spiritedness has replaced social compassion, in which politicians have deserted the interests of civil rights, racial minorities, and the poor. And since 1973, the no-growth economy has been an even greater disaster, creating for the 1990s a situation unique in America: one in which the average real income for workers seems to be in permanent decline; in which the new jobs produced tend to be markedly lower in pay and security than the old jobs lost; and as a consequence, the new generations of youth will not, on average, be able to match the living standards of their parents. And yet the rich get richer, while the poor get poorer and the middle classes are increasingly squeezed.

In such a political and economic climate, ethnic and racial antagonisms escalate, given that class struggle is not the American Way. Instead, we scapegoat the most vulnerable groups: new immigrants, Asian Americans, and homosexuals—as well as the two venerable targets of group hatred, Black people and Jews.

It is naive to believe that African Americans should be any more immune to the American disease of group-hating-group than any other sector of our society. In



Clark Jones, Impact Visuals

the 1960s and 1970s they were promised the freedom and equality for which their people had striven for centuries. But instead, even successful middle-class Blacks have been experiencing rising levels of racism (both on an interpersonal level, for example in occupational life, and in the larger society). And for those who are poor or working class, frustrations brought on by the economic situation and the political climate breed anger and a strong sense of betrayal. Hopes have been dashed, people are mad, and they are going to lash out.

And why not lash out at the Jews? Just as most young whites know almost nothing of the nation's history of racism, having been born too late to experience first hand the 1960s civil rights era, young Blacks know just as little about the times when Jewish Americans and African Americans were comrades in arms.

Over the long haul, Black Americans have been noteworthy—not for their hatred of white people, which would be understandable, considering their historic treatment—but for their ability to transcend hatred and maintain a humanistic belief in the possibilities of change and redemption. And this remains in large part true. But I believe that in recent years the racial hatreds of African Americans, including the recent hatred of Jews, have been given a new legitimacy—perhaps pseudo-legitimacy is a better term—that comes from the Left's "politically correct" discourse on race and racism.

During the 1960s, there was an explosion of new understandings, definitions, and meanings of the term "racism," which soon became the primary expression to denote racial oppression in America. Whereas most white people—aside from a minority of leftists, intellectuals, and academic social scientists—continued to view racism primarily as beliefs, feelings, and actions based on group stereotypes and hatred (that is, in terms of the 1950s model of prejudice and discrimination), many Blacks began to see racism as a structural phenomenon. Seizing on a distinction between subjective and objective racism, many Blacks argue that although African Americans can be as prejudiced as anyone, they can't be racist because they lack the power to institute or uphold structures of domination or to impose their views on others. I frequently hear this argument in the classroom, and it is a line of thought that is familiar to me because I helped develop and disseminate it and similar ideas in my sociological writings during the late 1960s and 1970s.

Perhaps twenty-five years ago I thought that the kind of distinctions sociologists make would so impress and educate the public that they would readily adopt our understandings and definitions. It hasn't happened. Although we influence, we cannot control the public's use of language. And while racism did replace prejudice as the key term in the language of race, for most people it retains the same "subjective" connotation as does prejudice. Therefore there is something quite disingenuous about those who argue that Black people can't be racist, because they know that they are engaged in verbal sleight-of-hand. Even so, this rationalization is useful in dealing with their cognitive dissonance and in serving as a green light among some African Americans to legitimate the expression of crude stereotypes and hatreds of ethnic groups (most notably, but not exclusively, Jews), expressions that would be totally unacceptable if voiced by whites. I do not think the Left should countenance such attitudes, nor such an intellectualized defense of

them. Black anti-Semitism is a form of racism and should be labelled as such.

But if the special frustrations of the Black population—the combination of economic hardship and the lack of future prospects, especially for the young—this larger scenario of rising expectations turned to dashed hopes—helps explain this new Black anger and need to strike back, we still need to ask, why the Jews? There was plenty of anger in the Black Power era (1965 to 1975), plenty of accusations that some African Americans were engaging in a reverse form of Black racism. But then the target was almost always "whitey," "honkey," white folks in general, very rarely Jews or any other specific ethnic group.

The late 1960s was a critical period. The Jewish-Black alliance may have already been dead by 1966, when Black nationalism and Black Power replaced integration as the major focus of the movement. But three events between 1967 and 1969 can be seen as the nails that sealed its coffin: first, the Six-Day War of 1967 in which Black militant leaders sided with Israel's Arab enemies; second, the battle for community control of the schools, especially in Ocean-Hill Brownsville, where the teachers and union leaders that stood in the way of Black parents and political organizers were overwhelmingly Jewish; and finally, the institutionalization of affirmative-action programs in 1968 and 1969. Jewish liberals and neoconservatives took the lead in providing the intellectual and political arguments against these programs, which furthered anti-Jewish sentiment among Black Americans.

And yet anti-Semitism per se remained tempered, contained to small circles for many years. Why? I think it's because in the Black Power decade there was still a lively personal and political dialogue between Blacks and whites, Blacks and Jews. Like other Left-liberal and radical whites, Jews were drawn to groups such as the Black Panthers, who saw the racist, capitalist system, rather than specific ethnic and racial groups, as the enemy. Jews were prominent among white financial supporters of the Panthers, and indeed Huey Newton is reported to have had a Jewish grandfather. (When he took a PLO-sponsored trip to the Middle East in the late 1970s, Newton insisted that his itinerary include Israel, so that he would get both sides of the story.)

Since the 1980s, this heated though rich and honest dialogue between whites and Blacks has been largely absent. And during the 1980s and '90s the leading voices of Black nationalism have moved away from the inclusiveness of a latter-day Malcolm X and the Black Panthers. At the same time, main-line civil rights groups and leaders have lost much of their authority. The consequent moral and political vacuum explains the increasingly important role that the Black Muslims and Louis Farrakhan in particular play in providing some ideological direction for Black anger and frustration. Combine this paucity of leadership with the economic hopelessness I've already described, and the result is a nihilism and desperation in Black America, which is why so many African Americans are listening to Farrakhan and other anti-Semitic voices in a serious way.

Furthermore, it is only in the case of the African-American minority where we have this peculiar marriage of a nationalist movement associated with Islam, a religion, culture, and politics which is often at war with Judaism and Zionism. In the case of Latinos and Asian Americans, such a "natural" opening to anti-Semitism does not exist.

How ironic that, aside from explicitly neo-Nazi and Aryan "White Power" groups, it is Afro-Americans who are today the primary perpetuators of Hitler's thought in America. But this is in part because the anti-Semitic discourse that Hitler tapped into and popularized is entrenched in Western culture and deep in the popular psyche. So these archetypal images of the deceitful and all-powerful Jew can be used by any leader when he wants to play demagogue, even leaders of organizations like the Nation of Islam, which otherwise do much that is positive for their members. Thus the recent allegation that Jews killed Martin Luther King, Jr. echoes the 2,000-year-old belief that Jews killed Jesus, and if, as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* say, Jews have long controlled world finance and economic life, then they must have controlled slavery and the slave trade also.

Jews also became a ready target because we have a special visibility, continuing to stand out through our cultural style, sensibility, and names, if no longer by appearance. And so often Jews just happen to be in those positions where they have some power and control (even if limited) over African Americans. I've mentioned the educational system, the contested terrain during the 1960s. At that time, Jews were still frequently storekeepers in Harlem and other ghettoes. Now Koreans or other Asians, and sometimes Arab-Americans occupy such "middle man" positions in urban Black neighborhoods, reminding us that Jews are not the only ethnic targets of Black anger.

Perhaps anti-Semitism is the underlying motive when Farrakhan and others assert that Jews control the media. But the prominence of Jewish Americans in intellectual and cultural life—in the universities, in Hollywood, in television writing and producing, in book publishing, as owners and editors of such important newspapers as The *New York Times*, as well as our significant role in other journals of opinion—

should not be dismissed as unimportant.

In recent years, the racial struggle is being waged more and more on the cultural front. What is at stake is control of those images of Black people that the wider public gets from television and film, as well as the control of the interpretations of race relations that are provided by the "opinion leaders" who write books and publish their ideas in newspapers, magazines, and academic journals. African Americans want a greater representation in these positions so that they can determine how their historical and contemporary realities are interpreted—Spike Lee can do only so much.

Consider how many of the writers and critics on jazz and Black music are Jewish, how predominant Jews have been among the white experts on Black history, Black culture, and the sociology of race relations. It matters less today that these Jewish writers have been liberal or radical and Black-affirmative; for the Afrocentric movement, all this is a negative situation that needs to be changed.

Finally, I think many Blacks have turned against Jews precisely because the two groups have been closely connected in the past. Many people have used the language of family to talk about these ties, which have been described as fraternal or paternal but never as one of equal partners. African Americans have constantly chafed under and worked against the paternalism inherent in this inequality. And since such a relationship cannot easily be reformed, it tends to be ended through abrupt and almost violent rituals of separation, as in the Black Power period when whites (read Jews) were ejected from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other civil rights organizations, or as in today's angry anti-Jewish rhetoric.

All this distrust, envy, and hatred is the underside of an African-American identification with and admiration of Jewish Americans. This identification has deep roots in Black religion and folk culture. The "Hebrew Children" in the spirituals stood for Africans enslaved in America. Blacks have also admired (and envied) the Jewish capacity for business success, which they see as coming from an ethnic affinity for "sticking together." This is typically contrasted with a characteristic disunity in Black communities and seen as the key to the impressive political and cultural power that Jews, a group small in numbers, command. But if the older brother has all the power, he must be using the younger one for his own purposes—enhancing his ego needs through domination, appropriating cultural riches for profit, exploiting Black people in countless other ways.

And Jews make an excellent target for charges of racism and exploitation, not because Jews are a particularly racist sector of the white population, but for the very opposite reason. Cornel West points out that Blacks have had higher expectations of Jews than they have had of other whites, so that when some Jews become point men in the attack on affirmative action, Blacks feel betrayed and unfortunately generalize their anger toward the group as a whole. And from the other side, the strong anti-racism of Jewish Americans makes us more vulnerable to attack, prone to feelings of guilt and responsibility.

Just what is the Jewish role and responsibility in all this? Jewish Americans admire and envy much about African Americans: their rich political history, the profound moral voice of their greatest leaders, the depth and creativity of Black culture and art, not to mention the



Phil Caruso

prowess and stylistic flair of Black athletes. Jews were among the first whites to "discover" these gifts, to recognize their importance and meaning and to market the African-American aesthetic sensibility to the white American public. During the 1960s, such sponsorship came to be seen as a quasi-colonial appropriation and exploitation of the culture of an indigenous people. This viewpoint remains widely shared today, especially among young Blacks and Afrocentric intellectuals.

Just as Blacks have often identified with Jews, Jews have gone even further in identifying with Blacks—sometimes in ways that seem inappropriate, even ludicrous, to the latter. When we "over-identify" with African Americans and the Black experience the result is a blurring of boundaries and an insensitivity to the other's needs for autonomy and control.

Another result can be an almost pathetic desire to be accepted by Black people, to be looked up to by them, and to be honored for one's unprejudiced attitudes. Thus, many Jews feel a nostalgic longing for the days of the Negro-Jewish alliance. But Golden Ages never return, and the hard fact is that the "objective conditions" for that historic alliance no longer exist.

It is not just the now-marked gap in economic status and social power between the two groups. Perhaps even more important, as Julius Lester has deftly argued, Blacks and Jews no longer share a common moral community. "Regardless of how an individual Jew may feel about being a Jew," he observes, "the solidity of Jewish history, culture, and religion are incontrovertible. It is the very absence of confidence among African Americans in the solidity of life itself that marks the gulf between Blacks and Jews." Blacks, Lester suggests, drawing on Laurence Thomas and Orlando Patterson, have "neither equality nor their historical-cultural traditions," and thus Black anti-Semitism may at bottom reflect "envy of the Jewish narrative and the painful longing for a healing narrative of their own."

So I suggest that Jews become sensitive to the pain Blacks feel when we insensitively argue that our shared oppression is more important than our differences. This means that we Jews should fight racism because it is right to do so, and it is in the interest of our country as well as our own ethnic group, but not for the approval of African Americans so that we can march arm-in-arm once again.

Overidentification can also result in a tendency for Jews to equate slavery and racial oppression in America with their own historic oppression. Some Jews use the Holocaust as a benchmark to weigh and legitimate the claims of others to be victims of persecution, a smugness that implies a belief in a special entitlement to be certified as experts in matters of social oppression. Such an attitude rankles "many African Americans," who, according to Walter Fields of the New Jersey NAACP, have the notion "that somehow Jews have cornered the market on suffering." African Americans are more likely to feel that "if any group is the American exemplar of deprivation and oppression," it is their own or perhaps American Indians. Farrakhan puts it more strongly: "The holocaust of black people was 100 times worse than the holocaust of Jews."

The bottom line is that Jews can be as racist as anyone. This is not to deny that Jews also have demonstrated a unique commitment to social justice, including racial equality for African Americans, a fact which has not gone unnoticed by them, even before the recent statement of Urban League president Hugh Price that no other group of whites has "matched the Jewish community as long-distance runners in the civil rights movement."

Price goes on to suggest that some Blacks have been impugning "long-standing allies" such as the Jews "because of the unconscionable behavior of some of them." It is not clear who he is referring to, but it is certainly true that over the past thirty years, Jews have not been as exclusively Left and liberal-leaning as we once were. Now spread out along the entire political spectrum, Jewish America today produces some of the nation's leading conservative voices, and in recent years such powerful political players on the Right as Henry Kissinger.

But despite such internal diversity, Jewish Americans as a group, as Michael Lerner points out, consistently support liberal positions on the controversial questions of the day. More than any other group, Jews resisted the swing of white voters to Reagan and Bush and still vote against their (narrowly defined) economic interests in favor of social programs for the poor. This "Jewish exceptionalism" may be waning as the assimilation process continues apace. But because of Judaism's social ethic and a historic tendency to identify with underdogs, Jews are still more likely than other whites to understand that their racial and class privileges pale in significance compared to the costs of racial and economic injustice—the pain and loss we suffer from living in a society so divided, so lacking in real community, and so rent with deep hatreds and alienation.

My arguments are not meant to deny that Jews are, and probably will always be a special minority, with an unparalleled history of persecution that reached its apogee in the Holocaust. Even if we are no longer poor

(Continued on p. 103)

TIKKUN CONFERENCE ON JEWISH RENEWAL

NOVEMBER 4 - 6, NEW YORK CITY

HOSTED BY CONGREGATION ANSCHE CHESED,
CO-SPONSORED BY CONGREGATION B'NAI JESHURUN AND GEORGE PUTNAM SONS PUBLISHERS,
AND WITH THE COOPERATION OF ALEPH—ALLIANCE FOR JEWISH RENEWAL
AND THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS AND MEANING

A national gathering of Jews who are committed to reclaiming Judaism from the spiritually deadening, culturally conformist, materialist, and politically conservative forces that still dominate too much of Jewish life.

The Jewish renewal that we seek to build rejects the "goyim bashing" and egocentrism of some variants of Jewish life, and insists on reclaiming the rich insights of Judaism from the conservatives, conformists, and spiritually dead who often claim to own Jewishness.

The conference will include Torah study, Shabbat celebrations (but also options for secular Jews who don't want to be part of the more spiritually oriented activities), music, and poetry—plus exciting intellectual and political discussions.

It's a perfect place to meet new people who share your ideals and your interests. So register early—more people want to come to our conferences than we can accommodate, so ensure your place by acting now.

Our conference is co-sponsored by George Putnam Sons, on the occasion of the publication of Michael Lerner's book, *Jewish Renewal*, and part of the discussion will focus on exploring the themes raised in that book (everything from a new interpretation of Torah and Jewish theology to a new way to think about the Holocaust, Israel, and the role that Jews should take in 21st century politics and culture).

The conference is not just about the book--it is about the full array of issues that progressive Jewish intellectuals face in renewing Jewish life. Neverheless, we urge you to read Jewish Renewal (available at your bookstores on September 21) prior to attending the conference. To quote Rabbi Michael Paley of the Wexner Heritage Foundation: "This is potentially one of the most important Jewish books of our times, an enduring contribution that could shape the Judaism of the 21st century." Or Professor Harvey Cox of the Harvard Divinity School: "As a Christian theologian, I rejoice in this vibrant and intelligent new voice of prophetic Judaism. This splendid and readable book will now take its place in the great tradition of the works of Martin Buber and Abraham Joshua Heschel."

If you can't come to the conference, please read Michael Lerner's book and subscribe to TIKKUN magazine so that you can be part of this ongoing discussion.

But try not to miss the conference.

Send registration information and check to: TIKKUN Conference, P.O. Box 1778, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025.

REGISTRATION FEE

Sliding fee scale: (Add $15 to these prices after October 5)

[ ] Students: $40 (Student bonus: free subscription to TIKKUN)
[ ] Incomes below $12,000: $25
[ ] Incomes: $12,000-22,000: $45
[ ] Incomes: $22,000-$40,000: $65
[ ] Incomes: $40,000-$65,000: $85
[ ] Incomes above $65,000: $125

MEALS

[ ] Friday night dinner (with singing and ceremony): add $25
[ ] Saturday lunch (with singing and ceremony): add $25
[ ] Saturday evening dinner: add $12
[ ] Sunday lunch: add $8

TIKKUN SUBSCRIPTION

For conference attendees: reduced rate:
[ ]$25/1 yr. [ ]$50 2 yr.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Note: This is the weekend of the New York Marathon and hotel space is scarce. The conference is at Ansche Chesed, 251 W. 100th (between Broadway & West End). Novotel Hotel at 226 W. 52 has some rooms reserved for Tikkun conference attendees (212-315-0100), or make other arrangements soon.

LIVE IN NY? Have a place for conference attendees to stay that weekend?

[ ] Yes, I can accommodate ____(no. of people). TIKKUN will contact you by one week before the event to let you know if we have someone to stay with you.

PAYMENT

$ ___ Total = sliding fee + meals + subscription
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The Conference Schedule

Friday, November 4

2-5:00 Late registration

4:00 a. Students, twentysomethings, and TIKKUN young leadership meeting
b. Study sessions

5:15 Opening Session: What Is Jewish Renewal?

6:30 Shabbat Services (several different options)

7:30-9:30 Traditional Shabbat Dinner with singing (for those who reserve in advance)

9:30 Evening Options
1. Feminist Teachings of Torah
2. Emmanuel Levinas and Jewish Philosophy
3. Bosnia, Haiti, and Health Care
4. Shabbat Israeli and Spiritual Dancing
5. Jewish Poetry Slam
(remember, the best poet always loses!)
6. Reading of New Jewish Fiction
7. Issues Facing Jews on Campus
8. Reflections on the Growth of Fascism in Europe
9. Martin Buber's Philosophy
10. Jewish Men's Issues

Shabbat, Saturday, November 5

9:00 Torah Study (traditional and alternative forms of grappling with Torah texts)

10:00 Services
1. Zalman Schachter leads renewal-style davenning
2. Non-religious alternative: Poetry and Fiction Readings
3. B'nai Jeshurun (traditional Conservative)

12-1:30 Luncheon with *zmirot*
(for those who reserve in advance)

2:00 Dramatic Presentation

2:30 Jewish Renewal:
Keynote Address by Michael Lerner

3:30 Responding to themes in Lerner's book *Jewish Renewal*
1. Resistances to spirituality: Rational and irrational reasons why a critical intellectual might be put off by the current resurgence of interest in spirituality.
2. Internalized oppression: Why do Jews have so much trouble liking Jews and liking themselves?
3. Holocaust: What could have done to prevent it in the 1920s and early 1930s?
4. Post-Zionism: Healing Israel's soul. Now that the peace process is under way, can Israel move beyond macho to embody a Jewish vision?
5. The Christian Right and the significance of a politics of meaning for the non-Jewish world
6. Feminist perspectives on Renewal and God
7. Forging a Jewish Secularist Identity: If I do not believe in God, do I still have a place in Jewish renewal?
8. Should we actively seek converts to Judaism?

5:30 Workshops on the above topics 1 - 8

6:30 Havdalah

7:00 Cultural event, and light dinner (reservations only)

8:00 KEYNOTES

9:30 FIRST ANNUAL TIKKUN BOOK AWARDS

10:30 Jewish Renewal Cabaret

Sunday, November 6

9:00-10:30 Workshops: Renewal in Personal Life and Families
1. Sexuality and Jewish Spirituality
2. Homosexual Relationships
3. Circumcision Debate
4. Healing our Addictions
5. Heterosexual Jewish Relationships
6. Intermarriage
7. Tikkun Young Leadership
8. Homelessness & Community
9. Creating Feminist Ritual
10. A Jewish Men's Movement

10:40 Understanding Life's Tasks from a Jewish Renewal Perspective
1. Transforming American society: Judaism's lessons for social change
2. Food and eco-kashrut
3. Saving the planet
4. Jews and money
5. Jewish approaches to healing
6. Serving the oppressed
7. Healing Israel's broken *neshamah*
8. Aging and eldering
9. The ethics of Wall Street and the world of business
10. Jews in the media
11. Possibilities for Clintonism 1995-6

12:00 Box Lunch

1:00 1. Blacks and Jews
2. Issues in Jewish internalized oppression

3:00 The Christian Right, The First Amendment & Jewish responses to the crisis of meaning

4:30 Does the Jewish people have a purpose? The meaning of Jewish continuity.

6:00 Closing Session: Next steps for renewal

This is a tentative agenda. A revised agenda will be sent to registrants the week before the conference with acknowledgment of your tax-deductible registration fee.

Cruelty Is Not Destiny

Abraham and The Psychodynamics of Childhood

Michael Lerner

Abraham as Survivor of Child Abuse

The Rabbis in the era of the Talmud, and those who followed them, have often been deeply critical of much of Abraham's behavior. For example, they were offended by his manipulative and demeaning treatment of his wife Sarah —presenting her as his sister to the Pharaoh of Egypt who, assuming Sarah to be single, takes her into his house while Abraham saves his own life and builds up his store of sheep. We have here a picture of an ancient desert sheikh or warlord whose behavior largely elicits disdain. Why should this man have been chosen to be the founder of our people? Why do we honor him?



Cyn Maurice

In attempting to answer the question, the Rabbis turned to a set of explanations not found explicitly in the text, but which may be presumed to have accompanied the text for hundreds of years. Some of these stories were collected in what became known as the Midrash, although others were often invented by the Rabbis themselves as a way of deepening our understanding. Yet many of these stories have roots running deep into the historical memory of our people, and at least some may have been based on collective wisdom and recollections preserved from generation to generation.

It may be a surprise to readers who think that psychological explanations are products of the contemporary world to learn that the midrashic stories that come down to us immediately turn to Abraham's childhood. The Torah tells us little about Abraham or why God chose him to become the father of the Jewish people. R. Hiyya (in *Midrash Rabbah* XXXVIII, 13) seeks to fill in the gaps, recounting the stories of Abraham's childhood that accompanied Abraham's legend through the generations. Abraham was the child of Terah, not just an idolater, but a manufacturer of idols in the Sumerian city of Ur. Yet Abraham managed to demystify the dominant practice of idol-worship and reject it. In so doing, of course, he also broke radically with his father.

Consider the words of the Midrash:

> Terah was a manufacturer of idols. He once went away somewhere and left Abraham to sell them in his place. A man came and wished to buy one. 'How old are you?' Abraham asked him. 'Fifty years,' was the reply. 'Woe to such a man!' he exclaimed, 'you are fifty years old and would worship a day-old object!' At this the man became ashamed and departed. On another occasion a woman came with a plateful of flour and requested him, 'Take this and offer it to them.' So he took a stick, broke them, and put the stick in the hands of the largest. When his father returned he demanded, 'What have you done to them?' 'I cannot conceal it from you,' he rejoined. 'A woman came with a plateful of fine meal and requested me to offer it to them. One claimed, 'I must eat first,' while another

Michael Lerner's book, Jewish Renewal, *from which this is excerpted, is published by George Putnam Sons/Grosset Books, and will be available in bookstores on September 21.*

claimed 'I must eat first.' Thereupon the largest arose, took the stick and broke them.' 'Why do you make sport of me,' he cried out; 'have they then any knowledge.' 'Should not your ears listen to what your mouth is saying,' he retorted. Thereupon Terah seized Abraham and delivered him to Nimrod.

Abraham, the son, challenges the worship of idols that is the livelihood of his father. His father has lost control of the rebellious son and now delivers him for punishment to the ruler, Nimrod. Nimrod, the Midrash tells us, raises the issue to a higher level of sophistication—if he can't get Abraham to worship something made from the earth, the idols, perhaps he will worship one of these other elements, fire, air, or water. But in each case, Abraham recognizes the limits of the natural elements. Ancient science is not going to entice him any more than the system of power is going to intimidate him. Nimrod is enraged once he recognizes that Abraham is rejecting the idol worship that is central to the established order of the kingdom, and is accepting instead a god who is the God of the universe who created all things but is not reducible to any of them.

Nimrod, according to the Midrash, acts on his anger at the rebellious child Abraham by throwing him into a fiery furnace. Miraculously, Abraham is saved. According to the Midrash, he emerges from the fire unburnt and unscathed. But is he really saved? Has he not been burnt and scathed inwardly?

The Midrash reveals that Abraham has had a traumatic childhood. Unable to accept the prevailing political/religious system, he immediately is placed in conflict with his own father, the mediator and representative of the reality principle. What gives Abraham the strength to challenge existing reality? It is the recognition that there is something more in the universe, something that transcends daily reality—and it is this belief that gets him through.

Yet at the same time, Abraham is a victim of intense cruelty. The childhood abuse he suffers is as though he had been thrown into a fiery furnace—and if he emerges alive, it is not that he has emerged unharmed. On the contrary—Abraham is a man who has been traumatized, to some extent made insensitive to others, a man whose experience of pain in childhood will remain with him in adult life—just as each of us carries into our adult life the pain and oppression of our childhood.

The Repetition Compulsion and the Binding for Sacrifice of Isaac

Freud wrote of the repetition compulsion—the tendency for human beings to act out on others the fundamental trauma that we experienced as children, in the hopes of thereby achieving mastery of a situation in which we were powerless and victimized. He might have chosen Abraham as the first historical example. The fundamental failure of recognition that Abraham experiences—his father's willingness to be more attentive to the needs of his idols, and by implication to the political/religious system of the kingdom within which he lives, than to the reality of his son, his father's experience of threat at the vitality and insightfulness and spiritual attentiveness of his son—creates a searing pain, and eventually an emotional deadness within Abraham. He, in turn, will live out this dynamic in his relationship with his family.

Abraham's adult life entails a series of emotional betrayals of those who are close to him. Faced with the difficulties of famine, confronted with the realities of a society in which rape and murder are commonplace, he is willing to abandon Sarah his sister/wife emotionally—allowing her to be brought into the house of Pharaoh and/or Abimelech. Although the Midrash claims Sarah was never sexually possessed by these other men, Abraham's willingness to allow his wife to be taken by them must have been in part a product of his emotional deadness to Sarah and her reality (and in part a response to the realities of a society in which men did not hesitate to kill for the sake of acquiring others' wives).

Yet isn't Abraham's behavior what patriarchy is all about—the subordination of women to the power needs of men? Yes, of course. But to use patriarchy as an explanatory tool doesn't get us very far, because we need to know what makes it possible for an individual to participate in a patriarchal reality. And it is my contention that we can't answer this simply in terms of the great benefits of male power that patriarchy provides—because those benefits are only great if they provide what human beings really want. Yet power is *not* what Abraham the child wanted—his is not the story of a worshiper of power and control. To achieve power and control, he had a clear path: cooperate with his father and the political/religious system of his time, inherit his father's idol-manufacturing business, and become a patriarch in Ur. Abraham wanted something more. He was troubled by his recognition that something was fundamentally wrong with his inherited worldview. And that made him leave the society within which he lived and seek something else.

When God first addresses Abraham in the Torah, it is with the injunction to leave behind the world from which he came and to try to find something new. "*Lech lecha me-artzecha, u'mee'moladateecha u'mee beyt avicha el ha'aretz asher ar'eka*—get thee out of your land and your homeland and your father's house to the land that I will

show you." (Genesis, XII, 1). There is no possibility of reforming the old world, God seems to indicate to Abraham. No changes will make it possible for him to live in peace with the place from which he comes. He must get out, break with his country, his homeland, his father's house. The demand to leave the old order by going to something new, not totally determinate, but something that will eventually become clear—this is the first command faced by the first Jew, the command to move beyond a world that is oppressive, to get to a new place and build a different kind of world. If Jews have been "wandering" ever since, we have been wandering toward the reality that would transcend the cruelty and pain of the places from which we came.

Yet in the deepest sense, Abraham continually fails to live up to this command. Physically he is able to cross the river, to become an "ivri" or "Hebrew." Theologian Rachel Adler points out that to be a crosser of boundaries, to break the normal boundaries, and to pass beyond the established constraints—is the root meaning of the word "ivri" that is translated in the English word "Hebrew." Abraham is the first boundary-smasher, who does not recognize the constraints of "reality," who rejects what is and seeks what ought to be. To the extent that Jews have internalized this cultural and religious legacy, to be the Hebrews or boundary-smashers who go beyond "the is" and fight for "the ought," to that extent do we become Children of Abraham and he becomes our ancestor.

And yet Abraham, like all of his children throughout the ages, repeatedly fails. He cannot live up to God's command. He crosses the physical boundary. He gets out of the corrupt land from which he came, and the painful and oppressive childhood of his father's house. But he can't get the oppression and corruption out of him; in the deepest sense, he cannot leave his father's house. He remains loyal to the insensitivity and pain that have been inflicted upon him. The failure of recognition that he experiences with his own father, the betrayal of human caring and connection, will now be acted out on others. So Abraham turns his back on Sarah.

Here, at the very beginning, we find the overwhelming distortion, not just in Abraham, but in those who told the story and managed to leave out the story of Sarah. We will never know how many women told the story differently, because the text that we have received gives us only traces of who this woman was, her power, her sense of mission, her frustration at being with a man who could be so full of contradictions, so full of transcendence and yet so deeply a product of his own social conditioning, so unable to recognize who Sarah, our foremother, was. I mourn the absence of Sarah's story, even as I proceed to watch Abraham in all his limitations.

The story proceeds to tell of Sarah, unable to give Abraham children, encouraging him to have relations with the Egyptian slave woman Hagar, who bears Abraham's son Ishmael. Yet Sarah's jealousy of Hagar leads her to drive Hagar and Ishmael away. Abraham allows it. The emotional deadness within him allows him to distance himself from the reality that the woman he has slept with and the son she has borne him may soon perish in the desert. How can our people begin its history with such a monumental failure of recognition? Ishmael, the first son of Abraham, is discarded and ignored. The pain of that failure of recognition will reverberate through the ages. According to the tradition, Ishmael is the father of the Arabs. Islam identifies with him. Perhaps partially in reaction to the misrecognition of Ishmael, Islam took many of the ideas of the Bible yet managed to demonize the Jews and sometimes to oppress us in Islamic lands. It is only now, with the agreement of mutual recognition between Palestinians and Israelis, that the possibility of healing this first misrecognition returns to the historical agenda.

But there is more to the story than Abraham's emotional distancing. Just as Abraham managed to transcend the deadness that surrounded him in the idolatrous culture in which he grew up (hence, could emerge from the furnace into which he had been thrown), Abraham appears in two Torah stories as someone who is able to transcend the logic of the world as constituted.

In the first of these stories, God tells Abraham that He/She will destroy Sodom, the city of the plain that is the living embodiment of evil and insensitivity. When Abraham hears of the level of destruction that is about to come upon the Earth, he challenges God to defend His/Her actions. After all, it was precisely the absence of compassion and the prevalence of cruelty that made Abraham rebel in his childhood and leave his homeland. No matter how imperfectly he has managed to stay true to his own ideals, no matter how much the logic of the world and the logic of his own childhood have combined to make him lose touch with his original rebellion against the world of cruelty, Abraham now faces a situation that forces him to reassert his deepest vision of what the world ought to be like. In a striking argument, Abraham questions whether God has not forgotten the spark of compassion that is central to God's being. "Will not the judge of all the Earth deal justly?"

Abraham thus challenges God, just as he had challenged Terah, insisting on the possibility of compassion, reminding God that there must be attentiveness to human suffering. We can imagine Abraham having this argument with the voice of God within as he witnesses what must otherwise have been the incomprehensible event of massive earthquake and

destruction. After all, the God for whom he left his childhood home cannot be a God who is indifferent to human suffering.

It may have been easier to show some feeling and identification with Sodom than with those closer to home (such as Ishmael). Abraham has less invested in Sodom, and its destruction may not raise for him a direct confrontation with the internalized pain of his childhood. So he can challenge the evil in the world without yet having to face the evil within himself. But the Akedah, the binding of Isaac for sacrifice, is quite a different kind of crisis for Abraham.

The Akedah has become one of the central events of Jewish religious history. I believe its original significance for Judaism has been lost or transformed through the centuries, replaced with meanings quite different from those that may have originally indicated the greatness of Abraham.

Abraham, the boy who was thrown into the flames, the child who was so deeply abandoned and betrayed by his father, is finally blessed with a son Isaac by his elderly wife Sarah. And yet, Abraham has never truly broken with the pain of his own childhood, the emotional deadness, and the need to master that reality. The repetition compulsion that shapes all of us suddenly makes its tragic appearance in the life of Abraham. The voices of the gods of his past have not been quelled; they remain within. And so, like so many of those in the land that he left, Abraham hears the voices of these gods, now in the voice of God, telling him to do to his own son what was done to him. As he was thrown into the fire, so he will pass on the pain to his own beloved. "Take your son, your only son, the one whom you love, Isaac, and offer him in burnt offering in the place I will show you."

At this moment, Abraham must confront the central problem facing every religious person: the difficulty in separating the voice of God from the voice of the legacy of pain and cruelty that dominates the world and is embedded in our psyches.

The greatness of Abraham is *not* that he took his son to Mt. Moriah, the Temple mount (the place where today stand both the Western Wall sacred to Jews and the Dome of the Rock sacred to Islam) so that he could sacrifice his son. No. The greatness of Abraham is that he didn't go through with it. The emotional deadness that allowed him to let Ishmael be cast off into the desert is now overcome as he looks into the eyes of his son bound for slaughter. At the very last moment, Abraham hears the true voice of God, the voice that says, "Don't send your hand onto the youth and don't make any blemish." Don't do it, Abraham, says God, you don't have to do it. You can break the pattern of passing on to the next generation the pain and cruelty that have been delivered to you. This is the moment of transcendence; the moment in which Abraham finally accepts as real the commandment that started his journey, to get out of his father's house. The real God of the universe is not the voices of cruelty that he had experienced and heard in childhood; it is rather a God of compassion and justice who does not command the sacrifice of the innocent.

Startlingly, the text itself points to two different voices that Abraham has heard, *not* one voice that has changed its mind. In Hebrew, when the text talks about the voice that tells Abraham to take his son, it is "*ha-elohim*" (which could be translated, "the gods"). But the voice that tells Abraham *not* to lay his hand on the young boy is a messenger of YHVH, the four letters that Jewish tradition identifies with the embodiment of God as the transformer and liberator from Egypt. It is YHVH who tells Abraham that the chain of pain can be broken—and that makes it possible for Abraham to recognize Isaac as another human being created in the image of God and hence infinitely precious.

The Danger in Breaking the Chain of Pain

It is at this moment of breaking the chain of necessity, transcending the psychological repetition pattern that makes us act out on the next generation that which was done to us, that Abraham becomes the father of our people. No wonder that Jews read this story on Rosh HaShanah, the holiday on which Jewish tradition tells us we can start to wipe our own slates clean and begin again. The liturgy for the Jewish New Year tells us clearly that what has been in our lives does not ultimately and completely have to bind us, limit us, make us less than we could and should be. If Abraham could transcend the voices of his childhood, the tradition is telling us, so can we! Our personal lives and our collective lives can be radically reconstructed. Abraham's choice becomes the paradigm for our choice: Just as he managed to transcend his past, so can we. Nor are the social implications hidden: The Rosh HaShanah liturgy explicitly presents us with the utopian possibility as a real possibility—that God will govern the Earth, that the kingdoms of arrogance will be utterly destroyed, that righteousness and goodness will triumph. Written at the time when the king of Persia called himself "the King of Kings," the prayer insists that the *king* of the King of Kings can actually run the world. It is a revolutionary message—and it was understood as such by the rulers of the world, who found Judaism anathema. It was Judaism's revolutionary message that led them to want to persecute and murder Jews.

In choosing to stay in the Jewish world and to

promulgate its revolutionary message, Jews throughout history understood that they were in effect exposing their children to possible persecution and even death. Thus, the very act of staying true to Judaism and rearing one's children as Jews is a replication of the binding of Isaac. We were taking our children and sacrificing them, that is, making them vulnerable to oppression, assault, rape, homelessness, expulsion, and murder—and we were doing this in the name of staying true to our God, just as Abraham was sacrificing Isaac in the name of his God. Nor were the Jews always passive victims in this process—we were often a cantankerous force in the ancient world, challenging the power of Rome and other imperial systems, having learned from our own history that oppression was neither necessary nor inevitable.

But when our message provoked the heavy hand of imperial oppression, and we were subjected to intense physical persecution, the meaning of the Akedah was transformed in popular Jewish consciousness. The greatness of Abraham was found to be his willingness to take his son to be sacrificed, rather than his ability to transcend what I am calling the voices of pain and cruelty. Abraham became "the knight of faith," in Kierkegaard's imagery—the man who could defy the rational constraints of the world to stand by the command of his God. This construal of Abraham made it possible for many Jews to understand their own religious and political persecution and choose martyrdom or risk of death, seeing in that choice a repetition of the faith of Abraham. Generations of Jews, faced with the choice of giving up their Jewishness or facing death, chose martyrdom, a death that could sanctify the Name of God (*kidushat ha'shem*) by insisting on remaining true to God's commandments. These martyrs kept alive the stubborn spirit of defiance against a world of oppression. And their example has encouraged Jews throughout the ages to subject themselves to pain and oppression rather than give up the message of Judaism.

And yet, in the process, some of the message was lost. The original message was that the cruelty was not inevitable—it could be overcome. But by the time the Jews faced the overwhelming power of Greece and Rome, many found it hard to remain witnesses to this truth. The world seemed so powerfully to be giving another message: that cruelty was endemic. So during that period, we begin to get a different kind of reading of Torah, one that sees this cruelty as part of God, so that our task is to be faithful to God's cruelty but to disallow human cruelty. This was a compromise position, one that did not give in to Greek or Roman imperialism, and rejected their power. In this reading, Abraham's greatness becomes his ability to accept the cruelty that God intends in the world (read: the triumph of various forms of imperialism) but to reject the gods of Greece or Rome and to stay loyal to our one God. As this reading of the texts becomes increasingly authoritative, Jews shift their focus from Judaism as a religion of transformation and begin to construct it as a religion that accepts the evil of the world and retains faith that there is a God who gives meaning to the evil and will ultimately redeem the world in ways that we cannot understand, with little relation to our actions.



Suzanne Long

Despite the prevalence of this interpretation of the Akedah, there is another reading of these texts in which the *real* continuity with Abraham lies in our ability to deny that the pain and suffering in the world is ultimately part of God's plan or God's will. To stay true to that possibility, we may have to be prepared to sacrifice ourselves and our children, *not* because God has made the world that way but because the human world is flawed in ways that generate cruelty and lead some people to hurt those who want the world to be different. And no one gets more hurt than those who proclaim to the world that the hurting and pain are not necessary, that it all can be changed, that what has been done to us need not be passed on to others. The Jews have experienced some of the worst suffering and oppression of any group in human history precisely because we proclaimed that the suffering and cruelty could be overcome.

Nevertheless, for many Jews who are faced with the overwhelming cruelty of the world, it seems more plausible to believe that it was really God who had ordered the sacrifice, and that their own sacrifices were somehow sanctioned as part of God's will rather than simply the painful consequences of a screwed-up world. It may be easier to face the pain and suffering if one believes that this is what God wants, if the evil is

somehow part of God's plan for the world, or God's plan for the Jews, or God's test for the Jews. So if we have to suffer in order to be true witnesses to God, why not attribute that suffering to God rather than see it as a consequence of stupid and evil people who might have acted differently?

What kind of a God would order what Abraham heard ordered? It is not a God very different from the gods that Abraham had supposedly left behind. Abraham's problem is our problem: to distinguish between the word of God and the unconscious legacy of pain presenting itself as if it were the voice of God. The moment at which Abraham was able to distinguish between these two voices was the moment in which he heard God telling him not to pass on the pain to his son. Hearing *that* God, the God he had experienced as a young man, the God that had led him to reject the world of his childhood, was what made Abraham the father of the Jewish people. It was to *that* God that we, the Jewish people, bound ourselves on Mt. Moriah, precisely by believing that the pain and cruelty manifest in so many aspects of the world need not govern the world and need not govern our own internal lives.

This is the promise and the problem of Judaism: to break the chains of necessity that link the generations one to another in a cycle of violence and cruelty and internalized oppression. Abraham did it, partially and imperfectly, but nevertheless he did it. And that is where Judaism began.

Judaism does not begin with a human being who is the embodiment of love and goodness and full transcendence. It begins with a human being who is conflicted, who hears different voices, who has trouble knowing which really is the voice of God. That is, it begins in the real world, the world of empires and ruling classes and parents who mediate the larger society and become the instruments for delivering to each of us the legacy of unresolved pain, as well as the possibilities for transcendence and freedom and love. Here Abraham stands out as the being whose life gives us the hint, the barest hint, yet enough to be a message of hope, the good news, that it is possible to break the chain of necessity, that we do not have to pass on to the next generation what was done to us. And for this reason, Abraham is our father, the founder of the Jewish people.

What Makes Mutual Recognition Possible?

What actually happened when Abraham lifted the blade to plunge into his son? Was it the look in his son's eyes that suddenly awakened Abraham? Was it a look of terror, fear, shock, betrayal, or was it perhaps a look of trust and faith that whatever this father was doing must be O.K.? Any of these looks would have been similar to what other children had given their fathers before they were brought to the slaughter, and yet those looks had not changed anything. What was it that allowed Abraham to understand the look from Isaac as the look of another human being, what made it possible for him to see Isaac as someone whose right to live and right to have access to his own experience of God was just as legitimate as the message of the *elohim* who had told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac?

If we say that the fundamental moment of evil, violence, and cruelty is a moment of failure to recognize the other as subject (or in theological language, the failure to recognize the other as equally created in the image of God), then in getting the word of God and breaking the chain of necessity Abraham was able to overcome a past that kept him from seeing the other as Godlike, as a being worthy of respect and awe. Transcendence of our past is in part this breaking through to the realization that we and others are radically free to remake the world and remake our relations with each other, that we do not have to do what we have been taught to do, that we don't have to treat each other in the way we have been treated, that in meeting each other we stand in front of a divine reality, a reality of another being as alive and free and real and subject to pain and joy as we are, and hence a person who can be loved but who must not be made into an object or lessened in any way. And this recognition is not just about others. Recognition is about ourselves as well: we too deserve to be treated with dignity and respect; we too can be different from who we have been; we too are embodiments of divinity.

What makes this moment of recognition of the other possible? Abraham made a tremendous leap toward this deeper form of knowledge by recognizing a single God, a God who had made the universe and made each human being. But Abraham could not embody this knowledge in his own reality until the moment of the Akedah.

So what finally made possible this moment of transcendence in Abraham? Whatever it is, I call that energy in the universe God. When we allow ourselves to give it words, we call it revelation. We are hearing the voice of God. God is the force that makes for the possibility of transcendence and freedom. Every fiber of being, every cell in the universe, every moment is permeated by the thunder and fire of this force, the passion and energy that pulsates through all being. Incidentally, scientific and psychoanalytic observers are now beginning to move in the direction of modifying previous theories that overly emphasized the pulls toward pathology in human life. Psychiatrist Joseph Weiss and others are now discovering an unconscious drive toward

psychological health and overcoming the patterns of the past. This pull toward health is a part of what I am talking about when I talk of the God of transcendence, the force that makes possible overcoming the repetition compulsion, the force that makes possible mutual recognition despite all that has been done to us to keep us from being able to recognize each other.

Isn't this kind of a conception of God too optimistically one-dimensional, alleviating the tension and deep mystery concerned with the God of the Akedah, the God of paradox, the God that surpasses human understanding? Are we not trying to reduce God to something manageable and controllable by human reality, rather than something that transcends it? The answer is, "Yes and no." On the one hand, to the extent that God created the world with the possibility of human freedom, S/He also created the possibility of misrecognition, distortion, cruelty, and evil. On the other hand, a possibility is not a necessity. If I give my child the freedom to rebel against me, I don't thereby require it of him. If he chooses to move in that direction, becomes deeply involved in that choice, even stuck in it, it is not necessarily because I wanted this to happen.

We are so willing to blame the evil in the universe on God's having given us the space to be evil, or on some substantive evil that really exists as an independent force, because of our fear of confronting the contingency of the evil that we confront in the world. Those who have been brutalized have found it easier to think that the universe was rightly imposing pain on them than to face the even more upsetting notion that the pain really wasn't necessary, really was not part of a divine scheme that had transcendent purpose. Perhaps the most difficult reality to face is the recognition that it is sometimes our own parents who are the immediate agents of our unnecessary pain. For throughout most of human history the instinct to cry out in anger at parental abuse has been repressed through parental violence or threat of violence—so the thought that one's parents are acting inappropriately or with cruelty has often been far too terrifying to seriously entertain. Moreover, since many children have simultaneously intuited in their parents not only cruelty but also a deep fear and vulnerability. They may react by trying to "protect" their parents by justifying the cruelty—for example, by developing stories about how they really "deserved" to be punished, ignored, misrecognized emotionally, or in extreme cases physically abused, because of some shortcoming or inherent evil. People who have suffered have often developed such theodicies explaining why it is "appropriate" that there should be so much pain in the world. At the moments when the Jewish people have lost their nerve, they've resorted to this way of thinking about reality and have then interpreted the story of their own suffering in terms that reify the regimes and social arrangements responsible for their oppression rather than confronting and changing their social reality.

The Obstacles to Recognizing Each Other as Filled With God

The world is filled with pain and suffering, both physical and psychic. I shall be summarizing here some of the work of Peter Gabel, who analyzes the subtle and complex ways each generation passes on to the next a legacy of pain and oppression, even as it simultaneously passes on, albeit in hidden, unconscious, and distorted ways, a message of possibility that the way things are could and should be different. Every human child emerges into consciousness in a world in which these distortions are already constituted as "normal reality." To become accepted in this world, the child must quickly learn to fit in, to be misrecognized by every other person, to become part of a world in which one's fundamental humanity is neither fully validated nor allowed to flourish.

Recognition is a fundamental human need. To be known and affirmed by an other, to be understood, seen, loved—these are basic aspects of recognition. Human beings are fundamentally in need of other human beings. Much of the recent work in psychoanalytic "object relations" theory has shown that human beings form their own sense of self in relationship to others. As the American psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin puts it, "A person comes to feel that 'I am the doer who does, I am the author of my acts,' by being with another person who recognizes her acts, her feelings, her intentions, her existence, her independence. Recognition is the essential response…"

My own conception of recognition goes beyond this tradition to encompass the human need to be recognized by God and to recognize the God within each other and to be recognized by others as an embodiment of God, potentially capable of joining in partnership with God to transform the world to a state of deeper self-consciousness, love, mutual involvement, freedom, and consciousness. The force of this mutual recognition operates somewhat the way gravitational forces work: It is as if every single isolated being is attracted to every other to the extent that each is filled with the spirit of God and capable of seeing the other as similarly filled. Our potential to be this way operates as a force from the future onto the present, pulling us toward being the kinds of being that can potentially embody this spirit of God and hence potentially be drawn into the web of love that attracts all such beings.

The primary source of recognition for the infant and much of early childhood, of course, is the parent or caregiver (which in some extended families and communities may include a wide variety of family and community members). Yet these people are enmeshed in a series of relationships in their daily lives that have often forced them to squash their own creativity, aliveness, spiritual and moral awareness, and sense of possibility.

The excitement we experience when we have children is precisely the sense that something new is happening, that the child's world has not yet been fixed and deadened in the way that ours has been. Even in societies very different from ours, in which children are often seen as valuable to the extent that they would help improve the material well-being of the family or a burden to the extent that they would drain the family's resources, these practical considerations still coexist with another level of awareness in which the child's birth is often celebrated as a joyful event, a rebirth of hope. Yet the very possibilities that the child evokes also awake terror, anger, and envy.

The terror comes from the possibility that the world with its pain and frustration need not be the way that it is, and that therefore all of us who have built our lives to accommodate to that world are living a lie. To undo that lie would require not only a momentary flash of recognition but also a monumental and uncharted struggle against the myriad ways that the world's "normal" interactions have been constituted. It becomes so much easier, then, to repress that awareness.

The anger comes from the intuition that to truly recognize this child, one must invalidate and struggle against all that one has become—and what right does this tiny being have to awaken those unsettling feelings and impose that kind of radical demand? The envy stems from the realization that *this* child need not accept the alienated compromises that have so limited our own world.

Thus, we resolve not to allow ourselves to acknowledge this aspect of the child, but rather to make sure that the child "fits in" to the already established world, to ignore or willfully not see the being who is before you. And to act unconsciously toward that other being as our parents acted toward us, reassuring ourselves with the certainty that this is all that could be, that this is the way things are, that this is how human beings treat each other, and that this is all we have ever known.

Yet the pain of misrecognition persists. It may be quickly repressed into the unconscious; but it is also constantly accessible as a background pain and sense of distortion that makes the world feel not quite right.

Children form a deep attachment to the belief that the pain they have experienced is necessary and legitimate (an experience that in adult life translates into inflicting cruelty and pain upon others, starting with one's own children). Such a perception is based in part on the repression of the memory of those moments in which children may have experienced the pain as *not* necessary, protested (nonverbally through crying or verbally or behaviorally in other ways that called attention to their incipient sense of the injustice of how they were being treated), only to find themselves visited with an experience like that of Abraham—namely, escalating levels of violence by their own parents or others with authority who frantically respond to these mini-rebellions by repressing them with overwhelming violence or threat of violence (sometimes conveyed in a look and other body language). The parent responds in this way in part because to respond in any other way, to acknowledge the potential righteousness of the child's response, is to allow oneself to know that the injustice and pain of the world are not inevitable, hence that one's own level of accommodation has been unnecessary and flawed, and this knowledge in turn raises the question of whether one's own parents were acting unjustly.

The fear of recognizing the injustice in our own parents is so deep, and the repression of the memory of cruelty and violence done to ourselves as a children so complete, that the parent is unable to recognize fully the spirit of God expressed in the anger of the child. Instead, the parent responds with anger to the child's sense of injustice and forces the child to repress that awareness as the condition of gaining love and approval. This need for love and approval, for recognition from one's parents while simultaneously deserving their respect and love, is so deep, the child accepts whatever recognition is available by repressing anger, accepting that parents, and later constituted authorities, are acting justly. Consequently, the recognition that is available to the child is based on this accommodation to a lie: that cruelty is inevitable and appropriate. This, we are taught, is "reality."

Accommodation to this conception of reality requires, in Peter Gabel's phrase, "denying desire" (our fundamental desire for connection and mutual recognition) so that the child becomes acceptable to adults as someone not threatening to tear their world apart. The price of getting the love available from parents is to deny, first to them and ultimately to ourselves, that something is fundamentally absent and deeply unreal in the connection. And if essentially good parents nevertheless have this dark side, perhaps conceiving of God as also having this dark side is not so strange. Perhaps it was God's dark side that not only asked Abraham to sacrifice his son but also ordered Moses to kill all the inhabitants of the Promised Land who might corrupt God's chosen people or keep them from their legacy.

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Black Men and Malcolm's Memory

Michael Eric Dyson


Mac McGill

Urban America is living through an epidemic of violence that has targeted and viciously transformed Black male life. With chilling redundancy, Black males are dying at the hands of other Black males. The mutual harming of Black males is a thematic mainstay of contemporary Black films from *Boyz N The Hood* to *Menace II Society*. The situation for Black men, especially juvenile and young adult males, is now so fatally encrusted in chronic hopelessness that terms usually reserved for large-scale social catastrophes—terms like "genocide" and "endangered species"—are now applied to Black men with troubling regularity.

Many cultural critics, especially conservative commentators, have concluded that Black male violence is the exclusive result of pathological cultural tendencies working themselves out with self-destructive fury. On this view, Black male aggression is part of a larger Black cultural malaise manifest in welfare dependence, criminal lifestyles, gang activity, and other morally impaired behavior associated with an ominously expanding "underclass." And even when other, more reasonable, critics, especially politically liberal figures, weigh in on the causes and consequences of Black male violence, their analyses often skid dangerously close to harmful cultural arguments that blame the victims of violence for its existence. Because the situation of Black males has become so formidably complex, the horizon of clarity often recedes behind vigorous yet confusing attempts to explain their predicament. Can Malcolm X's example and memory in any way help Black males past mutual destruction and the threat of social annihilation? How should we proceed in thinking about these issues?

In combating the crisis of Black males, we must first comprehend the staggering array of difficulties that hound and hurry Black males from the cradle to the grave. Malcolm was keen on scrupulously

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documenting the truth of Black life, a trait that led him to combine common-sense observation and critical investigation in detailing our plight. In this vein, the extent of social injuries to Black male life is indexed in the virtually mind-numbing statistics whose mere recital is the most powerful testimony to a hydra-headed crisis.

Black males are more likely than any other group to be spontaneously aborted. Of all babies, Black males have the lowest birth weights. Black males have the highest infant mortality rates. Black males have the greatest chance of dying before they reach twenty. Although they are only six percent of the United States population, Blacks make up half the male prisoners in local, state, and federal jails. Thirty-two percent of Black men have incomes below the poverty level. Fifty percent of Black men under twenty-one are unemployed. But it doesn't end here.

Between 1980 and 1985, the life expectancy for white males increased from 63 to 74.6 years, and only from 59 to 65 years for Black males. Between 1973 and 1986, the real earnings of Black males between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine fell 31 percent, as the percentage of young Black males in the work force plummeted 20 percent. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young Black men. And as illustrated above, Black-on-Black homicide is the leading cause of death for Black males between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four, as young Black males have a one-in-twenty-one lifetime chance of being killed. This is not new; in 1987 alone, more young Black men were killed within the United States in a single year than had been killed abroad in the entire nine years of the Vietnam War. This deadly pattern of problems—which shows no signs of diminishing and taxes Black male mortality beyond expected limits—makes it difficult to view the Black male condition as the product primarily of Black cultural failure.

Next, we should place Black male suffering in a historical framework that illumines how Black males, far earlier than their recent troubles suggest, have been culturally fashioned as a "problem" category. From the plantation to the postindustrial city, Black males have been viewed as brutishly behaved, morally flawed, uniquely ugly, and fatally oversexed. The creation of negative Black male images through the organs of popular culture—especially in theological tracts, novels, and more recently, in film and television—simply reinforced stereotypes of Black males as undisciplined social pariahs, citizens of a corrupt subculture of crime, or as imbeciles. Add to that the influence of scholarly portrayals of Black males, particularly those contained in ethnographic studies which have both aided and undermined the cultural status of Black men, and one gets a hint of the forces challenging a balanced interpretation of their condition.

Finally, we must pay attention to the structural factors that spawn Black male suffering. As Malcolm preached a year before his death, "[u]nemployment and poverty have forced many of our people into [a] life of crime." The shift of the labor base of Black males from high-waged, low-skilled jobs to scarcer service employment; the expanding technical monopoly of information services; the part-timing of American labor where more people are employed at McDonalds than steel mills (leaving workers without employee benefits); and the wrenching of the American economy by crises in global capitalism all bode ill for Black males. These changes, coupled with cycles of persistent poverty, the gentrification of inner-city living space, the juvenilization of crime, and the demoralization of poor Blacks through cultural stereotypes about widespread loss of initiative, only compound the anguish of an already untenable situation for Black males.

I am not suggesting that we can reduce the Black male crisis to its economic or social determinants. Nor do I contend that Black males are without responsibility for elements of their condition. Indeed, the example of Malcolm's Black moral puritanism—which promoted self-reliance, rigorous self-discipline, a strong work ethic, and law-abiding behavior—is a rebuke to Black males who profess to follow his example while shirking personal and moral responsibilities to their families and communities.

I am simply arguing that the debate about Black males must become much more complex and sophisticated, that its participants must be more honest in unearthing the roots of Black male agony. It is much easier to damn Black males for being irresponsible, immoral or even criminal, than to own up to how American cultural traditions and economic practices have contributed to their plight.

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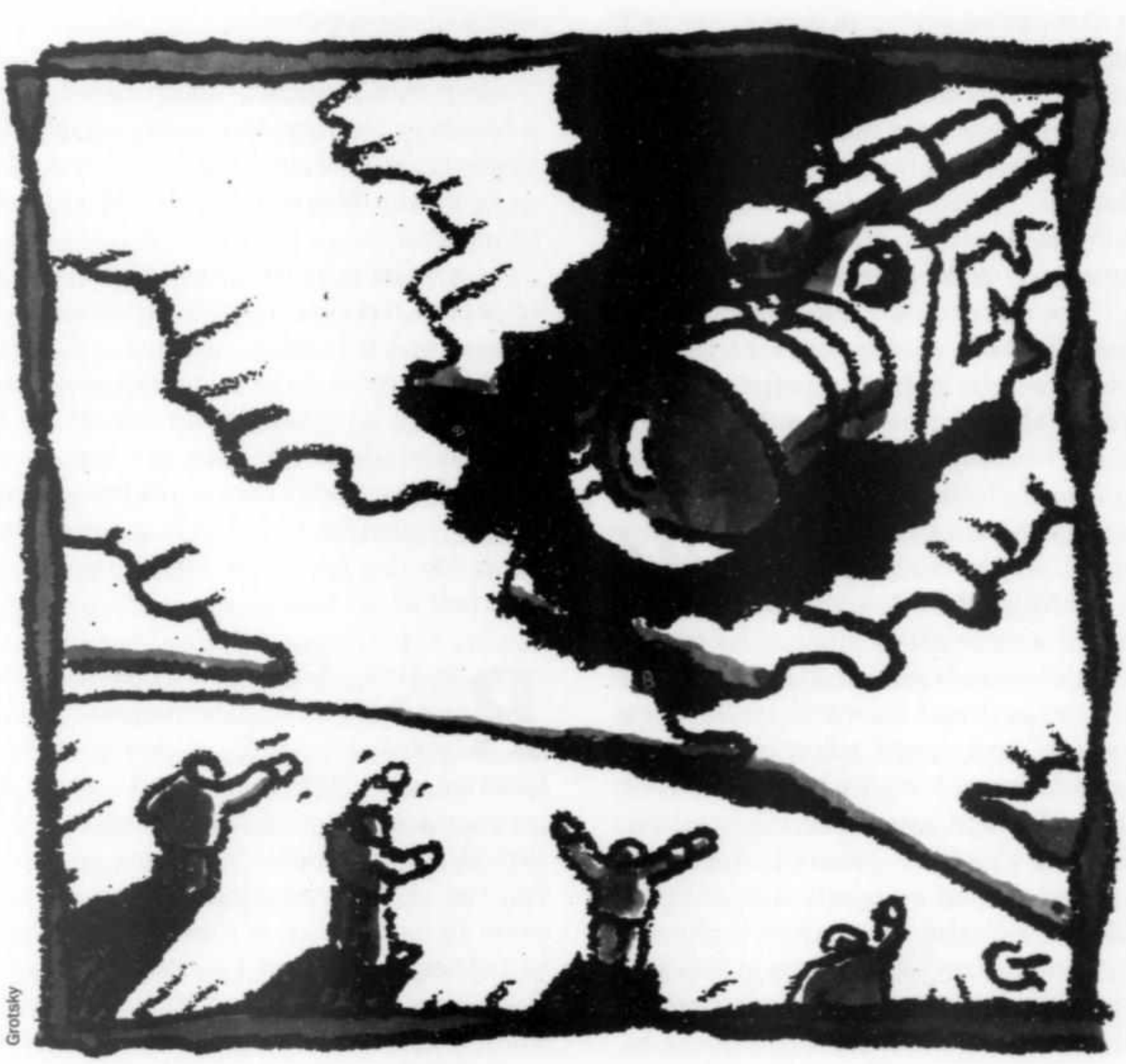
Malcolm's memory may yet help save an entire generation of Black males buffeted by brutal forms of racial and class antagonism from outside Black culture and besieged by internal demons and temptations, from drug addiction and violence directed against one another, from within. His wise, salvific offer of comfort to Black males—that they are worthy of the highest measures of respect and love—came wrapped in poignant demands of self-discipline and racial uplift. And his heroic example of relentlessly

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Helicopter Journalism and Its Limits

Why Reporters Who Only Look Down Tend to Cover Up

Danny Schechter



Grotsky

The helicopter provides a useful metaphor for assessing the state of contemporary American journalism and for understanding how the majority culture covers the minority.

Ninety-five million Americans were mesmerized as the TV news helicopters tracked O. J. Simpson's bizarre Bronco ride on the freeways of Los Angeles last summer. A scene that seemed inspired by a look-alike chopper shot in the movie *Speed* was fascinating enough to disrupt prime-time programming and the NBA basketball championship. The prospect of a Black celebrity blowing his brains out, live and in color, before the cameras was too tantalizing for our TV programmers to turn down. We would later learn that Simpson had told his pursuers he was heading home—but we never found that out until the chase scene was all over.

This was not the first time, of course, that aircraft were pressed into service as the prime means of reporting news in L.A. Who can forget those helicopters circling over South Central Los Angeles in the aftermath of the verdict in the trial of the policemen who beat Rodney King, video cameras zooming in vicariously on the excitement and danger of a community upheaval and rip-off spree in progress,

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with fires and plumes of smoke providing the kind of eerie special effects usually produced in nearby Hollywood.

To be sure, not all of the coverage came from the comfortable vantage point of an airborne helicopter. Some gutsy reporters were down in the streets taking notes while trying to safeguard their equipment and persons, knowing all too well that rage and frustration can spill over to the press, often perceived in inner-city neighborhoods as a proxy for the powers that be. The "facts" of the L.A. riot were ultimately reported, but their larger meaning may have been obscured while America fixated on the chaos below as it was broadcast safely from above.

That top-down angle of vision sums up the dominant "outside-in" media approach to racial stories in America. When there are no disturbances—only what some call "silent" riots—coverage is more episodic and usually linked to retrospective and ritualized coverage of commemorations such as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday or Black History Month. Occasionally the media focus on minority communities and their issues in the aftermath of the latest police brutality incident. As chronic problems resurface or boil over into destructive rebellion, the media dust off clips from the morgue or rerun archival footage to remind us that the news is not all that new. If this occasional use of archival material really drew historical parallels, or focused attention on long-standing structural racism, it would be welcome. But most of the time, footage is replayed for its action quality or to illustrate superficial points of comparison. Substantive analysis is rare, especially if it points to how government policies or police behavior contributed to structuring the problem in the first place. When was the last time you saw a report on ghetto violence that explained how red-lining by banks, inferior education, benign neglect by city government, decaying housing stock and infrastructure, or white business flight contributed to racial tension? Such reports air occasionally in the aftermath of events as a post-mortem. But by that time, the images and initial first-day story usually have defined how we understand "what happened."

The larger challenge to journalists becomes apparent as the truth of the l968 Kerner Commission's report on civil disorders is recycled from one generation to another, with its all too honest admission that we live in two countries, one white and one Black, that racism has an institutional character, and that white indifference is as much of a problem as white prejudice.

The Kerner report did more than document a growing gap between white and "Negro" Americans. It took aim at the news media in a "finding" that was buried in 1968 and is all but forgotten now, concluding that the media totally distorted the causes and significance of the racial uprisings that tore urban America apart: "We have found a significant imbalance between what actually happened in our cities and what the newspapers, radio and television coverage of the riots told us happened."

The commission then made what it called a "fundamental" criticism—indicting the news media for a failure to "analyze and report adequately on racial problems in the United States, and as a related matter to meet the Negro's legitimate expectations in journalism."

Twenty-five years later, these words have an ongoing relevance, serving as an indictment of corporate journalism's self-image, mission, and performance. How far have we come from criticisms of a press that "repeatedly, if unconsciously reflects the biases, the paternalism, the indifference of white America?" The Kerner Commission's final words bear repeating: "This may be understandable but it is not excusable in an institution that has the mission to inform and educate the whole of our society."

Reporting about race is a small industry in America. It has produced superficial and distorted reportage, as well as some of our greatest literature, spiced with insights and wisdom. My own experience as a journalist has been enhanced by immersion in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and coverage of the international human rights movement today. In recent years, as a television producer and admitted network refugee, I created a weekly public television news magazine that dealt with apartheid and the struggle against it, "South Africa Now," and more recently I help produce a weekly human rights series, "Rights & Wrongs," anchored by a fellow civil rights veteran, Charlayne Hunter-Gault of PBS's "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour."

Our company, Globalvision, an independent news organization, aspires to provide "inside-out coverage"—through which the voices that are being silenced and oppressed in this world can be heard. A reviewer for The *New York Times*, which is often the arbiter of legitimacy in American journalism, detected what he called a "pro-victim" tilt in some of our coverage. (I have referred the term to fellow Timesman William Safire to explore its genealogy; is the antonym "pro-victimizer"?) So these days, I think about the coverage of race in America in a global context, believing that when we look outside this country and

find other angles of vision and methods of analysis worthy of applying, we can see our own society a bit more clearly.

Outside the United States, the coverage of race does not focus on just one "c" word, color, but explores others, such as context, class, community, commerce, and consciousness. Race may be a key factor in all kinds of conflicts, but it is neither static nor the only one. There is confusion in America's public discourse about the vocabulary of race: We often use the term "race" when we mean racism, a concept that implies a relationship between an oppressor and the oppressed.

In other countries, especially in Western Europe, there are newspapers and public service broadcasters who tend to examine the causes of social problems as well as their effects, with journalists less likely to conceal their political leanings in a blather of self-congratulatory pretensions about "objectivity." I subscribe to the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, which offers reporting from The *Guardian*, *Le Monde*, and The *Washington Post*. It allows the reader to contrast coverage as well. The spectrum of discussion in the European media seems much broader and less likely to delineate political differences the way we do along narrow Republican/Democratic lines.

Television abroad, unlike American T.V., is not dominated totally by commercial values. In France, England, and Germany there are hundreds of hours annually of T.V. documentary programs that tackle social and political issues. The BBC, Channel Four, and other outlets are able to remain competitive with commercial broadcasting. The infotainment sensibility and tabloid "reality" programming has not yet prevailed.

As the major American media corporations and media barons such as Rupert Murdoch gobble up more media institutions globally—or launch their own—some of the differences between what we see in the United States and what they see overseas are disappearing. The so-called American influence, driven by corporate interests, continues to insinuate itself into the fabric of an emerging global popular culture. First Hollywood and now made-in-the-U.S.A. movies are driving our other fare simply because local culture and information have neither the resources nor the distribution channels to allow them to be competitive.

The annual T.V. market in Cannes is a good place to measure what's selling—and who is selling out. A Warner Brothers marketing executive speaks of "moving tonnage of product" in one corner; in another, the American networks are gobbling up production entities and positioning themselves for global expansion. For example, the European owner of the Superchannel—the pan-European satellite that linked East, Central, and Western Europe with a mix of programming that included shows about the environment and our own human rights series—was forced by a European bank to sell the station to NBC, owned by General Electric. The new owners re-christened it the NBC Superchannel and recast it in their own image as an outlet for NBC shows and CNBC financial chatter. Roger Ailes, President Reagan's image-maker and now a top NBC executive, played a key role in the program refit.

One of NBC's first decision was to withhold broadcast of a "Rights & Wrongs" show that reported criticisms of G.E.'s labor practices in Mexico (it was later broadcast after this small act of censorship was exposed in *Variety*) and then to drop the series altogether on the grounds that it lacked "European content." A week later we receive a grant from the European Community because of our European content.

We are all witnesses to the disappearance of serious journalism in the United States, as tabloid television increasingly sets the news agenda. Our media devote little attention to putting news in context. Judged by the way the mainstream press in the U.S. shuns the past and marginalizes memory, we might conclude that history doesn't count in grasping the present. Yet journalists, especially those who report on sensitive issues of race—often buried, as they are, in mine fields of nuance—-can only make these issues intelligible if they locate a historical context and larger meaning. And sometimes we need familiarity with the past to help us recognize that race is a significant factor in a story where it seems on the surface not to be. Otherwise we contribute to a fog of collective amnesia. For example, the legacy of slavery in America has to be acknowledged in reporting on race relations without regurgitating all those clichés about the "pathology of the Black family" which so often results in a "blame the victim" news frame.

In the international media, economic issues are treated as integral to an understanding of politics. In the coverage of politics, journalists attempt to trace and explain the relationships between who owns what and how power and opportunity are distributed in the society.

Ownership and interests are usually linked. This goes for the news business too: The concentration of the American media in fewer and fewer hands has had an impact on what does and does not get covered. The

(Continued on p. 101)

Cyn and Yas
A Fantasy

Richard Elman

Now that Masters and Johnson are "just friends," I think a lot about Cynthia Ozick and Yasir Arafat.

True, that marriage made in heaven was essentially not a sexual relationship, but it also didn't have to end the way it did. "Hostile integrations" after they break up don't always have to lead to nasty recriminations. People can stay on friendly terms even after they move on to better things. Look at Bill Clinton and Gennifer Flowers, Diane Sawyer and Richard Nixon, Linda Ronstadt and Jerry Brown, Barbra Streisand and Andre Agassi. Just so-so sex, if at all, I'm told, but no recriminations: It wasn't Andre's thing with Brooke Shields that forced Barbra to sell off her Art Deco collection; she really needed the bread to make another movie so she could feel undervalued as a woman which, in her tax bracket, wasn't easily achieved. But she kept her graphite racket and the Nike Airs with the polka-dot laces Andre bought her. She kept the only existing cassette of "Roses and Almonds," the MTV video she did with Cynthia and The Grateful Dead.

Some people say it was that ceremony on the White House lawn with the Clintons that really drove the final wedge between Cyn and Yas. On their own they'd coexisted in hateful silence more than forty years. You never heard Yas say a bad word about Cyn in public, or vice versa. But with all those Norwegians shouting "Mazel Tov," I guess Cynthia thought she'd been silent too long, and she began to tell everybody who would listen what a bum and a lout Yasir really was. He couldn't be trusted. He'd killed and he'd kill again. He was an instigator, a troublemaker. Look what they'd driven that nutcase Dr. Goldstein to do...

I heard she tried to sell her story to *People* and Liz Smith and The *Enquirer*, but finally settled for the respectable middlebrow press. People in the public eye are always pitching themselves at the media and then complaining they're being misquoted when they shoot off their mouths. Cyn didn't really want to be the center of attention, so she shot off her mouth in an op-ed piece.

I think Cyn's not the type to date a married man, and Yas recently became a father. Moreover, as with many such persons in star-crossed romances, this sweet-natured soul—aside from her moments of personal irascibility—really despises the chairman of the PLO for his closeted homosexuality and murderous intentions. She knows; she grew up lower-middle-class in the Bronx, where they kept a lot of other things aside from moth balls in their closets.

Cyn used to have a thing for Salman Rushdie and even rushed off to Paris for a rendezvous. But he was still playing hard to get. And when he turned out to be more interested in his own survival than he was in the Holocaust, which took place among Europeans some years before he was born, she dropped him like yesterday's tiffin and ruminated in public for The *New Yorker* about her disappointments with gentiles.

If you start out with the proposition that any attempt to bring justice to the Middle East is a knife at the throats of the Jewish inhabitants of Israel, you're either very astute or suffering from West Bank withdrawal symptoms.

My late mother was also very disappointed with gentiles, Arabs, African Americans, Italian Americans, Greeks, and homosexuals. In her last years, she became convinced that the entire Mafia was crammed inside the air-conditioning ducts of her Fort Lauderdale apartment and were out to murder her in cold blood. It was discovered that she needed new filters, and a dollop of Thorazine.

In addition to some common antipathies, these two women would seem to share a general aversion to all save the most gruesome possibilities. In the swinging Sixties we used to say, "it's just as easy to have a good time as a bad time." Suspicious of hope, Cynthia, like my mom, thinks morbidity is dependable. She never willingly seems to anticipate anything except her own scolding of others. □

Richard Elman, author of the novel, Tar Beach, *is currently writing a novel tentatively titled* A Shawl for Vanessa. *He teaches at SUNY, Stony Brook .*

FICTION

Tourist Season

Enid Shomer

When her husband, Milt, retired, it was as if a bell which Frieda had heard ringing pleasantly in the distance all her life, began striking right next to her head. Milt was everywhere she turned. "We're on our second honeymoon," he'd say, jollying her into another game of Bingo, another round of golf. After four months of solid togetherness, Frieda daydreamed that Milt dropped dead. She was lying on the wicker settee on the balcony. Tears sprang to her eyes as she pictured him laid out in a casket, looking perfectly healthy. Deeply ashamed for wishing him dead, she began to think of ways for him to spend his time.

Eight years before, Milt had bought a piece of a middleweight. It had been one of the most exciting times of his life—the domed dark of the armories, milky pillars of cigarette smoke, Milt hanging on the ropes, shouting instructions to "the Hurricane." Frieda had loved it, too—loved the fighter's pink satin robe draped over the corner stanchion, voluptuous as the lip of a conch shell, loved the blowzy crowd and oily-faced vendors hawking drinks and programs. But Tadeusz Simkowicz turned out to be a bleeder and traded his Everlast shorts for a job selling Cadillacs after five bouts.

What about investing in another fighter, Frieda suggested first.

No, Milt said. The fight game had lost its dignity. It was becoming a spectacle, like wrestling, the men wearing sequinned shorts and tutus, messages shaved into their hair.

Next, Frieda urged him to get involved in the management of their condo, maybe run for a seat on the board of directors.

No, definitely not for him. How could she suggest it? The directors were a bunch of bullies who couldn't pass for businessmen if they had ticker tape coming out of their butts. He hated the officious notices they tacked on the bulletin boards. *There will be a ballot in your mailbox regarding pool chemicals (chlorine versus bromine). Vote by July 15 or lose your say in this important matter!!* Milt had sold tractors to Mexico and drilling equipment to Venezuela. He'd propped up dictators in Latin America with customs bribes. He wasn't about to waste his time debating whether to paint the lobby yellow or green. He was retired, goddammit, and he was going to do nothing with the rest of his life if he felt like it.

Then the Knoblocks, a couple who lived on their floor, split up after six months of fierce bickering. It seemed insane to Frieda at the time. But Gertie Knoblock wasn't budging. She had a lawyer. It was war now. All because they got on each other's nerves after retirement and had nothing—no children nearby or business—that required them to get along. Everyone in the building marveled at the irony of this *tsouris*: Now that the Knoblocks could afford a deluxe condo on the Intracoastal Waterway, lacquered teak furniture, and Italian marble floors you could see your face in—P.S., they could also afford a divorce.

Frieda took it as a cautionary tale and signed up to be a "Pink Angel" at the Santa Rosa Hospital. Five mornings a week, wearing a pink duck blazer with the word "volunteer" embroidered in red above the breast pocket, she chatted with patients, delivered mail, and arranged video rentals.

Frieda put on her glasses to get her lipstick straight, dropped the tube into her purse and jangled the car keys. "I'm going," she called to Milt who was sitting at the breakfast table with three different newspapers spread out before him, as if he were compiling a concordance of the day's news. It took him a good two hours to read them all.

"Wait." He walked to the door and touched Frieda's wiry grey hair. They puckered at each other in the air.

It was 8:15 a.m. The women of Bluepoint Towers

Enid Shomer's recent books are This Close to Earth *(poems) and* Imaginary Men, *which won the 1992 Iowa Short Fiction Award and the* Southern Review/*LSU Fiction Award, given for the best first collection published by an American author in 1993.*

were already busy in the ninth floor laundry room. Frieda could just make out their chatter and the labored spin cycle of the washer as she walked toward the elevator. When the doors parted, a man with a Polaroid camera suspended from his neck was standing inside, his eyes darting back and forth, his mouth nervously mobile. "Good morning," she said.

"My name, what's my name?"

Frieda held the doors open. "You're my neighbor, Irv Snyder."

"Oh, sure, I didn't actually forget it."

Frieda took him by the arm. "I'll take you back to your apartment, okay?"

"Fine. That's where I was going."

But Frieda knew it wasn't where he was going. She studied his grizzled, distinguished face: the robust eighty-two-year-old could have been an ancient Greek oracle. In fact, Irving Snyder suffered memory lapses. He drifted in and out of his life, the way the sun broke through cloud cover over Florida's Gold Coast. Sometimes he sat for hours in the recreation room, staring at the saloon-style gold-and-black flocked wallpaper while his wife and neighbors played card games and billiards. Other times, under his wife's watchful eye, he'd pace the perimeter of the shuffleboard court, or pick his way along the wooden promenade of the dock, taking snapshots with his Polaroid camera as if he hoped to find himself in the images that bloomed on the glossy paper.

"You know, Frieda, I've got all my own teeth." He smiled at her, revealing brown stubs like the ruins of a fort. "No choppers in a jar by the bed for me."

Belle Snyder opened the door of 908. "You've been gallivanting again?" she asked, her hands on her hips. "I turn my back for a minute to go to the bathroom and you're off, like Marco Polo?" She gave Frieda a knowing look and shook her head. "Irving, I'm going to get a leash for you if you keep leaving the apartment by yourself. A leash, like a dog."

Back in the elevator, Frieda's eye caught a flyer taped to the back wall: *Last date to sign up for the bus trip to St. Augustine is October 15. Be there or be square!*

On her way through the parking lot, Frieda thought of animals finding their way home over hundreds of miles of foreign terrain. Spawning salmon. Migrating birds. Whales. Heroic dogs like Lassie and Rin Tin Tin. For a brief moment she imagined that Irv Snyder was one of these noble creatures, following some instinctual path to his real life, where a house and his youth and people long dead awaited him, their arms perpetually extended in a loving gesture of welcome.

Hallandale Beach Boulevard was clogged with cars as it was most mornings during the tourist season, which stretched from Thanksgiving to Easter and seemed to get longer each year. Frieda waited at a red light watching a traffic helicopter hover above Interstate 95. The morning light glinted off its fuselage, creating a fierce shock of radiance, like a second sun.

In May of 1941, Frieda had been working in the millinery department of Rich's Department Store when Jacqueline Cochran, the famous aviatrix, flew into town to promote her line of cosmetics. Frieda bought a bottle of "Pursuit" perfume (named for a kind of plane, she later found out). The next day, she signed up for flying lessons. Within a year, the country was at war and Frieda was flying for the Women's Airforce Service Pilots.

After the war, the airlines wanted women stewards, not women pilots. Her wings clipped, she married Milt, worked part-time with him in his export business, and raised three sons. At age sixty-five, she took retirement. Milt was still working then, and she found she enjoyed being alone. She began keeping a journal and took community education courses in art history. She even went to Greece without Milt for ten days.

At the hospital, the floor nurse asked Frieda if she knew a Janet Duquesne. "She's from your building," she explained. "A snowbird from Toronto. Just moved here. Heart palpitations. Her husband died four months ago."

"I don't know her." Frieda was relieved and then stricken with guilt. How could she entertain thoughts about avoiding Milt? She was lucky to have a husband, especially a *first* husband still living. Most of the women she knew were widows with no reason to pluck the bristles from their chins. They went everywhere in committee-sized clutches, as if lifted from a PTA meeting in the '50s and transported through time, set down fingering nightgowns in Loehmann's Plaza, chattering over mah-jongg, eating the early-bird special at the Sun Ho restaurant. "I'll take her outside for lunch," Frieda said.

At 11:30, the sky was a flat, Dutch blue. Perfect flying weather. Frieda hadn't soloed in the five years since her pacemaker was installed.

She parked Mrs. Duquesne in a patch of sun, opened her utensil package, and began the soothing small talk she had known how to do all her life. It flowed out of her automatically, the way a snail laid down its own slippery, protective runway. Mrs. Duquesne felt cheered by the end of lunch.

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When she returned home at 1p.m., Milt was waiting for her in his swim trunks, with towels, sunscreen, and hats neatly packed in a beachbag. Two tunafish sandwiches faced each other on the kitchen table like duellists. "I figured we'd eat, then head for the beach," he said.

Frieda studied the sandwiches—bulging half-moons of rye bread, with frilly red lettuce sticking out like a Flamenco skirt. "I'm tired," she said.

"Well, then, sweetheart, you can nap on the beach. You love the beach. You've always loved the beach."

"I just don't feel like going."

"Then I won't either. We can go tomorrow."

"No, Milt, I don't want to promise that I'll go tomorrow." She pushed the plate of food away. "I married you for better or for worse." Her eyes filled up with tears. "But not for *lunch.*"

They spent the rest of that afternoon in silence, watering plants, snoozing on the balcony, waiting for the evening news.

After dinner, Frieda mentioned the trip to St. Augustine. They hadn't been there for thirty years, when it was a nickel and dime tourist trap with a musty one-room log schoolhouse. She produced a brochure called "Florida's First Coast." Houses with walled gardens, cobblestone streets, and an old fort traversed its folds in splashes of color. "It's been restored," Frieda said. "You won't have to drive. The bus is air-conditioned, the seats recline,'" she read aloud, hurrying to quash objections before Milt could voice them.

"You want to be trapped for two days with all the old farts from this building?" Milt said.

Frieda dropped her eyes and gathered her patience. "The bus only holds forty-two old farts."

He glared at her.

"Look," Frieda said, "we've had this picture postcard condo life for eight months and we never budge out of it. We should take advantage of the group activities."

"You know I'm not a group activities kind of person. You do know that, don't you? A man who ran his own business for forty years—" "I want to go on this trip," Frieda said. "If you don't go with me—"

"All right."

"And no complaining. I don't want to hear one complaint from you, at least not until it's over."

"O.K. All right. Sold. Golden years," Milt muttered. "They ought to call them gold-plated years."

Inside, she was twenty. She was twenty in passion about landfills, African desertification, dolphins, the shrinking gene pool of food grains, the world her grandchildren would inherit. In her water aerobics class she felt twenty. There, three afternoons a week, nearly weightless in her foam Aquajogger belt, she floated standing up in the deep end and ran and ran, the jewel-clear turquoise water spreading out in ripples around her, like applause.

But Milt wasn't twenty or thirty. He was seventy-two. Not because he took beta-blockers and his knees were gone and he could turn his neck in only one direction. But because out of the blue he'd say things like, "The ambulance will be coming for me one of these nights." The ambulance, a frequent visitor, always drew a crowd. Frieda hated the way its red lights reflected on the fountain in front of the lobby, turning the spray blood-red, like some Old Testament plague. "My luck," Milt would continue, "I'll tell them my symptoms, but they'll be Cuban or Haitian, God bless them. They won't understand a word I'm mumbling. Just another D.O.A."

The charter bus was a glossy cordovan color, like an expensive shoe. They loaded their suitcases in the cavity at the bottom and took their seats. The view was good sitting high up—more treetops and sky, less asphalt and metal. Gertie Knoblock, already aligned with the widows, played Tinkle on a lap desk at the back of the bus. Irving and Belle Snyder walked arm-in-arm, like young lovers, when the bus stopped at an outlet store that sold flimsy towels and paperweights with flamingos that rained down glitter instead of snow.

The trip took seven hours. Milt and Frieda had each brought books. Milt read about Jewish prizefighters—Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom and a scant two dozen others. He was always reading about Jews—Jews in Hollywood and the actors to whom they assigned gentile names, Jewish settlers in nineteenth-century Florida, Jewish painters, Ethiopian, Turkish, and Chinese Jews. It was Milt's way of *being* a Jew, Frieda had concluded, since he never went to temple. Frieda read a book on harems and was surprised to learn there really was a white slave trade.

"Look at that!" Milt pointed to a billboard welcoming them to "Florida's First Coast." Under the dates 1513-1994 Spanish sailors with plumed hats kissed the earth. "What a great promotion. I mean, here we are, a stone's throw from Georgia where it actually snows," Milt clucked, "but we've got Florida *history* instead of Florida heat. And," he pointed again, "some midget palm trees so it still looks tropical."

Frieda was happy to see him so animated. He had talked a blue streak before his retirement. As a salesman, he could talk anybody into anything, and though there were times when Frieda wanted somebody more like Gary Cooper, somebody more like a sculpture

of a man whose iron features stood for all he need not say, she knew that talkers made better husbands. They gave you something to work with, so you weren't battling silence, empty space.

Frieda wasn't much of a talker. She was a doer. When the boys were little, some evenings she'd leave Milt at home and rent a Piper Cub. At 5,000 feet, the twinkling city and sky seemed mirror images of each other instead of places separated by vast, unimaginable distances. Later, when she climbed into bed, she imagined herself sleeping among stars.

Late afternoon sun fell through the trees and across the buildings of St. Augustine in great transparent golden bands. The bus driver circled around the Plaza, then dropped them at Malone's Bed and Breakfast, a Victorian mansion overlooking the inlet. Frieda and Milt ascended to the third floor in an old-style cage elevator. Their room was furnished with a high canopy bed, *Gone With the Wind* lamps and hooked rugs. A carved walnut wardrobe stood in the corner like a gigantic book. Milt climbed the bed ladder and bounced onto the mattress. "It's like a trampoline," he cried. Frieda joined him and they lay back and kissed. He thrust his tongue deep into her mouth. The first time they had kissed like that it was against regulations. Milt had been an aviation mechanic and she was a pilot at a base called "Cochran's Convent."

The canopy of the bed was baby blue taffeta, a shiny dome of sky. She had walked differently in her flight suit. She swaggered, by God. Climb into the cockpit, secure the canopy latch. Inside, the lights and gauges of the instrument panel waited like a small universe with its celestial clockworks exposed. She loved the feel of the stick in her hand when the great sheath of metal lifted into the endless Texas sky above Avenger Field, the roar of the engine so loud it became a kind of silence. Twenty thousand feet, breathing through the mask, the sun just a traffic light stuck on yellow as she rose above it.

Dinner on your own, said the brochure.

"Let's eat with Belle and Irv," Frieda offered. They knew Belle and Irv better than anyone else. And Frieda was drawn to them, as though she could prepare for her or Milt's senility by witnessing Irv's.

"Mr. Half-life," Milt snorted. "I mean, the guy's decaying right before our eyes. I'd rather eat alone."

That night, because, he said, the bed was so high off the ground, Milt slept entwined around her, one leg between her knees like an anchor.

Frieda lay on the hard-packed sand near the tidal edge which was still damp and cool from the night before. Behind her, on the sugary white dunes, teenagers sunbathed on the hoods of their cars, their boom boxes blaring. Frieda thought it barbaric to allow cars on the beach, but it was a time-honored tradition on The First Coast.

In the sunny breakfast room at Malone's, Frieda and Milt had decided to go to the beach before sightseeing. Belle and Irv Snyder had invited themselves along. Now Belle appeared, clutching the waistband of Irv's swimming trunks, steering him.

The boogie boards Milt had rented brought him and Frieda gliding to shore, happy beached whales. Milt looked rugged and determined as he leaned into the surf carrying the big blue hunk of plastic. Irv and Belle, too frail for the thrashing surf, stretched out on a beach blanket. In a few minutes, though, Irv was standing, his Polaroid around his neck. He began taking pictures of people at the beach, mostly pretty young girls in skimpy suits. Frieda heard him ask them to pose for him. "I'm a tourist," he said, again and again. "Would you mind if I took your picture to show my grandchildren up north?"

Milt wanted to boogie board until it was time to leave, and for the first time in months, he didn't ask Frieda to join him. She donned her sunglasses and lay back, studying the white wisps in the sky, a biplane trailing a commercial message: Eat at the Dixie Cab Company.

I'm over the target now, she used to radio to ordnance. She had felt blood lust as she crisscrossed the gunnery range going off like sparklers beneath her, firing at the target she towed behind her plane.

Just last year, Frieda had been interviewed for a book about the women pilots. Asked to describe her most unusual experience, Frieda told how she had once lost her bearings over the ocean, past the Outer Banks. When she finally came in late and low over the gunnery range, the cable operator was slow letting out the muslin target sleeve. It was only 100 instead of 300 feet behind her when live ammunition began to blister through the air. She gained altitude rapidly, but not before the B-34 was riddled with holes. That night in her billet, she'd lain awake for hours, hearing the metal of the fuselage rip. One round had missed her by less than six inches. Ordnance said she was a hero. They apologized for the mistake, but, of course, the mistake had been hers. For months afterward she broke out in a cold sweat at odd moments.

When the book came out, her story wasn't in it.

• • •

"Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum," Frieda said. "That's where I'm going first. She put a check mark beside the name in the *AAA Guide Book to Florida.*

"You're not taking the tram tour?" Milt's face crumpled.

(Continued on p. 98)

Shtern Un Ikh
or Ambushed by Jewishness

Steve Stern

It's my other self, Stern, who goes bungee-jumping. He thinks it's important, even at his age, to take risks. I, on the other hand, take Valium, and note that, even during the awful plummeting toward Earth, no one's paying attention. He's like the Icarus in Breughel's painting, who falls from the sky while everyone's looking the other way. Moreover, the fact of his having taken such a plunge seems, to my mind, to have diminished the whole enterprise. If he does it, is it even worth doing? As in his life, so in his writing: He thinks one must make leaps of faith. Okay. But in his case this involves jumping headlong into the Jewish past, a place he hadn't even heard of until relatively late in life. He believes he must journey there like a hero journeys to the underworld to redeem what's lost. The idea being that this act of "*tikkun*," as he calls it, after the kabbalistic practice of gathering the scattered sparks of righteousness—he's acquired quite a vocabulary in recent years—that this act sanctifies history. It's the connection that gives meaning to personal experience, legitimizes the collective experience of the community (what community?), and so on. That old saw.

Naturally I get dragged along on these forays—think of Tony Curtis and Sidney Poitier shackled together in *The Defiant Ones*, think of hostile Siamese twins—but I know better than to give credence to his delusions. I know, as who doesn't, that as the past is a timeless place, to dwell there even a little while puts you in danger of losing forever the here and now. The present slips away into an inaccessible future and leaves you stranded, marooned in the past like some idiot Ben Gunn on his island. Or like Meyer Hell-Beadle, a character in one of Stern's own stories, who becomes the caretaker of a ghost shtetl, the curator of a museum of the dead. I know too that, hanging with ghosts, you're subject to the contagion of their immateriality; you become invisible. And where, I ask, is the future in that?

I was born in December of 1947 in Memphis, Tennessee. Stern was born several decades later in Arkansas, and again in England, and later in places that have no geographical counterparts. Having once occupied space on Earth, such places have since been distilled into myth: the Russian Pale of Settlement, the old Lower East Side of New York, a ghetto community called the Pinch in my native Memphis. He fancies himself quite the professional Jew these days, does Stern, especially since his last book, the third set in the Pinch, was labeled in the trade catalogue: FICTION/JUDAICA. He thinks this means he's arrived, but where? In a literary ghetto that no modern reader with late twentieth-century sensibilities would ever care to venture into, that's where. At first I thought I had things under control, that Stern was simply a mask I wore. Lord knows I'd worn plenty of others—urban neurasthenic, sullen artiste, amateur drug fiend. So why not, for the sake of novelty, a Jew? But as in some sci-fi horror tale, the mask became flesh, not a mask at all but a face, which, however inauthentic, was nonetheless real. (Which is the type of cheap paradox Stern enjoys.) What's more, since I turned it around to get it out of my face, the face of Stern looks perpetually in the opposite direction from my own. So I'm left this improbable Janus-faced creature looking in two directions at once. I look forward (to what, I'm no longer certain) while he looks back to the past, trying always to convince me that I'm the one who's turned around.

I was raised in a reform synagogue that had more in common with the churches that were as common as filling stations in our city than any traditional *shul*. We had a choir, a pipe organ, hymnals instead of siddurs, a congregation who prided themselves on their schizophrenia—able to light the Hanukkah candles with one hand while trimming the Christmas tree with the other. Fact is, I still read a Dickens novel every Christmas, while Stern, the ardent proponent of *Yiddishkeit*, he reads his Isaac Peretz, Moishe Kulbak, Itzik Manger, et al., grooming himself for an honorary member of their *landsmanschaft*. His head (the one I'm forced by necessity to share with him) is an East Broadway shmooserie populated with the denizens of a long-vanished Yiddish bohemia. He even reads a *bissel mameloshen* in the

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Steve Stern is the author of A Plague of Dreamers, *a novella, and* Lazar Malkin Enters Heaven, *a collection of short stories.*

original, an exercise I find slightly ironic since he has almost no Hebrew at all. He peoples his stories with Yiddish archetypes, with *bubbehs* and *zaydes*, iron-headed Talmud prodigies and sharp-tongued *balebotim*, *shochets*, *shadkhns*, *badkhns*, outlaw *balagoulas*, threadbare synagogue *shamuses*. No character is too shopworn a candidate for his artificial resuscitations.

I had a *bubbeh* and *zayde*, though I didn't call them that, and they died before I was old enough to realize it was English they were trying to speak through their borsht-thick accents. I remember them only as the lumpish, stolid couple sitting silently in the back of our family Oldsmobile, all of us glued in sweat to its griddle-hot plastic seat-covers, as my mother drove us on Sunday afternoons past Elvis's house. (Often, even in those pre-Graceland days before he was King, he would emerge from his door like the Pope to bless his fans.)

As for my Jewish education, I wasn't even bar mitzvah'd; I was confirmed, and made a poor job of that. Seated on the altar, I swapped crude jokes with Randy Haspel, while Rabbi Wax spoke his benedictions to the Ark. Distracted, the rabbi turned to me and pointed his finger, uttered my name, his face screwed up from having been interrupted in his solemn communion with the Lord. I knew that lightning ought by all rights to shoot from that finger, frying me where I sat, and when it didn't, I abruptly lost my faith.

Among Stern's stock *dramatis personae* is the God-knower. A story isn't a story without at least a cameo appearance by some holy man, wonder rabbi, scholar-sorcerer, or *lamed vovnik*; whereas my rabbi wore ecclesiastical robes when preaching and ate *treyf* with his family at the Red Lobster Restaurant. That's where I last saw him, more than twenty years after my confirmation, during a farewell dinner with my mother on the eve of departing Memphis for good in 1987. He came over to our table and, to my astonishment, not only remembered me but said he was proud. Then he began to weep. My mother, always looking for excuses to turn on the waterworks, wept with him. I wasn't fooled; I knew his lugubrious pride was for Stern, not me. Maybe, in his mistaken identity, he was moved to think that such an incorrigible should have undertaken so quixotic an enterprise—reclaiming the Jewishness his generation had jettisoned wholesale, and so forth. Or maybe it was the toll that shellfish took on the vulnerability of age. In any case, having recently broken up with my girlfriend, I too was vulnerable, and so I joined them in their tearful appreciation of Stern's half-baked martyrdom to the Jewish past.

I'm always apologizing for him. Practically ignorant of the rational, legalistic side of Judaism, which as I understand it is the great bulk of Talmud, Stern fancies himself a mystic. The dilettante, he dabbles in folklore, demonology, angelology, and every crackpot aspect of faith. He contends that the mystical formulae found in practical Kabbala provide metaphors for the act of creation, the very keys to the making of a redemptive fiction. The magical tales of collaborations between God and man have their parallels in ordinary experience, just as everything in heaven is duplicated on Earth—albeit in a shabbier incarnation. So much the better, thinks Stern: The shabbier the experience, the riper it is for being transfigured. He believes in the dictum that above mirrors below, which by his lights is tantamount to saying that the present is a dim reflection of the past. I know where this comes from. To me this is straight out of the Sixties, a time when I too embraced the irrational.

A child of my generation, I took the sacraments we all took, guaranteed to transport you beyond the depredations of history into an instant messianic age. In my case, I flew as far as a dirt farm in the Arkansas Ozarks, a hippie commune if you will, where we lived a rustic idyll in drafty teepees and makeshift shanties on broken stilts. We were goatherds, swineherds, eventually itinerant hog butchers, who ploughed the fields naked and stalked chickens with a homemade bow and arrow. It was there I first read the stories of Isaac Babel, and from where I sat—in the scrub woods lousy with scorpions, tarantulas, and copperheads—history took on a burnished glow. From my vantage even grinding poverty and pogroms began to look good. Disorientation and blood sports notwithstanding, where else but the commune should the idea of community have aspired so urgently to a civilized context? A tradition? And the Jewish one, given the taste in authors I shared with Stern, happened to be closest to hand.

Nu, so I wasn't entirely blameless; I confess I planted the seed. It was out of my homesickness for a past I'd never known that the birth pangs of Stern evolved. But the golem—once hatched, did he have to carry things to such extremes? Disenfranchised as I was on that outpost, it would have been enough just to touch base with current events, to perhaps start a Havurah. But no. Once at large in the world, Stern behaves like a renegade genie (he would say dybbuk) escaped from a bottle. Weaned on enchantments, he straightaway rejects as too desolate my moment in time; he conceives this program whereby the here and now, a spiritual vacuum, must be bypassed entirely in favor of retrieving the heady essence of yesteryear. Who's master here anyway? I want to know, but Stern is born running, dragging me helplessly behind. Oblivious to my own predilections, he sets out on his mythic quest, patterned he asserts on his reading of Jewish folk narratives—though you could as easily

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Where Do We Live Now?

Jay Neugeboren

On April 4, 1993, two days before the start of the Jewish festival of Passover, my son Eli and I drove down from Northampton, Massachusetts to my cousin Carolyn's home, in Weston, Connecticut, for a Passover Seder that was not really a Passover Seder (since it was not yet Passover), and while we drove I found myself talking with Eli about how different things were for me when I was a boy growing up in Brooklyn in the years following World War II and I lived within walking distance of dozens of aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Eli, then eighteen years old, was the youngest of my three children, and his closest living relatives, my cousin Carolyn and her two children, lived 110 miles away. Like his brother and sister, Eli had no nephews or nieces, no first cousins, no aunts, and only one uncle (my brother Robert, who lives in a mental hospital on Staten Island) and one grandparent (my mother, who lives in West Palm Beach, Florida, who suffers from severe memory loss, and whom Eli has not seen for six years).

I told Eli about the Passover Seders Carolyn and I spent together when we were children, most years at our Aunt Ethel and Uncle Nat's apartment, and as I conjured up those evenings, I realized that my memories were far brighter than the Seders themselves, which, when I recalled them, seemed distinctly gloomy. In my memory, it was always raining on Seder nights, and the apartment, unbearably hot or chillingly cold, was suffused eternally in an irritating haze, as if the motes of dust that hung in the air were themselves made of minuscule pellets of pale yellow grease.

I remember, too, the happy light in my mother's eyes when she told me that for the first time in many years her mother and father—my grandparents—were going to get back together, and come to a family Seder. Like a child telling me about a party she'd been invited to, my mother kept clapping her hands and jumping up and down and repeating: *Momma and Poppa will be together again—Momma and Poppa will be together again . . . .*

The Seder that year was cut short by a major family battle, and all the way home, I recall, my father chided my mother, who kept sobbing and chewing on her knuckles, about how silly she was to have hoped for what would never be. When, he kept asking, would she ever learn?

My family, especially on my mother's side, I explained to Eli, was more out of Dostoevsky than Neil Simon—a Jewish family in which some loss of memory would have been welcome. My mother's parents did not live together through all the years of my childhood, and my mother's worst childhood fears had to do with coming home to find the police in her apartment, there to break up the violent fights between her parents. My grandmother beat my mother savagely, told her repeatedly that she wished she had never been born, and, after my mother left home and married, did not see her or speak with her for years at a time—for the last eight years of my grandmother's life.

What happy memories I retained from the Seders we celebrated each year had to do simply with the comfort that, for me, seemed to come from almost *any* repeated ritual, and from the fact that I loved any occasion that put me in the same place with my cousins. My father, who died when Eli was two years old, was one of nine children, and my mother was one of eight (two older brothers died as infants in Poland). My parents' brothers and sisters were all married, and they all, with one exception (a family with an only child), had at least two children—so that I grew up with thirteen sets of aunts and uncles, and more than three dozen first cousins, almost all of whom (along with dozens of my parents' aunts, uncles, and cousins) lived within a ten- or fifteen-minute walk from my home, and *all* of whom I saw regularly.

Now, one generation later, in what seemed a curious new diaspora, I had cousins living in Israel and Brooklyn and Calgary, in New York City and upstate New York and on Long Island, in Pennsylvania,

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California, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Florida, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, Nevada, and—since I had lost touch with virtually all first cousins on my father's side of the family—who knew where else. But—like my children, and like virtually all my friends—I had no relatives living anywhere near me.

On September 6, 1993, a week before Rosh HaShanah, I drove out to Athens, Ohio with Eli, who was to begin his freshman year at Ohio University. Friends had been talking with me for at least a year about empty-nest syndrome (I've been a single parent to my three children for the last decade, and I've also been caring for my brother, who, through these years, has been living in mental hospitals and half-way houses). Yet when I returned to Northampton, I felt, to my surprise, happy to be home, and happy to be alone in my home. How not? The rooms, like my heart and mind, overflowed with memories. They were filled with familiar objects that led to and from these memories, and the routes I took, from room to room and floor to floor, provided the pleasure that comes from being surrounded by things known through the course of my lifetime and my children's lifetimes.

What surprised—what seemed weird, in truth—was that the instant I stepped outside my home I felt more alone than I did when I was in it. I felt as if I lived nowhere. How could it be? *The hills are very beautiful*, I kept thinking, *but they are not mine*. If one were to put a giant spatula under my house, lift it up, transport it a few hundred or a few thousand miles away, and set it down in a different place, I would, I told myself, feel little change in my life, and small loss.

And yet: I had been living in the Amherst-Northampton area, and teaching at the University of Massachusetts, for twenty-three years, and I had been living in my present home for eight years. Our home was situated on a quiet, tree-lined street of handsome (mostly Victorian) private homes, one block from the Smith College campus, in a city and region that is culturally rich and physically beautiful. I had been living in this area longer, in fact—*astonishing* fact—than I had in Brooklyn, where I lived in the same neighborhood from the time I was born until I left home at twenty-one, yet I shared little with anyone on my street or neighborhood other than an occasional hello.

My synagogue was a five-minute walk away, and all through my children's growing up our family went there each Sabbath. I had been active in the synagogue—had led the youth group for three years, chaired the education committee, served as president for two years and on the board of directors for a decade. And yet, after my children's mother and I divorced, and I became a full-time single parent, for nearly a half-dozen years—shortly after my term as president, and during the time of my childrens' bat and bar mitzvahs—no member of a synagogue of some 200 families had ever invited me and my children for a Sabbath or holiday meal.

How could it be, and was the problem—the lack of communal help when my children and I could have used it most—mine in some way? Did the lack of connectedness I felt to the world beyond my home come from whatever it was in me that had struggled—and thrived—in the tens of thousands of hours of solitude that came with my life as a writer, and/or did it derive from my somewhat anomalous family situation? Was the port from which I set out and was heading toward still the essential isolation of my life, no matter my seeming efforts through the years at joining with others for communal enterprises, whether in family life, or in writers' groups, or on athletic teams, or in the synagogue, or at the university, or in political and social action?

Did what seemed a lack of neighborliness and community in my immediate surroundings come merely from the accident of those who happened to be my neighbors, or from the nature of academic life, or from something in the New England character—from its extreme regard for privacy, its reticence, its love of good fences?

Though I knew full well that my feeling of being an outsider, now as ever, was a constant of my nature, what I came to believe—to theorize—during these first weeks alone was that I was feeling the way I was because of changes that had been occurring, not just in family, religious, and community life, but in something less demonstrable: the loss of a sense of place in our lives.

I could, still, and with affection, recall every inch of the small four-room apartment in which my mother, father, brother, and I lived from the time I was two until I left home, but it was the world outside this apartment—the world of my block and neighborhood—that I knew at least as well, and that I loved more easily. The attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and styles that marked our family life as Jews in post-war Brooklyn—the near-worship of education and hard work, along with the supreme value put upon loyalty to family and community—tribal loyalty, in origin and affect—also marked communal life. About our lives as first- or second-generation Jewish-Americans, we believed two things simultaneously: that the freedoms we enjoyed could enable us to prosper in ways rarely known by Jews in any time or place; and that

these freedoms were, as ever, conditional—that anything we achieved or possessed (actual or emotional) could, at any moment, be taken from us.

My own block and neighborhood, in a lower-middle-class section of Flatbush, were not, as it happens, mostly Jewish. About one third of my classmates throughout elementary school were Black, and a majority of the families who lived on my block were Catholic (Irish, German, Italian). But no matter our origins, what seemed true for me seemed true for my friends, Jewish and non-Jewish, white and Black: those beliefs and attitudes that were given to us at home, and in our extended families, were echoed in the world beyond our family—not only, and obviously, in our churches, synagogues, and schools, but in the schoolyards, alleyways, movie houses, candy stores, and on the stoops, apartment-house roofs, and ballfields where we spent our free time.

The world I grew up in seems, in memory, whole to me, then, largely because what was in place—whether family or friends, luncheonettes or commandments—for the most part stayed in place, and because the people with whom I interacted, day after day and year after year, at home and on the street, were not strangers.

My parents' friends were the parents of my friends; the owner of the fruit-and-vegetable store around the corner was the father of my friend Steve, who lived next door to me; our butcher, Mr. Klein, who lived in the apartment above us in our four-family building, brought our meat orders to us evenings when he came home from work; my father brought home our eggs—three dozen at a time, wrapped in newspaper (a dozen or more of them double-yolkers set aside for me)—from his brothers, Harry and Manny, who had a butter-and-egg business on the Lower East Side; my Hebrew School teacher, Mrs. Berg, lived two houses down, and I played football with her son and wondered about her daughter, who seemed different—slow-witted, awkward—and who often disappeared, without explanation, for months at a time; our mailman, Ralph, spent most mornings in the kitchen of the elderly bachelor brothers, Leo and Phil Rubensohn, who lived in the apartment next to ours, so that a steady stream of neighbors would come knocking at the Rubensohns' door to get their mail; our landlord, Mr. Schoenemann, a German Catholic house painter, lived in our building, and his wife worked at a bakery a block away where I sometimes bought our bread; Mrs. Demetri, my favorite elementary school teacher, lived around the corner from me, and I took oil painting lessons from her at night in her living room; Jimmy, the delivery boy for our fruit-and-vegetable store (which was next to the butcher shop, which was next to the grocery store, which was next to the candy-store-and-bookie-parlor), molested me and my friends sexually, on separate occasions (as we later learned), in the lobby of my best friend Gary's apartment house (Mrs. Berg's building), two houses down from mine . . . .

What was different, then, about the place I grew up in was not that it contained more mystery, conflict, joy, or unhappiness than the place in which I live now, but that its elements often seemed, at least in memory, to have been connected to one another in an ongoing, natural, and daily way, and to have remained so throughout the course of my growing up.

When, in September 1993, I was set free (or so I thought) from the immediate responsibilities of single parenting, I found myself remembering the drive I'd taken to and from the previous year's Seder with Eli and asking about the place in which I now lived: Why is this place different from all other places?

Situated in the Pioneer Valley and the Five College Area (the University of Massachusetts, Mount Holyoke, Smith, Amherst, and Hampshire Colleges), surrounded by lovely rolling hills and the richest farmland in New England, and built on a series of rises that gave magnificent views of the Holyoke Range, the Berkshires, the mountains of Southern Vermont, and the Connecticut River, Northampton contains a flourishing downtown of tastefully restored three- and four-story brick office buildings; more than seventy restaurants; a half-dozen places where one could hear good music every night of the week; four old movie theaters (including a hundred-year-old municipally owned theater that also produces ballets, operas, and stage shows); several splendid gardens and parks; dozens of art galleries, crafts shops, book, jewelry, clothing, and specialty stores.

Northampton seems, also, reasonably free of crime and drugs, while remaining, for a city of its size (30,736), remarkably diverse: It is home to a Veteran's hospital, large gay and lesbian populations, sizeable Hispanic and Asian communities, as well as to thousands of students, and to many writers, artists, musicians, and professionals not associated with local colleges. And yet, for all its amenities, and for all my years here, I felt, when I returned from Ohio, that living here was no different than living in any other New England city (or any other academic community) might be. Northampton's downtown, for example, since one didn't go there for one's daily shopping needs—groceries, hardware—remained for me more an entertainment center than anything else.

What I hungered for, as ever, was continuity and constancy: some sense that I lived in a place where I was, through a common purpose—or common values, or common needs, or common experiences, or common struggles, or (even) common enemies—bound not only to the people among whom I lived, but to people and experiences particular to the place in which I lived. I wanted to feel that who I was in this particular time and place was inevitably connected to what, in this place, had come before me, and would continue after I was gone.

I craved some natural and ongoing relation between my family life and my life in the place in which I had lived with my family, and all the coffee shops, galleries, concerts, bookstores, and boutiques in the world, I knew, would not satisfy that craving. Those things that had previously informed the spirit of place and provided for and transmitted the values by which we lived—family, religion, and community, especially—seemed, sadly, absent. And though my specific situation—a single man raising children by himself, a fiction writer displaced from urban to rural setting—led to feelings that were doubtless peculiar to me, remembering my own childhood and thinking of my children's, I began to believe that what I had most in common with both people I knew (friends) and people I didn't know (neighbors), was that, increasingly, many of us seemed to be living nowhere. Or, to put it another way (since the word utopia—from the Greek: 'not-a-place'—*means* nowhere), that we lived *anywhere* instead of *somewhere*.

The evidence—that the ways in which the particularity and difference of one neighborhood, town, city, or region from another were eroding—seemed all about us, most visibly in the generic architecture that housed the places in which, from coast to coast, we now worked and played—in malls, shopping centers, sports arenas, and fast food restaurants; in schools, apartment complexes, prisons, office buildings, and hospitals—in places that did not bear any least impress either of our own identities, or of the places in which we lived.

Clearly, in my own life, friends and social services performed functions that family, synagogue, and neighborhood had once performed. Though I was as capable as anyone else of singing hymns to the Brooklyn of my childhood—to that world usually associated with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Coney Island, bagels, egg creams, and the rest—I had also come to believe that such exercises in nostalgia were frequently veils for rage and resentment: for suppressing and repressing the actual unhappiness that had often been at the heart of one's growing up.

Still, as I began settling into my new and solitary life in Northampton, I found it *un*settling to realize I'd lived in this place longer than I'd lived in Brooklyn, and that I felt as if I were a stranger here: *in* a place, but not *of* it. I might have felt and thought many things about the Brooklyn of my youth, but never this.

For five years, I directed the graduate M.F.A. program at the University of Massachusetts. At the end of each academic year, our program holds ceremonies at which we award two prizes of several hundred dollars each—The Harvey Swados Memorial Prize in Fiction, and The Joseph Langland Prize in Poetry. Harvey Swados was a writer who taught in our program until his sudden death in 1972, at the age of fifty-two. Harvey's widow continued to live in the Pioneer Valley for many years, one of his sons graduated from UMass, and his daughter and her family live here now. Joe Langland founded our M.F.A. program thirty-five years ago, taught in it for nearly thirty years, and continues, in retirement, to live in Amherst, a few minutes from campus.

I was driving home from last spring's ceremonies, a month or so after the Seder at my cousin's house, when it occurred to me that during the presentations, neither the current director of the program, nor anybody else, had indicated who the prizes were named for, or why. When I spoke with my graduate students afterwards, none of them was aware that Harvey or Joe had been teachers in our program. When I inquired as to why Joe Langland and members of Harvey's family had not been present at the ceremonies, it turned out that nobody had thought of inviting them.

My question, again, was the same: How could it be? How could it be that a program that had seemed a genuine community of friends and writers, and that prided itself on its achievements and history, could suddenly and unthinkingly lose its memory?

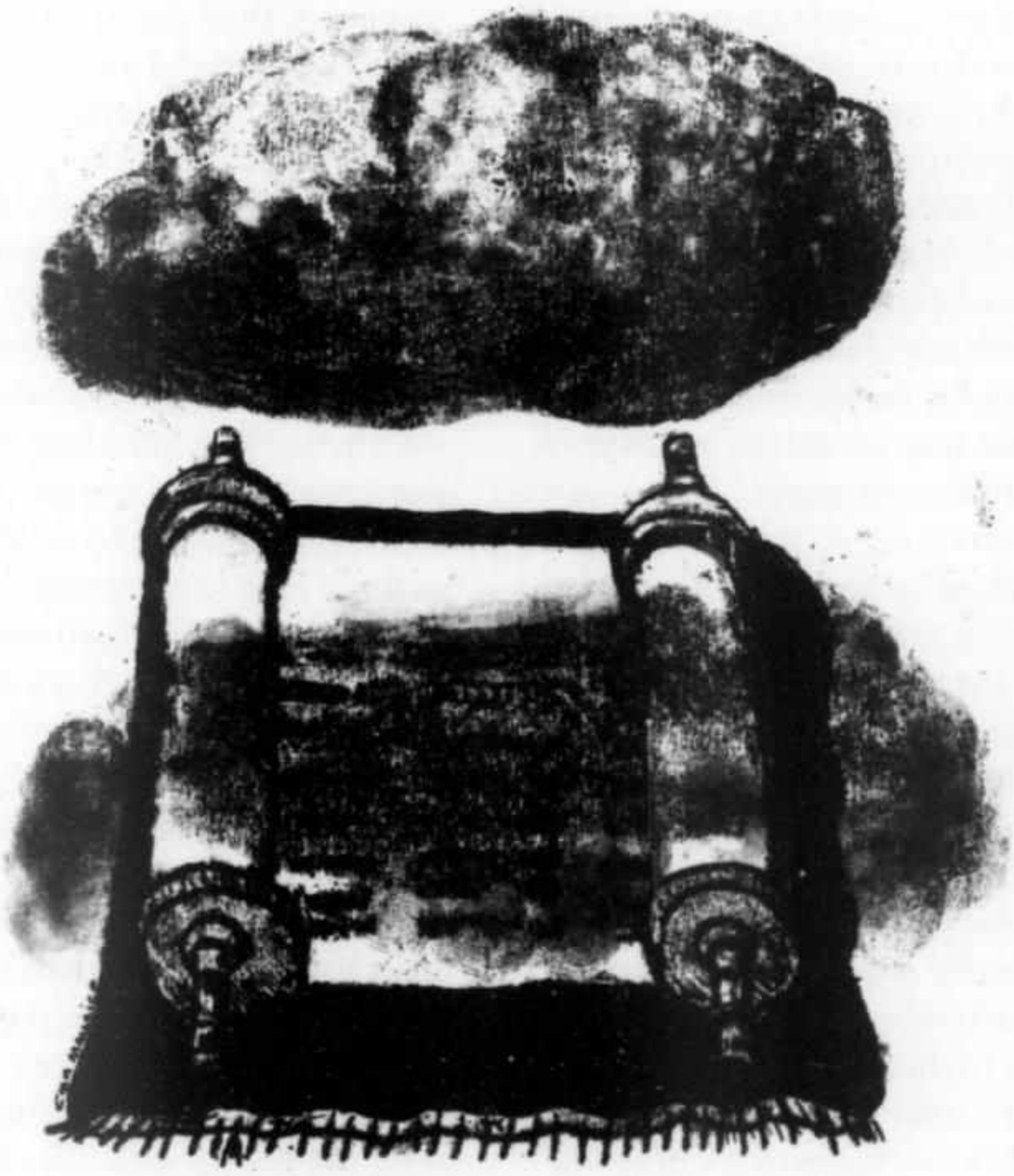
I didn't know the answer, but what I did sense was that a curious loss had occurred. Just as I felt I could have been living on any pretty New England street in any New England city, so I had felt, at these ceremonies, that I could have been witnessing the giving of *any* prizes at *any* university—and not the awarding of prizes named for two individuals and friends (Eli was given his middle name, Chaim, in memory of Harvey) whose lives had been intimately connected, in time and place, to the unique history and traditions of our program.

Without traditions and memory, I wondered, how provide for and transmit those things that give to a place its spirit? And without a sense of place, how sustain traditions and memory? Our seemingly

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Dealing With the Hard Stuff

Judith Plaskow



Cyn Maurice

For many years, I had difficulty listening to the Megillah reading on Purim. I found the story morally repugnant. Vashti's banishment for refusing to display herself before a group of drunken revelers seemed to me an example of male chauvinism it was impossible to slide over. And I experienced chapter nine, in which the Jews slay their enemies, as dreadful and bloodthirsty. That Haman should be hanged was utterly fitting; he was the one who hatched the plot against the Jews. But why should that be an excuse for a general bloodletting in which Jews treated an unnamed enemy in precisely the way they feared to be treated themselves?

But a few years ago—I'm not sure how or why—I came to adopt the perspective certain friends had long been pressing on me. The story was Purim Torah—nonsense, parody. I suddenly heard the full absurdity of the line, "for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon all peoples" (9:2), and my *gestalt* shifted. Ahasuerus was a complete fool, the story of Vashti obvious silliness, chapter nine the drunken fantasy of a powerless people. I thoroughly enjoyed the last several years of Megillah readings.

And then, this year, on the afternoon of Purim, I turned on my radio and heard that Baruch Goldstein had used the occasion of the holiday to mow down thirty Arabs praying in a mosque in Hebron. I realized that reading the story as Purim Torah had not banished or addressed the layer of poisonous objectification of the Other contained in chapter nine.

The massacre in Hebron raises a question posed many times in the course of the annual cycle of weekly and holiday readings: What do we do with hard texts? What do we do, when as individuals or communities, we find ourselves faced with texts that not only express values we no longer share, but that seem to support and encourage hatred, oppression, and violence in the world? For me, the end of the Book of Esther is not the only or even the most egregious example of this problem. According to tradition, in avenging themselves against their enemies, the Jews were simply acting on a broader warrant for genocide: the commandment to exterminate Amalek (Deut. 25:19; Ex. 17:16). Numerous passages in the Torah call for the annihilation of the peoples and indigenous religious traditions of Canaan (e.g., Deut. 7:1-5). And others identify groups within Israel as fitting targets for destruction or dehumanization. A man who lies with a man as with a woman should be put to death (Lev. 20:13). Lot offers his virgin daughters to be gang-raped by the men of

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Sodom (Gen. 19:8), an act on which the Torah makes no comment.

I am not suggesting that there is a direct and simple connection between difficult texts and contemporary examples of intolerance or hatred. Baruch Goldstein did not kill thirty Arabs in cold blood because the Megillah told him to do so. Nor do I see a direct relationship between discrimination against gays and lesbians in the Jewish community and the injunctions of Leviticus. Not only have appeals to problematic passages been too selective to support such easy correlations, but also there are obviously complex social, historical, and political factors that shape religious attitudes toward particular communities. I am arguing, however, that these texts foster and support a process of objectification of people who are "not like us." We learn from the Torah that there are whole groups of human beings who are so evil, or so other than we are, that marginalizing or destroying them is not only thinkable but divinely ordained.

Despite my willingness to read the Megillah as Purim Torah, I have never been of the school that feels we can simply dismiss troubling passages as reflections of an earlier time period. In this, I agree with Tzvi Marx, who discussed this dilemma in the last issue of TIKKUN ("A Post-Hebron Letter to My Son Michael," May/June 1994). Nor do I think we can interpret them away. In reading the Torah aloud each week as sacred text, we receive it ever again in the present, hearing it directly and unadorned. In this context, the fact that the midrashic tradition sees Lot as sharing in the sinfulness of Sodom cannot entirely eradicate the cruelty and violation of his readiness to sacrifice his daughters. There is no easy way to escape or ignore the hard places in Torah. Insofar as it has shaped our values, it necessarily has shaped them for good and for ill.

In dealing with hard texts, then, we have several possibilities. *Divrai Torah* or Torah discussions constitute the most obvious context for grappling with the difficult passages in Torah. Their purpose is to provide occasions for interpretation and application of the weekly reading. But there may also be other creative ways to turn troubling passages into opportunities for communal conversation and learning. In an article on Leviticus and homosexuality, Rebecca Alpert suggests that all synagogues declare the weeks of *Parshiot Ahare Mot* and *Kedoshim* lesbian and gay awareness weeks. Synagogues might set up panels and invite speakers, foster discussion, and formulate policy. One can imagine analogous events for other problematic passages. The week of *Ki Tetse*, when the injunction to exterminate Amalek is read, might serve—in the contemporary context—as the occasion for examining Jewish attitudes toward Palestinians. *Parashat Vayera*, when we read about Lot, might provide the opportunity to talk about sexual abuse in the Jewish community. And so on.

As another response in the aftermath of the Purim massacre in Hebron, Rivkah Walton has come up with a proposal for *liturgical* acknowledgment of the problematic nature of certain canonical sources. She suggests that when the Torah verses concerning Amalek are read, congregations read softly and rapidly, as they do for the curses at Gerizim and Ebal (Deut. 27:11-28). And she also proposes that Esther 9:1-16 be read in the *trop* (melody for chanting) traditionally used for Lamentations. Varying *trop* is a classic way of expressing feelings and values surrounding the material being read, and it has the advantage of calling community attention to morally difficult texts in the very process of reading. Such approaches can, in Rebecca Alpert's words, "transform Torah from a stumbling block [in]to an entry path."

But if certain texts seem to call out for attention and action, confronting hard texts also has its dangers and even absurdities. If we extend the principle of expressing our distance or mourning through *trop*, or set up "awareness weeks" for every passage whose import is damaging, where does the process end? It is not always easy to separate the stories and values we want to affirm from those we find troubling or simply unacceptable. We run the risk of always and only using Torah against itself, ignoring its richness and flattening its ambiguities.

And there is an opposite danger as well. It is one thing for adults who have already been affected and formed by difficult texts to find ways publicly to struggle with them. But can we justify teaching such passages and passing them on to the next generation so that they also need to exorcise the objectification of the Other that the text teaches and supports?

I do not have any easy answers to these questions. When I think about what I will do next Purim, I hope to be able to read on two levels. I do not want to lose the level of Purim Torah—the fun and self-mockery that is an important part of the cycle of human celebration and that has helped a persecuted people to survive. But I also want to grapple in community with the dangers of the Purim story for a people with power, and with the criminal use to which this text has been put, partly in my name. I continue to search for ways of dealing with a complex and contradictory heritage, and for ways of wresting life and justice from even its hardest places. □

Yuppie Redemption

Amitai Etzioni

When Hollywood lays off its usual cynically commercial staff and turns to the cultural crisis of our time, the resulting "redemption" movies are rather light, but not without merit. They share with the viewers some hints about the agony of alienation and the quest for a life richer in meanings and values. They just do not take us more than part of the way. *Doc Hollywood*, *Groundhog Day*, and *The Doctor* show that Hollywood can deal constructively, albeit in its own narrow fashion, with moral culture without sacrificing entertainment value or profit.

At the same time, the treatment of values in these movies lacks the kind of moral vocabulary and force possessed not only by the stories of Job, *King Lear*, and medieval morality plays—no one expects to find these here—but even those found in the movies such as *Chariots of Fire*, *The Mission*, and *A Man for All Seasons*. Instead, everything smacks of heaven-lite, of a cinematic treat for a yuppie who has ordered redemption, hold the religion. Their psychotherapeutic paradigm provides the framework for a limited but not virtueless guidance to the perplexed.

In *Doc Hollywood*, we meet young doctor Ben Stone, an accomplished but insensitive specialist. He is on his way to become a plastic surgeon in Hollywood. To ensure that the viewer doesn't miss the point, another doctor wonders aloud why our Dr. Stone would be wasting his God-given talents by lifting breasts and tucking tummies.

While en route to Los Angeles, Stone crashes his red Porsche in Grady, a rural Southern town. A judge commits Stone to sixteen hours of community service assisting the town's aging doctor. For its duration, the movie revolves around the conflict between the warmth of small-town America and the greed of the metropolitan city, and the "personal growth" of Dr. Stone.

As Stone feels ever more caught in the town's warm web, he makes a final attempt to escape, which provides the climactic/traumatic event that a Hollywood redemption practically requires. On his way out of town, one of the locals waves Stone down to assist in an emergency. It is a difficult breech delivery, the child of a couple Stone has gotten to know. Stone's elation at saving the child, of giving life, all but seals his transformation. While in the process of delivering the baby, Stone tears up his Armani shirt and watches a runaway truck demolish his newly reconstructed Porsche, the ultimate rite of purification and yuppie redemption. He agrees to take over the aging doctor's practice, and his reward is both immediate and tangible—he gets the most attractive girl in town.

Grady is a community with no churches, political parties, abortion clinics, pro-life demonstrations, crime, alcoholism, or AIDS. No one prays, even when parents hover around their dying son. The town faces no normative questions, there is no real evil or good, and hence there seems to be little need for deep answers. *Doc Hollywood* plays upon a strong American yearning for an idealized conception of small-town life. There is nothing wrong with such ideals, except that their normative content is such thin gruel. Indeed, this is a place for shallow communitarians who hold that strong community bonds are of value—without any attention to the texture and depths of the moral and social values it upholds.

Stone's redemptive transition takes him from cold-blooded, avaricious, city slicker to caring small-town physician—the kind of doctor who is often paid in live pigs and hand-carved pipes. The underlying paradigm is psychotherapeutic: an anal, uptight, type-A personality is transformed into a relaxed type-B.

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Yet for all the movie's warm vibes, one exits with a nagging question: Is sensitivity all there is?

Groundhog Day's Phil Connor is an ambitious TV weatherman on his way to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to cover the town's annual festival that lends the movie its name. Connor, abrasive and self-centered, believes that the festival is ridiculous, the town's residents "hicks" and "morons." He rebuffs the entreaties of a homeless beggar and shoves aside a former classmate who pathetically tries to sell him life insurance.

For these rather lite sins, Connor is punished. When he awakens the next morning, he finds that it is Groundhog Day all over again. Connor relives precisely the same events, and arises the following day to discover that he is truly condemned to a Sisyphean labor: Each morning starts exactly where it did the day before. Connor finds that he alone is locked in this torturous repetition, while the rest of the town is oblivious to its bizarre fate, without his cumulative memory of the earlier replays.

At first, Connor tries to take advantage of his special knowledge about what will happen that day and the uncanny freedom from accountability for his actions it produces. No one recalls his responses or gambits of the previous day, and Connor is free to experiment with the most outlandish or manipulative behavior without suffering the normal social consequences. He drinks heavily, steals from an armored truck, and manipulates a woman into a one-night stand. But his hedonistic indulgence fails to make the endless grind tolerable.

When the novelty wears off and the day continues to clone itself with no apparent end in sight, Connor begins his redemption. Yet the viewer is not given so much as a hint whose invisible hand condemned him to this Sisyphean condition, or why his tribulations are so out of proportion to his misdeeds (unless you consider being socially obnoxious the ultimate Yuppie sin, but Connor is not even very socially offensive). As the movie recognizes no superior force or set of values, it is unfathomable what it would take for Connor to return to the flock. Indeed, one might suggest that Connor turns to altruism out of sheer boredom. So our former Scrooge sets out to earn his Scout's honor badge. Connor assists some elderly women with a flat tire, hugs a pestering insurance salesman, buys supper for a homeless man. Now, appreciated by the town's folk, Connor dismisses the kudos, having gained humility. An observer with an eye for redemption may see here traces of the real stuff: the role of redemptive suffering, the purging of the sinner's past, the preparation for a nobler future, and the all-important recognition that it is not enough to atone for past sins. Otherwise, as the cynics put it, one may sin all week long, seek absolution during the weekend, and sin afresh on Monday. True redemption calls for restructuring one's life and aligning it with the ultimate values to which one is committed. In his own small way, Connor did not merely suffer plenty for his past, but he committed himself to a new way of life.

Having demonstrated his reformed and nobler self, Connor is released from the eternal rerun and returned to the normal life of a weatherman for a local TV station. Moreover, he receives what Hollywood considers the ultimate reward: He gets the girl. Rita (a TV producer on assignment with Connor) refused his earlier advances; now she is rather enamored with the new Connor. The sun rises with her in his bed.

The title role in *The Doctor*, is an arrogant and uncaring physician. According to Dr. Jack MacKee, a surgeon's job is similar to a mechanic's, to "get in, fix it, and get out" rather than to care. He pokes fun at a woman who has been left with a major scar on her chest and is afraid of her husband's reaction. He is equally detached from his wife and son.

Jack's upcoming, redemptive suffering is the severest of the lot; he is diagnosed with laryngeal cancer. He faces the loss of his vocal cords in surgery and possibly premature death. Meanwhile, he is put through the same indignities he recently inflicted on others. The diagnosis of cancer is thrown into his face unceremoniously by a callous doctor. Jack is forced to fill out stacks of forms, wait for hours, and is provided with a skimpy gown. All the while, he maintains his emotional barriers against the world, even against his wife.

Jack's redemption begins not when he faces death or his "evil" past (no match for true sin), but when he is touched by the "inner personality" of fellow patient June, who has terminal brain cancer. June has come to terms with her fate. But how? Not by finding a larger meaning in life or death, but by fully savoring each moment, such as the view from the roof of the hospital and a sunset in the Nevada desert. At one point Jack asks June point blank, "What do you do to keep it all together? Pray?" June answers lackadaisically: "I pray, I eat chocolate, I dance." She reminds me of an economist who tried to show that all goods can be traded one for another, and wrote that "the Bible, a pound of nuts, a fifth of Bourbon and dope are all interchangeable commodities."

Again, because there is no explicable source of

meaning, the movie draws on an underlying psychotherapeutic paradigm—June plays Jack's therapist. Her ability to listen in a non-judgmental way, her personal "touch," and her own "role modeling" composure bring him around. A platonic sunset dance in the desert is the high point of Jack's conversion, the required redemptive event. Jack returns a changed person. He treats his own patients with consideration and he is finally able to say to his wife the non-macho Yuppie words of redemption: "I love you." He even has time to smile at his child and announces that he will not testify on behalf of a colleague who botched a surgery. He was not merely exposed to the light; he restructured his life.

Jack's prize is quick and earthly. He does not lose his vocal cords and—what else?—he gets the girl, although this time it is his wife.

Other recent Hollywood redemption movies follow the same basic formula. In *Regarding Henry*, it takes a gunshot to make a better person out of the ruthlessly ambitious lawyer played by Harrison Ford (and he earns his family back). In *The Prince of Tides*, overbearing football coach Nick Nolte finds his salvation on the couch of his psychiatrist, and later wins her body and heart.

One exception to the rule, a movie that takes a rather different tack, is *Forrest Gump*. The movie tells us the "true" story of the childhood, adolescence, and young life of a person with a rather low I.Q. who can function in our society but barely. Recent American history—the Sixties counter-culture, the war in Vietnam, the preoccupation with making it rich—is used as a cardboard (and we shall see, rather conservative) historical-cultural setting.

Gump, the movie's hero, needs no redeeming; he is naturally good-hearted and giving, and too simple-minded to scheme and deceive. (Even his far-from-deficient libido is somehow held in check for what might be called true love objects; he instinctively draws back from prostitutes and waits chastely for his one lifelong love.)

Rather than being redeemed, Gump redeems others, not by preaching but by reaching out in his own warm, unadorned way. In Vietnam, he risks his life to pull his lieutenant out of a hail of bullets. When the lieutenant grows despondent and bitter (and later becomes an alcoholic) because he lost his legs and failed to die heroically in battle, Gump, by his own affirmative approach to life, convinces him to join him in a shrimping business. He redeems the lieutenant, at least in the sense that Lieutenant Dan finds again a positive meaning in his life and work.

Above all, Gump reaches out to Jenny, a victim of incest whose life has been marred by self-loathing and self-destructive behavior, Sixties style, from drugs to what was then considered sexual liberation. Gump never wavers in his devotion, although Jenny repeatedly leaves him for others, until finally she is redeemed, only—true to Hollywood code—to die of a fatal illness for her "sins," in his arms.

The movie's makers evince a lack of self-awareness about the message it sends. They never wonder what kind of redemption you gain if it is delivered to you by the touch of another. We hear very little about an inner struggle or growth either on the part of the lieutenant or Jenny, and less in the many others Gump reaches. (At one point in the film, Gump develops a national following—quite literally, as a whole gaggle of people simply follow him as he attracts national news coverage for running aimlessly back and forth across the country.) In a device that is threaded throughout the movie, Gump offers strangers a candy from his chocolate box, and they—at first suspicious—are sweeter for it. How lite can you get?

There is, however, a much deeper issue the movie skips, and that is the role of the societal structure in personal redemption. Gump saves people so that they can find happiness in conformity to the norms of the socially conservative, capitalist economy. The wasted lieutenant joins him in a very successful business venture; Blacks are "saved" by Gump's philanthropy; those who protested the war in Vietnam are depicted as a cross between radical potheads and crypto-fascists with no attempt to explain the politics behind the fads. The U.S. Army during the war in Vietnam is depicted as the one place in which a dumb person can be fully appreciated.

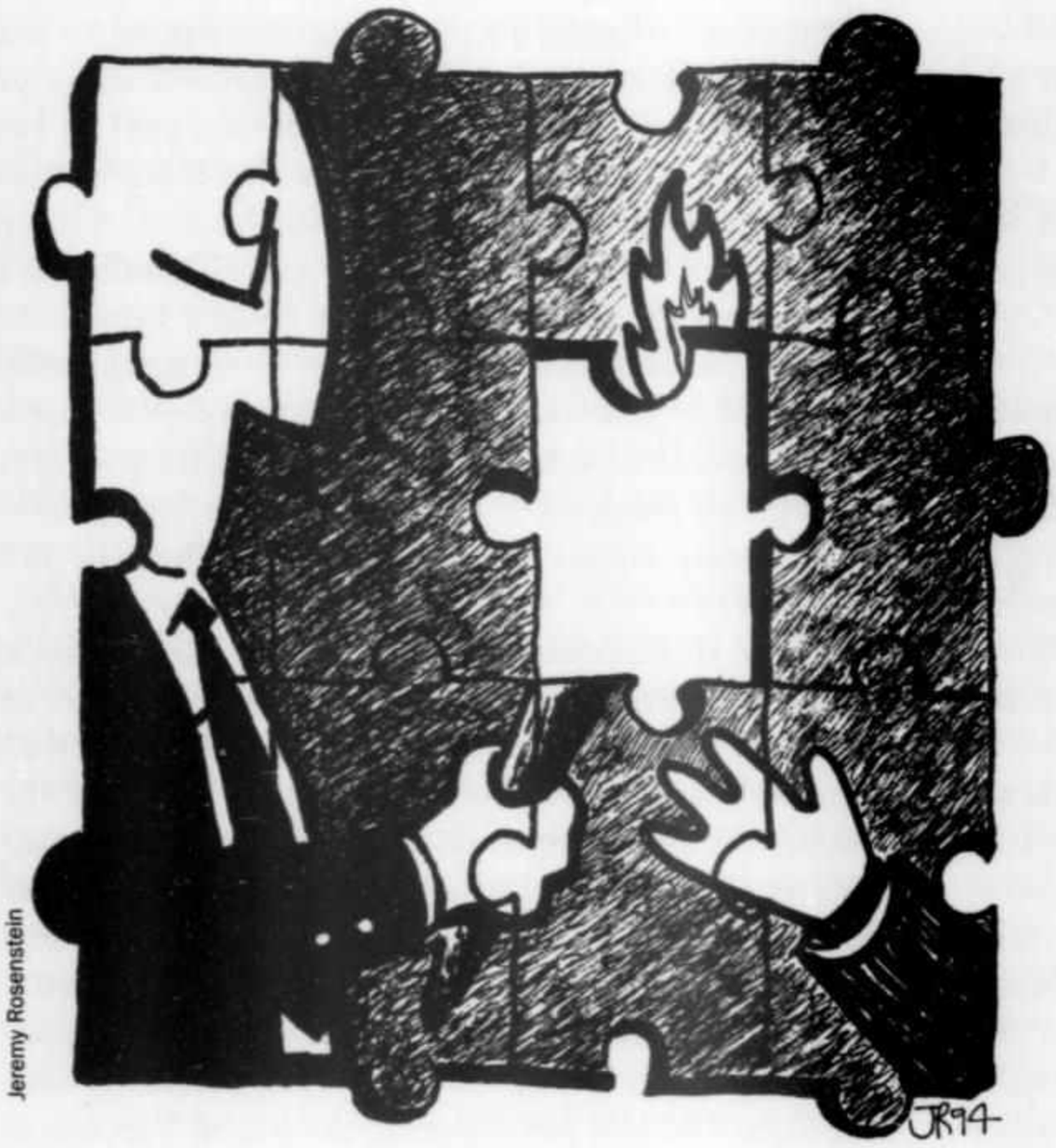
Each of these movies does have a redeeming touch. They reveal that Hollywood is not merely in the entertainment business, but is occasionally drawn into value issues, forever sensitive to the zeitgeist. Americans are sick of the nihilism and moral vacuity that afflicts major segments of our society. But it is not equally evident that these Americans are ready to face the deeper moral questions that our recent interest in the "loss of meaning" points to—the loss of virtue. True, a life without meaning is meaningless; but it is equally true that not all meanings are born equal; to establish which are morally sound requires acquiring a sense of what is right and the criteria by which we tell what is right from what is wrong. This is not exactly where these movies take

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Passing a Doubtful Torch

D-Day In the Eyes of the Woodstock Generation

Stephen Mo Hanan



Jeremy Rosenstein

At the midpoint between the summer that followed the Normandy Invasion and the summer of 1994 stands Woodstock. What does a baby boomer make of the recent avalanche of D-Day symbology? I was five when *Victory at Sea* was first shown on NBC, old enough to remember the epic roll of its black-and-white Richard Rodgers waves from right to left as the credits passed. Its commemorative showing on PBS last June was thus not only a fascinating illumination of the central myth of my parents' generation, but an evocation of my own childhood and lost innocence. President Clinton is only the most public member of a generation whose Vietnam-era pacifism must mix some irony into the honoring of what was truly noble and heroic in World War II.

The New Deal generation has reached a momentous anniversary, with every right to celebrate its accomplishment in mobilizing the forces of democracy to the highest degree ever known, in a cause unanimously endorsed by the verdict of history. Those who in youth waged war owe their very definition of courage and heroism to the experience. Many of them in middle age squared off against their children's garishly unpatriotic response to the challenge of Vietnam. The ones who survive today are the aging parents of children confronting their own middle age. Perhaps in the light of D-Day +50, there is some benefit in re-examining the chasm that opened between the generations half as many years ago. Perhaps as the lessons of one war confront those of another, a deepening of understanding will be available for Americans of all ages, and wounds long left to fester unattended may be safely re-opened and healed.

In a far more naive television era, *Victory at Sea* freely mingled gripping documentary footage with corny narration and snail-pace editing. It is fascinatingly unhip, howlingly gung-ho. It has all the political sophistication of Oliver North, whose perceptions it may well have molded. There isn't a scrap of ambivalence with regard to either the resort to violence or the identification of Good Guys and Bad Guys. As the images of destruction multiply, and explosion, flame, waste and ruin, maiming, and death succeed one another with terrifying regularity, there isn't the least suggestion that our enemies didn't deserve everything they got, and perhaps they did. But the remoteness of black-and-white cannot soften the mounting revulsion that the images of even this "Good War" must inspire in anyone inclined to count the human cost, admirable

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Buying Power
Thoughts on the "Crisis" of Commodification

David A. Smith

Not long ago, an issue of *Vanity Fair* contained a four-page layout on "grunge," then the latest fashion trend to hit urban America. Gossip columnist Liz Smith and talk show host Joan Rivers were featured wearing the hottest in designer grunge. "I like dressing like a poor little waif as long as I can keep some Van Cleef in my hobo bag," said Rivers, who was pictured wearing a Pamela-Dennis maxi-vest, a Cheap and Chic Moschino crochet dress, and Charles Jourdan shoes. Grunge, the rebellious counter-cultural response of 1980s youth to the materialism of the Reagan era, has, like so many political statements before it, been sanitized, accessorized, and advertised by the Madison Avenue mainstream.

And, in a twist on this trend that must have Lenin rolling over in his grave, Ralph Lauren recently introduced his "bolshevik collection." The ad copy exhorts the consumer to "Overthrow the status quo. Ralph Lauren revolutionizes Fall. His bolshevik collection establishes a brand-new doctrine. The leather jacket with faux Persian lamb trim and super-wide trousers are for rebels with a cause."

Perhaps it is time once again to bemoan the indefatigable power of capitalism to absorb and appropriate that which resists it. In the hype surrounding Spike Lee's 1992 movie about Malcolm X, pop-culture pundits expressed awe and dismay over the transformation of the letter X from a bold statement of revolutionary design to a decorative design revolutionizing the fashion statement. As Malcolm's symbol of rebellion against white America became the benign and ubiquitous motif on T-shirts and baseball caps across the American heartland, there was a general sense of horror among the politically aware that the market could swallow up and neutralize even the most extreme emblems of social resistance.

Ever since Marx, intellectuals have observed and condemned the power of capitalism to co-opt. But what were once brilliant insights into the workings of consumer culture are now part of the common wisdom of progressive thought. And there are certain truths within the Marxian critique of commodification that ought not to be ignored. Theodore Adorno, for example, argues that the late nineteenth century witnessed the invention of the artistic avant-garde, and along with it, the relentless pursuit of the new. Modernism meant the end of a centuries-long attempt to recapture the classical spirit; Europe began a dizzying process of stylistic innovation. Impressionism, symbolism, expressionism, collage, cubism, art nouveau, and art deco each momentarily captured society's interest, only to be quickly shunted aside to make room for the new.

Modernism undermined the very possibility of social critique, Adorno maintains. Each new revolution in style was quickly accommodated by the bourgeoisie and then even more quickly discarded. The surrealists thought that they could escape the commodifying process by using dream-like images to upset rational thought. Today surrealist imagery pervades advertising and popular culture. Absolut Vodka ads rely not only on the traditional surrealist technique of juxtaposing unrelated images, but also draw directly on the imagistic vocabulary of surrealism, using such dream-like images as clouds, hats, and fish. Saturated as our culture is by the influence of the surrealists, it is difficult to appreciate the original seriousness of their political project. Tristan Tzara and the Dadaists thought they could beat capitalism at its own game by playing at creating nonconsumable art. But the marketplace has been perfectly content to absorb signed urinals and found objects.

The nihilism of Dada merely provided a background to the growing utopian socialism of High Modernism, embodied in the International Style. Gropius intended his Bauhaus coffeepots and table lamps to undermine the very foundations of capitalism. If only he had lived to witness the birth of 1980s yuppie-spartan, with its stripped-down,

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industrial aesthetic.

Andy Warhol managed to laugh at capitalist appropriation without the slightest tinge of despair. He recycled consumer images in a cynical parody of Ford's assembly-line production. But the market has had the last laugh. At this year's Sotheby's art auction, when Warhol prints were proffered for sale, no one was buying.

So, for a century, radical artists and philosophers have despaired over the market's ability to absorb critique. Theorists have offered every plausible method of resistance, from Marcuse's call for "critical negation" to Baudrillard's ultimate recourse of absolute silence. But each effort has failed. In a sassy display of market sophistication and intellectual cynicism four years ago, several Brown University students distributed throughout SoHo *Defunct*, a glossy magazine featuring articles on the commodification of cultural criticism, sandwiched between full-page ads for Genera jeans. Yet despite the regularly reemerging theme of ironic resignation, the Left has remained consistently contemptuous of, and concerned about, the problem of commodification. We yearn desperately for a space of resistance, a transcendent discourse or iconography that will never be turned into a Bloomingdale's special.

Is all of this frustration well-spent? Without a doubt the problem of commodification and co-optation exists, but the question is: Is it all bad? Might not the commodification process actually serve the interests of a free society, not from a neoconservative but from a neo-Marxist perspective? Commodification saps the Left of its potential for radical reconstruction of society. One might argue that it has the same impact on the reactionary efforts of the Right.

In our anguish over the tendency of consumer capitalism to drain away the radical potential of all resistance, we on the Left have lost sight of intellectual consistency. Even as we worry about the sale of tie-dyed T-shirts at uptown boutiques, we stare in horror as the similar process occurs to the other end of the political spectrum. When it happens on the Right, we see reactionary ideology reified, made more sinister by becoming apparently more accepted. We never discuss the commodification of reactionary expression; rather, we are taught to dread the "naturalization" of right-wing ideology. Take for example, the phenomena of Howard Stern, who has parlayed his "shock-jock" radio show into national celebrity, and Rush Limbaugh, the phenomenally popular conservative radio and television talk-show host. For any intellectual, it is difficult to witness their success without trepidation. Slowly, insidiously reactionary thought appears to be creeping into, and taking over, mainstream media.

Or is it? This analysis represents a complete reversal of the suggestion that the media rapaciously devour and decompose all extremism. The very foundation of the commodification critique is the notion that market success is misleading because it always already involves its own doom. The first law of consumer culture dictates that the initial moments of market success foreshadow a day of failure. Just a few years ago, liberals were horrified and terrified by the rising popularity of hate comics such as Andrew Dice Clay. Now they are passé (and out of work), due not to the critical attacks of the Left but to the underlying, indefatigable propulsionary force of consumer capitalism: boredom.

The commodification of the Right continues unabated. While we on the Left might blush at the rapid acculturation of gay S&M accouterments such as nipple rings (now brazenly displayed by the heterosexual hip on the streets of New York), we should not overlook the fact that the nose-ring stems from a culture of female sexual servitude. If high-heels could symbolize sexual oppression for American feminists in the 1970s, one can imagine what Indian feminists would make of the pierced-nostril aesthetic. American women have imported a symbol of sexual difference from a culture that expects a widow to throw herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Think of how American women would react if the government had encouraged the wearing of nose-rings in the United States. Nose-rings would have been reviled as the ultimate symbol of gender discrimination. Instead, countless numbers of teen-age girls and adult women freely allow their noses to be stabbed with a needle so that they might sport metal loops—the insidious spread of reactionary ideology, or the numbing effect of commodification on the oppressive symbolism of third-world sexism?

When you look at what the typical nipple-pierced, nose-ringed fashion maven is wearing as foot-gear these days, you're likely to find combat boots—the co-opted symbols of the proto-fascist, skin-head movement. Head-shaving, meanwhile, has also lost its reactionary clout: Even Sinead O'Connor, a singer and spokeswoman for the counter-culture, is a skin-head. Her popularity threatens to turn innumerable MTV fans into skin-heads. But now, through the process of appropriation and mass-market co-optation, the visual image of the "skin-head" has lost much of its symbolic power. Like so many other attempts at political expression, it has gone the way of High Style.

Since the defining doctrine of reactionary thought is nostalgia, in order to measure the true effects of commodification we should look to see if nostalgia has managed to get the better of our society as it has in socialist and "national socialist" societies. The answer, in a word, is hardly. The ubiquitous threat of insurgent nostalgia is consistently rendered defenseless by the fashion trends of metropolitan culture. Does fifties revival foreshadow a return to a pre-feminist era? Not when you notice that those women wearing retro cat's-eye glasses are likely to be radical lesbian performance artists. And besides, the fifties revival is dead, only to be replaced by the resurrection of styles from the 1970s, potentially the most heinous decade in the history of fashion. Nostalgia may be alive and well in post-industrial society but it can hardly manage to be the force of political transformation that Thomas Carlyle and George Fitzhugh once envisioned.

In addition to nostalgia, American conservatism continues to be dominated by radical religiosity. Right-wing politics has become virtually synonymous with Christian fundamentalism. And Christian fundamentalism has always identified with the cross. So it is especially ironic that the market maven, Madonna, managed to turn the cross into a symbol of sexy rebelliousness and suburban chic. As a result of Madonna's "like a virgin" phase, millions of American girls began to buy and wear large crosses as part of a wannabe ensemble. Stores specializing in punk gear started selling vast numbers of large crosses on chains. The cross may still be a powerful symbol of religious belief—as well as a sometimes signifier of oppression—but its categorical authority as a sign of holiness has been challenged by the irreligious, irresponsible force of the mass market.

The Right is subject to the same forces of commodification and dissolution as the Left. If you are still in doubt, turn on your television set and witness how the ultimate consumer medium has appropriated and transfigured the ultimate reactionary impulse: nationalistic violence. This supreme expression of right-wing attitudes has been packaged, marketed, and domesticated in the form of a show called "American Gladiators." Here are virile men and women, ideal physical types, wrapped in the red, white, and blue of the American flag, sparring in mock versions of *gemeinschaft* gymnasia. Should we be frightened by their appeal to the American masses? Or should we be delighted that such indulgences of protofascism are burning up the fuel of consumer patience and will soon be abandoned for newer forms of television camp?



Johanna Vogelsang

The Left is quick to point to historical examples to show the evils of commodification. As we've already seen, each effort to subvert bourgeois culture in the last two centuries has been defeated by the gross desire of the mainstream to consume the rare and the new. It would, however, be foolish to think that only the Left has suffered the attentions of the market. Consumer culture is indifferent to political alignment. Just as the market was preparing to devour the radical rectilinearity of High Modernism, for example, it sucked up the fascistic frenzy of futurism and spit back innocuous imitations in the form of the "speed-line," a decorating motif for the 1950s gas station.

Economic history has not been kind to right-wing attempts at social control. Witness the graham cracker: In the nineteenth century, Dr. Graham believed that nibbling on the dry biscuit would help desiccate the libido of sinful adolescents. Once a creative solution to the problem of masturbation amongst young boys, the tasty treat is now a fad for the health-conscious because it is naturally low in fat. And who is most worried about fitness in America today? Probably not those with sexual restraint on their minds.

Commodification may not be nearly as sinister as we have been lead to believe. Even some of its most grotesque forms may in fact represent the neutralization of right-wing revolutionary objectives. For example, what has become of the eugenics movement? At one time in this century the Anglo, American,

and "Aryan" nations were obsessed with eliminating undesirable racial stocks. It would be naive to think that desire for human biological perfection could be erased by a few historical lessons. The theoretical animus of eugenics had roots much deeper than modern fascism, or even social darwinism. And that animus will persist long into the future, despite the likelihood that millions of Americans will be educated about its most murderous consequences thanks to the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

The only difference between the contemporary search for the ideal human type and its early incarnations is that it has become dispersed, disarmed in a sense. Consumer capitalism now sells the perfectly defined face, along with the perfectly defined body. Some of us pay $70 to dye our hair, others $700 to join a gym, and still others $7,000 to buy a new nose. So is this the consummate form of self-imposed slavery? Are consumer desires alienating us at last from our very physical selves? That is, of course, what many on the Left have assumed to be the case. Cher and Michael Jackson certainly seem like living proof of hegemonic ideology. To some, they are false consciousness embodied.

But the market, with its ineluctably short attention span and its never-ending quest for the new, has grown tired of traditional images of beauty. Now *Playboy* is printing photo spreads of the unclassical, unreconstructed Sandra Bernhard. According to morning-news television reports, the major modeling agencies are in a tizzy because Paris has decided that being beautiful is out, and being waif-like and vaguely unattractive is in. One of the hottest music video performers now is RuPaul, an over 6-foot tall, Black male transvestite. What happened to white, Anglo-Saxon cultural hegemony? It flooded the market and dried up demand. Consumer backlash strikes again. Speaking of backlash, where's Camille Paglia these days? It seems that sexism on speed has grown trite, the inglorious effect of overexposure.

The free market may not be all that Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill envisioned. But on the other hand, one-dimensional society may not be nearly as depressing as Herbert Marcuse suggested. Trapped as we may be within the dialectics of consumer culture, we are also safely shielded from the revolutionary programs of the radical Left and the Right.

America may never become a true Queer Nation, or a Nation of Islam. But if Madison Avenue continues to thrive, we'll never be made subjects of the White Aryan Nation either. As far as I'm concerned, that's worth watching even Joan Rivers go grunge. □

Nixon and the Sixties
Mass Media and the Sanitized Past

Edward P. Morgan

"A people or class which is cut off from its own past is far less free to choose and to act as a people or class than one that has been able to situate itself in history."

-John Berger

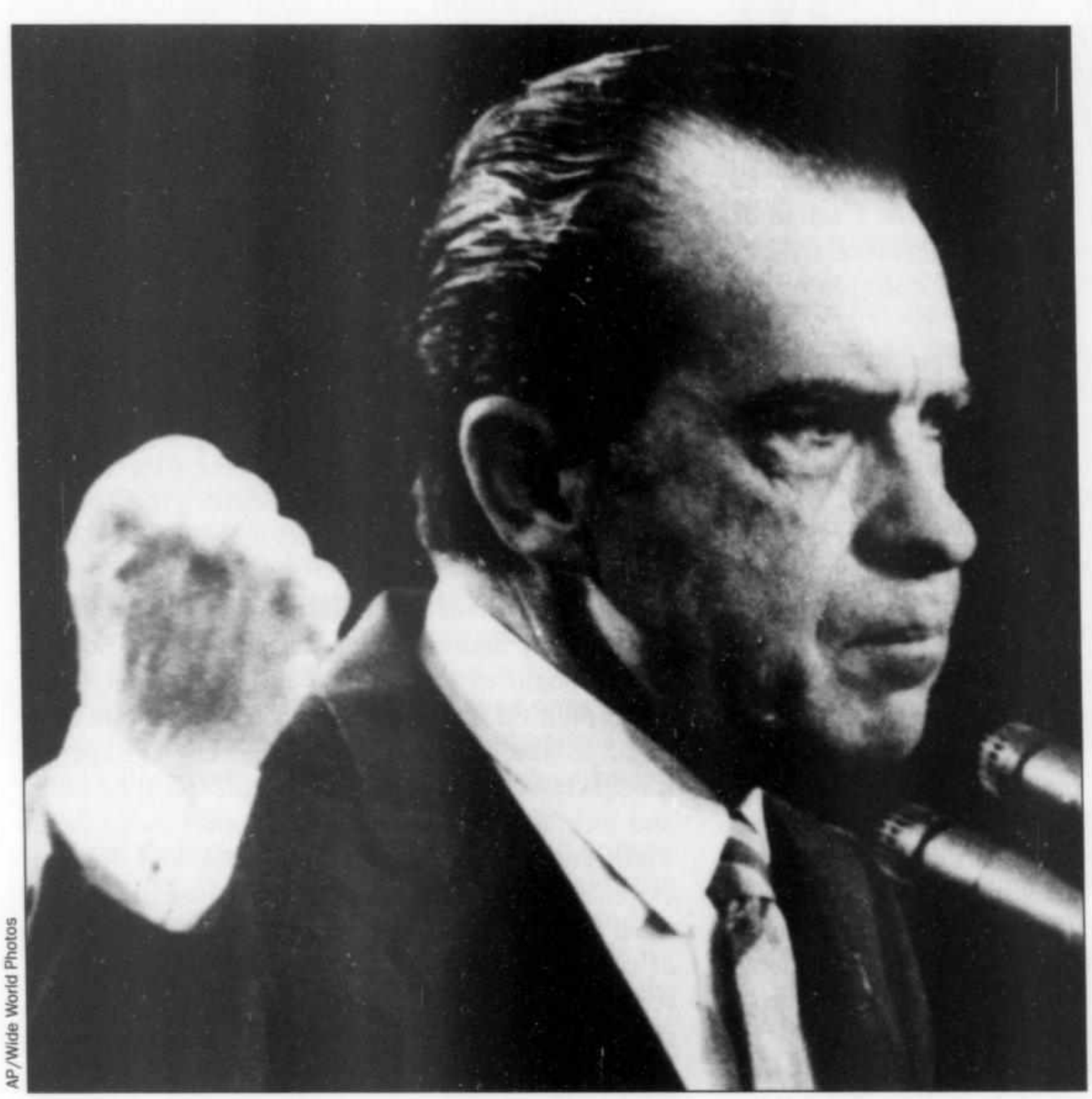
"How will history remember Richard Nixon?" asked the media pundits in the aftermath of the late president's death. The general consensus of sound-bite history seemed to be that Nixon was a "great statesman" plagued by personality flaws that led to his downfall in American domestic politics. Eventually, the *Glasgow Herald* (April 25) predicted, "American historians may judge the throwing out of office of a great statesman quite differently from the way it [sic] does now."

If historians rely on sources in the mass media, the *Herald*'s prediction will probably come to pass. A *London Sunday Times* headline summed up the media response to Nixon's death: "America unites in grief for a statesman now seen as good." A closer look at America's public mourning for Nixon, however, reveals the standard mass media treatment. Dramatic media images from the past—the Watergate hearings, Nixon's trip to China—are recycled and served up as history. A relatively small circle of notables frame respectable opin-

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ion, ranging from the paeans of former President Ronald Reagan and Senator Bob Dole to the let-bygones-be-bygones recollections of Nixon's former presidential opponent George McGovern to the genuflection of President Bill Clinton. Independent journalists strive for "balance" between the Good Nixon of foreign policy fame and the Bad Nixon of Watergate.

Yet the newly revised Nixon was such a blatant fabrication that his posthumous appearance produced a backlash of angry letters to the editor and some outraged columns by journalists decrying the freshly sanitized history. As some critics recognized, the problem with the media coverage was not so much the relative eclipse of the abuses of Watergate and Nixon's historic resignation as it was the widespread acclaim for Nixon as "statesman."



AP/Wide World Photos

By any moral measure, Nixon's worst crimes were committed in Indochina. Yet in the torrent of words unleashed by Nixon's death, these war crimes have disappeared down the black hole of history. The hundreds of thousands of civilians who died under the unprecedented American onslaught in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; the bitterness of American vets who were mere pawns in a Great Power game; the antiwar activists who were the targets of Teamster toughs, the FBI-CIA counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO), and a White House plan for mass detention—these are the now-invisible victims of Nixon "statesmanship."

Furthermore, as H. R. Haldeman's recently published diaries remind us, the Nixon-Kissinger team consciously prolonged their criminal aggression against Vietnam for their own electoral advantage. Yet a computer search through more than 2,000 American news stories following Nixon's death yielded only one oblique reference to the words "war criminal," attributed to Nixon critics, while there were 360 references to "statesman." (In the interest of balance, it would seem, the word "crook" appeared 106 times).

We shouldn't be surprised that Nixon's crimes in Indochina were largely invisible, since the brutality of American aggression has been largely excised from public recollections of that war. Respectable opinion in the mass media ranges from the "we should have won" rhetoric of hawks to the "we made well-intended mistakes" position of doves. Recently, the prevailing controversy seems to be whether or not it's time for us to forgive Vietnam!

The recent spectacle of Nixon revisionism exposes our mass-mediated postmodern culture for what it is: a montage of images, symbols, and soundbites that not only obscures reality but in some critical ways reverses it. The results of this sanitizing process are readily apparent in the Orwellian comments of people

too young to remember the real, live Nixon. One high school senior in an Advanced Placement government class remarked, "What Nixon did wasn't so bad. It's not like he killed anybody." Another simply asserted, "He tried to bring some integrity back to the Presidency" (*New York Times*, April 27).

What can progressives do in the face of such a total rewriting of history? Elsewhere in this issue, ("Buying Power: Thoughts on the 'Crisis' of Commodification," p.63), David A. Smith argues that the commodified culture of the mass media might "actually serve the interest of a free society" because they subvert the reactionary efforts of the Right as well as the radical impulses of the Left. Smith's account finds a reassuring symmetry in the market's balanced absorption of extremes. In my view, however, this is myopic feel-goodism. Events such as Nixon's death reveal how the mass-mediated culture accommodates a range of opinion from the Right to the safely liberal center, but squeezes out the more fundamental critiques of the Left.

Thus, I would suggest that progressives must first recognize the degree to which the commodified culture confronts us with a massive impediment to our efforts to mobilize large-scale movements for change. Our eyes must be fully open to the systemic as well as personal obstacles in our path. Consider, for example, the way the mass media have rewritten the history of Sixties movements.

The struggles of the 1960s posed a threat not only to elite politics-as-usual but ultimately, one might say, to business-as-usual. Nixonian rhetoric and media images aside, '60s movements didn't endanger "law and order" as much as they threatened to raise the ideological veil that obscures the dark side of American (and Western) corporate capitalism: oppressive poverty and exploitation (fueled by racism, sexism, and ethnic division), a materialistic ratrace, bureaucratic education, imperial wars, the erosion of community, and the progressive destruction of the ecosphere.

Activists confronted the system with demands for equality, personal empowerment, morally defensible policy, and community. They were most persuasive when their actions reflected these values. One critical principle of effective democratic mobilization, recognized perhaps instinctively by early civil rights and antiwar activists, is that protesters must communicate their claims in ways that *reach* their prospective audience. For this to happen, the "audience" must come to feel psychologically closer to the protesters than they do to the target of protest (be it racism or a brutal war). Protesters are thus faced with fundamental strategic dilemmas: how to present themselves and how to reveal the ugliness of their targets. These dilemmas become far more problematic when protesters' own exposure to the brutality of racism, war, and oppression triggers powerful feelings of rage.

Much Sixties activism followed this principle; indeed, many observers have commented on the way in which '60s movements embodied an expression of democratic values that was compatible with efforts to transform society. This activism generated a sense of possibility, a belief that the oppressed could become full members of society, and that the system could be qualitatively transformed. With an important assist from the media (exposing in some cases the integrity or psychological proximity of protesters, in others the ugliness or "other-ness" of racism, oppression, and war), millions of Americans and Europeans came to believe that "the times they are a'changin."

Yet Sixties movements inevitably and repeatedly came up against those with a stake in the status quo. As the principles underlying Sixties protests shifted from consensually grounded constitutional values like equal rights to a more radical critique of economic inequality and American foreign policy, reaching a larger audience became far more problematic. This remains a structural impediment faced by progressive movements.

But '60s activists faced two more tangible obstacles. First, led by figures such as Richard Nixon, political elites sought to marginalize and, where necessary, crush political dissent. Second, mass media attention began to distort and undermine the very '60s activism it helped to spread. As sociologists such as Todd Gitlin and Jock Young have documented, mass media in the 1960s gravitated toward the expressive and dramatic extremes of political action. Not surprisingly, at least some demonstrators learned to play to the imperatives of commercial television (recall the NLF flags that adorned late antiwar demonstrations). And, also not surprisingly, the media discovered others more interested in making a statement than in reaching a larger audience—including provocateurs hired by the very elites that sought to discredit '60s activists.

As President Nixon recognized, these very media images provided the powerful with material they could use to marginalize progressive movements in the eyes of the audiences they needed to reach. As the turmoil of the 1960s and early 1970s subsided, Western elites sought to strengthen their grip on the wheels of power. In concert with corporate efforts to change the terms of public dialogue, "Sixties-bashing" became re-

spectable. Never was this more the case than during the Reagan era.

The process of rewriting history that has taken place since the Sixties is instructive, for it involves a combination of explicitly ideological Sixties-bashing and the implicitly ideological commodification of the era. Sixties-bashing has been almost formulaic in its use of propaganda techniques. First, the most excessive forms of mindless militancy, drugged euphoria, or narcissistic self-indulgence (and, as noted, these did exist) are detached from the lived histories that help to explain them historically or personally (a process helped by mass media accounts of the '60s). This is rather like seeing a man in the street screaming and gesturing wildly, then ridiculing his behavior without noticing that behind him his house was burning down.

These images or selective personal memories are then held out as representative of "the Sixties." Only through such a process could Jonathan Yardley write in 1987 that the 1960s were "adolescent rebellion masquerading as a political movement," or Charles Krauthammer dismiss the '60s as "recreation mistaking itself for commitment," or Joseph Sobran dismiss the notion of New Left idealism as "malicious fanticizing." Such Sixties caricatures are subsequently blamed for a host of contemporary social ills from AIDS to the drug crisis to the decline of the university. That linkage is greatly assisted by a simplistic association of mass media images (drug use then, drug use now), sidestepping the need for any evidence that would support a causal connection. The most recent extensions of this '60s-bashing are the assault on multiculturalism and "political correctness," both similarly hyped by the Right.

In the tradition of classic propaganda, the primary purpose of '60s-bashing is to scapegoat the "threatening" progressivism of the decade and to divert attention from the real forces responsible for society's condition, many of which were themselves the targets of '60s movements.

In contrast to Smith's assertions about market "balance," ideological '60s-bashing gains instant credibility in the mass media. Reflecting areas where right-wing and corporatist agendas converge, '60s-bashing provides an enduring framework for neutralizing the inflammatory images captured in the media. Rush Limbaugh will undoubtedly burn out from overexposure, but other voices of the Right will take his place and continue to bash progressive movements of the 1960s and their alleged heirs. Yet authentic voices of the Left are virtually nonexistent in the mainstream media.

Furthermore, the media's reduction of complex phenomena from context to story to image lends itself to both ideological propaganda and market commodification. As '60s-bashers recognize, the collection of images known as "the Sixties" can be used effectively to sell ideology. Framed somewhat more sympathetically, those same images can also be used to sell products, especially to a vast baby-boomer audience.

Marketing the Sixties began before that decade had ended, when Madison Avenue recognized the commercial value of hip packaging that appealed to the "youth market." With its rich repertoire of styles and offbeat expressions, the counterculture was prime fodder for advertisers. Young people were lured by advertisements suggesting they could "join the revolution" by playing Columbia Records or buying expensive stereos.

It is but a short step from Sixties advertising to post-'60s nostalgia marketing. Consider an ad for Frye Boots in which the following text appeared beneath a collage of typically dramatic '60s images:

> A decade of enormous social change, political upheavals, and where the activities of the day ranged from the ridiculous (how many people could squeeze into a Volkswagen) to the sublime (meditating along with your favorite Maharishi). It was a decade that saw the first walk on the moon—and the New York Mets win their first World Series, a feat many saw as even more improbable.
>
> A decade in which four guys from England came west to the U.S. and changed music forever. And 400,000 people from all across America traveled north, to upstate New York, and a piece of history known simply as Woodstock.
>
> Finally, it was a decade in which hemlines got shorter, ties got wider, and the official uniform was faded jeans, T-shirts, and a pair of Frye boots.
>
> It was a uniform that symbolized a belief on the part of those who wore it (did anybody not?) in things that were simple, honest and enduring. So to the often-asked question these days, "Where can you find those values that were so important to us all back in the 60's?", we have our own answer. At any of the stores you see listed below. In men's sizes 7-13 and women's 5-10.

In addition to exaggerating the significance of its product, the Frye ad is completely devoid of political

content except for its generalization about "political upheavals;" no Vietnam, no civil rights or Black power movements, no student rebellion, no women's movement—any of which might tarnish the image of the '60s for some, thus narrowing the market appeal of Frye boots.

Thus the meaning of '60s struggles is converted by mass marketing from democratic opposition and mobilization to one of mass consumption. The best-selling images of the '60s—a series of dated, empty, and often silly fragments—are presumably designed to evoke sentimental longing for youth. The '60s "revolution" is transformed by the use of the Beatles' song of that name into the purchase of expensive Nike sneakers. The '60s slogan, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem," has been co-opted by industries eager to polish their tarnished public images; thus Dow Chemical's "paper recovery operation" demonstrates, in a Dow spokesperson's words, that "It's easy to move from being part of the problem to being part of the solution." Perhaps so, except for those die-hards who remember napalm and Agent Orange, among Dow's singular contributions to human suffering in Vietnam, now rendered invisible.

Advertising provides us with the purest example of the commodified culture. Yet note how the images retained by that culture are as empty and banal as those hyped by ideologically driven '60s-bashers; they have nothing to recommend them to contemporary audiences. Their only possible appeal is through nostalgia. Smith correctly refers to nostalgia as the "defining doctrine of reactionary thought," but it is also an effective vehicle for co-optation of progressive history into the corporate culture of capitalism.

Consider the case of a film like *The Big Chill*, a quintessential 1980s Hollywood view of the Sixties. *The Big Chill* captured its baby-boom audience through its play on that generation's nostalgia for lost youth and rebellious excitement. The reunion of old comrades for the funeral of their friend Alex (fittingly, the only character who remained true to his '60s values), lines like "I was at my best," or "there's no good music anymore," or "where did Alex's hope go?"—all reflect back on the audience its own sense of bereavement for a time gone by. The actual, oppositional 1960s are as invisible in *The Big Chill* as they are in the Frye Boots ad.

Where does *The Big Chill* take its nostalgia? Not toward political action that might revive a sense of hope, but toward political accommodation to the commodified culture of the 1980s. These aging boomers have become affluent yuppies, arriving in their high-priced cars, wearing pin-striped suits, and carrying attaché cases. Investment opportunities vie with reminiscences as topics of conversation. In the end, with throw-away lines like "Who'd have thought we'd ever make so much bread.... It's a good thing it's not important to us," the movie reassures its audience that selling out is okay.

The Big Chill thus goes a long way toward establishing one of the most pervasive mass-media myths about the 1960s: that young Sixties activists gave up on the values of their youth and sold out in their adult years. In the end, the presentation of '60s nostalgia helps to marginalize and isolate the oppositional forces that lie within the so-called "'60s generation." What better way to foster contempt among those who look on activism from the outside? What better way to nurture disillusionment and hopelessness among those who might carry on the struggle?

Despite ample evidence to the contrary, the myth of selling out, or "yippie-turned-yuppie," dominates mass-media interpretations of the '60s. Thus a 1987 *People* magazine retrospective leads with, "For the Baby Boom generation, '60s rebels remain a kind of psychic barometer. We wonder how they are faring. Are they still carrying the torch? Or have they—and it—burned out?" Not surprisingly, *People* focuses on the usual cast of media-anointed "stars" of the '60s: Bobby Seale, Angela Davis, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael (now Kwame Touré), Ken Kesey, and Wavy Gravy. *People* readers are assured at the end that "most of your favorite radicals, hippies, and Yippies are still carrying the countercultural [sic] torch 20 years after."

Thus reassured about a few "'60s rebels," readers can turn to *Newsweek* for a retrospective glance back at what the mass media seem to view as one of the high points of the 1960s: the 1967 "summer of love." *Newsweek* seems surprised to discover that "some people still cling to the values—and they're still called hippies." Most of the *Newsweek* article reveals glimpses into the lives of everyday people quietly living in ways that reflect '60s struggles ("rallying" around issues like apartheid, abortion rights, and nuclear power). But the story is framed in a manner that suggests that "clinging" to '60s values is something only a quaint aboriginal tribe might do. It begins:

> The smell of incense still wafts down from Earth People's Park, outside Norton, Vt. From the mountains near Eugene, Ore., on a quiet night you can still hear the "White Album" being played. They cluster in remote communes from which they descend occasionally to sell some sandals or straighten out a problem with their

> welfare checks [an important derogatory image]. Or they live in plant-laden Victorian houses in Cambridge or Boulder with $500 bikes in the halls and $200 cars in the driveway. They are hippies, survivors of that once vast band of romantics who imagined that the mighty river of American civilization [sic] could somehow be turned from its course by sex, drugs, and rock and roll. They await the call that may never come, to dance again on that verdant field of memory, joining hands no longer young, real grannies behind those glasses.

Newsweek ends the piece with the banal conclusion, "Someday no one will believe there was a time when young men and women tried to stop a war with music and bring down a president with flowers; or that they could have sex with dozens of strangers and run the risk of nothing more serious than body lice. It is time to move on, but not yet time to forget." Sixties-bashers couldn't have done it better.

Media efforts to make sense of 1960s struggles tend to focus on retrospective anniversaries or, occasionally, reunion gatherings of specific groups of activists such as veterans of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement, Mississippi Freedom Summer volunteers, or selective college graduations. In virtually all these cases, the yippie-turned-yuppie theme is the leitmotif. In a *New York Times* story on a Columbia University reunion, radical historian Eric Foner was apparently provoked by a reporter's line of questioning to declare, "This is not *The Big Chill*," yet The *Times* nonetheless prominently featured the comments of former-rebel-turned-*People*-editor James Kunen—a direct echo of *The Big Chill*. A Los Angeles *Times* account of a Berkeley seminar on "The Sixties" focused more on the "European luxury cars" in the parking lot and a "Sixties-style" clash over the seminar's admission price than it did on participants' current engagement in political activism. A Boston *Globe* account of the same event recalled the vacuous nostalgia of the Frye Boots ad or *The Big Chill* with its opening query, "What happened to all that energy and color and commitment? Can some of that old spirit be, and should it be, stirred up again?"

In the media's retrospective treatments, Sixties struggles disappear into a hazy past that has little connection to the current time. *Time* magazine chose to frame its ten-page retrospective on the year 1968 with reference to 1811, a year in which aberrant natural events occurred: squirrels by the thousands drowned when they plunged into the Ohio River; earthquakes reversed the flow of the Mississippi River, and a double-tailed comet burned through the night sky. The *Time* account plays out this metaphor; events in 1968 happened inexplicably and then faded into snapshots of historical trivia. The Vietnam War, for example, "alienated the young from their elders," rather than revealing destructive characteristics of American culture and institutions. Presumably, now that the young have aged, they are no longer alienated.

In essence, the public record contains two versions of the 1960s. One is dark, destructive, and threatening; its very existence is used to justify a reactionary politics and market-driven retrenchment. The other is sentimental, ephemeral, and totally trivial. It's a closed chapter that only the most nostalgic among us would want to revisit. Thus is progressive history depoliticized and co-opted.

The Political Implications of the Commodified Culture

Smith's suggestion that the commodified culture serves the interests of a free society is incorrect in regard to mass media, at least if "free" means democratic. As the Nixon and Sixties cases demonstrate, the market-driven mass media produce history that is compatible with the ideological interests of elites. This is not to say that all media images or stories are compatible with elite interests; they obviously aren't. Some media accounts were quite instrumental in helping to spread '60s struggles in their early stages. But it would appear that much of the time elites, including those in the media, eventually succeed in framing the images and stories in a manner that is compatible with their interests and incompatible with the democratic struggles of '60s activists. By trivializing and co-opting oppositional struggles like the movements of the Sixties, the mass media denigrate them as effectively as any ideological '60s-basher could.

Furthermore, the very proliferation of a mass media culture also threatens to diminish the possibility for democratic mobilization. In the late 1960s, a media-based "politics of statement" came to prevail, providing a foil for reactionary leaders seeking public support and a ripe plum for a marketplace eager for commodities to sell. The inflammatory statements of the late 1960s and early '70s eventually gave way to the quieter base-building of local, grass-roots activism. Yet the media have continued to seek out and co-opt flamboyant political expression, thereby producing a veneer of expressive statements incapable of generating a popular movement that could force real

political change on elites. The degree to which mass-mediated politics substitute "statements" for personal interaction and mobilization may represent the ultimate postmodern threat to democracy.

The media's revisionist treatment of Richard Nixon in death is one measure of how far we have passed down this road. Another is the heightened sophistication with which elites today manage the potentially subversive role of mass media. Compare, for instance, the handling of media during the Vietnam War to that of the Gulf War. Or compare officialdom's violent responses to 1960s protests—Bull Connor, Mayor Daley, or police called in by university administrators at Berkeley, Columbia, or Wisconsin—to the smooth public-relations operations of today's political, educational, and corporate managers. Actions by the former sparked the rapid growth of protest and mobilization; actions by the latter leave us muttering to ourselves or, at best, firing off a seemingly futile letter of protest.

What can progressives possibly do to counter the tendency of our commodified culture to eviscerate progressive challenges? At the current juncture, it's hard to feel optimistic about the prospects. After all, the powerful magnetism of leaders like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired grass-roots, direct action on a global scale; their most visible counterpart today, Nelson Mandela, now adorns the T-shirts of our "progressive" youth. No doubt Richard Nixon would find this reassuring.

Yet as totalizing as the commodified culture may seem, it suffers from two vulnerabilities. First, it is not a closed system in the traditional totalitarian sense. Although usually marginalized, potentially revolutionary images and ideas can and do slip through the filters of the propaganda system.

News photographs of the largely spontaneous 1960 student sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina helped to galvanize a wave of student activism across the South (in turn, an important catalyst for the student movement that began to sweep across the nation's campuses). According to their own testimony, these photographs also swept Robert Moses and Rennie Davis, future leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Students for a Democratic Society, into the Movement. The visceral power inherent in televised and photographic images of the civil rights and antiwar movements' pivotal events—the civil rights marches in Birmingham and Selma, the antiwar demonstration at the Pentagon, the police brutality against demonstrators at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, the murders of four students by National Guardsmen at Kent State—could not be neutralized by any official interpretation of their reality.

Second, no matter how managed or fabricated media images may be, the public's subjective reading of those images cannot be controlled. Millions of people worldwide experienced the inspirational power of the televised images of South Africa's first multiracial election. As long as these images penetrate public consciousness, they can go a long way toward countering the commodification of Nelson Mandela.

Progressives can, in fact, harness the power of the electronic media and use it to subvert the dominant media messages. In the case of the New, Revised Nixon, what if progressives had organized a "counter-funeral," a Nixon remembrance designed to keep alive public awareness of Nixon's deeds rather than to bury Nixon? With the right timing and a visually compelling setting (outside a federal prison?), such an event might have penetrated the veil of media revisionism, particularly if held in concert with related actions. Organizers would need to design the event in anticipation of media skittishness and the propaganda attack that would inevitably follow. There could have been no more effective antidote to the torrent of saccharine Nixon eulogizing than, for example, film footage of the Real Nixon lying about the invasion of Cambodia, juxtaposed with footage of the invasion's carnage (in much the same manner that *The Haldeman Diaries* reveal the Real Nixon on the printed page).

A concerted response of this sort to the Nixon revisionism might have helped to keep the Real Nixon alive in public memory, while raising consciousness about the systematic inadequacy of the mass media. Because those on the Left failed to respond in anything but a reactive way, however, the media were easily able to cast progressives' dismay over Nixon's posthumous rehabilitation as yet another example of our marginal status—shades of Spiro Agnew's "nattering nabobs of negativism" canard.

We should learn from our mistakes in this instance and take back the debate when such an opportunity next arises. As part of its responsibility to provide an alternative vision for our troubled world, the Left must play an educative role, continuously correcting the record compiled by the mass media and elite opinion-makers. In doing so, we can re-energize citizens who have been lulled into complacency or hopelessness by the officially sanctioned version of political reality and prepare a new generation to challenge authority effectively and constructively, all part of keeping the struggle alive for another day. □

Don't Follow Parties: In Search of the Left

Jonathan Graubart

Confusion typically grips liberals and leftists when the more palatable of the major political parties takes power, be it Clinton and the Democrats in the United States, or Rabin and Labor in Israel. Liberals especially tend to be seduced by the lure of respectability and a false sense of power. The late Paul Goodman succinctly described this disturbing phenomenon in reference to the liberal intellectual embracing of John F. Kennedy: "False Practicality is sometimes the bathetic illusion of exerting possible influence if one 'works within the system,' and naturally the major political parties use window-dressing to attract this kind of support."

This False Practicality is all the more alluring when those on the Left have spent a long time as the alienated opposition, as was the case during the Reagan-Bush years in the States and the Begin-Shamir reign in Israel. Many liberal-leftists who had spoken out forcefully against the policies of Reagan and Bush became more equivocal and deferential toward Clinton, notwithstanding his cozy relationship with Wall Street, his demagogic appeals to the "Bubba" vote, and his courting of neocon admirers of U.S. military power. Liberals were so eager to have a Democrat back in power that they stifled their independent perspective, wed their interests to Clinton, and internalized the Democratic Leadership Council's advocacy of crafting policy to win over the center.

But now that the honeymoon with Clinton has ended, most leftists and some liberals are applying the same critical standards to Clinton that they applied to Bush. The deferential attitude, however, is as strong as ever with respect to the American Jewish Left's relation to Rabin. This may partially result from their distance from Israeli life, making it harder for American Jews to see any options beyond Rabin for pursuing peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. But the more fundamental distinction is that Rabin, unlike Clinton, has given the liberal-Left something concrete on which to focus its hopes: the Israeli-PLO agreement.

Nevertheless, as potentially exhilarating as the Oslo/Cairo accords are, much of the peace camp in the United States has made the mistake of treating the accords as an unqualified good and in putting their faith in Rabin to steer the accords toward satisfying Palestinian national aspirations. Thus, most liberal American Jewish columnists, such as the *Forward*'s Leonard Fein (who calls the Likud reign the "nightmare years"), seem content with lavishing praise on Rabin and Shimon Peres (see "Peres' Finest Hour" 2/4/92).

Particularly illustrative of the liberal/Left deference to Rabin is the stance of Americans for Peace Now (APN). Executive Director Gary E. Rubin states that Rabin has "acted courageously" and deserves the full support of the American Jewish peace camp. Rubin is ecstatic over the Oslo/Cairo accords because they have led to the first voluntary withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian land, committed Israel to negotiating on final status issues concerning the occupied territories, and do not preclude the eventual formation of an independent Palestinian entity, be it in the form of a Palestinian state or a confederation with Jordan.

Rubin has correctly pointed out the up side of the accords, but there are potential problems as well. So far they have only amounted to ceding limited autonomy over two destitute areas of no material value. Most important, the autonomy does not disrupt Israel's domination of the region's water—Meron Benvenisti estimates that Israel uses up to 80 percent of the West Bank's aquifers. Nor do the accords grant Palestinians plenary power to set their own laws. Indeed the accords are perfectly consistent with Labor policy, dating from the late 1960s, of relinquishing control over the densely populated areas of the territories while maintaining the most valuable parts, including the Jordan Valley and the areas comprising "Greater

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Jerusalem" (keeping a total of about 40 percent of the West Bank). Some critics, notably Noam Chomsky and Edward Said, have even argued with some plausibility that the accords represent a PLO cave-in precipitated by a desperate move from Yasir Arafat to forestall an imminent revolt to his corrupt leadership.

Of course, it would be folly to advocate scrapping the accords. As Uri Avnery has argued ("Who is the Opponent?" TIKKUN, May/June 1994), the dispute is over the implementation: All the peace groups support the accords, because they are potentially far-reaching and represent the last best hope for peace. As it stands now, the agreement could either become a one-sided victor's peace with potentially disastrous consequences down the road from the bitterness and rancor it engenders among Palestinians, or a genuine reconciliation between Jew and Arab through development of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Deferring to Rabin, as many people in the American Jewish Left seem wont to do, is fundamentally misguided. Rabin's record suggests that, left to his own devices, he would go the victor's peace route. Rabin remains unalterably opposed to a Palestinian state and has arguably been Israel's most brutal defense minister. During the last election campaign, Rabin boasted of being the leading expeller of Palestinians and has since taken grim actions to secure this preeminence (has the deportation of 415 Palestinians slipped through some memory hole?). Widespread human rights violations in the occupied territories persist and have been documented in a recent B'Tselem report. Palestinians are subject to a legal double standard, denied the fundamental human rights enjoyed by Israeli citizens. Moreover, the army continues to coordinate activities with the armed settlers while the government circumvents its "no new settlements" commitment through creative expansion of existing ones.

Given Rabin's serious shortcomings, the American Jewish peace camp would be well advised to spend less time praising him and much more time exhorting him to flesh out the accords and cease the systematic deprivation of human rights in the territories. APN, to its credit, has called for the immediate removal of settlers from Hebron proper and from Joseph's Tomb, provide financial incentives for settlers to relocate voluntarily within the Green Line, and begin the negotiations for final status now rather than wait two years (the maximum period set forth in the Oslo accord). But APN is not willing to go any further in pushing Rabin; it maintains that Rabin is already committed to implementing a genuine peace plan (Rubin refers to these Peace Now positions as ones "Rabin has not yet reached").

Those less trusting of Rabin see the need to push the government much further. An excellent means for doing so is supporting the efforts of the Israeli peace group Gush Shalom which, unlike Peace Now, has no links to the coalition government. As Avnery notes, Gush has demanded "releasing immediately all Palestinian prisoners, allowing Palestinian symbols of pre-statehood to be raised in Gaza and Jericho, changing immediately and completely the character of the occupation in the other parts of the occupied territories, ceasing the manhunt of 'wanted' underground fighters" as well as the immediate dismantling of all settlements and declaring the creation of an independent Palestinian state to be one end target of the agreement's implementation. I would add urging concrete steps to eliminate Israel's economic exploitation of the territories (focusing in on use of water sources). Supporting such proposals has the virtue of signaling our support for the peace process and the accords and our solidarity with Israeli peace groups less enamored of Rabin.

Many American Jewish liberals will no doubt respond that public criticisms of Rabin from the Left play into the hands of Likud by undermining Rabin's support. Rubin raised this concern in a recent interview, pointing out the need to consider the harsh criticism Rabin has endured from the chauvinistic Right. While Rubin does not believe the Right has attained much success in undermining Rabin's popular support, he worries about what effect further attacks on Rabin, this time from the Left, could have on Israel's "floating middle." If the floating middle loses confidence in Rabin, warns Rubin, those Israelis will vote for Likud in the next election. Rubin thus opposes any criticism from the Left that goes so far as to suggest that Rabin is not an advocate of peace (one example he gave of such improper criticism was Avnery's aforementioned article in TIKKUN; this article would presumably be another example).

Such rejoinders, however, are flawed both strategically and as a matter of principle. How do criticisms from the Left play into the hands of the Right? Criticisms from the peace camp and criticisms from the militant chauvinists are not cumulative. Surely we have more confidence in the intelligence of the Israeli floating middle than to fear they won't be able to distinguish between the two.

Perhaps the fear is that putting forth more radical proposals will frighten those in the floating middle into the arms of Likud. It wasn't long ago, however, that calling for talks with the PLO, much less signing an

accord, was considered too radical. Yet much of the floating middle has been persuaded that such developments are actually beneficial to Israel's security by reducing hostility between Jew and Arab. It is the Left's task to persuade the Israelis that still bolder actions are needed to enhance Israel's long-term security. The floating middle will likely be resistant to such proposals at first. But it is imperative that they be raised and become part of the public discourse, since Israelis are not likely to hear about dismantling the settlements and changing the nature of the occupation from Rabin.

Moreover, holding back our criticisms for fear of unwittingly assisting the Right amounts to a compromised integrity. Silence from the Left suggests that rampant human rights violations and a military occupation are unacceptable under Likud but tolerable under Labor. The democratic process is profoundly co-opted when independent voices assimilate to the dictates of the party and adopt purely pragmatic positions. Given the present possibilities for peace in the Middle East, it is imperative that the American Jewish Left be heard as well, lest we leave the impression that the only choice is between supporting Rabin or the right-wing chauvinists. □

Peace in the Real World
A Reply to Jonathan Graubart

Gary E. Rubin

I would much rather live in the universe Jonathan Graubart imagines than in the real world that most of us inhabit. In Graubart's world, the primary considerations are whether one maintains intellectual and spiritual purity, or has "compromised integrity" and been "profoundly co-opted."

In the real world, people are dying in armed clashes in Lebanon and in terrorist attacks in Hebron, Afula, and Hadera. Children fail to receive needed education, health care, and nutrition because resources are wasted on conflict rather than human development. Mutual hatred rather than cross-national understanding and cooperation is the norm.

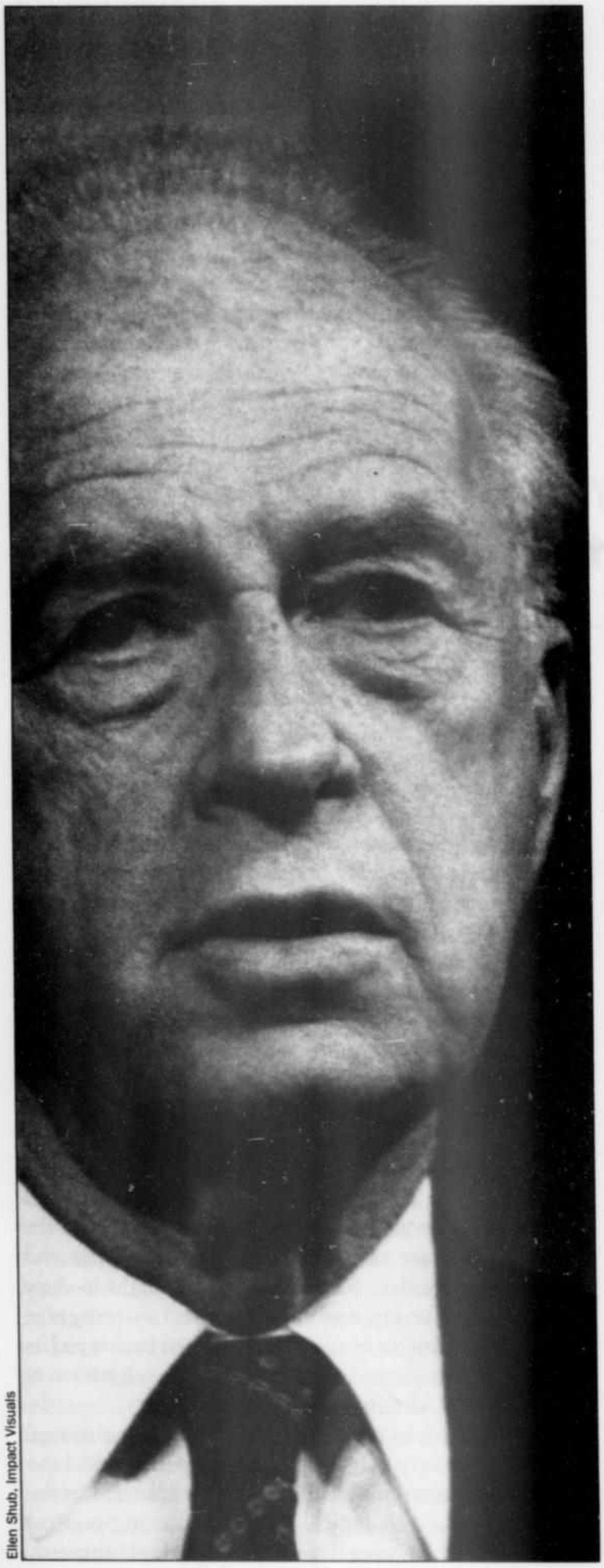
In the face of these life-or-death issues, the proper question to ask is not how to make ourselves feel good by retaining some abstract ideological consistency, but how to take concrete and effective steps to end the state of war in the Middle East and realize improvements in the daily lives of people for whom continued strife means only increased suffering.

Reducing violence and improving life prospects in the real world does not require measuring the Rabin government's peace initiative by some abstract standard of perfection. Rather, it demands a realistic analysis of the plan's potential for bringing concrete change to the region as well as of its shortcomings that must be addressed. To this end, supporters of peace must ask three questions: What has the peace initiative accomplished so far, and what can it realistically be expected to do in the future? What are the systematic drawbacks of the plan, and how can they be most effectively addressed? What, if any, are realistic alternatives to the government's peace efforts?

It is first important to understand the revolutionary nature of the peace process to Israel and to the Palestinians and Arab states. Conceptually, real negotiations require acceptance of the legitimacy of the other's existence and right to lead a free and peaceful life. For more than forty years, Arabs sought to deny Israel's legitimacy, and Israel refused to recognize Palestinian national identity. Each claimed territory as its exclusive domain and saw the other as the destroyer of its most basic identity.

The peace process has forever shattered this mutual denial. The very fact of talks between Israel and the PLO, and negotiations with Syria and Jordan, moves the conflict from ideological intransigence to practical discussions of security, economic development,

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Ellen Shub, Impact Visuals

diplomatic relationships, and other practical questions that are complex but soluble. The peace process has fundamentally altered the basic assumptions of what is possible between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab states. Any practical plan must recognize and build on this revolutionary breakthrough.

The plan has already produced significant practical gains. Graubart may disparage Palestinian control of "two destitute areas of little material value," but when I visited Gaza in June, I saw what it meant in the daily lives of Palestinians to be free of domination by the Israeli army and to have a police force of their own. In one hundred years of conflict, no one—Israeli, Arab, or European—ever before gave the Palestinian people real territory to control. Signed agreements call for the expansion of Palestinian rule in ways unthinkable before the peace process began.

Other real benefits have already been achieved. Only a few years ago, Israeli territorial concessions on the Golan Heights in exchange for a peace treaty with Syria were unthinkable, yet exactly these provisions are now being negotiated. Israelis have pursued peace talks in Jordan, Oman, Quatar, Morocco, and Tunisia, as well as, of course, in Egypt. The classic Zionist dream of achieving normal relations with other states has come closer than ever to realization.

We need to recognize that the peace process is still at an early stage and will undergo severe tests in the next few years. Indeed, progress made in transferring Gaza to Palestinian rule and reaching a peace declaration with Jordan represent the earliest and most easily obtainable advances in the negotiations. To be effective, peace supporters must accurately gauge prospects for the next stages and assess where our advocacy can be most productive.

We need to recognize that Israel is not pursuing a single peace process. Rather, there exist several contenders for national policy in the next few months and years. Powerful elements of the Labor Party seek to halt present concessions to the Palestinians in place, resist giving up large portions of the Golan Heights, and refuse to contemplate any realistic negotiations on issues such as the final status of refugees and Jerusalem. Others advocate conducting meaningful negotiations with the Palestinians now, recognizing Syrian sovereignty over the Golan Heights in exchange for full peace and security arrangements, and accelerating the timetable for dealing with difficult issues such as the settlements. It is vital to ensure that the peace process remains associated with those who would move it forward vigorously.

It is also important to talk about the peace process concretely. Moving forward vigorously means specific actions. First, the current autonomy must be fully

developed. This means provision of aid, subject to Arafat's establishment of acceptable financial institutions, needed to improve the employment prospects of Palestinians. It also means the prompt holding of elections in Gaza and the West Bank that will give Palestinian leadership full legitimacy to pursue a final peace treaty.

Peace advocates need to address the weaknesses of the current peace plan, especially the continued existence of Israeli settlements in the territories. The Oslo Accord allows the parties to defer this issue until final status talks begin in May 1996. But the uneasy proximity of 108,000 Jewish settlers and two million Palestinians creates dangerous tensions that must be addressed now.

As part of the peace process, settlers who intentionally provoke the hostility of their neighbors, such as the 450 ideologically hard-line Jews who live in the midst of 80,000 Palestinians in Hebron, should be removed immediately. In addition, Israel should institute a policy of financially assisting settlers who wish to move back within the recognized borders of Israel but cannot do so because the peace process has caused a drop in the value of their homes, making it unaffordable for them to leave without help. Negotiations on the final status of the settlements should begin as soon as possible, so that this volatile issue is not allowed to fester and produce further violence over the next two years.

Peace advocates must also begin to outline the shape of final status arrangements with the Palestinians. In this area, the most difficult issue to handle is Jerusalem. Much Jewish policy discussion on Jerusalem has been reduced to repeating the mantra that the city must remain the eternal undivided capital of the Jewish people. Indeed, few advocates, Jewish or Arab, would support a return to a city divided as it was before 1967, and almost all Jews insist on Jerusalem remaining Israel's capital.

But it is sheer fantasy to deny that Palestinians have serious claims to Jerusalem as well. The singlemindedness of much Jewish discussion on Jerusalem recalls the certainty with which much of the community declared a few years ago that Israel would never talk to the PLO. The real question is how to reconcile the goal of an undivided Jerusalem with meaningful political representation for its Palestinian inhabitants. Peace advocates need to prepare the community now for the inevitable negotiations that will take place over Jerusalem.

In advocating for peace, it is necessary to keep in mind the audience that must reached. Peace will come only with the support of the majority of Israelis. They need to be convinced not only that peace is just, but also that it will enhance Israeli security. A strong case needs to be articulated that Israel will be more secure within smaller borders if peace treaties are reached with the Palestinians and Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon that take into account both the greatly diminished prospect of war and Israel's need to protect itself should war recur. The top echelon of former Israeli intelligence and military officials has devised detailed plans for defense that could be implemented as peace treaties go into effect. These plans need to be stressed to assure the majority of Israelis that negotiations will produce not only peace, but safety as well.

If critics like Graubart are truly serious about ending Israeli human rights abuses in the territories, they have no choice but to accelerate the peace process. It is necessary to oppose any violation of human rights no matter where it occurs. The root of problems in the territories grows not out of any natural dynamic in Israel to exploit other people—promoting peace assumes the free and democratic nature of Israeli society—but rather from the inherent injustice in the unwilling domination of one people by another. The only reliable remedy for human rights violations is to end Israeli rule over two million Palestinians in the territories. Doing so quickly means pushing the current peace process.

The Peace Now movement has launched concrete projects to attain its objectives. It has mounted a Settlement Watch program to provide accurate information on the numbers and size of the settlements and to set priorities on which settlements produce the most tension and thus have to be addressed first. It has established a Palestinian-Israeli committee on Jerusalem to advocate plans for coexistence and prevent the Holy City from becoming another Hebron. It has set up a youth project to train the next generation of Israeli and Palestinian leaders in mutual cooperation and respect. It maintains constant contact with national and local Palestinian leadership. It continues to organize public demonstrations to express grass-roots advocacy for peace. In short, Peace Now has a strategy and programs to accomplish its aims.

In the end, critics like Graubart have the same problem as Likud leaders like Benjamin Netanyahu. They rail against current negotiations but have no real alternatives. While they criticize the only negotiations now in place, Israeli soldiers continue to risk their lives patrolling hostile casbahs in Palestinian cities, Palestinian children continue to grow up at risk of being shot and deprived of prospects for a decent life, and war threats continue on the Syrian border. We have to respond to these threats in the real world. That means following a consistent and vigorous strategy to realize the potential of the current process to bring real peace. □



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10

BOOK REVIEW

Singer Ever After

Mark Shechner

Meshugah, by Isaac Bashevis Singer. Translated by Nili Wachtel. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994, 226 pp.

Isaac Bashevis Singer's death in July 1991, at the age of eighty-seven, put scarcely a crimp in his publishing exploits. The first posthumous novel, *Scum*, appeared just months after his death, and was followed a year later by *The Certificate*. *Meshugah* is the third, and we have no reason to suppose that the backlog of unpublished material has been exhausted. Singer's lifelong filibustering for imps, demons, incubi, succubi, dybbuks, and the demonic-at-large gains credibility from the fevered pace at which he wrote for almost sixty years, as if possessed.

Meshugah is one of the New York City books that Singer wrote with increasing frequency in his later years. As such, it is one in which the mythical-spiritual dimension is recessive while the social-historical, at which Singer was also adept, holds court. The year is around 1950, and survivors of the Nazi death camps are finding themselves, and each other, in New York. Each encounter is a miracle, even as each discloses a tragedy.

Everyone has lost a husband, a wife, a lover, a child. It is a despairing time, even for those who have miraculously come away with their lives.

Aaron Greidinger, a Yiddish novelist in his late forties whose fiction is published serially in the newspaper, finds himself sought after as an audience for survival stories. Poised at the nerve center of a vast circuit of testimony and rumor—strangers are always drawing him aside—he is deluged with tales about Nazi concentration camps, Soviet labor camps, the ordeals of Jews in Poland and America. Despite Greidinger's productivity and growing fame, his life is a shambles. "God in heaven, in my late forties I remained just as I was at twenty—lazy, disorganized, immersed in melancholy. No success I had, small though it was, seemed to end my depression. I lived by the day, by the hour, by the minute...." It hardly needs saying that Greidinger is modelled upon Singer himself, who placed replicas of himself into his novels in order to tease his readers with intimations of confession.

Unable to stand aloof and tend to his art, Greidinger plunges into the chaos around him, becoming both the beneficiary of the stories he hears and their captive. Without appearing to will it, he is drawn into the private dramas of survivors for whom the wounds remain livid: Max Aberdam, his wife Priva, and her maid Tzlova; Miriam Zalkind, her parents, and her estranged husband Stanley; philanthropist Chaim Joel Treibitcher and his investor nephew Harry; Misha and Friedl Budnik; and the anarchists Leon and Stefa Kreitl.

Something of the tumult in Aaron Greidinger's life can be glimpsed in a fragmentary plot synopsis: Max Aberdam is married to Priva, a spiritualist whose seances are driving him meshugah, but for years has been carrying on openly with Miriam, a survivor who is estranged from her husband. Miriam is writing a dissertation on Aaron Greidinger, however, and has fallen for him. Max also admires the writer, so much so that he agrees to share Miriam with him. Stanley, though living apart from Miriam, remains possessive, and Aaron and Miriam's initial efforts at a tryst are thwarted when Stanley confronts the couple en flagrante and rousts Aaron at gunpoint. But Aaron is also coveted by Tzlova, once a Jewish businesswoman in Warsaw but now a maid to Priva. It is Tzlova, claiming psychic powers, who warns Aaron Greidinger that Miriam is a witch and that she, Tzlova, will have him one day.

Whatever is not the madness of love is the madness of money. Max Aberdam has solicited for the investor Harry Treibitcher, whose uncle, Chaim Joel Treibitcher, cleaned up in real estate in the 1930s and is now an eminent philanthropist. When Harry Treibitcher commits suicide, Max's clients, refugees and survivors, are left penniless. The catastrophe weakens Max's health, and surgery almost does him in.

This summary takes us halfway through the book, at which point the tempo is about to accelerate, to spin us through ever-tightening gyres of intrigue, as Miriam is revealed to have been a prostitute and possibly a concentration camp kapo as well, and the whole carnival of craziness is transported to Israel, where the principals head en masse when Aaron is offered a literary award. If the pace, the operatic intrigues, the dramas of duplicity and unmasking are reminiscent of daytime television, that is hardly happenstance. Singer wrote the bulk of his work serially for The *Jewish Daily Forward*, this novel appearing between April 1981 and February 1983 under the title, *Lost Souls*. This serialized fiction has much in common with daytime television, providing readers with vicarious romance and meeting the same technical requirements of episodic narrative everywhere: swift pacing, continual crises, formulaic repetition. To sustain suspense over the long haul, Singer's serialized dramas were invariably repetitive, titillating, and coquettishly scandalous—performing charades of illicit desire while keeping actual flesh discreetly offstage. Passion, feuding and forgiveness, guilt and redemption—page-by-page pathos—were the joists and beams of Singer's fiction. As one

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character announces to a Singer stand-in in the novel *Shosha*: "The main thing is don't spare the schmaltz. Today's Jews like three things—sex, Torah, and revolution, all mixed together. Give them those and they'll raise you to the skies."

The obvious divergence from soap opera is that Singer's version is Jewish melodrama—melodrama under the rule of history. Its licentiousness, far from being a commercial pandering to the market, is a tragic metaphysics, warranted, according to Singer, by the apocalypses of the twentieth century. The Holocaust is source and justification, motive and absolution, for if the universe is truly crazy, what claim does any individual have to exemption? Appetite and irrationality are the quarks, the DNA of the moral universe, and we are their slaves.

Such a doctrine sounds suspiciously like original sin, and Singer's characters do often behave as though they are under a curse for which history itself is a symptom, not a cause. Thus the moral problem of Aaron's relationship with Miriam goes beyond the sexual/erotic complications raised by husband Stanley and first-line lover Max, when she is denounced for having been a prostitute for the Nazis during the war and, later in the camps, a kapo who treated other Jews with cruelty. This is soap opera of the gallows, in which infidelity raises issues of suffering and death, betrayal and collaboration. Mere broken hearts are passé. For all that, Miriam remains primarily an erotic object, rather than a moral issue, to Aaron. His decision to marry her at the end of the book is unexamined and unexplained, except that in Singer's moral universe, desire conquers all.

Everyone makes his declaration for the crazy world. Miriam announces: "I love Max because he is perfectly insane. And I love you because you write about madmen. Did you actually meet the people you describe, or did you make them up?"

"For me the whole world is an insane asylum."

"For those words I must kiss you."

Pucker up for madness? There, it may be said, is Singer in a nutshell. This apocalyptic sensuality, which occasioned the dismay Singer sometimes aroused among other Yiddish writers, goes back to the beginning of his career, when he was fascinated by false messiahs, particularly Sabbatai Zevi, whose cult swept the Galician community in the wake of the Chmielnicki pogroms of the seventeenth century. That movement was the subject of Singer's first novel, *Satan in Goray*, which remains his most reckless performance and therefore his signature book. One article of Sabbatian faith was that the coming of the messiah not only permitted a suspension of traditional values but mandated it, a doctrine that underwrote a fair proportion of Singer's subsequent writing. It is uncertain how much this antinomianism was a faith and how much a reflex, Singer's way of massaging his audience and exaggerating his sense of his own sinfulness. It is, however, a distraction in *Meshugah*, in which the particularities of emigré life are so much crisper and more evocative than the shopworn metaphysics that subsumes all under a dubious theology, the *meshuggener* god. The sudden intervention of a mystical or theological explanation, even into contexts where it appears to be alien, is one of Singer's trademarks—indeed, a habitual routine.

In his youth, Singer became fixated on mysticism and the libertine sexuality he encountered in kabbalistic thought. As a boy he rummaged through his father's library, where he discovered in books with titles like *Book of Raziel* and *Book of the Devout* the suppressed counter-Torah, the kabbalistic side of Judaism that enchanted him with its energy, its anarchism, its intimations of revelation, and its promise of bringing the erotic and the divine together under the same heavenly domain. As he would avow in one of his memoirs, *A Little Boy in Search of God*, "Leafing through the cabala books, I discovered that even as they studied the Torah in the heavens, so did they indulge in fiery loves. In fact, in heaven Torah and love were two sides of the same coin."

It needn't have been Kabbala that eroticized the cosmos for the young Singer: Adolescence alone is sufficient to bring sun, moon, and stars together in ecstatic copulation. But Kabbala, as Singer read it, did bring sexuality in under the roof of Judaism and make it a plausible, if heretical, companion to the piety and worship in which Singer had grown up. Unlike his older brother, Israel Joshua, who took leave of Judaism altogether to become a communist, Isaac always claimed his Jewish faith, even as he courted heterodoxy and threw himself into the search for permissive codes of conduct that sanctioned his sexual awakening.

This lubricious Judaism was dramatized for Singer by a full cast of malign, invisible characters—devils, dybbuks, imps, hobgoblins—and every form of black magic. It populated the universe with a theater of transgression and tumult that not only overpowered the monotheism of Jewish orthodoxy by virtue of being more entertaining but supplied a comprehensive explanatory system in which all other philosophies, from orthodoxy to Hasidism to Spinoza to modern physics, could be reconciled. In one passage in *A Little Boy in Search of God*, Singer declared: "...When I read that a stone consisted of trillions of molecules constantly in motion and that these molecules consisted of atoms and that these atoms were in themselves complicated systems, whirls of energy, I said to myself, 'That's Cabala, after all!'". Like the Greek and Roman mythologies to which Judaism placed itself in opposition, Kabbala, as Singer interpreted it, was an amusement that came complete with a cosmogony and an ethics—a permissive one, to be sure—and it is little to be wondered that the Rabbis ruled it out of bounds for anyone under thirty.

Singer's angle on Kabbala might be put in perspective by comparing him to the historian Gershom Scholem, who did for Jewish historiography what Singer did for literature: invert traditional symbols and values; open the door to the kabbalistic mythology and folklore that normative Judaism kept at bay; and claim myth for the driving force of Jewish history.

Both were philosophers of the negative, who challenged rabbinic Judaism in the name of suppressed folk beliefs and heresies.

Both were Romantic rebels who sought to revitalize Judaism by restoring it to something like its pagan roots and claiming that those roots gave authority to popular energies and irrationalist outcroppings. Both extolled the Dionysian over the Apollonian and used the word "demonic" as a term of praise. Both were fascinated by the great Jewish heretics of the early modern era, Sabbatai Zevi and Jacob Frank, and both acknowledged a debt to the eighteenth-century Hasidic mystic, Nachman of Bratslav. Had he known of it, Singer would surely have

endorsed Scholem's pronouncement, in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, "From the point of view of the Halakhah. . .Judaism appears as a well-ordered house, and it is a profound truth that a well-ordered house is a dangerous thing. Something of Messianic apocalypticism penetrates into this house; perhaps I can best describe it as a kind of anarchic breeze."

Given that common ground, the differences reveal Singer's biases and limitations only too plainly. Unlike Scholem, who professed a skeptical relation to the lore he researched, Singer gave the appearance of being a disciple and celebrant of mysticism and Kabbala. Being a man of imagination who had more need of vision than scruples, Singer acted the convert, though in public pronouncements he usually hedged on the subject of belief. And unlike Scholem, a master of discrimination who was scrupulous about distinctions, Singer preferred the fog in which all systems melted into all others. Thus, this typical effusion from *A Little Boy in Search of God:* "Even a child could detect the similarity between the cabala and the cosmology of Kant and Laplace. The only difference lay in that the infinity as described by the cabala possessed consciousness, wisdom, beauty, and mercy, whereas the fog of Kant and Laplace was a dead golem." Singer's "philosophy," when expressed as precept, was seldom free of bombast.

The most significant of the differences, however, was Singer's sexualization of Kabbala, of which one finds virtually nothing in Scholem. For Singer, the erotic was the main line of kabbalistic lore. One looks in vain for that in Scholem, finding instead an elaborate dialectics, whose critical dramas are those of thought itself and of stubborn metaphysical knots waiting to be untangled. If Singer's Kabbala was post-Freudian, Scholem's was post-Hegelian, a dialectics of ideas that identified him plainly as a product of German intellectual history. Given such a difference, one wonders if Singer, in browsing through his father's library, was reading Kabbala at all, or reading himself and finding his own name inscribed in all the texts he happened to open.

Of course, Singer was not a philosopher but a story-teller who turned everything into grist for his mill: a mill of scandal and transgression powered, it seems, by divine emanations. The "*Meshuggener* God" of *Meshugah* is only a post-Holocaust variant on the anarchic cosmology that captivated Singer's imagination long before. In a novel like *Satan in Goray* and dozens of stories, that cosmology produced an authentically revivalist vision, after the manner of those Romantic folk literatures that seek to peel away the encrustations of culture to make contact with the buried folk life below. The Romanticism that Singer adopted may be thought of as Zionism by other means. Certainly it was consistent with the tide of nationalism that swept through Ashkenazic Jewry as well as other European cultures in the nineteenth century. One finds in German literature, in English literature, in Scottish and Irish literature the same revival of ancient lore and myth as testimonial to the native *Volksgeist* of a people. In this, Singer was cousin to the collectors of German *Märchen*, such as the Grimm brothers and William Butler Yeats. Extrapolating from his own desire and licentiousness, Singer forged a vision of Jewish history and the Jewish spirit that could not entirely be dismissed as aberrant and idiosyncratic. He portrayed the Jew as a creature of both appetite and spirit, a primitive being and an aspirant to holiness, and the portrait struck a chord in his readers.

Singer's Jew was a vivid and tormented creature who came to piety, if at all, through apostasy and through a flirtation with the paganism that Singer found pulsing beneath the surface of monotheism. Every man was Esau and everywhere he looked he found pottage.

In time, however, whatever was fresh in the revivalist years became routinized later on. How could it not? Singer became a machine for the production of stories on demand, an assembly line that produced in his lifetime ten novels, a clutch of memoirs, and hundreds of shorter tales. In order to gear up for such a high yield, Singer sprinkled his performance with recyclable "bits": the "world as slaughterhouse" bit, which segued into his vegetarianism bit; the "God must be crazy" bit, which sustained the "life is a madhouse" bit. There was the libidinal bit—rare is the Singer hero who is not juggling a minimum of three women in his life—the cafeteria bit, the "dead are living and among us" bit. Tossed in is the history of European Jewry reduced to bits: the dead of

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Poland, the victims of Hitler and Stalin, the failure of communism and fascism alike, the dybbuk in each Jew that drives him/her into sexual or political adventure.

Meshugah is a compendium of all of them. Lacking a firm plot—the book is sprawling and episodic as serial publications tend to be—*Meshugah* doesn't quite hold up as a novel. Think of it, however, as a Singer sampler, a guided tour through the old neighborhood, our last glimpse of a passing world, or a review of Singer's private obsessions through which the secret life of Ashkenazi Jewry may be seen, and the book assumes a documentary fascination.

And what, finally, do we think of Singer, especially of his relation to the world of ideas and rituals that formed him and to which, even as its loyal adversary, he owed the texture of his thought? In considering this, Walter Benjamin's lines about Franz Kafka in *Illuminations* come to mind:

> Kafka's real genius was that... he sacrificed truth for the sake of clinging to its transmissibility, its Haggadic element. Kafka's writings...do not modestly lie at the feet of the doctrine, as the Haggadah lies at the feet of the Halakhah. Though apparently reduced to submission, they unexpectedly raise a mighty paw against it. This is why, in regard to Kafka, we can no longer speak of wisdom. Only the products of its decay remain.

Substitute Kabbala for Halakhah and subtract the harshness, which we have no authority to feel toward Singer as a product of Judaism's decay, we have a way to see Singer, as a genius of Judaism's decay, whose invention of a personal theology was dictated by his situation and whose importance can only be measured by the consistency and vividness with which he brought that personal theology to life. □

BOOK REVIEW

'For the Sake of a Good Story'

Making History, Making Memories, Making Fictions

Jerilyn Fisher

Crossing the Border: An Erotic Journey by Kim Chernin. Ballantine Books, 1994, 325 pp.

Women rewriting history to include their heretofore neglected past, and those claiming authority to name and measure their personal experience, find they must begin by revising the record. Such revision, writes Adrienne Rich, is for women "more than a search for identity...it is an act of survival." In Kim Chernin's recent memoir, *Crossing the Border*, she portrays herself as a woman struggling against fragmentation, impelled to restore and challenge the audacious voice of her earlier years. Innovative and thought-provoking, Chernin's autobiographical narrative exemplifies how reconstructive memory and storytelling regenerate this woman's ruptured identity.



The Oakland Tribune

Kim Chernin

When Virginia Woolf was writing "A Sketch of the Past," she saw that the act of gathering our most sacred memories involves a necessary blend of imagination, omission, and association, resulting in a kind of storytelling that holds the power to deliver unforeseen and poetic truths. Autobiographical reminiscence invents, preserves, and excludes as it unfolds. What we add to remembrances is as crucial in constructing self-image as what we "forget," for finally the version told is the one that endures, holding new possibilities for both teller and audience to interpret its contents.

Indeed, most psychotherapies activate the individual's awareness of what is retained and what is dismissed in shaping an identity. During the last decade psychological studies have shown the significance of women's journeying back in time to listen to their hushed, youthful voices. Through longitudinal interviews and ground-breaking analysis, feminist researchers have found that a woman's fullest development depends on recovering the courageous girl within who can speak honestly about her thoughts and feelings. On an individual level, reclaiming a silenced part of one's self shares its purpose (to forge a strong identity) and its method (to recount and reinterpret the "text," be it self or biblical) with the

Jerilyn Fisher teaches English and Women's Studies at Hostos Community College of the City University of New York. Her essay on Kim Chernin's work will appear in Jewish American Women Writers *(forthcoming from Greenwood Press).*

Jewish commandment to remember. For the woman seeking youthful authenticity, the cost of forgetting is great. Forgetting incurs dissociation, silence, and at its most ominous, an amnesia that can threaten annihilation.

In her fiction-like memoir, Kim Chernin displays the interpretive nature of memory. Chernin begins by having her narrator-self admit how susceptible she is to memory's manipulation: "Who is to say," Chernin writes, "if the detail has been transposed, condensed, heightened, made to stand for more or less than itself... Who would dare to say, after all that, what truth is?" Other books by Chernin (*In My Mother's House*, *Reinventing Eve*, *The Flame Bearers*) also explore the author's fascination with memory, particularly as its transformative capacity empowers women retelling their life stories. In *Crossing the Border,* Chernin draws the force of memory as if it were a character itself, an almost-personified medium through which the narrator urgently revisits that part of herself forced into exile.

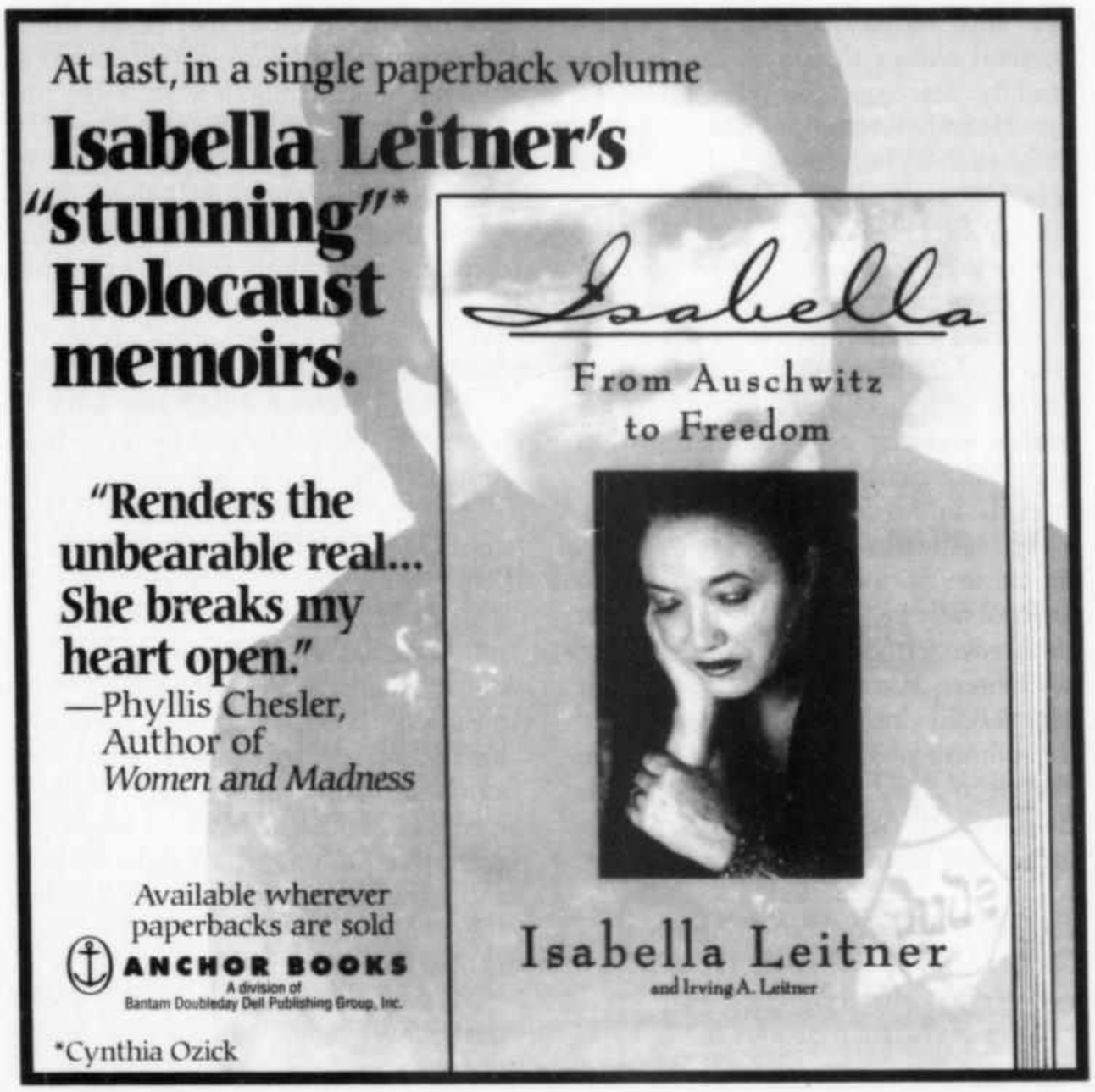
Using unconventional narrative form, the author splits herself in two: Kim Chernin (the name assigned to the thirty-year-old self) and her older (unnamed) self-as-narrator, who claims to understand much more than did her wilder, charming counterpart twenty-odd years before. In the non-linear, spiraling literary style for which she is known, Chernin writes this witty, eros-driven tale of a woman's "then" and "now," built around a modicum of plot concerning the sexual exploits of her Israeli sojourn during the early 1970s. A story of passion and self-reclamation, *Crossing the Border* is not, however, "about" its sequence of events; instead, the book captures what it is like to live, literally, at the edge. Moving across ambiguous boundaries, Chernin confronts the blurry contours of the self, Jewish identity, love, sexual orientation, and maternal responsibility—all this as she defies conventions of literary voice and plot. Chernin obeys few rules—of narrative or life—yet her rebellion is what distinguishes both the author's and her character's creativity.

This intensely self-conscious narrator seems to have absorbed a Jewish obsession with interpreting the past: She scans every recollected detail for "clues to what comes later," since "the memory of a single individual has as many codes, laws, legends, stories as the whole Jewish liturgical tradition." Convinced that memory cannot be trusted (to survive, "it wants to make things worse than they were, for the sake of a good story"), the narrator reflects on slippery distinctions between what she remembers and what she knows she has invented to remember, vividly illustrating the selective nature of whatever we choose to chronicle as personal or collective history.

Although thirty years old, Kim Chernin "back then" displays typically adolescent behavior and attitudes: She is someone for whom love and sex hold out a desperate hope for union, for distraction from the ache of loss, and for the discovery of wholeness, preferably found as far from home as possible. The book's narrator tells us that Kim Chernin "needed the love of a tribe, a collective of kindred-enough spirits, she needed to be stitched into them, woven into the dark web of their common identity." Attractive, single, and impulsive, she darts from an affair with the kibbutznik Simon, who appears only to suffer in his love for her; to Dov Aviad, a twenty-one-year-old Israeli soldier; to Sena, "the Bride," wife of an explosive kibbutz leader.

Throughout the memoir, Kim Chernin's strong erotic drive stimulates personal recollection as well as archetypal association; memories of her girlhood mix with biblical stories that come to her spontaneously. The way Simon lifts Kim Chernin reminds her of God's creation of the world, specifically recalling a passage in the Zohar; when Sena comes to her room, they tell stories about the *dybbuk* (devil) and Keshot, the river of knowing; as Dov undresses, crossing the room slowly toward her, "Kim Chernin goes back to Masada." The "erotic journey" of the book's subtitle is fueled by the interplay of memory and desire.

For more than ten years, Kim Chernin has been writing about yearning and loss, and about the illusions of memory as grist for the story. To retrieve an evanescent year of capriciousness and peril, she connects fragile shards of memory that, when pieced together, become the living version of these experiences. But Chernin frequently reminds us that even within herself, there exist infinitely different, opposing perspectives; any one of these might have become the "true" story through a different concoction of memory. Perhaps storytelling's most compelling quality is its proffering of hope that the revision of the past we want to have remembered will survive us. In *Crossing the Border*, Chernin shows how memory and the wondrous power of storytelling combine to shape meaning. □



BOOK REVIEW

Mac the Knife

Stephen J. Whitfield

A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald, by Michael Wreszin. Basic Books, 1994, 590 pp.

Dwight Macdonald (1906-1982) was the demolition man of the Old Left. Confronting cant and pretense, he was quick to detect shoddiness in the exercise of intelligence as well as slackness in the practice of representative government; and he specialized in surgical strikes which hit their targets so directly that his polemics constituted acts of public service. It was nothing personal: Some of those in the line of fire were even friends, or became friends.

Yet it was personal as well: Macdonald's prose was so singular, so immediate and vernacular that his readers seemed almost to cohere into a community, yearning for the more honest speech and the saner politics that he not only exalted but enacted. Even those who have only dipped into Macdonald's three great collections of essays—*Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1957), which is almost entirely political; *Against the American Grain* (1962), which is entirely cultural; and *Discriminations* (1974), which is both—know that the author was not only scintillating but also quite unobtrusively learned—especially in Anglo-American literature.

His stature in the history of our public culture is nevertheless equivocal—and not only because of the notoriously dismissive letters he got from some of his betters. For example, even though Macdonald vindicated the propriety of the Library of Congress awarding the Bollingen Prize for poetry in 1949 to Ezra Pound, despite treasonous radio broadcasts from fascist Italy, the poet called his champion "certainly one of the most ignorant apes that ever reached a typewriter." That put-down came only a decade after Leon Trotsky asserted of his acolyte: "Every man has a right to be stupid on occasion, but Comrade Macdonald abuses it."

Though not Jewish, Macdonald belonged to the nation's last intelligentsia—at once "ethnic" in its character and cosmopolitan in its tastes, based in New York City, and starting out in the 1930s. Argumentative and unacademic, the New York intellectuals bristled with opinions on any subject. They surmounted the barriers of specialization, editing and writing for magazines intended to be read—and not merely published in. Yet Macdonald was unusual, even in that circle, in his flair for fresh thinking about both politics and culture, about what is just and what is lovely. As Michael Wreszin's well-researched biography demonstrates anew, he could swing both ways.

Yet there are three counts to the indictment against him, and it is a pity that Wreszin does not explicitly confront—much less dispel or dismiss—them.

1) Macdonald never wrote a "big" book (and indeed could not write a book "in cold blood" at all). True enough. The major achievements of other New York intellectuals, ranging from *On Native Grounds* and *Love and Death in the American Novel* to *World of Our Fathers* and *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society,* will enjoy a shelf life longer than what Macdonald bequeathed. Wreszin's account curiously downplays the friendships with two non-New York intellectuals, James Agee and Hannah Arendt; it might be added that nothing Macdonald left behind matches *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* or *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*

But the case against the missing book can be overstated. Criticism is often most exemplary, or at least most authentic, when a particular text or event provokes an essay. The most famous books of Edmund Wilson, whose unflagging inquisitiveness made Macdonald envious, were really integrated essays—like *Axel's Castle, To the Finland Station,* and *Patriotic Gore.* Three scholarly monographs have already been devoted to Lionel Trilling, whose books also consisted mostly of essays. Clement Greenberg, Mary McCarthy, Philip Rahv, and Harold Rosenberg will be read for their deceptively easy pieces, rather than for tomes executed in cold blood. Sprinters don't have it easier than milers; the demands are just different.

It might be added that Macdonald's habitual reluctance to stand up during "The Star-Spangled Banner" extended the dissident tradition of Randolph Bourne, who died too young to fulfill his promise, and H. L. Mencken, whose monumental study of *The American Language* was begun as a way of avoiding politics. Yet both predecessors are probably best known for their critical essays—and certainly not for their systematic thought. "Systems die," Justice Holmes asserted, "insights remain."

Which brings us to 2) Macdonald was a nattering nabob of negativism, unable to formulate a constructive philosophy. He remained Mac the Knife, cutting away the diseased organs but not transplanting anything healthier as he performed his elective surgery upon mass politics and mass culture. True again. When Macdonald tried to affirm something big, when he stretched for the Vision Thing, *The Root is Man* came out botched—however gallantly his 1946 essay sought to transcend the dogmas of Marxism and the pieties of trade unionism to ground radical action in moral absolutes that somehow reconcile the individual conscience with the ideal of solidarity. Then again, most in-

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tellectuals now have trouble constructing an impregnable validation of their beliefs. The signature of the modern thinker is skepticism—a trait Macdonald himself exuded. Living among citizens whose temperament was sunny-side-up and who took the benevolence of their institutions for granted, Macdonald merits praise for demanding intellectual clarity and moral rectitude—especially in a manner that was modest rather than self-righteous, genial rather than grouchy.

3) So original and irrepressible was his wit that he paid a price. How could anyone so entertaining—it must have been suspected—be taken completely seriously? A comic sensibility risks the impression of frivolity; and those who address the most portentous topics are usually—and rightly—born under the sign of Saturn.

But it must be restated that sobriety is not synonymous with profundity; wit, if fresh and inventive enough, makes pleasurable connections, encourages the reader to persist, and helps keep thought evergreen. The principle that Voltaire enunciated—do not bore—Macdonald applied, but never for the sake of amusement alone, never when diagnosing the evils recorded in the annals of the twentieth century. Macdonald loved and used parody (and edited *Parodies* in 1960) because so refined a literary genre was a form of criticism, often drawing attention to the bad writing that may signal bad thinking. His own effortless style, which was of course the result of exhaustive work, enabled him to attach his funny bone close enough to his head and heart so that his polemics became effective and indelible.

A Rebel in Defense of Tradition also fails to solve a mystery: how did this privileged aesthete (Phillips Exeter '24, Yale '28) become so political a creature, and then become so radical (at least in spirit, resisting authority throughout his life), exploiting the imaginative potentialities of anarchism and pacifism in his journal *Politics* (1944-49)? He was never a "revolutionist," and, unlike the New Leftists he later influenced, boasted a very short rap sheet. Macdonald was culturally a conservative: If the heritage of Greek classicism, Enlightenment rationalism, and Twenties modernism ain't broke, don't fix it.

What could not have been anticipated from his pedigree was how brilliantly his journalism would penetrate the worst horrors of mid-century. No other New York intellectual peered so eerily close into the chasm and reported back what he saw. None observed so unblinkingly how terrifying the scale of violence had become, how relentlessly the monstrous impulses of totalitarianism had entered politics and were ruining the human estate. Macdonald argued that genocide and mass murder had become autotelic, unredeemed by any sensible purpose. He was especially attuned to the disjunction between scientific advance and rational control, between technical means and humane ends. Only a century had separated the first words to be transmitted by telegraph (Samuel F. B. Morse's "What hath God wrought?") and the first words of atomic warfare ("My God, what have we done?", asked Robert Lewis, co-pilot of the Enola Gay, in his log). Scientific progress had become catastrophic.

Before Macdonald others had, of course, faced the void of impersonal death and traced the implications of unmerited suffering: the prescient Kafka, and then Koestler and Orwell in their own novels and their journalism. Jewish intellectuals who found refuge in the United States also bore witness—especially Arendt, who would have been Macdonald's literary executrix, had he died first. But in sponsoring the testimony of Bruno Bettelheim and Simone Weil and Albert Camus in *Politics*, how could the former staff writer for *Fortune* and the future staff writer for The *New Yorker* have stared so hard into the abyss that ideological fanaticism and total warfare had opened up?

When I once asked him to account for such acuity, he replied: "Poe." The monosyllable struck me then as evasive, if not puckish. But it does makes sense. Unlike Kafka, Macdonald could not have picked up Central European *Kulturpessimismus* by osmosis (and then converted private nightmares into art). Unlike Koestler and Orwell, Macdonald had known neither fascist nor Stalinist terror during the Spanish Civil War nor, like Arendt, been inside a jail in the Third Reich or a Vichy internment camp. Never stateless, Macdonald could perhaps imagine himself "homeless." As a youthful "dandy" absorbed in perfecting a style, how else could he have appreciated chilling terror except through the mediation of the least American of American writers—the most morbid, the least affected by pastoral forms, the most quickly assimilated into European letters? How else could Macdonald have prepared himself for hearing a little night music? Wreszin mentions that Macdonald never really began a long-promised critical volume on Poe; only an anthology resulted. And yet a finer tribute was paid: distilling an eccentric artistic sensibility into a foretaste of the real world, permeated by the death sentences that contemporary "isms" randomly impose.

Whatever the exact sources of Macdonald's own radical insight, his career suggests discontinuities in the history of serious journalism in the United States. Macdonald's best political journalism was pitched to a readership of perhaps five thousand subscribers, who were willing to subsidize a one-man magazine that neither accepted ads nor appeared regularly. When a few hairpin turns in ideology found him at The *New Yorker*, he could assault such artifacts as the Great Books, the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, and Webster's *Third New International Dictionary*, gracing a weekly whose editor did not know what his readers thought nor survey what they wanted; William Shawn shaped

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the magazine according to his own taste. Yet by the 1970s, like most other New York intellectuals, Macdonald became reconciled to the academy. No longer blessed with the inspiration to write, he had become so impoverished that he was briefly on welfare. Honesty pays, goes the folk wisdom, just not enough. But the trajectory of his career warranted the faith that literate criticism could matter. Though Macdonald's audience was never huge, it was not a coterie either; and the accessibility of his voice conveyed the democratic aspirations that guided him.

His biographer has attempted to weave both the public and the private facets of an illustrious life within the context of American intellectual history, and the result is generally satisfactory: *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition* is engaging, thorough, and useful. Though the author, a historian at Queens College and CUNY, proclaims his own identification with his subject, Wreszin hits more blue notes than might have been expected from so admiring a portraitist. Macdonald's interior life is revealed as turbulent; the depressive moodiness, the sullen rages, the sexual frustration, the pangs of self-doubt are picked at like scabs. The flip-side of the bravado with which Macdonald pursued an ethic of honesty was boorish, careless behavior, especially when drunk—which occasionally resulted in insensitive remarks that sensitive Jewish friends took to be anti-Semitic. (As a secular humanist, Macdonald also professed no sympathy for *teshuvah*—for the religious and ethnic resurgence in some precincts of American Jewry; and he was quite irritated not only by Israel's treatment of Palestinian refugees but also by what he dismissed as the atavism of Zionism itself.)

Absorbing as Wreszin's biography is, it flunks a test that Macdonald himself might have imposed. For he represented, as his friend Czeslaw Milosz noted, "a totally American phenomenon"—the completely free man capable of making decisions at all times and about all things strictly according to his personal moral judgment. The biographer has weakened his book by not emulating his subject; he seems to harbor few opinions of his own that he cares to articulate or is driven to defend. The issues that perplexed Macdonald have apparently not challenged Wreszin enough to try to master them or to reach independent judgments; Macdonald's views are described more than analyzed, his impact traced rather than interrogated. The biography of an intellectual ought to highlight the fate of ideas—which are salient, which are unpersuasive, which are hand-me-downs. Why Macdonald should have his head examined requires a more nuanced attention to the validity of Marxism, anarchism, pacifism, and even liberalism and anti-Stalinism than has been invested.

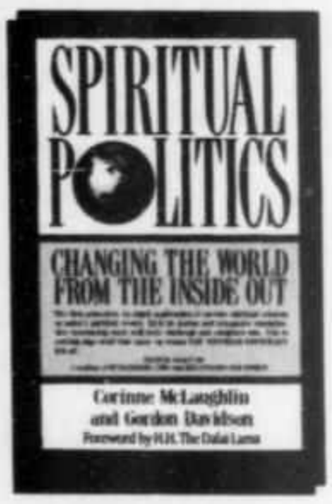
A Rebel in Defense of Tradition also fudges an issue of contemporary relevance: the link between politics and culture. *Partisan Review* (for which Macdonald wrote) was famous, of course, for uncoupling them, valuing both Marx and T. S. Eliot (both, admittedly, anti-bourgeois); and Macdonald could be a Trotskyist and then an anarcho-pacifist while endorsing the award of a poetry prize to a creepy fascist. Macdonald could wear two hats (and distinguish them). But to Wreszin, Macdonald had only one head, and his assaults on "midcult" in the 1950s and early 1960s are interpreted as waging politics by other means.

Though political readings of objects of art may be illuminating—and can often be obligatory—something valuable can be lost. Disliking a dictionary or a Bible translation is no substitute for opposing the "permanent war economy," any more than condemning bad taste is synonymous with uncovering injustice (though Macdonald did both); and to strive for intellectual clarity is not the same as recommending a war on poverty (though Macdonald used the former to promote the latter). However subtly exercised, power is a constant in human enterprises.

But when so much is defined as political—and Wreszin includes Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* as well as diagnoses of "alcoholism," a high price is exacted. In the past two decades, making culture political has given the Republican Party an electoral advantage it did not deserve, enabling the right wing to use symbolic issues associated with flag and family to distract working people from their own declining wages and living standards. Making culture political has also given the academic Left the illusion that revising the canon or writing history "from the bottom up" has much to do with making social conditions more fair. Blurring the line between culture and politics diminishes appreciation for the variousness and richness of human creativity, and subverts the effort to grasp how both self-government and self-expression operate according to their own imperatives. Politicizing culture is reductive of the very tradition that Dwight Macdonald so admirably rebelled against and hoped to conserve. □

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Opening the Borders

Wendy Orange

When working as a psychoanalyst specializing in dreams, I frequently heard some variant of this one: "I am living in a house that has many rooms I've never seen before. It's my house, only it's larger, and there are spaces I discover that have always been here but were kept secret from me." Such dreams usually leave the dreamer in a state of wonder and expansion mixed with sadness at awakening to a sense of constriction so contrary to the dream space.

These expansion dreams returned to me while I sat at the Arava crossing, as Israeli and Jordanian officials opened the borders between their two countries on a spot where the land, and the towns of Eilat and Aqaba, are almost kissing. The residents of each town gaze at the others' movements, boats, lights, and red mountains day and night: two miles across the magnificent Red Sea, yet worlds apart.

Running down the eastern side of Israel like a zipper of fear is the Jordanian border. Mine fields and barbed wire and complicated telescopes manned around the clock, along with myriad secret security procedures, have long been the rule here. Although, compared to Israel's northern border with Lebanon, the boundary between Israel-Jordan has seen few violent incidents, the Israelis have kept a persistent watch against terrorism. Over the years, terrorists were sometimes caught on the Eilat beach; land mines and bombs have been found and defused in the town of Eilat.

It's a rare moment—almost without parallel in the United States—when political rhetoric and reality truly converge. We are so used to scrutinizing a politician's words for surreal or suspect subtexts, easily finding bad faith behind empty words, while here today many in the bleachers on the Israeli side (soldiers and journalists and dignitaries) are palpably moved by the congruence of words and actions.

"This is our least painful peace," observes Hillel Halkin, translator of the great Israeli novels by A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz. Jay Bushinsky of the *Chicago Sun Times*, sitting nearby in the back of the makeshift bleachers, concurs. "We are the two most anglicized nations in the Mideast," explains Bushinsky, who's lived in Israel for thirty-odd years. "We've been honorable foes, fighting hard, but with less human-rights violations, less animosity on the personal level," he says, as the organic dignity unfolds in the tiny spot below us.

"Three days ago," Yitzhak Rabin says, "this was a mine field. Sand and more sand. Today this is an opening. Yesterday we installed telephone wires between Jordan and Israel. Soon it will seem as if this is the way it has always been. People say everything is moving too fast. But we had forty-six years of war. We cannot stand even one more day of it."

Crown Prince Hassan, brother of Jordan's King Hussein, talks against a "politics of despair" and speaks of the need for social justice in the region. Startling the Israelis, he ends his speech, in Hebrew, with the words of Hosea 2:15: "We will turn the wilderness of trouble into a gate of hope." It's a generous moment.

Some Shakespearean muse seems to be present in Rabin's stirring words, a reward, perhaps, for his courage. "Don't forget he has a heart of stone," someone remarks wryly. "But that's the beauty of it," I respond.

Chris Hedges of The *New York Times*, an intrepid war correspondent, is reading a novel (*The Confederates*, by Thomas Kineally) through much of the ceremony. One of the few non-Jews and non-Israelis present, he seems less engaged than most of us, who, no matter how far apart our "politics," are riveted, simply because we are Jewish.

On the opposing bleachers is the rival family of soldiers and journalists, the Jordanians. This *is* a family matter: What you often notice in the Mideast is especially vivid today—no one, Jewish or Arab, no matter what their professional journalistic roles, or how different their political beliefs, remains unmoved by the ramifications of this border opening. Parents and children of war dead on each side converge and exchange gifts. Old soldiers (the Israelis, to a man, in shirt sleeves, the Jordanians in jackets and ties) move to the center of the event, shaking hands, bringing gifts.

After the short ceremony, there's informal mingling on the small desert field. As a hot wind blows, journalists and statesmen chat and congratulate one another. Television crews circle the eminent among us.

Abba Eban is greeted warmly by Jordan's chief negotiator on water, Munzer Haddadin, who has an

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BOOK REVIEW

Spirituality and Community

Michael Lerner

The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Social Change, by Jim Wallis, The New Press, 269 pp., 1994.

Hymns to an Unknown God, by Sam Keen, Bantam, 308 pp., 1994.

Even the cynical media, politicians narrowly focused on self-interest, and an intelligentsia committed to a value-free "knowledge" and technical expertise cannot totally ignore the flourishing of America's latest spiritual/political awakening. That awakening began in the 1960s, and although it was not understood in spiritual terms, it functioned to challenge the dominant materialism of what was seen as a "plastic" and one-dimensional American reality.

The awakening took two forms: those who expressed their abhorrence of American materialism in political, usually leftist language, and those who articulated their alienation in a more traditional religious language. Ironically, neither group recognized the other as allies. Seen through the distorting lens of the mass media, religious people were depicted as irrational fundamentalists who were seeking to reestablish feudal social relations, while leftists were seen as drug-crazed nihilists wishing to destroy all stable relationships in a narcissistic pursuit of individual pleasure. No wonder that each group developed hateful stereotypes of the other that made it impossible for them to hear the common critique of American society and the common thirst for meaning and purpose that would transcend the individualism and selfishness that had been enshrined as the common sense of American life.

There were, however, significant groups of people in the political world who understood the deep truths of spirituality and a small group of people in the religious world who understood the need to connect its truths with the struggles for social justice. And there were people who did not identify with any existing religious tradition who nevertheless recognized that spiritual truths and politically progressive insights needed to be reunited if America was to be transformed. These voices—from the religious Left, the progressive religious world, and the humanistic psychology community—were typically ridiculed, marginalized, or ignored, not only by the media but also by people within their own religious, political, or psychological worlds who saw what they were doing as a threat to established orthodoxies.

In the 1980s, these voices received renewed expression with the creation of a series of journals that sought to validate the intersection of political and spiritual concerns—in the Jewish world, through TIKKUN, in the Catholic world through *New Oxford Review*, in the world of Evangelical Christians through *Sojourners*. Now, in the 1990s, the market is being deluged with books about spirituality. And to the amazement of the publishing world, they are selling! To be sure, some of these books recreate the problem by validating spirituality that is entirely inward and disconnected from or even antagonistic to the socially transformative efforts of the movements for social change. But a number of others are explicitly committed to challenging this split.

One of the most impressive such efforts is made by Jim Wallis, the courageous editor of *Sojourners*. In *The Soul of Politics* you will find a fresh and exciting voice challenging the spiritual corruption of American society. Insisting on the primacy of both personal and social morality in politics, Jim Wallis offers a prophetic challenge to the apologists of the status quo in both political parties.

Wallis's book is a stunning, provocative, and profound politics-of-meaning-style tour through contemporary American life. In one particularly moving account, Wallis takes us to the Gang Summit held in Kansas City in the spring of 1993 and presents us with gang members who are desperately searching for a higher meaning and purpose, and who are eager to respond to a spirituality that they heretofore had never found in existing religious or political communities. Yet the prophetic spirituality Wallis seeks is not just for the most oppressed—it is a challenge to all sectors of the society. Railing against American selfishness, Wallis declaims the affluent who "believe their children are more important than the children of the world who are now starving to death. The religious assertion that those children are also sacred means that they are just as important as our own children and must be treated that way. It is a spiritual imperative that we have ignored, and the consequence is our own spiritual poverty and moral deterioration. There is a cost to disregarding moral values, and we are now reaping the social and cultural disintegration resulting from our spiritual disregard" (p. 72). Wallis talks about evangelical Christian leaders who have taken great heat for firmly defending civil rights for gays and lesbians, insists on the importance of women's leadership in struggles for social justice, and maintains that without gender equality "the society simply cannot and will not be changed." Repeating a politics-of-meaning theme, Wallis insists that "every project, idea and system must be evaluated by whether it moves us toward greater connection with one another."

Following a liberation theology model, however, Wallis insists that the first part of the evaluation must be to focus on how any given policy will affect the poor. There's a problem with this, however, that the politics of meaning was designed to fix. For thirty years the liberal and progressive movements have often insisted that we give primacy to the suffering of the most oppressed (and then engaged in battles about who exactly the "most oppressed" really are). But meanwhile, for all their rhetorical flourish and concern, these movements have been able to actually deliver very little for the poor, because they have been unable to create a majority willing to jump on that bandwagon. In TIKKUN, we've argued that part of the reason for that failure is that most Americans are themselves in a great deal of pain, a reflection of the deprivation of meaning and alienation fostered by the dominant ethos of selfishness. It is only when we can validate that pain and help people understand that what is most hurtful in their own lives can be healed by a transformation of the dominant selfishness to an ethos of caring and to a validation of spiritual and ethical reality (a transformation that would contribute to making their personal relationships more stable, their work lives less alienating, their political and social world more meaningful) that we can bring those people to see that ending poverty and oppression of others (which are often merely extensions of the principle of selfishness and a denial of the spiritual unity of all things) is necessary for the majority to get what it needs for itself! Conversely, if the focus on the poor is separated from a broader politics of meaning focus on the spiritual and ethical and psychological oppression of the majority, we will at best reproduce the liberalism of the 1960s, with well-intentioned and guilt-ridden, middle-class people momentarily inspired to end poverty, only to shrink back from their idealism when faced with the necessity of raising taxes and thus seeing their morality in conflict with their conception of their self-interest.

Yet Wallis and the other writers considered in this review make important steps toward helping people overcome this narrow conception of their own interests. In a powerfully moving account of spiritual values like reverence (honoring the whole creation), diversity (a multicultural partnership of equals), justice (healing the hunger for what is right), personal responsibility (including businesspeople taking responsibility for creating good jobs, healthy workplaces and useful products), Wallis shows us a side of evangelical Christianity that can be a powerful ally for those who wish to build a politics of meaning to heal and repair the world. That many in the liberal world still find it difficult to imagine that such people exist is a testimony to how effective the media have been in separating us and making us invisible to each other. *The Soul of Politics*, if read widely, could be a major step forward toward societal transformation.

We all have good reasons to worry about the ways that spirituality can be co-opted in reactionary or politically conservative ways. So it is particularly exciting to read Sam Keen's *Hymns to an Unknown God*. Keen has been at the forefront of humanistic psychology and spirituality, and in this moving book he addresses some of the deepest concerns of the soul. Keen understands why contemporary intellectuals are resistant to spirituality, and he provides a "bullshit detector" to help us as we wend our way through the complex and sometimes flaky world of contemporary spiritual quests. Keen warns us of those who hitch spirituality to a nationalist or chauvinist agenda, and to leaders who do not attempt to live by their own values. (Note how a leader deals with sex, money, power, and friendship in his/her own life, he sagely warns us). Always question authority. In general, use your mind critically and evaluate what people are saying—spirituality should supplement, not replace, a critical intelligence. Insist on humor in spiritual groups. And insist that your spiritual groups allow differences of opinion and a culture of challenging leaders (Keen is obviously reacting to the spiritual world of gurus and popes, not to the rough-and-tumble of Talmudic debate and suspicion of leaders that has dominated most of the non-Hasidic elements of Jewish spirituality.)

What's most refreshing about Keen is his insistence that the spiritual assignment of our age is to create a spiritual and ecological community. While the spiritual task of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may have focused on the heroic journey of the isolated individual who needed to go inward, reclaim the unconscious, and grapple with one's own inner underworld, the spiritual task of the late twentieth century requires a journey with others ("alone together," as Keen puts it, to emphasize the need not to lose one's own integrity while joining with others). Whereas Jungians had emphasized the dark inner places of our soul, "the shadow," Keen recognizes that the shadow we have to eradicate is formed from pollution, warfare, the consumer economy, and in general redesigning the economic and political world.

Spirituality for Keen, as for these other writers, is more than just finding some internal vision of peacefulness. Spirituality must be suffused with compassion—and anything that leads to isolation from political life fails the task compassion. As Keen puts it, "if you're not touched by Rwanda, you can't be spiritual."

With spirituality like this, who needs secular materialism? One thesis of my book *Jewish Renewal* is that Judaism's most exciting message was precisely this integration of spirituality and political healing, a message that was played down and at times totally abandoned as Jews sought to create a Judaism that could be less of a target of ruling elites in a world of oppression. Contemporary attempts to renew Judaism must work on precisely this issue. So it is heartening to see so many outside the Jewish world moving in this same direction. TIKKUN's original commitment to building a progressive social-change movement sensitive to the spiritual and psychological issues, what we eventually came to call a politics of meaning, no longer seems such a daunting task. □

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Academic Freedom in the State of Israel

Jacob Neusner

Eleven years ago, in 1983, I got an invitation to address the Historical Society of Israel on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of its journal, *Ziyyon* (Zion). A month later, I got myself disinvited by return mail. I'd sent a copy of my lecture, the hosts didn't like what I had to say about their journal's articles in my field, and that was that. I was ready to debate, argue, negotiate. They had a different agendum.

That fact tells us all we need to know about academic freedom in Jewish studies in the State of Israel: You're free to say what they want you to say, but nothing else. Unfortunately, raised in the American tradition of academic freedom, I didn't know the rules. In our academic community, the task of learning is criticism; our tradition comes to us from the French Enlightenment, the German tradition of objective science (*Wissenschaft*), and the British tradition of pragmatism and insistence on hard evidence. But what defines the American academic tradition is the powerful commitment to freedom of speech, expression, and thought. We pay a price, inventing the wheel every morning, sometimes making things up as we go along. But we also stand at the forefront of learning in the humanities and social sciences; outside of the local humanities (French in France, Estonian in Estonia), everyone in the world wants to study in this country. Freedom is costly but carries great rewards.

Judaic studies in Israeli universities do not share that commitment to genuinely experimental thought—the what if, the why, the why not of learning. The professors prefer the conventional and loathe what is new and unfamiliar. Education is exceedingly narrow, so that with noteworthy exceptions (many of them the product of overseas universities), Israeli scholars in Jewish learning are famous abroad for the rather dull quality of their work. But why should that be surprising, when, after all, the thought police suppress anything but what is conventional, and Jerusalem decides the conventions? (The yeshiva world presents a separate set of problems.) In the humanities and particularly the Judaic humanities, Israel's academic tradition, such as it is, draws on two sources, one imperfectly understood, the other, alas, a wrathful presence. The founders of Israeli university studies of Judaism come from the tradition of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, that is, the science of Judaism. When called upon to found universities, first in Jerusalem, then elsewhere, they took as their model the only universities they knew, the German ones. The other tradition of Jewish learning, that of the yeshiva, they knew equally superficially: violent argument and the ritual conflict of personalities; but they did not grasp what was at stake at all.

So they formed out of the German and yeshiva traditions an academy of their own. The latter they aped in its appalling manners. The former defined their professional self-image. The authentic professor would then be an inflated, ill-mannered, self-important brute. The reason is that, never having been professors, the founders, many of them alumni of both yeshivas and Weimar Germany's universities, imitated what they remembered of the professors of their youth: the pomposity, the union of high self-esteem and (correspondingly) modest solid achievement, the overweening demand of entitlement, confusion of the power of sustained thought, and political preferment. Immature students tend to see the externals: They perceive professors as powerful, and reduce power to politics and personalities. That memory of Germany formed the first generation of Israeli Herr Doktor Professors and accounts for the character of Israeli universities in this field: unproductive, politicized, obsessed with gossip about personalities.

Consequently, when called upon to create a university field of Jewish learning for the nascent Jewish state, the founders, moving out of their high school teaching positions, or the post offices, or the stores, or the synagogues and yeshivas, where they had earned their livings, had no authentic academic model. But they did have a spurious one: their own memories of yeshivas, where by definition they were undistinguished, having apostasized; and the German universities, where they were outsiders. So what they remembered was, run things your own way, conduct scholarship as a blood sport, suppress what you cannot

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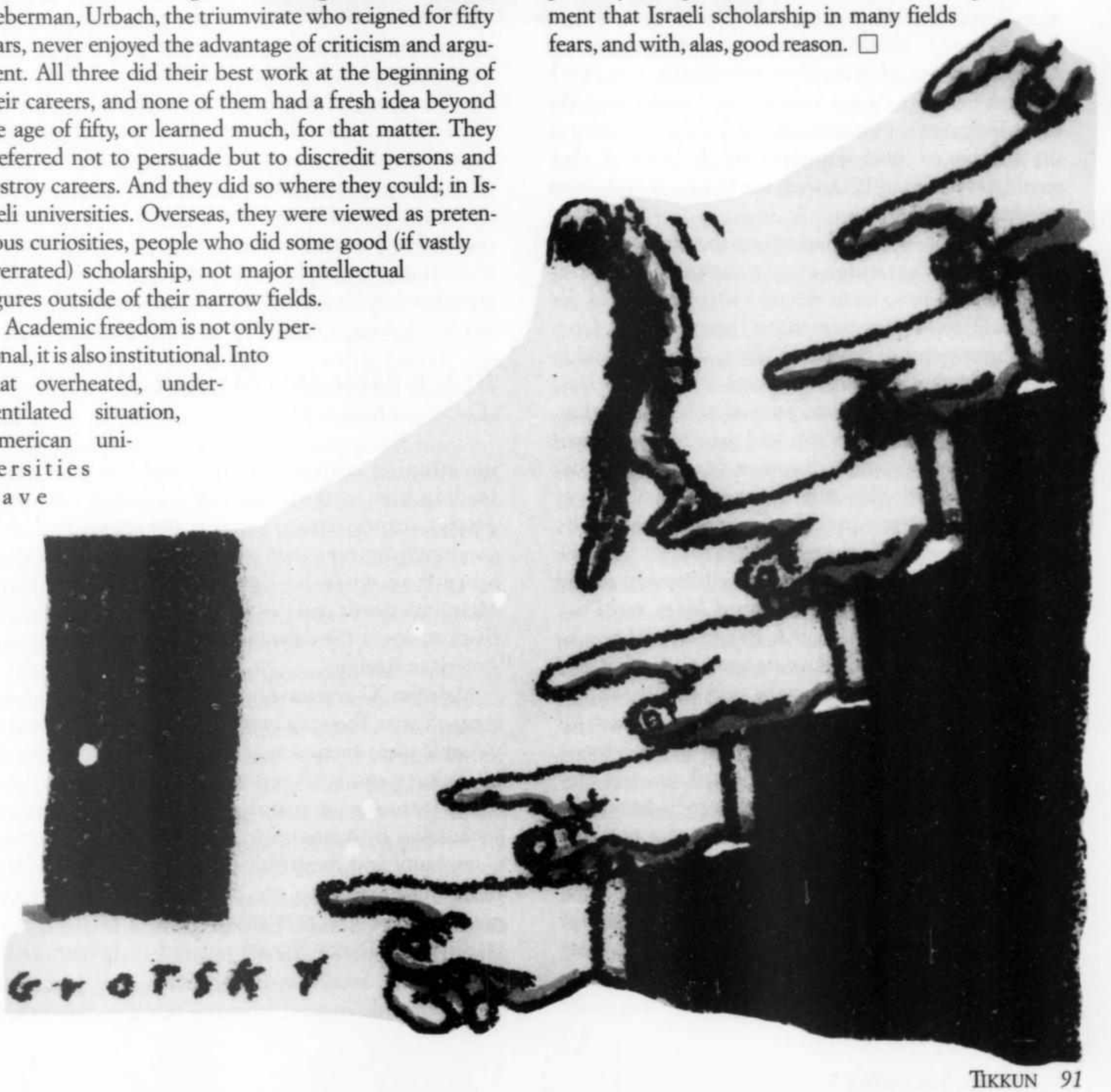
control, boycott whom you cannot subvert or surpass, and exercise the thought control that threat effects.

About the leading figure among them, Gershom G. Scholem, the story is told of a conversation he had with Saul Lieberman. Hearing Lieberman boast about his power to decide who in Jewish studies will live and who will die, Scholem replied, "You think you have power? You really want to see power?" Holding up his index finger, he continued, "I will show you power. With this finger of mine I can break or make careers."

So Herr Doktor Professor, remembered from the student's perspective, was a figure of power. But concrete achievement, the power of reason and persuasion, the dynamism of curiosity and quest—none of these authentic marks of (even) the German academy where it attained its goals ever registered. Scholem, Lieberman, Urbach, the triumvirate who reigned for fifty years, never enjoyed the advantage of criticism and argument. All three did their best work at the beginning of their careers, and none of them had a fresh idea beyond the age of fifty, or learned much, for that matter. They preferred not to persuade but to discredit persons and destroy careers. And they did so where they could; in Israeli universities. Overseas, they were viewed as pretentious curiosities, people who did some good (if vastly overrated) scholarship, not major intellectual figures outside of their narrow fields.

Academic freedom is not only personal, it is also institutional. Into that overheated, underventilated situation, American universities have found entry impossible. Several have tried to set up branches in the State of Israel, in which American approaches to education, to the classroom, teaching, advising, student life, and even scholarship, might be tested in the realities of Israeli life and culture. For we certainly have something to learn, but much to teach. Thus far, no American university has gotten permission to open a branch, and many think the reason is the Israeli educational establishment's fear of competition.

We see our failures and our flaws. But, it would appear, they see something we may miss: Israeli young people may well prefer an American university in Jerusalem, with less pompous and more relevant professors, rather than the Hebrew University. Academic freedom should encompass freedom to compete, try different approaches, wonder not why, but why not, and forge ahead. That is precisely the spirit of innovation and free experiment that Israeli scholarship in many fields fears, and with, alas, good reason. □



Doubtful Torch

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as the resolve of the Allies still seems.

As the veterans of D-Day take their bows on the global stage, the fiftieth anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki isn't far behind. In the torch this generation is passing to its once-recalcitrant children, what glows with the light of truth, and what is mere conflagration? Nobody doubts that World War II to some degree "saved" Western values. But on the edge of the next millenium, what do those values oblige us to ask about war itself? About militarism? nationalism? the organization of the global economy? If we pretend that the answers to these questions are the same as they would have been in 1945, then the G.I.s will truly have fought and died in vain.



AP/Wide World Photos

It is precisely over such questions that the D-Day and Woodstock generations fought the pitched battles which constitute so many people's simplification of the Sixties. Two factors prevented the questions from attaining any sort of resolution. First, those involved in conducting the Vietnam War (and their supporters) branded the most articulate protesters as un-American commie stooges and thus removed their higher motives from the realm of public discourse. Second, and more important, both the anti-war and flower power movements were fueled in many cases by intergenerational personal grievances, so that the rational grounds for protest and rebellion were sullied by old-fashioned antagonism toward Mom and Dad. Conversely, the generation that fought WWII was so stunned by their kids' failure to appreciate what had been done for them that very few could see the visionary idealism behind the anti-authoritarian pose.

Well, it's twenty-five years later, and the Woodstock generation has kids of its own. What tributes will they offer us in 2019, when one of them is president? Will they understand that our youthful war was one that fostered not magnificent unity of purpose but bitter national division? That instead of a benign father figure, universally mourned (well, almost) on the brink of victory, we served under two presidents who beat hasty retreats from a reviled White House? Will they understand that in some respects our war was never concluded, that even today its outcome is in doubt? Not with regard to Vietnam or Cambodia, nor even the Cold War, but the ongoing denial of what the Sixties really meant to those who fought its battles here in America: battles against repression, prejudice, materialism, greed, battles against the violent abuse of the Earth, against violence itself. Battles for tolerance and mirth, for a wider opening of the mind, a more reverent stewardship of the planet, a more loving application of technology and resources.

Twelve years of official denial managed to discredit the Woodstock ideal in the eyes of all but its most faithful adherents. Bill Clinton himself remains unclear about his own place on the beachhead. Perhaps those of us who parachuted behind the lines must send up a flare to remind him we're still here, waiting for our comrades-in-arms to help complete the task of liberation we shouldered. Our parents' generation completed theirs, and we owe them no less. □

Black Men and Malcolm

(Continued from p. 42)

questioning his own unjust thoughts and deeds, leading him to reject narrow racialism and blind gender scapegoating, remains the truest and most meaningful monument to Black manhood. Perhaps more than when he first spoke and lived them, Malcolm's words and deeds carry profound import for Black males at the dawning of our first full century of American freedom.

Malcolm X's words and deeds can also spur us on to great efforts: They can move us to build upon his most valuable ideas even as we are encouraged to transcend his failures and weaknesses. We can confirm his true significance as a prophetic orator and fearless spokesman by acting to enflesh the ideals of humane community and progressive political action he didn't live long enough to see become a reality. By this measure, the greatest achievements of the heroic tradition Malcolm X participated in remain in the future. □

YUPPIE REDEMPTION

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us. Something is amiss, if not missing, in all these cinematic treatments.

Specifically, these redemption movies have no moral conception, compass, or vocabulary. The characters (and theater audiences) see no compelling reason for their afflictions or the measure of their punishments. There is no hint about how to find one's way back into the fold. Connor cannot understand why he, out of all the people in the world, is caught in the broken record of Groundhog Day. Stone's car crash is an inexplicable "accident." Jack is a random victim of a terrible disease. Having no transcendental or supernatural explanations for their predicaments—for crisis, disease, or death—they cannot appeal to any credible force for consolation or guidance and have no terminology with which to seek a redeemed life. But it is precisely this randomness that people abhor, especially in the face of serious challenges.

One may say, wait a moment; you are dealing here with Hollywood farce, not a divinity school seminar. Fair enough. I do not expect or wish the movies to lecture us about values or to have a full-blown, explicit catechism. When they put their minds to it, however, moviemakers know how to depict ultimate causes. Old films such as *It's a Wonderful Life*, and to a lesser extent *The Miracle on 34th Street*, are exemplars. The problem is that contemporary audiences, while inching toward the real thing, may not be quite ready for a full treatment of redemption.

The acts of repentance depicted in the movies at hand also lack a well-anchored moral framework. Connor's quest to redeem himself consists of a random assortment of good deeds, ranging from changing a tire for elderly women to making an obnoxious insurance salesman feel "good about himself."

What is the deeper significance of these acts? A communitarian may see in at least some of these a welcome retreat from selfishness. But the justification for these social amenities and limited virtues in our society is often utilitarian: If you do not help your neighbors, you will end up living in a society where no one helps you. This way of thinking provides a rather tenuous foundation for moral conduct, because if circumstances change, it might prove beneficial to act in a selfish manner. Only strong commitments to moral deeds for their own sake provide a firm anchoring to virtuous conduct. But this in turn requires a commitment to ultimate values. You can see all these movies twice over and not gain even an iota of insight into this rather cardinal issue.

Just as the identity of the redeemer, the scope of redemptive suffering (why do bad things happen to people who think they are good?), and the acts that lead to repentance are not defined in morally meaningful ways, the films also lack an articulated depiction of a life of virtue to which those who seek redemption may commit themselves. The closest we come is the suggestion that forgoing money-making careers in favor of being close to people is the way to go. But making money (and pursuing one's specialty), ever more observers world-wide seem to agree, is a virtue that makes our economic system the envy of the world, especially of those in countries in which most people live in small towns. Nor is merely living in a small town a guarantee of a virtuous life; there is plenty of petty oppression and authoritarianism in rural America.

Most important, while having close relations is of value, it is but one value among many we need to guide our life. One hardly expects a movie to provide a catalogue of core values; one simply notes that the normative scope of the movies at hand, although they deal with redemption, is particularly narrow, and movie after movie waxes uncritically about the value of community without exploring the values of communities.

Religions provided answers that now elude many movie-makers and their audiences as they struggle to sort out their lives, trying to use these narratives as path finders. Moreover, religions have developed barriers which stand in the way of reaching many in the contemporary world. They have persisted in treating major segments of the population as second-class parishioners (women, and the Mormons until recently, Blacks). They often have been not merely authoritative but also arbitrary. At the same time the so-called civic religions, secular bodies of values, have not been able to deal with questions of ultimate values, with the meaning of life and death, with the meaning of our very existence—or to bail us out of our narrow existences to bind us into more encompassing wholes, unless one counts nationalism, which these days is often rather destructive. As these movies hint, though in no way establish, there may be no other reliable source for understanding the human condition and for finding the meaning for one's suffering than in the spiritual realm, and within it, in religion. You have though to watch these redemption-lite movies very closely and then some, to get this point. □

STERN UN IKH

(Continued from p. 52)

substitute Prometheus or Parzival or Ken Kesey, say, in place of the Ba'al Shem Tov. For all his insistence on the kosherness of his project, that's how it seems to me: a patchwork agenda of pop mythologies gleaned from Joseph "follow your bliss" Campbell and his ilk, which had great currency in those days.

But Stern would have it that he follows the logic of the cracked fables of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, Franz Kafka's spiritual ancestor, whose disciples are incidentally called "the Dead Hasidim." He claims a method in the madness of the magician Joseph della Reina's ill-fated attempt to bushwack Satan, and in the tale of the four who entered paradise. He says you must make an assault on paradise (which he confuses with the past) for the sake of retrieving miracles, like the four rabbis—one of whom died; another went mad, another lost his faith, and only Rabbi Akiva survived intact to tell the tale. I say to Stern, "You're no Akiva. God help you, you're not even Rabbi Wax."

He reads Kafka's parable called "Before the Law," and declares that, for the love of truth and art, one must duck under the arm of the forbidding doorkeeper and enter the palace. I would prefer to wait outside. I'd contend, in fact, that most of the literature of our century is about waiting outside, bemoaning our exile from the Palace of the Law. After all, isn't exile (what Stern likes to call *galut*) as good a Jewish theme as any? But Stern, remember, believes in taking the plunge. Not content with the wistful lamentations of banishment, he must penetrate to the interior of the tradition; he must make *aliyah* to the past, banishing himself from the here and now. A metaphysical cat-burglar, he steals into the palace, which is the seat of meaning and magic, from whence he sends back postcards and curios.

"Have a heart," I plead, fed up to here with Stern's imposture. But even if he weren't a sham, even if he managed single-handedly to salvage the lost continent of *Yiddishkeit*, who cares? Today's themes— alienation, a fashionable malaise of the soul—still abide. What we want to cozy up with of an evening is sophisticated despair, characters in kitchens and bedrooms being glib about their inability to make emotional connections. Folk heroes are a quaint embarrassment, as out of place in our age as the Holy *Shekhinah*, the female immanence of the divine, at a stag party.

I'm of the generation that honors Philip Roth for his savaging of Jewish suburban philistinism, his exploration of the terminal identity crisis among American Jews. When he takes them to task, I say *mea culpa*, luxuriating in my guilt, guilt being the opiate of my kind. Meanwhile Stern pursues his headstrong vocation, leaving his paper trail back to what he regards as the source. He thinks he's writing a kind of Baedeker by which the reader might follow his lead crablike into the past. He believes he can retrace his steps and return to the present with glittering gifts whenever he likes. Have I got news for him. For one thing, nobody's beating a path into his Yiddish twilight. He's all alone there, playing to a gallery of ghosts, and is as good as one of them; while I'm becoming invisible by association. Frankly, I want to get shed of Stern before it's too late. I'd like to breathe again the air of the latter days of my own misbegotten century, and if it's not too much to ask, have an audience of living beings. What's wrong with—God forbid!—writing about what you know? I'm somebody. I have a life, and an interesting one at that: I lived in England, New Orleans, Arkansas; I knew the Clintons. Once I was married. I bungee-jumped!

Lately Stern has begun to remove the headquarters of his imaginative operations from North Main Street in Memphis to New York's Lower East Side, with excursions into the East European Pale. He means to deprive me of the last attachment to my native milieu. He ignores my warnings that he's taken a one-way trip: His paper trail will blow away like fallen leaves, and he'll be stranded in his literary boneyard without a clue as to how to get out. Righteously he declares his intention to restore "nostalgia" to its original meaning of "the pain of knowing," but I still hear the maudlin strains of "Fiddler on the Roof;" I see Chagall's precious shtetl evocations, murder and mayhem alchemically distilled into rich greens and blues. And I wonder what's so all-fired honorable about resurrecting what in some cases is better off left to rot. Think of the character in *Tale of Two Cities* who, accused of being a graverobber, says he prefers to regard himself as a resurrectionist. What's the upshot of Stern's method but a Yid variation on the zombie jamboree? What's he got to offer beyond grisly mementoes from the kingdom of the dead? With respect to his stories, I say let the dead tell them to the dead. Where's the crime in confronting the life of our era? Nobody's really pronounced the last word on urban neurasthenia. Despair and alienation and spiritual malaise remain the hallmarks of our moment; they're my birthright and I want them back.

But Stern continues playing the elf to my shoemaker, id to my superego, attempting his "*tikkun*" with such blind conviction that I realize I'll have to kill him to get free. Then I'll end like the character in the novel *McTeague*, alone in the desert chained to the corpse of the man he murdered. Lately, as a measure of my broken resistance, I catch myself envying Stern his single-mindedness. Though I understand that this augurs the final stage of infection, sometimes I can't help it, I wish I were him, or at least who he thinks himself to be. That's when I know I'm truly lost. □

Where Do We Live Now?

(Continued from p. 56)

unremarkable forgetfulness on this occasion (what others called a mere oversight) was, for me, disturbing, and it was the very quietness of the forgetting that disturbed most—the sense that there had been nothing that was, quite literally, *in place*—no memory or memo or manners to work against, or compensate for, the possibility of ordinary, individual forgetfulness.

What seemed to be disappearing before my eyes, both where I lived and where I worked, was not merely a sense of the past, but the means by which memory itself, under changing conditions, might be sustained. If who we are and what we believe are, in part, defined by where we come from, and if one place (one street, one town, one M.F.A. program), becomes, increasingly, more or less like any other place, why value that quality in us—our memory—that reminds us of who, in our different selves and places, we once were? How feel at home in a place that is an everlasting present similar to everyone else's everlasting present?

What saddened was not merely the obvious substitutions of new for old (according to James Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere*, 80 percent of everything ever built in the United States has been built since the end of World War II), or of the impersonal and generic for the personal and individual, but, more, the value conferred upon the new, the impersonal, and the generic by the acceleration in our lives of their presence, and the fact of their omnipresence.

Three weeks after I drove Eli out to Ohio, I visited my daughter Miriam in Washington, D.C., where, in her first job after graduating from college, she was working as administrative assistant to the director of the D. C. office of Habitat for Humanity. And while I learned about the ways in which Habitat enabled poor and low-income families to build and own their own homes, I found my mind dwelling on the word "habitat" itself and thinking that it was usually used, not for places people lived in, but for places in the natural world inhabited by plants and animals.

But what was true in the natural world about habitats was also true, naturally, in our human lives, wasn't it? The fewer the variety of habitats, and the less various the habitats themselves, the fewer would be the varieties of species, the possibilities of species, and the possibilities for the survival of species.

If we could not see, experience, or know the difference and history of place—if one place was, increasingly, the same as the next—how feel more at home in one place than in any other? And if we lived, increasingly, anywhere instead of somewhere, what of that part of individual identity that was informed by place, and by the kind of memory and history attached to place—that both informed it and was formed by it?

When I was Eli's age, the last thing I or any of my friends wanted to do once we'd left home was to return. Most of us wanted escape in whatever way we could get it and, the children of immigrants, we often prized the distance—in miles and style—we created between our world and the world of our parents.

The price of this distance, though—of our success and assimilation—was often the loss of a connection to place, family, and the Jewish community. In our adult years (and especially for those of us not raised in Orthodox Jewish communities, which seemed to fragment less readily), many of us found, as I had, that we couldn't go home again even if we wanted to, mainly because it wasn't there; or, more exactly, because other people were living where we once lived. (My own street in Brooklyn, according to an undercover cop I know, consists of wall-to-wall crack parlors.) Nobody we knew, that is, or who knew us, now lived where we once lived.

I had, obviously, made use of my American freedoms—my freedom of choice and freedom from discrimination—to gain education and amenities denied my parents. I had, in fact, by the middle of my life, gained all they might have wished me to have—materially and spiritually, as a Jew and as an American: a good education (something, I'd been taught by them, that could never be taken away from me), a successful career as teacher and writer (hadn't God created the world because he loved stories?), a lovely home, three healthy children, a life rich in friends… .

And yet, it seemed, my very freedoms had led me to a time and place in which I felt, to my surprise, small connection to the place in which I'd lived for most of my adult life. What was I doing—a Jew from Brooklyn, one generation removed from the Old Country—living alone in the land of Emily Dickinson and Jonathan Edwards? Like the wandering Jew of legend to whom all doors are closed, I found myself wondering where I might go and live now—where I might feel what I still longed to feel: at home. Unlike this wandering Jew, however, most doors were open to me—I could, in the U. S. and abroad, live freely almost anywhere I wanted. I sensed, however, that no move made now—whether to Israel, or, a few years hence, say, to some retirement community in Florida, California, or (even) New York, where I might be among others with whom I shared common experiences and memories—would satisfy my own particular hunger, since any such move would, essentially, be artificial, whereas my craving was for

something that, as in my childhood, grew in a natural way through the passage of time.

Were I to emigrate to Israel, for example, I would, to be sure, instantly become part of a community in which I shared not only a historical past and a present purpose, but common daily struggles. But I would, also, and instantly—and the same seemed true, in prospect, of any move—be cutting myself off, in an ongoing way, from my own actual past and from what was dearest to me: my children, my brother, my friends, and the language and history which, in life and literature, for more than half a century, had been mine.

On November 1, 1993, seven weeks after I came home from Athens, Eli telephoned—an emergency—and I flew out to Ohio and walked him through a crisis (drugs, a bad LSD trip) that nearly led, among lesser possibilities, to his expulsion from college. When I returned to Northampton this time, I found myself returning, also, to something I'd felt when I'd come back from Ohio seven weeks earlier.

As I turned off Interstate 91 and drove the mile or so home through Northampton's downtown, I had been overwhelmed—barely able to breathe or to see—and I now recalled the specific source of the emotion: I had suddenly found myself imagining Eli returning to Northampton in some future time (would I still be here?), with a friend who had never been here, and saying to the friend, as they drove this same route: This is where I lived, and this is where I played pick-up basketball, and this is where my friends and I got drunk on graduation night, and this is where a friend OD'd on heroin, and this is where I went to Hebrew School, and this is where I worked as a short-order cook, and this is where my brother and sister and I used to hang out, and this is where my father and I used to go for breakfast on mornings after UMass basketball victories.... And when I entered my home, and walked from floor to floor, I imagined Eli showing his friend around the house, room by room, photo by photo, item by item....

Eli loved Northampton precisely because it was *not* dominated by nationally franchised food and clothing chains, and because, he said, one therefore had *real* choices here—sometimes, he laughed, too many choices (at least a half-dozen pizza places within walking distance of one another in the downtown area, all individually owned)—and this connected for him, in some way he couldn't quite explain, to the way he felt about not having grown up as part of an extended family. He felt very *lucky* to live here instead of somewhere else, he said, because in some strange way the absence of extended family in his life—and this situation, with one exception, was the same for all his friends—enabled him to choose his friends, which friends were for him, he said, like family.

Surely, I told myself, as I knew from both life *and* literature, the place in which one grew up, whether beautiful or ugly, fertile or barren, overpopulated or underpopulated, had a claim on one's feelings and imagination in a way nothing else ever could. And surely, too, my occasional antipathy to the place in which I now lived was due, in part, to the fact that, watching my youngest child leave home (and childhood), and feeling the loss (temporarily) of the family life I so dearly loved, I was also feeling, anew and more fully, the loss of my own childhood.

"The thing is," Eli said at dinner one night, a month or so after completing (successfully) his first semester of college, "I don't feel I missed out on anything because I can't miss what I don't know I never had." The same was true about the landscape of the world he'd grown up in: malls, Burger Kings, and the rest; these, he pointed out, had just always been there. "It's not," he added, "as if I ever really knew any other life."

"Free people have a serious problem with place," Walker Percy writes in an essay about Covington, Louisiana ("Why I Live Where I Live"), "being in a place, using up a place, deciding which new place to rotate to. Americans ricochet around the United States like billiard balls."

I had, when I began this essay, assumed that this ability to rotate and ricochet—the endless freedom to choose new places in which to live, was, in fact, at the heart of the decline of a sense of place in our lives. I had speculated that many of us in America, enjoying the benefits of college educations and middle-class life, had, like baseball players, but without their lavish perks, become free agents—able to choose and to change, endlessly and often, where and how we lived.

In fact, though, this turned out to be an illusion. The Bureau of the Census began publishing reports on annual residence change rates in 1948, and as far as we can tell from studies done since then (see, for example, Peter Rossi's *Why Families Move*), when it comes to mobility, nothing has changed much during the last fifty years: The majority of Americans still live out their adult lives within a few miles of where they were born, and the actual rate at which individuals and families move has stayed remarkably constant (approximately 20 percent of our population can be found to have moved within the previous year to their present address, and about 80 percent of these moves are local).

In early November, my son Aaron called to give me what he said was good news—"at least I think it's good news," he added. He had decided to transfer, mid-year, from the University of New Mexico to the University of Massachusetts. He asked if I could help him out with paperwork, transfer forms, logistics. Should I find out about dormitories? I asked. "Dormitories?" he replied. "Why would I want to live in a dormitory?"

And so, four months after Eli left home, Aaron, at twenty-one years old, returned. To my children, clearly, Northampton *was* home, and was at least as real for them as Brooklyn had been for me.

Some things, clearly, had changed since I'd left Brooklyn—the extended family, as we knew it a generation ago, at least for middle-class, middle-aged Jews like myself, was gone. And what I had written about the ways in which generic architecture was homogenizing our landscape—had its truths too. But why, I now wondered, my fierce investment in believing that such changes were at the heart of the sense of loss I had been feeling? And why, too, the feeling that the world around me—Jews, colleagues, neighbors—was somehow conspiring to intensify my already well-developed sense of estrangement? Perhaps, it occurred to me, I had been feeling detached simply because I had been feeling detached....

Yet there was, I knew, something else: There was a story I had left out and had known I was leaving out, and it was crucial to feelings that had been with me through all the years of raising my children alone.

In the summer of 1983, several months after the children's mother and I were divorced, and within a month or so of Miriam's bat mitzvah, one of my children informed me, casually, after we'd come home from synagogue one Shabbos afternoon, that on the previous Sunday their mother had taken the three of them to church and had them baptized.

Though I would, soon after this, come to believe that the event was hardly fatal—that the water was only water, and had, if anything, helped the children by making what had been covert undercurrents in their lives into a stream they could, as it were, see, recognize, and deal with more readily—at the time I felt as if a knife had been thrust, my children as weapon, into me, and into everything I held dear and sacred.

A year later, their mother (who had, two decades before, converted to Judaism—her choice, which I had not, at that time, encouraged, though I had been, and would remain, deeply pleased by it), married the minister who had baptized the children. A year or so after that, she left both the Amherst-Northampton area and our children.

The spoken and unspoken wishes of my childhood had not, then, it occurred to me, been so different from those of my mother: that I create a loving, stable family in which the mother and father did not use the children in their wars against one another. The dissolution of my own marriage left me, thus, like my mother, with feelings not only of defeat and loss, but of utter failure, and it had, also, caused me to withdraw somewhat from the Jewish community.

In order to minimize trauma and conflict for my children—to remove them from the crossfire that might result from parental battles—I had diminished the presence of Judaism in our home and lives: insisting less on Sabbath and holiday rituals, on Hebrew School attendance, etc. Back then, I now recalled, I had felt, by turns, enraged, humiliated, exhausted, helpless, and (believing, too, that what was happening to my children was somehow happening *because* of me) uncharacteristically immobile. That others in my immediate surroundings, especially in the Jewish community, seemed to share my view—to treat me, it seemed, as the failure and outsider I felt I was—had reinforced intense feelings of isolation and resentment, and it was these feelings, long gone (or so I thought), which, when Eli left home at the age of nineteen, returned.

But had I withheld the story of the children's baptism from print—even from the early drafts of this essay—for so many years in order, as I thought, to protect my children—or to protect myself? And if it was the latter, to protect myself from what? The answer—the beginning of *an* answer, now seemed apparent, and amazingly ordinary: to protect myself from having to give up the dreams and illusions of *my* childhood. For if I gave them up, clearly, I would have to acknowledge that the life I now had would never be like the life I had once dreamt of having, and that the place I had been living in for nearly a quarter of a century, a place my children knew as home, was the place I would probably grow old in, and that, in all its particularity and imperfection, it was—had become—my home too. If the time and place I grew up in had been as rich in misery as it was in community, I now began to see, the place I had come to live in, if a bit less rich in community, was, at the same time, much less rich in misery—and it seemed, suddenly, neither better nor worse than the world of my childhood, but merely different. There were some differences that seemed discouraging and sad (the thinning out of the extended family, the diminished sense of the past), but others that seemed as surprising as they were

wonderful (the closeness, despite distance, of my children to one another, and to me).

Many members of my family still live in and around New York City. When, three years ago, I asked a cousin about the possibility of inviting my brother Robert to his home for a family gathering that was to include the celebration of Aaron's high school graduation, the cousin became angry. He would, he stated, be the one to choose an appropriate time and place for a visit from Robert (this has not happened yet). And also, he noted, his future in-laws would be visiting that day, and how, he asked, would he explain Robert to them?

When my children overheard the conversation, they became incensed. "But Robert's *fine*!" Eli declared. "When he's with us and we're with him, he's really just like anybody else . . . . "

"And anyway," Aaron added. "He's *family*."

At the Passover Seder, just before the youngest child asks The Four Questions, we open the front door, uncover the unleavened bread, lift up the ceremonial plate, and say, "Behold the matzo, bread of poverty, which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are needy come and celebrate the Passover with us."

However different my children's childhoods from mine, as middle-class American Jews living in the last decade of the twentieth century, how can we not be mindful of our freedoms, and of the various futures (happily unknown) these freedoms make possible? And how not be mindful, too, that beyond the basic hungers which, in our lives, are amply provided for (food, clothing, shelter), there are other hungers my children and I clearly share, along with the sense that all the material blessings in the world will never begin to satisfy them, and that, therefore, we will have to find and make our own ways of satisfying them.

Most people in most places, in life as in literature, have always preferred the familiar, the safe, the generic, and the predictable: McDonalds and "Ozzie and Harriet"; K-Mart and formulaic fiction; or, as in my case, what I never experienced but had hoped to create—a stable, two-parent family living happily within the bosom of a loving community. Still, there seem good reasons to prefer what is more real. There seem good reasons to prefer whatever, like my brother, and my children—madness, divorce, baptism, drugs, and all—is unique, individual, complex, different, unsettling, and (even) strange, and, therefore, to resist whatever promises to deny memory and to depreciate difference—to turn someone into no one, or somewhere into anywhere. □

TOURIST SEASON

(Continued from p. 50)

Frieda quickly repaired it. "Why don't you come with me? The walking will do us both good. Besides, the tram doesn't stop long enough at any one place to really see it."

Milt did the math—two hours divided by fifteen: only four minutes per attraction. "All right, we'll go to Ripley's. But I want to see the fort. They kept Geronimo in the dungeons there, you know."

At Ripley's they saw a two-headed calf, an entire oil painting on the head of a pin, other freaks of nature, and hundreds of the original cartoons that ran in newspapers illustrating the odd facts which Robert Leroy Ripley was so fond of collecting. An exhibit on Eng and Chang, the original Siamese twins, filled a whole room. She and Milt stood silently absorbing the information about their odd, conjoined lives. A series of photographs spanning four decades showed them at work at the circus and relaxing at home. They had each married and had nineteen children between them. They spent half their time in one household, half in the other. Frieda tried to imagine their sex life, one negating himself, disappearing into a private void while the other pushed and grunted toward orgasm. She read on. When one died, the other died within hours—of fright, it turned out. There was a picture of the dead twins curled in their custom-made funeral suit like a dead spider. In a caption below, the doctor who performed the autopsy said that they could have been easily separated at any time, that all that held them together was a thick muscular ligament at the breastbone.

"I bet they knew they could be separated all along," Milt said. "I bet they chose to stay attached for the money."

"I wonder," Frieda said. To herself she thought that maybe they were so used to being a creature with four arms and legs and two heads that separation would be a terrifying loss, like an amputation.

Milt took Frieda's hand as they exited into the bright sunshine and began walking toward the fort. There was a breeze so balmy, so oily with traffic exhaust and suntan lotion that Frieda felt the skin all over her body, felt where she stopped and the world began.

A crowd was gathering on the grassy mall that ran down to the bay. Frieda picked out the voice of Belle Snyder screaming, "Help him! Somebody help him!"

Frieda and Milt walked faster and faster, until they were jogging toward the scene, despite Milt's bad knees and Frieda's irregularly beating heart.

"Is anyone here a doctor?" Frieda called out. She

elbowed her way through the throng, took Belle's hand, and repeated her question. Everyone looked down, ashamed they could do nothing but gawk and *tsk* at the tragedy before them. There on the ground lay Irv Snyder. People had backed off to give him air, so that he was encircled by a nimbus of grass, like a descending archangel in an old religious painting.

"All right." Frieda stepped over the imaginary line that had been cleared for him. "You there," she singled out a young man in a khaki jumpsuit. "Call 911. Just walk over to that T-shirt store." She pointed across the street. Her mind was racing. It hadn't run this fast since she worked. No—since her WASP days.

Irv looked fragile, as if all the bones in his body might have snapped at once. He was nattily dressed for dinner in a pink shirt and white tie. A madras suit jacket lay bunched under one shoulder. "Oh my God, my God," Belle sobbed. "Somebody help him. Help him." The crowd respected Frieda as she shouted out orders. "Don't anyone touch or move him until professional help arrives." Frieda knelt and put her fingers on Irv's neck to find a pulse. "His heart's beating," she announced. Probably had a stroke, she thought. Probably won't ever talk or walk again. Milt leaned down and gently loosened Irv's tie. The crowd watched in respectful silence.

Belle, on her knees next to Irv, was wringing her hands. "We were walking through the castle and I turned around and he was gone. Poof! Just like that." She snapped her fingers. "Gone for a good half hour. I just now found him."

As Milt dislodged Irv's jacket, a thick packet of pictures fell onto the grass. His polaroids. But they were not of the girls at the beach or Bluepoint Towers or boats on the Intracoastal. At first, Frieda saw only that there was flesh—breasts and buttocks. Belle's breasts and buttocks. Belle with a large vibrator inside her. Belle on her knees, spreading her buttocks for a close-up of her anus, Belle pushing her breasts together, making the nipples touch like two giant crossed eyes. The crowd turned its attention from Irv to the photographs surging through their hands like whitecaps. Frieda heard a succession of clicks and whistles, oohs and aahs.

Just then a boy of about sixteen pedaled by, saw the figure on the ground, threw his bike down and rushed to Irv's side. "I know CPR," he shouted. He began thumping on Irv's chest, blowing into his mouth. As if on cue, Irv opened his eyes, bits of blue that matched the sky.

"Oh my God," Frieda said. "I bet he was just asleep." That was the first thing you did, she remembered now from her CPR course: scream at the patient, slap him, if necessary, to make sure he isn't just dozing.

The boy continued: fifteen thumps on the sternal notch, then mouth to mouth. Irv raised up on one elbow. "Why is this beautiful boy kissing me?" he asked, smiling.

The ambulance arrived. Medics took Irv's vital signs and questioned him. Irv stood and stretched. He refused to go to the hospital.

Sleeping on the manicured lawn of the Plaza de la Constitucion was not so unusual, it turned out. "Usually it's bums we find here. You know, around December, January, they start flocking here. Like birds on the flyway. But this guy's nicely dressed. Just take him home and give him a nap," the head medic said.

"He'll want his pictures back," Belle whispered to Frieda. "They're important to him."

Frieda retrieved as many as she could from the strangers ogling them, and stuffed them in Belle's handbag.

"I did it to please him," Belle said. "He couldn't do anything but look anymore."

• • •

The Columbus Restaurant was a shrine to Spanish ornament. Frieda found the profusion of patterns and colors nauseating. Even the food was decorated with flower petals and bits of toxic greenery, each plateful as busy as a crazy quilt. She closed her eyes and saw Irv stretched out on the grass, the peaceful expression on his face before he was awakened. A line from an old poem about a dead lamb left out for crows to eat pulled across her mind like a banner: *The sleep looked deep*. At the edge of her consciousness she overheard Belle recounting Irv's story at a nearby table.

The early-bird special that evening was Florida lobster. Most of the diners wore lobster bibs with pictures of conquistadors on them. Milt never ordered specials. He liked to pay full price—for steaks, suits, cars, ties. It made him feel better, he said, than buying things on sale. As the waitress leaned down to tie a bib around his neck, he blurted out, "Are you going to bring me a highchair, too?"

"Excuse me?"

Milt turned to Frieda. "You might as well shoot me if you ever find me wearing a bib, with butter smeared all over my face and my hair sticking straight up."

"Pardon us for a moment please," Frieda said to the waitress.

"Just shoot me. I'd rather be dead than have you see me like that."

Frieda stood and grabbed Milt's elbow and marched him out of the restaurant. They walked to a hole-in-the-wall pizzeria two doors down and took a booth. Frieda

scanned the laminated menu and ordered "the lollapaloosa." They sat in silence until Frieda could see that Milt was completely overcome with self-pity. "So you want me to remember you the way you were at age forty? Sixty? Thirty? You're a human being, not a photograph."

"A human being," Milt repeated.

The pizza arrived. Milt reached across the table, dug his fingers into Frieda's arm and began to weep. The waiter scurried away. "I only feel like a human being when I'm with you."

"That's ridiculous," Frieda said, patting his cheek, mopping a tear with her thumb. "A lot of people need and love you."

"I'm at the mercy of bellboys and waitresses. Ten-year-olds on skateboards feel free to give *me* the finger." He wiped his eyes and blew his nose. Then he served each of them a slice of pizza and stared past Frieda through a bright square of window. "You know, I think I miss having people to boss around."

Frieda waited a moment before she answered. "I think that's it. And you know what, Milt? You've been bossing me around instead."

"I've been bossing you around? Since when?"

"Since you retired. And sometimes before that, especially when the boys were little."

All at once their shared past, a host of old complaints and brags, came pouring out. The U.S. Army had ruined her life, did he know that? They had trained her to be an ace and then consigned her to a life running back and forth between a turquoise washer and dryer. "I never really had any meaningful work," Frieda said.

"Almost nobody has meaningful work. You just shine the pants off your butt to stay above water." Hadn't he respected her flying all those years? There she'd be, flitting among the stars while he babysat the boys, smoking a lonely cigar, watching "Your Show of Shows," a man ahead of his time, a feminist before anybody knew the word.

"Do you realize how much time we spend disagreeing?" Frieda asked. "Look at the Knoblocks. It could happen to us."

"But Knoblock is a jockstrap," Milt said. "I'm not like Knoblock." "We're both like Knoblock. We're breathing down each other's necks. I spend my mornings with sick people. Some of them are dying, Milt, but at least they don't expect *me* to cure them."

Milt had removed all the pepperoni from his half of the pizza and stacked it into a cold, greasy pile which he now offered to Frieda. She pushed it behind the napkin holder.

"I feel like I'm being turned into something I'm not. That's it!" he said, suddenly struck with insight. "I used to be treated like a man—with respect, a little fear even. Now people treat me like an old douchebag."

Frieda imagined him, for the first time in her life, as an old woman. The sexes did look more alike as they aged, as if turning into a parody of each other. She remembered her two years in the WASP when she had been treated—almost—like a man. Afterwards, she was an outsider again, the standard bearer of a flannel-soft world men had to stumble through to spread their genes around. That was the science of it. The rest of it was messier—love songs and bag ladies and young men dead in their twenties because they had to conquer some part of the world, maybe just one street corner. "I don't think I can help you with that one," she said.

Milt's eyes filled up again.

"But you can talk to me about it as much as you need to." Frieda immediately regretted saying that. Somewhere, in a book or on a talk show, she had heard that if you allowed a person to complain to you about a problem three times without doing anything about it, you became part of the problem, the way people who tolerated alcoholics actually enabled them to go on being drunks.

Frieda awakened abruptly in the fragrant Florida night. She was still on the bus, her book open under the reading lamp, the moon dogging her in the window.

She resumed reading. Wasn't it wonderful the way books waited for you?—the women in the harem all there, their eyes inscrutable above their veils. Shame and charm, that's where she'd left off. They derived from the same word.

She and Milt had talked about the photographs. The look on Milt's face when they fell out of Irv's jacket was not disapproval but surprise. Surprise that Irv had a single idea left in his head. And it was a pretty good one, Frieda thought. Milt admitted he liked the pictures. They discussed buying their own Polaroid, maybe even a video camera. "Before everything shrivels up," Milt had said.

To her right, Milt snored fitfully, like an old bear in his den inhaling the first stirrings of spring. Soon he would awake, his mouth full of the delicious hunger that came from surviving one more season. Slowly he would lumber back into consciousness, into desire, like the crowd who had gathered around Irv and then dispersed, dazed as movie patrons emerging from the darkness into the daylight, returning to real life. □

HELICOPTER JOURNALISM

(Continued from p. 45)

distribution of economic power has maintained a class-stratified society in which our beliefs and worldviews are shaped by class experiences and socialization. That's why labeling people racially and monolithically (i.e., "the Blacks," "the Latinos," or "the whites") is so misleading.

In the case of the Los Angeles upheaval, for example, the circling helicopters brought us images that could not explain who was rioting or why. The fact that there were as many Latinos and other minorities arrested as Blacks meant that it was far more than just a Black reaction to the Rodney King verdict. A new independent film, *The Fire This Time*, explores the roots of the disturbances, examining the parallels with the 1965 Watts rebellion and the city's failure to act in its aftermath. Shot from the ground, not from the air, the film focuses less on the people in the streets than the neglect by those in the suites—the city's power structure. Perhaps because it looks around, rather than down, *The Fire This Time* is having problems getting on the air in Los Angeles.

Once again, an international parallel might help us see our society more clearly. There has been extensive coverage of South African apartheid in the American media but rarely in a way that helps us understand what our two countries have in common. Typically, apartheid in South Africa is presented as another version of the overt racial segregation that long divided Americans here, as if the African National Congress's (ANC) liberation struggle was just a replay of our civil rights movement. What we are rarely told is that apartheid's founders based their system in part on the U.S. policy of forcing Native Americans onto reservations. The ruling white minority used apartheid not only as a rationalization for dumping so-called surplus populations but as a tool to manage and exploit Black labor. Propped up by American-based multinational corporations who flocked to South Africa in pursuit of the profits such exploitative policies promised, the pass system was a way of controlling and subjugating the work force and enabling giant mining enterprises to flourish. The American press reported South African police atrocities, but the structure of the apartheid system, and its creation of a vast gulf between wealth and poverty, was rarely explained.

Furthermore, while people of color in South Africa certainly have been oppressed on a racial basis, deep divisions also have existed along rural-urban lines and according to loyalties of ethnicity, tribe, and politics. These destructive factionalisms contributed to the decision by the African National Congress to make non-racialism a basic tenet of its philosophy. (See "Beyond the Rainbow," by Jacklyn Cock, TIKKUN, July/August 1994.) Yet as far as the American press was concerned, Mandela continued to be identified as South Africa's "black nationalist leader," simplifying his movement's ideas and political culture and subordinating them to his pigmentation. A conflict over values and power was presented to American audiences for years with one formulaic racial description—"black-on-black violence"—an explanation that explained nothing, making it virtually impossible to assess, for example, the real significance of the struggle between the ANC and the Zulu-nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party led by Gatsha Buthelezi.

The American press habitually resorts to this black-on-black refrain in covering politics in Africa, yet never uses similar terminology to cover Europe: We do not read about "white-on-white" violence as an explanation of neofascism or the war in the former Yugoslavia. The western media use another variety of false labeling in the case of the war in Bosnia, characterizing the warring parties along equally artificial ethnic lines—*the* Serbs, *the* Croats, and *the* Muslims. Such monolithic categories subvert any clear understanding of the war's political dynamics because they deny ideological differences and confuse authoritarian ruling elites with the people they ostensibly represent. For example, the people of Sarajevo of all ethnic backgrounds who are fighting to defend their multicultural city against an ultra-right-wing nationalist onslaught can't understand why so much of the coverage treats the aggressor and the victim with parity. That western diplomats have proposed a plan to carve up the country along ethnic lines—à la apartheid—is rarely commented upon. And despite all the references to "ethnic cleansing," the war is rarely depicted as an expression of racism.

The South African experience has relevance here as well. "Ethnic cleansing" is but another form of forced relocation in which a people is dispossessed because of who they are. It is unmistakably a racist concept, since it targets people on the basis of their ethnic-racial difference. The Bosnian writer Kemal Kurspahic refers to the so-called peace plans that have sought to partition Bosnia along ethnic lines as "classical apartheid"—a solution to which the West once again, in another part of the world, has acceded. Other Bosnians have made parallels with the genocide of Jews during World War II. A Muslim cleric, Musta Spahic,

has referred to Bosnia's Muslims as the "new Jews of Europe." Marek Edelman, the Jewish hero of the Warsaw Ghetto resistance, has also stressed the parallels, indicting Europe for "behaving the way it did toward the resistance in the Ghetto."

Listen to Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifshults put forth the Bosnian perspective in their book, *Why Bosnia,* and ask yourself how many times this perspective has informed the news coverage you have watched: "The reality, as the Bosnians saw it, was that the West was complicit in engineering their defeat and the destruction of their society. Their emphatic denials to the contrary notwithstanding, the Western Powers had made their position unmistakably transparent: they could not intervene in the war to defend Bosnia, they would not permit Bosnia to defend their country themselves or to allow others to join in their defense and they would compel them to accept defeat, and accede to the internationally legitimized carve-up of their country."

And yet if the majority of the Bosnians were not Muslim, would the West have looked away as long as it did? If Haiti was not Black, would its refugees be returned from the high seas? Jesse Jackson once asked if the media response would have been different in South Africa "if 26 million blacks were holding down four million whites under the gun."

These international references are relevant to a discussion on the reporting of race in America because the United States is bound by the same international protocols and covenants on the protection of human rights as other nations. Our media could if they chose legitimately examine domestic racial issues in the broader context of international human rights. Over the years, American civil rights leaders began to appreciate this connection and internationalize their own perspective, broadening their civil rights emphasis into a human rights focus. W. E. B. Dubois, an early NAACP leader, became a pan-Africanist and intellectual of global stature. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. in their own ways followed in DuBois's footsteps. Malcolm X went from the Black Muslims to Black nationalism to Black internationalism, demanding in his last years that the United States be judged by the standards set out in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. He saw Black oppression in America as a crisis of human rights and traveled worldwide preaching this gospel.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is usually remembered for his "I Have a Dream" speech of 1963. But later in his life, he too developed an international outlook, attacking the war in Vietnam while arguing that "a true revolution in values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast between poverty and wealth...the Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just."

In December 1993, Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union published a comprehensive and detailed report on human rights abuses in America. They studied how the United States government applies human rights law, and whether our country is in compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the U.N. Declaration that Washington signed in 1992. The 128-page report catalogued serious and widespread violations in the areas of race and sex discrimination, prisoner's rights, police brutality, the death penalty, immigration rights, language rights, religious liberty, and freedom of expression.

Most Human Rights Watch reports get lots of coverage and are cited by broadcasters throughout the United States. Their findings about other countries routinely make news. This one didn't. "It got almost no pick up," an official of the organization told me. "We were surprised because it is such a powerful story."

Powerful maybe—but also willfully ignored. Why?

The challenge for those reporting on race is to cover the many struggles to right wrongs. It can be done: *Freedom on My Mind*, the audience award-winner at the 1994 Sundance Film Festival, is a case in point. It offers an intimate insider view of the civil rights movement that transformed Mississippi and challenged America in 1964.

The film gets at truths deeper than most journalistic accounts because it encourages you to feel that movement's texture and passions through the eyes of those who made its history. It humanizes rather than distances, while offering a real contextualized chronology. It tells stories based on the lives of ordinary people at the grass roots, not just the better- known leaders, with compassion and a bottom-up, not top-down, perspective. It also points toward the kind of reportage we see so rarely now on television but could, if the television networks had different agenda.

Helicopter coverage could never have told that story, or many others. Perhaps that's why the helicopter pilot who brought the great O.J. freeway spectacle to world attention is now being wooed with movie deals and an offer of a "reality" series of his own. Let's face it: The choppers just chop it up. It's time for journalism to parachute back to Earth and start reporting from the ground up, not the top down. □

That Black-Jewish Thing

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and even if the institutionalized anti-Semitism which once kept Jews from fully participating in American society is largely a thing of the past—in contrast to the depth and subtlety of anti-Black racism—we have learned from the experience of Hitler's Germany that economic mobility and cultural assimilation guarantee very little. Jews know that, as a group, they have been offered up as a sacrificial lamb during those periods of history when mankind expresses its darkest impulses. Such expressions of humanity's dark side continue around the world today; because of this, it is not surprising that many Jews persist in feeling a common interest with Black Americans in developing an anti-racist politics. And indeed Blacks and Jews remain the favorite targets of white-power movements based on hatred and bigotry.

The strains in Black-Jewish relations should not be seen in isolation, but rather as one important aspect of the breakdown in the multifaceted civil rights coalition that existed until the mid-1960s. Another important loss for civil rights has been the decline in numbers and social power of organized labor, a fact which has contributed to the conservative drift among white blue-collar workers. Perhaps most pivotal of all—and largely unrecognized—has been the split between white liberals and white radicals that took place in the late 1960s. The mutual antagonism and lack of dialogue between white liberals and white radicals makes it difficult, perhaps impossible, to develop a mass anti-racist movement that would draw upon significant numbers of European Americans. The radical-liberal split can be seen as an American equivalent of the fault-line between social democratic and communist movements which developed in Europe in the years after the Russian Revolution. Just as the inability of socialists and communists to work together is often seen as one important key to the ascendance of fascism in the 1930s, the liberal-radical split makes it impossible to develop a successful united front of white Americans in the work of countering racism, our home-grown brand of fascism.

Without waiting for this to happen, I believe that Jews remain uniquely positioned to play a special role in the fight against racism. If the State of Israel can designate selected Germans and other Europeans as "Righteous Gentiles" because they resisted meaningfully the destruction of the Jews, we could by example encourage others to be Righteous European Americans. We may not be able to give up our class and racial privileges, but we can take the lead, through our actions and our consciousness, in giving up "white" ways of thinking and identifying.

On returning from a visit to Israel, a group of American Blacks were puzzled, according to Gerald Early, the chair of the African and Afro-American Studies Department at Washington University, Saint Louis, as to "why Blacks had not done more to embrace the memory of slavery as Jews had the Holocaust." But the memorialization of slavery and racism is not simply the responsibility of African Americans. All of us suffer from the unfinished business of our racial past. The nation as a whole needs to collectively mourn our racial "holocausts"—including the genocide of Native Americans. Indeed, America has probably done less in this regard than Germany has with respect to its own past crimes. Since Jews do have a gift for historical memory and for ritual observance, we could take the lead in insisting that the United States find ways to erect monuments and devise ceremonies that would acknowledge rather than deny the crimes of our racial past. (Parallels that come to mind are the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Vietnam War Memorial.)

To this end, the bill introduced in Congress by Representative John Conyers for a national commission to study the effects of slavery is worthy of support. Also of critical importance in my view is the growing movement in favor of some form of "reparations" for African Americans. I would like to see Tikkun magazine and other progressive Jewish circles support—at least in principle—the idea of reparations. There will certainly be many reasonable reservations, not only about details, but about such larger issues as political impact and economic feasibility. But if reparations were acts of justice in the case of Germany and our own incarceration of Japanese Americans, how can similar redress for African Americans be inappropriate?

Perhaps beginning with this question of reparations, Jewish groups and individuals in various communities can make overtures to African-American groups and individuals for the purpose of forming Black-Jewish committees for dialogue and potential cooperation. Such committees were formed in New York City after the Crown Heights disturbances. And after the 1992 riots, Blacks and Koreans came together in Los Angeles.

Such "bridging" committees can be a first step toward moving from today's fragmented politics of identity to the building of the more universal and inclusive sense of common purpose that the nation so sorely needs—the heart of a politics of meaning. □

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endowed with a sacred quality. The sacred wound comes to heal us in a particular way which then provides us with a sacred calling or gift. There's a Talmudic saying, "*hakadosh baruch hu makdim refuah le'makah*"—that God creates the healing or medicine before the illness. From this perspective, the very purpose of the illness is to bring forth a particular quality or power that otherwise would have remained dormant within us. This teleologic approach to healing offers the hope of finding a deeper meaning and purpose in the pain and mistakes of the past.

When I think back on my own life, each painful event of my childhood led me to a particular gift. My parents, both survivors of Auschwitz, bequeathed me a legacy of loss; this was further punctuated by the untimely and sudden death of my father on Yom Kippur when I was eleven. The shock over my father's death left me in a state of unresolved grief for many years that prevented me from fully loving myself and others. In the process of healing this wound in therapy, I came to understand how we fear and defend against the very love we long for. As I healed myself, I found my gift as a healer in helping others open up to love. My early exposure to loss also drew me toward the spiritual realm at a young age. I suppose I used intimacy with God to cope with unconscious feelings of abandonment and loss. Although my spirituality may have first developed as a compensatory coping mechanism, it remains a gift derived from that early wound.

In a similar fashion, I imagine the Ba'al Shem Tov, Hasidism's founder, may have found his gift as a wounded healer and spiritual master. Orphaned at a very young age, the Ba'al Shem Tov must have suffered from painful feelings of loss. Perhaps his spiritual practice of *devaikut* (cleavage with God's immanence) was the way he transformed his painful feelings of separation anxiety into a path for immediate intimacy with God.

These and many other examples have inspired a meditation I lead in preparation for Yom Kippur that brings the transformational dimension of *teshuvah* to life. Before starting the meditation, I spend five minutes guiding people into a relaxed state of mind. Then I suggest that they focus on something about themselves or something that happened in their lives that they have had difficulty accepting or reconciling with. After they get in touch with that memory, I ask them to find the ways in which that very thing has also empowered or blessed them in some way. When people are able to connect their painful memories or experiences with some redeeming outcome they frequently experience a deep sense of forgiveness and peace. What seemed to be arbitrary bad luck in their lives suddenly takes on new meaning and purpose.

Teshuvah *as Time Travel*

Reb Tzaddok considered *teshuvah me'ahavah* (*teshuvah* out of love) as the highest level of *teshuvah*, at which the transformation of sin into merit takes place. As I understand it, this dimension of *teshuvah* involves a kind of time-travel from the present back to the past. The deep awareness and closeness to God that we achieve through *teshuvah* takes us back to the time of the sin and enlightens the sin itself—bringing God's loving presence to that dark time.

When we do *teshuvah* we access the Y-H-V-H name of God which stands outside of time. (YHVH is a composite of the three Hebrew words: *hayah* [was]; *hoveh* [is]; and *yihiyeh* [will be]). This name is also associated with God's transcendent and compassionate (*chesed*) qualities. In YHVH-time, the workings of time can be rectified, and transformational *teshuvah* is a possibility. Perhaps this is what the Rabbis meant when they said that "*teshuvah* preceded creation"—hence, it stands outside of time. On Yom Kippur, we are invited to enter the Holy of Holies, to transcend the finite laws of space and time, and at this level of consciousness we can bring at-one-ment to our lives.

In psychotherapy, we employ a variety of "time-travel" techniques that facilitate deep healing of childhood pain and trauma. Through free association, guided visualization, or hypnosis, the patient can be guided back in time to a particular trauma or painful memory. Through the compassionate reaching out from the adult healthy ego-self to the wounded child of the past, healing begins to occur. The pain of the past is touched and transformed by the love and compassion of the present.

At such moments, a shift and transformation begins to occur. Instead of trying to forget and not feel the pain and suffering of one's past, it is a moment of deep connection to all of who one is, was, and is becoming. Finally, we can look back and see how everything we have endured, all the pain and suffering, the mistakes and deviations from the path of truth, have led us to become who we are today. When we can embrace it all with a sense of forgiveness for ourselves and others as well as for God, our *teshuvah* is complete. The pain of the past is recontextualized by the higher state of consciousness we have reached in the present, and we may finally find a sense of meaning in all we have endured. It is a bittersweet moment of at-one-ment when we can openheartedly embrace all that we have

been through. At such moments we are at one with the many parts of ourselves; all the different voices within us unite under one *tallit* and say Amen, so may it be. Until this kind of at-one-ment and forgiveness is achieved, we tend to waste energy being ashamed or angry at ourselves and/or at God about our fate.

On Yom Kippur, we evoke the archetypal image of the High Priest (Priestess)-wounded healer to help us as we seek this radical kind of healing and at-one-ment. Like Aaron we, too, have to face the pain of our golden calves—those mistakes and woundings that took us away from our truest selves. Yet we must also acknowledge that we have grown and become who we are today because of these deviations and find a sense of peace and acceptance with our lives.

The ancient scapegoat offering unique to Yom Kippur hints at this level of *teshuvah* or transformational healing. Two goats were brought before the High Priest on Yom Kippur, and, after drawing lots, one was offered in the Temple as a sin offering and the other was sent off to Azazel—the wilderness or the Satan's domain—after the Priest confessed and transferred all the sins of the Israelites to the goat. (Leviticus, Ch. 16) According to the Ramban (a medieval mystic and biblical commentator), the scapegoat or "*seir la'azazel*" was an offering to the "other side," a bribe to Satan ("*shochad la'satan*").

Why send Satan a gift on Yom Kippur? The symbol of the scapegoat suggests that on the holiest day of the year, even our enemy must bless us. In a sense, the *seir la'azazel* is a rite of divine unification. God and the Satan make amends on Yom Kippur, so that nothing is outside of the divine realm of the One. On Yom Kippur, even the shadow must shine.

What is even more striking about the *seir la'azazel* is that on any other day of the year this same rite would have been considered an idolatrous practice. Yet on Yom Kippur it is a sacred rite of unification and atonement. What would otherwise be a sin becomes a mitzvah simply because it is done according to God's will. So, too, our spiritual work on Yom Kippur is to illuminate all of our past deviations and heal our neurotic splits by bringing it all back to the One. As the unconscious becomes conscious and is fully integrated, we become whole again. Another ancient rite of Yom Kippur, the *ketoret* or incense offering, hints at this same theme of unification. Once a year, on Yom Kippur, the High Priest would enter the Temple space known as the Holy of Holies—the innermost chamber which housed the Ark of the Covenant and was considered the abode of the Holy *Shechinah* or Divine (feminine) presence. No one was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies except the High Priest and only on Yom Kippur while performing this rite.

The *ketoret* consisted of eleven spices, one of which was called the *chelbenah* or galbanum. Though the *chelbenah* smelled bad by itself, it was an essential ingredient of the sweet-smelling *ketoret* offering and without it the *ketoret* was not complete. In many Yom Kippur prayer books, the *chelbenah* is cited as a symbol of our welcoming of sinners (originally connoting religious apostates and converts by force) in our prayer community as we collectively recite the opening *Kol Nidre* prayers. Just as unity among all Jews, from sinners to saints, is a prerequisite for our prayers of atonement, so, too, in the psychic/psychological realm, we each have a *chelbenah*—a quality that by itself can be quite a nuisance. When we deny or reject this part it remains part of our Shadow; when integrated into the totality of our selves the "*chelbenah*" is often the key to finding our wholeness—the yeast that ferments us.

Rav Kook, the first chief rabbi of the State of Israel, spoke eloquently of this possibility:

> When a person sins he has entered the world of fragmentation, and then every particular being stands by itself, and evil is evil in and of itself, and it is evil and destructive. When he repents out of love there at once shines on him the light from the world of unity, where everything is integrated into one whole, and in the context of the whole there is no evil at all. The evil is joined with the good to invest it with more attractiveness, and to enhance its significance. Thus the willful wrongs become transformed into real virtues. (*The Lights of Penitence*, Ch.12, number 5)

This is the transformational healing we pray for on Yom Kippur—that no part of the self, nor any individual from the collective soul of Israel, be cut off or separated from the whole. Only in our individual and collective unification can we achieve true at-one-ment and healing.

The High Holidays can expand our individual experience of *teshuvah* by opening a gate to a larger communal context. It is easier to change the old patterns if family members, friends, and community jointly engage in the process of *teshuvah*, because the larger social systems in which we live are opening to change. Instead of allowing each other to fall back into old patterns shortly after the holidays end—something we've all experienced— we could be more supportive of each other's growth. As Jewish renewal communities translate the process of *teshuvah* into practices that engage us emotionally and spiritually, we can begin to tap into the deeper healing potential of these holy days. □

The Simpson Case

(Continued from p. 26)

construction of masculinity itself. "Black men are held up as super-masculine, and therefore as a model for white men. And that super-masculine model is someone who has control of women. So racism in that sense contributes to domestic violence, but also, generally speaking, to sexist gender relations."

The racism/sexism combination also serves to divide people who otherwise might make common cause. Many feel compelled to look at cases involving African Americans and sex—like the Simpson, Thomas-Hill, and Tyson cases—from one angle and forget the others. Polls show that many African Americans apparently perceive the Simpson case primarily through the racial lens and are more sympathetic to O. J. than are whites. Even Smith, who sees the case as a simple incident of domestic violence, notes, "Whenever a Black person is accused of a crime, we all feel that it affects us." On the other hand, many whites deny there is any racism operating in the case: "Race has nothing to do with it" is a common talk-show refrain from whites, male and female.

Clearly, race does have something to do with it. But understanding the connections between racism and sexism—and acting on them—is difficult. White argues for a deeper analysis, one that incorporates all people of color—and all women. "We make a mistake," she says, "not recognizing that anti-racism really needs to have a gender analysis. There is an apparent split between anti-racism and feminism, but in fact I don't think that's a real split." True anti-racism, White notes, *must* focus on the needs of Black women as well as those of Blacks in general and Black men in particular. And, equally, true feminism must focus on the needs of Black women, who are often invisible in the public discussion of "women's issues."

The systematic devaluation of the lives of all women and all people of color has haunted this country for most of its history (along, for that matter, with the devaluation of the lives of poor and working people). The Simpson case, because it contains key elements of both those dilemmas, offers us a new opportunity for the deeper analysis White advocates.

That analysis reveals at least one way in which those interlocked devaluations work together: When violent crime is defined as what Black men do on the streets, then neither what white men do to white women at home, nor what Black men do to Black women at home will be perceived as violent crime, and the criminal justice system will continue to treat intimate homicide not as violent crime, but as love gone awry. □

Domestic Violence

(Continued from p. 20)

Passing health-care reform will not be a panacea for the victims of family violence. In the same way that police cannot solve the crime of domestic violence, health-care professionals are not going to solve this problem.

If we are to break this cycle of violence, we must recognize that all of us in the community are stakeholders. We all need to be involved: health-care providers, educators, business people, clergy, law enforcement officers, advocates, judges, media, and community residents.

But there is another level in this debate. Even if Congress enacts health-care reform and even if communities start to deal with this escalating problem, as a country we are still faced with a whole host of problems that we are only beginning to comprehend. For instance, we now have to ask about the responsibility of the health-care community to provide leadership for community collaboration. And how should the role of health-care providers intersect with others in the community?

Furthermore, the provider is now confronted with serious ethical questions such as whether physicians should be mandated to report information about abuse and if so, to whom? Is the obligation to notify the law enforcement or legal systems greater than the responsibility to respect the victim's autonomy? If a victim asks that there be no action, should a doctor or nurse or therapist honor the request? And what are the responsibilities of health professionals with regard to the perpetrators? What is the role of neighbors who hear much too much through thin walls?

I don't have all the answers to these types of questions. Indeed, since we have just opened the door to this discussion, I'm not sure anyone does. But that, in part, is the point. We have now initiated this debate, and we have begun talking as a community—knowing full well that because of this conversation we will begin solving one of the most devastating social and medical problems facing every one of us.

For the last two years, my wife Sheila and I have been traveling throughout Minnesota, convening gatherings and attending events where such issues are being discussed. The conversations are having an impact. We are seeing community action throughout the state, and we are seeing a tremendous number of providers, judges, and police getting involved. My own experience in Minnesota makes me believe that similar efforts nationwide will also be successful.

We must begin this discussion with a sense of urgency—peoples' lives and safety are at stake. □

CLINTRADICTIONS

(Continued from p. 18)

If Clinton seizes the opportunity to successfully steer the nation away from contingent capitalism, his second major task is to help resolve the internal contradictions of cooperation. The business model of cooperation is laced with deforming contradictions which are ultimately self-defeating for business itself, helping to explain the long, fitful history of promising starts and disappointing conclusions that has characterized participatory initiatives over the last twenty years. Business needs the benefits of cooperation to survive in the new order, but is too narrow in its vision, economic interests, and social diversity to conceive or implement the robust cooperative forms that can deliver the goods, condemning it to an endless cycle of aborted cooperative experiments.

Cooperation, by its very nature, has to involve all partners fully; as a communitarian strategy, it cannot succeed unless it promotes and enlists a genuine trust in and ownership of the process by all involved—not only management and employees but outside "stakeholders" including the larger community. If cooperation fails to alter power relations in ways that permit authentic democratic representation of the entire community, it will win only the distrust and cynicism that is appropriate to sham communities.

All current forms of micro- and macro-level cooperation display the constraining imprint of business interest and control. In regard to workplace participation, business has been torn between the humanistic and democratic impulses necessary to increase employee trust, motivation, and commitment, and the autocratic and technocratic imperatives necessary to maintain managerial control. Each generation of workplace cooperation, from the quality of workplace (QWL) and socio-technical experiments of the early 1970s to the 1990s model of teamwork, quality-control management, and labor-management cooperation, have had a heartening tendency to reintegrate mental and manual work and vest workers with more control and responsibility—but without fundamentally altering the basic power arrangements of the firm. Business embraces "empowerment" (an optimistic business buzz-word of the '90s) to reap the huge savings that self-managing workers deliver by increasing productivity and quality and making supervisory middle management expendable. But it backs off from the kind of empowerment that would truly democratize the enterprise, limiting cooperation to decisions about job processes and lower-level corporate decisions, while falling back on the management prerogative clauses of the New Deal's Wagner Act to reject shared control at the top.

The Clinton administration has done little to rectify these problems, and indeed has exacerbated them. By distancing itself from labor, the natural counterweight to management, the administration has tacitly endorsed and encouraged business domination. Without full labor involvement, whether through a revived union movement or new forms of employee representation—both unlikely to emerge without active intervention by the administration—business will continue the cycles of failed cooperation we have already witnessed. Clinton has neglected to provide the nation with a sense of what is at stake for community groups, social movements, and the larger public in these new business developments; instead of helping create the new politics that could reshape business cooperation into a genuine communitarian economic strategy, he is allowing it to drift in the fragmented and self-aborting form that business imposes on itself.

Clinton may forever be associated with these contradictions—making them "clintradictions," a term coined by sociologist S. M. Miller—if he does not act decisively to resolve them. His challenge, then, is to create a new politics that awakens the public to their own vast stake in transforming business and helps mobilize a wider social movement for a genuinely cooperative economy. There are several reasons why he is the right president for this role, beginning with his own communitarianism. Cooperation rests on a communitarian strategy resonant with the President's own beliefs about coming together around shared interests for a common good. It is thus no accident that Clinton has been enthusiastic in his rhetoric supporting labor-management cooperation, employee ownership, and socially responsible business, telling ESOP federations and Business for Social Responsibility that their cause is close to his heart. Reflecting Clinton's sentiments, Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich told The *New York Times* after the worker buy-out of United Airlines, "From here on in, it will be impossible for a board of directors to not consider employee ownership as one potential business strategy."

The President has to help articulate a new vision that moves beyond contingent capitalism and the current piecemeal forms of business cooperation toward a genuine communitarian economics. Such a "social market" system integrates more democratic and communitarian models of the micro- and macro-cooperative business practices with social democratic approaches that build community by ending poverty, redistributing income, and ensuring equitable

distribution of essential social services. Since half-hearted, fragmented, and contradictory forms of cooperation inevitably fail, the President (and both business and the larger society) have no choice but to pursue a more transformative approach.

Real cooperation requires turning workplaces into genuine communities of meaning that unleash the explosive potential of morally committed or turned-on workers. Companies that meet their employees' needs for belonging, dignity, and socially useful work (rather than stirring up the stress, anger, and alienation bred by conventional companies) can spark extraordinary productivity and help redirect the economy toward the most pressing social and ecological needs of the larger society. But this will require taking the new business cooperative forms well beyond their current limits, restructuring the market system itself, so that social costs and benefits to the community are as important as shareholder return in the corporate calculus.

While this is a long-term project, Clinton can initiate a crucial new political dialogue about values and the market now. Business gurus such as Peters and Waterman have paved the way by flooding the public with ideas about a new value-based business paradigm. Having already defined himself as a president seeking to restore values and responsibility, Clinton needs to show that trust and cooperation have always been necessary to the operation of markets (as Adam Smith, the founding theorist of markets, strongly emphasized); that the emerging form of markets demands a higher standard of morality and cooperation (contrary to the still dominant mythology perpetuated by Reagan conservatives and *New Republic* liberals about individualism, competition, and amorality as the foundation of all markets); and that failure to shift toward a more developed value-based cooperative market system jeopardizes not only business itself but the renewal of values in families and neighborhoods throughout the nation.

But a new political discourse is not enough; the President should push for a new legislative framework that ensures labor and community participation in the process of building cooperative companies and markets. The President's Dunlop Commission, in its effort to build a new cooperative industrial-relations model, should ensure that workers have the right of formal representation in every company from the shop floor to the board room. Clinton should nip in the bud congressional efforts to eliminate ESOP tax incentives, and massively expand the incentives for meaningful employee ownership (with fully vested stock-carrying voting rights available to all employees in the firm), based on the accumulating evidence that employee participation and worker ownership are effective only when they are fused and create a real rather than rhetorical community of interests. The President should follow through on and expand the community-oriented economic development and banking agenda enunciated in his campaign, which would help promote the social investment and financial accountability to neighborhoods and regions that are the lifeblood of communitarian economics. And legally mandated public and community representatives in all large companies should work with management and employees to ensure that social costs and benefits are factored in to all corporate decisions.

Most important, the President has to show ordinary citizens that the current contradictions of capitalism are their business too. Clinton can document the public stake by showing the intimate links between his own communitarian issues—the breakdown of family, the crisis in values, the rise of violence—and the communitarian deficits in the economy. A master of public dialogue, Clinton has the capacity to show how a predatory contingent capitalism is helping undermine family values and civility at work and in the streets, and how healthy families, secure and meaningful work, and a society based on responsibility can only arise through a more communitarian economy and a business system committed to real social partnership. His approach to business can be entirely hard-headed: that its own long-term profitability will be sabotaged by piecemeal cooperation and can only by assured through complete commitment.

Clinton can help ignite this new politics, but it will not catch fire without a change in consciousness and focus among labor, community, and progressive social forces. A reigning cynicism about any potential for cooperation in or with business, as well as a shift from economic and class issues to identity-based cultural politics on the Left, has ceded the field to business. But the Black, women's, and other identity movements represent the sectors of the population who have most to lose in contingent capitalism and most to gain from genuine communitarian economics. The ultimate success of these movements, and those of progressive citizens and community groups, depends on coalescing around a movement for a new genuinely democratic and cooperative economy; it is the politics of a communitarian economics that has the greatest potential to rebuild community both among progressives and in the nation as a whole. But this will require the end of the debilitating split between economic and cultural politics in American life which has disfigured both the Left and the larger body politic. □

PRODUCTION OF THE PRESENT

(Continued from p. 14)

world's genuine marvels, and I wondered how many editors might make the connection to the mechanization of death in the camps. The panel discussion promised to be interesting.

It was, but for a rather different reason than I expected. The presentations were brief and provocative, and Koppel decided to bring the editors quickly into the middle of the subject. So he asked them to reflect on the following question: When should journalists permit the consequences of their reporting to influence what they decide to report? If pictures of starving people in Somalia are likely to shift that country's plight to the administration's front burner, should that "become a part of the formula in deciding where in the newspaper the story plays?" If there is no longer any prospect that further reporting of carnage, famine, or genocide in one country will influence policy, does that argue for clearing the front page, and giving other tragedies in other countries their shot? After all, Koppel reminded the group, at any given time there are dozens of wars, famines, and human disasters going on around the globe. No one in the room intends to cover them all. Thus, Koppel asked, "To what degree must we consider, dare we consider the consequences of what we put on the air or what you put in your newspapers?"

Koppel posed the question several times and grew a bit agitated as the editors declined to grapple with it. He allowed the panelists their turn. He went back to the editors and asked them again. Several hands went up, but the comments trailed off in other directions. Finally, he pleaded with the audience to remember where they were. Please, he said, in "this building, in this place, at this time," we should be able to reflect on matters as grave as this.

It was an impressive attempt, but it failed. The discussion went on for more than a hour; Koppel's challenge was barely addressed. At the close of the evening, he offered his own answer: "Our role as journalists is to hold up the light, and it is to reveal what we can. But I am most uncomfortable with the notion that we should be considering the consequences of what we report." He had done it once, he said. On "Nightline," he repeatedly drew attention to the plight of Andrei Sakharov, then in forced exile in the Soviet Union. "I was so outraged by this," he conceded, that "anything there was to be said about Andrei Sakharov" was mentioned "every night for about two months." It "didn't do a damn thing, but it made me feel better." He concluded:

> And I know it sounds cold, and it sounds heartless, and each of us as an individual man or woman has the responsibility to be a good person. But as journalists, I think we open up a very, very dangerous can of worms when we start presuming to bring about consequences.

Watching this scene unfold, I marveled for maybe the hundredth time at the mind of the American journalist, a territory I often cross on my way to work. Not one of the editors, not Koppel, or any of the journalism deans in attendance, thought it important to mention that more than forty reporters and photographers have been killed trying to cover the war in Bosnia, which is where the "journalism of genocide" is being practiced right now. Think for a moment what that means: The international company of journalists has been willing to sacrifice more lives than all the elected governments—our governments—in the Western world combined. Certainly this says something about the ethical standing of the news business. What it says, I think, is that journalists take seriously the deeply moral responsibility of the witness—to tell what they saw—and the equally important duty of the reporter: to go see what needs telling, even if it occasionally means risking death.

Roy Gutman from *Newsday* was a member of the panel. He had risked his life to cover the genocide in Bosnia, and while everyone in attendance was certainly aware of his achievement, no one thought it the least bit remarkable—that is, worth discussing—that journalists regularly put their lives on the line for our sake, so that we at home can encounter the events in Bosnia, or turn the page, as we choose. Perhaps they didn't do it well at all during the Holocaust, perhaps they don't do it often enough, but they still do it, many times a year, and the reports and images that filter back to us from the world's trouble spots bear little trace of the courage and commitment journalists demonstrate in their critical role as witnesses to history's upheavals.

If the silence that surrounded this fact was impressive, with its vague hint of stoicism, the silence that greeted Koppel's question was depressing. For this was a group of accomplished professionals refusing to even try on a moral identity, let alone inhabit it. Koppel's answer—"you get into very, very dangerous quicksand when you start examining consequences"—amounted to much the same refusal, although I admired his urgency in posing the question. Reflecting on consequences strikes most of us, I believe, as a good definition of ethical thinking. Any group that cannot "afford" such reflection is asking for a free pass, an

exemption from the category of moral actor.

Journalists often seek such an exemption, not because they are "bad" or unthinking people, but because they prefer to see themselves in the ethically uncomplicated role of witness. "I'm just telling you the way it is; if you don't like it, your argument is not with me but with reality" is a common attitude in the working press. Michael Janeway, former editor of the *Boston Globe* and now a journalism dean at Northwestern University, writes of the "macho minimalism" that prevails among journalists who see struggling with moral questions as the work of others:

> The press says as a matter of professional identity, and I myself have said as a journalist, that our business is facts, the public has a right to know them, freedom has a price, let the chips fall where they may, we are not in the philosophy business.... It says, no one got into this business to be loved; weighty reflection about our role is for journalism schools and op-ed pages, not for the reporter and the editor under the gun or on the trail of the next Watergate.

This last observation points again to Koppel's intelligence as a moderator. By mentioning the solemn setting where they were gathered, he forced the editors to acknowledge that they were not, at that moment, "under the gun," or on the trail of a hot story, but in a quiet space of reflection, which is exactly what the Holocaust museum is. But the professional identity Janeway describes ("we're not in the philosophy business") was too strong, stronger even than the depth of contemplation the editors has just undergone during their tour.

The journalist's "macho minimalism" in matters ethical and spiritual can lead to some absurd scenes. I once interviewed an experienced newspaper editor who was applying for a teaching job. We asked him for his views on the dubious practice of standing outside the homes of "newsworthy" people, waiting to buttonhole them as they emerged. This editor saw nothing troublesome about that. How about a juror in a high-profile case who has done nothing but fulfill a civic duty? Should the juror's home be the target of a media siege? I remember his reply: "The streets are public property." He did not get the job.

Or consider the handiwork of Howell Raines, the editor and reigning intelligence on The *New York Times* editorial page. Raines is known to be something of a hawk on the Whitewater scandal. That's a reasonable position—who knows what really happened?—and to defend such positions is, of course, what Raines does for a living. But listen to the argument the *Times* makes in an April 10 editorial on "Whitewater and the Press." After urging his colleagues that "now is the time to put more resources, rather than fewer, into the Whitewater story," Raines (or his designate) explains why:

> In this society, journalists have a constitutionally defined obligation to stick with a story as long as there are unanswered questions of political, legal or moral consequence.

This is simply false. No copy of the document Raines can find, no First Amendment lawyer The *Times* can pay, will say that the Constitution "defines" the journalist's "obligation" to pursue anything. The notion that the Founding Fathers, or the courts since then, have forced the hand of Raines and his colleagues, leaving them no alternative under the Constitution but to "stick with" the Whitewater story, is absurd on its face. It is also the opposite of what freedom of the press means. Under the Constitution, journalists cannot be forced to do anything, except to occasionally testify in court (they often refuse) and avoid libeling people. As a victorious defendant in two of the most important First Amendment cases ever—the Pentagon Papers and *Times vs. Sullivan*—The *New York Times* is dishonored by this phony appeal to constitutional authority.

What the editorial actually upholds is the journalist's deep wish to be free of any identity as a moral actor—that is, someone who makes judgments that have public consequence. Both "the law allows it" and "the Constitution made us do it" evade the multitude of judgments that are inherent in reporting, editing, and commenting on the news. What could be clearer than that Howell Raines and his colleagues at 229 W. 43 St. are disturbed by Whitewater? They want to keep the pressure on because they believe that wrongs may have been done, that these wrongs, if committed, matter to the nation, that the events in the scandal are therefore of consequence. It is certainly their right, possibly their duty, to come to such conclusions, and to urge them on the rest of us. But whatever freedom of the press means, it cannot mean freedom from one's status as a moral actor, a fallible, swayable judge of things, someone who decides one way and declines another.

A few facts: The *New York Times* published twenty-four front-page stories on Whitewater during the month of March; the *Boston Globe* ran twenty-nine. There are only thirty-one front pages a month; but according to The *Times,* April's Whitewater developments would require "more resources, rather than fewer." To these facts add a few questions: If a

particular story on the front page at a 93 percent clip for the month, as the *Globe* did, are the editors making their own judgment about the importance of the issues raised by the affair, or are they obeying a "constitutionally-defined" mandate in the manner of, say, cops reading a suspect his rights? Might the Los Angeles riots have left several "unanswered questions of political, legal or moral consequence?" And if they did, does the decision by The *Times* not to run twenty-nine front-page stories about Los Angeles during, say, the month of June 1992, raise *constitutional* questions we might adjudicate in court? Or does it reflect the editors' judgment about the relative importance of the L.A. story as against, say, the developments in the American presidential campaign, during which little was said about Los Angeles and its aftermath?

This sort of question is important because the journalist-as-judger, weigher, and evaluator stands in a different relationship to the political community than the journalist-as-witness, or the ludicrous fiction of journalist-as-obeyer-of-constitutional-requirements. As a witness, one has a duty to tell the truth. As a judge, one often *makes* truth, and this, in fact, is what the professional culture of journalism seeks to avoid—a view of its task that would describe the news as "made" rather than "found." Anything that is made can be made "this way or that, according as [we] judge, prize, love and labor," to quote John Dewey in *Freedom and Culture*. And indeed, the most compelling view of press freedom would stress journalists' freedom to make what they make without undue pressure from anyone—including you and I, or, for that matter the publisher of The *New York Times*.

But what is it that journalists "make?" Here we get to the heart of Koppel's question, the territory all wished to avoid, the place where journalists, as professionals, "judge, prize, love and labor." For that is what Koppel was asking his colleagues to consider: With so much misery in the world, how do we judge? What do we prize? Granted that none of us went "into this business to be loved," as Janeway said, what is it that we *do* love, as journalists? And for what, or for whom, do we labor? There is no tradition of "weighty reflection" on these questions in the American press, and the editors Koppel kept prodding were not about to begin one.

Compiling a report that is accurate, comprehensive, and fair describes the duties most journalists are willing to accept. Note that these are all aspects of truth-telling. They correspond to the oath courtroom witnesses take to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Carl Bernstein of Watergate fame has defined news as "the best obtainable version of the truth," a definition that emphasizes the reporter's pursuit of facts as well as the witnesses' account of them. But with Bernstein, we are still in the realm of finding rather than making.

Whatever version of it journalists manage to obtain, truth cannot be disgorged in the manner of a machine. Instead, journalists must tell us a story—by beginning somewhere—and it is never obvious how the story of our public life should be told. Public narratives are among the things people in the media make, and it is reasonable to ask about their social responsibilities as story-makers. In general, we want a tale that engages our emotions at a level equal to our interests; a story that, in describing the situation, renders clearly the choices before us; one that humanizes the actors so that we don't regard them, inappropriately, as faceless villains, cogs in a machine, or cardboard cutouts with no feelings or interests themselves. We want a public narrative that assumes in us the capacity to take others' places, in order to see things from their perspective, but also one that reminds us of where and who we are, so that we don't lose our bearings entirely.

In Arendt's terms, we want a story that encourages the "distancing of some things and bridging the abysses to others," by which we gain possession of a common world, where what happens to the society happens to, and with, "us" as a political community. Finally, we want a story that leaves us with some hope, not for a "happy" ending, but for an *intelligible* one, an ending we can understand, judge, and tell a larger tale about as we try to make sense out of our collective life.

That America does not have such a story about, for example, the assassination of JFK, is a profoundly disturbing fact, for it seems to discredit, not only the agencies responsible for investigating the crime, (including journalism) but the principle of responsibility itself. On important matters of nationhood, no intelligible story ever emerges from a single telling, or a single journalist, but if it *never* emerges, if we can never say to ourselves what the Kennedy assassination was "about," then we can never judge what sort of nation we are, or were then, and our sense of ourselves as a "we" will become dangerously eroded.

When no one is responsible, then everything seems permitted. Jews especially (including Jews in journalism) should be alert to the horrors that can follow when people feel themselves adrift in an unintelligible world. This is the condition of "worldlessness," which in Arendt's view lay behind the rise of Nazism. In *The Human Condition* she writes:

> The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes [contemporary] society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and separate them. The weirdness of the situation resembles a spiritualistic seance where a number of people gathered around a table suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.

This is what happens in an environment like our own, where "information" from the media repeatedly outruns political imagination, so that we "learn" about events in Los Angeles only to find that the public world of politics intends to ignore them. The problem goes way beyond those who engineer the presidential campaign, or report on it, and neither of these groups is, strictly speaking, to blame. A new ethic of political communication is needed, one that might link politicians, writers, journalists, activists, and citizens in the recognition that the political present, the common world, is something societies construct through their manner of living and communicating together. What we lose when the present is poorly-built—as is certainly the case today—is not the knowledge we need to make wise decisions, but the need for any knowledge at all about matters that, while occurring to "us," or within our vision, are widely regarded as happening in another world.

To put it another way, worldlessness is a cultural achievement, the most dubious achievement of which a democracy can boast. We edge closer to this condition every day, whether we "follow the news" or not. "We are contemporaries only so far as our understanding reaches." At issue in Arendt's frighteningly apt thought is what happens to the political present as it passes through the various hands by which it is made, repaired, or undone—including, finally, ours. That the present can fail us, that we can somehow cease to be contemporaries while living in the "same" world, should remind everyone of the huge variety of ways through which democracy as a way of life can be lost.

What, then, of Koppel's question about consequences? First, it is a good question, the sort of thing one struggles with over a lifetime. In distinguishing a report of events from decisions made about them, he is on firm ground as long as we see journalists in the role of witness. To testify about what happened requires a certain detachment from what others may choose to do next, and in refusing to consider what others must decide for themselves, Koppel is adhering to the strict code of the truth-teller. But the journalist as truth-maker needs a rather different code, and here it is significant that Koppel's conversants were editors rather than reporters. Editors have no other duty than to decide and thus "make" things. Among other tasks, they "make up" the front page, and no editor can find in the day's events the principles that will enable the front page to be well made. These principles must come from somewhere, and the logical place to look is inside the mind, heart, and soul of the journalist.

When Ted Koppel decided to mention Andrei Sakharov on every edition of "Nightline" he was not lunging blindly into an ethical no-man's land, as he now seems to have concluded. He was saying to us, one day these events will have to be judged, and I want you to know about them now so that you'll be prepared then. That he came to say this from a deep feeling of "outrage" is not an eruption of personal conviction into a properly neutral domain, but a moving display of what we might call the public art of urgency, the crafting of the present so that it displays its proper contents to the minds of citizens who must, now or later, judge and remake them.

At root in this attitude is a kind of love for the world as a thing we have made and must care for, and what Koppel found unbearable is to live in a public world where the plight of Sakharov could be rendered invisible. Perhaps Howell Raines feels this way about Whitewater. If so, he should tell us, and stop pretending that the Constitution can say it for him.

As for journalists in general, the "consequences" they need to worry about involve us as citizens, not the decision-makers at the State Department. That we will restore, through imagination, a political perspective that "relates and separates" us and the world of events; that we will seek the meaning of those events through public discussion and argument; that we will face, as a political community, the choices we must face if we're to create a more just (and more common) world; that we will one day tell a story about what actually happened in our collective history; and that we can be persuaded to live more and more of that story while it unfolds—these are the "consequences" journalists should endeavor to bring about, and this is the faith that makes of their craft a genuine calling. □

Don't Do It

(Continued from p. 12)

intervention in the economy; that is missing the point. Within our borders, there is a loose agreement on the sovereignty of the federal government, which supposedly acts by the will of the people. At times of crisis or in the face of intractable problems, that will combined with the Constitution gives the American government a right and even an obligation to intervene in domestic affairs. Beyond our borders, there is no acknowledged right of U.S. or U.N. intervention in the internal affairs of a foreign country. We are not the world's policeman, and much of the world is steadfastly opposed to our attempts to play that role.

It is easy to send in the Marines when the public or the international community clamors for action. It is hard to resist that temptation and at the same time offer cogent and compelling justification for what some take to be inaction. That is the task: finding forceful ways to articulate pragmatic reasons for why force should not be used. Humanitarian military intervention hasn't worked before. Given that little has changed in Washington since the abortive effort in Somalia, it probably won't work now. The national security bureaucracy is neither disposed nor particularly capable of planning for the long term; short-term solutions favor only U.S. interests and will likely do nothing to improve the situation in the Haitis of the world.

The progressive interventionists say that this time, we'll get it right: Good intentions combined with military force will bring our morality in domestic affairs to bear on our role in international affairs. That argument can only be taken on faith. Like the prophet who claims that the hour of redemption is near, the progressive interventionists might be right. But unless one has faith in the prophet, there's no reason to believe the prophecy. □

Just Do It

Why We Should Intervene in Haiti

Joel Dreyfuss



AP/Wide World Photos

With the political situation in Haiti in a stalemate, the possibility of United States intervention is not only inevitable, it is the right thing to do. American action can put President Jean-Bertrand Aristide back in power, restart the process of democracy, and avoid getting caught in a Vietnam-like quagmire. And while this intervention may have a superficial resemblance to those of the past, it differs fundamentally enough to be worth the risk.

This would be the first time that the United States has used its military muscle to support the wishes of the majority of the citizens of a Third World country. A U.S. action would bear the endorsement of the United Nations and the tacit approval of the Organization of American States, which is always on the lookout for signs that the United States is returning to its old imperialist ways.

Since the end of the Cold War, the struggle to define a U.S. foreign policy has been cast as one between isolationists and interventionists. The debate has taken on a twist reminiscent of an O'Henry fable. Conservatives who never missed an opportunity to rattle a missile warn against involvement in Haiti. Liberals who railed against our excursions from Vietnam to Granada wax eloquent about a six-hour "surgical" military operation to oust Haiti's ruling junta.

George Bush's pompous and short-lived "New

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World Order" was an attempt to define a grand vision of American policy that would replace the simple imperative of Soviet containment. But to the surprise of Washington policymakers, no one was prepared to automatically genuflect to America's view of the world. Bill Clinton tried to set a series of tests for intervention and left the situation more muddled than before.

All these attempts to create an overarching template for foreign involvement fail, because each foreign crisis has its own set of roots and circumstances and thus warrants it own solution. The conflict in Somalia has very little to do with the one in Haiti. Somalia is one of the many post-colonial African nations where tribal affiliations are often stronger than a national identity. Haiti has been independent for nearly 200 years, and Haitians have a strong sense of nationality, along with a rich and vibrant culture that has produced world-class art and popular music.

U.S. military interventions should always be acts of last resort, but there are justifiable cases. Restoring a democratic process, or giving it a chance to flourish, especially with international endorsement, is one. A humanitarian operation, such as the one in Rwanda—and even the first part of our involvement in Somalia—is another. But we should not fool ourselves into believing that we can build institutions, as we proclaimed in Somalia.

Much of the opposition to U.S. involvement in Haiti has come from our own military establishment, which is still trapped in its own post-Vietnam syndrome. The Pentagon wants to avoid any mission that bears a risk of failure, especially situations where political goals are more important than military objectives.

Those who argue against intervention in Haiti often point to the last U.S. occupation, which lasted nineteen years. They claim it had no visible impact. On the contrary, the Marines left a powerful legacy in every Latin American country they occupied: baseball, and a well-trained military that eventually overturned fragile democratic institutions and seized power. It happened in the Dominican Republic, in Guatemala, in Nicaragua, in El Salvador and, of course, in Haiti. Haiti alone resisted baseball—and fought the occupation longer than any other Caribbean country.

But attempts to draw parallels to an occupation that began almost eighty years ago reflect our unwillingness to learn the complexities of small countries—or to concede that they can evolve. In 1915, Haiti was an isolated, feudal state with a small mixed-race elite that controlled commerce, a small Black elite in charge of politics, and a massive rural peasant class. The French-speaking elite looked to Europe for culture and viewed the U.S.—especially after experiences with American racism during the occupation—as barbaric and primitive.

While Haiti remains the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, it is considerably different today. A new and growing Black urban middle class has evolved since the 1960s, fed by Duvalier family patronage and by the growth of the assembly factories around the Port-au-Prince airport. At the peak of the manufacturing boom, 100,000 people worked in the factories, creating a significant salaried class for the first time in the country's history.

Haiti has joined the global village. Its emerging classes watch U.S. political conventions on CNN. They hear about China's struggle for democracy on the radio. Many survive on the estimated $250 million sent home annually by the half-million Haitians and Haitian-Americans living in the United States.

In the 1970s, hundreds of grass-roots organizations sprang up among farmers, laborers, and factory workers; their common goal is democracy. A vigorous free press took on the excesses of the regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier. Haitians braved violence and intimidation to register to vote, to overturn several military regimes and finally, to bring Aristide to power. They may not have much experience with democracy but they know they want it.

Even if the cause is right, critics ask, how do we get out? Aristide's term expires in 1995. At that point, the United States should have disbanded the army, trained a lightly armed police force and paved the way for the next round of elections. A free, internationally supervised ballot will likely bring to power another populist with mass support. Once a new president takes office, the United States will have completed its job. Without the army to impose its will, the elite will finally have to start negotiating a *modus vivendi* with the majority.

There will be a few lessons from a successful intervention in Haiti. Line up multinational support before you go in. Make sure the majority of the people in the targeted country support the side you're on. Plan to get out before you wear out your welcome. Leave the nation-building to the international agencies that have the know-how. Get accustomed to public criticism and private praise: History dictates public posture in Haiti as much as it does in Jordan or Israel. Don't look for grand patterns or signposts that will guide your actions in the next conflict. The world is neither that simple nor that orderly. □

THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF CHILDHOOD

(Continued from p. 40)

To be sure, a part of us is also aware that something is wrong and deeply desires a different kind of world. Yet through most of human history the level of repression of desire has been so massive and total that the child has never had much opportunity to experience true recognition and connection, and instead has accepted the world as it is with an automatic and depressed resignation.

Only in the past ten thousand years at best, and probably most noticeably in the past thirty-five hundred years, have societies evolved to the point where fundamental material needs are adequately met and human energies are available for less constricted and more fulfilling connections between people. The fundamental emotional-erotic need for recognition can then emerge in a fuller way. But when it emerges, this need for recognition plays a subversive role, potentially disrupting the accommodations made to a world based on the objectification and exploitation of others. The absence of recognition becomes the precondition for the possibility of class societies, for any one group oppressing another. Seeing each other as fully human, fully alive, fully imbued with the spirit of God, would make it much more difficult for us to enslave others or turn our back on their suffering. Recognition of the other becomes a subversion of a world of oppression.

It is in this context that Abraham enters history, aware that indeed something is indeed fundamentally wrong, no longer willing to accept idolatry. Abraham can sense something more in the universe, some greater potentiality than what may be manifest in the worship of what is—power, beauty, wealth, etc. In breaking his father's idols, he is symbolically trying to break through to his father, to say "This dead matter that is used to justify an oppressive social order is not real, and you and I don't have to remain stuck to it, do we?" The inability of his father to respond, to see the life energy and reality in his son and to say, "Yes, son, something more is possible" means that he has instead to see his son as the problem. Abraham's breaking through social conventions requires of his father a level of emotional and spiritual and political aliveness and honesty that feels too overwhelming and threatening for Terah. So Abraham cannot be recognized by his father; he has to leave behind, abandon, reject, and transcend the world of his father.

The Terror of Breaking From Cruelty

The legacy of pain and cruelty that is part of the history of human relationships reasserts itself as Abraham follows his dream. Yet what makes Abraham in touch with God is the extent to which he can imagine a reality in which that legacy of emotional and spiritual deadness need not govern his experience of the world. In such moments, he is in touch with God.

Making this kind of break with one's parents and with "normal reality" is fraught with danger. Most human beings have been too scared to make the break, and instead have desperately clung to their existing picture of themselves and of the world as limited and as necessarily involved with pain, injustice, cruelty, violence, and evil.

Yet it is precisely the full expression of our own anger at our parents for their lack of recognition of us that would allow children to free themselves of the self-punishing attitudes that limit their adult life. And if they could free themselves of that, most people would quickly move beyond anger at their parents to a deeper level of compassion. They could act upon the realization that their parents are people who themselves had parents and were born into a social order that made them feel that they couldn't really be alive, didn't really deserve recognition for who they really were, that they too had to feel emotionally dead in order to win the recognition that they wanted from their parents and society. In short, the parents who had required their emotional and spiritual deadening had been subjected to the same strictures in order to gain minimal recognition. In short, they would come to see their parents as deserving not just anger but also real compassion.

To reach such a level of compassion, we would first have to allow ourselves to experience the terror and anger that comes when we recognize that our own life could have been much fuller and deeper and more fulfilling had the world been constituted by a community of people who affirmed each other's being in the fullness of their potential.

Few people have been capable of sustaining such a recognition. And so it is much easier and more comforting to find a metaphysics that seems to confirm our own belief that the failures of connection, the levels of misrecognition, the absence of a community filled with loving connectedness, are inevitable and necessary. The very thought that the world, including our childhoods, could have been different is so overwhelming that many people will do anything to avoid understanding it. The very idea of thinking about childhood in this way gets dismissed as "psychobabble" by people too scared to consider the possibilities being discussed. So desperate are the keepers of the established orders of cruelty to avoid anyone considering an alternative way of creating society that they define as childish, stupid, or incoherent any view that envisions an alternative.

To be mature, in this account, is to learn to accept that the distortions and cruelty and lack of recognition we experienced as children are fundamental to how the world is. It's not that the world is deficient because human beings have not yet fulfilled their potential or have misused their freedom. Rather, those who remain defeated and despairing see the world's flaws as being fundamental, created by God, part of the structure of necessity. Like moths drawn to the fire that will kill them, most of us are drawn into a dreamlike state in which the evil of the world is deemed inevitable, and those who seek to eliminate evil are seen as fools. No wonder, then, that every prophet is castigated, stoned, threatened, ignored, made into a sideshow, ridiculed, or otherwise discounted.

For those who remain loyal to their parents in this respect, who will not imagine that the way human beings connect with each other could be fundamentally different, the principle of evil in the world has substantive reality. And so, according to such logic, the God who has created all things has created this evil as well, and created it in a way that cannot be radically transcended.

Out of loyalty to their parents and to their own lives lived in a spirit of resignation and compromise, those who limit their vision are furious at anyone who thinks that the world could be fundamentally different. The logic of their position leads them to side with those who tossed Abraham into the fiery furnace—not because they are cruel but because they think that maintaining the existing order, whatever its cruelty, is what is required of them so that they may be serious and competent adults.

For this reason, they come to believe that what is important about the Akedah is not that Abraham didn't sacrifice his son, that Abraham broke the chain of necessity, that Abraham refused to pass on to the next generation the pain that has been passed on to him. No! What is important, these people insist, is that Abraham unquestioningly brought his son to the altar in the first place—and that therein lies the glory of Abraham. And no wonder they would see it that way. In their own daily lives and their own childhoods it was precisely this self-sacrifice that was the cost of reconciliation with their own fathers.

Those who are committed to ontologizing evil and cruelty often embrace some variant of the notion that a mysterious paradox is governing the universe. Any theory that does not recognize this fundamental evil and cruelty will seem "simplistic" or "naively rational" or "post-Enlightenment consciousness" or "utopian" or "simple-mindedly optimistic."

The conservative and neo-conservative consciousness that has become a major force in late-twentieth-century Western thought is in part a product of this dynamic, in part a product of the (quite legitimate) outrage at a world that seems to confirm their worst suspicions, because it embodies in its actual activities the playing out of violence and cruelty. It's no wonder that the combination of a real world in which cruelty continues to reign and a childhood experience in which we are bound to this cruelty could produce a set of religions, metaphysics, and political philosophies that see all this violence and cruelty as "the nature of reality." This combination accounts for the contemporary popularity of pessimism and cynicism among both liberal and conservative theorists, including many contemporary Jewish theologians who think of themselves as liberal realists. Yet this way of looking at the world is the opposite of what was revolutionary, exciting, and foundational in the religious experience of Abraham.

I am tempted to say that it was merely the external reality of oppression that led the people of Israel to reconstruct our memory of Abraham's story so what we found most moving in it was the "recognition" that the world was governed by paradox and irrationality, and our faith in a God who governed despite the paradox and beyond our human understanding. Rather than making the Abraham who challenges God about Sodom and who dares to argue and bargain with God the paradigm for the father of our people, they may have chosen the Akedah as our founding moment precisely because they saw in this moment an affirmation of their own need to suffer the irrationality of the world. Yet I doubt that this choice was merely a failure of nerve precipitated by external reality. More likely, it was the reassertion of the loyalty to our parents that we all experience and to the lives that we have imaginatively and energetically created to sustain ourselves in the face of a loss we only dimly perceive and dread to confront.

And why be hard on ourselves? After all, Abraham, the revolutionary par excellence, was still loyal enough to the experience of cruelty and pain that he actually heard the voice of that legacy, the very thing that he had hoped to transcend—and he heard all that *as* the voice of God. Yet the greatness of Abraham, and the insight that we need to hold on to and build upon, is that ultimately he heard another voice of God, and that second voice allowed him to transcend the past and break the chain of necessity that always threatens to link generations in an embrace of cruelty, violence, and death. The force that makes possible that break, the force that makes possible recognition of our common humanity, which the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas notes that we can see in the eyes and the face of the other, that is the force we call God. It was at such a moment of recognition that Abraham discovered God, and it is in testimony to the possibility of such moments that Jewish renewal seeks to reclaim the voice of God who told Abraham not to continue the violence, cruelty, and evil in the world. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 4)

merely "Jewish" magazine, not even take up its politics of meaning as the most serious challenge to contemporary left-wing and right-wing thought, and continue on the mind-deadening path that Gitlin and Berman so eloquently illustrate.

Sharon Levin
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

Gitlin and Berman were too kind to Lerner and Gabel. The politics of meaning is far worse than just an empty speech-writer's phrase—it is the undermining of the whole basis of liberal thinking, the separation of politics from the religious arena. I, for one, remain an unreconstructed champion of the Enlightenment against all the forces on the Right, and now, with Lerner and Gabel, on the Left as well, who claim that we lost something important when we lost feudalism. Frankly, I think we lost nothing but our religious chains, and whatever the fine language of Lerner and Gabel, I think that if their attitude becomes more common they will (unwittingly, I'm sure) be opening the door for the reemergence of the feudalists, the religious Right, the anti-Semites, and worse. I imagine that Gabel and Lerner think that it will be a revived New Left counter-cultural celebration of goodness that will dance through the door they've been opening. But the '60s are dead, and what lives in their place is a mean-spirited religious Right that is going to destroy all of us on the liberal Left unless we fight hard to keep them out of politics.

J. J. Jones
Chicago, Illinois

To the Editor:

I don't understand why Gitlin and Berman are so worried when Michael Lerner tries to include awe and wonder as part of what a progressive politics of meaning would talk about. To be sure, these are spiritual concerns that progressives have always avoided. But why must they? Lerner's and Gabel's point seems to be that having a spiritual sensitivity would help the progressives connect with the spiritual needs of many Americans. I can't see what they are afraid of in addressing spirituality.

There is nothing in what Gabel or Lerner say that makes them commit to a specific religious view of how awe and wonder should be expressed. I presume that a politics of meaning celebration of the miracle of the universe would be inclusive, would not seek to privilege a given religious community, and would try to be respectful of a variety of ways to express awe and wonder. I can't imagine anything that would strengthen the liberal/progressive world more than to find that one could have this kind of a celebration integrated into the struggles for equality, human rights, economic benefits, and the like.

Berman is concerned that Gabel and Lerner would be totalitarian if they linked this spirituality with their particular approach to ecology. I suppose that this is the concern about what the Christian Right is doing. But the problem with the Christian Right is not that they are linking their religion with their politics, but rather that their politics are so obviously out of sync with what is best in the Bible and, even more importantly, out of sync with what any feeling and caring human being would believe. If people really were trying to build a politics consistent with the deepest spiritual truths of the universe, I can't see that as anything but good. The problem is that usually they build their politics on the basis of their own inner distortions—and then claim that these are "spiritual" truths. But that happens even when there is no spiritual language involved—and from my standpoint, Bob Dole is every bit as distorted, without attempting to derive his politics from spirituality, as is any Christian rightist. That some religious people have hurtful politics and dress it up in spiritual language is not a good argument against the rest of us trying to derive our political understanding from the deepest spiritual truths we know.

Sandra Boscanelli
Boston, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Perhaps the most convincing and frightening proof of the truth of your politics of meaning analysis is the way it seems to help explain the rise of fascist tendencies in Italy and and Germany. When secular socialists and liberals in Italy were exposed as corrupt, and the frenzy of capitalist consumption seemed less fulfilling because more exposed for what it is, people gravitate to nationalist fantasies for emotional and spiritual compensa-

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tion. So, too, in Germany, the failures of the market society to provide meaning leads people to seek their identities in the older framework of meaning supplied by German nationalism. The analyses in your July/August, 1994, issue by Anjana Shrivastava ("German Neo-Fascism and the Politics of Meaning") and Richard Wolin ("Mussolini's Ghost and the Specter of Fascism") really prove that the politics of meaning provides a framework for understanding not only domestic issues but international realities as well. Kudos to TIKKUN.

Sanford Schleyer
Seattle, Washington

JUDAISM & GAYS

To the Editor:

Reuven Kimelman tells us that "valorizing" homosexuality with commitment ceremonies will "devalue" procreative sexuality and threaten the Jewish family ("Homosexuality and Family-Centered Judaism," July/August 1994).

I am the mother of a twenty-three-year-old gay son, and believe it is time for Jewish families like ours to be heard on this issue. As we see it, the most ugly threat to the continuity of family-centered Judaism is the rejection of our children by Kimelman and others like him.

Kimelman asserts that "credibility is compromised" when Judaism promotes childbearing while sanctifying relationships which are "inherently childless." The truth is that Jewish credibility is compromised when Judaism encourages childbearing but does not accept Jewish children in their uniqueness and diversity.

Our son told us he was gay when he was nineteen years old. But he began to understand the nature of his sexuality when he was fourteen—and could still wear the suit he wore at his bar mitzvah.

At what point would Kimelman have wanted us to begin instructing our child in the absolute "social and moral status of homosexuality"? When should we have explained that straight sex is "good sex" and that gay sex is "bad sex"? At what point should we have let him know that Judaism expected him never to hold a beloved in his arms, and never to share the joys and sorrows of a committed, intimate relationship?

We did not say these things, of course, but the Kimelmans of the world say them loud and clear. During our son's last two years in high school, he contemplated suicide. He did not take his life, he told us later, because despite the world's messages, and despite Leviticus 18:22 and the teachings of his own faith community—he trusted his family's love.

For the sake of our son, and for the sake of other Jewish gay and lesbian children, it is time for Judaism to become a source of hope and strength for all Jewish families.

Ronnie M. Horn
Verona, New Jersey

To the Editor:

Reuven Kimelman contends that the very survival of the Jewish tradition is directly related to procreation within the specific context of normative marriage.

Today we live in a world in which same-sex as well as heterosexual Jews single and partnered can and do choose alternative approaches to the creation of Jewish families. They beget, adopt, and nurture children with strong Jewish identities and a commitment to Jewish traditions and institutions. Nonetheless, Mr. Kimelman doesn't council gay and lesbian couples to "go forth and multiply," so that the Jewish people may endure.

As it turns out, Mr. Kimelman is not first and foremost concerned with promoting the conception of Jewish children or the survival of the Jewish people, its traditions, and institutions. He is far more interested in the procreation of a value system condemning any deviance from the "normative family" structure which he believes has the capacity to protest in this world and redeem in the next.

Whatever else these principles may be (and despite his protestations, homophobic comes to mind), they are not family-centered. They are predicated on the denigration of specific Jewish families. They threaten their well-being and their status in the community, and deny modification to the family units they have and will create.

Our organization, New Jewish Voices of Gays and Lesbians (based at the JCC on the Upper West Side of Manhattan) finds Mr. Kimelman's ethos an insult to the traditional Jewish family values we practice. As Jews we value who our children are—precious beyond measure—and we value and support those Jewish institutions that cherish and embrace them. These values we share with our children's siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends across a rainbow of denominations from orthodox to unaffiliated. It is a bond that links us to the past and propels us into the future with the strength to preserve our Jewish heritage.

Liz Gewirtzman
New York, New York

To the Editor:

The argument that Professor Kimelman makes (following lines proposed by Father Richard John Neuhaus in the *National Review*) is that lesbians and gay men like myself are essentially being too fatalistic about our sexual orientation. If we have control over our actions, we could control the manifestations of our sexual orientation. We could give our sexuality up to God the way Catholic priests do, and never act when we are attracted to someone. Or we could pursue heterosexual marriage.

As a gay man, I have never had a sexual attraction to a woman. But I could probably pull off sexual intercourse with a woman, since sex is just an act. And if I take my theology seriously, on Kimelman's account, the way I should go about this is to marry the woman first, which is also something I could do, since that also is an act. The moral question is, why would such a marriage be a good thing, and who would it be good for?

While I'm not much of a fan of the "Imagine yourself in this situation" school of argument, I'd be interested in Professor Kimelman's response to the following hypothetical. Imagine a reasonably attractive, somewhat successful, witty, and thoughtful gay Jewish man who decides to follow Professor Kimelman's prescription for his life and is fortunate enough to find a woman who will have him. Would Professor Kimelman really be so gung-ho about this man's decision if the lucky girl he chooses to marry were Kimelman's daughter? While I have no scientific data to back this up, the parents I have so far posed this question to are far more enthusiastic about their daughter's marriage when it is not conceived of as sexual therapy for a morally compliant gay man.

As long as homosexual people are

taught that heterosexual relationships are better for them than homosexual relationships, there will remain a powerful incentive for people to fool either themselves or someone else. I suspect there is no shortage of spouses who become involved, wittingly or unwittingly, in such rehabilitation efforts, and who can testify that under such circumstances it's easier to pull off a wedding than a marriage.

Professor Kimelman is wrong, I think, not because he says lesbians and gay men can control their sexual behavior, but because he appears to think we can control who we fall in love with. Heterosexuals don't believe that of themselves, why would they believe it's true of anyone else? When Kimelman suggests that all homosexual acts, even those within a loving and committed relationship, are to be discouraged at all costs, his focus on the ability to control sexuality ignores the sincere affections and love which same-sex partners feel for one another apart from (or at least comingled with) sexual attraction. Most of us, gay and straight, have been brought up to believe that it is emotional attachment that transforms mere sexual attraction into true love, and that when emotion and attraction meet that is a rare and beautiful thing. Because the debate over homosexuality always focuses on sexual activity *simpliciter*, this affectional part of same-sex relationships is treated as irrelevant to the relationship in a way it never is for heterosexual couples. That asymmetry has always struck me as the heart of the problem lesbians and gay men face in this debate.

The insidiousness of the way the entire debate is infected with a practically invisible unfairness toward lesbians and gay men is most evident in the fact that someone as thoughtful and articulate as Rabbi Levado may not make his case in his own name. The choice to speak freely may result in expulsion from the community you love enough to criticize. And, of course, anyone outside that community is not given credence because they are not members; their every utterance can be discounted because they do not truly understand the inner workings of the community, be it the military or orthodox Judaism. In such situations, it is the party line or silence. This is an effective way to enforce uniformity of opinion, but it is a difficult context in which to have a serious discussion. Rabbi Levado's

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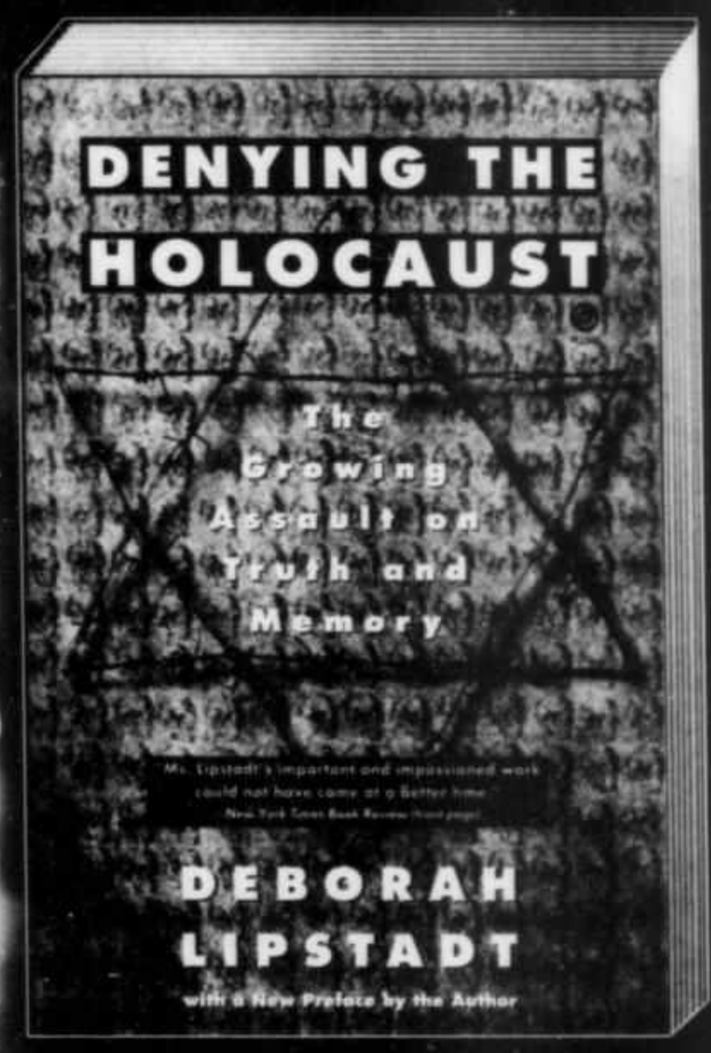
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PLUME

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thoughts should carry more weight, not less, because he is so committed to Judaism. Yet the only way he can speak his mind is to forfeit his face. How many heterosexuals can imagine having to enter such a bargain?

You have my deepest thanks for conducting the debate so responsibly in your pages.

David Link
Los Angeles, California

Reuven Kimelman responds:

In my article, the editors inserted a parenthetical phrase, "child born outside of marriage," as an explanation of the term Hebrew word *mamzer*. In doing so, you perpetuated a grievous misunderstanding. A *mamzer* is not a child born out of wedlock, but one born of parents who cannot legally get married such as in cases of adultery or incest.

The letters in response to my article express deep personal pain. One cannot but sympathize with them. Nonetheless, the issue of public policy remains. Every community has a right to promote its values, especially those tied to its continuity. The question for the community accordingly is determining those institutions deserving of its maintenance and investment. The article argues for the priority of the reproductive family.

David Link's letter points to a disagreement on the nature of love that gets to the substance of the issue. He writes, "Professor Kimelman is wrong... because he appears to think we can control who we fall in love with." To some degree this is true. I agree with M. Scott Peck's analysis in the chapter, "Love is not a Feeling," of his book, *The Road Less Traveled*. He writes, "The misconception that love is a feeling exists because we confuse cathecting [the process by which an object becomes important to us] with loving." He further says, "Genuine love... implies commitment and the exercise of wisdom," since love is "the will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." He concludes, "True love is not a feeling by which we are overwhelmed. It is a committed thoughtful decision." Thus, "Love is as love does."

NAACP AND FARRAKHAN

To the Editor:

As an African American who lives in Harlem, I have the sad obligation to acknowledge that your fears about growing Farrakhan-spurred anti-Semitism are well grounded. I had to agree with former NAACP leader Julian Bond who denounced the NAACP's current involvement with Farrakhan. And I'm saddened as well by Cornel West's willingness to support Ben Chavis and to attend the meeting himself. The operative point, that you make so well, is that while it is perfectly legitimate for anyone in the African-American world to talk with or meet with Farrakhan, it's a different kettle of fish to be calling him "a national leader" and to have a progressive organization give him legitimacy by inviting him to a "national leadership summit." As the press made clear, when historians look back at this summit they will not point to some broad new strategy that emerged to help inner city Blacks overcome poverty. And they won't point to some new organization or new campaign that the summit launched. Nothing like this occurred, nor is it likely to occur. What they will point to is that Farrakhan got legitimated, and that people like Manning Marrable and Cornel West who are the main spokespeople of progressive African Americans decided that they wanted to publicly declare unity with Farrakhan more than they would declare unity with the Jewish progressives who were protesting this gathering. To me, this was a terribly disturbing moment, and it made me very depressed about the possibility of Black progressives ever getting together a strategy that could counter the growing nationalism and anti-Semitism that are a central part of the appeal of Farrakhan.

Jeremiah Brown
New York, New York

OPENING THE BORDERS

(Continued from p. 87)

aristocratic bearing, full of regal self-confidence. "You, Mr. Eban, have a special place in our hearts," he says. Eban, a former Israeli foreign minister and visionary of peace, seems mostly dazed by the heat. "My doctor says to keep out of the sun," he mumbles to himself, yet he removes his hat as the CNN cameras close in on him. Now he retreats into the shade as Chris Hedges approaches him. Hearing "New York Times," Eban seems to wake up, become clarity itself, as language rises up and through him. He eloquently describes the inexorability of the momentum toward peace, explains how Syria has no other option but peace with Israel, and cautions us to remember Yasir Arafat.

"We would be wise not to forget that none of this would have been possible without Arafat," he says. "We must show parallel devotion to both the Jordanians and the Palestinians in the territories," he continues, alluding to the obvious: Peace with Jordan is a far easier, sexier, safer enterprise than the work of peace with Arafat in Gaza, Jericho, and the West Bank.

With a spasm of guilt and sadness, I realize as Abba Eban speaks that this leap into peace with the Jordanians is deeply threatening to the Palestinians in the territories, who so often have been relegated to waiting and more waiting, in the confusion of their new autonomy, under a leader with none of King Hussein's charisma or character.

As the bus carries our group of journalists the few miles back to Eilat, I glance out at the blue tent and the small, spare bleachers that formed the setting for this latest breakthrough between Israeli and Arab. The modest space cleared for this occasion now looks insignificant, the tent flapping in the vast desert moonscape. With just a few lights illuminating this ancient wilderness, the tiny spot could be a biblical or Bedouin camp.

Turning to Hillel Halkin, who grew up in New York but has lived in Israel for the last twenty-five years, I ask him why this event seems so moving. "Because we're all involved," he replies. "The United States is the loneliest place on earth," he adds. I too feel that the words spoken today mix perfectly with the ancient landscape and the intense family feeling on each side. This warm peace merges with the heat, directly speaking to our future—a political/personal moment I've never experienced in the States.

Back in Eilat, we can see the boat carrying Hussein and Rabin. The king is steering his yacht into Israeli waters, hosting his host. I remember Rabin saying, "This will soon feel natural," as it already does to the crowds of vacationing Israelis who take a moment out to wave at the king's yacht, or simply to gaze in amazement from the long seashore. And then I remember the exact words of King Hussein at his press conference in Aqaba after the ceremony: Speaking slowly, he said, "The kind of peace I feel with myself today is something I've never experienced in all these many years."

The words of the two old warriors turned peacemakers unleashes a feeling of expansion and authenticity, like the dream openings inside our own homes, even as we are all wide awake. □

Carpenter

Before the dream evaporates,
the paint flakes or fades,
my father sheathed in callouses
hefts the hammer,
pounds each nail into
its proper place making
sound music from sound noise.

His days hinge together.
Mornings he wakes early,
shakes the furnace down,
opens dampers and the fire
blazes as she squeezes juice,
cooks porridge and listens
to the noise overhead.

A building permit's his safe-
conduct to the future
where he's a week-end revo-
lutionary, reads The Daily
Worker, saws and hammers outside
in the winter with his union card
in his vest pocket.

His sander strips surfaces
honing time to its clean
edge when he can leave
the city weekends to
crouch in the lake,
soak his arms up past his
carpenter tan and swim with
eyes shut splashing everyone.

He looks for structural fatigue
in his marriage. With her
it's always 20 below.
The weather has its reasons
and so does she. Her days
sucked into sinks full of dishes,
nights spent ironing.

His drill digs deep into his heart
exposing the bitter past,
mother dead and he apprenticed
to a carpenter at nine,
the ocean crossing and the stench
of steerage when he was seventeen,
laying railroad tracks
and sleeping in unheated box cars
until a worker froze.

His miter box builds secrecy
of corners. There, he hides his mandolin, strums it
with his amputated finger
or switches off the buzz saw
to hear silence grow.

His wedge separates the hours,
pries a little extra time
into his life; a chance to
listen to Caruso after supper,
play a game of checkers or
hum Light Opera Gems.

We watch him balancing on
scaffolding high above our games
and when he spits a nail,
drives it in and stops to wave
at us we all wave back.

His saw crosscuts the years.
Now, he hears his children
singing, smells the scent
of wood shavings and glue,
wakes each morning from
hard bones of sleep.

His screwdriver tightens
tendons, ligaments and bones
that give him strength
to build our house from memory
and deep in the house's heart
he makes a room for each of us
with a window's width of light.

Now, we're safe inside our simple
rooms in our simple house
with his sandpapered arms
wrapped tight around us
as if time were nothing at all.

Ruth Daigon

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