TALES FROM THE CRYPT

GUILT AND THE JEWISH RIGHT
REVIEW: YOURS IN STRUGGLE
RAG TALK
NEW YORK STREET GAMES
SHORT STORIES, POEMS
LETTERS

FEATURING: STEVE FANKUCHEN, RICHARD GROSSMAN,
EUGENE KAELLIS, A. M. KRICHH, BURTON LEVINE,
ELLIO T RICHMAN, LENNY ZESKIND
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STEVE FANKUCHEN
Publisher/Editor

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I have frequently said that people shouldn't believe what they read, whether it's the Reader's Digest, Commentary, Road and Track, Woman's Day, or The New York Times, any more than they should believe what they hear on the radio or see on the tube. Just because something is neatly packaged, proclaims authority, oozes money, or wrings your heart is no reason to suspend the critical capabilities of your own brain. When it comes to the media, skepticism and rigorous scrutinization should be one's starting points. This is especially true when we are talking about media with whom we have essential philosophical and political agreement, because it is precisely in such instances that we tend to let our guard down, replacing scrutiny and doubt with faith and hope. Wanting to believe in something certainly makes it more likely that we will read into a situation that which we hope would be, rather than what is. At the least, there is a tendency to accept, to view the source as "authority", even when it preaches against authority.

It would be totally hypocritical of me to claim an exemption for SHMATE. This magazine should be viewed no differently than other media. In fact, for me it is more important that people approach SHMATE (as well as all media, politicians, gurus, doctors, sociologists, and therapists) with passionate skepticism, than that they believe what is written in the magazine.

To that end I tried a little experiment in the last issue. I printed something totally phony, not simply a fact, but something so basic which, if true, would have a profound affect on major social institutions. In the midst of an intentionally trivial and silly paragraph on page 2 (bottom of column one through top of column two), I dropped a "one-liner" detailing how Christ did not die on a cross at Calvary, that it was a substitute switched by his disciples, and that three days later, out of guilt, he committed suicide. (These "facts" are actually from The Gemini Contenders, a novel by Robert Ludlum.) Not a single reader took note of this item in a letter. Of course that doesn't mean everyone believed it. Undoubtedly a number of folks thought of it as a joke or simply as a factual error not worth responding to. However, my purpose was not to elicit response, but to give each reader the chance, at this point, to examine his or her own reaction to the item. Did you notice it? Accept it? Question it? Doubt it? Reject it? Did it get passively absorbed, without particular notice, in your awareness, to be disgorged as "truth" in some future conversation?

I take very seriously the issues of integrity and responsibility. It certainly isn't my purpose to call into question SHMATE's commitment to them. In spite of that — or perhaps because of that — I believe it is important to risk this magazine's credibility in order to pursue the idea that credibility should always be tempered by skepticism and critical evaluation.

Another aspect of this was inadvertently highlighted in the last issue. The cover graphic was printed backwards. The swastika surrounding the two intertwined men goes the wrong way. If it weren't for my brother-in-law's keen awareness, I wouldn't be aware of the error. Again, nobody else with whom I spoke or who wrote took note of it. Perhaps many readers noted the error and took it for the "typo" it was. And, no doubt, some thought it correct the way it was. There is a third possibility, however, which is of distinctly greater concern: thinking the reversal was intentional and fraught with meaning and symbolism. Assume the correctness of the media, of the President, of corporate public relations flacks, and bend your "understanding" to fit their "facts". The worst aspect of this is that I have no doubt that, if questioned, I could claim the reversal was intended to symbolize something-or-other and that I would be believed. The media, like politicians and p.r. people, believe that the best defense is a good offense. Caught with some vice? Proclaim it as a virtue! Ollie North's gun running. Weyerhauser, the tree growing country. When's the last time you saw your favorite magazine or newspaper admit that it blew a call with the same prominence it made the call in the first place?

Perhaps I'm belaboring the point a bit. It is not my desire to promote a debilitating cynicism. However, it seems to me that the only legitimate way one can broadly grant the credibility of an authority, personal or institutional, is not only to reserve but also to exercise the right to question, the right to demand satisfactory explanations, especially from those nearest and dearest to one's heart.

Last spring the Bay Area was bombarded by the media with 20-year retrospectives, usually written and broadcast very nostalgically by folks too young to really have been an integral part of the events described. Twenty years ago was the coming of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts' Club Band and the Haight/Asbury Summer of love. What at the time were items of derision and subversion to the straight media have become, with the passage of time, safe — not to mention profitable — enough to look back at wistfully. For the most part I avoid media nostalgia like the insidious plague it often is, revising history to exclude the still-threatening realities and co-opting

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that which can't be avoided.

As for myself, I was never a big Beatles fan (Dylan and the Stones kept me going), and the Summer of Love I literally walked into and out of without knowing it was there. At the time I was busily bumming around the country, going nowhere, having just concluded what I'd already suspected: I was incapable of earning money. It wasn't an ideological inability, rather an emotional disability. I had tried the drug business, both the usual one and one with offices across from the Empire State Building. As to the former, anybody I knew simply couldn't charge a profit to and anybody didn't know, I didn't want to deal with. My one sale I lost money on. The Mid-town business produced similar results. I had the opportunity to make a lot of bread and be my own boss. But, I was incapable of pushing largely unneeded products (vitamins) on people who basically didn't have any money. My one sale was to a semi-fascist Greek grocer friend of mine, who used to run around Ithaca yelling that Melina Mercouri was a whore and reporting leftist opportunity to make a fortune. As to the former, anybody would extend us the endless credit we needed, keep­

ing a running tab on the back of an intermittent starter, and two bum cylinders, which converged on me.

I was, at the end of The Summer Of Love, in Cincinnati (the only place where people wore ties to go to the movies), having just driven 2400 miles on a total of six hours' sleep and no drugs, not even coffee, in my '54 Chevy with its leaking radiator, intermittent starter, and two bum cylinders, which limped into town and croaked, in Cincinnati, broke, maniacally exhausted from driving to see a woman who not too many hours before, when I was in Berkeley, said on the phone, "I miss you. I want you," who says, when I show up at her door in Cincinnati, "What the hell are you doing here?! Goodye!"

Cincinnati was, in one way, an inspiring place. It inspired me to get the hell out of there as fast as I could. And as far. So I talked my three closest friends into the idea of going around the world mountain climbing. We converged on Ithaca to get together the bread for the trip. Which gets me to precisely where I was twenty years ago. Cutting brush with a chain saw, notching logs with an axe, driving six foot reinforcing rods with a 16-pound maul, and filling 20-foot chainlink baskets with rocks. There's another way to describe what I was doing: stream erosion control. And another: killing crawdads, destroying spawning grounds, and general environmental pacification. And another: getting poison ivy, stung by bees, and trying to avoid getting my head blown off by the 10,000 hunters going after the 100 deer. It's all a matter of perspective. How you look at it. Pop relativity.

Each morning my buddy and I would wake up to the strains of WLS out of Chicago, which we could pull in before sunrise. Usually it played Lulu doing "To Sir, With Love". If it was cold, he'd take the short route from the porch, where we slept, into the house—through the window. I'd make our breakfast, while he made our lunch; then I'd crank up our other roommate's 650 BSA and we'd tool off twenty miles to our job. Keeping the bike on the road with 200 pounds sitting behind me, trying to avoid suddenly stopping rural school busses, frosty slick spots, and insomniac dogs, usually woke me up, so that by the time I got to work, I was awake enough to remember which end of the chain saw to hold when I pulled the starter cord. Most of the time.

That job taught me to appreciate McDonald's. Not love, just appreciate. After three weeks of tuna sand­wiches for lunch, we figured we needed a change. Since we had a half hour for lunch, we could hop the cycle, peel the eight miles into town, grab a burger and fries, and get back to our corner of the woods in time. Of course this didn't leave us much time to eat the stuff, but who the hell wants to linger over a 15¢ burger anyway?! After three weeks of that, we were getting pretty desperate. Our burps were making the 2-cycle chain saw exhaust smell good. At that point inspiration struck. The bosses on the crew were also supposed to take a half hour for lunch. But they took more. All that was really necessary for us was to be back before them. So we followed them to the greasy spoon where they hung out, set ourselves down in comparative luxury, ate our $1.50 roast beef sandwich and mashed potatoes, left when they did, and got back to work two minutes before them, since it took them more time to loaf into their truck than for us to hop on the bike.

The job was good. It paid $2.25/hour and life insur­

ance. The latter was not an irrelevancy, I realized, the day I let go of the maul mid-swing and almost took my bosses heads off. One of the bosses, that is. Which is why the strike I led, first (as far as I know) in the state conservation department's history, was a success. At the time of the strike there were five laborers and seven bosses. As I made it plainly clear to the lower rung bosses, if they canned us, they lost all their status, immediately ending up on the bottom of the heap. The strike was over a backhoe. We were working in a stream putting in gabions, large wire baskets filled with rocks. We had to work underwater with the water temperature in the 45° range, on cold days in the 30's. It was an incredible pain in the ass, somewhat dangerous, and highly inefficient. I kept saying let's dig a channel...
around the spot where we're working, do the gabians dry, and finish in comfort in half the time. We even had a backhoe sitting there doing nothing at $12/hour. The bosses said no and we went on strike.

The five of us strikers had a lot of solidarity. There was one hoping-to-be professional baseball player, my buddy and I mad at the military for what it was doing in Vietnam and two other guys mad at the military for refusing to send them to 'Nam when they volunteered. We got along very well, and when I took a couple days off to go to D.C. for the March on the Pentagon, all I got from the rest of the gang was incomprehension and curiosity. At least to my face.

I burned my draft card at the Pentagon and found a new one in my mail box two days later. The strike ended in what only the Peoples' World would refer to as a victory for the working class. And, twenty years ago this week, the job itself ended with the pacification of strategic hamlets of the hostile indigenous fauna population and the denuding of the countryside. The job had been a good place to visit, but I doubted if I wanted to live there. It did leave me in good spirits and great shape, which turned out to be important when I broke my back six weeks later.

********

I'm an equal opportunity bigot. While I'm much too cynical to think that religion is the opiate of the masses, I do basically consider it a minus, especially when it becomes an endeavor that reaches past the personal to the political. But sometimes a religion presents a golden opportunity. The Mormons recently presented the Jews with such an opportunity. Unfortunately, the Jews blew it. The Mormons wanted some prime Jerusalem real estate to build a university on. Most Jews felt the Mormon idea of a university was a place from which to proselytize, and so ensued a big argument as to whether or not they should get the land. The Israeli government, more concerned with votes in the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee than with the souls of impressionable Israeli youth, decided to let the Mormons open up shop.

This was a mistake. Not because I mind them praying, preaching, proselytizing, and politicking in Israel. To the contrary. What the Jewish community should have done was offer them a trade: Israel (all of it, not just part of Jerusalem) for the southern two thirds of Utah. Think of the advantages. First, the Jews end up with a lot more land. Second, we end up with some of the most beautiful land imaginable, including the requisite desert to wander in for 40 years. Third, most of the Mormons would probably leave and head north to Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Provo, or to Israel. Not that there are very many folks who live there now. (A people without a land for a land without people!) A chunk, of course, should go to the Navahos. This would leave the Mormons and the Palestinians to deal with each other (pure poetic justice) and the Jews with only an exceedingly small residual population of jack Mormons, who would feel real at home with the ultra-Orthodox Jews, the way the Orthodox Jews feel right at home in a nationalist Quebec. Such a deal!

Speaking of Mormons, why is it that when Fundamentalist Protestant ministers claim a direct pipeline to God, the Jewish (as well as Catholic as well as mainstream Protestant) leaders deride them through resolutions, press releases, and ecumenical confabs, yet when the head Mormon has his latest one-on-one with the One and Only, not a word is heard from our alleged leaders. A for instance: it was bad enough no one opened his or her mouth about the fact that the Mormons did not believe, as a theological certainty, that Blacks were equal. But, when a few years ago the President of the Council of Elders talked with God and came back to tell his flock of his revelation that, Io and behold, Blacks were now equal, the silence from Jewish honchos was just as deafening. Can't our community conjure up at least a little embarrassment at its selective morality?!

Not that the Mormons come off so squeaky clean (except culturally — hard to dirty what isn't there). I don't mean things like Brigham Young University busily recruiting unequal Blacks for their football and basketball teams. It's more like the Mormon leadership inveigling against government regulation (commie plot, of course), except when you want to drink real beer or wash your underwear in a laundromat on Sundays.

And then there's the case of the MX Missile. The Mormons have supported virtually every armaments program ever proposed in Washington. And not for cynical economic reasons. No, they are really into the weapons as a matter of policy, as a matter of theology for all practical purposes. And they were all for the MX. That is, until the massive MX-on-a-train construction project was slated for their own back yard. A little fast shuffling of revelations at the top and the Mormon leadership suddenly sounded like a one shot SANE convention. The unanticipated attack of peace, love, and good vibes produced much discussion as to whether the Mormons had actually seen the light, thought twice about becoming a target area for Soviet missiles, or had developed a sudden case of environmental sensitivity. The answer — and you heard it here first — is: None Of The Above. Nope, what the Mormon leaders were really worried about was the social effect of an incredibly big construction project. What happens in instant construction boom towns which spring up? Booze, sex, dope, gambling, and a general disregard for the extremely controlled values of the Mormon environment. The social atmosphere would be tainted. What's worse, some of the Mormon kids, hitherto shipped off as missionaries fresh out of high school and married before they're old enough to drink even 3.2 brew, might get some crazy notions in their heads. They might begin to question, to challenge, to reject authority. When that

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happens, no autocracy is safe, especially a theocracy. Commies with nukes are one thing; but kids who question, now there's real danger.

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STATE OF THE RAG

To belabor the obvious, this issue of SHMATE, like the previous one, is late. Thank you all for bearing with me, while I put things back together after a lengthy illness. The next couple of months I will concentrate on the editorial end of the magazine, developing several issues at once, probably using guest editors more. I have yet to find a way out of the morass of spending most of my time dealing with subscriptions, production, distribution, and publicity, not to mention the daily supply of junk mail, which multiplies like bunnies. You folks can help a lot by telling me of any change of address and by renewing — preferably for eight issues — before your subscription expires. The expiration issue is the same number as the last two digits after your name on the mailing label.

Letters. Please keep them coming in. They are especially important to the authors and artists. Feedback is the only compensation they receive for their efforts. That's also how I learn. In addition, many of you have important contributions to make to subjects covered in the magazine. Readers like letters, especially substantive ones. If you enjoy reading one, write one. If it is important to use a pseudonym, that's fine, as long as I can verify who you are.

A few other items. I would like to know what you think about the idea of removing the subtitle from the cover of the magazine. Also, all readers are encouraged to send in articles or proposals for articles, especially non-fiction. I want SHMATE to be a participatory endeavor, not a consumer product. It is definitely not intended to be a publication by famous names for the consumption by the awestruck.

For those of you new to the magazine, SHMATE is produced entirely by an unpaid staff of one — myself. It has no angels or institutional support. It exists solely through the subscriptions and donations of its readers. Similarly, the rag depends on you to spread the word, for publicity, for gift subs, for getting others to subscribe. A little Chanukah gelt sent this way would be most appreciated.

I think it's fairly safe to assume that virtually all SHMATE readers consider themselves pro-union, as do I. When I began this magazine I specifically chose a union shop. After a couple of issues, their prices seemed too high and their quality inconsistent. So I sought out another printer, also union, whose rates were about 40% less. Though there were some problems over the years, I liked the folks a lot and was basically satisfied with their work. Unfortunately, their prices went up about 60%. I sought out another printer, the only other one in the area capable of efficiently producing a magazine such as SHMATE. He gave me a price about 35% less than I had been paying with a very slight reduction in paper quality. Considering that printing is well over half the cost of producing the magazine, it seemed obvious to try the new printer. I brought down my copy, went through it page by page and, when I came to the back cover, showed them where to put the union bug. They said, “What bug?” No bug, no union. So dear readers, to reiterate, I consider SHMATE a participatory endeavor, not a consumer product. Therefore, I'm throwing the ball into your court. You're for unions? Fine! Are you for unions enough to pay $1 more per copy, because that's what going back to the old union shop would cost. Your thoughts on this subject would be most welcome.

STEVE FANKUCHEN
I discovered **SHMATE** at my school library and love it. I've pored over all the back issues and figure I might as well support the magazine. I wish I had more money; I'd love to donate some. It is so refreshing to read a magazine that is both left-wing and Jewish. The issue on Jewish Humor was great. So was the "Open Letter To An Anti-Zionist Friend", by Daniel Lev. I have made copies of it to give to friends. I also thought your editorial "Israel and The Left" was right on target.

Tony Michaels  
Santa Cruz, California

I picked up a copy of Issue #9 at Bound Together in San Francisco. What a relief it is to read an article on Israel and the Left that steers clear of dogma and rhetoric, yet remains critical.

Sharon Seidenstein  
Berkeley, California

You are probably the only one on the Left trying to publish facts on Israeli problems. The others that I have tried have allowed their convictions (bias?) to control the content of the non-editorial part of the publication. This includes the *Nation, The Progressive, Tikkun, Mother Jones,* etc. Given the way people want to read what they already believe, I fear you have an impossible task. I salute you for trying.

Sy Fellner  
Long Island City, New York

I like your rants. I just spotted the one in the issue on The Right about [pictures of missing kids] on milk cartons. Do rant on. At least it maintains some sanity and, who knows, it might help.

Aryay Lenske  
Arcata, California

Thanks for keeping me on during my penury. The “Mrs. Katz” poem was great!

Daniel Marlin  
Berkeley, California

I really do know better; having taken care of RFD for a goodly number of years, I remember the frustration of returns keeping up with subscribers, etc. So, with the best of intentions, I kept meaning to inform you of my address changes, but there were a few of them in a short time, and the most recent issue I had was packed away. Anyway, thank you for following up.

I was especially pleased to receive this last issue with the comments about charging all Catholic priests with being agents for a foreign government, especially since some of us around the country may be involved in actions and efforts to keep a PLO voice in this country, for which we might be charged with the same. But I’d bet, shekels to bagels, that the Catholic Church has a bit more clout than the PLO, and only one suit will go through to completion.

I’ve been talking to a few people about bringing suit independently, or something like that. I am fairly litigious, whenever I can afford it, or can get NLG or ACLU support. My record right now is 1 and 2, but at least all three cases got publicity, which is part of the battle (Singer & Barwick v. Hara [gay marriage], Singer v. U.S. Civil Service Commission [employment rights/free speech], and benMiriam v. OMB [removing the phrase A.D. from Federal forms]).

Faygele benMiriam  
Seattle, Washington

I do want you to know how much I enjoy reading your stuff — such a refreshing change from the pompous columns of the *New Republic, The Nation,* all those people who know what’s right and are so certain of their positions, or have to please their advertisers or their subscribers. Your rag reminds me of the broadsheets of the 18th (?) century, where strong-minded men wrote what they pleased, and were arrogant, wrong-headed, sometimes wild, but honest.

Where else will I read about Gypsies and the Holocaust? (And how about the homosexuals and the Holocaust?) And your account of your solo trip through the Southwest really struck a responsive chord — I covered much of the same ground last year, and I could smell and taste the place again, from your description. Love your writing, even to forgiving the misspellings (minuscule, desirable, not minuscule, desirable, and I assume the misspelling of *Commentary* was a typo.)

You may have a small circulation, but we have to be a very elite remnant. Which reminds me, why don’t you start a Personal column? You could make some money, and we few grouipes could find geographically desirable Shmante mates. Nu? Enclosed is my check for $25 for a two-year renewal.

Name Withheld  
Washington, D.C.

Loved the article on the Roma — very enlightening.

Roxane Neal  
Berkeley, California

I’m writing a long overdue reply to the articles about the Roma (Gypsies), in the Winter ’87 issue of SHMATE. Also the Roma connection to the Holocaust.

My family is from Rumania. My mother told me, when I was little, that “we are part Gypsy, but don’t tell anybody.” My mother was a radical and a union organizer. I have been fired from, and discriminated against, in more jobs than I care to...

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10
LISTEN JEWS. STOP FEELING GUILTY — AT LEAST ABOUT WORLD WAR II. FOR THE PAST DECADE JEWISH RIGHT-Wingers have claimed that American Jews share responsibility for the mass murder of European Jewry. The Rebbe of this campaign, Elie Wiesel, even erases the difference between German war criminals and those, like American Jews, who Wiesel believes did not do enough to stop the crimes. "Ask the survivors; they will tell you, the indifference of the allies and friends wounded them as deeply as the cruelty of the enemy." Establishment Jews have accepted both the guilt and the conservative agenda pushed by the campaign. Even many on the Left have masochistically accepted Wiesel's false portrait of American Jews' indifference toward the fate of European Jews.

Most of the conservatives are connected to Revisionist Zionism. Revisionists believe in a radical Zionism in which Jews must choose between their own state and a world that is completely and permanently anti-Semitic. They dream of an Israel on both sides of the Jordan. They oppose liberals, socialists, communists, and Jews who believe in a collective struggle for anything other than a Jewish nation-state. In Israel today they are with Sharon on the right-wing of the Likud.

Wiesel's second book, *Dawn*, was a justification for terrorism by the Revisionist Irgun after W.W.II. Wiesel even gave his own biography to an Irgun assassin in *Dawn*. Jack Eisner, who is a major financier of the guilt campaign, was a member of Betar, the Revisionist youth movement Begin led in Poland.

In 1981, Eisner financed a commission, with Arthur Goldberg as figurehead, to study the behavior of American Jewish leaders during W.W.II. After a year, Eisner withdrew his support because the commission's indictment was not as stern as he desired. Samuel Merlin, another Revisionist, wrote the reconstituted commission's final report. Even in its attenuated form the Goldberg report, along with books by historians David Wyman and Haskell Lookstein, surrender to the Revisionist charge that American Jews share in the guilt of the Holocaust as silent accomplices of the Nazis. They claim that most American Jewish leaders and organizations were more concerned with personal feuds and communal politics than with helping the Jews of Europe. Only Revisionists, operating on the edge of Jewish life, effectively fought in America to help European Jews.

A key point in the indictment of American Jewry is American Jewish Congress Leader Stephen Wise's handling of a telegram from Gerhard Riegner, the World Jewish Congress representative in Switzerland. Riegner's telegram provided proof from a reliable German source of a German plan to systematically kill Jews. After receiving the telegram in late August 1942, Wise consulted the State Department. Under Secretary Sumner Wells asked him not to release it until the State Department could verify it through its sources. Wise agreed and did not release the telegram until November 24, 1942.

"How could he (Wise) pledge secrecy when millions of lives were involved?" asks Wiesel. Lookstein and other historians accepted Wiesel's belief that Wise suppressed the report for three months leaving docile American Jews uninformed and dooming millions to death. During those three months, they say, American Jewry could have been organizing protests to demand the rescue of European Jews.

But Wiesel's version is based on omission of some facts and distortion of others. David Wyman is a non-Jewish historian, who relies heavily on Revisionist sources, but is more interested in the policy of the U.S. government during W.W.II than Jewish communal politics. Writing in a detailed, plodding style free of the bathos and sanctimony of Lookstein and Wiesel, he disproves their account of the Riegner telegram.

First, although the Riegner telegram was significant as a report of systematic mass murder, it was not the first report of its kind. Wyman cites six others between March and August 1942. One issued in London by Riegner's own W.J.C. reported up to 1,000,000 Jews dead. Another issued at the same time by the Bund and the Polish government-in-exile discussed the existence of a systematic plan of mass murder. Only one thing makes the Riegner telegram significant — it was the first to have the official confirmation of the U.S. government. But to get that confirmation, Wise had to cooperate with the State Department.

Second, by the fall of 1942 too much information was available for anyone to suppress it. B'nai B'rith's *National Jewish Monthly* in October and *Jewish Frontier* in November put together all of the available information to come to the same conclusions as the Riegner telegram.

Third, Jacob Rosenheim of Agudath Israel of America received the same information as Wise at the same time. But Wise, Lookstein and other conservatives only condemn Wise, the liberal New Dealer and supporter of Labor unions. They ignore Rosenheim, the Orthodox leader. Rosenheim could have done whatever they expected of Wise. But Wise is a representative of

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the conservative enemies — the Enlightenment, freedom, rationalism. Rosenheim represents the conservative ideals — religious obscurantism, repression, and the denial of free will and democracy.

Fourth, during the three months wait Wise's behavior was neither that of a man callous toward the fate of the Jews nor that of one trying to suppress information. On September 3, he and Rosenheim convened a meeting of Jewish organizations to discuss the telegram. The next day they allowed the Jewish Telegraphic Agency to report on the meeting. In the weeks while he waited for the State Department's verification, Wise urged Myron Taylor, Roosevelt's representative to the Vatican, to intercede with the Pope, lobbied Vice President Wallace and Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson about sending food to Jews in Poland, discussed setting up sanctuaries for Jews with Secretary of the Interior Ickes, and asked Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau and Justice Frankfurter to discuss the telegram with President Roosevelt.

Fifth, only the wealthy or self-proclaimed Jewish leaders interest conservatives like Wiesel. If they did not live up to Revisionist standards then all American Jews are condemned. But most Jews were active even before the Riegner telegram. On July 21, 1942, B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Labor Committee, and American Jewish Congress sponsored a meeting to publicize and protest the mass murder of European Jews. Among the speakers were Stephen Wise, who Lookstein and Wiesel virtually accuse of having blood on his hands for suppressing this information a month later. More than 20,000 Jews crowded Madison Square Garden and thousands more stood outside. The Synagogue Council of America declared July 23, Tisha B'Av, a memorial for the slain Jews and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis declared August 12 a special fast day.

Even before the war began, American Jews were holding mass meetings and protests to demand government action for relief, rescue, or sanctuary for European Jews. They continued throughout the war. Although they were heavily attended, polemicists like Wiesel rarely mentioned them, unless Revisionists were involved.

Besides demonstrating, American Jews fought hard to win the war. More than 500,000 Jewish men, about 11% of all American Jews, fought in the war. Many Jewish women also joined the armed forces. Other men and women worked in war industries. People like Wiesel give them no credit for their efforts.

Finally, how much influence could protest have in the summer of 1942? The outcome of the war was uncertain. The Germans were outside Stalingrad. Rommel was moving toward Alexandria. The U.S. was just revving up its war effort and the Marines were just landing on Guadalcanal. At that time winning the war was the best way to help Jews of Europe. The defeat of Britain, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. certainly would not have helped Europe's Jews. Until the U.S. itself was out of danger, no government official would consider diverting any energy away from the war effort.

Revisionists often write as if America and American Jews were the same 40 years ago as they are today. The fight for a policy of rescuing Jews from Europe shows how wrong they are. In January 1944, little more than a year after both the Riegner telegram and after the war turned in the allies' favor, the U.S. government, largely at the instigation of American Jews, established the War Refugees Board to rescue Jews from Europe.

During the year long fight for the W.R.B., Jews had to fight stubborn bureaucrats, their own political weakness, anti-Semitism, and human nature itself. The government, especially the State Department, was full of anti-Semites and petty bureaucrats who opposed helping Jews. In July 1943, Roosevelt approved a Treasury Department plan to send relief funds to Jews in France and Romania. The State Department held it up until December 1943, when it was no longer possible. Also in 1943 the State Department defied Roosevelt's orders to do more to rescue Jews. Even in 1943, State Department officials like Ambassador to Spain Carleton Hayes ignored State department orders to cooperate with the W.R.B.

Anti-Semitism did not just lurk in the government. It increased during the 1930s and only peaked in 1944, when one poll showed 56% of Americans with anti-Semitic attitudes. Bigotry was acceptable enough for Congressman John Rankin to use anti-Semitic and racist epithets on the floor of the House, without protest from his colleagues.

In 1942, American Jews had little power, money, or influence. Most were first or second generation Americans. B'nai B'rith, the largest Jewish organization, had only one paid staff member and no permanent headquarters. During W.W.II, only seven Jews served in the House of Representatives. The seven, like most Jews, were Democrats. Since Roosevelt knew that most Jews would not vote Republican, he had little to gain by supporting Jewish demands. On the other hand, if he did support Jewish demands for things like a rescue agency, or immigration from Germany or East Europe, he would lose votes.

Perhaps more obstructive than anti-Semitism or uncooperative bureaucrats was human nature. Twenty-five years ago, while writing about Anne Frank, Bruno Bettelheim observed that many people, when first confronted with evidence of Nazi mass murder tried to repress the information and continued to live as if nothing had changed. According to The Survivor, Jack Eisner and members of his family, repeatedly left hiding and a measure of safety to sneak back into Nazi-run ghettos where, although in danger, they felt comfortable. Eisner, the scourge of American Jews for not helping their Polish brethren, spent the first three years of the war aloof from any Jewish underground or political
organization. Instead he maintained his parents' middle class life by smuggling. Only just before the final battle by ghetto fighters did Eisner join a Betar combat group.

In his first book, the autobiographical Night, Wiesel tells how he and the Jews of his town refused to accept or act upon news of the killing, when confronted with it. In his later works, like his preface to The Abandonment of the Jews and his Nobel Prize speech, Wiesel changes the story. Now he claims that in 1944, despite world-wide organization, instead he maintained his parents' middle case, since he claims that Hungarian Jews did not know about the mass murder, because people like Wise suppressed the facts. If the Hungarian Jews had known, he says, they would have fled the Germans. But they did know. Their own repression, not Wise's suppression, stopped them from fleeing.

Neither Wiesel nor Eisner are unusual. Many European Jews who were actually confronted with the Nazis and their barbarism time to comprehend the truth. Only then could they begin to react. Why should American Jews, often only informed by third and fourth-hand reports, be expected to react any quicker? The wonder is how quickly they grasped the enormity of the Nazi crimes. The first report of mass murder arrived in March 1942. By July, Jews were already crowding into Madison Square Garden for one in a constant stream of protests. In only 14 months they forced a stubborn government to rescue Jews.

Although Wyman's book is the best on the subject, his reliance on Revisionist sources leads him into problems. The worst is his acceptance of the dichotomy between American Jews and Revisionists. During W.W.II, the American Revisionists followed a group of ten Palestinian Jews, including Samuel Merlin, who were known as the Bergson Group, after their leader Peter Bergson. The Revisionists claim that since the Bergson group only arrived in the U.S. just before the war, the entire Revisionist movement who followed them was not American. They ignore the thousands of American Jews who worked in Revisionist groups. At the same time, they credit the Bergson group with any achievements by American Jews during the war. For example, they assume that the W.R.B. was only a result of the Bergson group and Revisionist protest and publicity. The effect of this maneuver is to portray Revisionism as a force outside of American Jewish life, to be favorably compared with supposedly passive, selfish American Jews.

After stripping American Jews of credit for any wartime achievement, polemics like Lookstein and Wiesel easily conclude that American Jews failed European Jews by not having a "united sustained campaign for all-out mobilization of American Jews and their organizations on behalf of massive rescue." If only American Jews had suppressed their differences and worked together (according to a Revisionist plan, of course), so much more would have been done.

What critics like Lookstein, Weisel, and Merlin dismiss as communal politics and personal feuds was democracy, however feeble, in action. In the 1930s, opponents of the Revisionists accused them of being Mussolini-style fascists, who submitted to the will of their Leader, Vladimir Jabotinsky. Even today without their Leader, the Revisionists cannot shake their distrust of democracy. Leaders like Stephen Wise bother them because, instead of issuing orders, they discussed, debated, and sometimes even voted.

The anti-democratic Revisionist dream of Jews working together as an organic whole would not have been nearly as effective as the actual arrangement during W.W.II. Rivalries among Jewish groups forced each group to work harder. In March, 1943, the American Jewish Congress, hesitant about having a protest rally at all, quickly scheduled one for March 1 when it learned of the Bergson rally scheduled for March 9. Both had high attendance. Obviously, many of the same people attended both events. But if the groups had been working together there would have been only one rally and half as much publicity. Also, outsiders like the Bergson group and the Revisionists strengthened insiders like Wise. The insiders could do to Roosevelt and say give me something or the crazies will take over.

The Revisionists might have been better at stirring up public opinion and scaring the government, but for more mundane tasks, established Jewish organizations excelled. After Roosevelt created the W.R.B., the Revisionists turned their attention from rescuing Jews to supporting the Irgun in Palestine. Any success of the W.R.B. was to the credit of regular Jewish organization. Although Roosevelt established the W.R.B. he gave it almost no money — only $500,000 for administration and about $1,000,000 to buy food to ship to concentration camp victims. The entire rest of the W.R.B. budget came from Jewish organizations. Although supposedly mired in personal and organizational politics the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and American Jewish Committee gave the W.R.B. $15,000,000 and Vaad Hahatzalat gave $1,000,000. The W.R.B. used the money to save 200,000 Jews and to send its most successful agent, Raoul Wallenberg, to Hungary. The A.J.D.C. was also the principal financial support for Protestant and Catholic rescue committees, which throughout the war could not raise enough money from their own people.

Another element in the Revisionist version of W.W.II is their insistence that nothing matters before 1942 and the industrialization of mass murder. For conservatives 1942 is a good date. All of the anti-Semites and conservative scoundrels, who are now Revisionist allies in the cold war and who kept Jews out of the U.S. during the 1930s, appear much nicer dressed up in wartime patriotism. Also 1942 was the middle of the war, when American Jews had few anti-Nazi options open to them. Starting from that date necessarilly makes them look CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
more inactive than they were and makes them feel guilty.

But Jews were fighting Nazis long before 1942. In 1933, within days of Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, Jews around the world spontaneously began to boycott German goods. This boycott was not like today’s tepid anti-South Africa disinvestment campaign. The boycott was a total refusal of commercial relations with Germany. On March 13, 1933, five weeks into Hitler’s term, the American Jewish War Veterans was the first group in the world to call for a boycott. On March 27, 1,000,000 Jews and another 1,000,000 non-Jews joined boycott protests throughout America.

The boycott was, at first, successful. By early April, German exports were down low enough to affect the balance of payments. In May IG Farben reported a 50% decline in exports and German Finance Minister Schacht told U.S. Secretary of State Hull that German foreign currency reserves had fallen so low that Germany might have to default on $5 billion in foreign debts.

Edwin Black’s *The Transfer Agreement* is a meticulous account both of the boycott and its failure. As a Zionist, Black wants to justify the Zionist Organization’s decision to break the boycott and to sell German goods throughout the Middle East. In return the Germans agreed to allow the transfer of German Jewish capital to Palestine. Black explains this agreement as an example of Zionist cunning that resulted in the economic development of Palestine and the future Jewish state. He admits that the transfer agreement, along with extraordinary German austerity measures, helped to undermine the boycott, but views the failure of the boycott as a bearable cost in the fight for a Jewish state.

At the time, the Revisionists opposed the transfer agreement and supported the boycott. But their 1980s followers like Wiesel rarely mention the boycott controversy because it complicates their simple view of the past and their program for the future. In order to make American Jews feel guilty they brush off or ignore any Jewish activity before 1942, like the boycott or the heavy Jewish involvement in Leftist and anti-Nazi work. At the same time they whitewash the Zionist anti-boycott blunder. With these two steps they can falsely chide American Jews for their wartime inactivity and, at the same time, insist that American Jews slavishly support Israel and the Zionists who, unburdened by their boycott mistake, are held up as models of unselfish Jewish solidarity and political wisdom.

Playing off American Jews’ false sense of guilt, Wiesel and his followers use the Holocaust as an advertising gimmick for their conservative causes—the cold war, support for the Contras, Israel as a conservative ally of the U.S., the destruction of the Israeli Left and Israeli socialism, support for Begin, Shamir, Sharon, Ronald Reagan and opposition to any third world liberation movement. Elie Wiesel has even used it to endorse Republican political candidates.

The Jewish conservatives transformed the laudable and necessary fight to help Soviet Jews into a cold war tactic. In the 1970s American Jews supported the Jackson-Vanik Amendment that forced the U.S.S.R. to trade emigration of Jews for trade with the U.S. Many Jews, led by people like Wiesel, said “this is what we should have done for German Jews in the 1930s.” In fact, it is what American Jews did do until the Zionist leadership undermined them. But more important, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was written by conservatives as an explicitly anti-Soviet law that would stop détente and keep U.S. arms production high. It would not even affect a country like Nazi Germany, since it only applied to “countries with nonmarket economies,” in other words, Communist. After passage, Jackson-Vanik could not be used to help endangered Jews in Argentina or other countries favored by conservatives during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Besides being part of an anti-Soviet campaign, Jackson-Vanik meshed with Revisionism by transforming the campaign to help Soviet Jews into a movement with the restricted goal of letting Jews leave the Soviet Union for Israel. The goals of religious freedom and an end to Soviet anti-Semitism died. But for Revisionists, who believe the world is necessarily and hopelessly inhospitable to Jews, transforming the Soviet Jewish civil rights movement into a Zionist emigration movement was perfect.

Despite their “never again” mantra, the conservatives seem not to have learned from W.W.II. According to David Wyman, the only American Christians who substantially helped Jews in Europe were the American Friends Service Committee, Unitarian Service Committee, and the Federal Council of Churches. Today these liberal church groups, especially the National Council of Churches, the successor to the Federal Council of Churches, are the constant targets of the National Council of Churches, the successor to the Federal Council of Churches, are the constant targets of Jewish conservatives, because they show occasional sympathy for the non-Jewish Palestinians, because they are critical of Israel, and because they partially question American cold war policies. They have not lost the humanitarian impulses that led them to help Jews during W.W.II. On the other hand, the conservatives fawn over petty, xenophobic, anti-Semitic know-nothings like the American Legion, Republican Party conservatives, and right-wing fundamentalist Christians, all of whom worked to keep Jews out of the U.S. during the war, but are now reactionary supporters of Israel.

Under normal circumstances, even the most befuddled American Jews would not buy an argument that people who kept their parents and grandparents out of the U.S. during the Hitler period are better for Jews than the people who tried to help them. But the conservatives, by arguing that everybody, even American Jews, were guilty, make it harder to pin down guilt on anyone. The anti-fascists of the 1930s who helped Jews

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remember. My employers suspected me of being Native American, Chicano, and a "dirty Gypsy." I always thought it ludicrous to tell them, "No, don't discriminate against me, I'm Jewish."

A number of factors gives me a different perspective from most of my American Jewish brethren. I feel proud to be working class (housing projects), a college drop-out (I couldn't swallow the crap they were teaching), daughter of radicals, and a self-taught artist. The pain of living with these factors, as well as looking different growing up in Minnesota, has taught me an immense amount I couldn't have learned elsewhere.

The Jewish legacy of looking inward, and dealing with our yetzer hara (the evil urge) and ethical conduct is fast slipping. Our position has changed from being outspoken prophets and outsiders to militarists (Israel), and fat, assimilated, comfortable Jews, who think we're Americans. The constant screeching and going over and over episodes of the Holocaust feels like self-interest to me. I also think that it furthers the interests of Washington, in that it diverts attention from the present to the past.

There are many lessons to be learned from the Holocaust. The European Jews, specifically in Germany, believed that they were safe, accepted, and assimilated. They did not see the danger, while it was right at the door. German Jews were often successful and had positions of authority. Did they connect with the Gypsies, the crazy people, gays, revolutionary German artists, and the German working class? Some factors were the failure and narrowness of the Left and socialist parties, economic crises, the German authoritarian character, and Hitler. The grounds for fascism are complex, yet in many ways obvious.

I don't see a great deal of difference between the Holocausts of then and now. What's the difference in the theology and actions of WWII and the 1980's? The Germans said non-Aryans are evil, kill the dirty Jews, Gypsies, crazy people, disgusting artists and homosexuals. The American government says everyone who doesn't agree with American economic interests and our way of life must be wiped out. Meaning Nicaragua, Cuba, the U.S.S.R., the Indians, homosexuals, homeless, artists, crazy people, farmers, factory workers, trees, water, animals, plants, and everything non-plastic.

It feels troublesome to me, to find a goodly number of Jews supporting, cooperating, and putting these fascistic policies into action. There's no section of people who has the corner on suffering and persecution. The inability to see beyond self-interest, and look into the deeper causes of the problem, only creates repetition of the problem. Can't we learn from history? Where is our legacy of scholarship and learning?

Of course, half a million Gypsies perished in the Holocaust. They are perishing and persecuted to this day, all over the world. The Jewish spirit is perishing also. We have forgotten, in the space of fifty years, our four thousand-year-old history and all its lessons. Instead of arguing about which is the more ethical way to behave, we drive our children nuts, in the name of becoming successful Americans. Instead of critical thinking, we blindly support militarist Israel and do the same to the Palestinians as was done to us, in the name of our survival.

Although many things about Judaism and Jewish culture may be oppressive, I advocate looking into our past and tradition to better learn, become better people, and also to try to truly survive.

B. Spiegel
Berkeley, California
Barret Kasophsky cracked the tired joints in his back and pushed his chair from his worktable. All the other workers had gone, and Barret sat with the machines alone in the low-ceilinged windowless room. Barret was 33. He was ambitious. He was smart and willing to bust balls. But tonight, after eighteen hours of work, he was tired.

Barret had brought all his brothers and sisters and close relatives to America from Russia, one at a time. His first son had recently been born. Barret had focused on a short range specific: bring everyone over, find a place big enough, get them going somehow on their own, keep them together, keep an eye out. All in all, he felt, these tasks had been accomplished with surprising ease, considering hydrological, pecuniary, and linguistic logistics involved.

On this night, Barret found himself thinking of the future, of his children, grandchildren, and even beyond. Barret acknowledged to himself his modest ambition: basic respect and ease, which tasteful wealth would bring, dignified professions for his descendants. But he was experiencing some discomfort. Here I am, he thought, head of the family I have led to freedom, Moses to the entire Kasophsky family. On me sits responsibility for infusing new life into old while maintaining valuable traditions among temptations of this new world. Here I am creating a dynasty in a strange land. What will become of the sweat of my sweat and the blood of my blood?

He had eight brothers and six sisters. In his heart, he knew he could not exercise hegemony over all of them and their descendants, much less even know where their hands were. He was resigned, therefore, to some degree of dispersion. But at the same time he had decided that by dedicating himself to his own and to selected relations, one day a reasonable family might at the least be circumscribed.

As Barret let his chin fall against his chest, a small man pulled up a chair.

"Indulging yourself about the future, Barret? You have the time?"

"So who are you?" demanded Barret, lifting his head and rubbing his eyes.

"Ah," said the man, "let us not bother with trifles. You're beginning to worry, aren't you, Barret, that you may just wither away in this sweatshop. That you may turn out to be ordinary. That your descendants may not be leaders in their communities, credits to their race and family. True?"

For a few moments Barret was silent. Then: "What do you know from respect, from credit? From family?"

"I know," said the man. "Look, we'll make a deal."

"I don't make deals," said Barret sharply. "I've had a long day. I'm going home. I'm tired."

"Barret," said the man, "you don't know what tired is. Wait until you are 99, and just the thought of another sunrise makes you weep with weariness. Take time today, Barret, take time today to talk with me. We need to talk... about your labor and your loins."

"Barnet looked up and down the man. "You don't sound Jewish," he said.

"Ah, said the man, "ad hominem outbursts don't become you, Barnet. Listen, I have it within my ability to make you a prime exemplar of the American Dream. Say the word and I'll get you out of this sweat shop, and into one of your own. Yes, Barnet, your very own cloak and suit factory. I'll move your family out of the Lower East Side into a bigger place in Brooklyn. You'll be the honored patriarch of a vast new family. You will be fruitful. You will become a man of property, consuming one shrewd real estate deal after another. You will have health, wealth, and respect. You will be a fountainhead; your children will prosper and live on Long Island, and you will have nachis from your grandchildren."

"So who needs you?" asked Barnet. "At 33, I am already a patriarch. Who do you think holds this family together? I know who I am. I know if I work hard I'll get what I want. I know I can compete in the melting pot and achieve what I want without your help."

"Sure, sure, Barnet," said the man. "But it is all not that simple. I am quite sure you know the ills which can befall a man at the drop of some kreplach. Look at Job, for instance. And there is even more whimsey behind cosmic events than is revealed by that nice little story. Listen, you could be kicked by a milk horse on the way home tonight, and never see your cute kneidl again. All your dreams, all the sweat, PUF! down the drain. Ah, Barnet, you are a link, a crucial link in the fructification of several generations, not to mention in the concatenation of knowledge. Now of course, no one can guarantee to you a bed of roses - there will be the regular amount of pain, agony, etc., to go around. But look at what it is we can offer: life for you until some time of several generations, not to mention in the future, of your labor and your loins."

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is which keeps you under 100, but the printouts are clear on this point, and there is nothing I can do. So what's the difference a coupla years? Anyhow, that's not my department. But I can assure you of all the other things: you will be an immigrant success story, but tastefully, without gaudy ostentation and overweening pride. Quietly, without arousing envy, you will prosper. There will be children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, a huge family. They will all surround you for joyous Pesachs and colorful Hanukahs. And the children — among them will be better than average the number of high achievers. Good natured, upright, honest, respectful, model citizens without quirks and kinks, which would call untoward attention to themselves and the family. Every greenhorn’s fantasy, my dear Barnet, every immigrant’s dream.

Barnet sat silently for a few moments, then said, “All right. This fancy deal of yours, what will it cost me?”

The man poked around in his ear with his long pinkie nail and played with his large Adam’s apple. “I am not one to beat around the bush, Barnet. It won’t cost you a nickel. I want the youngest son of your first born.”

“My grandson?” shouted Barnet, “For what do you want my grandson?”

“That. dear Barnet, is my business,” said the man. “And what’s the difference why? It is a long time away when we would assume him. It will be an age of space travel, an age of unimaginable weapons and destructive wars, of fear, upheaval, and mountains of data. It will be a very different day from now. The sacred strands of our heritage, which you and I have learned to cherish, will have long been unraveled.”

“Bah,” spat Barnet, “Fancy words, but it’s evil that I hear, pure evil that I see in your beady eyes.”

“Barnet, Barnet,” said the man soothingly, reaching out to touch the tailor’s shoulder, “we wish you no ill-will. If you turn us down it will only mean you will just have to take your chances alongside the millions and millions of other immigrants and people. You will just have to compete breath by breath with the human horde, with their dropsi and diptheria, polio and plague, cancer, smallpox, typhoid and typhus, traffic accidents, chokings, earthquakes, stabblings and scarlet fever, ophidians and arachnids, toxic wastes and fission products plus a multitude of other anachronisms I don’t wish to go into at this time.”

“Why me?” asked Barnet, “why have you singled out me?”

“We want your grandson.”

“But it was my son who was only just born.”

“Aah.” said the man. “But there is this machine, called the electronic digital computer. It has not been installed yet on earth, but we have access to a huge one elsewhere. We feed in large amounts of raw data, and the computer tells us who we want. It knows billions of people and their primary and secondary characteristics in an instant. The computer stores all, screens all, retrieves all. I tell you, Barnet Kasophsky, these computers are absolutely fantastic.”

“So tell me,” said Barnet. “Tell me something what these machines of yours say will happen to my grandson if you get him.”

“Nothing will be done to him, Barnet. Therefore no one can predict his fate to a certain T. It is just that the computers inform us that if you live out your life in certain fashion, and your son does what he is to do, then when the time is right, your grandson will be what we want.”

“And we have to make this deal today, in 1910? You can’t wait until he is even circumcized, my grandson?”

“I wouldn’t say exactly we can’t wait,” said the man. “It’s just easier to work it all out now. There will be less hassle for everyone, including you, if this deal is made today. These are simpler times. There are no rules yet, no hotshot telecommunications lawyers and meddling busybodies throwing themselves onto the path of progress.”

“What will be done to him?” asked Barnet.

“Enough, Barnet,” said the man. “Enough questions. Other wage slaves would jump at the opportunity. You’d better think about it. Talk it over with the wife. This business can’t be rushed. We shall meet again, you and I. Sleep on it.”

The man rose, bowed a formal bow, and vanished.

Barnet blew his nose, put on his coat and walked out into the cold winter air.

That night, Barnet’s grandfather came to him in a dream. “Let’s talk about this supposed deal,” he said. “Yes, the little devil speaks the truth: you might prosper and thrive, as a cutter, a cloak and suiter, a real estate mogul, if you go along with this deal. But your grandson — if you give them your grandson — they will take him and fill him with sensitivity and reformist zeal, which will generate irresolvable conflicts and lusts for vengeance, which neither by noble deeds nor persistent art he will ever satisfy. They will mark him as a 20th Century Cain, and he will spend his life in search only of his grief. And when he meets his horrible end, he will be tired, tired as a young man as you will be only when you are bent and wrinkled.

“For all this, they mean to grant you fame and wealth, and, to be fair, him perhaps a fleeting opportunity to achieve an instant’s empathy. There are many variables, Barnet, but it looks as if they will give him a chance … of course, how much of a chance I don’t know.”

“There are variables?” said Barnet. “You mean I can make this deal and put my grandson through hell, and he may never know the fifth essence?”

“So what else is new?” said Grandfather. “Look, Barnet. I don’t want to get into a big tzimmis with you.

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over predestination. That is an exceedingly complex subject beyond the scope of this visitation. The computers say there will be the opportunity, and so far, the machines of the devil have proved to be uncannily accurate. But a machine is just a machine. No doubt there will be substantial flexibility, even should you choose to accept this deal. Nothing will be handed to either of you on a silver service. But it's your decision. I must go now.

But a machine is just a machine. No doubt there will be substantial flexibility, even should you choose to accept this deal. Nothing will be handed to either of you on a silver service. But it's your decision. I must go now.

When Barnet awoke, he dressed hurriedly and left the house without speaking to his wife or to various relatives and borders wandering in in early morning hours. He was troubled. Bent over his work he thought about the little man and his offer. Who needs this crap anyway, he asked himself. Isn't it enough I have slaved over this boring machine to bring the whole family over from Russia? Isn't it enough I support everyone and watch over them like a mother hen? I should also have the soul of my grandson on my conscience? Ach, it is not my business to choose the future for my grandson. I'll do my work, and leave the future to the stars. Besides, I don't make deals.

At once the man appeared, talking fast: "That's very nice and righteous of you, Barnet, but not a little prideful. Look at yourself, Barnet, aren't you already tired? You're young yet, 33; how are you going to make it to 90 and beyond? What is one grandson, when your future and the future of your entire family are at stake? Barnet speeded up his machine. "I won't even respond to your cheap hard sell," he said. "I won't give you my grandson. I don't need you. No deal. That's final. Go diddle the hopes and fears of some greenhorn geek."

"Look, Barnet," he spat. "You dare to threaten me? Pig! Pig!"

Barnet exploded: "You dare to threaten me? Pig! Pig!" he cried. With his strong immigrant arms he picked up the little man and threw him into the corner against sewing machines and their astonished operators. Barnet Kasophsky stood tall in the middle of the room, trembling with rage. "Stay away from me, and stay away from my family. There will be no deals. Go back to Hell!"

Barnet stomped out of the shop. As he walked around the neighborhood, he began to feel his rage melt into warm satisfaction. He congratulated himself for the firm and decisive action he had taken.

"Careful, Barnet, don't hurt your back you are slapping it so much," interrupted the little man popping up at his side.

Barnet kept walking. The little man hurried to keep pace. "Ah, Barnet," said the man, "you can't fight history. You can't stand up to fate. There are so many crazies around, Jew, Gentile, Pagan. Who knows what might befall you in the most innocent of circumstances?"

Barnet started to run. He felt cold snowflakes against his cheek, and the bite of winter wind.

"Listen, Barnet," said the man, so close Barnet could feel hot breath upon his neck. "I don't hold your momentary anger against you. I empathize with the nature of your oppression in this country. My heart goes out to the way you are alienated from your shirt collars and your waist bands. But I can't let you go on believing that you're somehow one-up on me. It is essential for you to understand that I let you throw me across the room. I could have done all kinds of things to you, to prevent you, to punish you. But I didn't. Look, Barnet, like you. I came to help you. I don't understand how you can be such an ingrate. I know your grandfather spoke with you last night... did he upset you? Is that why you are being so impolite with me today?"

Barnet was silent.

"So, Barnet, be reasonable. At least talk to me a few minutes."

Barnet stopped short, and the little man almost bumped into him. "My grandfather told me how my grandson would suffer, something you conveniently forgot to mention. He said my grandson would walk with the mark of Cain."

"Nu," said the man, "did I say he wouldn't? So he suffers a little. Who doesn't? Anyway, a little honest suffering never hurt anyone. And your grandson, he could become an artist. Think Dante, Barnet, Dostoyevsky, Thomashefsky, Jack London. Or a famous pacifist, maybe. Think of that, Barnet, think Eugene Debs."

"Pacifist schmacifist!" shouted Barnet. "What good is peace or art if he is to be miserable? If he is destined to wander the earth and beat his breast on account of evil not of his own doing? If he must wallow in the detritus of 20th Century civilization and consume his own entrails? Bah!" he spat. "Artist schmartist."

"Look, Barnet, ars longa, vita breve. Where's your sense of the big picture. How can you be such a Philistine? Barnet, Barnet," he said soothingly as Barnet started moving away, "Barnet, I'll tell you what, I'll do something I don't ordinarily do; I'll give you a guarantee, my own personal guarantee, that your grandson will get a fair shake. An honest shot. On the up and up. Foursquare. On the level. I really mean it, Barnet. Trust me."

"Trust you? Fuck you!" exploded Barnet. "Go fuck yourself." And then Barnet started to run. The little man followed half-heartedly for a few steps, then stopped and shouted: "Barnet, Barnet, you could be Zeckendorf without hubris; and your grandson — Philip CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
Roth! Don’t throw it all away. What’s it to you that after you’re long dead he will fester a little. I only want to help. Listen to me, Barnet...

But Barnet didn’t stop, and the little man watched as the black-cloaked figure disappeared around the corner. “Well, good luck to you, Barnet,” he said softly. “And that grandson of yours, God help his poor ass.”

A man yellowed from jaundice, emaciated from the meanderings of assorted intestinal boarders, kicked, with no particular emotion, a bamboo table, overturning it and scattering what had been a simple Filipino meal across the dirt floor of the bamboo hut. The houseboy standing near was unimpressed. He made no move to clean the mess or assist the man mumbling in a drunken stupor.

The small hut was located at the edge of a sugar cane plantation in the countryside in the eastern part of the Philippine archipelago. It had two rooms — a small one where a rattan bed with ragged mosquito netting took up most of the space, and a larger room which contained the now upside-down table, and a second, larger table set against the wall. A typewriter, stacks of books and papers, pens and pencils covered this table. On the wall were charts and diagrams of plots and characters from stories and dreams, written and unwritten. Piles of rancid books were scattered throughout the hut.

The man half-heartedly gave the table another kick, then stepped outside into the tropical sunset. He lit a thick short local cigar with shaking hands, and blew his smoke towards the setting sun. Tropical reds and oranges bathed him, and it was possible to see that he was white, tall, young in years.

Amos Kasophsky reached into the back pocket of his baggy and very dirty white trousers for a half-empty rum bottle and took a deep pull. The rum and the sun tried to warm him but he only shivered.

Amos’ Asian friends had been good to him, those friends he had made years and miles ago, when he had been young in spirit, confident, optimistic. In the beginning, they had taken him off to play volleyball, and had sent young girls from the mountains eager to please. They had sought his counsel and celebrated with him their victories. But he had grown impossible to understand, then to tolerate, with his festering desperation, his cosmic anger, the conflicts swelling in his breast, which he could not identify, but which left him no peace. And so they had let him be, had left him to drink and curse, to relive the times he had applied his Louisville Slugger to numerically-controlled machine tools and a variety of discs and chips. They had provided revolving houseboys to take care of his marketing and cooking needs, and they had stayed away.

This day, Amos knew he did not want to see another sunrise, did not want to think another thought, consider another idea, write another word. After years of computer sabotage and organizing among the exploited, he had settled here and produced pounds and pounds of essays and stories, of poetry and epics, along with mountains of empty bottles and vomit and piss. That afternoon he had burned a huge amount of work in a fire, whose smoke blended inconspicuously with that spiraling up from the firing of harvested cane fields.

Amos Kasophsky, age 33, had been ambitious. He had been smart. He had been willing to bust balls... to put his body on the line. But he was tired. He had tortured himself. He had run. He had stopped running and tried to transform himself—and all life—into Art. But he did not want to have to do it anymore. He had finished. Tossing the empty rum bottle into the hut, he slowly removed his clothes, clamped his teeth down into his cigar, and stumbled off into the twilight.

In a Brooklyn, New York, mortuary near Prospect Park, a substantial crowd assembled to pay homage to a man who had arrived penniless in America and had departed this earth a wealthy computer giant, civic leader and philanthropist. Barnet Kasophsky had finally died, at the age of 100 years plus one day. At his funeral, his son spoke for the family, telling for the

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thousandth time the classic immigrant story which his father had embodied.

Five times his attempts to open his own cloak and suit shop were spoiled by fire, and each time my father was forced to return to his bench as a wage-earner in someone else's shop. When his real estate career was also cut short by conflagration, we thought this would certainly force him to return to his bench as a wage-earner in someone else’s shop. When his real estate career was also cut short by conflagration, we thought this would certainly sap some of my father’s faith in himself and this new land. But he persevered.

“It is difficult to relate to you the extent of the family’s surprise, when we discovered that our father, from the beginning, had been cultivating an interest in automatic calculating and tabulating machines. Before World War I, he had begun to invest small sums in obscure, shaky companies making these crude machines. If I were to mention the names of the Computing, Tabulating, and Recording Company, I am sure you would not recognize them. But these are the firms my father started putting his nickels into, and today they are known by slightly different names . . . IBM and Sperry Rand. All those years, through the 20s and 30s and 40s, my father was watching and putting his nickels in. And the companies were slowly growing.

By the early 1950s, when electronic computers were in their infancy, it turned out that my father controlled the largest single block of shares in a number of different computer companies on their way to becoming corporate giants. And in the late 1950s, when the significance of these new machines was just beginning to be generally recognized, my father—approaching 80 years of age—engineered the takeover of the largest such company, took it multinational and earned himself an international reputation as a shrewd and tenacious businessman. He became an advisor to business leaders and governments around the world, and the best friend data ever had.”

“But my father never forgot his roots; he never forgot how he had worked most of his life with his hands, under conditions which today we would call intolerable. He never forgot his family and friends, and almost everyone he knew discovered significant amounts of stocks in their names dating back to the old days. When we kids, and then the grandchildren, would ask how, back in the early days of the century, when he was a poor sewer and cutter living in the Jewish ghetto of New York, how he could have possibly known anything about digital computers and the impact they would have upon all life, he would tell and retell, to the listeners’ delight, the story of how he beat the devil at his own game, how he had utilized an apparently useless bit of information dropped by the devil to forge one of the most spectacular careers of all time.”

“My father had to wait a long time, a lifetime, for his dream to come true, for computers to flower and multiply. But my father Barnet Kasophsky was a giant of a man. He knew how to listen, and he knew how to wait. We who are his children, we who are the Kasophsky family circle, will stand proudly in his shadow as the data whose collection and retrieval he revolutionized hurtle us gloriously towards the 21st century.”

Several hundred yards into the jungle, Amos heard a command, and he stopped. “What’s new boy?” asked the snake. Amos squinted until he could focus his glassy eyes upon the creature coiled in his path. The snake repeated his greeting, but Amos remained silent.

“You should have heard your uncle at the funeral, boy. He was a trip. I tell you, it never ceases to amaze me what jive bipeds won’t try to feed and swallow.”

“My grandfather—he’s dead?” Amos asked.

“A doornail,” said the snake.

Amos swayed gently in the tropical breeze.

“You knew, didn’t you, boy? You knew we put that big number over on your grandfather. . . .that we were able to use him to computerize the world. He was perfect, no?”

Amos said nothing.

“It wasn’t easy, boy. He had to be convinced he was playing the decisive role in shaping his own destiny. So we devised this ingenious plan to make him believe he had been tested in the very crucible of hell. And along the way I dropped that apparently useless bit of information on him, which fortunately he gobbled right down. Ah, Amos m’boy, we needed someone to transform life into chips, people into data slaves. I sure as hell didn’t want to have to do it. And so your grandfather was it. Those damn machines said he was the one and they were right. Whaddya say, boy?

Amos, swaying, did not speak.

“Well,” said the snake glancing up at the sunset’s remnants, “you’ve got time to ask me a final question. You’re supposed to be so smart—see if you can come up with something really scintillating.”

Amos stared at the snake for several moments, then whispered: “What about me snake? What about me?”

“You’ve been a trip, boy. You had the hubris to believe you could alter the destiny of your grandfather even after it had been fulfilled. That you could undo what he had been foreordained to wreak upon the world. Heck, you never had a chance. Someone had to pay for the human disintegration your grandfather inflicted upon this earth, and you were tagged. I mean, it was settled before the beginning of time. But believe me, boy, it’s been nothing personal at all.

The snake paused to lick his lips. “Look, kid, you did what you had to do. You pissed and moaned, smashed and crashed, scribbled and scrawled. Now and then, here and there, you fought a good fight. Hey, I respect CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
you, I really do. But be that as it may, in a minute you will kick off pretty much anonymously in this jungle so very far from your mummy and daddy. Listen, it could be worse. If it means anything to you, I was on your side. Really. On the up and up. I never did think much about bipeds screwing up perfectly good real estate with their pride and ambition. And for the life of me I never understood why so much earthling drivel had to be rendered so instantaneously retrievable. I even liked the way you wielded your Louisville Slugger against repressive symbols and machinery of your age. So no hard feelings, eh, kid? I've just been doing my job. You know how it is. So anything else I can do for you?"

Amos Kasophsky promptly extended his ass to the snake. He felt a flash of pain in his left buttock, took one step, then dropped dead. The snake calmly spit out his mouthful of Amos' blood and flesh, paused a moment to look over the scrawny white form stretched out before him on a jungle floor, then slithered off into the brush.

The next day, patient Filipinos buried their strange American on a hill overlooking the ocean he had loved to watch. They spoke a few words over his grave, talked briefly of happier times, then sent a short telegram to Long Island, USA.

For one week the Kasophsky family gathered to sit for its patriarch. They discussed endlessly what the doctors had described as the "sighs of great triumph" which had passed Barnet's lips the first morning of his 101st year. With those great sighs, the doctors said, it seemed that Barnet's will to live, his plutonium will which had sustained his century-long battle against hell on earth, had finally lifted like the fog in hot sun.

The talk turned again and again to triumph of good over evil, and the role played by computer technology in the liberation of the Kasophsky family and the world. Again and again the saga was retold, and even the grandchildren who had studied computer science and marketing at the best universities couldn't help but beam with astonishment and awe. From the children to the great-grandchildren of Barnet Kasophsky, all felt little data shivers flowing up and down their spines. The family basked, and sacks of telegrams piled up around them from all over the world.

Richard Lee Grossman used to write stories about people and angst. He currently is an eco-catastrophist living in Washington, D.C.
NEW YORK STREET GAMES

by STEVE FANKUCHEN

Most SHMATE readers identify, to one degree or another, with some concept of universalism, of an international community of all peoples. However, like folks everywhere, there is a bit of a gap between our theory and our practice. Witness the mutual contempt and condescension with which residents of New York and California view each other. For us the Hatfields and McCoys are remnants of semi-feudal Americana. Yet, put a New Yorker and a Californian in the same room and... Now, myself, I'm not partial. After all, I've lived in the Bar Area fourteen years. I'll admit the alfalfa sprouts on a bagel are a bit hard to take. And if I had to choose between a hydrant or a hot tub in the summer it would be no choice. But, what can you expect—there isn't any summer out here. (Or fall, winter, or spring for that matter. Unless fruit trees blooming in January and February can be called spring!)

I t is fortunate that as editor of this magazine I find it so easy not to take sides. After all, any sanely emotional person would rather stand in front of a hydrant with an egg cream in hand than boil like a lobster in a hot tub sucking up Perrier. My son used to think that snow was something I'd invented along with the Wizard of Oz. Fortunately California is about to remedy that particular problem. I've heard that Walt Disney Studios will open up Weatherland out here. There will be a tree that loses its leaves every day (twice a day on weekends and holidays). For 25¢ kids get 5 minutes of time to rake them into a pile. There will be a snow machine and for 50¢ a throw, people will get to make snowballs. For another 50¢ you can rent leggings to put on over your bermudas. Of course everyone will have to sign a waiver of liability in case they get hit by a snowball. Oh, yes. Children under twelve will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Which gets me to the New York Street Games, held in San Francisco each of the past nine years on a playground guaranteed not to have a single blade of grass. The scene is one of true liberation, where hundreds of people suddenly throw off the bonds of assimilation. Having freed themselves from the Sisyphus-like effort to “pass”, they return to their spiritual roots, playing punchball, stickball, potzie, hit-the-penny, handball, boxball, skully, redlight-greenlight, giant steps, flipping cards, and mah-jongg. There are contests to get the ball out of the sewer with a coat hanger and to fold a New York Times with one hand while straphanging on a rush hour subway.

Now, the real purpose of the New York Street Games is to get to the root of Coastal Chauvinism, ignorance. Therefore the Games publishes a series of scholarly monographs to dispen myths and educate all concerned. As part of my commitment to break down barriers among people, printed below you will find two of those works: a New York-San Francisco bilingual dictionary and a College Bored aptitude test to measure one's potential success as an intercoastal commuter.

SHMATE
NEW YORK: continued

1. What was Freedomland?
   a) West Berlin in the '60s
   b) A Stephen Foster spiritual
   c) An amusement park in the Bronx

2. What is on that site today?
   a) The only part of the Bronx still standing.
   b) Loehmann's
   c) Co-op City

3. What is a sliding pond?
   a) A body of water on the San Andreas Fault
   b) Frozen water used for Eskimo children's games
   c) Children's play equipment

4. What does "taking a bungalow" mean?
   a) Ripping off a Bungalow Bar man
   b) Breaking into a country cabin
   c) Renting a country place

5. Who was Robert Moses?
   a) He lead the Israelites out of Egypt.
   b) The real name of opera star Robert Merrill
   c) A New York public administrator

6. What's a Castro convertible?
   a) A Cuban trolley car
   b) A San Francisco bi-sexual
   c) A sofa bed

7. What are "singles"?
   a) Unmarried people who habituate First Avenue
   b) The overflow crowd at Perry's on weekend nights.
   c) Dollar bills

8. Was "Klein's 'On the Square'"
   a) A really honest Jewish butcher?
   b) A thrifty department store catering to yelling ladies?
   c) A haven for the non-hip?
   d) All of the above?

9. Who was Abe Beame?
   a) A short building contractor
   b) At least two of the seven dwarfs
   c) The shortest Mayor in New York history
   d) A fictional small person

10. The term "stoop ball" really means:
    a) A game played outside city apartments using a Spalding
    b) A yearly dance given by the Mayor for people with chronic back problems
    c) Something dirty you won't see printed in this family "PG" trivia test
    d) None of the above (or all)

11. Bess Meyerson is best remembered for:
    a) Her pot roast
    b) The book, "My Teeth and Me: A Personal Memoir"
    c) The title, "a former 'Miss America"
    d) Snoods

12. Arnold Constable is known to be:
    a) Chief of police under John Lindsay
    b) A traitor during the Revolutionary War
    c) A Fifth Avenue department store
    d) A famous British painter

13. Who is Red Barber?
    a) A character in an opera by Mozart
    b) A hair cutter for the Communist Party
    c) A tyrannical religious leader
    d) The Mel Allen of the Brooklyn Dodgers

14. What was Lewisohn Stadium?
    a) Minnie Guggenheim's summer hangout
    b) A seating arrangement that sent proctologist's children to Europe
    c) A site on the La Guardia flight path
    d) A spot for adolescent fertility rites
    e) All of the above
15. What is a frozen twist?
   a/ a dance done at the North Pole
   b/ Chubby Checker with a back ache
   c/ a blintze that was caught in a mangle
   d/ a chocolate jaw breaker

16. What are the trotters?
   a/ a disease you get going through Joisey
   b/ the course of the New York Marathon
   c/ a late evening walk through Central Park
   d/ a Roosevelt Raceway happening.

17. Who are Bert and Harry?
   a/ The brothers Karamazov
   b/ Bert Bartles and Harry James
   c/ the Smith Brothers sans beards
   d/ the Piel Bros.

18. What is MOMA?
   a/ the universal Momma, as in “yo, momma”.
   b/ Leone’s favorite lady
   c/ West of SOMA
   d/ Museum of Modern Art

19. What is the Met?
   a/ Lincoln Center Opera House
   b/ NY baseball team that lost an “S”
   c/ Museum at 83rd and 5th
   d/ all of the above

20. What is Erasmus Hall?
   a/ a place for a Dutch catered affair
   b/ Robert Hall’s first cousin
   c/ a philosopher’s residence
   d/ Barbra Streisand’s alma mater

21. Stonestown is to Park Merced as Alexanders is to:
   a/ Rightfrak City
   b/ Trump Tower
   c/ Levittown
   d/ Lefrak City

22. Who are New York’s Finest?
   a/ Yonah Shimmel’s knishes
   b/ former NYers living in SF
   c/ the cabbies
   d/ the fuzz

I admit that I am particularly perturbed by the fact that there are no such things as sneakers out here. You simply get a blank look when you go into a store and ask for them. Even after explaining, the best you get is a litany of eight different shoes, at least four of which you are expected to own if you are going to make the slightest effort toward good health. Then when you explain that what you want are some $15 shitkickers to use, not identical $15 shitkickers with an added $50 British flag sewn on in the same Korean factory for before and apres sweat wear, you realize you are speaking a different language. In addition, forget it if you want canvas because it’s better for your feet if you actually intend to use your sneakers for running, jogging, racquetball, even jazzercize. It’s plastic and leather. Period. Someone should check and see if Tinactin bought up all the sneaker companies.
During the second month I started growing a tail, long, curved, hairless, the color of ashes. To consult a doctor would have meant incarceration, probes, experiments, the touch of rubber-gloved hands. So I bore my agony in silence, easily, my voice also having changed, becoming high pitched, almost laughable, a phonograph record played at the wrong speed.

I, of the glib tongue, a Philadelphia lawyer, the first Jew to be admitted to the firm of Raeder, Johnson, Hyat & Hastings.

Now slinking through the ghetto streets that on occasion I rode through, my Mercedes windows nailed shut tight, air conditioned, protected by steel and glass, and white skin shone like Galahad’s armor.

Only here, among the black and wretched, do I now belong, my skin, too, their color, covered by a thin film of black hairs.

Impulses, premonitions, vague hunches, all replaced the ordered, legal, rational world to which I once belonged. I hear colors and smell sound, and time itself melts like a gold watch in white light.

One of these impulses compelled me very late one evening to make my way to another part of the city. As if following a slender blue mist, I entered a neighborhood of Victorian homes that had been sundered into apartments. The mist led to a great brick house with tulip poplar trees rising to block the moon. I pried open a cellar window and through the dark maze of the basement jogged as easily as a runner on the beach at Atlantic City at high noon.

Sensing that there was only one person in the entire house, I followed the strong trail of his odor, through kitchen, parlor, living room, then up a winding flight of steps, pausing before a closed door, from under which light leaked like white blood.

My jowls arched, my body tensed, thin strands of memory collapsed into the man’s scent behind the door, smell and screams combined into deathsmoke, a railroad yard, humans more wretched than those I lived among, whips cracking in the night and fog.

Mengele, a name formed as an image in my mind, not even as a word.

Mengele. Josef Mengele.

I slid open the door, and with all the silence within me now, I approached him, I, an orphan, born in Auschwitz, more than likely of Jewish parents, adopted by Jews, loved by Jews, now about to revenge all my people who were sent to their deaths, by this man, the Angel of Death, Mengele.

The room I was in resembled a monk’s cell. White walls, a pallet, a small oak desk.

His back toward me, wearing a dark blue robe, he was absorbed in a book.

“Mengele,” I whispered in that rasping, high pitched sputter that was now my language.

He must have been going deaf, because he did not turn around.

Only when I touched his shoulder with my long, dark nails did he leap up, and when he saw me, I rejoiced for the terror on his face.

“Mengele,” I said again, the name itself recalling a room of test tubes and quiet men in white, some with Nazi armbands.

That arrogance, that certainty, which could condemn so many so easily, returned to him, though, if only for a moment. During the transition from terror to arrogance, he reminded me of a kindly delicatessen owner I once knew in Brooklyn, thick bushy mustache, grandfather eyes behind blackrimmed glasses.

“Mengele drowned,” the man said. “Don’t you read the newspapers? Even some kike from Israel said that that hairy skull was definitely mine.”

There was no accent, except the accent of irony. He paused.

“How did you know where to find me?”

“I smelled your soul.”

The haughty smile flickered.

“And what does my soul smell like?”

“The latrines after the potato soup. The blanket covering a dead old woman.”

“Ah, so I have a soul,” he said, as if to himself.

Then, cocking his head, placing his hands on his hips, he looked me over.

I knew, then, that I, too, was one of the condemned. “Tell me,” I demanded. “What is happening to me?”

“Would you mind if I smoked?” he asked as if at a cocktail party. “Or are you one of those afraid for his health, secondary inhalation, or whatever you Americans call it, if you are an American.”

I didn’t know why, but I felt compelled to answer his questions.

“I’m an American, yes.” This gave me some sense of myself, an identity, out of the flux, an American, even

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
though I originally came out of Poland, a war orphan, adopted by Corporal Harry Goldstein, of the 82nd Airborne, who happened to be part of the American forces that liberated Auschwitz.

Lighting his cigarette, Mengele walked around me, and as I said, "I'm not an American," he shot back, now facing me, "No, you are not an American. You are not even fucking human, you know that."

My shoulders rose, my mouth opened.

Go ahead," he continued, not even wincing. "Go ahead and kill me." He lifted his face, exposing his pouchy neck. "You will never find out, will you then? Will you?"

I detected the slight "v" sound in the "will you."

Stepping away, I yelled high pitchedly, "Tell me." Without taking his eyes from me, he did.

"The Fuhrer and I not only dreamed of a master race but of races to serve us. Among my other duties at Auschwitz were experiments to cross-breed humans with animals of different species to produce a race of genetic hybrids. The Fuhrer and I dreamedalue of species with the intelligence of humans and the characteristics of selected animals. Imagine cross-breeding an ant, let us say, with a man, thus producing a soldier with the instincts of an ant? What do you think of that, my good man?" He stressed the man, smiling.

I didn't say anything.

"What is your name?" Mengele asked, almost kindly.

I tried to remember my first name, but it was lost in a place where there were no longer words, only sensations.

"My last name is Goldstein."

Mengele smiled again. Just like that delicatessen owner, about to hand me a free sandwich.

"Ach, a nice yiddisha boy."

He slapped his blue robed hands together.

"Oh, the Fuhrer would be so pleased. So pleased, indeed." His laughter was like a hen's cluck.

What strength I had I used to stop from tearing out his mouth with my teeth.

"Shut up," I screamed. "Shut up."

But his laughter did not stop.

Until I reached out and slashed his face from his forehead to his chin with my claws, four straight ribbons of blood springing from his cheeks, a smell exciting me so much that I had to step back, for fear I would destroy him before I learned the full truth.

"Do you think you can scare me?" he said. "I who condemned hundreds of thousands to die? Do you think I am afraid? I who know more of death than anyone?"

But there was the smell about him of those who knew outside the showers.

Lighting another cigarette, he seemed to stare through me, to where the bodies are stacked to the end of the universe.

"Go on," I said, taking a step toward him. "What happened?"

"Nothing happened. All the experiments failed. Even the one where we attempted to crossbreed sheep with humans, creating the perfect citizens who would unhesitatingly obey every command. They all failed. All of them... except for one."

Mengele paused and looked at me.

"We managed to crossbreed one animal with a human. One animal whose genetic make-up was compatible with man's."

I knew what he was going to say and did not want him to continue.

"Would you like to know what animal it was, Mr. Goldstein? What animal matched people so well? Eh?"

I knew now why he was telling me everything so easily. With the shock of my true parentage, he hoped to stun me into immobility, while he lunged for the luger that I smelled in his desk drawer.

"Cat got your tongue, Goldstein?"

That hen's laugh again, but he was afraid.

"Well... then I'll tell you anyway. Your father was a human. Your mother was a... a... curious, Herr Goldstein?"

Before he said the word, I said it.

"A rat. My mother was a rat."

Knowing that I was about to spring, that I wasn't reduced to quivers of fear and loathing, Mengele yelled.

"Yes, a rat, Goldstein. That was your mother. But your father, the human? You know who that was? My little joke, my little Jewboy, that's what. Your father, you know whose sperm I used, just for fun?"

Becoming nauseous and dizzy, the white walls becoming whiter, breaking into fog, Mengele floated away.

"Who?" I demanded. "Who?"


Leaping for him, there was an explosion in my gut, but his face was in my mouth and I ripped it apart, until I heard the sounds of my brothers calling me from all the sewers of the world and the screams of my people turning into joyous song.

Elliot Richman is the only Jewish midshipman on the racing yacht Wiki-Wiki, out of Cumberland Head, New York. He also writes poetry.
BOOK REVIEW

YOURS IN STRUGGLE

by LENNY ZESKIND

Yours in Struggle (Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith, Long Haul Press, Brooklyn, New York) makes helpful contributions to the discussion of a number of difficult problems of interest to anyone concerned with the danger posed by the far-right, anti-Semites, and racists, including how to build stable coalitions centered around Black and Jewish constituencies, how to counter racism among well-meaning white people, how to deal with anti-Semitism among well-intentioned non-Jews, and how to attack institutionalized racism and anti-Semitism in society as a whole. These are difficulties that must be solved in order to build the dynamic coalition necessary to defeat far-right hate groups.

The contribution that Yours in Struggle makes is within a definite context, the women's movement. More particularly, the discussion in the book centers around themes and issues that are current among lesbian feminists. It is an unstated assumption that the authors have a direct interest in helping to defeat far-right hate groups who have targeted gay men and lesbians, as well as Blacks and Jews. The discussion of racism and anti-Semitism has been fairly widespread and democratic inside the lesbian feminist movement for a number of years. It is clear that Bulkin, Pratt, and Smith's book is meant as a definite part of that discussion. In fact, according to the authors preface, the book began originally as a single essay by Bulkin in 1982 and expanded into its current form as the result of a panel on racism and anti-Semitism at the 1983 National Women's Studies Association conference. In addition, during the summer of 1982 a widespread discussion of anti-Semitism began in the pages of off our backs, a nationally distributed feminist tabloid, and continued into 1983.

The book consists of three essays on racism and anti-Semitism written from three different points of view — that of a "white Christian-raised Southerner" (Pratt), an "Afro-American" (Smith), and an "Ashkenazi Jew" (Bulkin). Pratt's essay is a sensitive discussion of her own transition from being a married white woman out of touch with the social relations that make up her unnamed eastern North Carolina "market town," through a rejection of what white womanhood means to white racists, to an activist lesbian challenge to racism and anti-Semitism. Smith's account is less personal, but no less emotionally charged. In a section of her essay directed at Jewish women she says, "Jewish women need to acknowledge the potential for racism... and that racism has already occurred in the guise of countering anti-Semitism." And in a section of her essay directed at Black women she says "A major problem for Black women, and all people of color, when we are challenged to oppose anti-Semitism, is our profound skepticism that white people can actually be oppressed. Jewish oppression is not identical to Black oppression, but it is oppression... Anti-Semitism... is currently on the increase as the political climate grows ever more reactionary." Bulkin's essay, the longest in the book, ranges over a wide spectrum of issues, including Jews-Israel-Palestinians, male chauvanism in the "male left", Black-Jewish relations, and strategies for confronting male supremacy, racism, and anti-Semitism at the same time. At different points she criticizes several other authors for reducing racism or anti-Semitism to one-dimensional analysis "can discourage some women from learning about mixed groups which are combating racism and anti-Semitism: the National Anti-Klan Network, New Jewish Agenda, the Southern Poverty Law Center."

The strength of Yours in Struggle is its honest discussion of different issues from within a particular context. That is also its weakness. Some readers would have difficulty with the particular language of the discussion. For example, one tendentious phrase used regularly was "non-Jewish women of color, like non-Jewish white women." In addition all three essays suffer from a common analytical weakness: they don't distinguish between personal prejudice and racism, the institutional racism of society, and the genocidal racism of the neo-nazis; similarly they don't distinguish between the prejudice of those for whom Jews are invisible and the hatred of those who would make Jews non-existent. Nevertheless, Yours in Struggle should be widely read and discussed.

Lenny Zeskind is Research Director of the Center For Democratic Renewal in Atlanta, Georgia.
"Dummy," said the crow, "don't stand there catching flies with your mouth. Come on, you've heard me talk before. Who do you think was slipping you those tintinabulations? Mental telepathy? Let me tell you I've got a tongue in my mouth when I have to. So listen up, kiddo. I'm not going to chew my cabbage twice. And I don't have any stock in the phone company.

Get wise. For fifty years I've been sitting on your shoulder pretending to be a raven while you pretended to be Edgar Allen Poe. Five lousy decades you've been plucking feathers out of my ass, dipping them in horse-shit and calling them villanelles, epics, haikus, God knows what. Making me wear sneakers and a beret, smoke reefers, go AC/DC and all like that. Me neither! The money you spent on paper, erasers, S.A.S.E. alone. Not to mention carbon ribbons, white out, and Thesauruses.

I could have been taking it easy now, retired on pension in some hybrid cornfield in Western Mass. Out of sight, cushy in an English professor's renovated barn. But no, you had to have your dark side, your personal schwartz.

Believe me, I only did it for your Dad, may he rest in peace. When I used to work for him in the old country he'd whet my whistle with bread soaked in bootleg and a little pepper on my tongue.

Cheapskate, you never gave me a cherry off a Sloe Gin Fizz.

And the poems he taught me to recite. Seawave, seawave, O, you wave, Always a rover, never a slave... Pushkin, I think.

Your Dad would know, a schoolboy of Czar Nikolai. But you, you'd been better off with a canary bird. Tweet, tweet! April is the cruellest month... I couldn't keep a straight face.

Mixing memory with desire... What is this, a malted milk?

Work. Did I say I worked? A pet I was. Slept in the same bed head to feet, as they say. And don't get funny ideas. What an insult. Nobody's safe from you. A twisted mind. Back there in the old country I hung out with real people, rough but good-hearted. Kuzma the Chief of Police would come out of your grandad's bath-house, all steamy with his whore on his arm and grab me by the neck. Eff your mother! Eff your mother!

And I had to repeat it until I got blue in the face.

Never mind. Live and let live. If they let you, deh Fasheesten.

Zoll zeh vachsen sie ah tsiboleh. Like an onion. Get it? With the head in the ground. You should live in Russia, Boytchik.

You didn't know I could talk Yiddish? What do you think. I'm one of those illiterates who makes an X when he votes?

So you took up French. Vooey voo cooshay? Ooo la la! I've been around, kiddo. How do you think I got here. Hitchhiking?

Why, for your Dad I turned myself into an albatross. Two solid weeks I swallowed smoke and puke over the S.S. Liverpool.

I thought I'd croke. At last, thank God, I saw the Statue of Liberty.

I took a rest on the torch. How I prayed outside Castle Garden while they checked him up, trachoma, clap, consumption.

I never would have made it back, believe me. A few Crackerjacks, a fershimmeleh pretzel, that's all I had to eat.

Both of us had to learn a new language. By ear, mind you. And you scolded him for double negatives. College boy! April is the cruellest month... Don't make me laugh. You want cruel.

How about December, January? Ah finstereh yor. Don't make me laugh.


Well, we're through, see? I'm blowing town. Taking the air.

From now on you're going to ponder weak and weary. Yessiree.

From now on, I'm going to be my own man, Mr. Corvus Brachyrinchos.

I may change it to Corey Crowe. Or Gary Rink. Something hip.

Right on! Go to night school. Take up Creative Writing. Touch typing.

Semiotics. All like that. Who knows? I may even get into chicks.

So get out your Eversharp. Lissen, lissen the eat is pissen. This is the last stinking nevermore you're going to hear from me."

"Nevermore!" he quoth in broken English and fell, dead drunk, at my feet.

A. M. KRICH
“Ahimsa,” “no harm” in Sanskrit, a summer camp of beautiful waterfront meadows, its grassy expanse leading into glades surrounded by fir and madrona among which move rabbits, deer, and other fauna from experience so trusting they loll under leaves, creating for all the world a Beatrix Potter tableau, a scene so idyllic one could, by simple extension, trust that the lamb would soon lie down with the lion. But hawks and owls hover for swift crepuscular raids, darting among the munching bunnies to seize them for the food they crave and think they need.

Ferdy, remarking the atmosphere of vegetarianism and meditation, traipsing, trips and falls on a soft, half-hidden chanter, sees her smile and hears the calm continuation of her “om-ing.”

“Om to me, my melancholy baby,” thinks Ferdy.

He, adherent of nihilism, oracle and possibly progenitor of the oncoming apocalypse, meets Atmana, siren of compassion reserved solely for objects of total passivity. No clash of personalities or disagreement on tactics with the flies she gently stuns then seizes, releasing them through open windows to the probable sequella of a slow death from internal injuries. From the flies, from the cats and the kittens, from the feats. Never mind. Invariably the arguments resume. A captain issuing orders to the engine room, don’t want to be born. Let me of my birth pangs be tunes of a fast-approaching world.

But, an upsetting dream, a fault line in her unconscious works its way out as a vision of a bent over embryo — large, ungainly head, chin to chest as if already bearing the misfortune of a fast-approaching world. It sings through its umbilicus as would a captain issuing orders to the engine room, “I don’t want to be born. Let me of my birth pangs be shorn.” Does Atmana, of thigh too thick for the full-lotus posture, bright beyond the limits of her concerns, does she presume on the pro-life of a fetus? Ferdy wants to know. He tells her a joke. Two old men bemoan life’s tragedies. “Better to die,” states one. “Better never to have been born at all,” retorts the other. “Yes,” agrees the first, but who has such luck? Perhaps, Ferdy tells her, you are justifying your pursuit of bliss by projecting on to fetuses who may be struggling against their own destinies. “Pray for us now and at the moment of our birth,” he quotes the poet, not the prayer. Atmana, now the advocate of fetuses collectively, will as she and they age, dismiss them collectively.

With all this, Ferdy and Atmana fuse, first in nature’s most widely applauded conspiracy — sex, and then in a tie so increasingly close that they develop a ritual of repeated antagony as a reliable but not always deliberate means of saving bifurcation.

To come to Ahimsa again and again means for Ferdy the exercise of his genial derision. He likes the people even with their near mawkish and studied niceties, their unflagging goodwill, their spiritualism confident enough to permit him the full display of his baroque satire. Indeed, Ferdy is often told that he is funny and clever. He craves this as the hawks and owls crave their game but unlike them he is allergic to the food of his greatest desire. Hard upon the praise come the hives of embarrassment. He suffers until he heaves up the plaudits, sobers, and once more feels the pangs of hunger.

Atmana, aware of Ferdy’s perpetual pecadillos, in time experiencing them all herself, knows of his grotesque and insatiable need for attention. Showoff. “Ferdinand, Ferdinand, the bull with the delicate ego,” she coos in her predictable comment when he sulks following the realization that victory has once more eluded him in one of their frequent arguments. Ferdy never wins. How could he, he wonders, when Atmana has neither the wit nor grace to recognize or acknowledge defeat. Never mind. Invariably the arguments resume. Over the years they have become so formalized that any practiced observer, distracted by a whim, could easily fill in the lapses with pinpoint precision.

Atmana of the post-nasal drip puts aside a moment for silent invocation before eating; a prayer that the food she is about to consume will not be converted into mucous.

“Mucous,” Ferdy seizes the moment and stands with upraised glass, “Mucous, the great natural lubricant! Mucous for coitus, mucous for deglutition, mucous for defecation, mucous for parturition, Gentlemen. I give you mucous.”

“Snot nose,” says Atmana.

“Bliss-lover,” says Ferdy.

This week the camp program includes a series on the Six-fold Path to Enlightenment by yet another in a long line of East Indian sages. “From sri to shining sri,” mocks Ferdy knowing origin east of Longitude Sixty to be a major credibility factor at Camp Ahimsa. “If Joe Stefanie, a barrel-chested coal miner from Scranton, Pee-Ay said the same thing while staring at a piece of anthracite, who would come? Who would listen?”

“Hah, the Six-Pack Path to Enlightenment,” Atmana sneers.

Martha, a camp instructor, is in favor of closer communica-tion. “Talk to your dream,” she counsels in a dream workshop. “Talk to your buttocks,” she advises in a relaxation class.

“What if they talk back?” Ferdy wants to know. Martha looks at him sincerely. Her sincerity is unmarred — face close, eyes into his eyes, head slightly tilted to the right, chin down a touch between affirmative nods, eyebrows a mite raised. Ferdy, who feigns awkwardness in asanas postures, the better to receive her ministrations as she bends over him with noth-

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ing but a loose-fitting camisole, loses her confidence one cool late August afternoon when, after a secret village binge, he throws up standing on his head and Martha notices morsels of meat in his steaming vomitus. The last he views of her succulent geometry. *Karma!*

The *sri* speaks with the grammatical precision and clipped mordancy few beyond educated East Indians have ever managed to achieve in the English language. He repeats a litany of assertions, hoary and poetized, as he touches on every physical, mental, and emotional complaint which can be gleaned from a standard compendium of western woes: anxiety, obesity, insomnia, and above all, meaninglessness. He skilfully employs the very latest *Time* trendy-technico terminology.

As *sri* speaks, Ferdy looks at the people around him. Some are nodding rhythmically in affirmation with the same look of studied sincerity Martha always carries. Some have their eyes closed while half-smiles sit lightly on their lips. He alone frowns. Could their uncritical acceptance of eastern thought come from a sense of renunciation or abandonment of the West so deep and keen that it escapes the notice of its possessors? Could the adherents be patronizing *sri* and other brown men in servile compensation for a guilt laden with blacks and yellows? As someone who has attended many lectures and given even a few of his own, Ferdy knows that it is only with the freely-posed questions of a critical audience that lectures are revealed as hotbeds of assertion and unarticulated but blandly shared biases. At that point, the speakers, so good in the didactic, become, in the polemic, testy, churlish, obfuscating, and qualifying.

*sri* speaks of escape from the tirelessly hectoring and pursuing dichotomy of subjective and objective, vexing those vexed by the chatter of their own minds. Not Ferdy. He thrives on his own chatter.

When *sri* concludes Ferdy breaks the mood. “Is it true,” he wants to know, “that ten thousand defective mantras were recently recalled to Benares alone? The *sri* is unamused.

On their way to the cabin Ferdy and Atmana argue.

“What do all your incantations and meditations do for the harsh realities of existence? How are the poor of India or anywhere else helped by your quest for matchless validity?” Ferdy demands. “Was there ever a sutra for social justice?”

“Oh, my, when that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept.”

“Not fair. I have done more than express my sympathy and compassion. I have worked in various organizations and on various projects and you know it.”

“Yes, and tell me, Ferdele, how effective has all that been? Before you can change a system you have to change the people in it.”

“Your ‘Om’ isn’t an ohm of resistance. It’s a measure of acceptance of something you don’t understand but which you hope understands you.”

“Yes, I admit freely that there’s something greater than my intellect and, if I were you, I could probably see it more readily since you have such a tiny intellect.”

“Why don’t you give up trying to re-attain grace? You can’t go back to a pre-Fall position.”

“Pre-Fall position! Is that your summery argument? You autumn-aton.”

“Funny. Very funny. Give up your longing for grace. That we are human beings and alone in our awareness is enough. Be like Camus’ Sisyphus; accept the tragic reality of existence and embrace it.”

“I do that each time we hug.”

Ferdy rises to an incandescence. “Enough of the effabilization of the ineffable! Enough of the lives and minds wasted on the presumption of presumptions! Enough of each generation caving in to the temptation to elevate its ephemeral biases! Enough of the conceit of conceits! Down with spiritual hedonism!”

Ferdy looks at the space around him with a sudden, wilful wildness. “All right, gang,” he shouts, “let’s have some crap-yoga, the yoga that conceals yoga. The anti-yoga. The yoga of disbelief. The yoga of the pique experience. Give me a hearty ‘Oh, shit!’ Gimme an uproarious, ‘I dunno.’ One ‘Oh, shit,’ for a thousand Oms.”

Ferdy has always been an irrepressible *tummler* — a noisemaker, a brash attention-getter, a subverter, a Jewish Tish. Ferdy rises to an incandescence.

Years later Ferdy “got” Atmana on yeast. She didn’t eat eggs out of some misplaced embryonic empathy, but daily she ate a supplement of corpses of millions of *Mycophyta*, budding and innocent who, except for an occasional instance of thrush, benefited all with bread and brew. But, of course, it was only to argue; that was the main thing. Once they argued over the color of a blanket——Ferdy: blue, Atmana: green. She, on reflection: blue, he, having forgotten his original position but remembering a conflict: green. And so it went.

For a while Ferdy supports himself by teaching evening classes on Painting in the Dark, a technique appealing to the strong penchant for novelty in the ’sixties. The students work sloppily in the darkroom environment with the phosphorescent paint splattering on their hands and clothes. They emerge from the absolute and opportune obscurity with smiling faces and glowing crotches. No wiser, but no sadder either.

Ferdy the *tummler* turns anti-Semitism right side up. They hate us, he reasons, not for killing God but for creating Him. Who wants Him? Who needs Him? Such a heavy trip the Jews laid on the world! No longer can the giant broadsword be swung with feckful innocence composing, as it arcs, a high-

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pitched hum to eternity. No longer can one seize and rape with
not a care but for the moment and the mounting. Innocence
has vanished, stolen by the Jews and Jesus.

On Ferdy's street lives an old woman deranged by life's ad-
versities. In all weather she daily climbs the fire escape to
stand above the earth and peal forth in Yiddish anathema af-

which passes as the insults of his generation. He approaches a
the lush rococo splendor of her banes with the lame obscenity
which accompanies a dying art. The company is not interested. Ferdy
curses them in a muddling competence sprinkled with similies,
then pulls down his lower lid in a gauche effort at malocchio.
"Fuck you," yells the manager after him and adds as an after-
thought, "and your whole family." Progress!

Ferdy attempts to write. He piles up manuscript upon un-
published manuscript. He tires of defeat and buries them all in
a chest. As a reincarnated publisher he will discover himself
and provide the posthumous love and fame he now lacks.
People will dig him up too and carry his remains to some futuristic
Pantheon. Planning!

He also invents a simulated manuscript-reader for compas-
sionate but deceitful publishers. It will dog-ear, place coffee
stains and, on every third page, a greasy thumb print. Rejected
authors will feel that at least they've had a reading. They will
be encouraged to submit once more.

Ferdy's outlook is not bright, but it never was. His culture
tells him that the Messiah is forever coming, but will never
come. The end of the world is at hand. He thinks back to his
youth and the end of the War. The beginning of a nuclear era,
the sober days of a world rid of of one holocaust and not quite
ready for another. The first and second wave of Communists
on trial. Their claim — We predict violence, we don't advocate it.
Social meteorologists. Now even the weather can be
changed. Later he sees an East German poster. The grim and
determined profiles of Marx, Engels, and Lenin (Stalin had
already reached ignominy). The caption: "Everyone talks
about the weather. Not us!" Will they, in their talk make a pre-
diction of violence? Does the Jehovah's Witness with his
Awake and sandwich board predict or does he advocate? In
the final moments will a smile of vindication come across per-
haps vindictive lips as a world he hates is smitten with
calamity?

Ferdy is working on a new project. He will be the first to
compile a "Lexicon of Comparative Onomatopoeia."

Does a hen "cluck" in Japanese? A cat "purr" in Urdu?
A brook "babbles" in Swahili? The De Forrest Foundation will
securely supply funds for a trip around the world. The Fund
decides and instead suggests a trip to a publisher. At first
Ferdy boohoos, then guffaws, and finally hoppity-hops off to his
(non-) editor, (non-) publisher friend, Meyer.

"Live forever, Meyer."
"Prosper, Ferdele my friend."
"Be always potent, my cherished comrade."

"In anticipation, throb. With release be flaccid, my cheerful
companion." Taxing, these mutual, fulsome salutations,
but enduring. Monthly, for a decade, Ferdy and Meyer, spin
from the same web of hilarious intrigue, meet and greet in a
mirth of comic irony that invades, even displaces talk. The
best of all humor — cogent, succinct, merciless, keeping them
alive and mocking. They taunt themselves and all around them,
striking pretense, pulverizing any effort at illusion save
their own, which is that there is no pain.

"Walk in wisdom, Meyer."
"Have gladness in your heart, Ferdy."
"Be apt in replies, oh flywheel of the watchworks of time."
"Quiet concentration, flourish in righteousness, spout of the
fountain of life."

Ferdy proposes his onomatopoeia project. Plop! He tries
another. A new game — Thesaurus Thaumaturgy — in which
one goes from a word to its opposite in the least number of
transitions. The downfall of a maiden in eleven episodes: pur-
ity > innocence > simpleness > ignorance > uncertainty >
equivocalness > ambiguousness > vagueness > confusion >
indiscrimination > promiscuity . . . gotcha!

"Words, words, words," says Meyer ostentatiously quoting
Hamlet and smiling. "Each one subtle as a morning breeze,
engaging others with caressing ease," he versifies.

Ferdy pushes. "It’s a family game. Kids can send Mom from
wholesome to corrupt. Dad can send Junior from snickerty to
staid. Is it good?" Ferdy wants to know.

Meyer, the editor, squints and gazes off. "Good? Yes, I'd
say it's good, even fine, nice perhaps, certainly attractive,
appealing, invoking. It implores, calls out, is in fact an outcry,
a clamor, a complaint, a lament, a wail, a mourning, a deplor-
ing, a regret, a grief, a distress, an affliction, a torment. 'Get
out of here with your rotten trash! I never want to see you again'!

They part. Ferdy walks. It is the kind of lovely afternoon
which only autumn knows and which seems all the more beau-
tiful because of the anticipation of winter. A bonus. Ferdy
takes a longer, less familiar path home, the better to enjoy the
weather and console himself on his defeat. As he walks, he
glances to the right and left, seeking a welcome distraction.

It is three months since Atmana's departure, their closeness
finally obliterated under salvos of discord. One day Atmana
was gone. A note with the address of an ashram in Madras
— all arranged in the weeks before. Next to the note, a lotus and
the scent of her departure remains. Ferdy crushes the lotus but,
by will, grins and nods his head.

Ferdy thinks on his life of brilliant but obscure accomplish-
ment. He has always been an expert — on everything; a theo-
rist, a generalist whose brain illuminated all around him in
short, intense bursts of incandescence, like a flashbulb. His
mother had urged him to "take up a profession" so that he
could earn a living. He might have liked that, but he could
never negotiate the ground where most people live, between
minutiae and grand declarations. He was good at either end,
but never in the middle.

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Ferdy has planned great impresario projects. With borrowed show tunes and original lyrics he will produce a musical of the Moscow Purge Trials. A scene of the Trotsky Trot, a Russian two-step with Vishinsky and Bukharin arm-in-arm kicking away in a frenzy of accusations and confessions while Vishinsky sings, "I must admit he did it, he did it, he did it." Another scene with Kamenev and Zinoviev in a sleazy Right Opportunist Rock while they implore the NKVD head, "Ya-goda, have a heart, versts and versts and versts of heart."

He has invented a stupidomimetic drug which permits users to dip into a state of profound idiocy and then return to normal, able to recall the entire experience. It creates "outsights" and is widely acclaimed by neo-Rousseauists and their crypto-allies as the greatest invention since the tabula rasa.

Ferdy, reminiscing, floats himself off to a fantasy. He is to be the first recipient of the Nobel Prize for Farout Thought.

"Dear Ferdy Moskowitz, I hope that you are well and recovering from your postnasal drip. This is to inform you that you can receive a genuine Nobel prize, with a velvet-lined box and everything, if you come to Stockholm in late November and wear proper evening clothes. In case you don't have any, send us your size, shlimazel, and we will rent for you. Also, please indicate if you eat kosher or anything and whether you are willing to accept the prize (certified check, no cash) on a Saturday. Thank you. Signed—King Olaf," whose picture he last saw on a can of sardines, or was that King Oscar? "P.S. If you have to share a room, are you a non-smoker?"

"Dear Nobel Prize Committee. Wow! Thanks a lot! I never expected this. I'm a non-smoker, size 38 jacket, 31 waist, and eat kosher only when I'm with goyim."

"P.S. I just thought you'd like to know that anytime I have any excavating to do I make sure to use Swedish dynamite."

Ferdy walks. Because of the warmth, doors and windows are open to the sunlight and the pleasant fall air. Passing a row of garden apartments he is brought back to reality by the repeated ringing of a telephone. It gets louder as he approaches. By now it has run seven or eight times and Ferdy is getting nervous. What if it's important? Someone must be at home with the door wide open. Why doesn't he answer? Is something wrong? So Ferdy, on impulse and clapping the woes of the world to his hairless chest, breaks through the open front door and reaching the clearly visible telephone on the hall table. He snatches it.

"Hello," he pants.

"Hello," a pleasant feminine voice responds. "Is Helen there?"

"I'll check. Excuse me for a minute."

Ferdy slowly heads further into the hallway yelling through cupped hands as he goes. "Hello, hello. Helen, are you home? Telephone." Before a closed door he hears the sound of running water. He taps gently and repeats the message. Another pleasant feminine voice responds.

"Tell whoever it is to hold on. I'll be out in two minutes. Thank you."

Ferdy makes his way back to the telephone and transmits the message. Then, as he waits he rhapsodizes to the caller, ex-
The Moskowitz charm is one hundred percent effective. As always his winning ways are based on a moneyback guarantee of integrity.

They pay the bill, Peggy's included, and go back to Helen's apartment with its cold, empty refrigerator and make warm, full love. Woman astride. No position of mammalian surrender as a fixed entity for Helen. If she ever has a child she will squat, she vows. A position for pelvic examination will be negotiated. What began with a shriek ends with a bang. No whimper intercedes.

The night of the big meeting has arrived. The abortion issue rages and more people join the Hospital Society in this one year than in the ten previous years. Will the hospital perform abortions or not? "Pro-lifers"—wholesome, convinced, doing God's work, sharing in the fellowship of His holy purpose, erasing, in their drive to be of service, their individuality and the memories of a fumbling urgency. "Pro-choicers"—young, their brashness covering a deeply inculcated guilt, trying to break away from the long cycle of oppressive absolutes, only mildly aware of the great perils of choice, but having faith enough to accept the risk.

Helen is Pro-Choice candidate for the Board of Directors. Defeat is evidently stinging her in the face. Ferdy, an authority on reverses, surveys the crowd and confirms her suspicions. The speeches will be pro forma they both agree. Everyone's mind is already made up. Helen, however, is prepared. When her ten minutes come, she drags her cello onto the stage. She should waste such a large audience after six years of lessons? She places the cello between her knees and gently draws the bow across its strings. The sweet sounds of Dvorak float out to a giggling, nervous audience. A creation. Disputationes breves. Ars longa.

In Madras Atmana sits on ample haunches and breathes first through one nostril then the other. Eyes closed, she thinks — good pranha. Ferdy is forgiven. So is Helen. Good Pranha. Good pranha.

Eugene Kaellis, who lives in Victoria, B.C., is a frequent contributor to general and Jewish periodicals in Canada and the United States.
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