LOS MADRES DE LA PLAZA DE MAYO
SHOAH
RADICAL LIBRARIAN
ACTS OF FAITH
SHORT STORIES
MAIMONIDES STAMPS
LETTERS

FEATURING: ANGELA HIMSEL, EUGENE KAELLIS
DEBORAH KAUFMAN, BOB LAMM, BURTON LEVINE
JANIS PLOTKIN, KRISTIN BAN TEPPER, J. WAGNER
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**STEVE FANKUCHEN**  
Publisher/Editor

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### ADVERTISING RATES

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Guilt! Is there no other way Jewish organizations know how to raise money? I can’t remember the last time I received a request for support, that wasn’t predicated on the stuff. If you don’t fork over money immediately—in copious quantities—you are personally held accountable for Arab, Soviet, or Ethiopian policies. As I stated in SHMATE #11-#12, “I have become disgusted with the endless parade of appeals designed to make the recipients feel and believe that, unless they respond, they will have personally betrayed the memory of the Six Million or caused the imminent destruction of Israel.” When such appeals invoke the Holocaust, I find them particularly repugnant.

A case in point was an appeal I received a couple of months ago from Dr. Harold M. Jacobs, in his capacity as President of the National Council Of Young Israel.

I am writing to you in the belief that you know a life-and-death emergency when you see one—and that you will confront it with a cool head and courageous heart. That, after all, is what the heroic Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto did in 1944 when faced with annihilation by the Nazi SS. They faced a life-and-death crisis with coolness and courage. In doing so, they wrote one of the most glorious chapters in the history of our people.

I think perhaps you are made of the same tough fiber they were....What we are witnessing today is nothing less than a Second Holocaust.

Now, what is the nature of this holocaust calling us to the barricades with Zog Nit Keynmol on our lips and .45 caliber checkbook in hand? Intermarriage, secularism, assimilation! If it weren’t for the fact that I know not to blame Judaism or the Jewish people for the idiocy of individual Jews, the good Dr. Jacobs would be enough to make me run out and convert!

But, please don’t get me wrong. I certainly don’t mean to imply that Jacobs and Young Israel only know how to use guilt to raise money. No, they recognize other ways you can show your “cool head and courageous heart”, other ways you can show “the same tough fiber” as the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto. Not long after I received the first appeal, another came, looking just like the Publishers Clearinghouse Sweepstakes. Here was your chance to win $25,000, a color T.V., or a radio telephone. No doubt that in solidarity with Mordecai Anielewicz and Emmanuel Ringelblum the radiophones are for better communications among the barricades, when the Boro Park Uprising begins, the T.V. for watching reports of enemy troop movements, and the $25,000 for motlov cocktails.

“Probably the most absurd and ridiculous instruction ever issued by this [administration].” Was that said about South Africa’s decision to ban political badges, bumper stickers, and T-shirts or San Francisco’s pending legislation to ban the sale of large magic markers to anyone under 18 years of age?

There are those, other than politicos, who are willing to do more than just voice their opposition to Reagan’s Star Wars. In the first few weeks of a campaign to oppose the President’s boondoggle, 54% of the faculty members of the nation’s 14 leading university physics departments signed a pledge refusing to accept Defense Department Star Wars contracts.

Children are the poorest age group in the U.S. 20% of American kids below the age of 18 and 25% of those under 6 live in poverty.

About 70 people a day kill themselves. A slightly smaller number are murdered. Attacks on women by their husbands account for more injuries necessitating medical treatment than auto accidents, rapes, and muggings combined. Your chance of being murdered is 1 in 150. Approximately 25% of all households were hit by thieves or violent criminals last year. Pacific Gas and Electric says that “the energy thief usually is in the middle to upper income bracket and is married”

For those who feel that I do not cover enough important issues pertaining to Israel, I offer the following from The Progressive Review.

A messy food fight has broken out between tomato growers in Israel and Florida. The Floridians claim the Israelis are trying to dredge up images of the Holocaust by referring to the American product as “force-fed,” “gassed” and “crammed into semitrailers.” And they say the “Jewish” ads attacking the domestic product indicate Congress “should reexamine the grounds for our traditional support of Israel.” The Israelis are calling the Floridians anti-Semitic, the Floridians are calling the Israelis anti-American, and the imported Carmel tomatoes are selling well— in New York City.

Also, the Associated Press quoted an Israeli radio correspondent. “I’ve never seen anything like it. People were threatening to cut their veins on the barbed wire plant fence.” This, when thousands of smokers almost broke down the gates of the only cigarette factory in Israel after a 13-day shutdown.

A forest in memory of the seven dead Challenger astronauts is being planted in Israel by the Jewish National Fund. But what will they do in three years, if they learn that one of the astronauts was gay? Since the J.N.F. refuses to allow trees to be memorialized in the name of gays and lesbians, ("Homosexual trees simply can't reproduce and make a forest, thus reclaiming the land!") I suppose they'll have to go out and uproot 1/7 of the saplings.

STEVE FANKUCHEN
STATE OF THE RAG

I would like to thank all of you for not writing to ask the reason for the delay in this issue of SHMATE. The quarterly schedule will be caught up with by three more issues before the end of the year. Those issues (coedited in Texas, Missouri, and Washington) are special focus issues, which will not include stories or poems, so please hold off sending in poetry and fiction until September.

SHMATE's renewal rate took a sharp dive after the last issue. At that point, out of 671 subscriptions, 207 were expired and had not paid for renewal. 43 were various types of unpaid subscriptions. In addition, I had for the first time cut overdue (more than a year) subscribers off (59 of them) before last issue. This left 420 paid subscriptions. Of the 142 people whose subscriptions expired with the last issue, only a few (approximately 15) have renewed yet.

Sending out a minimum of three renewal notices to each overdue subscriber is too much a burden for a one-man operation. I have always believed that getting the material in SHMATE to people was more important than getting the money for it. Of necessity, this must change. Thus, as of July 1, all unrenewed subscriptions that expired with Issue #13 or before will be dropped. Those whose subs expired with #14 or #15 will have until August 1. The issue with which your sub expires corresponds to the last two digits in the four digit number next to your name on the mailing label. (The first of the four digits refers to mail classification; the second, to type of subscription; the third and fourth to expiration.)

In addition to subscriptions SHMATE needs donations, unless someone can tell me of a cheaper post office or free printer. Since last issue, I received $147 from 6 people. To put it simply, that isn't enough. Now I realize it's difficult to give a good reason to contribute to SHMATE, when you can show your cool and courageous Warsaw Ghetto fighter fiber by contributing instead to Harold Jacobs' Young Israel anti-intermarriage and anti-secularism fund. And I can't even give you a color T.V. in recognition of that fighting fiber. (Sounds like an Arthur Godfrey laxative commercial.) All I can give you is the only unaffiliated progressive Jewish periodical in the country, whose motto is, "Why cut down trees to make paper to print the same old stuff."

YOU DON'T NEED A WEATHERMAN
TO KNOW WHICH WAY THE WIND BLOWS

From the National Association of Christian Educators I received the following joyful announcement. I'm especially touched by the paraphrasing of Hillel.

Your loyalty to Christ, as a part of this remnant of awakened believers, is going to reclaim our schools and our country for Christ. We are winning!

Our goal is to have twenty-five State Directors by January 1986; and fifty State Directors by July of 1986. In the 1986-87 school year (one year from now), we plan to hold 500 banquets across America to rally Christian parents and Christian teachers and students to take DOMINION over our schools and our nation.

There is no more time for talk — we are now taking back all the ground the church has given up to satan. The destruction of beautiful children by atheistic ideology must be stopped. FINALLY, we're doing it!

We are small, we are weak, we are few and we are financially poor, but we are winning everywhere. We are now in the process of putting born-again Christians on every school board in America. How? By "COMMUNITY IMPACT EVANGELISM!" A school board with five members needs only three Christians to take control of a school district. You can literally own that system and control all personnel, curriculum, materials, textbooks, and policies. You will influence the "mindset" of between 20 and 50,000 children. Is it worth it? All reasonable people would have to say "YES!"

Our membership has tripled during each six or twelve month period. Our workers on our list now number 20,000. Fast growth and the same income = growing pains.

We still have not been able to gt the $1400.00 high speed printer for our new computer. It's like having a carpenter but no hammer. Would you please pray about this?

Please be willing to stand up with us to stop secular humanism and liberal socialism, and the immoralities of drugs, sex and homosexuals imposing their lifestyles on our children. We must win. The parents' revolution will change education and America forever! We dare not fail.

We are doing our best to carry out God's plan. Please make it possible. If you don't, who will? If not now, when? All heaven is waiting to see what we do. I'm not a good beggar. I just know we must not fail. As my co-partner with Christ, please come through — today. We will be anxiously watching our mail.

Your servant and Christ's slave,

Dr. Robert L. Simonds
President, NACE/CEE
THE VIEW FROM OUT THERE

So what can I do? You give me a free ride and ask me about the rag. So I'll tell you, piece by piece. And $5 on account, on account of sweet pitch. Toons were good.

Free ride and ask me about the rag. So I'll tell you, piece by piece. And $5 on account, on account of sweet pitch. Two sentences, maybe.

I like history. Like Levine's interview with Erlich. Reminded me of an interview in Social Anarchism not long ago. Don't like Julia Vinograd's poetry particularly. Maybe I just have other more personal memories of that place (Jerusalem). The cartoons were good. I like pictures and drawings. The letters were interesting, but I wasn't here for the issue on the Right, so not as interesting as if I had read it.

I like the rag. I agree with the letter that said, "keep it freewheeling." Also, though this may happen somewhere else, I agree with the friendly criticism that sometimes more balance is necessary.

I just finished several articles on Israel's arms business in Central and South America, their support (training) of fascists, etc. I'm still trying to describe all that, my trip to Israel (where I was a greater freak than here), and how it seems the Jews were given no choice but to hone their survival skills and go for it. That they have been unable or unwilling to move past the attitude that survival justifies anything is a great loss.

Thanks for the excuse to write. I like your rag.

Aryay Lenske
Arcata, California

I've been to Poland (Auschwitz etc.), Nicaragua, and am now on my way to Cuba for an education seminar,—bearing greetings for peace and a saner world from my union president and our local New Jewish Agenda chapter....So, obviously, along with my teaching chores, life has been quite busy for this globe-trotting Yiddishe mama.

Even though I still retain some misgivings about your failure to publish my poem dedicated to my husband and sometimes wonder "which side you're really on", I've enclosed a renewal.

...I want to see for myself who these Cubans are that Reagan wants so desperately to prevent us Americans from having contact with. Also, several of the bilingual teachers I work with are interested in obtaining some of the Cuban children's literature and instructional materials, since we have heard they've made some excellent strides in that direction.

Marilyn Baumkel
Pontiac, Michigan

I put out all the copies of SHMATE you sent, including my own back issues. I must say the results were poor. It is with reluctance I also add that some reactions were quite negative as to name and content. You must realize, though, that my group are 70+ years old tired radicals and/or modern "schul-mentschen", emotionally tied to Israel and not much else but survival.

Last thought—fight for your own particular niche—and it's not the AKs.

Burt Witkovsky
Laguna Hills, California

Look, I wish I could renew my long overdue subscription, but I simply can't afford it. I hope you know my heart and kishkas are with you. I appreciate the job you are doing and realize it takes every drop of gelt and energy to keep things going. Wish I could help. Maybe further down the road.

Marianne Ware
Guerneville, California

My daughter is a Curator of Astronomy at the Smithsonian Institution, an ardent feminist, and an enthusiastic subscriber to your magazine, and she does her best to indoctrinate me. I, too, enjoy your publication.

Minda Mills
Evanston, Illinois

Last time I subscribed, I got two out of six issues. Maybe it was you, maybe my college doesn't like delivering this kind of mail. Fortunately, I was able to find the issue on the Right when I was in Philadelphia. I had really been looking forward to it. In any case, I want to renew my subscription, but this time around send the magazine to my parent's house. And behazlachah with upcoming issues—you put out a fantastic magazine.

Lea Fester
Wellesley, Massachusetts

The interview of Julia Vinograd in Issue #14 is the best I've seen of her. I also appreciate your excerpts of Up From Seltzer. I notice from back issues that you often focus on humor and women's issues, which I especially like. In fact, I think I'll subscribe!

Sonia Saxon
Berkeley, California

I have read Issues #13 and #14 and enjoyed them very much. I wonder, though, if SHMATE has done any articles on the children of Jewish-Black (or other ethnic or religious) interracial marriages and their experiences....

I also liked the way you took to task the established "leadership" of the American Jewish community, who kowtowed to Reagan over Bitburg. Their disgraceful behavior recalls to mind other famous "leadership", who were ruthless within their own ranks, but were scared to death of "authority-power" figures.

Jackie Julty
New York, New York

I enjoyed SHMATE #11—#12 and felt that some of the points you mentioned as "not covered in relevant ar-
ticles" would have been well taken up. In general I believe our temporary "prosperity" blinds us to the long term logic behind authoritarian modes of thought.

Jonathon Heinsein
Berkeley, California

I would like to register an objection to a section of your last editorial. The line read as follows: "As clone-like, boring, scared, and uncreative as the Jewish press is, it is still better than any other ethnic or religious press in the country".

This last phrase is an absurd, racist generalization. No one could possibly be familiar with the entire spectrum of "ethnic or religious press", let alone have seriously compared Jewish media to all of these others. Given that a large number of the publications of non-dominant cultural groups are written in that particular group's native language, one would have to be a multi-linguist to even begin to appreciate them.

Let's stop this tiresome Jewish superiority crap. It only shows how little we've learned and how little we really care about the state of our ignorance.

D. Herman
Toronto, Ontario

I'd like to point out that in my letter which you printed in Issue #14, the words "Christian community" the second time was supposed to have a small 'c'. "How can we utilize the help of the Christian Community to best influence the Christian community". Sorry if my printing didn't differentiate enough.

I classify all neo-Nazi, New Order, Posse Comitatus, or like groups belonging to the Christian community, that believes and teaches that Jews are controlled by the devil (even though you can't see their horns) and that Jews cannot make it into God's (the cause of all causes) kingdom.

I hope before not too long SHMATE will receive the recognition it certainly deserves and that you'll be in a more financially liquid position. Keep up the good work.

Ralph Berger
Hyannis, Mass.

Please accept my renewal. SHMATE excels in its unique role as a sort of bellwether for the direction of Jewish thought in this generation. While I can't confess to knowing much about Jewish thought, it's reassuring to know there is some.

I would suggest that a future issue, or substantial portion thereof, be consigned to objective analysis of the challenge and problems posed by the Palestinian people, both beyond and within the Israeli frontier. Without wishing to offend anyone who may strongly feel otherwise, I personally believe that substantive negotiations including face-to-face talks with Yasser Arafat (or some other credible Palestinian nationalist) will be indispensable to the attainment of a general peace in the region. Any genuine peace process involving Israel and her neighboring states must inevitably contemplate ceding some power and territory to Palestinian Arabs, whether directly or indirectly.

Any other course can only serve to perpetuate the historic tension and struggle between Arabs and Jews, of which terrorist criminality is but one ugly symptom. As always, the independence, the culture, indeed the very survival of our people may hinge on how much knowledge and inspiration we allow ourselves.

David Axelrod
Berkeley, California

Julia Vinograd has been "talking up" SHMATE to me for some time, and I'm coming to see why. The magazine keeps getting better, and your reputation is growing . . . Here's wishing you more of the same. (You did a beautiful job with her stuff in Issue #14. Thanks, I enjoyed it.)

Layeh Bock/Pallant
Oakland, California

I think you ought to do a piece on Jewish media—in particular the lack of support for it from the Jewish community. If I were the only one having difficulty I'd ascribe it to the subject matter only, but a friend who is working on a history of Egyptian Jewish culture can't do any better. The leaders are more than willing to be big machers in showing the work, especially when they do it at a fundraising event for their synagogue or cultural institution.

But be out there seeing solid media materials get produced, never! If I told you what we've tried, you wouldn't believe me. No one wants to deal with these [Greensboro—ed.] issues. I haven't yet given up, but it's mighty close.

Rob Spencer
Jackson Heights, New York

We have enjoyed SHMATE very much, but have decided that we are not able to continue the subscription at this time.

Hannah and Benjamin Lowenhaupt
Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania

I felt there were too many letters in Issue #14. I'd like to see more issues like the one on the Right.

Joel Ensz
San Francisco, California

Issue #13 was not very interesting except, for me, the interview with Victor Erlich.

Irena Narell
Oakland, California

Here's $15 for a renewal and $10 for a contribution, let's say to the fire fund. I continue to be grateful for your magazine.

Guy Manheimer
San Francisco, California

Issue #14 is the best in ages, especially the "Jerusalem" poems and Ronica Stern's story. All the analysis of issues may be important and worthwhile, but the poems are beautiful. We (I) need more of that and less of heavy thinking.

Lesley Apt
Newtown, Connecticut

I don't know what I'm getting into, having just glimpsed a copy of your magazine in a Jewish library in Nebraska. But if I am helping to strengthen the base of Jewish radicalism, then my $15 is spent at great proximity to my heart.

More power to you. Sign me up.

Howard Freedman
Haverford, Pennsylvania
My father's name was Isaac. This has no significance in English, but let me tell you, in Hebrew it's pretty funny! You see, my grandmother Sarah was an old woman and didn't have any children. God (whom I will go into more detail about later) told Sarah's husband, Abraham, that Sarah would have a son. When Sarah heard this, she laughed. Then, when she got pregnant and gave birth, she was still laughing and she named the kid Isaac, or Laughter. Is that a sensitive name, I ask you, for a child? Your own mother calls you a joke!

Of course, my name isn't much better. Jacob. As I was coming out of my mother, Rebekah's womb, I grabbed on to my twin brother's heel. Mom thought that was cute and she named me the Heel. I have a very literal minded family.

As you can imagine, it was difficult growing up the heel of the family. I felt I had a reputation to live up to and now, at the end of my life, I see that my life could easily be negatively construed. I was not a good son to my father; I was not a good brother, nor was I a good husband to either of my wives or either of my concubines, with the exception, perhaps, of one.

I wasn't particularly a good father, either. I was, altogether, a mess when it came to intimate relationships.

Of course, none of the men in my family have been good fathers. Grandpa Abraham was going to sacrifice Dad. Dad doesn't talk about it much, but the story goes that Grandpa tied Dad up, laid him on the altar, pulled out his knife and was ready to give him the old heave ho when behold, an angel of God appeared and said, "Don't."

I should explain who God is. God is the one who told Sarah she would have the kid in the first place. Then, God told Grandpa to sacrifice Dad. Then, God told Grandpa, "No, I changed my mind. Don't." Well, ever since, Dad hasn't known whether he was coming or going, and so I guess I shouldn't blame him too much if all he did while I was growing up was lie around the tent and eat.

I think that incident on the altar traumatized him. Of course, having a name like he did wasn't much help, either, because God knows he didn't have much to laugh about in his lifetime.

There is an analogy to be made here about the tailor's son running around without any clothes or something like that. You see, God told Abraham he was to be the father of a multitude of nations and, as a result, he was a great parent to everyone except his own son.

Dad was very close to his mother and not long after Grandma died, he married my mother, Rebekah.

Briefly, let me say that the tent was a very tense place to live. Mom and Dad tried for ten years to have kids, and by the time we came along, things were fairly strained between them. Dad was also getting old and he didn't have any energy for me and my brother, Esau. Of the two of us, he liked Esau better, because he was older and hunted meat for Dad to eat. Mom and I sat around in the tent and talked and cooked together. Dad didn't say much, just sat on the pillows and brooded over his miserable childhood.

Esau and I weren't the best of friends, I have to admit. He was a nice kid, one of those strong, silent and stupid types, if you know what I mean. Once, when I was making some lentil soup, Esau came in from hunting, starved. He asked me for some of my soup and I made him trade the food for his birthright.

Of course, this was mild compared to what Mom and I cooked up between us against old Esau. You see, Dad was old and blind, and he wanted Esau to go out, hunt some game, and make him his favorite dish, so he could eat it, bless Esau, and die.

Mom heard him say this, so she had me get two kid goats, so she could make him his favorite dish. Then she had me put on Esau's best clothes, and she put the skins of the kids on my head and neck to make me hairy like Esau.

To make a long story short, I brought Mom's food in to Dad, and he blessed me instead of Esau, and Esau was pretty mad because Dad's blessing made me master and Esau servant.

Dad wasn't too happy, either. He felt tricked again and taken advantage of. But like Mom told me, let's be realistic. It's a cold, hard world out there and if you don't seize opportunities when they come to you, you'll never have anything.

Esau didn't see things that way and told Mom he was going to kill me as soon as Dad died, so in order to remove me from his clutches, Mom convinced Dad that I should go to her father's house in Paddan-aram and find a wife there. Dad called me to him, gave me the news, and asked God to bless me and my descendants. And so I left my family.

On the way to Paddan-aram I had a very strange dream involving a ladder going from earth to heaven. God stood above it and told me, basically, that He was my God and He would give this land to me and my descendants and would be with me and keep me wherever I go.
This contract didn't seem specific enough to me, so I told God that if He would be with me and give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I could return to my father's house in peace, then He would be my God.

I mean, He can't have it all on His terms. All the best things in life are worth bargaining for.

This next part of my life gets rather complicated, as I was being shuttled back and forth between four women in the infamous Battle of the Wombs story. I was staying with my Uncle Laban and he had two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Rachel was beautiful and I loved her. Laban promised me I could marry Rachel after I served him seven years. After seven years, there was a marriage, but Laban, the sneak, had given me Leah instead, because she was the elder and the custom was that the oldest daughter had to be married first. I hate being tricked, but I suppose there is an element of poetic justice in this story.

In any case, Laban promised I could have Rachel the following week, if I worked another seven years for him. I agreed, and so I had two women living with me. Leah knew I loved Rachel the best, and she tried to make up for it by giving me children, which was something Rachel was having difficulty doing. This is another trait the men in my family have in common. Aside from not being good fathers, we have problems fathering children from the women we love.

Leah and I had four children and Rachel was jealous, so she gave me her maid, Bilhah, so she could compete with Leah. Bilhah and I had two sons, then Leah got jealous so she gave me her maid, Zilpah, and I had two sons with her.

You would think this would have alleviated some of the tension around the house, but no. I didn't know whom I was sleeping with at night and to be quite frank, I had begun to feel used. I was a very minor character in this war, and the kids were only so many notches on the belt, the means by which the women kept score.

I came home once to discover Rachel had traded her sleeping privileges with me for some mandrakes. Leah rushed out to me one evening and said, "You must come in to me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." I felt this was possibly carrying bargaining too far, but I had long since given up making sense of women's quarrels. I went through the motions by trying.

Rachel finally had a son, whom we named Joseph. You can imagine I loved the child very much, and the older boys were jealous, and this brought on the tragic Prodigal Son story.

At this point, I wanted to leave Laban and return to my home. Laban didn't want me to leave as I was still useful to him. Although he was my mother's brother, I have to say he was a selfish, sly sneak. Even as I was about to leave, he tried to take away what I had rightfully earned. I was one step ahead of him, though, and I managed to outwit him. I won't relate the whole story, but suffice it to say I told Laban I would take all the speckled and spotted animals as my wages. Then Laban stole all of those very same animals from me and ran away, while I was taking care of the flock. So I constructed some rods by the water troughs, which made the goats mate when they came to drink. And so my herds increased, and I bred only the strong animals and left the week ones for Laban.

Laban was not happy about this, but the truth of the matter is that God had seen favor with me and had taken away Laban's cattle and given them to me. God then appeared to me in a dream and told me to leave that land and return to my homeland.

I took my wives and children and all of my possessions and left. Laban ran after me and after some heated words on both sides, we made a covenant between us that neither of us would harm the other, so help us God.

And then I was to come face to face with my brother, Esau. Twenty years had passed and I hoped that he had reconsidered his vow to kill me. However, you can't take these things for granted. I sent messengers ahead to tell Esau that I had gifts for him. He had always been susceptible to bribes when we were younger. Then, I divided my people into two camps, thinking that if Esau attacked one of the camps, the other might escape.

I prayed to God to deliver me from Esau, and I reminded Him that He had said, "I will deal bountifully with you and make your offspring as the sands of the sea, which are too numerous to count."

I sent the gifts ahead of me, hoping that they would clear the path for me, when I finally had to face him.

That night, I took my two wives, two maidservants,
and eleven children, and I crossed the ford of the Jabbok. I was left alone and a man wrestled with me until the break of dawn.

Now, there comes a time in every man’s life when he has to come to terms with who he is. Call it the mid-life crisis, but it is a very lonely time, and no one can help you out of it. It is a very individual, personal struggle, and you can only hope that you will survive the ordeal without too much pain or loss.

There I was, all night fighting against this man, and when he saw that he had not conquered me, he pulled my hip at its socket so that the socket was strained. And he said, “Let me go, for dawn is breaking.” And I answered, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.”

And he said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob but Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human and have prevailed.”

Well, it was a relief not to have to face my brother as Jacob, the Heel.

Then the sun rose and I got up, limping on my hip. I looked up and I saw Esau coming. I went ahead and bowed low to the ground seven times until I was near Esau. Esau ran to me. He embraced me and kissed me. We wept.

Esau saw all of the women and children and asked me who they were. I proudly introduced my family. Then Esau asked me why I had sent the gifts on ahead. I bluntly told him, “To gain my lord’s favor.”

Esau said that he had enough and told me to keep it all. And I urged him to take it, for he had received my return with very good grace. Finally, Esau accepted the gifts.

Esau wanted us both to return together, but I told him to go ahead, for we were travelling slowly. So Esau went back to Seir, but I went to Succoth, where I built a house. I don’t think it’s such a great idea to live with relatives.

In the following years, the monotony of the desert was broken by the normal family quarrels. My daughter, Dinah, was raped by a neighboring prince who wanted to marry her. However, my sons would have none of it, because he was not circumcised. When he agreed to be circumcised and to have all of his people circumcised — I can’t imagine that my daughter was worth it, but men are funny that way — my sons went into the city, when the men were in intense pain, and killed all of the men and plundered the city, all for the sake of their sister’s honor. They have a strong sense of family, my sons.

This almost created a war between my people and theirs, and so we moved from there to Ephrath, where Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin. (That battle, by the way, had still continued, but had become less intense in the past few years.)

My oldest son, Reuben, slept with my concubine, Bilah; my father Isaac died, and Esau and I buried him; my other sons played a practical joke on Joseph by selling him to some Ishmaelites, who, as it turned out, sold him to some Egyptians. Sibling rivalry also runs in my family.

God appeared to me periodically during the rest of my life, offering advice or requesting sacrifices, nothing as drastic as Abraham’s sacrifice, but all in all, I think I’ve sacrificed to God much of my life and the lives of my family. Don’t get me wrong; He’s done His part, too, and I am grateful for it.

And now, the end of my life draws near. I am in Egypt, where I have been reunited with Joseph, and I realize that as the patriarch of the family, I must give each of my sons a blessing before I die. In many ways, I may not have been a good father. But I know my children, I know their strengths and weaknesses, and I will mete out judgement.

But I do not want to be buried in Egypt. Joseph has promised that he will return my body to the land of Canaan, where I will be buried in the cave with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah.

We may not have been a close family during our lives, and God knows we’ve had our differences, but nevertheless, we were a family and, God willing, we will remain a family and spread over all the earth.
SHOAH, French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann's 9½ hour epic, is an extraordinary and unforgettable film, a study of the Holocaust through oral histories of the victims, of the witnesses, and of the technicians of death.

Its structure is unlike most documentaries. It does not attempt a chronological survey of the period, nor does it include any archival footage or photographs. Instead it is constructed in a series of cycles that build gradually. We are introduced to individuals who recall and relive moments/eternities in their past—a Jewish barber whose assignment was to cut the hair of women at Treblinka, a courier to the Polish government-in-exile, who was a Gentile witness of the Warsaw Ghetto, the former head of the Reich Railways Department, the chief traffic planner for the trains transporting Jews to their death.

We listen to them tell their stories in a panoply of languages, often with translation through an on-screen interpreter, which slows the film down considerably. But this technique is, nonetheless, a powerful one—we literally hear the breadth of the Reich's international impact, we reflect on the stories that we are told, and we feel how difficult it is for mere words to describe the truth in any language.

As we face these men and women, time shifts. The past has more than shaped the present; then and now have merged. In establishing the interconnectedness of time, Lanzmann makes us become part of the world we see on the screen. We cannot be dispassionate observers.

Historian Raul Hilburg says (as if speaking for Lanzmann), "In all of my work I have never begun by asking the big questions, because I was afraid that I would come up with small answers; and I have preferred to address these things which are minuitiae, or details, in order that I might then be able to put together in a gestalt, a picture which, if not an explanation, is at least a description, a more full description, of what transpired."

Lanzmann would feel pretentious trying to give meaning to events so astounding in their proportions. He simply wants to learn the truth.

A recurring question implicit in SHOAH is "What is an appropriate memorial for the dead?" In a strange way, SHOAH is an Eastern European tour of 'memorials', and an eloquent testimony to the inadequacy of current monuments.

Treblinka seems pretty—a fastidiously landscaped garden, with trees and sculpted stones, some carved with the names of the countries or towns of the dead.

In contrast, Auschwitz has a museum that emphasizes 'realism' and attention to detail, instead of reflection: there are small, detailed replicas of the gas chambers and crematoria.

We visit Chełmno, now covered with mud and grass. There is no indication that any murders at all took place in this quiet glen.

In a sense, Lanzmann's film itself is a more appropriate memorial, a visual elegy designed to keep remembrance alive. It provides meaning with its quiet tenacity, with its cycles of survivors, survivors with their children, survivors in Israel.

Hilburg points to the Holocaust as a turning point in human history: this was the first time that technocrats were harnessed to invent the 'final solution'—beyond expulsion or conversion—that a decision was made to kill all the Jews. This was more important than winning the war.

The bureaucracy of this death machine acted efficiently, calmly, as if everything was 'normal' (memos were rarely marked "secret"). Again and again we see language used to pervert the truth. "Showers" are gas chambers. "Special Vehicles" are death vans with carbon monoxide pipes fitted into passenger compartments. "The Infirmary" is the building at the camps where old Jews are shot and thrown into pits.

But bureaucracy, technology, and propaganda could only be used where rampant anti-Semitism already existed—and still exists today. In Lanzmann's film, Polish farmers still say the Jews deserved it, because they killed Christ. Polish women still say it's better that the beautiful Jewesses are dead, because their men are not tempted.

But perhaps the rabid anti-Semitism is devastating because of the testimonies of those who simply watched and did nothing. These were people who weren't in the SS. They weren't totally ignorant racists. They had a choice. They watched, they knew what was happening, they understood it, and they chose to carry on with their lives.

We are told that between arrival and death at Treblinka, the time it took to kill a whole trainload of people was only two hours; 15,000 people were killed and disposed of in a day. The Polish farmers listened to trains full of screaming Jews backed up on the railroad tracks. The trains couldn't get into the camps because the Nazis simply didn't know how to kill and get rid of the bodies as fast as they were bringing them in. The farmers ploughed their fields right up to the stalled cattle cars. Work as usual.

It was a task of enormous proportions to transport

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millions of Jews across Europe during wartime. Trains could have been used to take personnel and materiel to the Eastern Front, but were used, instead, to transport Jews, because that was more important. The railroad workers who coordinated the runs, who were the switchers, who ran the locomotives, who worked at the stations—they all say they weren't responsible.

And the sophisticated people in the cities—architects, designers, engineers. On the screen we see Saurer trucks zooming down the autobahn in present day Germany and marvel at the success of "denazification". Lanzmann reads the order to redesign Saurer vehicles with better drainage so that 'fluid liquids' and 'large pieces of dirt' can be 'evacuated' for 'easy cleaning of the vehicle'. This means the death trucks have to be redesigned and equipped so it's easy to clean them of blood and feces.

In an amazing passage Lanzmann interviews Mrs. Michelson, wife of a Nazi schoolteacher in Chelmno, who lived across the street—150 feet away, she says—from the building where Jews were gassed or put into death vans. "Gets on your nerves", she says of the screams, "A sad sight." Lanzmann asks her if she knows how many Jews were killed there. She replies, "Four something." "Four hundred thousand", Lanzmann says. Michelson replies, "Four hundred thousand, yes. I knew it had a four in it."

Striking cinematic gestures are used to get at the truth, to provide a description, to give visual rhythm, emphasis, and counterpoint to the stories we hear. The camera, a self-conscious extension of Lanzmann, is an active participant in this voyage into hell. The lens views the verdant landscape from the platform of a train that slowly, slowly arrives at a small signpost, almost hidden under a tree, marked "TREBLINKA"; we pan across a beautiful rushing river, reflecting the sunset's pink light, as we hear how the ashes of thousands upon thousands of Jews were dumped in its waters.

The camera is a bold instrument of discovery. Painterly surfaces are thick with history. Beneath the serenity and beauty of the rural countryside are the screams, the violence of the past. As we watch this film, the quiet hills shriek with terror. In an unforgettable moment we zoom in from a longshot of a nondescript Polish field to train tracks emerging from the overgrown grass, to an astonishing and nauseating close-up of hundreds of rusting spoons and cups half buried in the mud between the rails.

Lanzmann's lens is at its most relentless in its steady, seamless filming of men and women in moments of intense emotion. In one brilliant scene we see fragmented reflections in barbership mirrors of survivor Abraham Bomba, whose image collapses upon itself, when he recounts a horrible memory in the crematoria. We view through hidden cameras videotaping SS Unterscharfuhrer Franz Suchomel, a grainy and distorted black and white picture of a face that twists into a skull, as he describes the 'management' of Treblinka.

In one interview, Lanzmann says, "I wanted to kill the Nazis with my camera..."

Memory is a matter of choice. In SHOAH, to remember is a political act. Reagan lays a wreath at Bitburg. He agrees with the Germans that the Russians are the enemy. How well do we choose to remember? Thousands of people work on the design and deployment of nuclear weapons. Do they conveniently forget that a nuclear war will finish off the human race? In SHOAH this behavior seems less a matter of irrationality than of convenience.

But for the victims, the truth is impossible to evade. One survivor, now speaking from an Israeli kibbutz, looks at us and says, "If you could lick my heart, it would poison you."

In the final oral history presented in SHOAH, survivor Simha Rotten describes his ascent from the sewer into the rubble of the devastated Warsaw Ghetto. It is night and the smoke of fires and the smell of charred bodies permeate the air. He is alone, except for the sound of a woman calling from the ruins, a woman he never finds in the darkness. He thinks to himself, "I am the last Jew."

Lanzmann consciously ends the film in the middle of the war. The past merges with the present.

Deborah Kaufman of Albany, California, is the Director of the Jewish Film Festival.
“Madames et messieurs…”
“Señoras y señores…”
“Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Air France flight 517, departing Paris for John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City. This is Marcel, your flight attendant. With me in the cabin crew are…”

I was one of the first to enter the plane. As I sat reading the Herald Tribune, a rather handsome, mustached Arabic man, perhaps in his late thirties, stood over me and placed his tan topcoat in the overhead rack. He eyed the window seat next to me, then politely asked (in elegant English) if I would place his black attache case on the seat.

Just as he was about to squeeze past me to sit down, he seemed to glance at a tall, blonde-haired man a few rows back. Or did he? It was almost as if they were acknowledging each other, yet in a veiled way.

It seemed odd. I began to wonder if they really knew each other. Let’s see: they get on the plane, they get on at about the same time. They don’t sit together, not even near each other. One man is Caucasian, the other Arab. They pass a signal. Well, maybe they pass a signal. I don’t know; it’s weird. What would they want to hide? Why would they…

Oh, no!

No, I won’t believe this, it’s too crazy. The man’s sitting next to me in his three-piece suit reading Le Monde and I’ve got him ordering us to Libya. I must be losing my grip on things.

Wait a minute! The attache case. What’s in that case? He could have a weapon there. A gun, a knife, a grenade. This is absurd. He can’t really have a gun in there.

Got to think carefully. He can’t have a gun. He went through all those machines, those metal detectors. They were metal detectors, weren’t they? Oh, hell, what am I saying? Probably any jerk with 100 francs in his pocket can get onto the plane with explosives, heroin, or a pet alligator.

German! That’s it, the other guy’s German. Why, it’s perfect: an Arab and a German. What a combination! The guy’s probably a closet Nazi, only in disguise as a Marxist intellectual. Ugh, they’re the worst, they’re so boring. If he tries to give us a lecture all the way from Paris to Libya, I’m going to jump.

“Please fasten your seat belts and bring your seats to an upright position. The captain has asked that there be no smoking during…”

They’ll know! They’ll know I’m Jewish. Those guys can sniff it out like bloodhounds. They’ll take my passport, they’ll see I’m from New York, they’ll know. I can see it now: “Well, so your name is Gold? And vat kind of name is dat? Vat vas your grandfather’s name: Goldstein? Goldbloom? Goldberg? (How about Huntington? Oliver Edward Driscoll Huntington, IV. They called him Ollie in prep school. He changed his name to Gold, because he found it hard working in the garment district with a name like Oliver Edward Driscoll Huntington. And the looks he would get in shul!)

“This is the captain speaking. We are now passing over the southern coast of England. If you are sitting on the right-hand side of the plane, you may be able to see…”

I’ve got it: I’ll jump him! I’ll smash him into the wall and grab the attache case! I’ll… I’ll chicken out. Come on! There was that time in high school when I was a marshal and that older kid hit me. I just stood there. I mean, I just stood there. I didn’t move, I didn’t say anything, it was such a strange moment. This guy I hardly knew had actually punched me in the stomach. I couldn’t quite grasp it.

OK, I can’t jump him. But I’ve got to do something. I don’t want to die like this. Damn it, look at the people on this plane. They all look like they’re either from Bonn or Des Moines. I can just imagine how they’ll react if the Jews get separated out from the other passengers. What’s a few kikes, more or less?

This is nuts! I don’t want some crazy fanatic to blow my brains out. What an idiotic way to die! And the aftermath, just think of it. Sensitive young writer (mostly unpublished) (mostly not writing) killed by horrible terrorist maniacs. Banner headlines in the New York Post, probing feature stories for at least two days. Then on to the next bloody mess.

But it’ll be great while it lasts. Everyone from Westchester can tell the press what a nice Jewish boy I was. “He was always so polite, so respectful…” They can publish excerpts from my Bar Mitzvah essay on the evils of prejudice.

Terrific! I’ve got someone next to me who might have a grenade, and I’m busy writing my obituary and planning my memorial service. I might as well cast the TV movie while I’m at it. Hmmm, I think I’d like Martin Sheen to play me. Now who would be good as the Arab? How about…

“Excuse me, do you have a match?”

“No, sorry, I don’t smoke.” (Yikes! He’s talking to me. What do I do? Ask if he works for the PLO? Remind him that we’re in a nonsmoking section? Great, I can die as the first martyr of the antismoking campaign. They’ll name a self-help clinic after me.)

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“Thanks anyway.”
(What now? Make conversation? Act like everything’s cool?)
“Going to New York?” (I’ll begin a subtle interrogation.)
“Actually, I’m heading for Ottawa. I have to fly to New York, change planes for Montreal, and then take a train to Ottawa.”
“Oh, is that where you live?” (Wonder why he’d want to go to Ottawa?)
“Yes, I’ve been living there for almost ten years. I originally moved there to study business, and now I own a men’s clothing store downtown.”
(Oh, sure, he owns a clothing store. What a great front! Wasn’t it a tailor shop in downtown?)
“Wasn’t it a tailor shop in New York, change planes for Montreal, and then take a train to Ottawa?”
“Horrible. Just awful. I had been warned by my family’s letters, but still I wasn’t prepared for it. I’ve never seen anything like it.
“You know, Beirut used to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. When I grew up there, it was so civilized, so cultured. The city had so much grace and tradition. Now there are buildings in ruins everywhere: hotels, mosques, schools... You can’t walk three blocks in any direction without seeing something that tears your heart out.
“And the worst part of it, the worst of all, is the children. All over the city, ten year old boys running around with machine guns, with real bullets. Shooting wildly. Ten year old boys! I tell you, Beirut is my home, it will always be my home, but I cannot stay there right now. I cannot stay there.”
We stopped talking for a while. Later we played a few games of chess on the magnetic chess set my parents had given me. The games were friendly; neither of us was a great chess player.
Kamal asked me about my writing, about New York, about the latest art exhibits. We bought each other drinks. He gave me his card and told me to drop by the store, if I ever got to Ottawa.
I took a cab home from the airport. New York looked very gray. I wondered about Beirut.

RAINFOREST POLITICS

The Rainbow Coalition; there was a lot of spirited disagreement — to put it mildly — concerning the Presidential candidacy of Jesse Jackson. Of course the real issue was the question of his leadership, politically, morally, and symbolically. I’ve never been too keen on Jackson. However, his campaign clearly highlighted the need for someone to fill the role he was helping to define, that of a Black leader of national stature, well-respected in the Black community and supported by others as a quality progressive, national leader, not just as a leader of Blacks.

To fulfill that role I would suggest Congressman Ron Dellums. Dellums’ political history has been a Rainbow Coalition since its inception, long before the term was acquired by Jackson from the mayoral campaign of Mel King in Boston. From his first election to the Berkeley City Council, Dellums has actively sought and received support from all segments of the community. He has also clearly identified himself as a Black leader, while seeking to represent all his constituents. His has not been a tenure of lip service, but of performance to the realities and sensitivities of Rainbow politics.

This is not the place to go into a long discussion of Dellums’ politics and positions. He will never be elected to higher office, not because he is Black, but because he is probably the most progressive politician in Congress. By and large the Left has ignored Dellums. This country needs capable leaders. Those of us who consider ourselves progressives, of whatever appellation or color, would be well-served by checking out Ron Dellums.
Starting in the mid-1970's, people from all walks of life in Argentina began to disappear, arrested or kidnapped by the military. In the spring of 1977, 14 women, mostly middle-aged and elderly, risked their own lives by gathering in a public square in Buenos Aires, the Plaza de Mayo, to publicly protest the disappearance of 30,000 Argentine citizens.

The original group of fourteen grew to a movement of thousands around the world. Their daily protest demonstration defied the laws against public assembly passed by the military government during the transition of power from Isabel Peron to the military junta in 1976. Despite this, they continued to meet, to grow into an Argentine national movement, and to stimulate an international campaign for the release of the disappeared. In 1980 Los Madres de la Plaza de Mayo were nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. The democratically elected Alfonsin government, which came to power after the Falklands debacle in 1983, has recognized their efforts. Today, Los Madres continue their commitment to complete their difficult task of bringing to justice every murderer and torturer who remain in Argentina.

The documentary, Los Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, by San Francisco filmmakers, Susanna Blaustein Muñoz and Lordes Portillo, recounts this recent tragedy of institutional terrorism and a people's response. The film sensitively records a remarkable demonstration of the Argentine people's awareness of the military government's legalized means of gathering up those who were perceived to pose a threat. The film builds as an oral history, with stories told by the parents of idealistic children, who wanted to build a better society. What makes the film so good is the capturing of these recollections of family love and the nature of that human bond. A constant refrain is how the parents were taught by their children. One mother, who was abducted and tortured herself, reveals, "It was as if I was born from him—not he from me."

Walking each Thursday afternoon at the Plaza de Mayo, these women joined together to support each other in their grief. Wearing pictures of their missing children as ammunition, the mothers provided powerful images that silently spoke the truth. By gathering together they overcame despair, and were empowered in a society that expected women to be silent. The film Los Madres thus underlines the power that is created, when women join together in solidarity in the pursuit of justice.

Filmmaker Susanna Muñoz was born in Argentina and could have been one of the disappeared. Her parents were pre-war Jewish emigres from Poland and Russia. Like others, her family sought Argentina as a safe haven. Many of the children of these Jewish immigrants were political. Those who wished to fulfill their Zionism went to Israel, but many others remained and pursued their hopes for a more just society by participating in progressive and socialist movements in their communities. Susanna went to Israel in 1972 to study. Many of her friends and family acquaintances were among those abducted by the military and never seen again. The film is, therefore, a very personal statement.

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Although it is not reported in the film, Jews were particularly singled out by a paranoid military. The contemporary replay of Jews-as-victims of a fascist regime was first brought to light by the highly publicized abduction of Jewish newspaper publisher and human rights advocate, Jacobo Timerman. During Timerman’s internment of 30 months, he reported that he was repeatedly “accused” of being a Jew. The military believed the Jews were extracting “blood and money” from Argentina for Israel. (The painful irony is that Israel sold military arms to the Junta.) He recounts that pictures of Hitler were hung in the room where Jews were questioned. A full description of his experiences can be found in his compelling memoir: Prisoner Without A Name, Cell Without A Number.

In Timerman’s book and in the film, the Jewish community appears passive. The officials of the Jewish community refused to publicly support the work of Los Madres, a refusal which suggested to many that they wanted to show support for the Junta. But the Jewish community was scared — several of the community’s leaders had children who were kidnapped. It was reported that up to 20% of the disappeared were Jewish, even though Jews only comprise 2% of the Argentine population. Discussions with leaders of North American Jewish organizations revealed that the Jewish community in Argentina was secretly working with the Jewish Agency in Israel to get people out of Argentina. This was successful up to a point. The problems were complex, and a strong unified response appeared impossible. But thirty years after the destruction of the Jews in Europe, one has to question the community leaders in their indecisiveness.

In recognition of the power and importance of this story, Los Madres has won critical acclaim at international film festivals in Germany, Cuba, Brazil, Italy, and the United States. This praise almost assures the kind of broad distribution that every social issue documentary desires. Hopefully its message will be heard in theatres and auditoriums across the country and around the world. The film is a moving testimony and a lasting memorial to the 30,000 disappeared.

Janis Plotkin of Berkeley, California, is the Associate Director of the Jewish Film Festival.

KAELLIS ON PLOT

Dear Steve,

I received your interesting letter of February 17th.

Enclosed is a re-write of the last two paragraphs of “The Prick.” What I have attempted by inserting a paragraph on Pages 11 and 12 and by editing the last paragraph on Page 12 is to make the ending a little less abrupt, by introducing the idea of perfection earlier and slightly more elaborately.

I have not done anything with “The Three-Times Rookie of the Year” (complete as you have it) or “The Protocol.” I will explain why.

First of all, I am sorry if I misled you by using the word “story.” You are quite right. Strictly speaking much of what I write is not stories, it is “short fiction.” The distinction is not trivial, because some are prose poems with all the opacity that can (and should) accompany that medium, and very few have the classical elements of plot.

I must tell you I have little use for plot. The whole idea of plot rests on what I consider no longer tenable assumptions about life in general. It connotes objective rather than process. It connotes a beginning, a middle, and an end. It connotes outcome rather than continuation. I don’t see this as reflecting anything but an anachronistic approach, which can easily be traced through the history of Western thought. If there is anything the twentieth century teaches us, it is that objective, outcome, start and finish, completion are concepts which no longer apply in life and should not be required in literature. One of the great advantages of Judaism is its baroqueness. It is incomplete, it tends to spiral in its themes, it is polyphonic. It doesn’t, thank God, have the perfection, completeness, certainty, and structured theology and eschatology, which Christianity has. It has, in a word, a large haggadic element.

Now, I realize very well that even short fiction is not a rock video; it has to have a bit more structure and cohesiveness. So, we can differ as to whether my short fiction has enough or too little (or too much). And apparently we do. I’ll even grant you that I may be literarily deficient in plot-creation and I am rationalizing my weakness by making an ideology out of it. I can’t know if this is so and neither can anyone else. All I can do is write what pleases me and hope that it may please someone else as well.

I hope my short fiction pleases you sufficiently well for you to expose it to others or others to it. Yes, you may hold on to it for a while, I have even included another “story” — “Getting Vla.” It is something I just finished and I thought you might like to look at it.

I think that in my first letter I mentioned something about Mishnah. My wife and I have a new theory of Purim. We think many of the oddities, peculiarities, untoward events in the Book of Esther can be explained by one hypothesis: one assumes that Haman and his followers were apostate Jews, who opposed support among Babylonian Jews for the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple and community. Do you print mishnah?

Sincerely,
Eugene Kaellis
S tefan came to the United States in 1945, just after the War, when he was nineteen. That was over forty years ago. He worked, went to school, became a chemist and started synthesizing compounds. Today he is retired. He lives alone and spends most of his time composting visions. Into his head goes cut grass, dead leaves, torn flowers, fruit pecked by birds and turning brown with wasps still sucking out the last drops of nourishment and moisture, the rotting flesh and vegetation of unfulfilled dreams. Only the breakdown of the formerly-living supplies the energy and materials for Stefan's syntheses. The composting in his brain creates a fever, and his brow sometimes sweats with the exertion. Cell walls disintegrate, molds grow, bacteria secrete enzymes, and molecules are formed having that sweet-sour scent of life at its most basic level.

Stefan is an olfactile. He learns by smell, not as visiles do by sight, or audiles by hearing. Often he has identified places only by their odors. He is an expropriator of volatile substances, a respiratory nibbler, who sucks scents into his bloodstream in which they travel until, quite by chance, they come to rest in the depots of his body. His tissues have become scent repositories, sin­cures of smells. Any movement of a limb or function of an organ releases small vapors into his blood, which make him dream of things which never were or never can be. He is a Reichian odor bank. In his spleen have lodged sea smells; the fragrance of apples is in the back of his skull, and when his head rests on some hard surface, he smells orchards; the warm, enticing odor of noodles is in his thighs.

L ast night at two he woke to pee, because of too much beer he'd drunk to help him sleep. Gropping in the dark he hit a low table and cursed in the Ukrainian of his youth. From secret stations in his injured leg were leached the di-amines of death, the rotting corpses — cadaverine, putrescine — and Stefan dreamt of Kiev on September 30, 1941. The tanks have gone through heading east, and the Jews have been corraled near the Babi Yar Ravine. At the edge of the ravine is Pavel, a hired hand. It is his coffee break and he is talking to a friend.

"Jesus! Finally! It's getting too dark to work. Wow, this thing is getting hot. My hands are numb from all the vibrations. In a few weeks they'll be numb with cold. Shit! The last batch was something. Let's go sit by the fire. There's enough time. Have you got a cigarette? Thanks. Oh, one of those. Shit! No, no, it's all right. I'll take it. It'll be nice to have real cigarettes and coffee again for a change. Thanks. Every time I light up one of these I feel like my lungs are on fire. What time is it? That sonofabitch is already looking at his watch and we haven't even had our coffee yet. He can't get the job done fast enough. What's the rush? Those bastards aren't going anywhere. No sugar, huh? Thanks. Yaaach! Well, at least it's hot. It'll be nice when this is over and we can get some decent coffee, no ersatz. Better than that, a real drink. Hey, what're you gonna do? Not now; when this is all over? Y'know what I'm gonna do? First, I'm gonna get me a girl, a really nice one. Then I'm gonna settle down in a small town and start my own business. It's the only way. No boss; I can do what I like. Boy, would I like a woman right now. That would warm me up more than this stuff. Did you see that one with the long black hair and the big tits? Jesus, what a waste. I could have given her a good one, but now, with that crazy bastard yelling every minute — Faster, faster, c'mon get going. It's a good thing he's not around every day. What a shit. Did you ever see the way he has them running over here? That guy must be plugging for promotion. Jesus, I hate this job. But shit, it's better than being shot at. We better get back. He's headed this way."

Approaching Pavel is Eric, the foreman. He is thinking.

"This could be the most important and lasting thing we accomplish. Yes, everybody agrees that it's important, but what do they give us? Idiots and incompetents who don't know anything about discipline. All they do is complain, and they are unbelievably sloppy. I have to keep telling them — Do it right the first time and we won't have to waste time doing it again. But it's all thrown out on these sloppy bastards. They are always slow to begin and then in a hurry to finish. All they want to do is drink. And always complaining — it's too hot, it's too cold, it's too dark, the hours are too long, the food is lousy, give us real coffee. What do these stinking foreigners expect? We're all sacrificing. No wonder they are what they are. They'll never be anything better. Just look at them! Sloppy bastards!"

On the other side of the ravine Mischka, Stefan's boyhood friend, as he was then, a boy of fifteen, is talking.

"Be careful, you dope. Don't make any noises. We're not even supposed to be here. We can duck behind that rock if they see us. We should've been here yesterday, but my father wouldn't let me out. Jesus, look at them! What a bunch! Holy Christ, that lady's naked. Wow! Did you ever see a girl without any clothes? Jesus, ohhh! Hey, I'm getting a hard-on. How about you? Look at that old fucker with the beard. I'll bet he can't even get it up anymore, just stands there shaking. Shit."

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The sound of Stefan's alarm is like the staccato of machine gun fire. The coffee break at the B-Y Ravine is over. It's time to get up. He puts on his robe and shuffles to the kitchen, his left leg still sore. He measures out the coffee and starts the water heating. Leaning on the sill he waits; his forehead pressed against the cool glass. Outside a fine spring morning is becoming unglued from the night. On the glass, next to his face, is an early morning fly. Up the pane, down the pane, its vision of freedom on the other side perishing in sight of its hope by not passing through the pane. The scent of coffee reaches Stefan's nose and will soon lodge in his right hand so that later, when he raises his arm to clutch the bus strap, his wrist will turn and he will suddenly think of the fly, who has no concept of things beyond its reach.

Sunday Stefan goes to the park. He slips off into a small side path, where perverts and potheads go. Standing still, he listens for footsteps on the soft forest floor, then sweeps the dense foliage with his eyes and turns his head and body for a panoramic view. Satisfied, he leans forward, his lips puckered, eyes closed, and reaches out his arms. He grasps and hugs, feeling the smooth hard surface of hip and flank and back, running his lips down the cool ligneous throat of taut dark skin. When he has finished his embrace, he passes a large rude hand over his lips and cheeks to dislodge bits of bark pressed in. For a minute yet, the imprint of moss remains on his face, as if he had some skin disease. But it is only a beech. Buchenwald. Stefan thinks of the months he spent tending the morgue, daily collecting bodies from the barracks and carting them away, adding to the odors of his stock. Trees can only stand or fall. They must suffer mute witness to many things that cause them pain. Stefan understands; he envies their impossibility of choice.

He is startled by a sound. On the edge of the grove is a path on which scores, then hundreds of children are running, for some affliction, some disease which has caught the fancy of the press. The disease is written on their T-shirts, but he cannot see it through the trees. Their blistered toes will make fine amends for the stinting of their sponsors in this small and moving passion play.

They pass. Stefan ambles to a warm spot of grass and lies on his back, face up to the sun. He crosses his hands, palms under his nape, smiles at the heat on his face, and falls asleep thinking of the running children and their innocent sacrifice. From somewhere in his inventory of odors he smells the ash which, by the social alchemy of the twentieth century, was made from lungs and mouths, the acrid fragrance of millions of vapors of despair. He has breathed in the bodies he has helped cart out. In the global diffusion of their gas he may still breathe them now. He starts and sits up, elbows straight and palms against the turf. Can he corrode his insides with his thoughts? Decades later can some small persistent vapor claim him as a corpse, his insides rusted like an engine soaked in brine? A casualty never on the casualty lists? The sun has gone behind a cloud, and he feels a tension in his bladder.

Stefan thinks of Austria in the summer of 1945, just after the war. Someone has come to speak to the Jews in his Displaced Persons Camp and he goes to listen and watch as he did outside Kiev. A young man is pleading for Jews to go to Eretz Israel to help found a homeland there.

“Have you ever considered the plagues of the Egyptians?” asks the speaker. People stare at one another. They are confused. What plague ever visited on any people could equal theirs? “Have you ever wondered how the Jews were affected by those plagues?”

A D.P. answers, “They weren’t. God told them to make a mark of blood on their lintels and doorposts so that He could pass over them.

“Yes,” the younger man replies, “but that was only for the last plague. What about the gnats, the frogs, the boils, the locusts? The Jews were living in the midst of the Egyptians. How could they have escaped such plagues?”

“Maybe they didn’t. But to them they weren’t plagues. They were steps on the road to freedom, and the Jews were willing to suffer them as long as it brought them release from bondage.”

“The Egyptians could have let us go and saved themselves their plagues. What choice did we have?” several people demanded.

Undeterred, the speaker continues. “Give meaning to your suffering and to the dead. Go to Eretz Israel and help establish a Jewish homeland there.”

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A struggle against an affliction, like those children running, Stefan thinks. Running has to be matched with money, a holocaust with a homeland. Stefan has long stopped his own struggle. Since Olga died he has almost welcomed death. He turns his head and glances down the hill to a stream where young men are rowing their boats.

He smiles wanly. When you’re rowing upstream, every moment your oar is out of the water you’re losing water. Maybe it’s more accurate to say you’re losing water. If you lose too much water you could wet your pants! Hah! Then won’t you be embarrassed. People could say that you have weak kidneys or a weak bladder or no control. Like a child, perhaps a child who runs for causes and has to stop on the side of the road to pee. Stefan doesn’t have weak kidneys, it’s just that he finds it hard to row upstream. He used to try harder to get to the headwaters, dipping his oar into anything or anyone. Then he leaned on his oar and rested. Boats and people went by him on both sides. Some were going upstream but most, including Stefan, now were headed down. The water was wider and deeper downstream. There was simply more of it. It also emptied into the broad, shining sea, and everyone knows that life comes from the sea. So Stefan lies back and dozes once again. His dreams of the ravine, his thoughts of the beech grove and the plagues of the Egyptians are all behind him. He sniffs the grass, leans on his oars and snores.

It is time to get up. He has to go to the Men’s Room. When he gets home, he sits down to answer a letter from his sister, Sonya, in Chicago. He smiles and starts.

"Dear Sonya. You ask me how I am."

Sonya is always inquiring about his health. Not, "How are you?" But, "How are you really? Tell me the truth."

"I’m all right, Dr. Howe, a urologist, informed me on March 17th that I have prostatitis, but that I shouldn’t worry. It’s very common at my age. A few months before, a Dr. Ostenritter (Do you remember German? — an ‘eastern knight.’) Could he be descended from the Livonian knights who were defeated by Alexander Nevsky? Remember the Eisenstein film?) who has a Ph.D. and an M.D., told me I have constipation. Actually, I told him. I also have osteoarthritis on my upper back and a mild bronchitis in my right upper lobe. My cholesterol was 178, sugar 92, triglycerides 67, blood pressure normal, and electrocardiogram also normal. At that time my prostate seemed to be okay. Recently I have found that I have a mild hypoglycemia, so I have changed my diet slightly. I can send you the glucose tolerance curve if you want it. Write and let me know. Occasionally I have gas. Everything else is okay. I manage to keep busy. Sometimes the children write. Now tell me, Sonya, how are you? I mean really. How are you?"

Stefan smiles and licks the envelope, tasting the sweet glue and thinking he has to pee again. Disappointed at his small, intermittent stream he looks at his penis. There is his salvation, his prepuce. One fold of flesh less and he would long be oozing di­amines at the bottom of the old B-Y Ravine. This used to be an organ for pleasure, not only for salvation. Now it’s just for peeing. To use it for a double purpose; had he been the opportunist or had nature? Did his penis acquire its versatility through an economy of nature? Safeway now sells anti-freeze and films. An outlet is an outlet.

Sure, I have to pee more often now, thinks Stefan. Is it my prostate or am I more sensitive to the stretching of my bladder? Has my threshold to the sensation of fullness changed? Would the doctor be concerned if my cholesterol went up to 250? Would he be alarmed if it were 300? How do we know what is normal anymore with all those sick, suet-eating, sedentary people creating the values? Thresholds for everything are high these days. If you want to get attention, you have to compete, and rhetoric is easily exhausted by competition. Hyperboles and invective don’t impress anymore. Even back then Jesus had to die and be resurrected to become a savior. What if he had lived, his miracles worn thin with repetition, a scandal or two along the way, his face grown old and pudgy, and his ankles swollen (Savior, heal thyself!). He might have ended up a boring, cantankerous old man shuffling around the Ophel section of Jerusalem with his cronies. Peter would certainly have gone back to the Galilee, where he felt more at ease.

Stefan thinks of the old Ukrainian story of the man who is hired to train a donkey. The first thing he does is hit the poor animal over the head with a two by four. "Hey, why did you do that?" yells the outraged owner. "I pay you so much just for you to hit the donkey? I could have done that myself." "First," explains the trainer patiently, "I have to get his attention."

People have to run for peace, thinks Stefan. They have to run for cystic fibrosis. They have desperately to get something to impinge on their own minds and the minds of others. If only four million Jews had been killed would that have been enough to get them Israel? Was it a bargain at six or did they overpay? Hah! Imagine the Jews overpaying!

Everything is payment. If you want food, you have to pay. If you want lodging you have to pay. If you want salvation someone has to pick up the tab. Either you or Jesus. It’s easier to let him do it. He’s already crucified and dead.

Stefan dribbles to an end and replaces his penis in his pants. He will mail his letter to Sonya so she will stop her worrying. There is already too much fretting in the world.

Eugene Kaellis, of Victoria, British Columbia, has written for scientific and scholarly journals, magazines, and newspapers. He is the co-author of SATISFY!, a relationships manual and boardgame published in Canada by Braemer Books, Ltd.
A *Acts of Faith* is an agreeable change from most books about Jews. It is a lively, accessible report on what Dan Ross calls his "journey to the fringes of Jewish identity." Rather than write another opinionated, self-righteous tract on what is a Jew, Ross tries to understand Jewish identity by finding its limits. Each chapter is about a group that has drifted away from Judaism, that is fighting to be accepted as Jewish, or that has existed in secret. *Acts of Faith*'s chapters on the Chuetas of Majorca, the misnamed Jewish Indians of Mexico, the secret Jews of Portugal, the Mashadi Jews of Iran, the Donmeh of Turkey, the Bene Israel of India, the Samaritans, the Karaites, the Jews of Ethiopia, and the Jews of China pleasantly combine personal reporting, anecdotes, and the latest historical and anthropological research. The book ends with attractive reference notes and a bibliography for anyone who wants to learn more.

Ross mercifully spares his readers pretentious conclusions or introductions that illuminate the big picture. He just reports the facts. But leaving out a conclusion in a book like *Acts of Faith* is, itself, an important statement. By not leading his readers to a definition of Jewishness, Ross is acknowledging the impossibility of a single Jewish identity. *Acts of Faith* is an answer to those, like the current Chief Rabbi of Israel, Avraham Shapira and Mordechai Eliahu, who recently claimed that "there can be no pluralism within Judaism" or to former Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren, who would like to excommunicate Conservative and Reform Jews as heretics.

The Samaritans have a nice conception of the pluralistic relationship among various Jewish and quasi-Jewish groups. They believe that the Jews are not a people. Rather they believe in one people of Israel divided into two communities — Jews and Samaritans. Substitute many for the Samaritan limit of two and note that some of the communities define themselves in national-political rather than religious terms. Note, too, that communities are porous, with fuzzy borders and overlapping zones. Finally, remember that communities have fights, internally and with each other, and you have an idea of the relationship among various kinds of Jews.

*Acts of Faith* is also for people uninterested in who is a Jew or why various groups of religious fanatics despise other groups of religious fanatics. For instance the Donmeh were followers of Shabbatai Zevi, who converted to Islam, but secretly adhered to an antinomian Judaism in which many Jewish customs were reversed. They ate on Jewish fast days, had ritual eating of *treif* and, instead of Pesach, had Sheep Night, which included sacramental sex. Like today's Chasidim who distinguish among various sub-sects by their clothing, the Donmeh distinguish among themselves by the way they cut their hair and beards.

A minor problem in *Acts of Faith* is that Ross does not use the names the groups call themselves. Each chapter Ross explains why the groups dislike the names, but then continues to use them himself. Donmeh is Turkish for convert. The people who Ross calls Donmeh prefer the Hebrew name Ma'amim. The Samaritans call themselves Shamerim. In two cases the names Ross uses are considered insults by the groups. The Beta Yisrael of Ethiopia reject the name Falasha and the Cristaos Novos of Portugal are not enthusiastic about being called Marranos.

Another problem is Ross' Sgt. Friday just-the-facts style of journalism. Not burdening his readers with windy pontifications about the big picture is nice, but Ross also misses many little pictures. Since each chapter is separate and discrete, he pushes all the work of analysis on his readers. For instance, the Ma'amim are not the only group preoccupied by sex. So are the Shamerim, Beta Yisrael, Karaites and a group Ross does not consider — so-called Orthodox Jews. Ross' arrangement does little to help readers to compare the groups or to find structural similarities among them.

Of all the groups in *Acts of Faith*, the Ethiopian Jews are probably best known. Perhaps Ross should have substituted for this chapter ones on the Black Jews of America or the Frankists, who were similar to the Ma'amim. He might also have considered some of the cultural problems of the Beta Yisrael. For the last 100 years Jewish missionaries have bullied the Beta Yisrael into believing that their version of Judaism is somehow inferior to mainstream Judaism. The missionaries have persuaded them to end their animal sacrifices, their ideas of family and sexual purity, and their leadership by priests. They are told to become just like the Jews of Eastern Europe, complete with *payiss* and streimel. The move to Israel has accelerated this process. Do the so-called Orthodox Jews realize that they are murdering a Jewish culture? Do they care? Do the Ethiopian Jews have a choice? Could they live in modern Israel without abandoning their pre-modern religion? Beta Yisrael have balked at Israeli Rabbis' demands that they submit to a token conversion. Have any gone further and argued that they will not change their version of Judaism? Ross avoids all of these questions.

*Acts of Faith* is incomparably better than most of the junk written about Jews. It is a wonderful introduction to the many worlds of Judaism. In a time when fundamentalists and religious fanatics would force everyone to be like them, a book like *Acts of Faith* that glories in pluralism is invaluable. Read it, and then you will know that for Jews to survive, we must have one, two, many Judasims.
Every morning since his wife's burial, Daniel had driven out to the cemetery with flowers. He arrived just when the gates opened, and after unloading the roses, an aluminum lawn chair, and a parasol, he held vigil beside the grave marked Rebecca Ruth Ziv, October 10, 1918-April 2, 1984. He became so used to a day's progress from dawn to the swift, all-consuming nightfall of the Florida tropics, that he did not need a watch to tell time. The flowers, too, were little clocks, holding their petals fresh and upright, then gradually wilting until they were as limp and dusty-sweet smelling as the clothes left hanging in her closet. He alone seemed immune to time, his grief eternal. Signs still burning in small towns became sparser, until woods stretched on both sides of the road.

Old legends claimed the wild swamp had no limits. A race of whale-like creatures with the heads and torsos of women were said to live in its remote reaches, but Daniel knew these mythical beings derived from the shy, ungainly manatee. What still fascinated him was the sport of frogging. The frog legs, which he sold to restaurants, also brought in a little extra income. At first, he had rented airboats at Cole's Fishing and Boat Supply, but fifteen years ago he had built his own craft. The two wooden seats rose some six feet off the deck, and the flat-bottomed boat, powered by an airplane propeller, was designed to maneuver swiftly through the sawgrass.

Although his wife never understood the sport, she had tolerated it to the degree that he tolerated her Hadassah meetings. He had tried to explain why he liked his hobby: the boat's near flight over the water, the challenge of fending for oneself in the wilderness. But the explanations only exasperated them both. She accused him of being unsociable.

On the sagging, rain-rotted porch of Cole's store were rickety chairs, a three-legged pool table, and fishing and hunting supplies ranging from rubber boots to Winchester rifles. Olena Cole, the proprietor, stood at the door. A tiny woman with no teeth, she had thick black hair yanked into a braid that touched her heels and wore earrings made of eagle feathers. Daniel was not sure whether she was a Seminole, but he did know that her manner was more direct and brutal than any man's. She could drink anyone under the table and had wrestled more alligators than even she could remember. She kept five of those oversized lizards penned in her yard, ready for the curious tourists who paid to see her wrestle them.

"Other froggers out tonight?" Daniel asked as he paid for the gasoline. He loved to imitate the rough, clipped speech of the swamps.

What you think?" she snapped. "I saw Sonny Bullfrog set out a couple of hours ago, like always.

Sonny "Bullfrog" Hines was the county's champion frogger. No regular job could hold him. For sixty years
he had frogged in season and out, never bothering to apply for a license. Often he glicted up to fifty pounds a night and sold the frog legs for five dollars a pound. The largest frog he had caught, big as a chicken, was nailed to Olena's wall, next to a Budweiser poster. As usual, Daniel wanted to touch the trophy for luck, but she said, "I'm closing up now. Git out."

As dusk settled over the Everglades, the odor of falling dew mingled with the warm, sour smell of the swamp. Daniel planned to gig all night. He preferred full darkness, because only then could his light pick out the frogs' iridescent eyes and distinguish them from the fields of smokey green. He wore a helmet, like a miner's, with a light at the forehead. His gig, an eight foot long pole with four fishhooks at one end, caught frogs alive, so they could be sold fresh. Now as he lifted the gig from the car, he felt such apprehension he trembled. But, then, he had not been out on the swamp for a long time. For a year his hands had handled nothing but flowers.

When the boat was in the water, he checked to make sure he had the compass. Only once had he lost his bearings, but the terror of wandering through the darkness of that eternal and unchanging swamp had made him careful. Sonny was the only swamper who put faith in instinct, navigating by instincts so subtle, so unerring, the fish and game authorities long ago gave up chasing him. Sonny was the one who had found Daniel the next day, sprawled on the deck, unconscious from heat prostration.

Heading south, Daniel skimmed across the swamp where, decades ago, bootleggers had hauled cargos of liquor, destined for remote speakeasies run by Al Capone. Cocaine was the illicit treasure now.

As darkness fell, the old man's world was narrowed to the helmet's cylinder of light making jerky sweeps across the grasses and cypress trees. He surprised a raccoon that dissolved into the darkness almost before his brain could acknowledge what his eyes had seen. On he went. Ten feet away, he sighted a frog. Then two long, mottled legs snapped, and the frog floated clear of the grass in a slow, endless arc. He pivoted the boat toward it; leaning forward, he plunged the gig into the frog's back with a split-second motion and hurled it into the net at his feet.

When he had caught thirty frogs, gigging no longer intrigued him. He felt overcome by an inertia that had nothing to do with the heat, for it was a fine, cool April night. Why, then, didn't anything seem to interest him anymore? Impatiently, he cast aside the gig, revved up the engine, and flew across the swamp at a speed that, had he hit a rock, would have overturned the boat. But the reeds, tall as men, flattened before him as though by magic.

He did not know how far he had traveled, when he saw a faint, pearly light. Had he somehow backtracked to Olena's? Yet there was the North Star, still behind him. He took out the compass. He was still due south, and judging by his reckless run, farther south than he had ever ventured. He cut his motor and coasted toward the light. As he drew near, he saw that it was another airboat — idle, adrift.

Suddenly, he heard a voice cry out, "Help me... Holy God."

Daniel pulled up alongside the other boat, secured a rope to the railing, and climbed on board. Nobody to be seen. Then he looked down. Crouched before him in prayer was a skinny, silver-haired man.

"Daniel!" the old swamper said. He moved in a manner that seemed to doubt the existence of things. "I thought you was an angel of God."

"Shit, it's Daniel." He swamper rose with dignity and greeted him with a clap on the shoulder. "Good to see you back in these parts. I heard about your wife... damn sorry." Then he scowled, and his face turned an ugly angry purple. "That Ollie, she drank me under the table again. We was playing poker, see. Bitch whipped me with a royal flush. She can second-deal and bottom-deal."

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Whipped me at the bottle too. Then she thrown me out. Picked me up by the goddamn collar, dragged me across the floor, and thrown me out. Pass the bottle.”

“You’ve had enough already.”

“Pass the bottle, goddamn it, and take a load yourself.”Daniel took a swallow, then passed the liquor. “So, you’ve got fancy tastes.”

“Johnnie Walker—sure I got class, even if Olena say I don’t. Look at this here black eye, do I deserve it or what?”

“What’d you do, try to boff her?”

“I asked her to marry me!”

A picture of Olena rose in Daniel’s mind: the skin on her bony face creased and taut as the peel on a dried apple, her gleaming lower lip set in a perpetual sneer, her muscular arms akimbo on hips as motionless as a hunk of sandstone. And then Sonny on his knees, eyes lifted in adoration. Daniel began to laugh.

Sonny swung at him. “Shut your mouth. It ain’t what you think. I just tol’ her it would be a con... convenient thing and us not not getting any younger.”

“Sure, but maybe she thought you were after her pension.”

“Jesus Christ!” he exclaimed. “My mama was a foot-washing Baptist. After putting up with her all those years, you’d think I got enough sense to keep clear of womanfolks. Mama tried to pack me off to vocational school. Since. Jesus Christ hellfire damn. Mama tried to convert a few—clean wore herself out making sure I was a foot-washing Baptist. After putting up with her all those years, you’d think I had enough sense to keep clear of womanfolks. Mama tried to pack me off to vocational school. Since. Jesus Christ hellfire dam. Pass the bottle.”

Daniel, who never indulged in more than a glass of wine at dinner, did not know when he began to float, but all at once he felt that his brain had lost his body and was beaches fish. The boat began to rock wildly, and when Daniel rose, tottering slightly, his fists clenched. "Defend yourself."Sonny mewed a battle cry.

"Shut up, you lousy schmuck." Daniel rose, tottering slightly, his fists clenched. "Defend yourself."Sonny mewed a battle cry.

"Oh," Sonny scratched his chin. Then in an even lower voice, "Say, you miss your wife a lot? You miss giving it to her?"

"I'm drowning," Daniel gasped.

"Let's declare a truce," Daniel shouted. Just as they shook hands, a blinding flare of lightning struck a cypress and split it wide open with a deafening crack. As it fell in two flaming parts, the bright orange fire blotted out what few stars were still visible between the thick, moving clouds.

The two men sat slumped against each other in mute astonishment. Then Daniel began to wonder about his fate. Surely, he wouldn’t be relegated to the fires of Gehenna? Surely, Rebecca — wearing white shining garments and as beautiful and youthful as he wished to remember her — would meet him somewhere and guide him heavenward.

Suddenly panic swept through him: suppose, instead, Rebecca and Sonny’s mother appeared together like two harpies, tormenting the two men for... what? He couldn’t speak for Sonny’s mother, but he could imagine Rebecca’s wrath. Rebecca scolding him for being proud and possessive of her even in death. Rebecca scolding him for not brushing his den-

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tures or shining his shoes or... Why, Sonny, that scoundrel, was corrupting him with his obnoxious humor. Daniel reached out to shake him, then refrained. Radiating good will, Sonny's fact was lifted in anticipation of paradise.

A nearby noise startled them from their enchantment. A noise of feet splashing through water with a stealthy, nocturnal prowess.

"Turn your head," Sonny said sharply.

Caught in the light from Daniel's helmet was a glades panther. The tawny, tremendous shape stood as if frozen. Even its yellow eyes were unblinking, like glass. From its mouth hung a deer, the throat torn out and the entrails and one buttock partly eaten. The rank stench of the kill wafted on the air.

"That sack," Sonny whispered, "my gun's... in there."

As he reached for the sack, Daniel kept his eyes on the panther. Every detail, the poised angularity of the cat's legs, the rounded, fine-whiskered muzzle, became acutely distinct against the yellow camouflage of the grass. Yet the tawny shape remained impossibly still.

Was it real at all?

Then there was nothing. Without apparent movement or sound, the beast had vanished into the solitude of the wilderness.

Some moments later, the crickets renewed their raucous chorus.

Daniel looked at his hand clutching the sack so tightly the fingers were a bloodless white—as pale as Rebecca's lifeless fingers that morning he had clutched them. He trembled. "Sonny, you know the difference between a _schlemiel_ and a _schlamazel_?" he said in a voice barely above a whisper.

"Huh?" Sunny was staring at the place where the panther had stood, as if it all were still a mystery to him.

"A _schlemiel_ is someone who drops some valuable pottery, and a _schlamazel_ is the one who has to pick up the pieces. Ach, a team of fools," he said.

They began to laugh at their drunken foolishness, the taste of fear still fresh in their mouths.

And then Daniel felt an overwhelming rage. He hurled the net, limp and empty, into the water. He began to weep; involuntary sobs that emerged with a hoarse, retching sound. Then he surrendered to an unleashed flow, feeling that something swollen and painful had burst inside him. Perhaps he could forgive Rebecca for abandoning him. Perhaps, too, he could forgive himself for forgetting. For no matter how desperately he had held vigil at her grave, a time had come, when the memory of her began to fade. His weeping began to subside.

When he finished, he saw Sonny poking his gig at the dry, whispering sawgrass. The storm had passed over without shedding a drop of rain.

"Summer is coming, I reckon," Sonny said. "Everything's dry. Where I expected frogs last night, there weren't none."

Daniel nodded. "I think I'm finished for tonight," he murmured.

"Tomorrow night I'm heading toward Alligator Alley."

"I should head north too," Daniel said.

"Where you headed—Okeechobee?"

"No, Boston. I've got a daughter up there." He thought of Ann, who he had so carelessly ignored and cast aside. "Boston!" Sonny scowled. "People ain't the same up there."

"What about tonight?" Daniel asked. "Going back to Olena's?"

"Naw. I got sixty frogs I gotta catch again." Daniel offered him a spare tank of gasoline. "I don't take nothing but premium."

"You have a choice, running on empty?"

"I've rowed plenty of miles in my day."

"So this is premium, goddamn it. Here!"

Sonny took the tank. "I could row to Cuba and back, if it was worth my trouble. I could even row up thater Intracostal to Boston if the frogging was any good."

They shook hands, and then the roar of Sonny's boat was lost in a vast silence. Daniel started his own motor, realizing that no compass or North Star could guide him on this difficult new journey. He saw, as though sitting right before him on the horizon, Ann's squat wooden house in a yard full of maple trees, saw the more than physical effort it would take to find his way to her door. Then he grasped the tiller, trusting his instincts to find the way.
t didn't matter who you were. It made no difference what beliefs you held. The tidal wave of events that washed over the United States in 1968 was bound to slap your soul. Early in the year Benjamin Spock was indicted on charges of conspiracy for counseling young men to violate U.S. law; Martin Luther King was shot to death in April; clashes between Black Nationalists and the police reached their apex in the long, hot summer of '68; and in November the Yippies and their porcine presidential candidate, Pigasus, were arrested at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Consciousness was being raised, pant suits were overtaking the mini, and a group of revolutionaries within their own ranks were struggling with these affronts to our cultural traditions. Urge your administration to develop a consistent collection policy for handling "alternative" materials. His message, in short, was an urgent request for library professionals to respect the contemporary informational needs of those patrons who did not constitute the majority in a community.

If this first missive of Berman's to the library world wasn't entirely innocent, it certainly wasn't indicting. It wasn't until 1969 that Berman, writing from the University of Zambia declared:

After three weeks of using the Library of Congress (LC) subject heading list at the University of Zambia Library, what I long suspected has now been disgustedly confirmed: Western chauvinism permeates the scheme...

He then proposed two remedies to treat this lack of sensitivity; 1) A comprehensive study by the new Round Table on the Social Responsibilities of Libraries to study the extent to which our major catalog and classification schemes are white, imperialist, and Christian-oriented, with concrete suggestions for improvement; and 2) Immediate corrections being made by libraries for subject headings such as 'Race Question'. "It is surely no mere 'question', no leisurely abstraction, to American and South African Blacks," and the subdivision 'Discovery and Exploration' "represents an insult to the many people and lands which, so it appears in our library catalogs, didn't really exist until white men happened to notice them."

This, of course, is no walk to a bookstore. What Berman briefly sketches out in this letter is his growing concern with the abuse of language as it happens in hands of the very people — including librarians — who regard themselves language experts.

Some two months later, a reaction to this indictment by A. C. Poskett appeared in Library Journal.

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Who says that the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) or Sears List are disinterested? They are designed for use in Western Libraries. They reflect the historical biases of those libraries and of their users, who — for their sins — have been brought up in that particular tradition. If Mr. Berman wants a disinterested scheme, he will have to look elsewhere.

Berman's reply to that was quick and easy.

Exactly the point! Once recognized, surely the most foolish and wrong-headed aspects of bias can be corrected.

Unfortunately, it was quite some time before Mr. Foskett, or anyone else, was able to read Sanford Berman's impassioned support of himself in this matter. The chance he was given by the ALA Publishing Service to produce a long and thorough critique of LC subject heading met an unexpected turn in 1970.

In 1970, ALA Publishing Services invited and encouraged me to write a book-length critique of LC subject headings. I did. The manuscript was entitled Prejudices and Antipathies. And ALA refused to publish it. The reason: they branded it "vituperative" and "intemperate". But in fact they thought it too critical of such a "venerable and respected institution." (By contrast, Scarecrow Press published the tome with much speed and no static.)

LIBRARIES AND ELITISM

By no means did Berman remain dormant while waiting for the publication of Prejudices and Antipathies. His bold, decisive letters and articles began appearing regularly in several library journals. He continued to rally against the overt prejudices with the LCSH scheme; however, a larger theme was beginning to sound in his writings: elitism in librarianship.

Years later, Berman was able to fully define this elitism. In his mind, it would take on various guises: "printism" (where nonprint media is subjugated to print media), the rush to automation, pandering to big business, and the disdain towards "underground" or alternative materials. Crucial to this belief was his insistence that such elitisms could eventually erode the accessibility to materials for many, many people.

An article by Berman entitled "Let It All Hang Out: A Think Piece for Luddite Librarians," was possibly one of his first calls to arms with this idea. His articulate censuring questioned the pernicious stereotyping within subject heading schemes, decried the supermechanization of libraries, chastised U.S. Information Service and military libraries for their narrow selection policies, and blamed the ALA for a lack of innovative socially responsive programming and services within the library community.

The article was somewhat inflammatory. The response it received, was, in a word, hot.

"...As a critic of federal libraries, Berman is as uninformed and fanatical as McCarthy, but a lot less interesting."

"...I find it very obvious that he has very little concept of what library automation is doing and trying to do."

"...I must admit to an incomplete reading of Sanford Berman's "Let It All Hang Out", because I find his obsessions a bore."

Others found his approach compassionate, lion-hearted. Celeste West, commenting about his article, "Libraries to the People," which originally appeared in the LA Free Press, declared:

"For once, a professional talking to people who don't use the library, rather than about them."

By the time Prejudices and Antipathies appeared, Berman had become fairly well-known. His peers were ready to review him.

Berman's aim in Prejudices and Antipathies was simply to re-examine the long-term assumptions and values used in structuring those Library of

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Congress headings which deal with people and their cultures. Throughout the book he maintains that:

... The LC list can only “satisfy” parochial jingoistic Europeans and North Americans, white-hued, at least nominally Christian (and preferably Protestant), ... in the middle and higher income brackets, ... in suburbia, ... loyal to the Established Order, and heavily imbued with the transcendent, incomparable glory of Western civilization.

He supports this thesis by citing some 122 items, which reflect “a host of untenable—indeed obsolete and arrogant—assumptions” about women, ethnic minorities, sexual and political views, and the like. Each item is then openly dissected for its prejudicial vein. Expert and abundant bibliographical citations assist in this operation, and a remedy is then offered. Examples of each, with text directly from Berman’s work follow

1) Subject heading to which the addition of a gloss is urged:
Item: GOD
Subsequent primary head on the same page—e.g., GOD (BRAHMANISM), GOD (CHINESE), GOD (JUDAISM) — prove conclusively that the Christian Diety has been allotted an unqualified prominence ... the form should be amended so that the Christian Diety simply assumes its rightful, yet not overpowering place alongside Zeus, Shiva, Pavati, Isis and Allah in the vast panoply of Gods.
Remedy: Add the gloss, (CHRISTIANITY) and transfer the resultant head to its proper slot in the alphabetical sequence ...

2) Subject headings using the word “as”:
Items: NEGROS AS BUSINESSMEN (CONSUMERS, FARMERS, ETC.) The “as” necessarily implies that the occupation or activity that follows is somehow odd, uncommon, or unfitting for “Negros” to engage in. The “proof of the pudding” is that no NEGROES AS SLAVES or NEGROES AS DOMESTIC SERVANTS is thought necessary.
Remedy: Directly precede the occupation or activity with the adjectival form; e.g., AFRO-AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN (CONSUMERS, FARMERS, ETC.)

3) Subject headings with problem cross references:
Item: GYPSIES
xx Rogues and vagabonds
A highly picturesque cross-reference. And also pejorative, conferring upon these people, en masse, the status of thieves, ... and n’er-do-wells ... All this might be casually dismissed as but another manifestation of stupid prejudice and know-nothingism, albeit demanding correction, except for the central, overwhelming fact of 20th century Gypsy experience, conveniently ignored in the LC scheme: that the Nazis exterminated somewhere between 200,000 and 600,000 Romanies before the Third Reich concluded, first subjecting numberless thousands to diabolical “medical experiments.” Remedy: a) Delete “rogues and vagabonds” as an xx. b) Add the sub-head — PERSECUTION, with an “xx” for “Genocide.”

Berman’s chosen style, as can be seen from these examples, is frank, colorful, and impassioned. It is consciously designed to attract the reader’s empathy. This aim, over and above the possibility of insulting some “not bad” people who may have assigned (or even constructed) YELLOW PERIL at some point in their cataloging lives, is central to the book. For Berman, the darkest crime of all in the establishment of many of the headings is the dehumanizing effect in their treatment of certain people and cultures. In ignoring a people’s cultural or national milieu, or singling out a minority for some type of aberrant behavior (“Does no one else drink?”) he innocently queries when commenting on the headings ALCOHOL AND JEWS, ALCOHOL AND WOMEN, and ALCOHOL AND NEGROES, you increase the possibility of turning them into a mere abstraction.

On the face of it, “Jewish Question” may seem a bland, neutral term. Yet is is just the opposite, masquerading ruthlessness and inhumanity — the age-old and altogether vicious practice of scapegoating—in a deceptive, leisurely abstraction. The phraseology is that of the oppressor, the ultimate murderer, not the victim. Strong language? The stench at Auschwitz was stronger ...

If Berman appears vituperative in this passage, if the strength of his language seems unnecessarily overbearing, then he must, at least, be right about the power of language.

The first reviews to appear in library literature did not overtly admonish Berman for daring to attack the LC scheme. Many of them agreed with the need for remedial action and found several of his charges unanswerable. What some of his reviewers did question was whether or not Berman really understood the functions of subject cataloging at all. Seymour Lubetzky, writing in the Library Journal, stated that:

A list of subject headings is not a social treatise reflecting its author’s philosophy or point of view. It is merely a list of the subjects with which the materials in the library’s collection are concerned, and any imbalance in the character of these materials will naturally be reflected in the subject headings.

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The function of any subject heading, he argued, is merely to reflect the subject contents of materials. If the material is prejudicial—well, then it is.

Should subject cataloging be called "labeling"? Is it really the modest objective activity that happens only in the simple application of a set of words found in a list to a bibliographic record? For Berman, that isn't the case. While a subject scheme should correspond to a library's holdings, it cannot help but reflect the cataloger's perceptions of those holdings. Whether they realized it or not, catalogers were always making serious, arbitrary decisions about the materials they were processing.

Berman was reading the headings as statements, and this reading was taking him closer to the connotative qualities of the language being used in the LC subject scheme. This assumption on Berman's part was the assumption of the user. As non-specialists, users deserve terms which are relevant, objective and impartial to any particular world-view. Assigning LITERATURE, IMMORAL to A Report on Denmark's Legalized Pornography casts a certain judgement on pornography, as well as on Denmark's legalization of such materials. (Berman would suggest LITERATURE AND MORALS or a new construction like EROTICA-MORAL (SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ASPECTS.)

The implication here is that the catalog is an educator. Cataloging may not have originally been intended to function in such a manner, but the rising voices of our society's minorities, and the multicultural aspect of many libraries' holdings made it necessary for the profession to re-evaluate its services as a social institution in this area.

Finally, many of Berman's peers graciously suggested that if he was so truly dissatisfied with the unfairness in the LC subject scheme, he ought to simply adopt the attitude of the little red hen in the old folk tale and simply "do it himself."

And he did.

BERMANISM IN ACTION

The emathics Sanford Berman expressed towards the Third World and other cultures were not of the "radical chic." His concerns, based on a professional career of international dimension, were authentic. His masters thesis on (then) Spanish Guinea (1961) was described by African Newsletter as "monumental...The services rendered to African studies by the writer cannot be overestimated." In 1968, as Assistant Librarian at the University of Zambia, he urged African libraries to include more Black Americana in their collections and played a large part in the commission of an essay "Censorship in South Africa" by African exile novelist Ezekiel Mphahlele. After two years in Zambia, he returned to the United States, where he was unable to obtain employment. For three bleak months he continued to fight for library causes, publish articles and search for employment. To stay in the profession, he returned to Africa, accepting a positon as Assistant Librarian at the Makere Institute of Social Research in Kampala, Uganda.

Berman's position at Makere allowed him to compile a unique cataloging authority for the library, which proved that he could be an able practitioner of his cataloging credos. The List freed a black African University readership from an obsolete and offensive terminology; Makere's circulation experienced a 500 percent increase.

During this time, he was also becoming increasingly involved with African liberation movements. Involvement for Berman in an ideological cause is persistent, but never subversive. Sheer negativism and blatant or violent attempts to overthrow established authority—these are not his tactics. The mightiest sword Berman heaves is that of intellectual freedom. His efforts to acquire and issue leftist information as editor of a newsletter at Makere in the face of Idris Amin's purges led to the immediate departure of Berman and his family from Uganda. Fearing for their lives, they hastily returned to the U.S. in the fall of 1972.

Subsequently, Berman was hired as head cataloger, Hennepin County Library (HCL), where he edited The Hennepin County Library Cataloging Bulletin.

The Bulletin began as a medium for listing and explaining HCL revised subject forms. As such, it was initially geared to the Hennepin public service staff. Eventually it expanded into a serial with an international readership containing letters, news, reviews, and articles (many by non-librarians) dealing with cataloging and related issues.

Although it could have easily become a one man song and dance vehicle for Berman himself, the Bulletin actually was an open forum for anyone concerned with the social responsibility of libraries.

A great deal of the forum-like atmosphere in the Bulletin originated in the "Feedback" section of the serial. Here were printed letters of praise or condemnation, suggestions for subject form revisions, and portions of

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reviews from other periodicals about the Bulletin. Many of these communications led to some of the fascinating articles printed throughout the Bulletin. Discussions about the removal of INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA in favor of NATIVE PEOPLES or AMERINDIANS (April 1974) was followed by a sensitive article, “Ojibwe: Murmurs from Red America,” written by a young Ojibwe woman. The writing is not offered as “propaganda,” but as an insight into the complexities and grace of the Ojibwe language and world-view. This, again, is Berman’s way of letting things speak for themselves.

The bulk of the Bulletin is given to the subject revisions which HCL has incorporated into their authority file. New forms are listed along with cataloger’s notes, bibliographic citations from outside sources, and cross references. Whether one agrees with the HCL revisions or not, there is great value in browsing through this section:

...Often it is possible to quarrel with the remedy offered, or to question the usefulness to the patron of particular entries, but in this case, to quarrel is to think, and who can ask for more from any periodical?

In 1976 the Hennepin County Library Cataloging Bulletin won the H. W. Wilson Library Award as the best library periodical. Despite this, as of 1978, the Bulletin still had not been reviewed formally by any established reviewing medium, and H. W. Wilson rejected it for inclusion in Library Literature with the explanation that they could find nothing in it to index! Other “snubs” had occurred as well, all of which seemed designed to insubstantiate the credibility of the periodical. If this treatment was meant to single out Berman as controversial or irrelevant, then his main objective—that of making the catalog an authentic and comprehensible tool for all patrons—must have seemed just as incidental to his critics. But who would want to admit to that?

Now that Berman’s position at Hennepin County Library finally allowed his cataloging and classification practices to thrive, he refined the philosophy behind these practices in several poignant articles (often reprinted elsewhere) that appeared in the Bulletin. One of the first appearances of this philosophy is in a “prose poem” he originally delivered at an HCL staff meeting.

To venture into history for less than 30 seconds: Too much of cataloging attitudes and practice in the past has been frankly self-serving. Cataloging has too often been performed for the exclusive satisfaction of catalogers themselves, who seemed to conceive of themselves as members of a special mystery cult. Only the properly initiated could really decipher or comprehend what they were into. Well, we don’t dig that approach...

The issues or objectives that Berman held true were tied completely to this notion of Comprehensibility: How best to make the catalog intelligible to each and every patron? He posted three guidelines that ought to underlie both descriptive and subject cataloging in achieving this aim:

1) Intelligibility. Bibliographic data—i.e., the substance and format of catalog entries—should be helpful to catalog users. And make sense.

What didn’t make sense to Berman in our catalog entries? Well, in a public library context, just about every new dot, slash, dash, and bracket that was introduced in the ISBD format. He felt that these symbols and mysterious Latin ciphers like s.l. and s.n. were not only meaningless to patrons, but also had the potential to “make the uninstructed feel like stupid jerks.” He also felt that while most abbreviations (tr., rev., co.) made sense to professionals, they were often lost upon the public. Centimeter spine sizes, Roman pagination, space-wasting 1st ed. statements—all of these items were insignificant to anyone but library types:

For a profession that’s increasingly so economy-minded. It’s remarkable how much unnecessary and often unintelligible junk we insist on keeping in our catalog entries.

2) Findability. That is, access. It should be quick and fulsome. This involves the use of contemporary, familiar language; entering works under the author’s title-page name; and assigning enough added entries—for titles, subtitles, collaborators, and subjects—to make the material findable where people are likely to look for it.

Does even the most avid fishing enthusiast know that material on minnows is cataloged under FUNDULUS HETEROCLITUS? How many persons would first look under TOBACCO—PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECT when searching for material on smoking and health? Certainly, see references can be constructed, but for Berman not only does it cause useless user frustration, it also establishes a “distinct gap, a distance, a gulf between the knowledgable “ins” and stupid “outs”?

Discussing title-page cataloging, Berman asks:

If an author chooses to write a book as Jean Plaidy, and the publisher not only prints Jean Plaidy on the title page but also advertises and markets the book that way, and reviewers review it that way, and bookstores sell it that way, and patrons expect to find it shelved that way, how does it serve either findability or common sense to catalog it under HIBBERT?

3) Fairness. That is fairness or equity toward the material being catalogued—and with special regard to subject cataloging—to the topics themselves.

Berman continued to rally against headings which prejudiced users against materials. Damaging and demeaning stereotypes against the very people who use the library reflected on a library’s essential integrity.

There was still an argument. Even if Inuit, for
instance, was legitimate, wouldn't most people continue to search for material under “Eskimos” in the catalog? How did that mesh with easy accessibility? Berman's answer was that in these cases the “easy route is not the right one.”

The problem is not one of access to material on the Inuit; for instance, but rather of what kind of access: i.e., via their own name or what somebody else has laid on them? Hopefully, most library users — being relatively intelligent and retentive folk — will only need to jump this access hurdle once. Afterwards they'll know that “Eskimo” items are listed under INUIT... And that very awareness may be worth a lot.

As a public librarian, Berman realized that his clientele was “no less than the entire population. Made up of all ages and class levels, faiths and ethnic backgrounds, his readership was voluntary. They came to the library for entertainment, for practical, hammer and nails information, and for enlightenment. This made them distinctly different from the hypothetical, well-educated researcher that the Library of Congress was cataloging for. And yet, with the advent of the computer age, small and large public, school and community college libraries were going to become more dependent than ever on LC copy. This deeply concerned Berman. Fortunately, by the end of the 70's, his reputation had grown, as had respectability. He was invited to bring his concerns to the 1975 and 1977 ALA Institutes on the Catalog, and he was asked specifically to address the effects of the catalog on the user. Finally, he was becoming recognized as an agent of compassion, rather than controversy.

In the mid-seventies ALA brought together some of the most influential people in the cataloging field to discuss current and transitional issues. Berman was present at both proceedings. At the first institute, which was held in New York City in October 1975, he operated as an official reactor at the conclusion of each paper's presentation.

I recently spent something like twenty minutes talking over the phone with a suitably irate and properly frustrated borrower. She repeatedly bypassed the catalog because she was an inveterate fiction reader and approached the ‘A’ section of the fiction shelf...expecting to find Sholom Aleichem under ALEICHEM. I could only invoke rather mystical language to explain why she was not finding Aleichem under ALEICHEM, but rather under RABINOWITZ...

Need I say that my explanation didn’t do a whole lot to relieve her...

His follow-up to Joan Marshall’s paper, “The Catalog in the World Around It” is quite striking. Marshall’s presentation lucidly described the critical errors in LC’s assumptions about their hypothetical readership. Berman further exemplifies this thinking with the following verbal demonstration:

...Imagine that there is a graphic to project on the screen or blackboard. In your mind, divide that space into two columns, please. Consider placing the following five or six names in the left-hand column, and then tell me what you feel: Eta, Untouchables, Bushmen, Hottentots, Eskimos, and Lapps. There is not any great disquiet or discomfort. Am I correct in assuming that? Not terrible anyway. Consider now what we’re going to place in the right-hand column, one for one, analogous: Krauts, Wops, Frogs, Kikes, Polacks, Micks, and Gringos. Is there a little unease about those, a little bit? Well, I surely hope so.

What is that? What’s in the right-hand column? That’s slanderous: they’re not the names of the people. Kikes are not Kikes, we’re Jews. Okay? Wops are not Wops, they’re Italians. Those are their real names. The others are derogatory...But what about when our own professional center, the Library of Congress uses BUSHERMEN and HOTTENTOTS, which are analogous to Polacks, Kikes, and Wops? Eta literally means filthy persons... And what I'm trying to suggest is that there's something shameful about a profession that has allowed this kind of blatant and rank ethnocentrism...

Essential Berman.

Berman was, by this time, publishing his catalog in a book format, using all the aspects of good public cataloging that he had so fully described. LC's interest in this was good to hear, especially in light of the fact that Berman, since his return to the U.S., had still been operating as somewhat of an "outsider" to the profession. He was not, and still is not, a member of ALA. Even as Chairman and editor of the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table Newsletter, he had never been given any voting rights or privileges within the organization. Remington’s admiration of Berman’s work led Maurice Freedman to openly say:

One of the things I would ask, though, is that there be some legitimization of people like Sanford Berman. When the committees get appointed by LC and ALA, when the consultants are brought in, the people who have been pleading, asking, or declaiming don’t seem to be the people who are invited to participate in the actual planning; they aren’t brought in to discuss the delineation of plans. So I hope that there will also be another kind of change—the participation of the dissidents and critics in the planning and decision making.

Has Sanford Berman been legitimized? I don’t know if that’s the question that really has to be answered. In 1981, he received the Margaret Mann Award, which is awarded annually for outstanding achievement in cataloging and classification. This very "official" recognition of Berman was an honor, of course. Far more honorable in

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There is no doubt that their longevity cannot always be ignored. In the past few years, most of Berman's critics have been silent. Although he will freely remark, with no false modesty, that he “never really got much done, not really,” he is still quite visible outside of his Hennepin County Library activities, most notably as a proponent of the small press profession. His interest in this area is not new, and it certainly runs a close parallel to his anti-establishment that the ‘brash challenger,’ was not to be touched upon them.

Berman has always had a keen interest in these types of materials. In fact, there has always been a core of active, bright, and prolific library professionals in the U.S., who have done their best to promote and produce alternative materials. The more “established” fruits of their labors, such as Alternatives In Print, Alternative Press Index (API) and portions of Bill Katz’s Magazines for Libraries, have always carried Berman’s by-line as compiler, editor, or reviewer.

As for the here and now, the most current articles that Berman has published are most definitely concerned with some very highly charged, topical subjects; the new Right, creationism, subject access to material on nukes, militarism, and war. As a cataloger, he is anxious, once again, about the terminology being used to provide access to these materials. As a human being, he is concerned with nothing less than the truth.

Kristen Ban Tepper is a library student at Kent State University.

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G A Y, D E A D, A N D P R O U D

by MICHAEL BRONSKI

After many years of silence, members of the gay community’s least vocal, and perhaps most oppressed minority, are now speaking out. Discriminated against, ignored, and worst of all, literally buried away, the gay dead person finds her or himself not even a member of the twilight world; it is always dark for them. Raymond Carver is a member of Gay and Dead who speaks of some of their problems and plans for the future.

GCN: Why are gay dead people shunned even by their own community?
Carver: It is not just the gay community, but the whole society. Just look at the language. Words like “deadbeat,” “dead-head,” and “deadletter”—not to mention phrases like “beating a dead horse” or “dead as a doornail”—all reinforce the impression that there is something wrong with being dead.

GCN: But surely gay people as an oppressed minority would have more understanding and sympathy?
Carver: Not true. The typical gay person is as insensitive to the needs and interests of the dead as a straight person. Some of it is a simple matter of economics. Gay life revolves around bars and the dead don’t drink, therefore the bar owners just don’t want us there. The same is true of discos. They claim that we just take up space.

GCN: But certainly a politically aware paper like GCN is not guilty of this. Why, every week our newspapers are filled with stories of death: murders, suicide, assassination.
Carver: First of all those stories are all written by the non-dead. GCN has never had an actively dead person on their masthead. And secondly, death is never presented as an attractive alternative. Even the suicide stories imply that social forces pushed the person to this point.

GCN: How do the dead view themselves as a minority?
Carver: I think that it is important to point out that we are not a minority. There are many many more dead gay people than there are living and we have our traditions, our heroes, our culture. We have Oscar Wilde, Natalie Barney, Sappho, and Michaelangelo. All you can point to is Christopher Isherwood and Jean O’Leary.

GCN: How do you plan to make the rest of the gay community aware of your existence?
Carver: We have rejected being vocal as being too non-dead oriented. One of our planned political and social actions is a non-demonstration in the near future.

GCN: What will this be?

Carver: I can’t tell you the place or time, because there is too much opposition to our fight, but we plan to have a rot-in.

GCN: A rot-in?
Carver: Yes. We feel that it will allow for socializing among the dead, and after several days a pungent political statement.

GCN: What do you feel causes this fear of the gay dead in other gay people?
Carver: Clearly it is a recognition of the dead-self. There is some dead in every living person and they are terrified of that. You might call it thana-phobia.

GCN: How does this deadness manifest itself?
Carver: During sex, most of the living just lie there. This is a latent death instinct.

GCN: What are the aims of organizing the gay dead?
Carver: We do not want to be accepted because we were once living, or because some of us might not appear quite dead. We want to say, and show, that the living should become more like us.

GCN: Are there any organizations that cater to the gay dead?
Carver: Yes. The National Gay Task Force.

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