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THE NEWSPAPER OF THE LITERARY ARTS

Volume 5, Number 8 December 1995 Ithaca, New York FREE

SHADOW OF A GUNMAN

The Israelis

Eyal and Shirley Zisser

For 27 years of his life, Yitzhak Rabin was a warrior. He had fought many battles and scored many strategic achievements, but history shall remember him as a peace-maker — as a man who had endeavored to bring peace to his people and who died for peace.

As a youth, Rabin began his military career when he joined the "Hagana," the underground movement of Jewish settlers in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel. Inducted into the "Hagaria" in 1941, Rabin was soon promoted to platoon leader, and in 1948 was the commander of the brigade that fought for Jerusalem. Rabin reached the peak of his military career in the Six-Day War of 1967, when, as commander of the Israel Defense Forces, he led the Israeli army to its greatest victory. That war is of crucial significance because it dispelled fantasies of eradicating the modern state of Israel, setting in motion a psychological dynamic which was gradually to bring Arabs to recognize the existence of this state. It was this dynamic, paradoxically, that made the current Middle East peace process possible.

Rabin's assassination came at a moment crucial for the future of peace in the Middle East and for the character of Israeli society. When he was elected Prime Minister in 1992, Rabin was able to rely upon the trust that the majority of Israelis had in his commitment to the country's security interests, giving him a unique opportunity to concentrate on efforts to terminate the Arab-Israeli conflict by openly considering such politically sensitive issues as withdrawal from the West Bank or even the Golan Heights. Nevertheless, the peace process exacerbated deep political divisions that had already been wrenching Israeli society apart.

It is by no means certain that the government that will succeed Rabin's will enjoy the same support that his had. Nevertheless, the national trauma of the assassination has brought about a political shift in favor of government policy in Israel, so that in the immediate future the new Israeli prime minister should be able to mobilize support for the peace process. Beyond the visceral reaction to the assassination, however, the basic political schism in Israeli society remains, and it is still too early to speculate in what form it will be articulated in the elections scheduled to take place in a year's time.

Less immediate, but more significant, is the question of the impact of Rabin's assassination on Israeli society, which is now undergoing a transition from a culture at war to one that strives to live in peace with its neighbors, a

see *Israelis*, page 9

The Palestinians

Munther A. Younes

It is no exaggeration to say that the Palestinians have the most to lose in the event of the collapse of the Middle East peace process and the most to gain by its continuation. Unlike all other parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, their very existence as a people is at stake. Since they do not have a state of their own, their fate has largely been determined by external powers in and outside of the region. To assess the present situation of the Palestinians, however, it is important to grasp the events that have led to it.

1948: The Year of the Catastrophe

The beginnings of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict date back to the end of the 19th century and the Zionist plan to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, which was predominantly populated by Palestinian Arabs. With help from the Western powers, particularly Great Britain, large numbers of Zionists began to immigrate to Palestine and build the foundations of a Jewish state. The Palestinians resisted a Zionist takeover of their homeland, but eventually their resistance was overcome by the better-educated, better-organized, better-armed, and better-financed Zionist organizations. In 1948, the Zionists succeeding in establishing the Jewish state they had been dreaming of. To the Zionists, 1948 was the year of independence of the State of Israel, but to the Palestinians, it was *Sanat al-Nakba*, the "Year of the Catastrophe"; not only had those whom they regarded as foreign invaders successfully established a state on their land, but, in doing so, had also destroyed the fabric of Palestinian society.

Israel was established on about 80% of the land of Palestine. During the conflict that preceded and followed its establishment, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled and became refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and other Arab countries. A minority stayed within the borders of the Jewish state. The remaining 20 percent of Palestine, which became known later as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, was administered by Jordan and Egypt. The West Bank was annexed to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and its residents became Jordanian citizens, while the Gaza Strip was never annexed to Egypt and its inhabitants remained stateless.

1967: Another Catastrophe

After recovering from the shock of the 1948 defeat, many of the Arab countries in the region started preparations to liberate Palestine; they built modern armies, bought modern weapons, and prepared for war, but before they could wage a war, Israel launched a pre-emptive attack that devastated the armies of the "confrontation states," Egypt, Jordan, and Syria — leaving Israel in control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. This resulted in another wave of



Jack Sherman

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Ars Brevis

IN THE YEAR OF LONG DIVISION

by Dawn Raffel
Knopf, 117 pages, \$18.00

THE AGE OF WIRE AND STRING

by Ben Marcus
Knopf, 140 pages, \$21.00

Jon Michaud

Both writers of these debut collections have a remarkable way with the language, a syntax and musicality all their own. In the old battle of plot against poetry, Dawn Raffel and Ben Marcus will always opt for poetry. Here, for example, is a passage from the title story of Raffel's *In the Year of Long Division*:

Days, we saw those boys in the sun, in snow, pants slit up the seams; the quick glint of a splinted finger, foam. Our neighbors were whistling, snow slinging, crutching. Their socks were rough and thermal. Wool, maroon—the grimed red of a scab where a shoe was gone. We thought the casts were dyed.

This is the staccato style of much of Raffel's prose. Her stories move ahead in jumps and twists, a rhythmically knotted yet euphonic writing full of detail and feeling. The action evolves out of double-entendres, clichés broken open, and odd juxtapositions. Raffel is always playing with received forms of expression. In her world, "the die was cast" becomes "the casts were dyed"; "ready or not" becomes "ready and not." There is a determined attempt not to say things that have been said before. And when Raffel is at her best, as in the title story, the results are breathtaking.

"In the Year of Long Division" describes a family of girls growing up across the street from a family of boys. Raffel vividly captures the helpless fascination with which they regard each other:

We looked out from indoors. Nose-to-glass, we looked, fogging, we looked, through the damp of our exhalations, downstairs, upstairs, piggy-back—we saw scenes through see-through curtains, a shadow boxing with a shade, something bubbled, tubside—every which way we could find to look, we did; one and the other, and once—or was it twice?—both, in a wash shriveled and skin-shedding, soaked in looks of bathroom-window-frosted boy.

The scenes take place in winter, and we are given evocative descriptions of experiences from youth—snowball fights and school cancellations. "We were snowed deep in," writes Raffel. "School had been suspended and this in the year of long division and remedial enrichment and lunch and petty cloakroom theft." But the story is more than just vivid descriptions of childhood memories and desires. It blossoms suddenly at its end into a tale not only about children, but the adults they become, and how they make their way with and against each other in the world. This development occurs rapidly but, in retrospect, makes perfect sense. Most astounding is the economy with which Raffel brings it off: "In the Year of Long Division" is not much longer than this review.

In fact, most of the stories in the collection are very short—fewer than ten pages. It's a length that seems to suit Raffel's style. The best stories—"We Were Our Age," "The Other R's," "Somewhere Near Sea Level," and "Migration"—have the same punchy, intricate effectiveness of the title piece. One of the things that makes this dense economy possible is the range of Raffel's voice. She can adopt the narrative stance of the epic, as in the opening of "Migration": "Geese came. Dark as the loam of fertile lands, they came, the sky incessant. In the hard fields, bladed brown, no further crop would fill the woven horns of fall..." or the conversational method of a Grace Paley story, as in the first sentences of "Somewhere Near Sea Level":

"Here is my father. He is tucking in a tongue. Coaxing. Lacing, doubling a knot." Raffel is also a master of the list, her catalogs small stories in themselves. This is from the title story:

Rust. Spit. Lotion. Spit and polish, spray and wax, and gabardine going dotty in a closet, smells, plugs, the smell of Mother, and starch, and rutted underfoot wood, patent leather and nails, bleach, blood, gum and balls of hair-balls in the drain—this was our house.

Raffel is above all, a writer of riffs and rhythms. Her best stories have a unique tempo, moving almost by sleight-of-hand. A few of her stories are obviously early exercises in which she is learning how to use her voice. They are interesting in relation to her more accomplished works, but they don't stand alone. Others, particularly the longer stories, are strained. Their length, like the unsupported span of a bridge, is weighed down by the intricate work she does on individual sentences. Raffel is not a builder of large structures. She is an artist of the miniature, like the painter who can write the alphabet on a grain of rice.

Like Dawn Raffel, Ben Marcus is engaged in the task of finding a new way of writing fiction. To this end, he has deviated much further from the mainstream. Here is the entire text of the shortest story in *The Age of Wire and String*:

DIED

Parker, Mark, a body king fighting the darkness person Albert, which nightly killed the persons of light; with his sun stick he also killed the person's home; after killing the entire person, he was attacked by a winter Albert (possessing underground extremities [sublimbs]), which he killed with another stick (Nagle), but died himself accompanied by Mary (keening), and in agony seeing the new persons that were walking freely, unnamed beyond the reach of the sun.

It's not really fair to give this out of context, but there is no other way of conveying the absolute strangeness of Marcus' writing. He employs the tone of the weather forecast, the dictionary, and the instruction manual, but the terms of his forecasts, definitions, and instructions are entirely his own. *The Age of Wire and String* reads like a guidebook to a culture we've never experienced or an explanation of an arcane text we've never read.

It should be noted that, although the above story might seem to be nonsensical on first reading, there is a coherence to it. Its terms appear to conform to a system in which proper names are used to describe inanimate objects; there is a fascination with meteorology and mortality. The sentences describe causes and effects. This holds true for the entire collection. *The Age of Wire and String* is divided into eight parts:

"Sleep," "God," "Food," "The House," "Animal," "Weather," "Persons," and "The Society." Each part consists of five stories followed by a glossary of terms. Here is an example of one of Marcus' definitions:

MOTHER, THE The softest location in the house. It smells of foods that are fine and sweet. Often it moves through rooms on its own, cooing the name of the person. When it is tired, it sits, and members vie for position in its arms.

There is an uncanny accuracy to this definition. But not all of Marcus' definitions are as comprehensible. Take this one for THE SUN: "Origin of first sounds. Some members of the society will detect amplified speech burst emanating from this orb and have accordingly designed noise mittens for the head and back..."

There have, of course, been any number of unruly lexicons over the years—Flaubert's *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, and Ambrose Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary* come quickest to mind—but the text that seems the most relevant here is Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, with its odd descriptions of "Objects," "Food," and "Rooms," like this summation of A SOUND: "Elephant beaten with candy and little pops and chews all bolts and reckless reckless rats, this is this." The difference between the Flaubert/Bierce lexicons and those of Stein and Marcus is that the language

of the former represents a readily identifiable world. The definitions are ironic, but their sense is plain (for example, in Bierce's book, "Noise" is given as, "A stench in the ear"). In Stein and Marcus, the connections are not always explicit; the vocabulary is personal, not civil. Like a bunch of tourists in an alien land, we may get glimmers of the meanings that exist in the foreign language we hear but we can never be entirely at ease with it. And this, I think, is the point of the exercise. Stein and Marcus, uncomfortable with the "real" world, have created alternate universes in which they are at home—but in which the rest of us are not. Marcus hints at this in his definition of RHETORIC: "The art of making life less believable; the calculated use of language, not to alarm, but to do full harm to our busy minds and properly dispose our listeners to a pain they have never dreamed of."

This kind of writing requires patience and a certain amount of indulgence on the reader's part. It contains none of the consolations of traditional fiction. We are in a place without plot or character. It is easy to understand why this might not appeal to many readers. But Marcus' book is not without its rewards. His eerily beautiful prose offers us a haven from everything that is recycled and exhausted in writing today. *The Age of Wire and String* is probably as close as you can come to dreaming someone else's dreams.

Jon Michaud is a writer living in Ithaca.

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The BOOKPRESS
THE NEWSPAPER OF THE ITHACA AREA

Publisher: Jack Goldman

Editorial: Jack Goldman and Russell Underwood

Managing Editor/Design Editor: Russell Underwood

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Distribution: John Wolff, Russell Underwood

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Subscription rate is \$12.00 per year. THE BOOKPRESS is published eight times annually, February through May and September through December.

Submissions of manuscripts, art, and Letters to the Editor should be sent, SASE, to:

THE BOOKPRESS, DeWitt Building
215 N. Cayuga Street, Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 277-2254; FAX (607) 275-9221

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This publication is made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

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Psychiatric Fallacies

Jeffrey Rubin

In the classic 1902 book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James depicts how people who were once miserable often-times gain the gift of "happiness" either through religion, or "it may be produced by the eruption into the individual's life of some new stimulus or passion, such as love, ambition, cupidity, revenge, or patriotic devotion." Today, if you are unhappy and visit a psychiatrist, chances are your feelings will be translated into a language of symptoms, diagnoses, and mental illness. And chances are you will leave the doctor's office with a prescription for a "happiness" pill.

James goes on to contrast the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy's approach to his experience of severe melancholy with that of "medical materialism," a point of view still fashionable in today's world of biopsychiatry. James's brilliant critique of medical materialism is relevant today as an example of how the deeper level of fulfillment that can be derived from the soil of one's complex of feelings, thoughts, and actions is more meaningful than the superficial happiness that can be derived from psychiatric drugs.

In his painfully personal book, *My Confession*, Tolstoy relates how, at about the age of fifty, his life had become flat, more than flat, dead. "I felt," says Tolstoy,

that something had broken within me on which my life had always rested, that I had nothing left to hold on to, and that morally my life had stopped. An invincible force impelled me to get rid of my existence, in one way or another...Behold me then...hiding the rope in order not to hang myself from the rafters of the room where every night I went to sleep alone; behold me no longer going shooting, lest I should yield to the too easy temptation of putting an end to myself with my gun.

All of this took place at a time when Tolstoy's outer circumstances seemed excellent.

I had a good wife who loved me and whom I loved; good children and a large property which was increasing with no pains taken on my part. I was more respected by my kinsfolk and acquaintances than I had ever been; I was loaded with praise by strangers; and without exaggeration I could believe my name already famous.

Now, there have always been physicians who would readily prescribe "happiness" drugs to anyone. But some have felt that it is important, prior to prescribing such drugs, to first look for a difficult situation that may be causing the patient's unhappiness and, if one is found, to teach skills that can improve the situation. Such physicians believe that prescribing drugs inappropriately deprives people of the motivation they need to improve their lives. Yet many of these same physicians who feel uncomfortable about prescribing "happiness" pills for those in stressful situations, when confronted with cases similar to Tolstoy's, might nevertheless employ modern "miracle" drugs in the belief that individuals who experience misery in the absence of any discernible stress are suffering from a chemical imbalance.

Poor Tolstoy! In his day, "wonder drugs" did not exist, so he began to write about his feelings in what eventually became *My Confession*. One day in early spring, while he was alone in the forest listening to its mysterious noises, he was filled with a sense of deeper meaning. "After that," he wrote, "things cleared up within me and about me better than ever, and the light has never wholly died away." His suicidal feelings disappeared and he went on to live a productive, even brilliant life until his death at the age of 82.

Reflecting on Tolstoy's experience, William James decries those who would reduce such spiritual struggle to the terminology of bodily affliction:

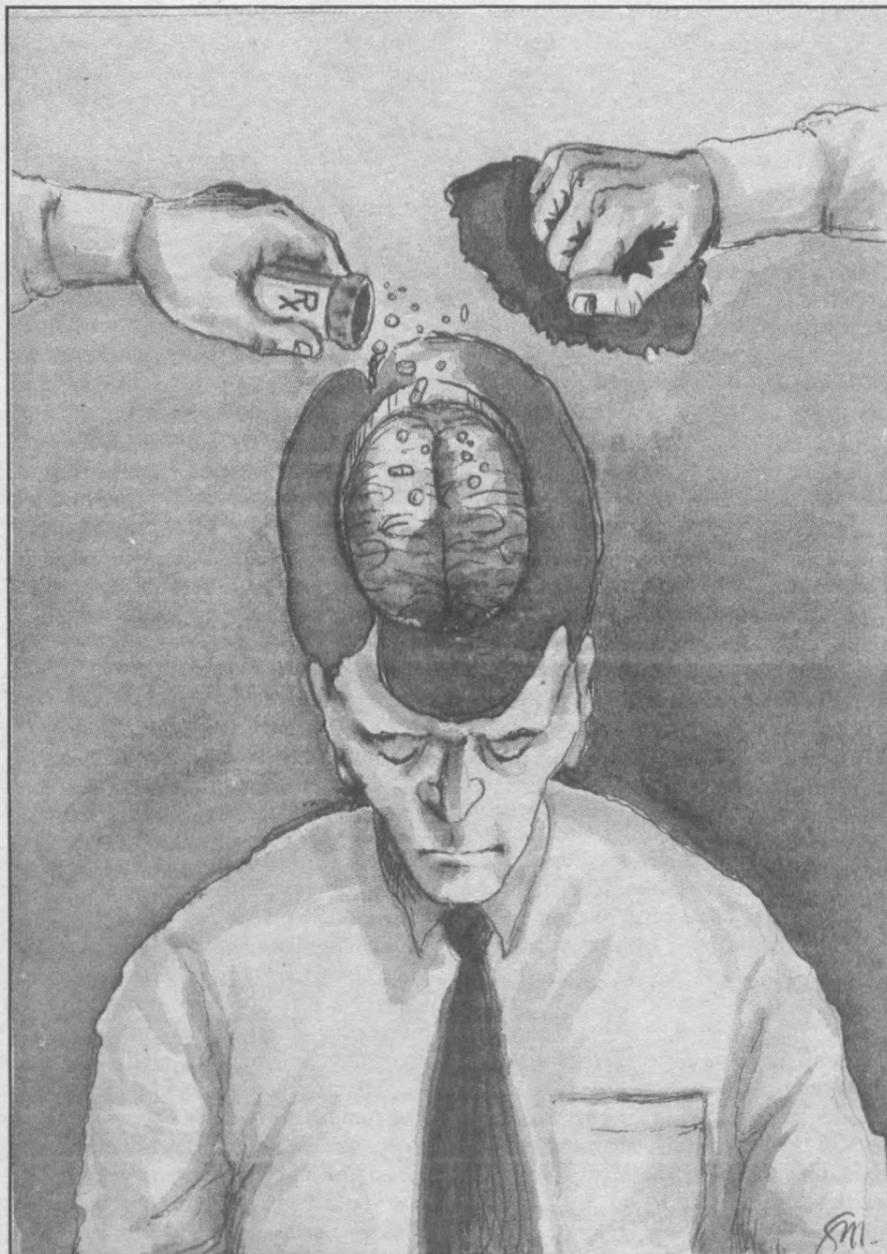
Medical materialism seems indeed a good appellation for the too simple-minded system of thought which we are considering. Medical materialism finishes up Saint Paul by calling his vision on the road to Damascus a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic. It snuffs out Saint Teresa as an hysteric, Saint Francis of Assisi as an hereditary degenerate. George Fox's discontent with the shams of his age, and his pining for spiritual veracity, it treats as a symptom of a disordered colon. Carlyle's organ-tones of misery it accounts for by a gastro-duodenal catarrh. All such mental overtensions, it says, are, when you come to the bottom of the matter, mere affairs of diathesis (auto-intoxications most probably), due to the perverted action of various glands which physiology will yet discover.

Of course, some cases do validate the

natural and animal things. His crisis was the getting of his soul in order, the discovery of its genuine habitat and vocation, the escape from falsehoods into what for him were ways of truth. It was a case of heterogeneous personality tardily and slowly finding its unity and level.

James does not deny that there are some aspects of physiology playing a part in Tolstoy's anguish. But he includes in his interpretation the interaction of Tolstoy's thoughts and feelings with the values of his culture. Moreover, working through his crisis enabled Tolstoy to discern crucial aspects of his identity that permitted him to resume his life on a new basis.

By contrast, let us consider how Peter D. Kramer, M.D., in his popular book, *Listening*



Steve Muck

approach of medical materialism. Serious diseases or physical incapacities are often accompanied by mental and emotional problems. In such cases, there is no question that curing the physiological ailment will almost certainly remove its mental effects. With these kinds of examples, medical materialists defend the organic-psychiatric hypothesis — namely, that persons whose physiology is abnormal may exhibit behavior or sense feelings that are abnormal.

But, for the large number of psychic afflictions that have no discernible physiological basis, the techniques of medical materialism may be not only irrelevant but harmful to the patients' recovery. Consider William James's analysis of Tolstoy's melancholy:

As I interpret his melancholy, then, it was not merely an accidental vitiation of his humors, though it was doubtless also that. It was logically called for by the clash between his inner character and his outer activities and aims. Although a literary artist, Tolstoy was one of those primitive oaks of men to whom the superfluities and insincerities, the cupidities, complications, and cruelties of our polite civilization are profoundly unsatisfying, and for whom the eternal veracities lie with more

to Prozac, deals with the misery of a patient called Sam, suffering from what Kramer refers to as a "brooding depression." When Sam begins to take Prozac, a so-called antidepressant drug, the change in him is remarkable. Not only does he recover from his "depression," he also declares himself "better than well."

Of course, not everyone is as pleased with the effects of "happiness" drugs as Sam claims to be. Many people report that, over time, the benefits from taking drugs become mixed with complex adverse consequences. Too often, physicians ignore the fact that their information about the beneficial effects of drugs is based on short-term studies. Yet patients may be prescribed a drug for years, even though positive outcomes tend to wane as the body develops chemical tolerances and the risks from long-term use increase.

It is important to note that one-quarter of patients who experience symptoms of emotional stress report spontaneous improvement within a month without any psychiatric treatment at all; half or more recover without treatment over a few months; and even people with severe depression often recover without treatment. At the very least, the high rate of recovery without the use of drugs casts doubt on

their benefits. Nevertheless, individuals who feel better just when they began to ingest a drug, tend to attribute their improved mood to the drug's effect. Others, who do not quickly feel better, are told that it takes time for the drug to have an effect. If a few more weeks go by without improvement, the psychiatrist may adjust the dosage or try a different drug. Months can go by, during which time half the people who originally came to the psychiatrist for help would have improved even if they had not taken any drugs. But because they begin to feel better while undergoing treatment, they attribute their recovery to the treatment.

One way to test a drug's effectiveness is to give some people a placebo and others the active drug under double-blind conditions, where neither the patient nor the clinician dispensing the pills is aware of who receives the real drug. About 65 percent of double-blind studies indicate that the "antidepressants" proved more effective than the placebo, leading many psychiatrists to conclude that there is sound scientific evidence documenting the effectiveness of these drugs. However, research carried out by Seymour Fisher and Roger Greenberg of the SUNY Health Science Center at Syracuse, throws doubt upon such claims.

It turns out that studies reported as being double-blind oftentimes fail to keep secret which patients are taking the active drug. This seems to occur because patients who are taking the real "antidepressant" regularly complain about side effects (e.g., dry mouth, tremor, sweating, and constipation). In this way, clinicians soon discover which group is which. When studies are done comparing "antidepressants" with a placebo that mimics the side effects of "antidepressants," typically, no therapeutic differences can be discerned.

A related flaw in the reported research has to do with whether the patient or the clinician determines the rate of improvement. Generally, when patients rate their own outcomes, there is no advantage for "antidepressants" beyond the placebo effects. When clinicians rate their patients, their reports indicate that patients taking "antidepressants" tend to do better.

Roger Greenberg, Seymour Fisher, and two other colleagues in a report published in the October, 1992 *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* looked at studies designed to be less vulnerable to clinician bias than those in the typical double-blind drug trial. In such studies, clinicians' improvement ratings were approximately one-half to one-quarter the size of those previously reported under more transparent conditions, but still significantly larger than those that were based on patient ratings. Consistent with their previous work, Greenberg and Fisher found that patient ratings revealed no advantage for "antidepressants" beyond the placebo effects. The authors state that their findings "highlight the fragility of the antidepressant effect."

With regard to the risk of these drugs, many people believe that because a drug is approved by the FDA it must be safe. Over and over again, however, such drugs have proved to be injurious. In the 1960's, a rash of deaths from brain hemorrhage was reported among patients taking a class of "antidepressants" known as MAO inhibitors. Other patients taking these drugs, although they did not die, experienced severe headaches. It turned out that aged cheese interacted with the drugs to cause the reactions. The MAO inhibitors stayed on the market while patients were warned to stay away from cheese, but problems continued until it was discovered that other foods, such as Chianti wine, fava beans, and ripe figs, can also cause reactions with this class of drugs.

In his book, *Listening to Prozac*, Peter Kramer seems to agree that, at least some of the time, the proper response to what he calls symptoms, "is not to seek to allay them, but to use them as the stimulus for search." But, then, he presents the argument that there are "...instances of discreet mental illness for

see *Fallacies*, page 10

Fiction

Dog Summer

Russell Underwood

So we're here: Greg, Will, the girl, and me. All of us as white as blowfish, except of course Will, who is golden. We have been on Tybee Island almost exactly nine hours.

At the moment, I'm sitting on the upstairs balcony that faces the beach, my back wedged into a corner of the railing. From here I can see the girl, Brett, shuffling around in the kitchen, looking like hell. She's wearing a frumpy plaid dressing gown, the front of which hangs straight down from the tips of her breasts. Her too-blonde hair is kind of messy, and she appears old without her makeup, but you can tell she still looks pretty terrific, or will in a couple of hours.

It's cold still, and the sky is test-pattern gray, and through the slats in the railing the surf looks like molten steel. Greg and Will are down there, getting wet. Will wades in slowly, his steps measured and deliberate. Greg rushes past him like a gecko, his feet pounding out little explosions of water. He dives in violently, slamming himself into the nearest wave with lunatic force. When he surfaces he whips his long hair back theatrically, and I can't see from here but I'm sure he's grinning like a loon. He tackles Will, and together they sprawl in the wash of a gigantic wave.

The girl is suddenly behind me, holding a glass of grapefruit juice. "Idiots," she says in a sleep-wrecked voice, and drinks.

...

I'm on the beach now, self-conscious in a borrowed orange swimsuit that balloons around my thighs. Greg, who was a philosophy major in college, is spouting some shit about Marx and how commodities are like abstractions and how they "mediate" the ways in which people relate to each other. I don't know what he's talking about, but the girl looks as though she's trying to be interested. Will is just Will, which would make sense if you knew him. He's not interested and he's not uninterested. He's just kind of there, going with it. The girl says something which I gather is dumb, and Greg smirks and corrects her. Will just smiles inscrutably, like a dime-store Buddha.

If you ask me, the whole situation is kind of weird. I don't know who decided coming here would be a good idea, or who invited whom or how the girl ties into anything. All I know is, it's late August, and we're out of college, and as far as I can tell none of us exactly has what used to be called prospects. We're all still living with parents (except of course Will), which is humiliating. The girl said she lives with her mom and two sisters and keeps talking about going to California like she's planning some kind of holy pilgrimage. I don't know what she thinks she'll be doing there that's any different from what she's been doing here. Greg, meanwhile, is confident about some job coming through because his family's rich and connected (it's their beachhouse), but he's been out all summer now and nothing's come through yet.

Will, of course, has no plans at all. None that he talks about, anyway. I've known the guy half his life, and never once has he mentioned to me who or what he wants to be. He just floats along, and it would be pathetic except that with Will somehow it's not. He keeps landing on his feet, and it isn't because he's strong or anything. In fact, it's probably the opposite. You look at the guy, talk to him, and you can't help wanting to take care of him in some kind of motherly way. He has in that sense always depended upon the kindness of

strangers, but things are changing now, and I think even he realizes that someday soon the trick isn't going to work so well anymore.

It's scary. Friends of mine are getting married, having babies for God's sake, and paying for it by settling down into shit jobs they would have cringed at the thought of taking in high school. Maybe I just never matured right or something, but I can't imagine shoving what individuality I have into a meat grinder for money. It would take love for me to do that.

Which reminds me. I have one up on Greg and the girl and maybe even Will, because unlike them I have a direction and

cheap in front of Will.

As we're leaving, Brett pulls me aside. I like the way her fingers press my forearm. She is so close I can smell Greg's fruity shampoo in her thick blonde hair. "So David," she says in a lowered voice. "What's the deal with them?"

But of course there isn't time to explain.

...

Back at the house, I edge onto the hammock, which is tied off between two stout wooden posts out back. It's shaded, and yellow flowers grow on the lawn nearby, and I can smell the ocean salt and hear the



(reprinted from *Edward Hopper*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1995)

Edward Hopper, *Captain Upton's House*

a purpose and a goal. And it may not be anything special, and maybe I don't even really know the implications of it, but I guess you hold on to what you can these days: I follow Will.

...

When it cools off, we gather up our things and head back to the house. I try not to notice too much when the girl hoses the sand off her body, which is tall and full of tight, flat muscles. She must live in a health club. But like I said, I try not to look.

After we all get cleaned up and changed, we go out for groceries. The house is pretty well stocked, but the refrigerator's almost empty, and there's the party tomorrow night to think about. So we cruise in Greg's 320i to what passes for downtown Tybee Island.

Our first stop is the Maui Wowie Surf Shop, which, as the name might imply, is run by a mellow older couple who never quite made it past 1975. The guy has wild gray hair, now receding, and wears a tight purple tie-dye that barely covers his paunch. I look at that guy, see my future, and shiver. His wife's not bad looking, though, for an older lady.

Greg and Will are fucking around near the counter, looking at stickers for their boards. They always act like third graders together, and I don't get it, because Will's never been that way with me. Minor twinge of jealousy. I notice that the girl's watching them too.

We buy a bunch of junk at the A&P, including a few cases of Labatt's Blue because it's on sale, and split the cost four ways. Which pisses me off, because most of the stuff is for Greg's party tomorrow, and I don't feel like paying to feed all his cheesy Savannah friends, most of whom I haven't met. But I don't want to sound

ugly cawing of gulls. Moments like this are why I come to the beach. It's like a fucking Jimmy Buffett song.

In a little while, Will shuffles down the stairs in his ratty brown sandals, and for once Greg isn't dogging his heels. He looks at me kind of shyly as he descends, his smile, as usual, vaguely sarcastic.

He's a pretty big guy, really. His size startles me sometimes, when I haven't seen him for a while. He's about six-three but superthin, like maybe 140 pounds or so, and he ambles around in such a way that you'd think his limbs are too loose. His blond hair is long in the front, and he has to keep tossing his head to clear the bangs from his eyes. He sits down on the floor next to me. "So what's up?"

"Nothin.' You?"

He shrugs.

Which pretty much sums things up. So we're quiet for a while, until I really can't take it anymore and I say, "So what's with the girl? Did Greg bring her?"

"Um, I guess. I think he knows her from high school."

"Are they together?"

"Have to ask them."

Typical Will answer. I'll have to dig deeper to get anywhere, but at this moment it feels like too much effort, and I don't really care anyway. The only thing I care to know as far as Greg's concerned is something I can't really ask about, and it's frustrating as hell, so I say, "You and Greg have been spending a lot of time together lately," even though I know it makes me sound like his mom.

He actually looks at me. "Yeah, I guess. Is that a problem?"

And I'm thinking *shit*.

"Of course not. I don't care what you do. I'm just wondering what the girl thinks."

"Her name is Brett. And why do you care what she thinks?"

"I don't, okay? I'm sorry I brought it up. She can go to hell for all I care."

"What's your problem, David?"

I grind my head against the hammock's little foam pillow and try not to grit my teeth. "I don't have any problem except that I think Greg is a monumental asshole, and ever since we got here he's practically had his tongue down your throat."

Will stands up and sort of shrugs. His face looks, as always, completely and stupidly calm. "Well, when you get over your tantrum, come upstairs. We're playing Truth or Dare tonight."

I stare at the ceiling, listening to his footsteps recede on the wooden stairs, and I am thinking *shit, shit, shit*. My head actually feels hot, and for a few seconds I can't really think straight. I wonder if it wasn't just shame and embarrassment and fear and all but instead some kind of swelling of the brain that made me say such things.

...

Tonight, after our little game, I am going to write an essay called "Why I Hate Greg." It will be a long essay, but God knows I am ready to write it, having endured his shit for, Jesus Christ, half my life now.

The crux of my argument will be that I hate the way I am around him. And maybe some of that's my fault, I admit, but not all of it. The thing is, he keeps me quiet. I can be quite a talker, but around Greg I become some sort of verbal eunuch. I want to talk, but the force of Greg's presence keeps my mouth shut. He talks faster and louder than any Southerner I've ever met, and my pedestrian mind can't keep up with his outrageous tangents and shifts of topic. Of course, it's not a problem for Will, who doesn't really engage Greg, but rather glides along the periphery of Greg's monologues. In conversation, he's like a subtle rhythm section, accompaniment to Greg's screeching guitar.

Truth or Dare, I think. Lovely.

...

It starts out all right. We settle down in a tight circle on the living room floor, like conspirators. In the center of the circle, Greg has set a salad bowl full of hot nachos covered with jalapeño cheese. Each of us is well into our second can of Labatt's.

I don't feel nervous. I really don't. I know what's going to happen, even if I don't know exactly how, or when, or to whom. It's sort of like Russian Roulette. I look at Will, who acts as though our talk never occurred, and think, hey, fine, let's go.

Greg, who always starts, of course picks me.

"Truth," I say. Calmly still. I have no secrets. It is a blessing and a curse.

The game proceeds into the night, like a friendly poker game that gradually becomes intense as the hours wear on and the stakes increase. Petty and uninteresting revelations follow one upon the next, and the question becomes, who will break first, as the truths become harder to tell?

It's the girl, of course. She's new here and doesn't know better. Greg has her drink a Dixie Cup half full of Texas Pete hot sauce. Her eyes water afterward, and she glares at him sourly. It's nothing, though, compared with what's coming. It occurs to me that whatever her feelings for him, she doesn't know Greg at all.

When his turn comes around again, he asks her "Truth or Dare?" I see something in his eyes. Here it comes. Will is still impassive, but I know he sees it too. His body tightens, just a bit. No one else would have noticed.

"Truth," the girl says defiantly, thinking, I guess, that nothing could be much worse than another swig of Texas Pete. Trusting him.

"Who do you love?"

A simple question, lightly asked, but it settles in the room like a dense and heavy fog. The girl is quiet, looking at Greg, pissed off now, and too proud to answer. Recognizing Greg's little power game. Maybe for the first time.

"I'll take the dare," she says coldly.

"You can't," Greg replies amiably. "You have to say double dare."

A long pause then, filled with the soft hiss of breath being drawn, slowly. "Fine. Double dare."

"Take your clothes off," says Greg.

Another pause as her eyes narrow. "Bastard," she says, but rises to her feet.

...

Who do you love?

Would I have answered? I know I said I have no secrets, and I don't, not really. Greg knows, and so does Will, in his way. Hell, even Brett's probably figured it out. But it's different to say what you feel, out loud and to everyone. To declare yourself. I know that as well as anybody. My mom knew I was bi since little league, since those afternoons I spent alone with a young friend in my room, the door closed discreetly behind us. But the fact that I never publicly acknowledged to her my attraction to boys allowed her some measure of deniability. When I finally came out for real, she burst into tears. I know, she told me. I've always known. You didn't have to say so. I wondered later why I did. For political reasons, I guess. Because all my new friends were out. And to hurt her. Yes. That too.

...

The next night, the festivities do not begin in earnest until nearly 11:00 pm, when the last of the guests arrive, having made the long trip down from Savannah, across the ancient, creaking suspension bridge that connects Tybee to the rest of the world. As a group, they seem nice enough, though it's difficult for me to work up much enthusiasm for them, tainted as they are by their association with Greg. By midnight, the beach house is full, and the party has taken on the familiar rhythm of all such gatherings here.

In one of the guest bedrooms, a clutch of young women and one skinny boy lounge on the floor and bed, passing around a blue-tinted water pipe. The kitchen is predictably crowded, the counters filled with beer cans and half-crumpled foil potato chip bags. The carpet, stained here and there by dark splashes of spilled beer, crunches with tiny shards of nachos, and every room billows with the musty tang of clove smoke and pot. A few kids from the kitchen propose an alcohol run, and a collection is hastily taken up in a someone's battered felt beret — a tithe to the beer gods, someone suggests.

Sometime later, the group from the guest bedroom shuffles giggling down the stairs, headed for the base of the dark lighthouse nearby. I watch them briefly through a window, their lithe bodies dancing drunkenly before the huge structure, which stands out against the indigo sky like some preposterous phallus. They look like druids performing an orgiastic rite.

Turning away from the window, I notice two beautiful boys in plain black T-shirts and shredded jeans curled together on one corner of the couch. They are kissing with such exquisite tenderness that my

heart lurches. I look immediately away and realize with something like alarm that I have hardly seen Will all evening.

Just then, I catch sight of the girl — of Brett. She's standing on the deck, a tall still form staring out to sea. Slowly, with measured steps, I make my way to the sliding glass door and step outside. The briny warmth of the night air plays against my skin like the breath of a lover. The girl has not yet moved, and, watching her granite stillness, I feel something ugly and cold slip along my spine, take refuge in the stem of my brain. I stand beside her and scan the horizon for whatever it is that seems to have transfixed her. But there's nothing — just the sea and the sky and the beach, stretched out like a long bony finger under the ghost-glow of a fat crescent moon.

Then I see it — see them. Two shadowed bodies lying together among the scrubby dunes, their liquid movements so coordinated that for a moment they looked like a single form.

And suddenly it seems as though all warmth has drained from the summer air, and I stand as silent and still as the girl, watching them. For one mad moment, it seems almost funny. *Who do you love?* Greg asked last night. It never occurred to me — not once — to wonder what Will might have said.

Suddenly, I am very conscious of the girl. Though neither of us has moved, she feels closer now, and I am aware of her warmth and moist fragrance. I feel angry and defeated and absurdly aroused.

And then our shoulders are touching, our bodies listing against each other.

"Brett," I say, my voice softer and less

steady than I intended. I realize it is the first time I have said her name.

"Shut up," she whispers, turning toward me, into me, her face damp and shimmering, her eyes bright and cold. Her hands slide to my waist, grip the hem of my shirt in a tight, fierce knot. "Shut the fuck up." And then her lips are on mine, salty and moist, and my collar makes a soft ripping sound as she yanks at the bottom of my shirt.

...

The only remaining occupant of the guest bedroom forfeited by the lighthouse revelers is their clear-blue water pipe, which lies on the nightstand like a child's forgotten toy. The lights are off, and it takes my eyes a minute to adjust as Brett draws the door closed and snaps the lock.

We have not said another word, and a tacit understanding seems to flow between us that we will not. Behind me she slips out of her clothes; I don't even look. The bed's made but rumpled by the weight of bodies. I remember the condoms in the desk drawer — thick, pink Sheik Elites with tiny bumps along the tip like goose-flesh.

Brett approaches me from behind, helps me off with the shirt, pulls my belt away like a drawcord. There is no gentleness between us, I realize, only a cold electricity masked as warmth, a rough friction grinding away at whatever either of us ought to be feeling.

And for long seconds, as my lips and fingers explore her perfect flesh, it is easy not to think of Will. Then we pull each other down in a gesture so familiar from

other nights, and suddenly, ridiculously, I feel unfaithful. Anger spreads through me, but, as confused as my emotions are, it's hard to know for whom.

My mouth descends on Brett's, almost cruelly. I feel the resistance of teeth under bee-stung lips, her breasts flattened beneath my chest, her short tough nails gouging at the skin along the base of my spine.

She jerks her mouth away from mine, gasping like a diver up for air. "No," she says and squirms beneath me. I'm almost relieved, but then I see what she's done: She's on her stomach now, her back arched like a gymnast's, knees planted at shoulder width on the mattress. When she speaks again, her voice is arid, utterly flat. "Like this," she says.

...

"That's what it's like," she whispers afterward, as we lie beside each other among the muffled party sounds filtering through the door.

"Sometimes," I say. *But not for them, I'll bet. Not for a while, anyway.* But I don't want to think those thoughts, want only to feel something for this girl beside me, to feel anything at all.

"What's next?" I say to the ceiling, unsure really who the question's intended for.

"California," the girl says resolutely. From her lips, the word sounds talismanic.

At this moment, it seems as good an answer as any.

Russell Underwood is managing editor of The Bookpress.

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Kikerizpotschen

Harvey Fireside

In my geography as a child of seven or eight, Vienna was the center of the universe. I could reach all parts of the city by the red-and-white *Strassenbahn*, the streetcar that jangled and clanged down steel rails, powered by overhead cables. If it ground to a halt, the motorman would leap nimbly down from his perch in front, and, with a long pole, reattach the metal hasp atop the car that must have slipped loose. Soon, the motor would begin chugging again.

The local sport was to leap on or off the streetcar when it slowed at an intersection or a curve. Placards sternly warned passengers to refrain from such derring-do, but in the Kafkaesque world of civic bureaucracy that dominated our lives, defying an occasional regulation was an irresistible temptation for free spirits.

I suppose that this forbidden sport was something like a Viennese variant of Russian roulette. If your luck ran out, you might have to join the legless veterans of World War I, who sat on camp chairs in their threadbare uniforms, while compassionate passers-by dropped schillings into their upturned caps. Other fixtures of the Vienna streets were the musicians who performed saccharine tunes. Occasionally, a serenade wafted from our courtyard, an aria from Paggiacci, or a popular song like "Wien, Wien, nur du allein, kannst die Stadt meiner Träume sein" (Vienna, only you can be the city of my dreams) crooned in the style of the *matinée* idol Richard Tauber. My father would sometimes allow me to fold a piece of newspaper around a coin and pitch it out the window in appreciation. The troubadour would bow his thanks.

In those days, we had a comfortable apartment on the Albertgasse, where I remember watching my mother at the grand piano playing pieces by Chopin and Schubert. A plaster bust of Mozart presided over the living room. My parents had taught me a nonsense verse to recall the overture to "The Marriage of Figaro." It went (in Viennese dialect), "Nudl hamma heut. Makaroni Nudl hamma morgen um die Zeit. Makaroni Nudl und a gutn Apfelstrudl—umma so a gute Mahlzeit tut mir leid." (We're having noodles today. Macaroni noodles tomorrow, same time. Macaroni noodles and a good apple strudel.)

After the death of my mother, my father and I moved to a cramped flat on the Lange-gasse, furnished with cheerless furniture. Frau Fantl, the landlady who wore mousy dresses flecked with flour, was supposed to keep an eye on me. She also served me cold suppers alongside her own kids. But most of the time, I was on my own, staring at the wallpaper with pink butterflies against a flowery field, and recalling the happier days when I had both parents.

Now, there were long lonely evenings, especially when my father put a carnation in his buttonhole, a sign that he would be gone all night. Sometimes he would return whistling a tune he must have heard at a cabaret. In the morning, he would occasionally ask if I wouldn't like to have some nice lady take the place of my mother. I couldn't answer such a preposterous question.

When he was in a good mood, my father let me take the streetcar after school to Josefstädterstrasse, the downtown thoroughfare where he had his photo shop and studio. If business was slow, he would leave the shop to Fritz, the apprentice with long blond hair and bad teeth, and take me to a nearby café. Once, when Fritz had been caught stealing, my father called him a *Dummkopf*, slapped his face, and told him to straighten out. Fritz promised to behave—after all, even the posi-

tion of apprentice was a step up from the dead-end life of an unskilled worker, particularly one saddled with a criminal record.

As a habitué at the café, my father was proud of being shown to his *Stammtisch*, the regular table where he could browse through a rack of foreign newspapers. A mustachioed waiter would whip out a match for my father's cigarette. Am I wrong in suspecting that there was a hostile side to such servility, the resentful air of a menial who could lay claim to racial superiority?

Ludwig Bemelmans calls Austrians a race of hotel keepers, their over-politeness a veneer for assorted petty hatreds. Shopkeepers—even my father—would greet an old bat of a customer with "Küss die Hand, gnä Frau" (I kiss your hand, gracious lady),



Herr Maschek's second-grade class, 1937. (Mr. Fireside is fifth from the left, front row.)

before mumbling a nasty comment under their breath.

While my father sipped black coffee behind an English language paper, I was treated to a dish of *Schlag*—whipped cream sprinkled with powdered sugar. When my father's business was good, the waiter would bring a tray of pastries to choose from, including *Sachertorte*, which had been invented at the Hotel Sacher around the corner; *Schaumrolle*—a cream-filled horn; and *Stachelschweine*—chocolate morsels in the shape of porcupines, with slivered nuts as their quills. Whatever may have been the corrosive effect on our teeth or arteries was of no concern at the time. It was all a marzipan dreamland presided over by a statue of a turbaned Turk, a tribute of sorts to the Ottoman legions who had conquered the city and, upon their retreat, had left the Viennese permanently addicted to their scalding black brew.

The *Strassenbahn* was also on hand to take me to the *Stadtpark*, the city's central recreation area, for a pickup game of soccer. One variant was called "zur Suppe, zur Suppe, die Knödel sind heiss" (soup's on, the dumplings are hot). It began with a huddle from which we boys emerged sprinting in different directions. The player whose turn it was to be "it" then yelled to make us freeze, so he could toss the ball at the nearest player. If you were hit, then you became "it." In one variant, the players adopted fanciful nationalities—Amerikaner, Franzose, Kinese, etc.—and proceeded to conduct a soccer-style war. Casualties suffered no worse than a torn shirt-sleeve or a few missing buttons.

I could give as good as I got, having been a veteran of many a schoolyard battle. Those were generally provoked by some bully who had just emerged from *Religionsstunde*, the hour each week when a priest came to the school to instruct Christian students. No doubt he had taught them that we Viennese Jews were the descendants of the biblical persecutors of their savior. The avengers might begin with a provocative jingle: "He, he,

Jude, spuck im Hut. Sag der Mutter das ist gut." (Hey, hey, Jew, spit in your hat. Tell your Mom that it's good.) I couldn't, for the life of me, feel any atavistic guilt. I just got mad at the insults and lashed out, then set a speed record running from my pursuing tormentors.

Once, after Otto, an older kid from an upper grade, had outrun me, I made the mistake of confessing to my father the reason for a particularly bad set of bruises. My father immediately made an appointment to see my third-grade teacher, Herr Maschek. This mild-mannered fellow, who had instructed us in the history of Vienna, starting with the Roman camp at Vindobona, was not about to let such an episode of barbarism pass. He promised that the incident would not recur.

Then he called in Otto's mother for a stern lecture. I realized that Otto's gang threatened me with the mayhem that was reserved for a fink—a "Weimperl"—which made for a very uncomfortable few weeks of ducking out of school.

Apart from racist taunts, the standard way to needle a schoolmate was to yell, "Leck mich im Arsch" (kiss my ass), or simply to mutter the initials "LMIA." Later, you could sound quite erudite by telling your friends you had said "das Götz Zitat" to those who annoyed you—Goethe's play, *Götz von Berlichingen*, being the source of this popular curse.

Weren't we a civilized bunch, to borrow our insults from the classics and to sing our national anthem to a tune composed by Haydn—"Gott erhalte und beschütze...." (God maintain and protect), to the same melody as "Deutschland über Alles." On national holidays, the *Heimwehr*, our home-grown army, paraded by to the Radetzky March, a sprightly rhythm that we mocked by singing the nonsense verse, "Wenn der Hund mit der Wurst uebern Eckstein springt..." (When the dog with the wurst jumps over the curb). The red-white-red flag of our republic had been sanitized by having the double eagle of the Austro-Hungarian Empire excised.

Despite his assimilated ways, my father would periodically succumb to nostalgia and return to the Leopoldstadt, the Jewish quarter where he had grown up. The Danube embankment, or *Lände*, was still the home of his parents, the only grandparents I knew: a patriarchal grandfather with steel-rimmed glasses and a white beard, and a grandmother who smelled of spices. Grandpa Aaron (*nom de commerce* Adolf) had nurtured the religion he had brought with him from Oswiecim (later to achieve notoriety under its German name, Auschwitz), and he conducted Friday night services in his living room. My father and his brothers would stave off boredom by whispering dirty jokes until their guffaws

evoked an angry glare from Grandpa.

I was in awe of my grandfather, who earned a living by taking the official photos of finishers at the Vienna racetrack. In the off-season, he dreamed up ingenious inventions. When a rooster he kept with some chickens in his backyard aroused protests from the neighbors, he designed spectacles that kept the bird from crowing at dawn. My grandma, Oma Marie, prepared savory dinners for us after services; while the food was warming on the coal stove, we would toast bread spread with chicken fat and rubbed with garlic (better than it sounds). Sometimes my uncles serenaded grandma with a maudlin tune, "Mein jüdische Mamma, sie ist die Beste in der Welt..." (my Jewish mama is the best in the whole world).

All my uncles had broken from the orthodox faith. We met some of them and their families on High Holiday services at the modest conservative temple on the Klukigasse. I also remember walking by the synagogue on Seitenstetterstrasse, where ladies from the Jewish elite showed off their stylish furs. I was most impressed by the coats with a collar in the shape of a fox biting its tail.

My Onkel Walter, a gambler who was periodically broke, occasionally came by to borrow cigarette money from my father. Onkel Nazi (Nathan) was a traveling salesman with a long-suffering wife, Irma, and a son, Kurt, who, with his freckles and twinkling green eyes, was my favorite cousin. Onkel Willi carried on the family business at a high-society photo studio; his daughter, Selma, who had attended the art academy, was my image of elegance; his strapping son, Egon, joined Kurt in the city's Zionist soccer league, "Hakoah." Onkel Mike had left for the States as a young man, and now lived in a strange place called Danville, Illinois.

In my childish imagination, I fantasized about life in America. Most of my settings were taken from the romantic novels of Karl May, a German author who wrote boyhood adventures spun from whole cloth. Their hero was Old Shatterhand, a legendary scout who always manages to survive his battles with the Indians to live another day. I also loved the fantasies of Baron Münchhausen, the noble warrior who brags about his superhuman feats, such as sailing out of danger on a passing cannonball. Another favorite of mine was Till Eulenspiegel, the bane of the *Spiessbürger* (bourgeoisie), whom he provokes into pursuing him with elemental fury; however, even on the gallows, he manages to have a last laugh.

As tykes we had all been read the tale of *Struwpeter* (shaggy Peter), as a kind of moral lesson. For never washing, combing his hair or trimming his nails, Peter becomes the victim of sadistic punishments. Eventually, he has his finger lopped off. I have often wondered about the subtext of this "children's book" with which many generations of Austrian and German children grew up.

I also read, with little joy, the *Märchen* (fairy tales) of the Brothers Grimm. They seemed to reflect the meanness of adults, from which children manage to escape only by luck or magic. "Der Jude am Dorn" (the Jew in a brier) has its stereotyped villain, a crooked old Jew, who tries to frame a good-hearted yokel who humiliated him by playing an irresistibly catchy tune on his fiddle. Of course, the good peasants of the tale outwit the Jew and have him hanged as a thief. Didn't some of my classmates believe we made matzohs from the blood of Christian babies?

Weren't we also—even if native-born Viennese—descended from such "wandering Jews"? Perhaps a few such throwbacks from former times still sold old clothes or pots and pans from their wagons, but, for the most part, the Viennese Jews of my father's generation

and Kristallnacht

were more educated and respectable. They flocked to medicine, law and other professions. Having changed their names and refined their manners, they thought they could melt into the middle class. Foolish dream!

We were all seduced by Vienna's *Gemütlichkeit* (with no exact English equivalent, call it a sense of being at home, comfortable, letting one's hair down). We believed in the city's orderly design—the *Innere Stadt* (central district), centered on the *Stefl*, the tower of St. Stephen's Church. This "first district" was encircled by a boulevard called the Ring, actually a semicircle closed by the Danube. The major link of the Ring was in front of the Opera, but it curved around Parliament, with its statue of Pallas Athene, the goddess of wisdom (facing the other way). It even contained a segment named for the city's anti-Semitic mayor, Dr. Karl Lueger.

Apart from his politics, Lueger was said to enjoy the coffee shops for the scintillating talk of their resident Jewish intellectuals. When challenged on this inconsistent behavior, he had replied, "Wer ein Jude ist, das bestimme ich" (Who is a Jew—that I will determine). The city center sported the Kärntnerstrasse, the most fashionable street for shopping, as well as the Graben, where you could hire a hansom cab or inspect the Pestsaule, the macabre pillar commemorating the Black Plague, with its horde of pitch-black sufferers topped by a gilded Madonna and child. Tucked away in the center was the Judenhof, a square once inhabited not just by Jews but by Mozart in his Viennese days. You had to discover such treasures on foot.

My father's business always seemed to be on the verge of bankruptcy, so I was never taken to visit areas beyond Vienna. School chums would sometimes brag of vacations their families had spent at spas like Bad Ischl, mountain resorts in the Semmering or on the Vorarlberg, and at the Wörthersee and other lakes. But how could I feel deprived when all the treasures of Vienna were at my feet?

Still, with more than the usual dash of boyish curiosity, I couldn't wait for a visit to the *Wochenschau*, the newsreel theater that offered the latest true adventures each week. There were disasters that killed masses of people far away—the zeppelin Hindenburg bursting into flames, the Japanese army marching across China, the civil war in Spain. Closer to home, we saw our doughty chancellor, Kurt Schuschnigg, receiving assurances from his friend, Mussolini, that Austria's security was guaranteed. What if there were demands from our expansive neighbor that we were historically suited only to be an adjunct, the *Ostmark* (eastern province) of Germany? With all its drawbacks, our home town seemed like the best of all possible worlds.

Why, my father would ask rhetorically, would anyone need to leave the electricity of Vienna for some faraway Podunk? The slang name for such a dead corner of the countryside was *Kikerizpotschen*. It is a wonderful non-

sense word, suggesting the crowing of a rooster (*kikeriki*) combined with a term for the clogs or slippers (*Potschen*) worn by country folks. The word evokes the ridicule by the sophisticated Viennese of their benighted country cousins—i.e., by the "Reds" (urban Social Democrats) of the "Blacks" (right-wing clerical parties). Yet, while the Viennese prided themselves on their cultural superiority, the rural majority inevitably determined the country's history. It was in distant Braunau, near Linz, that Adolf Hitler had grown up, then tried to break into the art world of Vienna, only to be rebuffed for lack of talent. Some thirty years later, when he marched back into that city, he was soon joined by most of its inhabitants in a war against its "decadent culture."

...

Austrians cheered Hitler when he marched into Vienna in March 1938. The noise lasted all night. What had happened to all those blustering declarations of national independence by the Austrian government of Kurt Schuschnigg? Instead of fighting to the last man, as they had promised, the Austrians met the *Wehrmacht* with flowers, hence the name *Blumenkrieg* (flower war) for the encounter that led to the *Anschluss*, or the annexation of Austria to the Nazi Third Reich.

Before long, the situation of the Austrian Jews became precarious. Hitler had brought with him the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, by which anyone with two or more Jewish grandparents was deprived of citizenship. That meant that Jews, from schoolteachers to workers at the many state-run companies, lost their civil service jobs. As noncitizens, Jews were fair game for any Nazi who wanted revenge for a real or imagined injury from former days. We kept searching our memories for some employee of my father's little photo shop who might have harbored a grudge and could now, resplendent in a black or brown Nazi uniform, order us out of our apartment or even into a concentration camp.

Several neighbors who had seemed to us like decent people began sporting special swastika pins in their lapels, indicating that they had been underground members of the Nazi party in the last days of Chancellor Schuschnigg, when membership had been illegal. With names like Fantl or Kratochvil, these members of Austria's ethnic goulash now puffed themselves up as certified Aryans. Street corner displays featured anti-Semitic pages from *Der Stuermer*, a hate sheet that delighted in depicting deformed or obese old Jews as living proof of their racial degeneracy. Overnight, we became strangers in our own land.

As a scrappy nine-year-old, I was warned by my father not to fight back when the bullies from third grade met me after school to even up the score for Christ. If I struck back, the bully's father—some bigshot in the Party, perhaps—could have us all deported. The world I had grown up in was suddenly a dangerous place.

On the evening of November 9, 1938, my Onkel Lou came over for a visit to our flat. Suddenly, we heard a banging on the door. Two men in Nazi uniforms stood in the entrance. They wanted my father to accompany them to his store, a few blocks away in the Josefstadt, the eighth *Bezirk* (district) of Vienna. Hours passed, and my uncle tried to reassure me that there were still laws; they wouldn't do anything to my father without proper papers. Near midnight, my father did indeed return, looking very shaken.

He told us that the Nazis had taken him into the store and pulled down the metal shutters. He was afraid they meant to kill him without any witnesses being able to see from the street. Soon, however, it became clear that the Nazis were just out to plunder everything they could carry on the motorcycles they had parked outside: cameras, photo albums, furniture. My father tried to stall for time, showing them how some of the gadgets worked—the flash units, light meters, and imported equipment. After several loads of his possessions had departed in the motorcycle sidecars, there was a loud knock on the shutters.

The Nazi punks opened up to find someone who outranked them, a man in a black SS uniform. What were they doing? he asked. "Wir nehmen nur was uns gehört," (we're only taking what belongs to us), they answered. That didn't satisfy him. He asked for authorization, to show they were taking the loot to the proper office, not just indulging in private plunder. They conceded that they had been in such a hurry to engage in the *Judenaktion* (the anti-Jewish measure), they hadn't bothered with formalities. The SS man told them to seal the place, and he would see to the consequences, including what to do with the Jew.

When the punks were gone, my father thanked the SS man, whom he recognized as an old customer, for probably saving his life. Don't bother, was the reply, just go home and pack up—there's no future for you here in Vienna. It was good advice, but quite another thing to follow it. It took another year and a half to obtain permits to leave the country, along with the most precious piece of paper of all: a visa from the United States.

Later, we learned what *Kristallnacht* had been all about. Having prepared the script for a pogrom against the Jews in Germany and Austria, all Hitler needed was an excuse: that came when a young Polish refugee in Paris named Hershel Grynszpan heard that his father was being deported. Grynszpan walked into the Nazi embassy on November 7 and

fired at a minor official named Ernst vom Rath, who died two days later. The following morning, the signal was given for the arson, murder, and looting that savaged Jewish communities throughout Germany and Austria. Hundreds of Jews were killed on the spot; others, like my Onkel Walter, the gambler, vanished after being taken to Dachau or Buchenwald, the first concentration camps.

The smashing of windows in scores of synagogues and thousands of Jewish shops gave the pogrom its name, *Kristallnacht* (the night of broken glass). In short order, a series of legal decrees made life unbearable for Jews. My father's shop was closed, I was expelled from my public school, and the whole family had to find a place in Leopoldstadt, which became the Jewish ghetto of Vienna. We squeezed into an apartment with a cousin's family. Our only regular meal was hot soup, doled out by a Jewish relief agency.

Our days were spent poring over almanacs and maps, trying to find some distant country willing to accept Jewish refugees. There were abortive applications to Manchukuo (Japanese-occupied Manchuria) and the Dominican Republic. Our American relatives shrugged off our pleas; surely we must be exaggerating our plight. Only in April 1940 did the papers come from Illinois. The war had already broken out, but as long as Italy remained neutral, we were able to get to Trieste.

HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, fed us our first real meal in over a year—the seder for Passover. Then we set sail on the Roma, a steamship that took over two weeks to reach New York after a circuitous route around the Mediterranean. Our arrival was a mad whirl of impressions: a visit to the World's Fair in Flushing, sleeping on cots in the stripped-down Astor mansion in Manhattan, then the long train ride to Danville, Illinois.

I can remember a flood of emotions. We felt the relief of survivors, but also the anguish of knowing how many we had left behind. They would never make it—my white-haired grandmother who smelled of spices, my teenage cousin who had tried to escape through the Zionist underground, my uncles and aunts with their gaunt, hungry faces. Young and old, they were all murdered by the Nazis. It has taken over fifty years for me to be able to recall these ghosts and to come to terms with my memories.

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INTIMATE ENEMIES: JEWS AND ARABS IN A SHARED LAND

Meron Benvenisti

Foreword by Thomas Friedman

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Larry Edwards

I

Ishmael and Isaac:

A Midrashic Meditation

When their father, Abraham, died, his sons came together in Hebron to bury him in the cave where Sarah had been buried, the cave which Abraham had purchased from Ephron the Hittite. Had the brothers been strangers to each other all those years? Isaac at the time was living in the south, in Beer-lahai-roi (The Well of the Living One who sees me). He is coming from there when Rebekah arrives; he returns there after his father is buried. What is this place of vision? It is Hagar's well, the place where an angel of God spoke to her, noted her affliction at the hand of her mistress, Sarah, and promised her a son who would become the father of a great nation.

Isaac (Yitzhak, the laughing one) would become the father of Israel; Ishmael (God will hear) would become the father of the Arab nation. Ishmael and Hagar were exiled from Abraham's home at Sarah's demand because Ishmael had been "sporting" with his younger brother. Some commentators suggest that the verb means some form of idolatry, immorality or murder. But (as Arthur Waskow suggests in *Godwrestling*), the word (m'TZaHeK) comes from the same root as Isaac (yi'TZHAK): perhaps Sarah was angry because Ishmael was *too similar* to her son. Indeed, the two boys had much in common.

After the exile of Hagar and Ishmael, God commands Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. At the end of that narrative, Isaac disappears. He does not return with Abraham to Beer Sheva. He is not even mentioned as being present at the burial of his mother. The next time we hear of him (when Rebekah is brought back by Abraham's servant as a bride for Isaac), he is returning from Beer-lahai-roi. I strongly suspect that he had been spending a great deal of time there. Who but his brother, Ishmael (and his step-mother, Hagar), could fully understand the pain of growing up in the home of a man so obsessed with God?

The theme of our histories had been set in place. There would be times when the children of Isaac and the children of Ishmael would live in fruitful proximity; there would be times when they would struggle. Are we now coming to the end of a time of struggle? Are we beginning a time of fruitfulness?

II

Have We Come to the End of Zionism?

Once again we are overtaken by history, and are forced to think more deeply about the context and meaning of events. I returned in August from five weeks in Israel feeling uncharacteristically optimistic. Yes, there would continue to be sporadic terror attacks from Arabs and Jews who oppose the peace process, but the process itself is unstoppable. Even were the right-wing Likud to take over in the next election (which polls indicated was quite possible), they would not be able to turn back.

Furthermore, peace is good for business. I heard that stated very clearly in a meeting with the chairman of El Al (Israel's airline), who waxed enthusiastic over the opening of new routes to India and elsewhere, none of which would have been possible without the accords. Israel no longer feels like a pariah, and even a year ago when Ambassador Colette Avital, Israel's Consul General in New York, visited Cornell, she spoke happily about the new atmosphere of friendliness in the diplomatic community.

But such an attitude does not prevail in certain sectors of the Jewish community.

Ambassador Avital herself has been cursed and assaulted in synagogues, something unprecedented for an Israeli representative. To his great credit, Abraham Foxman, Director of the Anti-Defamation League, resigned from his synagogue after his rabbi delivered a vehemently anti-Rabin sermon on Rosh Hashanah, before Rabin's assassination. In Israel, the rhetoric in some quarters had grown extremely heated. I asked my friends there how anyone could possibly call Yitzhak Rabin a traitor. Mistaken, perhaps, or moving too fast, but *a traitor*? Rabin, who devoted his life to the defense of Israel?

But I shrugged it off. Jews are passionate, Israelis especially so. Many feel threatened, afraid of change. Jews' psyches are shaped by the "lachrymose" version of Jewish histo-

graves are ripped out to make room for micro-chip factories, and the Israel Defense Forces gradually become a volunteer army, no longer the central formative experience of all Jewish Israelis. If peace *really* prevails and takes root in the region, the IDF may eventually come to resemble Theodor Herzl's original notion of a token border police.)

Zionism has achieved much. It is now confronted, however, not only by its external enemies, but by its own shadow side as well. Indeed, the lines have been shifting for some time; the assassination only throws them into dramatic relief. The struggle is no longer Jews versus Arabs. On one side now are those, both Jews and Arabs, who believe in the possibility of peace and who desire co-

cope with the difficulties of day-to-day living, month after month, year after year—all these forged the Palestinian community. The Intifada, like every other profound collective experience, was a unique spiritual event for those who lived through it, one that could not be comprehended in full from the outside. [98-99]

Aside from its internal effects on the Palestinian community, the Intifada also made clear to Israelis the cost of continued occupation. In similar fashion, the Gulf War, which brought about a series of geopolitical realignments, also had important internal effects on the Israelis:

Israeli society, tried in war, instinctively identified the familiar signs of a state of war. In previous wars, however, the disruption was caused by the call-up of the reserves and civilian vehicles, while this time everyone stayed home...It goes without saying that the warning of a gas attack on Israel led to a panic about mass destruction and conjured up the specter of the Holocaust. ...The Israeli public reacted as it was accustomed to react in war. The sense of a common fate sharpened, the willingness to sacrifice for the general good grew, patriotism and tribal mobilization strengthened. Yet this strange war also awakened contrary feelings. With the entire family cooped up in a sealed room, with no front line and no collective concern for our brave soldiers there, individual anxiety increased, and with it the feeling of each man for himself...The lack of military response made its people feel that Israel had lost its "reputation as a country that never forgives the spilling of its citizens' blood." ...But, strangely enough, ordinary people understood that this strange war was not their war. Eighty percent of the Jewish residents of Israel preferred "restraint," and this number did not change during the course of the war. "Righteous people's work is done by others," many said, and believers saw God acting in history. [127-129]

Occasionally, *Intimate Enemies* suffers from too much assertion and too little documentation. Nevertheless, it does succeed in conveying the thick, convoluted complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Each claim entails a counter-claim, each truth its equally true opposite. From every angle the struggle appears exquisitely insoluble. After outlining the situation in a somewhat cantankerous style that suggests only he sees the underlying truth, Benvenisti admits, with sudden and enthusiastic astonishment, his failure to foresee the "Breakthrough" (the title of his concluding chapter) of September 1993:

A few months before the historic handshake, I borrowed Albert Camus' description of the French-Algerian conflict to characterize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: "It is as if two insane people, crazed with wrath, had decided to turn into a fatal embrace, a forced marriage from which they cannot free themselves. Forced to live together and incapable of uniting, they decided at last to die together." [206]

And then,

The unfolding events and especially the signing of the declaration of Israeli-Palestinian mutual recognition have stunned me. With the touch of a wand, my pessimistic determinism crumbled before my eyes. [209]

May it continue to crumble! Geopolitical shifts create new possibilities, but leadership and individual courage are what bring them to fruition. These are fascinating and dangerous days in the Middle East. They call for steadfastness in the pursuit of peace. And they require cranky and clear-eyed analysts like Meron Benvenisti, who tells the harsh and hopeful truth.

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(reprinted from *Jerusalem*, Princeton University Press, 1985)

The Wailing Wall

ry (Salo Baron's term), and not without reason. Anyone the least familiar with Jewish history should understand why many Jews would be reluctant to trust the outside world. And anyway, had I not seen enough Knesset debates to know that this is just the way Israelis talk? They get excited. It's part of the energy of Israeli politics.

Now we see, to our horror, that somewhere along the way the debate had crossed over some invisible boundary line. One man pulled the trigger, but language had created a context for assassination. The assassin moved in the dark shadows cast by certain rabbis and politicians, for whom the anguish of the Jewish experience throughout history provides justification for an ideology of self-righteous absolutism.

Once again we are brutally reminded how difficult it is to make peace, to ask people to change their deeply held views of the world, and to give up the obvious risks of the status quo for the uncertain risks of a different future. We are left wondering at the courage of a man who appeared to transform himself from a gruff warrior to a peacemaker. Yitzhak Rabin was able to move beyond a deeply ingrained worldview, to see that things had changed and could change more. By the end, the old soldier had become a man of vision. His murder marks a dramatic shift in Zionism.

In just 100 years, the modern Zionist movement created a revolution in Jewish life, politics and self-understanding. If you doubt that it was a revolution, consider the former stereotype: Jews were not farmers, because they were not allowed to own land; they were not fighters, because they were not allowed to own guns. Yet the two things for which Israel has been best known are its agriculture and its superior army. (Of course, these images will change yet again, as orange

existence in a context of liberal, democratic pluralism. On the other are those, both Jews and Arabs, who neither believe in nor want that possibility, and who justify themselves with pseudo-mystical theologies of tribe, soil and blood.

III

A Review

Meron Benvenisti is a voice for democratic pluralism. Scion of a Sephardic family whose roots in Jerusalem go back at least eight generations, he served in the 1970's as Deputy Mayor of that City. In 1982 he established the West Bank Data Project, which kept thorough track of developments in the occupied territories. He now writes a column for the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*. Benvenisti is known to be a careful observer, whose credibility rests on his reputation as a researcher who is determined to examine problems from every side and to report his conclusions without flinching.

In retrospect, it seems clear that three major events opened the way to the peace process: The end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union; the Palestinian uprising known as the Intifada; and the Gulf War. In *Intimate Enemies*, Benvenisti discusses these large, external shifts, but also pays careful attention to the resulting inner transformations among both Israelis and Palestinians. He describes, for example, the effect of the Intifada on the Palestinians themselves:

The political change brought about by the Intifada, both on the political and conceptual level, is not the sum total of the social and cultural transmutation that the Palestinian community has undergone. The popular struggle, the dead, the suffering and grief, the elation and despair, the mutual aid, and the readiness to

The Palestinians

continued from page 1

Palestinian refugees and brought another one million Palestinians, the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, under Israeli military occupation. The hopelessness and despair among the Palestinians and the discrediting of the organized Arab armies after the 1967 defeat resulted in the creation of popular liberation movements, most important of which is the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Direct Negotiations or an International Conference?

Except for the Camp David peace accord that was signed by Israel and Egypt in 1979, the search for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict was dominated for the twenty years after the 1967 war by issues of form rather than substance. Israel insisted on direct negotiations with Arab countries on a one-to-one basis, while the Arabs insisted on an international conference that included all the parties to the conflict and involved the United Nations. Furthermore, Israel refused to deal with the PLO, which it considered a terrorist organization, no matter that it was the sole organization chosen by the Palestinians to represent them.

The Intifada

Towards the end of the 1980s, more than twenty years after the Israeli takeover of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Palestinians still suffered from a heavy-handed military occupation which steadily encroached on their land and their very existence. The policy of creating "facts on the ground," which was begun shortly after the 1967 war through the confiscation of Palestinian land and the building of Jewish settlements, continued unabated. In spite of countless U.N. resolutions condemning Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories, humiliations, murders, and maimings continued. Houses were demolished, schools and universities shut down, and livelihoods destroyed on the least pretext.

Outside of the Occupied Territories, the Palestinians saw a world, including the Arab world, that had virtually lost interest in their cause. This situation resulted in the Intifada, the "Palestinian Uprising" against Israeli military occupation, which started in December 1987. The Intifada did not end the occupation and did not bring the exiled Palestinians back to their homes, but it focused world attention on the plight of the Palestinians and convinced the Israelis that military occupation and the domination of the lives of millions of people by force cannot continue indefinitely.

The Gulf War

The Gulf War of 1991 could not have come at a worse time for the Palestinians, and the behavior of some of them, particularly the PLO leadership, during that war had disastrous consequences for the Palestinian cause. First, attention was taken away from the Occupied Territories and focused on Kuwait. Second, although many Palestinians, including some in the PLO, condemned Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, the Palestinians as a whole were perceived as supporting the invasion. The PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who, along with King Hussein of Jordan, was trying to mediate the conflict and contain it as an inter-Arab affair, was portrayed as siding with Saddam. His liberal tradition of giving hugs and kisses to anyone who cared to receive them reinforced this image.

The Peace Process

After his victory in the Gulf War, President Bush declared that it was time to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Secretary of State James Baker was able, through a strategy of threats and promises, to persuade the mostly unwilling participants to participate in a peace conference in Madrid. When the conference, co-sponsored by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, was convened in October 1991, the Palestinians were weaker than ever, and their opponent, Israel, was stronger than ever. The stronger side dictated all the terms; it had veto power even over the formation of the Palestinian delegation to the con-

ference. This imbalance was very clear in the negotiations that followed in Washington: Not only did Israel dictate the agenda, but, as Yitzhak Shamir, the Israeli Prime Minister at the time, later revealed, Israel's strategy was to discuss only issues of form and nothing of substance. According to Shamir, the goal of the Israeli delegation was to drag out the negotiations for ten years, during which time the Occupied Territories would be filled with Jewish settlements and there would be nothing left to negotiate. Even though the Palestinians realized this at the time, they still viewed the negotiating process as the best way to demonstrate their interest in peace.

Just as the negotiations were looking like an exercise in futility, the Israeli Labor party, led by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, won the Israeli elections on a platform that gave prior-

ed by the military governor. According to the agreements between Israel and the PLO, the Israeli army will still control external borders, strategic points, major highways, and water resources. But the absence of Israeli soldiers from Palestinian town squares, school yards, and rooftops will offer the Palestinians a sense of security that they have not had in a very long time.

Rabin's Assassination and the Outlook for the Future

We have heard politicians and experts declare that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is irreversible. But nothing should be ruled out in a conflict that has lasted for so long and which involves issues of life and death for both sides. The peace process is still so fragile that one act by a desperate individual or group



(reprinted from *Jerusalem*, Princeton University Press, 1985)
The Dome of the Rock

ity to peace with the Palestinians. Although nobody expected quick and easy solutions, there was a marked change in the language of the Israeli government and in its approach to negotiations. Whereas the preoccupation of the previous Likud governments was with expanding the Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories in order to create a situation that would be irreversible in the event of a peace settlement, Rabin and Peres wanted to reach an agreement with the Palestinians in a short period of time. There was talk of the inadmissibility and immorality of military occupation and of the existence of two peoples with legitimate claims to the same piece of land. The word "Palestinian" and the phrase "Palestinian people" gained prominence in Israeli discourse over such terms as "residents of the territories" and "residents of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza."

The first Palestinian-Israeli accord was signed in Washington in September 1993 and is known as the Declaration of Principles. Another agreement was signed last September by Rabin and Arafat. From the Palestinian point of view, the most important aspects of the two agreements are Israel's commitment to withdraw its troops from the towns and villages of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the establishment of a Palestinian National Authority to administer those areas, making it possible for their inhabitants to lead more normal lives.

The two agreements are described by some Palestinians as a sell-out. In some ways they probably are: They failed to address issues of basic importance to the Palestinians, such as water rights, the right of refugees to return to their homes, Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories, and the status of Jerusalem. But the Palestinian inhabitants of Jenin, who had been groaning under the weight of military occupation for 28 years before the withdrawal of the Israeli army a few days ago, will tell a different story. Now they can visit their neighbors without being shot at, their children can go to school and learn about their history and culture, and they do not have to accept a mayor appoint-

could have serious consequences. For example, a suicide bombing could result in a redeployment of Israeli troops in areas which they have evacuated according to the terms of the peace agreement. The Palestinians would be unable to stop such a redeployment. The same act might also be used as a pretext to seal off the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, cutting off tens of thousands of Palestinian workers from their places of work in Israel, thus creating more hardship and despair — exactly the environment that breeds further violence. (Israel's first reaction to the assassination of Mr. Rabin was to seal off the West Bank and Gaza, even though the Palestinians in these territories had nothing to do with the assassination.) In this scenario, the peace process could quickly unravel, plunging the area into more violence and suffering.

The alternative scenario is one in which not only the achievements of the two agreements are maintained, but in which more progress is made. The new Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, has reaffirmed Israel's commitment to the peace process. His job should be easier than that of Yitzhak Rabin, who made the first move that broke the deadlock in Israeli-Palestinian relations. On the Palestinian side, there is no reason to believe that the commitment made by Yasser Arafat in the agreements has changed. Among both Palestinians and Israelis, there is strong support for the continuation of the process. Some of this support may be the direct result of Rabin's assassination and a reaction against the extremists who were behind it.

But unless people on both sides see and feel positive, tangible results in matters of vital importance to them, the present support may easily diminish. The Palestinians need to see more withdrawal of Israeli troops, more control over their own lives, and more recognition of their basic rights, including the right to self-determination. The Israelis need to be convinced that what the Palestinians are asking for will not constitute a threat to their security. The best hope is that the peace process will enable the Palestinians to lead normal lives, focusing their energies on building an educational system, a national economy, and the foundations of a democratic political system without outside interference and control. This situation will not produce the permanent peace that everyone is hoping for. In order to achieve that peace, many difficult issues still need to be resolved. But that can happen only if the current process produces an environment conducive to mutual trust and understanding, where the two peoples treat each other with respect and equality.

The danger is that elements on both sides of the conflict may continue their attempts to undermine the peace process: Extremist Palestinians continue to feel justified in pursuing impractical goals through violent means, and extremist Israelis will use whatever power is available to them to hold on to the Occupied Territories. But the fact that Mr. Rabin was assassinated at the hands of a Jewish extremist has dealt a serious blow to religious extremism on both sides, strengthening the position of Israeli and Palestinian moderates. In addition, a crackdown on extremist Jewish organizations, whose main support comes from the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, will be welcomed by the Palestinians of those areas who have long been subjected to the violence of these organizations. Despite the suffering they have endured, the Palestinians will find it easier to accept peace with a country which shows a measure of even-handedness in dealing with extremists on both sides.

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The Israelis

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transition that Rabin mirrored in his personal metamorphosis from commander of the Israel Defense Forces to a leader committed to serious negotiations with his former enemies. This transition is by no means a simple one, entailing as it does a revision of the myth of brotherhood in arms that is fundamental to the nature of the State of Israel, where conscription is mandatory for both men and women.

Rabin's assassination, which amounted to no less than one brother-in-arms slaying another, destabilized this already shaken bastion of Israeli culture. His death has brought Israeli society face-to-face with a latent identity crisis that may have begun developing as far back as the aftermath of the so-called Six-day War of 1967. That military victory brought the Old City of Jerusalem as well as other areas in the West Bank region under Israeli control, allowing religious and right-wing extremists — the ideological ancestors of Rabin's assassin — to cultivate dreams of the re-establish-

ment of the biblical Kingdom of Israel. These aspirations ran counter to the peace process initiated by Rabin, and the tension between them had already begun to unglue the cultural bonds forged in the experience of military service.

When Yigal Amir, a former soldier in one of the Israel Defense Forces' frontline infantry units, pointed his weapon at the man who was the living symbol of Israel's military ethos, he exploded the myth of brotherhood. Israeli culture is thus enjoined to redefine its identity and to revise its national ideology. It must choose between what now seems the distinctly perverse blend of patriarchal Judaism and Zionism and the secular code of fraternal peace embodied by Rabin, whose last public words were the verses of the Israeli Song for Peace.

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When Blood Is Thicker Than Water

D.I. Grossvogel

The cookbook born over a century ago and until recent times a bourgeois fixture of French kitchens is one that has survived its numerous editions with only minimal change. Still known as *Tante Marie*, Aunt Marie, it is subtitled "real family cooking" ("La Véritable Cuisine de famille"). It is a subtitle that leads one to believe family cooking, obviously a category apart, has degrees of integrity, stressed by the emphatic "véritable," that somehow reflect the integrity of the family, and of which *Tante Marie* is the truthful mirror: the book vouches for the fact that family fare is more desirable than other fares, perhaps even on moral grounds.

Possible reasons for that special excellence could be many: *Tante Marie* is not esoteric, a far cry from, let us say, Escoffier's in quarto cookbook. Escoffier knows all about food's more worldly connections;¹ but these may well have begun (and maybe quite recently at that) with a famous soprano or a gastronomic composer—who might not even be French and who, in any event, would not be the kind of people with whom upstanding bourgeois rub elbows. Alongside it, *Tante Marie* evidences honesty and a healthy simplicity. It deliberately addresses itself "to modest families where time and money are in short supply." Presentation is straightforward, with no "stylistic affectation"—down to earth—suggesting roots deeply planted and continuity: one expects that when *Tante Marie* tells you how to bake a *Quatre-quarts* cake or how to prepare a *poulet à l'estragon*, she is telling you to do them in exactly the same way as a still-remembered great-grandmother did.

Since this is family fare, it is fitting that the legator of these recipes should be called Marie (even George M. Cohan thought there was something square, that is to say something honest and direct, about the grand old name

¹ With good reason: Georges Auguste Escoffier, "king of cooks," wrote his *Guide Culinaire* after a brilliant trajectory that took him through the Grand Hotel in Monte Carlo and the Ritz Hotel in London.

Mary—only the Gallic Marie gave him trouble, simply because what might have been equally square when it drew its substance from French soil became exotic and suspect as an export). Nor is it overly surprising that these recipes should be bequeathed by an "Aunt." However, one may legitimately wonder, if these are ancestral recipes preciously and scrupulously transmitted, why the book isn't called *Grand'mère Marie*, or even *Arrière-Grand'mère Marie*. Why the "Aunt"?

The two volumes of the Gale Trade Names Directory (*Brands and Their Companies*; Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1992) list about forty brand names using the word "Aunt," and about fifty using the word "Uncle": coupled with a personal name, most of these designate packaged foods. There are twelve uses of "Mother" which, when followed by the "Mother"'s name, are food designations. Perhaps because of the ambiguity, there is no "Father," and one assumes that for the same reason there is no "Brother" or "Sister." There are no "Cousins" or "Nephews" either since, presumably, they would be thought of as belonging to an age group that is too young to have developed the required culinary or taste expertise. And even though they are no more distant from the heart of the family unit than the "Uncle" or "Aunt," they cannot be avuncular—they cannot be endowed with their parents' benevolence, which is one born of experience and kindness acquired over a long lifetime. In this sense, a young "Uncle" or "Aunt" is a contradiction.

"Aunt" and "Uncle" assume that the kitchen is at the center of the family unit. That very assumption suggests as well that such labels are deliberately old-fashioned in privileging age and a sense of the past, trading on ideas of family warmth and integrity, the comforting notions of structure, competency and tradition strengthened through time. It is a formerness that endures as a strange sentimentality in a culture that does not particularly prize it.

The large number of "Uncles" vouching for the special quality of their product requires some elaboration, since the uncle is not, like the aunt or mother, a family member apt to be found in the kitchen; clearly, this is not simply an "Aunt"'s spouse upon whom his wife's

culinary virtues have rubbed off. Rather, it is the U.S. usage that designates an elderly man, stressing familiarity and friendliness. Since age can denote senility or wisdom,² the benign connotations of the word "Uncle" load it with more sagacity than decline—while not eliminating altogether the decline.³ It thus incorporates the right blend of affection and condescension the South once reserved for retainers who had been in service long enough to have become part of an extended household. It is the title given Harriet Beecher Stowe's character and the one to which the black who served as the male family cook or major domo could aspire. These are the composites that likely enter into the attributions of the "Uncle" Ben whose benign, elderly features once sold rice—the cereal grain that was brought to the American colonies in the mid seventeenth century and became one of the country's most important crops. (Uncle Ben still sells his rice but he has been reduced to a medalion that is so small as to be scarcely visible: well-established food companies are driven by conflictive desires to preserve the image that brought them fame and being dealt a racial, and therefore controversial, card they are reluctant to play these days.)

The title "Aunt" has similar connotations. The O.E.D. believes usage in the United States reaches beyond strict family definitions to designate any well-intentioned and generally helpful woman. The same is true of the Spanish *tia* and one assumes that similar cultural reminiscences account for the Marie whose good will and helpfulness are evident in the cookbook that bears her name. Paralleling these Latin acceptations, our own South used the female term in the same way as its masculine counterpart.

But Marie has other resonances (how-

² *Senility* is nothing more than the state of being old, but usage has tended to stress the negative aspect of age associated with decay.

³ The same proportions most likely accounted for the *Dutch uncle*, someone whose advice (at least in the mid-nineteenth century) was well-intentioned though a little ponderous. *Avuncular*, the adjective that derives most directly from Latin (*avunculus*: maternal uncle) is, as noted, similarly benevolent.

ever faint) as well: in a largely Catholic country like France, she is of course the emblematic "Mother." At the same time *tante* in French is the slang equivalent of queer, and the homosexual connotation reminds us that in our own language, "Aunt" was similarly tinged with sexual inferences: in the seventeenth century, the word evolves from the designation of an old woman, to that of a gossip, and later can name a procuress and a prostitute. Just as age might suggest wisdom as well as decay, familiarity and benevolence may hint at greater intimacies than simple kindness would allow. That is why these traits in the "Uncle" have occasionally turned his title into an ironic mask that disguised and designated the illicit lover. It is an irony from which even the "Mother" is not exempt. To stress these connotations would of course distort the meaning of the names; but it is opportune to remember that appetite is desire and that desire for food is not necessarily distinct from or unrelated to other desires. The deliberate archaism of brand names that attach their product to the intimacy of the family circle allows a hint of sensuality that is likely to be absent from the "modern," functional label (the label that names the product for what it is rather than for what it connotes).

This reversal of the lofty concept by its libidinal opposite devolves from the antithetical division studied by Freud—what is found split into a pair of opposites at the conscious level often occurs in the subconscious as a unity. In his first use of the term "Oedipus complex" (though not of the concept) Freud sketches out the way in which the "Mother" is seen as unfaithful by the son (for having preferred the father) and comes to be replaced by the whore, now stamped with maternal characteristics—the son compulsively seeking surrogates that cannot provide satisfaction.

It is thus not too surprising to find the same shifting significances in "Mother" that give "Aunt" and "Uncle" their interesting resonances: the noun that designates the woman who has given birth can encompass in an adjectival apposition the relationship between the genetrix and the percipient from the point of view of that percipient; within such a perspective, the Earth or one's *Alma Mater* suggest the fostering one may draw from a

Psychiatric Fallacies

continued from page 3

which drugs are appropriate." How does he know when to draw the line? In one case that Kramer describes, a woman's crucial "symptom" was crying. Whenever, this woman spoke to him about her married boyfriend, tears would stream down her face. It is interesting to note how Kramer first describes crying pejoratively as "uncontrollable sobs." Then it becomes a "symptom." The teenagers I work with have often told me that what they like about coming into my office is that they can have a "good cry" without my putting them down. What to the teenagers I work with is a "good cry," to Kramer is a symptom, possibly indicating that the patient requires medication.

To Kramer's credit, he is refreshing to read because he doesn't present his positions in an authoritarian style. For example, after explaining his medication approach to dealing with the sobbing woman, he states that his explanation "...may seem to be based on highly subjective data — and I think this perception is correct." Nevertheless, we can discern in Kramer's attitude about crying a tendency to encourage the

suppression of sad feelings lest we be perceived as "mentally ill."

Another troubling aspect of modern psychiatry is its continued reliance on coercive practices. Recall that Leo Tolstoy was struggling with ideas about suicide. If he had mentioned this to many psychiatrists today, he might very well have found himself locked up in a hospital and forced to take drugs.

Thomas Szasz, a trenchant critic of coercive psychiatry and author of over twenty books on the subject — including *The Myth of Mental Illness* and *Law, Liberty, and Psychiatry* — has long condemned psychiatry's reliance on drugs, its use of such techniques as electric shock and lobotomy, its stigmatization of adversaries, and its tendency to create confusion by calling both voluntary medical interventions and coercive practices "treatments." As a moderator of a series of debates on psychiatric drugs in which Szasz participated, I have admired his ability to provoke a hearty laugh while challenging people to think more deeply about the issues. For example, he once commented:

A person may use force to compel another to change his or her religion, to submit to a sexual act, or to ingest a drug. The first we call coerced religious conversion, the second we call rape, and the third we call psychiatric treatment. Let me make it very clear that I am not opposed to psychiatric relations between consenting adults. I don't see how any reasonable person can be opposed to it. So I am only going to talk about psychiatric rape because that is our subject.

In my view, one of the most hopeful activities occurring in the Ithaca area today is the Crisis Hostel Project, a program that offers an alternative to psychiatric hospitalization. Run by people who have themselves struggled with serious emotional difficulties, this program favors peer counseling over the drug-oriented approach of biopsychiatry. This is not to say that some of the guests at the hostel don't use psychiatric drugs. Most are already on such drugs when they find themselves in a crisis condition (a sad commentary itself, I think, on the effectiveness of the pills). But the continued use of psychiatric drugs is left to the guests'

own discretion.

Guests are permitted to stay at the hostel for up to two weeks, and are provided with support if they request it. No one is viewed as *the* expert. Experiences are shared and the guests' wishes for privacy are respected. Research is being carried out to see how this program compares with more traditional therapeutic environments. Though the Crisis Hostel Project is still in its experimental stage, it is a small but significant step in the direction of a more humane psychiatry. The time is long overdue for psychiatry to recognize that drugs represent more of a hazard than a cure for most people, and that the primary responsibility of psychiatrists is to assist patients to restore themselves as autonomous individuals who are capable of leading productive lives in their communities.

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relationship that is not one of actual kinship. But that fostering from which the blood bond has been removed also allows the word "Mother" to designate a bawd.⁴ And so the relatively few "Mothers" that identify food brand names (perhaps because the sacred genetrix so strongly overwhelms the prostitute in the conscious mind of the buyer) nevertheless conveys a richer sense deriving from the loam of subconscious depths.

...

If it is true that there are remarkably few "Mothers" alongside the "Aunts" and "Uncles" that vouch for our packaged foods, there are few of the latter in comparison to the number of "Mrs." There are around a hundred of these with a variety of personal names: it is evidently good for the marketing of certain comestibles in this country that they be thought of in connection with a woman who has been married—someone who is mature and who would demonstrate in the kitchen an irrefutable expertise. (Interestingly, there is no equivalent "Mister" or "Mr.," a prefixed title used strictly as a joke and never with a personal name, but only with one that attaches it to a function or product, as in Mr. Marinade, Mr. Golf, Mister Donut, or Mister Meatloaf).

It is worth noting that among the brand names that intend a link between nourishment and familiarity by awakening through a specific food childhood reminiscences of nurturing and warmth, there should not only be fewer "Mothers" than "Uncles" or "Aunts," but that the denomination of choice should be "Mrs."—the ascription most distant from "Mother," that intimate, comforting and sustaining breast. "Mrs." is not even family: it is an impersonal designation that suggests expertise in the kitchen but does not turn that kitchen into a place of comforting intimacy. "Mrs." belongs to a time when such intimacies were not voiced, a time which may indeed be returning as we attempt to objectify and neutralize Oedi-

⁴ By a further inversion of the same kind, an Abbess, a Mother Superior, becomes a superior kind of bawd (both terms being sometimes linked as Mother Abbess). Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, ed. Paul Beale (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

pal tendencies.

Some forty years ago, Vance Packard believed that where a man saw home as a symbolic Mother—"a calm place of refuge for him after he has spent an abrasive day in the competitive outside world"⁵—a woman, already a symbolic mother, saw the home "as an expression of herself and often literally as an extension of her own personality." There is considerable evidence to suggest that such a perception of women, by others and by themselves, has noticeably changed since then. That such changes have not entirely eliminated earlier assumptions is evident in the very personification by a family member of the food's arcadian virtue. Furthermore, even though the entire family is implicated in the "Mother," "Aunt," "Uncle" designations, it is the woman of the household (assuming there is a household) who is likely to be doing the shopping and seeing the labels. However, the nearly ten to one ratio of brand names that refer to the woman who runs a house ("Mrs.") rather than to the one that designates it as womb ("Mother"), would seem to imply that today's woman, even when she is a homemaker, is seeking definitions for herself that are less totalizing and less exclusively centered on the nurturing kitchen.

Since the woman is still the one who does most of the food buying, the food's label is generally first meant for her: her evolution thus entails an evolution of the package, and more specifically, of the image that mirrors the idea she has of herself. Betty Crocker requires a face lift every few years in order to keep up with the times.⁶ Half a century back, Proc-

⁵ *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1957), p. 93.

⁶ Social forces at many levels keep altering these images: the original Aunt Jemima was likewise too matronly (and perhaps a little too reminiscent of a bygone South) to have survived; the modern Aunt Jemima is a duskier version of the modern Betty Crocker: she has kept her broad smile, but freed of her bandanna and its ante-bellum implications, she smiles because she feels like it, not because it is expected of her—she radiates health rather than a now questionable friendliness. Furthermore, like Uncle Ben (and for the same reason), she is no longer featured as prominently as she once was.

tor and Gamble distinguished between their two shortenings "by depicting Crisco in the image of a no-nonsense professional dietitian and Golden Fluff as a warm, robust, motherly character" (Packard, p. 48).

There is some likelihood that a large number of today's women would see themselves more as the dietitian than the warm mother (however robust): in that respect, they follow the path of Fanny Farmer along which women moved, at the turn of the century, from tender-minded to technically-minded.

One might wonder also to what extent today's woman will restrict the implications of Fluff to the light airiness of baked or fried products without feeling caught up in the term's suggestion of insubstantiality: of the forty-two brands listed by the Gale Trade Names Directory that incorporate the syllable fluff, Fluff is among the fewer than ten percent that designate edible products—and the only one that is not a confection (by definition, a food of little culinary consequence); the rest name objects according to their feel: fabric softeners, knit goods, facial tissues, toys, stuffed animals and the like. As for today's Crisco, it is concerned, beyond image-projection, with letting the diet-minded buyer know that it contains 50% less saturated fat.

...

With the unisexing of America, Ms. has displaced Mrs. and a large spectrum of food images is becoming obsolete. Changing roles should eventually doom the "Mothers" and "Aunts" as well as the feminized "Uncles." As women move away from previously defining images, men who feel embattled become conservative: while women enlarge their occupation of the male world, a number of men try to maintain themselves on a shrinking island which they can still define sexually. Spectator sports appear to be the last frontier of distinctly male activity; as such they are naturally associated with food and drink that is supposedly masculine.

In this world of men, drink is usually beer and, in a minor key, food is the

hamburger of fast food dispensers, that minimal male Eucharist, the feast pared down to movable size, one that can be transported into the bleachers. The food of communal celebrations bears no label, but when it is advertised, as on television, it is simply seen within the ambiance that best characterizes it—the variously hurried or frugal patrons of fast food transience (those who sit briefly at the fast food table or counter) or the take-out males bonded by the game to which they are transporting their food. Beer, on the other hand, is repeatedly identified with masculine images—jagged, snow-covered peaks, wild horses or other sturdy animals; or it is simply a fantasy world of male comradeship, or yet one in which the dominant presence of a beer-derived masculinity entices the enticing female.

Today, it seems strange that half a century ago, in an experiment conducted by Mason Haire at U.C., fifty percent of the women given a shopping list that contained as one of its items Nescafé instant coffee thought of the list's author as "lazy and a poor planner"; that conclusion was arrived at by only two percent of the test group whose otherwise identical list showed instead of Nescafé "1 lb. Maxwell House coffee." Sixteen percent of the first group actually voiced the point the experiment was making: that the woman who did not go to the trouble of brewing fresh coffee for her husband "was probably not a good wife." Those were the days when the warmth of the home was still a prevalent ideal, encouraging the coining of so many of the familial names. The sense of the woman as both the power and the handmaiden within that home accounted for the vogue of female and family designations on food labels. One can expect them to recede as quickly as the times out of which they grew; they are not likely to be copied in the foreseeable future.

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Seasons and Seasonings

Hitch Lyman

I don't suppose gardening and cooking are always linked. Yet they are occupations which both involve seasonally repetitive actions. Seeds are again sown, tomatoes are again sliced up with new onions, the first soft-shelled crab, the first Temple orange, the first frost: These are the satisfying events which bring 'round the years. Another like them is the holiday book offering American publishers lay before us. I recently went shopping for that hard-to-please loved one who gardens or cooks, and I am happy to report that this year's harvest is a good one.

Timber Press is currently the most ambitious publishing house to focus on gardening. The two titles which interested me this fall are *Wisterias* by Peter Valder (\$32.95) and *Peonies* by Allan Rogers (\$34.95).

The wisteria book is magical and full of interest but since we really are one step too cold to succeed with these

super-excellent vines I should rather choose the peony book for usefulness. It is full of new and interesting information. I didn't know Cornell University, between 1906 and 1912, grew more than 700 peony varieties to establish valid names for the horticultural trade. I did know that upstate New York had two of the most ambitious peony hybridizers, A.P. Saunders in Clinton and William Gratwick in Pavillion. I should think any gardener would be pleased with a copy of this book and a year's membership in the American Peony Society, 250 Interlachen Road, Hopkins, MN 55343 (\$7.50).

If your gardener has an interest in travel, there's a new book on *Gardens of the French Riviera* by Louisa Jones (Flammarion \$50.00) with the glamorous sort of travel poster photographs that make me want to instantly depart for wherever sunlight is falling on palm fronds.

For the beginning gardener there remain in print Donald Wyman's *Encyclopedia of Gardening* (MacMillan,

\$55.00), G.S. Thomas' *Perennial Garden Plants* (Timber, \$39.95), Rix and Phillips' *Random House Book of Bulbs* (Random House, \$27.50), and Joy Larcomb's *The Salad Garden* (Viking Penguin, \$12.95), all of which are wonderful references.

I consider books on gardening to be doors opening onto new plants and new ways to grow them. Cookbooks, too, seem most interesting when they reveal new recipes for favorite foods. At the Café DeWitt, Kathy Koken, whom I trust, tells me *Gourmet Grains, Beans and Rice* by Dotie Griffith (Taylor, \$17.95, paper) has given her new arrows for her culinary quiver. I was won over by *Italian Immigrant Cooking* by Elodia Rigante (First View Books, \$29.95). The photographs of her family and her food are adorable and the recipes seem to come from a real tradition.

This is not true of *An American Bounty* (Rizzoli, \$30.00), a book from the Poughkeepsie school, the Culinary Institute. The dullness of Swiss cooking applied to "American"

recipes is, I suppose, what is called "fusion."

Delightfully, there is *Cooking Through the Seasons* by Joel Robuchon (Rizzoli, \$40.00), a book of beautiful, uncookable food. It is a reminder that in countries like France or Italy, with evolved markets and cuisines, the idea of coming across "two small veal kidneys" and a bottle of "82 Vosne-Romanée" is not so remote.

For the younger (or milder) cook, the great *Chez Parnisse Menu Cookbook* (Random House, \$16.00) by Alice Waters is now in paperback, and Elizabeth David's *English Bread* is out in a new edition from Biscuit Books (\$25.00). Unfortunately, my favorite cookbook of the decade, *Honey from a Weed*, by Patience Gray, is out of print. Of course, the really nice thing about these books is that they provide a satisfying feast for the eye and the imagination, even before you pick up a hoe or don an apron.

Hitch Lyman lives, gardens, and cooks in Ithaca.

Victoria's Secret

Sarah Elbert

"I tell you I cannot bear it. I shall do something desperate if this life is not changed soon. It gets worse and worse, and I often feel as if I'd gladly sell my soul to Satan for a year of freedom." Rosamond Vivian, eighteen years old, orphaned, and shut up in the island home of her decadent grandfather, utters these words in the opening scene of Louisa May Alcott's twenty-three chapter serial, *A Long Fatal Love Chase*. When Alcott submitted it to the racy weekly, *Flag of Our Union*, in 1866, publisher James R. Elliott rejected the work as "too long" and "too sensational." Elliott did accept "Behind A Mask" (written under one of Alcott's pulp fiction pen names, A.M. Barnard) for his paper, paying \$65 and calling it a story of "peculiar power."

Famously impoverished, the Alcott family depended upon Louisa May's household service, her paid work as a seamstress, laundress, teacher, and finally upon her strategically varied production for a mass publishing market. By 1866, in addition to thrillers, thirty-four-year-old Alcott had published her first adult novel, *Moods* (1864), as well as fiction about her Civil War nursing experience in *The Atlantic* and in Boston's anti-slavery newspaper, *The Commonwealth*. She was also drafting a serious women's rights novel that eventually became *Work: A Story of Experience*.

In 1868, *Little Women*, Part I was published; less than a year later, its success won fame and fortune for Alcott, and *Little Women's* enshrinement as a Victorian family favorite doomed her further explorations in pulp fiction. Alcott had earned her membership in the professional sisterhood that Nathaniel Hawthorne labeled "the damned mob of scribbling women," writers who invaded the Victorian literary fraternity.

But yesterday's thrillers are today's Victorian valentines, and not long after Kent Bicknell, a New Hampshire schoolmaster, purchased the manuscript of Alcott's unpublished *A Long Fatal Love Chase* from a New York City rare book store, he was able to sell it, along with the publishing rights, to Random House for a reported one million dollars. It was published this year in a handsome hardcover edition (\$21) with a dust-jacket featuring gold foil letters and a red rosebud slipped under a brown twine bow. The inside endpapers are brown-toned photographs of the manuscript, with the author herself advertising the work in the style of those lingerie and furnishings catalogues that bring us retro Victorian culture with overnight delivery guaranteed before Christmas.

Previously, a story in *The New Yorker* about Bicknell's entrepreneurship made the obvious connection, reminding readers that "Random House snapped the book up last week, catching the wave of renewed excitement that has been touched off by the remake of *Little Women* starring Winona Ryder. On the Christmas Day before *The New Yorker's* revelation I went, with my two granddaughters and their friends to see the

newest *Little Women*. A sellout performance in a Bellingham, Washington mall cineplex, this movie will be the "real" version of *Little Women* to be recalled and re-played by the newest little women I sat with. There were mothers and grandmothers, too, in that audience, reminiscing about their "real" versions, including Katherine Hepburn's Jo and June Allison's Jo, and one grandmother's Jo was Katherine Cornell in the London New Theatre production of 1919.

Please don't get me wrong; I believe our individual and collective recasting of Victorian works and themes are significant. But current popularizations of Victorian novels often drain the most serious political content from canonical

production and distribution, as well as the meaning of the text itself become, however innocently, part of "you've come a long way, baby" consumer feminism. A Victorian editor is superseded by a modern progressive schoolmaster who, in a "Today Show" interview agreed with the female anchor that Alcott's story is about a very modern problem: "obsessive love" and "the stalker." Given a quick soundbite moment of his own, Bicknell tried to point out that Alcott is concerned with "independence for women, economic, intellectual and spiritual independence." I watched, I taped, and I growled back at the TV: "Alcott's independence was not about making it *in spite of your sex/race/class*, it was about rising *with your sisters and brothers*."

deserted a Ph.D. dissertation on "Melville and the Problem of Slavery" in favor of one on Alcott in which I relied heavily on Stern's biography. I completed an introduction for a new paperback edition of Alcott's long out-of-print novel, *Work: A Story of Experience*. Bolstered by Stern's warm wishes and excellent scholarly advice, and after a flood of Alcott scholarship, criticism, commercial productions and publicity, I then had no trouble persuading editors at Rutgers Press to bring out Alcott's first novel *Moods*. Presently, with the recent appearance of Elaine Showalter's selections in *Alternative Alcott*, the canonization of Alcott's "sub-literature" is almost complete. But much work still needs to be done tracing the social and political context of Alcott's works and understanding them as part of the American radical literary tradition.

If I were filling a gift basket of Alcott books (and maybe videos!) I'd include *A Long Fatal Love Chase*, edited by Kent Bicknell, despite its rather arbitrary modern pastiche from two incomplete manuscript fragments. And I'd tuck in *Moods*, edited by me (Rutgers University Press). Four of Madeleine Stern's anthologies are worth choosing from: *Modern Magic*, a Modern Library edition brought out to tie in with *A Long Fatal Love Chase*; *Behind a Mask: Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott* (Morrow); *A Marble Woman: Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott* (Avon); and *Louisa May Alcott Unmasked: Collected Thrillers* (Northeastern University Press), my current favorite collection. Stern's reliable, readable biography is now updated and available from Random House (please don't buy Martha Saxton's refurbished *Louisa May*; it's unreliable pop psychology); Angela Estes and Margaret Lant are working on a new literary study of Alcott's texts to be published by University of Tennessee Press. They have already done brilliant and controversial readings of *Little Women*, "Cupid and Chow-Chow" and *Work* in scholarly journals, wherein Judith Fetterley, Eugenia Kaledin, Elizabeth Keysar and Anne Hollander, among others, have all treated Alcott seriously. Patricia West is completing a study of American house-museums that includes a superb treatment of Orchard House history as the Alcott's home and the March family cottage (forthcoming from the Smithsonian Press).

What do I wish for in next year's marketplace? Topping my list is the re-publication and criticism of Alcott's abolitionist, inter-racial thrillers — and I'm working on it. In the meantime, I understand one of the networks will do a mini-series from Bicknell's edition of *A Long Fatal Love Chase* and the B.B.C. has completed a film for its Open University Series on Alcott's fiction and her life, using various locations and featuring interviews with scholars. With luck, and viewer contributions, PBS may purchase a copy. Stay tuned.

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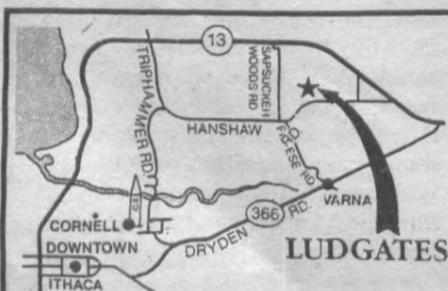
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works and pulp fictions alike, turning them into psycho-sexual thrillers that do not so much celebrate erotic violence or imperialist venues so much as they distract audiences from apprehending the social and political dimensions of these stories in all their myriad racial/ sexual/ class forms.

One problem with *The New Yorker's* rendition of Bicknell's entrepreneurship is that it did not explain how Alcott's nineteenth-century vision of woman's rights fits into a larger, historically specific social movement for human rights pitted against property rights. Consequently, when we read that Kent Bicknell, in his agent's office says, "I think it's an appropriate feminist act to restore her text to its original form, it was rejected by a man, who didn't really appreciate it in the first place," the novel's pro-

In 1943, Leona Rostenberg alerted us to the fact that Louisa Alcott had written sensational thrillers in the 1860's. But it was not until 1975 that Madeleine Stern, author in the 1950s of the first serious biography of Alcott (and Rostenberg's partner in a distinguished rare book firm), succeeded in getting William Morrow and Company to publish two Alcott thriller collections with Stern's scholarly introductions and notes. Significantly, neither Rostenberg nor Stern held academic posts and their concern with identifying and restoring Alcott's works came, as Stern put it, because they were familiar, as scholars and book dealers, with many past women writers who "while they may never have preached woman's rights, nevertheless practiced woman's rights."

That's where I came in. After having



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