

Why a Jewish Quarterly?

The quarterly part is easy. In an age of Twitter storms, #FakeNews and instant opinion what could be more valuable than a publication that invites serious reflection and arrives at a pace even the busiest of us can manage to digest? One that, along with the provocations and polemics, also provides fiction, poetry, reportage, criticism, art, photography and even, when we can persuade a comedian to write for our rates, humour. *Partisan Review* was a quarterly. *The Paris Review* and *Granta* are quarterlies. So are *The Baffler*, *Jacobin*, *Mslxia*, and the *Oxford American* – to name some newer ones we admire. Quarterlies, as Matt Smith said of bow ties, are cool.

And Jews? If you've read this far you probably have an opinion – at least one – about Jews. Do Jews really need a quarterly of our own? With Jews not just visible, but prominent, at the highest levels of journalism, publishing, and political commentary, why write for the *JQ* when you can write for the *Guardian* – or the *New York Times*? Why read the *JQ* when you can find many of the same writers elsewhere?

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My own experience suggests that although those remain pertinent questions, the answers may be changing. While I've often written on Jewish matters – my first book, *The Holocaust on Trial*, is an account of the David Irving libel case – the charm of the parochial has always eluded me.

It still does. But there are two recent developments which, taken together, suggest an urgent need for a genuinely independent, unabashedly Jewish voice. The first is the election of Donald Trump, and more broadly the rise of a new nationalism – in Italy, Hungary, Poland, and right here in Britain – every bit as hostile to religious, ethnic and cultural minorities as the old nationalism. Meanwhile relations between the Labour Party and British Jewry – never entirely comfortable – seem to have reached a new low. In an era when even the United States starts imposing a religious test on migrants – and where European politicians from countries whose Jewish populations were decimated by the *Shoah* once again find antisemitism a useful trope – it feels imperative to speak clearly as a Jew.

The other is the long, slow, almost unnoticeable crowding out of progressive Jewish voices. At the *JQ*, we believe

there is an audience for more thoughtful, less inhibited discussion of Jewish culture and Jewish issues than will ever be found in the columns of the *Jewish Chronicle*. Currently that audience – diverse, open-minded, not primarily observant or exclusively Jewish – has no home in print in Britain. And the two principal US-based publications that do address it – the *Forward* and *Tablet*

– though filled with brilliant cultural commentary, also have a hard stop on the left that excludes political opinions outside the Zionist consensus.

Which means there is not only an opening, but a real need for a journal that, while embracing the full richness of Jewish life, culture, and controversy, remains open to the left, and to views outside the cozy confines approved by the Board of Deputies. Such a journal – confidently Jewish in voice, completely at home in contemporary trans-Atlantic culture (British, American, and European) – could easily have an appeal, and an influence, far beyond these shores.

This issue represents the start of a conversation I hope you'll want to join. Help us create the kind of journal you

would read with pleasure, and fascination – rather than out of a sense of communal obligation. A magazine with a London Jewish accent, but with a reach that takes in not just Jerusalem and New York, but Berlin, Glasgow, Hollywood, Liverpool, Margate, Miami, Tel Aviv, and all points in between.

A magazine, as the Levy's Rye Bread ads that were once a fixture of the New York subways used to boast, "you don't have to be Jewish to love." Or to read. A magazine for the rest of us. **JQ**

