

## Tolerating Prejudice

NANCY A. HARROWITZ. *Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1994. 314 pp.

**T***ainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes* is the outgrowth of an April 1991 conference held at Boston University with the title “Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism, Prejudice and Cultural Heroes.” The translation from conference to collection entailed the loss of a key word in the conference subtitle: “prejudice.” Framing these studies of the often-closeted antisemitism within modern disciplinary canons is the relationship between antisemitism and prejudice: for the editor and conference co-convenor Nancy Harrowitz, antisemitism is defined as “prejudice specifically against Jews” (x).<sup>1</sup> That word stricken from the title but not from the text is perhaps the key to both conference and collection. Unfortunately for both, that key cannot unlock the closet of modern antisemitism.

### *Prejudging Prejudice*

While Harrowitz defines antisemitism in terms of prejudice, the inclusion of “prejudice” in the conference title may have had other, nondefinitional functions. For example, understood broadly, “prejudice” provides a space for the analysis of pejorative representations of other non-Jewish groups. It also serves as a rubric for potential presenters who prepared papers only tangentially related to antisemitism or who distinguished antisemitism from a less malevolent “prejudice” against Jews or who recognized that anti-Jewish representations are often constellated with images that are misogynistic, homophobic, racist, etc. Further, since there is no significant change in the range of contributions, the term’s absence from the book title may also suggest that an emphasis on antisemitism provides the volume its niche in the book market.

This mention of “prejudice” may also have been in part institutional: the senior scholar Christopher Ricks, professor of English at the host institution Boston University, colleague of many of the participants and *Doktorvater* of several, had three years earlier published *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice*. His tome analyzed the antisemitic passages in Eliot’s work and explicitly addressed their

relationship to Eliot's own "greatness." Further, Ricks was slated to provide summary remarks at the end of the conference. Finally, it may be surmised that Ricks's presence also had another function to fill: his work appeared to legitimate Jewish concerns about antisemitism in the Western literary canon. This analysis by a respected gentile scholar testifies that the perception of antisemitism not merely arises from the imagination of oversensitive Jews—as some assume—but can be discerned by all.

With such logistical matters no longer a concern, dropping "prejudice" from the collection title would have been a necessary move. The concept of prejudice is an inadequate tool for the analysis of the phenomenon of antisemitism.<sup>2</sup> Although absent from the collection's title, "prejudice" is nonetheless repeatedly employed in Harrowitz's opening statement. The meaning of the term, however, is never directly addressed. Prejudice sometimes appears to entail faulty, inflexible generalizations or opinions about others, sometimes particular affect-laden attitudes toward or modes of engagement with others, and sometimes structures of mind. In this last instance, prejudice is the necessary residue of a cognitive economy: the mind can only process so much information; consequently, in order to survive and not be overcome, the mind or self relies upon prejudice and stereotype to filter the flood of perceptions. In sum, prejudice is conceived as a psychological process. Implicit in this construction are the historical accretions to the term: hostility directed at and injury done to members of other groups as well as the nonrecognition of their rights. Combining all tacit dimensions of the notion, "no tolerance for difference" (*Tainted* 1) epitomizes this psychologized notion.

This psychologization has a number of effects. The emphasis upon cognitive limitation risks rendering the term diffuse: since we all have particular viewpoints, we all have our prejudices. Universalizing prejudice then begs the question of why some prejudices are considered good and others bad.<sup>3</sup> Prejudice can be applied to almost anything: from disliking red M&Ms, to genocidal hatred directed at Jews, to the feelings of the critic toward an author demonstrating prejudice (cf. *Tainted* 3).

More problematic, the psychologized notion presupposes as the norm the individual or subject who is rational, conscious, and without self-contradiction. Following Gordon Allport's 1954 *The Nature of Prejudice*, the standard work on the topic, prejudices are perceived as judgments based on the individual's false or illusory knowledge; they are nonrational, powered by affect and by mass conformity—unless of course one is in the minority, in which case the explanation is psychopathology. They supplement an original and true cognition

as well as blind the individual from its recognition. The relationship among prejudicial utterances, the utterance of "prejudice," and discursive formations remains unthought.

### *The Other of Enlightenment*

Historically, these interconnected formulations of prejudice emerged as the other of enlightenment reason. Prejudice mediated religious and class differences as well as the public and the private; it served as a synonym for religious (read Catholic, for the Protestant possessors of the Word) or folk or peasant or proletarian thought. Prejudice was also correlated with the notion of genius which shapes our understanding of the cultural hero and the great: prejudice was the attitude of the philistine who cannot rise above the comfortable, self-confirming everyday. These prejudicial origins of "prejudice" are not recognized by the editor. Nor are the dangerous implications of its foremost characteristic. By describing prejudice as "no tolerance for difference" (*Tainted 1*) Harowitz draws upon an oxymoronic register: the recognition of difference by Enlightenment universalism. The subject of Enlightenment does not recognize the other *qua* other; rather, it represents the other as an object for analytic appropriation and/or as a threat to be controlled, if not destroyed. The tolerance of difference presupposes the hegemonic, unquestioned power of the tolerating group or subject within an economy that demands a return from the other. With regard to the Jews, the telos of toleration—its return—was their dissolution as a particular collectivity and the assimilation of its individual members into the normative community.<sup>4</sup> The classic formulation is Clermont-Tonnerre's 1789 call in the National Assembly that "Everything must be refused to the Jews as a nation; everything must be granted to them as individuals."

Further, to think prejudice in these terms leaves the tolerating subject unquestioned; it fails to recognize how identity and difference are coeval, mutually implicating. Cultural critics like Homi Bhabha and David Theo Goldberg have attempted to find a language to describe racism: they examine the relationships of identity and difference (fetishism, hybrid, mimicry, etc.) and the processes of incorporation and introjection. They explore the implications of the split self as well as of the conflicted and conflicting subject positions people assume, investigate the role of cultural and disciplinary discourses in the formation of identities and differences, and analyze how these discourses—their questions,

silences, objects, exclusions—structure and are structured by historically specific representations of other groups.<sup>5</sup>

By defining prejudice as the intolerance of difference, Harrowitz takes for granted not only that tolerance of difference is good but that it is a reigning value. She thereby misses one of the ironies of modernity: “As modernity commits itself progressively to idealized principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity . . . there is a multiplication of racial identities and the sets of exclusions they prompt and rationalize, enable and sustain.”<sup>6</sup> The problem with assumptions about the positive value and consequence of a tolerating society is more than the discrepancy between ideology and actuality or the tension between the universal and the particular; rather, the question needs to be asked: liberty, equality, and fraternity for whom? This intolerance of difference is tied to the advent of modernity, which finds a subject seeking to author and authorize himself by inscribing derogatory ethnic and gender differences on the body of those others—whether women, Jews, or Chinese—who threatened his claims to originality and totality. “Prejudice” cannot think the modern.

### *The Genius of Prejudice*

With prejudice as the operant term, the historian or cultural critic asks the wrong questions or at least not the right ones. Thus if prejudice is a matter of the individual, of the self-contained subject,<sup>7</sup> questions like “Why didn’t they know better?” or “Should they [works, authors] remain in the canon?” are posed. Although Harrowitz recognizes that the notion of genius emerged in the nineteenth century, her employment of prejudice and its accompanying questions presupposes as natural that very notion: exemplary individuals who stand above even as they embody their culture. Their position beyond historical determination provides them deep insight into the human condition or the nature of knowledge or the world. It is assumed that the same ability to cognize such truths should apply to everything. As a correlate of this knowledge of the world is knowledge of the self. The consequent response to the bigoted genius is: “Maybe they weren’t so smart after all.” This response then justifies the expulsion of the so-called genius from the canon on academic rather than moral grounds.<sup>8</sup>

Such questions and answers also lead to various strategies of exculpation. These include contextualizing or blaming the prejudice on the times; the offending statements merely reproduce everyday attitudes or traditional tropes.

Positively stated, the analyst claims to rise above moralism by “reconstructing the conditions, proclivities, and contradictions” of the culture.<sup>9</sup> Another strategy, to borrow from T. S. Eliot, is to separate the dancer from the dance; this partition claims either that the work is an atypical, weaker effort of the author or, conversely, that the truth of the work exceeds the author’s weaknesses. On occasion, the genius is exculpated by blaming the prejudice on the victims or by arguing that the victims make similar statements about themselves: no prejudice—false opinion—is evidenced since the statements reflect real situations.<sup>10</sup> Another form of explanation denies the “prejudice” altogether: prejudicial opinions are viewed as opportunistic; the bigot does in fact know better but is employing or appealing to the prejudices of others. A converse explanation poses the bigot as “bigot”; the author of these prejudicial utterances is mimicking or ironizing the prejudices of others in order to display them as opinion rather than truth and thereby subvert their authority. These last analyses reinforce a notion of the subject corollary to that of the genius: the individual who stands above the mind’s contents. These questions and answers fail to situate these “cultural heroes” in structures of thinking that generate both “prejudice” and “truth.” They fail to recognize that the desiderata of order, purity, transparency that determine the notions of both prejudice and truth are the values of modernity.

Such individualized, cognitive notions of prejudice also place critics in inappropriate positions. On the one hand, the great figures, about whom critics have oriented themselves, “have betrayed” their readers “by expressions of prejudice” (*Tainted* 3). Within the reception-history of prejudice, the critics are positioned as victims. They yield to the authority of or are shaped by canonized prejudice. The critics are compromised. On the other hand, analysis becomes a soteriological narrative in which the errant soul under review is redeemed or condemned, retained in the canon or removed. Or else the moral status of the critic is placed at stake and determined by judgments for or against the perpetrator. Criticism becomes moralizing criticism. Indeed, this is the great risk and the great temptation of these notions of prejudice for the analysis of antisemitic discourse.

Unfortunately, far too often rather than interrogating the implications of tainted greatness, its relationship to modernity, and its consequences for us epigone, the conference yielded to temptation. Such can be witnessed in the essays of the co-conveners: Nancy Harrowitz’s condemnation of the Italian Jewish forensic criminologist Cesare Lombroso for speaking ill of his fellow Jews and their practices, and Josef Polack’s expression of revulsion toward Joseph Conrad.

There is also the temptation not just to criticize the greats but to criticize the critics as well. Emblematic was a concluding remonstrance—not included in the collection—of the predominantly Jewish participants by Christopher Ricks. Drawing upon the authority granted both an official interpreter of the canon and one who has faced up to the antisemitic imagery in that tradition, he castigated the conference participants for harping on the taint. For Ricks, now that the infection the past mastered, has been localized it should not detract from the greatness: “resistance to an injustice perpetrated by Eliot should not issue in an injustice to Eliot”;<sup>11</sup> prejudice should not be met with prejudice. Already during the conference the finger had been pointed at the potentially apologetic character of a conference on antisemitism. Framing his cogent and sound analysis of Herzl’s affinities for and with Wagner, Steven Beller erected a straw audience who would be aghast by the connections he draws and so would be prejudiced against him for having blasphemed or transgressed. Unfortunately, his argument had been well received until he sought to force the issue by playing selections from *Tannhäuser* with the intent of creating discomfort.

Moralizing ultimately fails to combat prejudice. It instead reproduces the structure, even if with reversed values. But the alternative, in which the critic following Ricks and Beller risks becoming the tolerating subject, reproduces a different but perhaps more insidious structure. The proper attitude, writes Harrowitz in a later collection that supplements *Tainted Greatness* and rectifies some of its moralistic excesses, is “to establish a delicate middle ground between an overly apologetic stance toward the text, generated by perhaps too much sympathy for the historical conditions in which a writer found himself and fostered as well by a certain blindness to the overt perniciousness of the writing, and a naive horror that does not take into account at all the conditions that produced the text.”<sup>12</sup> Yet the presupposition of prejudice remains.

### *Question-begging Bigotry*

Beyond leading to a variety of unproductive questions, employing individualistic, cognitive perspectives for understanding prejudice impedes analysis in a number of ways. First, by focusing upon preconceived opinions or stereotypes, this notion of prejudice conveys the impression that these representations are fixed, appropriated whole cloth. Yet this archetypal perspective leaves begging the question of why these authors, philosophers, and psychoanalysts who regardless of their “genius” are in the business of reshaping cultural goods

and of representation, did not transform these images. Such stereotypes are not merely hung decoratively upon a text; rather, through processes of appropriation, incorporation, and interpellation, the tainted representations are mutually implicated with the manifest concerns of the work.

Another problem with such cognitive approaches is that they do not relate antisemitism (or other “prejudices”) to the productive aspects of repression (and oppression). Antisemitism has generated knowledges (e.g., racial science) that have been employed to subordinate the group labelled “Jewish.” This perspective recognizes that prejudice is about subject construction and representation through discourses; it is about power and about the relationship of power to knowledge. Prejudice legitimates the dominant group as it enables the subjection and exclusion of other people. The productive capacity of both antisemitic discourse and the attempts to displace its taint is in fact taken up by several essays in the collection: Paul Morrison examines the effects of representing the “Jew” as a figure for figuration in Pound and poststructuralist discourse; conversely, Edith Wyschograd analyzes how the unrepresentability of the “Jew” for Genet serves as the unredeemable null point for Genet’s aesthetic; William Flesch discusses the attitudes of De Man’s students before and after the publication of his wartime writings.

By both psychologizing and individualizing prejudice, the editor does not ask the question of historical difference beyond the most elementary of reception processes: historical periodization is structured about an event that may have affected the individual’s perceptions, but after that event he or she should have known better. Thus Harrowitz is moved to ask what led this individual to persist in prejudice: “How ‘appropriate’ it was for Heidegger to appear in a Nazi uniform during the war must be considered separately from his attitude toward nazism after the war, when, it can be argued, he would have understood its full ramifications” (*Tainted* 3). With the notion of “changing contexts” rather than dealing with modernity, she ends up dishing out judgments à la mode. She implicitly asks whether the values by which a discipline or culture canonizes the greats are those which would produce taint, but can she recognize the obverse of her definition of prejudice: *that the intolerance of difference is also the promulgation of identity, of homogeneous totalized visions (for even nihilistic perspectives can be totalized)* characteristic of the notion “genius”?

And to historicize this obverse point: these totalized visions are part of the legacy of modernity. Behind the correlated notions of greatness and cultural hero are very problematic notions: not only the genius but also the nation. By failing to interrogate the nation in particular, the collection (with the exception

of Steven Ungar on Blanchot and the politics of national memory and, less self-reflexively, Adriana Berger's essay on Eliade's ties to Romanian fascism) neglects a primary form for the symbolization (and enforcement) of homogeneous totalization. The nation (or culture or *Volk*) authorizes the genius, for the genius is not the isolate over and against the concrete universal but its *porte-parole*. It is not the Jews against the individual, but the Jews against that individual and all of his or her kind.

### *At the Margins of Antisemitism*

Defining antisemitism as a species of this genus prejudice and the Jews as the particular content of this nontolerated difference thus implies that this anti-Jewish phenomenon is the accidental effect of a universal psychological or cognitive process. The specificity of this particular prejudice, antisemitism, is lost. The primacy accorded prejudice cannot explain the decision to study antisemitism instead of American racism or Serbian ethnocentrism without falling into the traps of the numbers game and of special pleading. By such a general, historically nonspecific definition, explanations of pagan anti-Judaism, Christian anti-Judaism, and modern antisemitism fold one into the other. Yet ironically, by devaluing historical differentiation, this definition results in a tepid, secularized version of the diabolical view of antisemitism as "the longest hatred": racial antisemitism is but the secular variant of the apocalyptic teaching of contempt. More historically sensitive readings, e.g., that of Steven Katz,<sup>13</sup> argue instead that while modern antisemitism probably could not have emerged without its predecessors, especially Christian anti-Judaism, the existence of these predecessors did not necessitate that modern antisemitism appear or develop in this particular form. As a consequence, understanding anti-Jewish attitudes as a form of prejudice doubly marginalizes antisemitism as an object of analysis. Because prejudice is defined as deviant and derivative, all forms of prejudice are therefore marginal to the study of the essential conditions for the formation and maintenance of a culture and its subjects. Since antisemitism is but one of many possible prejudices, its specificity is merely contingent.

There are additional problems with Harrowitz's conjunction of antisemitism, prejudice, and tolerance. One begins with her opening gambit of citing Susan Sontag. Sontag queries the paradox: why has "our liberal bourgeois civilization" brooked the decidedly antiliberal tendencies or attitudes of our cultural heroes? Harrowitz implicates but never develops a possible solution by reiterating



tolerance in the following formulation—which also explodes the presumably positive value of toleration—“Why is it that these cultural figures have no tolerance for difference, yet their readers tolerate their bigotry” (*Tainted* 1)? The answer not offered is that liberal bourgeois culture may be already as tainted as its heroes. The cultural hero may not be assuming the position of cultural critic who stands above even as he (she) embodies that culture and who located at the culture’s periphery is thus perhaps at risk of adopting minority or marginal views along that wayside. Rather, the “bigotry” may be just as representative, only of a different form.

In a brilliant analysis of the *Construction of the “Jew” in English Literature and Society*, Bryan Cheyette argues for the inscription of racialized constructions at the heart of even British liberalism: the liberal position adopts the “enlightened expectation that a superior ‘culture’ can modernize and civilize even the Jew.” This stance is neither exceptional nor pathological but consistent with the values of that culture. The Jews can join us so long as they are no longer Jews. And who is that Jew: the Jew is not (merely) the other who is the object of hostility. The force of that prejudice is derived as much from ambiguity and ambivalence as from hate. The Jew has always assumed a double role within the Christian *Heilsgeschichte* and its transformation by modern culture: the Jew is both a deicide and the key to redemption; for modern liberal culture, the incorporation of the Jews offers the possibility of both a “new redemptive order as well as the degeneration of an untransfigured past.”<sup>14</sup> If culture can raise or civilize the Jew, then it can do anything, but if it cannot, then that society—and perhaps the Jews as well—are doomed.

There is another locus for the ambiguity and ambivalence aroused by the Jew: the Jew has often been figured as the double of Christianity and of the German. The history of Christianity, especially of pre-Reformation Christianity, is in part the history of Christianity’s attempting to differentiate itself from the Jew. In Germany, the era of Jewish Emancipation in Germany coincided with the rise of German nationalism and the development of the German nation-state; both Jews and Germans together were converging on the construction of a modern German identity. The irony of modern German antisemitism is that its growth was directly proportional to the increasing acculturation and “bourgeoisification” of the Jews: the more the Jews resembled the “Germans,” the more they were represented as embodying difference. What was problematic was this doubleness: not that they were different but that they seemed to be so much the same, thus undermining the unique identity, the chosenness, of the Christian or the German. Further, if modernity values order, homogeneity, etc.—

as Zygmunt Baumann and, following him, Goldberg and Cheyette argue—then the notion of the German Jew embodies boundary ambiguity.<sup>15</sup> In all of these instances of ambiguity, hostile affect and representation are effects of cosmological structures and epistemological quandaries, not causes.

Related to the ambiguity of the “Jew” is the feeling of ambivalence toward the “Jew.” The most baleful hatred is seldom free from its opposite affect; indeed this conjunction of opposites may intensify the manifested enmity. Homi Bhabha and, anticipating him, Horkheimer and Adorno in their analysis of antisemitism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* have described the dialectic of desire and repudiation that mediates relationship between the dominant group and its others. Hostility can arise due to that desire for the offensive and the guilt over that desire.

### *Canon Fodder*

While the genealogy of “prejudice” taints this volume’s understanding of modern antisemitism (or racism, misogyny, and homophobia), this collection’s emergence in this particular form needs to be contextualized further. Its catalyst was not just the series of *les affaires* Heidegger, De Man, Eliade (Campbell, Jung, etc.) per se, but the more general question of the relationship between modernity and the various forms of postmodernity and the position of discourses by and about Jews within that relationship.

As we have moved from pillar to post, from the pillars of the traditions to the posts of modernism, structuralism, and colonialism, disciplines have lifted up the rock of modernity and not liked what they have seen: a mirror. In the ensuing postmortems, any notion of progress has been put in question (and this very modern notion of progress has often been implicit in conceptualizing the “postmodern”, “poststructuralist”, and “postcolonial”).<sup>16</sup> But there is another post that is also at stake. Harrowitz writes: “After the Holocaust, our context *has* changed, which is why it is not only possible but necessary to reevaluate certain ‘culture heroes’ from a different perspective and to question the ongoing dissemination of their thought, and with it their bigotry” (*Tainted 2*). With this statement Harrowitz puts “bigotry” on a genocidal trajectory; thus her understanding of prejudice as the lack of tolerance toward difference implies a telos of foreclosure of the different. Indeed, it implies that this trajectory is the only one for prejudice. There are additional problems with the conclusion that “the final outcome” (*Tainted 11*) of bigotry against Jews is conceived as

the Holocaust, not the least of which is that when the stakes are placed this high, denials of harboring any prejudice and apologetics are mobilized and communication is defeated.<sup>17</sup> A corollary concern also emerges: is bigotry bad only because it will lead to the ovens?

But underlying the evocation of the Sho'ah, of the post-Sho'ah, is a related issue. After the Sho'ah, antisemitic utterances eventually became considered inappropriate for public discourse. There was a general repudiation of the discourse of scientific racism, especially as it had been applied to the Jews: the Jews are not a race. Moreover, as quotas and other discriminatory practices largely ceased to operate, as Jews began to assume a broader distribution among elite groups, as Israel became a role model for Americans—Jews and non-Jews alike—there arose as it were “a pharaoh who did not know Joseph.” In 1985, a special issue of the journal *Critical Inquiry* on “Race,” *Writing and Difference* appeared, with additional articles, responses, and rejoinders following a year later.<sup>18</sup> The editor Henry Louis Gates gathered together many of the leading critics of contemporary culture, including Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Patrick Brantlinger, Gayatri Spivak, and Jacques Derrida, to “explore, from a variety of methodological perspectives and formal concerns, the curious dialectic between formal language use and the inscription of metaphorical racial differences.”<sup>19</sup> In contrast to earlier approaches to racism, the goal of this collection was to show neither what racism does to its objects nor the taxonomic inventory of racial representations. Rather, the concern was with analyzing how such racist representation is inscribed in and thereby enables (produces) the discourse of culture.

In his response to the commissioned papers, the Romanian-born French critic and author of *La question de l'autre* Tzvetan Todorov noted, “Finally, I was surprised, not to say shocked, by the lack of any reference to one of the most odious forms of racism: anti-Semitism.”<sup>20</sup> But in the wake of the post-Sho'ah developments, the Jews are not a race; ergo, they are not victims of racism. Indeed, not only were the Jews not considered the object of racial discourse, they were enlisted in the ranks of the perpetrators. Thus when discussing the power of canon to marginalize others and to occlude its own construction, Gates remarks in his introduction: “Once the concept of value became encased in a belief in a canon of texts whose authors purportedly shared a common culture, inherited from both the Greco-Roman and the Judeo-Christian traditions, there was no need to speak of matters of race, since the race of these authors was ‘the same.’ One not heir to these traditions was, by definition, of another race.”<sup>21</sup> Courtesy of the hyphen, the Jews were incorporated within a canon, a tradition, and a

race which left their own particularity unmarked even as it marked everyone and everything else—of course, the Jews' fellow members of "the same" rarely perceived this common identity awarded the Jews by Gates.

Gates resorts again to this hyphenated hybrid when he historicizes the uses and inscriptions which the collection would explore: "Current language use signifies the difference between cultures and their possession of power, spelling out the distance between subordinate and superordinate, between bondsman and lord in terms of their 'race.' These usages develop simultaneously with the shaping of an economic order in which the cultures of color have been dominated in several important senses by Western Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman cultures and their traditions."<sup>22</sup> Thanks to the hyphen, the Jews became part of that Frankenstein monster created by a Christianity seeking to occlude its originating supersession of difference. Instead, beneath its philosemitic mask of post-Sho'ah ecumenicism and seeming openness, even toleration, Christianity reproduces its origins. The act of acknowledging commonality—and on occasion originality (although the topos of linear development is usually replaced by the rhetoric of the common source; time is irrelevant from the perspective of the eternal)—in fact forecloses the hyphenated partner. However, in Gates's formulations no such ecumenicism is at work—except perhaps that of sharing the blame. Gates, who otherwise has demonstrated remarkable sensitivity about Jewish history and the history of antisemitism, has espied a monster but has not reflected upon its creator. By invoking unproblematically the Judeo-Christian tradition, Gates confirms the grounds for the anxiety of influence that hangs over Harrowitz's volume—the fear that the taint infesting our cultural heroes is contagious (cf. *Tainted* 5, 8).<sup>23</sup>

The Gates volume reflects another quite serious problem in the academy: the ostracism of the Jews from the multicultures and the multicultural curriculum. Whereas Jewish academic reflections upon their own histories and their relationships with the dominant cultures often seek solidarity with other marginalized groups and are usually ambivalent toward the dominant Christian culture, they have frequently received a cold shoulder and sometimes worse from those same "others" in the university. Jews have been sutured upon the history of Western domination.

In part, both conference and collection are heirs to the legacy of the Gates volume: they seek to demonstrate that racism (which the editor and conveners inadequately articulate as prejudice) is intrinsic to valued cultural productions (which, again to their loss, they can conceive only as the products of individuals and not as cultural discourses and institutions). Yet they also seek to supplement

Gates's earlier volume; by focusing upon antisemitism, the conference sought to remedy the omission so pointedly noted by Todorov. The analysis of the tainted greatness of these cultural heroes would demonstrate that antisemitism, too, inhabited the airy heights of Western culture and perhaps even propelled it to those heights. Further, Harrowitz draws upon Gates's analysis of canon and employs it as a critical notion in her introduction.<sup>24</sup> She recognizes that so-called politicizing the canon merely renders explicit the always already political nature of canon formation and maintenance. Like Gates, she realizes that canons are neither found objects nor self-sustaining. She also is cognizant of how canons canonize: they sanctify and render sacrosanct their constituent parts. One concern noted but not readily addressed because it strains the limits of the individualized and psychologized notion of prejudice is the question of institutionalization: there are institutional interests in sustaining and reproducing the canon, and these interests usually seek to hide their role in the production of that canon. And several contributors to the volume did address such issues, including Alan Rosen on Kittel's *Theological Dictionary* and its current editors, Morrison on the academic institutions of literature, and Ungar on the politics of memory.

Finally, even as this collection is written within the penumbra of a rather problematic notion of prejudice, a number of the contributors—in addition to those already noted, Robert Gibbs's essay on the ethics of a "return" to Heidegger should also be mentioned—made presentations that reflect the contradictions of the taint of antisemitism, its productive capacity, its relationship to modernity, its transindividual character, as well as offered reading strategies by which to "return" to at least some of these antisemitic texts that have shaped and were shaped by European modernity. *Tainted Greatness* ain't great, but 'tain't bad neither.

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\*I would like to thank Jonathan Boyarin for his suggestions on an earlier draft of this review.

<sup>1</sup> The absence of the direct article is also a problem since it renders the collective as a collection of individuals, rather than as a gestalt or type that exceeds any one or a group of individuals.

<sup>2</sup> For a comparable analysis of the inadequacy of "prejudice" for understanding antisemitism, see Gavin Langmuir, "Toward a Definition of Antisemitism," in *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 316ff.

<sup>3</sup>See Christopher Ricks, *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 119–121. Ricks critiques Sander Gilman's universalizing the need for stereotyping while claiming the ability to distinguishing the bad from the good, the pathological from the non-pathological.

<sup>4</sup>Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination. A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 18–19, analyzes how British opinion posed itself as a liberal society over and against the illiberal Nazi regime who were “intolerant toward its Jewish minority” yet nonetheless viewed the stories of persecution as exaggerated or else in part blamed the Jews. He argues that this ambivalence does not reflect the limitations of British liberalism, but of the liberal notion of toleration; Jews are included in liberal society not as Jews but through their conformity to English values, manners, and culture. Kushner draws on the work of Susan Mendus, *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism* (London: Macmillan, 1989), idem, and David Edwards (eds.), *On Toleration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), and Bill Williams, “The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance: Middle-Class Manchester and the Jews, 1870–1900,” in *City, Class, and Culture*, ed. A. J. Kidd and K. W. Roberts (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985). Bryan Cheyette, *Construction of the “Jew” in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations 1875–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) draws similar conclusions about the intentions and consequences of toleration in his analysis of representations of Jews in English literature. Corollary to the discourse of toleration is the discourse of empathy, and as Jonathan Boyarin argues in “The Other Within and the Other Without,” chapter 5 of *Storm from Paradise. The Politics of Jewish Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), that empathy also arises from a position of dominance and engages in a similar obliteration of difference.

<sup>5</sup>See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), and David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture. Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) and idem, (ed.) *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup>This may be correlated to the inner contradiction of capitalism: between the demands of capital to flow universally and the necessity to make distinctions in order to produce value.

<sup>7</sup>For a preliminary statement of the way the presumption of autonomous selfhood is challenged by Jewishness, see Jonathan Boyarin, *Thinking in Jewish* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>8</sup>See David H. Hirsch, *The Deconstruction of Literature. Criticism after Auschwitz* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England/Brown University Press, 1991), pp. 17–20, on Heidegger.

<sup>9</sup>Barbara Hyams and Nancy A. Harrowitz, “A Critical Introduction to the History of Weininger Reception,” in *Jews and Gender. Responses to Otto Weininger*, ed. B. Hyams and N. A. Harrowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup>Christopher Ricks often resorts to this strategy to mitigate—"being fair"—the implications of his analysis; for example, in his discussion of Eliot's line about "free-thinking Jews" and "reasons of race and religion" in *After Strange Gods*, Ricks moves from the incapacity of all but "learned sensitive scholars" for understanding "what it is to be a Jew" to "Presumably a rabbi . . . could concur with Eliot's point while arguing that this does not mean that Eliot has the right to concur with him, since it might not, for a believer in Judaism, be 'reasons of race and religion' that would make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable, only reasons of religion. Nevertheless, a man of religious belief, whether Christian or not, not only might but should deprecate free-thinkers" (*Eliot and Prejudice*, 41, 43).

<sup>11</sup>Ricks, *Eliot and Prejudice*, p. 39; cf. Morrison, "'Newspapers': Ezra Pound, Post-structuralism, and the Figure of the Jew," in Harrowitz, *Tainted*, 231–232 n5. Ricks doggedly probes all instances of prejudice in Eliot's writings, yet then pulls his punches: his test of the evidence requires absolute empirical certainty, hence to assume motivation for a particular egregious passage is prejudicial "for the line does not say . . ." (30). Further, Ricks, as noted above, argues that Jews also at times criticize other Jews and generate self-definitions not too divergent from Eliot's definition of them. Ultimately, "insofar as Eliot's poems are tinged with anti-Semitism, this—though lamentable—is not easily or neatly to be severed from things to which the poetry is not to be deplored or forgiven but actively praised. . . . a sliding from something disagreeably true (about the need to classify) into something disagreeably and destructively false (a punitive *tanimus*)" (72).

<sup>12</sup>In Hyams and Harrowitz, "A Critical Introduction," pp. 14–15. Where her earlier essay often swerved from this middle ground to denounce Lombroso, her later essay—essentially a rewriting of the earlier—at least concedes that Lombroso "is attempting to save the Jews from . . . the racist rhetoric of biologically based antisemitism. In so doing, Lombroso has adopted, wittingly or not, the racist logic of the erasure of difference" ("Weininger and Lombroso: A Question of Influence," in Hyams and Harrowitz, *Jews & Gender*, 81).

<sup>13</sup>Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context*, Vol. 1: *The Holocaust and Mass Death before the Modern Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 395–400.

<sup>14</sup>Cheyette, *Constructions*, pp. xi, 6.

<sup>15</sup>See Zygmunt Baumann, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), and idem, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>16</sup>See Tomoko Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime, The Quest for the Origin of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>17</sup>By representing the Sho'ah as the culmination of the history of antisemitism, Harrowitz reproduces the same problematic as her prejudicial understanding of antisemitism: the relationship of modernity (and its associated processes, administrations, economies, etc.) to the emergence of both phenomena is underthought and overlooked.

<sup>18</sup>*Critical Inquiry* 12:1 (1985) and 13:1 (1986).

<sup>19</sup>Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Writing, 'Race,' and the Difference It Makes," in idem (ed.), "Race," *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 6. Rpt. in idem, *Loose Canons. Notes on the Culture Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>20</sup>Tzvetan Todorov, "'Race,' Writing, and Culture," in Gates, "Race," p. 377.

<sup>21</sup>Gates, "Writing," p. 4.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 6; for another analysis of the hyphenated Judeo-Christian in Gates et al., see Marshall Grossman, "The Violence of the Hyphen in Judeo-Christian," *Social Text* 22 (Spring 1989): 115–122. The classic discussion is Arthur A. Cohen, *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition* (New York: Schocken, 1971).

<sup>23</sup>Even as it acknowledges this fear Harrowitz's collection generally overlooks that the good guys, no less than the bad, bear the same inscribed trace of taint; however, see Morrison, "'Jewspapers'," 226–231, on the representation of the Jew in poststructuralist discourse, especially the work of Jacques Derrida.

<sup>24</sup>Harrowitz cites (*Tainted* 4) from an essay, "The Master's Pieces: On Canon Formation and the African-American Tradition," that immediately precedes the reprint of "Writing, 'Race,' and the Difference It Makes," in *Loose Canons*.