

FREUD IN ZION: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE MAKING OF MODERN JEWISH IDENTITY. By *Eran J. Rolnik*, translated by *Haim Watzman*. London: Karnac Books, 2012, xxvi + 252 pp.

DOI: 10.1177/0003065115591574

Readers familiar with the Israeli writer Batya Gur's mystery novel, *Saturday Morning Murder*, will recognize the Jerusalem Psychoanalytic Institute as the building donated by Max Eitingon's wife after his death. Gur opened a door to psychoanalytic intrigue that might be tagged as one aspect of *Freud in Zion*, Eran Rolnik's history of psychoanalysis and the Yishuv, the Jewish communities in Palestine in the pre-State era. Drawing on previously unpublished documents from a range of archives, Rolnik places psychoanalytic thought amid the diverse currents that shaped Jewish culture in early-twentieth-century Palestine and, later, in Israel. This richly textured history, published originally in Hebrew in 2007, opens with the concept of the "new Jewish man" at the turn of the twentieth century and moves on to consider the integration of psychoanalytic ideas into the Zionist program for a new society, exploring the impact of Max Eitingon's move from Berlin to Jerusalem. Rolnik concludes with some poignant reflections on current psychoanalytic thought in Israel.

Freud in Zion, Berlin in Jerusalem: This history of the Yishuv belongs to a broader terrain marked by fertile exchanges across national and disciplinary boundaries. The processes of modernization and assimilation that shaped Jewish life in this period rendered geographical and political boundaries permeable, opening them to new forms of expression and inquiry.

Rolnik gives us a vivid sense of the excitement of turn-of-the-century thinkers who sought large-scale remedies for the ailments of individuals and groups. While noting the tension between the Zionist emphasis on the collective and the psychoanalytic focus on the individual, he shows us how influential psychoanalytic thinking was, nonetheless, in the shaping of modern Hebrew culture. We perceive the mingled influence of psychoanalytic ideas in youth movements that also advocated hygiene, physical exercise, and a return to nature. Indeed, some Zionist thinkers thought to appropriate psychoanalytic theory as a therapeutic instrument that could

be used to refurbish or refashion the Jewish psyche, a way to “cure” the ills of European Jewry. In this respect, it’s interesting to note that the very first of Freud’s writings to be translated into Hebrew, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, was required reading for members of the Organization of Hebrew Teachers (an organization devoted to “Hebrew” in the broader sense of a new national culture).

In a review of the original Hebrew publication of Rolnik’s book, Zvi Lothane lauded the author’s achievement in “demonstrating the inextricable bond between psychoanalytic science and psychoanalytic politics” (p. 1389). Indeed, the story of psychoanalysis in Jewish Palestine offers a condensed version of its history after being driven from Vienna. Rolnik draws our attention to three major strands of thought to which Jews contributed over the course of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century: socialism, Zionism, and psychoanalysis. Appreciating the richness of these evolving discourses in all their shifts and contradictions, he highlights the strands of collectivist and individualist thinking that enter into Zionism and psychoanalysis, in a study that contributes to the intellectual history of both. Exploring the diverse psychoanalytic currents at work in the Yishuv, Rolnik discerns the mingled influences of the Russian revolutionary Freud and the more pessimistic German reading of Freud. He points out that both Zionism and Russian revolutionary movements adapted Freud to address collective experience, though those efforts ended in the Soviet Union in the 1930s with the Stalinist repudiation of Freud’s ideas.

In Rolnik’s account of tensions in Jewish Palestine between a psychoanalytic individualism and the pressures of collectivism, he assigns pride of place to Max Eitingon. Eitingon figures not only in his devotion to Freud and his role in founding the Berlin Polyclinic, but as a figure who mediated between the collectivist focus of the Zionist project and an analytic focus on psychic interiority. Taking note of Eitingon’s enormous investment, both emotional and financial, in the Berlin Institute, Rolnik describes the man’s fierce efforts to retain a leadership role, even after Hitler’s accession to power. He describes Jones’s ameliorative role in working with the two non-Jewish Berlin analysts who took over from Eitingon to bring the polyclinic into conformance with Nazi regulations; efforts included expunging the name of Freud and locking his writings away in a “poison cabinet.” (As a side note, it is interesting to see how Palestine figured in the imagination of Anna Freud and other analysts in

Central Europe as they pondered not only the fate of European Jewry, but of their field and its institutions; Rolnik cites a letter Anna Freud wrote to Eitingon in the 1930s in which she describes a “vivid dream of Jerusalem,” picturing it as a “mixture of Vienna Forest and Berchtesgarden” [p. 136].)

The ferment of ideas at the turn of the twentieth century gives evidence of competing ideological currents that shaped meanings of Jewishness as diverse as nationality, ethnicity, race, and pathology. Rolnik comments on the tendency of Jewish physicians to buy into racial conceptions of Jewishness, making heredity and race part of their approach to medicine. Noting Freud’s avoidance of racial or specifically Jewish explanations, Rolnik sees Freud as going to the other extreme: “By refusing to write as a scientist in a Jewish cause and remaining silent on his own and his patients’ Jewish affiliations, Freud departed no less radically from categories used by other Jewish physicians than he did from the dominant paradigm of nervous diseases” (p. 7).

The first part of Rolnik’s study takes up “the Zionist version of the European ‘New Man,’ and its connection to the Freudian view of man” (p. 2). He notes the long history of representation of the Jewish body as “sickly” and “atrophied,” a perception that entered into anti-Semitic discourse and into Jewish thinking as well, among, for example, the Zionist theorists who “formulat[ed] the Jewish problem in medical or psychiatric terms,” with “sickness and degeneracy central tropes in Zionist representations of European Jews” (p. 4). One question to be asked—a question implicit in Rolnik’s study—concerns the Jewishness of psychoanalysis. It’s a question that’s answered not in terms of ethnicity or race, but rather with an appreciation for the vicissitudes of European Jewish life at the turn of the century. From this perspective, it is less important to ascertain what Freud’s feelings about Jewishness or Zionism really were, than to consider the evolving inquiry into Jewish identity to which Freud’s writing contributes.

As Sander Gilman has shown, nineteenth-century ideologies of race and nation localized the perception of difference in images of a pathologized and feminized Jewish body.¹ The identity politics of European

¹Sander Gilman’s work is indispensable to this field of study, offering, over many volumes, a virtual physiognomy of the Jewish body as it has figured in the discourses and imagery of anti-Semitism. See Gilman (1985, 1991, 1993, 1995); see also Boyarin (1997) and Geller (2008).

nations and ethnic groups drew upon racial science and the search for the origins of peoples to formulate a manly ideal and its feminized Jewish antitype (Poliakov 1974; Mosse 1978, 1985). Thus, in the European imagination at the turn of the century, masculinity was defined by impermeable boundaries that marked off difference from the image of the feminized Jewish male.² Under the guise of science, classifications of race provided the framework for a system of differences in which language, physiology, and gender played a part. In this scheme of things, the Jewish “body” played a crucial role in the enterprise of fashioning a concept of degeneracy that would integrate mental, moral, and physical attributes.

As a literary scholar, my work is with texts, but as a psychoanalytic critic, I’ve come to appreciate the bodily aspects of texts. Textuality and embodiment, texts and bodies, are related areas of concern for me. Modern Jewish writing offers a striking instance of the intersection of textuality with embodiment, given the fraught and contentious place of the Jewish body in nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinking about race, gender, and pathology. Rolnik recognizes the ways in which Freud’s writing reflects the impact of scientific and political discourses of his time, manifesting traces of racial thinking even as it challenged or used them to break new conceptual ground. In order to look at some of the ways in which Freud’s writing is implicated in the politics of gender and pathology of his time, we can set Freud alongside several of his contemporaries, to examine the different ways in which each responds to stereotypes of the Jewish body.

The impact of stereotypes of difference is particularly clear in the work of two writers, contemporaries of Freud, who though very influential in their time are virtually forgotten today outside of academic circles: Max Nordau, the physician and cultural critic of decadence and degeneration, who also played a major role as a Zionist theorist arguing for the renovation of the male Jewish body through repatriation and physical labor, and Otto Weininger, a baptized Jew whose 1903 book, *Sex and*

²The association of the male Jewish body with feminization has a long history that includes, for example, medieval depictions of Jewish male menstruation. Trachtenberg (1943) writes: “All men are subject to disease, the Jew among them. But the Jew suffered also from certain peculiar and secret afflictions that were especially characteristic of him, and which did not normally trouble Christians. Indeed, it was this belief that helped to account for the Jewish need of Christian blood, the sole effective therapeutic available to them. Most often mentioned among these ailments was that of menstruation, which the men as well as the women among the Jews were supposed to experience” (p. 50).

Character, virtually quantified the degrees of femininity to be found in Jewish men.

Nordau's conception of mind and body was rooted firmly in physical science and the idea of progress. Extending the work of Cesare Lombroso, Nordau built his cultural diagnosis of degeneration out of the physiological notion of "morbid deviation from an original type" (Nordau 1892, p. 16). Thus, in the best-selling *Degeneration* (1892), a strident critique of new cultural trends, Nordau sought to bring human life into harmony with scientific laws governing the universe. Nordau's fin-de-siècle indictment claimed the authority of positivist medical science, categorizing Ibsen, impressionism, Nietzsche, and the cult of Wagner as degenerate forms of expression.

In later years, when Nordau sought to refute prevailing views of the Jews as degenerate, he fashioned a different trajectory, while invoking the same positivist principles. As Rolnik points out, Nordau joined forces with Herzl, to work from the outside in, beginning with "the visible Jewish phenotype and habitus" in order "to proceed from there to the eugenic project of upgrading the fundamental Jewish genotype" (p. 22). In his Zionist essays and speeches in the early 1900s, Nordau put science to work to account for the debilitated state of ghetto Jews as an adaptation to degrading surroundings, rather than as a sign of inherent degeneracy. All the elements needed to sustain life—"light, air, water, and earth—were measured out to us very sparingly," he writes, with the result that in "the narrow Jewish street our poor limbs soon forgot their gay movements; in the dimness of sunless houses our eyes began to blink slyly; the fear of constant persecution turned our powerful voices into frightened whispers, which rose in a crescendo only when our martyrs on the stakes cried out their dying prayers in the face of their executions" (Nordau 1900a, p. 435; 1900b, pp. 379–380). In responding to straitened circumstances, the Jewish people lost their heroic manly virtues of old and took on the *appearance* of degeneracy.

Along with the establishment of a Jewish homeland, Nordau advocated a program of physical hygiene, including a regimen of exercise, in order to reverse the decline of European Jewry. (Moreover, as Berkowitz [1993] has shown, Nordau's work inspired a physical education movement in Western Europe.) Nordau's Zionist writings convey the sense of a collective reentry into history: reclaiming the physical prowess that was theirs in the ancient world, Jewish men would engage collectively in the

active struggle to establish a nation. Rolnik draws attention to the burdens of this ideological inheritance. He highlights the efforts of the psychoanalyst Dorian Feigenbaum in the 1920s to increase awareness of the intrapsychic conflicts experienced by youthful pioneers coming to Palestine at the time. Feigenbaum felt keenly the analyst's role as sole witness to the inner struggles of members of the Third Aliyah (wave of immigration). Noting that the pioneer had to "fight, not only with malaria and the stony soil, but with an easily comprehensible longing that has been sacrificed to his ideal," Feigenbaum chastised Zionist officials for failing to recognize emotional factors in accounting for the high suicide rate among the pioneers in the years 1910 to 1926 (p. 45). Israeli literature supplements Feigenbaum's observations, giving ample evidence over the past century of challenges to a collectivist ethos, while exploring its deeper recesses. A robust literature attests to conflicts derived from the pressures of collectivist thinking and the compensatory stereotype of an idealized male body.³

Rolnik traces the complex interaction of ideas about gender and sexuality in the eclectic mix of Zionist theorizing and in the development of psychoanalytic thought. The male Jewish body figures significantly in this history of highly politicized ideas. Thus, seemingly at the opposite pole from Nordau's stake in Zionist theory, we find the enormously influential 1903 treatise of Otto Weininger, a book that drew interest across Europe for its elevation of masculinity to a platonic ideal and its association of male Jews with women. For the young Weininger, who was both a baptized Jew and a homosexual, Judaism was consonant with dispersion and the notion of a Jewish state a contradiction in terms. Indeed Weininger's internalization of the values of the dominant European culture of his time was so extreme that it turned his philosophical argument into a mirror, reflecting the image of Jews as feminized, rootless noncitizens. "The true conception of the State," he writes, "is foreign to the Jew, because he, like the woman, is wanting in personality; his failure to grasp the idea of true society is due to his lack of a free intelligible ego. Like women, Jews tend to adhere together, but they do not associate as free independent individuals mutually respecting each other's individuality" (1903, pp. 307–308). The further one goes in reading Weininger, the more one hears the desperation of his efforts to isolate masculinity and protect

³For studies of literary expressions of dynamic conflicts concerning ideologically loaded conceptions of masculinity, see Hoffman (1991, 1992, 1997); see also Presner (2007) and Gluzman (2007).

it from contamination at the hands of Jews and women. Weininger's suicide at the age of twenty-three, just after the publication of *Sex and Character*, suggests the ultimately destructive impact of the very positions with which he sought to identify himself.

Rolnik notes the cult status of Weininger's book in fin-de-siècle Vienna and recognizes its impact on Freud's thinking. The most striking instance of that impact, to my mind, can be found in a footnote to the case of Little Hans (Freud 1909), the boy whose castration anxiety Freud analyzed through consultations with the child's father. In this well-known footnote, Freud argues that the root cause, "the deepest unconscious root of anti-semitism," as he puts it, can be found in the castration anxiety awakened in gentiles by the Jewish practice of circumcision, an interpretation that supports his argument for recognizing castration fear as a primal fantasy, a universal feature of masculine development. This fascinating footnote carries out a distinctly uneasy negotiation between Jews and castration anxiety, shedding light on the provocative notion of castration in Freud's work.

Scholars have pointed out that Freud refrains in this footnote from identifying as Jewish any of the persons to whom he refers—Little Hans, Otto Weininger, and himself (see Gilman 1991; Geller 2008; Boyarin 1997). Nevertheless, Freud describes Weininger as "highly gifted but sexually deranged," takes note of his suicide right after publication of his "remarkable book," and comments on Weininger's conflation of Jews and women as the target for a hostility stemming from his "infantile complexes" (p. 36). We can speculate that Freud's own discomforts as a Jew—his own resistance to that internalized trope of feminization—occludes his writing here, producing a strategic, if not symptomatic, erasure of his own Jewishness, along with that of Weininger and Little Hans. At the same time, however, it is most certainly Freud who gives us the opening, in this case and elsewhere, to a dynamic understanding of masculinity, an approach that we can use to understand the conflicts that produced his erasure in the first place.

During this period, a crisis in symbolic authority leaves traces in the work of a range of male Jewish writers compromised by their conflicting positions as simultaneously insiders and outsiders. Producing symptomatic texts at cultural intersections, the work of these writers reflects the feminization that formed part of their cultural inheritance. Nordau and Weininger, as different as they may be, appear to have taken in prevailing stereotypes, specifically an idealized male body, and preserved it intact.

In contrast, Freud's writing, and Kafka's as well, is remarkable for the manner in which it absorbs stereotypes and puts them to work in new ways. Rolnik cites a quizzical comment by Kafka, declaring his intention to keep his distance from psychoanalysis, even as he likens it to the work of Rashi, a classical Jewish commentator and spiritual guide (p. 6). This kind of touchy ambivalence regarding Jewishness runs through Kafka's writing and, arguably, animates his fiction. Consider Kafka's ape in the story titled "A Report to an Academy" (1917). Imitating the mannerisms of civilized Europeans, the ape seeks approval from the "scientific gentlemen" of an academy for his acculturation. What does it mean to "ape"? Kafka criticism has taken an historical turn, recontextualizing Kafka's spare narratives and reading them in the light of nationalist movements, anti-Semitic discourse, and the relations of West and East European Jews. Thus we can discern resonances in the ape's report of discourses of the time that cast the Jew as imitator or "ape" of the civilized European, a reading that agrees with those of Kafka's contemporaries who saw the story as a satire "on the Western Jew from a Zionist standpoint" (Robertson 1985, p. 164). Kafka's ambivalence toward Zionism does not keep him from drawing on the Zionist critique of Jewish mimicry, considered to be one of the negative traits that characterized the assimilationist strivings of West European Jews. (Robertson finds in Herzl's and Nordau's addresses to the first Zionist Congress abundant evidence of "mimicry" as a negative characterization of Jewish assimilationism.)

From the vantage point of the present, I suggest that Freud and Kafka took in negative images and reformulated them into a new ground for embodied subjectivity. In their work, abjection provides the opening into a new conception of human being. We see this in the choreography of Freud's case history of Little Hans: an engaging mix of reported dialogue, developmental narrative, theory, and footnotes draws readers into a universe where bodily sensations and functions provide the groundwork for fantasy in adult and child. So too, the performative utterance of Kafka's ape, standing on his hind legs and earnestly addressing the men of the academy, lays bare what codes of propriety would conceal (a reading of Kafka that is, admittedly, indebted to Freud).

In the acts of exposure that the writing of Freud and Kafka performs, the Jewish body becomes something *more than*, or *different from*, feminization. It becomes rather a reminder of the child's body as experienced in fantasy. For writers and readers, conscious or unconscious memories of

early bodily experience are a resource that makes literary experience possible. The body is an inexhaustible source of vitality for writing, in both its intimacy and its strangeness (Brooks 1993).

The distinctions I am drawing between Nordau and Weininger on the one hand, and Kafka and Freud on the other, are both literary and analytic. As such they form part of the cultural terrain whose history Eran Rolnik has given us. His research illustrates what I would take to be a fundamental analytic insight: that our perspectives are never completely free of who we are. Ideas are not disembodied abstractions: history and theory are mutually implicated, as his study so richly demonstrates. Psychoanalysis, quite wonderfully, opens the field of inquiry into the embeddedness of theory in history, offering a structure and a method for self-reflection and critique.

Rolnik concludes his book with some sharp criticisms of current psychoanalytic thinking in Israel. In the shadow of the Holocaust and the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, Rolnik notes a turn in Israeli analytic work to a traumacentric view that emphasizes the passive position of the subject as victim. This shift to an emphasis on environmental factors in patients' histories is accompanied, he argues, by diminished interest in infantile sexuality and a tendency to avoid "the idea of primary innate aggression as implied by Freud's death instinct" (p. 212). Lamenting a loss of interest in psychic interiority, Rolnik criticizes what he sees as a shift from the "Freudian Law of the Father" to a "fantasy of fusion with the Mother" (p. 209). To his eye as an historian and a psychoanalyst, current trends in the work of Israeli psychoanalysts suggest a move to evade "the presence of Jewish history and past in their self-understanding" (p. 211).

It's been said that psychoanalysis as a field will never be free of the name of its founder.⁴ I understand that to mean that it's a discipline that takes the human subject as its object of inquiry, while recognizing that inquiry is inevitably shaped by the position, the embodied history, and the emotional life, of the observer. Eran Rolnik has given us a history of ideas and theories, of individuals, psychoanalysts, and their wanderings, during

⁴Derrida (1980) writes: "The science of his proper name: a science which for once is essentially inseparable, as a science, from something like a proper name [*nom propre*] as an effect of a proper name which the science allegedly accounts for (in return) by making its accounts *to it*. But the science of his proper name [*nom propre*] is also that which remains to be done, as the necessary return to the origin of and the condition for such a science" (p. 332).

a time of cultural ferment and of war, when the very ideas about gender and embodiment, sexuality and fantasy, with which psychoanalysis was concerned, formed part of a cultural force field. In his attentiveness to the development of theories and the dynamics of fantasy in individuals and groups, within the context of the turbulent events of the twentieth century, Rolnik has given us a genuinely psychoanalytic history.

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