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Author(s): Paul Breines

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*Germans, Journals and Jews/ Madison, Men, Marxism and Mosse: A Tale of Jewish-Leftist Identity Confusion in America**

by Paul Breines

In August, 1979, *New German Critique, Social Text* and the kindred German journal, *Ästhetik und Kommunikation,* held a small conference to discuss some of their shared theoretical and practical concerns. The gathering took place on the campus of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where a number of associates of the two American journals reside. In the opening session some of the editors outlined the problems and perspectives of their publications. For good measure they sketched their intellectual roots. This last matter, that of roots or heritage, did not occupy the conference as a whole. But it led me to the personal reflections that follow.[1]

When David Bathrick, Jack Zipes, John Brenkman and Stanley Aronowitz referred to the young Lukács, Gramsci, Benjamin, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas, this list of forerunners seemed to most of us unexceptional, almost obligatory. In addition the *Social Text* editors spoke of some contemporary Parisian influences, which caused a ripple of mutters among us Germanophiles present. But even this seemed a matter of prescribed roles and assumptions — Frankfurters versus French Fries, as one participant commented. To German ears, though, our approach to the business of forerunners and influences evidently had a different ring. Peter Hohendahl thus opened the discussion with a disarmingly obvious question: what of the *American* sources of these journals, the native well-springs of

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* For my parents, Nettie and Simon Breines.

1. Wini Breines has been involved in much of what is recounted here. Since we do not see eye to eye on all of it, and, since she is herself at work on related themes — her book on the New Left in the early and mid-1960s will be published soon — I am especially grateful for her patient encouragement. Friends, some of them past or present Madison people, read an earlier draft and generously provided me with tolerance, support, criticisms and advice: David Bathrick, Ros Baxandall, Jessica Benjamin, Paul Buhle, Margaret Cerullo, John Ehrenreich, Liz Ewen, Stuart Ewen, Naomi Glauberman, Jeff Herf, Alan Hunter, Russell Jacoby, Ralph Miliband, Andy Rabinbach, Peter Weiler and Jack Zipes. They helped me more than they think. My thanks to each of them.

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their thinking? Could it be that we American radicals draw no sustenance from indigenous traditions and currents? Presumably we do, but the interesting thing is that none were mentioned, and nobody thought this odd.

Nor was the question really addressed. The discussion moved instead to a more pressing matter of historical-political identity: the role of women in the two journals and the larger problem of tensions between Marxist and feminist theory. And I cannot answer it properly here, at least not in connection with *New German Critique* and *Social Text.* I knew them only as a friendly outsider. But, as soon as Peter Hohendahl posed his question, my thoughts began to scurry down a trail of memories and associations centering on questions I had fumbled with before, and in the same place, Madison. I had been an undergraduate student there from 1959 to 1963, and then a graduate student between 1966 and 1968. Those were formative years, personally and for the New Left movement generally. Whenever I return to Madison, I get submerged in nostalgia, and this time was no different, except that circumstances prompted me to try to see it through. At the conference, then, the thought occurred to me that of course Madison itself is in some sense the American root of the two journals, as it had earlier been the home of *Studies on the Left, Radical America* and a host of other expressions of the New Left's intellectual culture in this country. One need look no further than the very place in which we were gathered.

Yet, just as quickly, the picture blurred in my mind's eye. For the Madison Left experience, at least in the early and mid-1960s, was never simply an American experience. It was more jumbled, at least more composite—like America itself? In my own not untypical case, Madison helped turn me into an American leftist, but at no point in the process was I really drawn to American models of Leftism. They were available in relative abundance, but so were others — western, central and eastern European models — which I found more compelling. Why, for example, was I drawn more deeply into the European cultural history course taught by the non-leftist German-Jewish emigré, George Mosse, than to the course on American foreign policy offered by the very American socialist historian, William Appleman Williams? Was this because of the differing styles of academic charisma of the two teachers, both of whose courses were vital experiences for so many students? Or was my leaning toward Europe an expression of some budding estrangement from things American; a sophomoric but critical sense that genuine *Geist* could be found anywhere but here?

Or does the answer involve a yearning for something Jewish, a little bit Jewish in any case? After all, I was what some might call an A.W.O.L. Jew, while Mosse's initial impact was primarily that of a cosmopolitan German, rather than a Jewish intellectual. Or all of the above? And these led to further queries, like what really is a political heritage? Why and how do you make it your own? What is the relation between being influenced and constituting the things that influence you? And what is the relation in all of

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this between private fantasies and objective factors? How do you share a heritage, and can you have more than one? The only clear element was the fact that I was on *this* merry-go-round again and, no surprise, in Madison.

Three Representative Careers

There are, then, two magic rings to reach for here. One is Madison, the University of Wisconsin, as a specific center of New Left intellectual culture in this country.[2] The other is the Jewish part of that story as I experienced it. Since I approach these matters from the standpoint of historical materialism, the proper starting point is with the occupant of the chair next to mine at the conference, Stanley Aronowitz. He enters the picture not because he happens to be a Jew or because he has any special relation to Madison, which he has only visited. I refer to him because the main outlines of his career indicate some of the social backdrop of these notes. At the close of his initial remarks, Stanley Aronowitz reiterated the great dream of so many leftist journals today. *Social Text,* he announced, was dedicated to reaching an audience beyond academic circles. The fact that he could say this in 1979 in Madison was to my mind laden with symptoms of our shared historical situation.

I first met Stanley Aronowitz in New York City in 1963, when he had been recruited onto the editorial board of *Studies on the Left,* which had been launched in Madison in 1959, moving to New York some two and a half years later. I was then one of *Studies'* undergraduate friends and hangers-on. The journal itself was the main periodical publication of the germinal New Left in this country. Part of the reason for its move from Madison to New York City was to be located more suitably for building ties to leftist activity beyond the campus confines. The recruitment of Stanley Aronowitz, at the time an organizer for the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers' Union, was to further this aim. Through him, *Studies,* which from the start had a less academic cast that most comparable journals today, was not only reaching into the working class, but bringing the working class into the journal. Now, with some water under the bridge, Stanley Aronowitz, one of the three editors of *Social Text,* is a tenured professor. He is seeking among other things exactly what *Studies on the Left* had found in him in the first place.

Then there is the case of Paul Buhle. He is not a Jew, nor was he present at the conference, although he should have been. While a student at the University of Connecticut, he founded *Radical America* in 1965–66, a journal of American socialist and labor history. Paul Buhle, his wife, Mari

2. Madison as a center of revolt in the streets has been more visible, most recently in the film, *The War at Home,* and I say little here about the activist political movement. I recognize that such a distinction is problematic, but so is the failure to make it. In any case, I focus not only on ideas and intellectual experiences, but on the early to mid-1960s, which preceded the big actions and mobilizations.

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Jo Buhle, the feminist historian, and *Radical America* moved to Madison in 1966–67. At roughly that time, *Studies on the Left,* long resettled in New York, ceased publication. I had just returned to Madison following two years at Cornell. While there, Sam Weber and Shierry Weber introduced me (and my wife: the story of couples on the Left awaits its chronicler) to the ideas of the Frankfurt school. That opened the way for what we soon considered *the* book, Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man,* which appeared in 1964. Paul Buhle's arrival in Madison, then, coincided with the little efflorescence of Marcusean ideas in Madison in which I was involved along with a group of old and new friends. Buhle, a sort of neo-syndicalist, was initially interested in labor history. But through his attention to questions of working-class culture, he began building nice if often polemical links to those of us who were buried in Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer and the Frankfurt School's critique of the culture industry. Making a longer story short, the polemics centered around Paul Buhle's opposition to what he saw as our elitist scorn for popular culture — our blindness to its oppositional elements.

When I left Madison for Germany early in 1968, I corresponded with Paul Buhle on some of these problems. One theme our exchange of letters took up was whether the distance we Frankfurt School disciples felt from popular culture was a Jewish distance — a case of estrangement between cosmopolite Jews and the American grain. As I recall, Paul Buhle and I at least agreed that this was, in some important sense, the case, even if the little circle of *Frankfurterkinder* did not consist of Jews alone. While he never warmed to what he deemed our aloof cosmopolitanism, nor we to what we considered his populism, Paul Buhle and the rest of us were together intrigued by these issues. In the meantime, he was opening the pages of *Radical America* to writings of a neo-Frankfurt School variety. And today, while the journal he founded is in other hands, Paul Buhle is an expert on Yiddish socialist culture in America. He is fluent in the language, filled with knowledge of Yiddish working-class theater, poetry and press, and more conversant in numerous Jewish matters than are many of his Jewish friends from the Madison Left. What is one to say of such an evolution: only in America? or only in Madison?

The third career is Ralph Leavitt's. In accord with one strand of experience I had brought with me to Madison in 1959 from the prosperous New York suburb of Scarsdale, I joined a fraternity, Pi Lambda Phi. Lonely and apprehensive as an incoming freshman, my first social contacts were with some boys who were fraternity bound, and I went along. I looked over some Gentile houses — the dividing lines were clear enough — and finally chose Pi Lamb. It was a Jewish fraternity whose members tended not to look especially Jewish and generally paid special attention to parties with Gentile sororities. Characteristically, I avoided the one or two houses that were obviously Jewish, less sports-minded and more religiously oriented. My own impulses to deny my Jewishness, to be a Gentile, fit well with the Pi Lambda Phi ambience.

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Anyone entering a fraternity went through a trial period as a pledge, each of whom was assigned a pledge father. Mine was one Ralph Leavitt. Brilliant and troubled, Ralph Leavitt held the informal title of "house animal," meaning he was a master of all sorts of vulgar stunts, some funny, others sadistic. When as a pledge I naively proposed that our fraternity contribute money to the movement of Black students then engaged (1959–60) in sit-ins in the South, Ralph Leavitt denounced me as a Nigger-lover. Not long afterwards, I quit Pi Lambda Phi. And as a small sign of those times, when my class graduated in 1963, only three or four of the 20 boys who had entered Pi Lambda Phi in 1959 were still in the fraternity. Eventually Ralph Leavitt, too, departed from the prescribed path. He found his way to Israel, became a Zionist, then renounced Zionism and emerged a well-known figure in the Trotskyist movement. As a graduate student in Soviet Studies at the University of Indiana in the mid-1960s, he was one of the politically persecuted "Bloomington Three." In 1968 or thereabout, my ex-pledge father was running for political office in the state of New York on a slate of candidates put forward by the Socialist Workers' Party.

Pi Lambda Phi suggests a fourth career, about which more will be said below — that of Professor George Mosse. For several years prior to my own arrival in Madison, George Mosse had been the fraternity's faculty advisor. Normally, this is a perfunctory role, but he managed to get himself expelled from it. When in 1958 a handful of Pi Lambda Phi members tried by a sort of *coup d'état* to reform Hazing Week, the disgusting and in several instances lethal initiation rites, their plot was exposed and the perpetrators were sent packing. With them went their active supporter, Professor George Mosse — a small harbinger of the student activism to come and of his ties to it.

The History Department

George Mosse is, of course, not known primarily as a former adviser to a Jewish fraternity. In the late 1950s and early 1960s he was merely one outstanding member of an exceptional history department in an unusual university in a politically interesting state. For some, the state of Wisconsin is notable as a homeland of Senator Joseph McCarthy, the infamous witch-hunter of the early Cold War years. But it has other credentials, including such Progressives as Senator Robert LaFollette and William Evjue, founding editor of the once muckraking paper, *The Capital Times;* a strong socialist movement in the early decades of this century, especially around Victor Berger in Milwaukee; later a durable branch of the Communist Party, and so forth.

That the University of Wisconsin, too, should have a certain heritage of academic radicalism is thus not surprising. This reaches back at least to the turn of the century when John R. Commons founded the country's first school of labor history; to Alexander Mickeljohn, iconoclastic and experi-

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mental university president in the 1930s; and to such beleagured leftist faculty in the 1940s as the Marxist, Alban Winspear, author of *The Genesis of Plato's Thought* and one of the teachers with whom Norman O. Brown studied classics. In the post-World War Two years, the history department in particular collected a handful of independent-minded (and at the time leftist) scholars, among them the Americanists, Fred Harvey Harrington, Merrill Jensen, Howard Beale and William Best Hesseltime, who created a certain space for critical reappraisals of the national past. This would then be expanded further by two graduate students who in the 1950s and 1960s were to return to the university to teach—the socialists William Appleman Williams and Harvey Goldberg. While the history department was emerging as the main vessel bearing, altering and enhancing older radical traditions, the university also counted among its faculty the sociologist, Hans Gerth, who had in 1942 approved a doctoral study of American pragmatism by another talented Madison graduate student, C. Wright Mills.

These are but some highlight personalities of a story that awaits its interpreter, although much of the story *is* one of the coming together of teachers and students, the ties and tensions among them being central to the transmission of ideas. In the absence of that larger story, three summary observations will serve as a momentary substitute. The first is that the University of Wisconsin crystallized some of the state's rich political dynamics and, in doing so, provided the historical terrain for the fusion of oppositional activism *and thought* which was to flourish in the 1960s. The second point concerns the vital place in this picture of the history department, a few of whose members managed to create, often quite without intent, a politically and morally charged milieu which, in the rapidly shifting climate of the late 1950s and early 1960s, helped give birth to the New Left in Madison. And the last point is that the state's and the university's radical tradition, while hardly dominant, nevertheless served as a magnet that attracted students from among the children of leftist Jews from New York.

Scarsdale

These strands came together in the group of graduate students around William Appleman Williams, who in 1959 constituted *Studies on the Left.* I know I am not the only younger student for whom contact with the journal and its milieu was a turning point. In trying to reconstruct some aspects of its impact, several personal details will help. My parents are second generation American from east European Jewish families. My grandfathers were skilled craftsmen who worked themselves to death before I was born. My father is an architect. In their early years and during my childhood, my parents were part of the fellow-travelling Left. They are both intellectuals. Born and raised in New York City, they became thoroughly modern in relation to their cultural pasts. Our home was areligious; our ties to Jewish custom thin. Neither my brother nor I was bar mitzvahed. Yiddish, which

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my parents spoke fluently, was heard in our home only at the occasional gatherings of the larger family.

I knew we were Jewish but had little notion of what this meant. Nor did I ever ask. Not when, at around ten years of age, I told my best friend's devoutly Catholic grandmother, as she sat in her darkened little room surrounded by crucifixes and statuettes of the Holy Mother, that, yes, I had gone to Mass that morning. Nor several years later when, with awe, I beheld my father lead a family Passover Seder, reading the Hebrew text with ease and authority. Nor when he noted that he knew someone we had encountered one day was a Jew because, well, such things you just know. None of this troubled me, perhaps in part because as far as I can remember, I never experienced anti-Semitism. Nor did my parents instill in me the idea that I was especially lucky in this respect. Being Jewish, then, was a private and very obscure part of my youth. I became adept at keeping it that way.

In the early 1950s we were part of the exodus from the city to the suburbs. I had no difficulties integrating myself fully and happily into the upper middle-class life of Scarsdale, where I initiated our family's regular celebration of Christmas. My parents tolerated this, drawing the line on the occasion when I proposed we place a little Nativity scene beneath the tree. If my conscious ties to things Jewish had been loosened from the start, I was likewise only dimly aware that I was a kind of closet Leftist. Unlike other "red diaper babies" (children of leftist parents) I would later meet in Madison, I was largely oblivious to politics and never felt myself at odds with neighbors or classmates. On the other hand, I knew my parents were Leftists, a fact I admired more than I understood. With the same admiration and a bit more understanding, I knew they lived according to more bohemian and less commercial values than did the parents of my friends. That they did not quite fit into the Scarsdale ambience sometimes made me uneasy; yet, among my circle of friends, my parents were highly regarded — considered something like the cultural hero and heroine of the neighborhood. I read and loved the novels of Howard Fast, then a Communist, and noticed such material as *I.F. Stone's Weekly, Monthly Review* and *The Nation* on my parents' reading table, though I do not recall reading them. Had anyone scratched my surfaces, they would have found a socialist. But no one did, least of all me.

While I loved numerous of my high school teachers, I never thought of myself as an intellectual. Instead, I pursued sports and a social life among the popular crowd in my class, which graduated in 1959. Scarsdale, whose Jewish population was growing at that time, was above many things but not racism or anti-Semitism — the two Black students in the high school were children of live-in domestics. Now and then word would circulate that a local realtor had refused to sell to a Jewish family; a Jewish boy would be turned away from a debutante's cotillion at one of the WASP country clubs. My high school girlfriend came from a German-Jewish family which belonged to an exclusively

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German-Jewish country club, closed to Americanized *Ostjuden.* All of this was kept under the rug of harmony, and I kept it under my personal rug.

I did not know, yet I knew, what was an *Ostjude.* Virtually all my relatives came from this stock, but for me my father's mother and aunt were its palpable representatives. I feared that some of my friends might confront them and, witnessing their noisiness, accents, funny eating habits, their Jewishness, would discover who I was. But I was also drawn to their Jewishness which, in some small cranny of my Scarsdale soul, meant very precise things: little black whiskers on their chins; the smells of their by then dumpy bodies; the foods they made; my grandmother's bitterness and my great-aunt's cackly laughter and wit. Of Hannukah or the Holocaust I knew next to nothing.

In a sense, I was an all around latent person: latent Jew, latent Leftist, latent intellectual. The one mode of "otherness" I chose in the Scarsdale context was both impossible and tame. It amounted to a mild version of Norman Mailer's white Negro and consisted of a passion for Black basketball, rock n' roll and gospel music, fumbling efforts to talk in Black city dialect, a general empathy and admiration for Black people, and outrage at how America treated them. For Blacks I would have fought; for Jews, perhaps not immediately. In any case, at age eighteen I recognized I would probably not go on to become a Black person, but was sure of little else. Originally planning to attend a small New England liberal arts college, I switched at the last minute to the University of Wisconsin when a Scarsdale teacher I liked spoke highly of his summer-school experience there. My parents, familiar with the University's tradition, endorsed the idea.

Studies and the Socialist Club

It may make sense, then, when I report that after the brief transition through the fraternity, my discovery of the group of students, who had just launched *Studies on the Left,* who composed the little University Socialist Club, and who were mostly Jewish intellectuals from New York City — that all this struck me as something like a return to the home I never realized I had been looking for. In fact, I did not really discover this new milieu, but was introduced to it by the woman I would later marry, Wini Jacoby. In I rushed to that world of ideas, young bohemian intellectuals, books, journals, folk music, of intense debates, a shared attempt to live by humanistic ethics, a will to end class society. As I began the long process of shedding my reluctance to embrace the fact that I am a Jew, I donned a cloak of guilt at having come from Scarsdale. But these seemed small and private concerns amidst the nascent Civil Rights movement and on the enthusiastic fringes of the Cuban Revolution.

The history of *Studies on the Left* should soon be written. The journal drew on the work of Williams and C. Wright Mills, and was encouraged by Hans Gerth. It was inspired by the sense that its efforts were part of a

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broader, if embryonic, national and international New Left. *Studies* accomplished several important things. It advanced the idea of a post-Stalinist, humanistic Marxism (many of the editors were former members of the youth section of the Communist Party), stressing its relevance to contemporary American life. It insisted on the centrality of historical thought and criticism, highlighting in particular William Appleman Williams' insights into the "corporate capitalist" character of American society. And, against the backdrop of the impacted conformity of 1950s academia, the *Studies* group represented a new and alternative community of intellectuals. They were not alone in this. It hardly needs saying that Marcuse, Mills, Paul Goodman, Harold Cruse and others were at work along roughly kindred lines. But *Studies,* as a milieu (rather than an isolated thinker) of a younger generation, was vital. Between the prevailing Cold War liberalism and the small orthodox Marxist groups, it carved out the terrain — not only in Madison — on which many of us now stand.

One aspect of *Studies* is especially notable in view of the seemingly inevitable tendency toward departmentalization on the part of so many Left intellectual journals today. Its editorial group, both in Madison and later in New York, included historians, economists, political scientists, Germanists, sociologists, a novelist and a poet, a literary critic, a couple of academic drop-out intellectuals and Stanley Aronowitz. It included several women, though the journal was certainly male-dominated. *Studies* was also imperfect, that is, it mirrored the dominant order, in so far as only one or two Black people stood among its associates. On the other hand, some of the most important articles it published were those by Harold Cruse reinterpreting Black historical experience in America. Nonetheless, in the range of credentials among its associates and in the coherent breadth of the articles in its pages, *Studies on the Left* set standards that any Left journal today could be proud to match.

In this brief homage to the journal, I want to mention one other flaw, both because there were efforts to overcome it and because it bears indirecly on the Jewish theme to which I will return. *Studies* had a definite tendency toward a kind of American provincialism; a generally latent but now and then manifest hostility toward European leftist theorizing. This is neither the time nor place for sectarian squabbles. Yet, I still think it notable that, although the journal died in 1966 and one might thus say there was not enough time, it never did reckon with Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* — which was not merely European theorizing — and all it represented. On the other side of this coin, in its final year, *Studies* did publish an important article by Marcuse's student, Ron Aronson ("The Movement and its Critics"), who had also become an editor. More generally, thanks to the background encouragement of Hans Gerth and the work of editors Ellie Hakim and Lee Baxandall, political and cultual Leftism from Europe was not absent. In fact, the journal carried the first English translation of Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." It

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also ran translations of early essays by Karl Mannheim, dealing with themes in Lukács's work, and the first significant appropriation of Gramsci in this country, written by Eugene Genovese.

In their Madison days, most of the *Studies* editors were also involved in the University Socialist Club, a band of some two or three dozen members and friends. It was primarily a discussion circle and forum. We heard Herbert Aptheker of the Communist Party denounce William Appleman Williams' revisionist historiography; listened to the humbly charismatic presentations of Martin Sklar, the grey eminence of a good deal of Madison Leftism in the early 1960s; and plunged into debate on whether or not to condemn bomb testing in the People's Republic of China. But the Socialist Club, sometimes in tandem with the even smaller crew of pacifists, was also the vehicle for what leftist action there was on campus: support for the sit-ins in the South, for the Cuban Revolution, for disarmament and related causes. Its beleaguered demonstrations invariably met with catcalls of Go Back to Russia, or Go Back to Brooklyn. Now and then there were real threats of violence. There was as yet no such thing as mass mobilization.[3]

The particular call from the hecklers to Go Back to Brooklyn gets me back to the Jewish theme. Had someone yelled, Go Back to Scarsdale, I might really have been perplexed. But the Brooklyn advice was in its way helpful. I could see and affirm myself through the hecklers' eyes: we were Jews, not merely Commies. Of course, not all of us were Jews. And I do not know just what any of us who were not Jews thought about all this, since we never really discussed it. Nor, for the same reason, do I know if other Jews in our circle were as ambivalent as I about being a Jew. But this is what I believe: by becoming a Leftist and an intellectual, I was beginning to become a Jew. And in their own ways those in the Madison Left who were

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3. The *Studies* and Socialist Club milieu of the early 1960s, as well as developments later in the decade, were tied to certain physical spaces. These lay approximately between the Capital Square on the eastern end and Lake and Park Streets to the west, with Washington and State Streets being the north-south borders. The area consisted of a network of streets and small alleys lined with wood-frame, two-story apartment houses, many trees and numerous small shops, luncheonettes, restaurants and bars. Separated from the university dormitories and fraternity-sorority row, it contained the living quarters and general setting for the student Left, as well as for artists, bohemians and many normal people. By the end of the 1960s, the obliteration of this political and cultural terrain was underway. In its place there now stand giant university buildings and dorms, widened thoroughfares, hip-capitalist shopping malls and a generally space-age look. It also has the look of social control. Whatever the official reasons for the extensive redevelopment, it clearly reeks of a kind of Hausmannization. More or less as in Paris following the 1848 revolution, so in Madison at the end of the 1960s, the oppositional turf, the nurturant space of the avant-garde, was liquidated. Already in 1967, as the redevelopment plans got underway, the growing radical community fought the whole operation with spray paint, balloons and dancing in the streets. The modernizers won, at least in the short run. Other oppositional spaces have since sprouted, around and even within the redeveloped area. The fact that Hausmann's work was followed by the Commune of Paris in 1871 is no source of hope today. Presumably, though, there are other sources.

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not Jews had already found or were beginning to find a Jew within each of themselves.

These were subterranean, one could even say repressed, themes at the time — at least in Madison. Only later in the 1960s did they even begin to come somewhat to the fore. But I do not think I am merely reading later concerns into the earlier situation; they were there all along. The chief reason for the silence is that, both early in the 1960s and later, we considered ourselves first of all and all together Leftists. This was a matter of real, that is, felt priorities, not mere rationalization. But it was a little bit of rationalization. No doubt we were all reluctant to amplify the fact, obvious to all, that the Left in Madison was composed largely of Jews. Moreover, as anti-racists and, as far as we believed, rationalists, none of us relished admitting that cultural/racial myths, fantasies and stereotypes played roles in our lives. Typical of the situation and sensibility involved was the appearance in our midst in 1962 of one Doug Korty. A freshman from Ohio, ruggedly handsome, blond, blue-eyed and a socialist, Doug Korty was happily dubbed our token Goy, although he was only the most Aryan specimen among the bunch of non-Jews. The good cheer in this case was mutual. So, as far as I remember, was the impulse to leave it unexamined.[4]

Some of the peculiarities of the Madison scene and my own experiences with the question of Jewish identity are crystallized in the following story. At the end of the school year, 1961, I decided to take part in the Freedom Rides in Mississippi. This was the Civil Rights movement's main project at that time. The Freedom Rides aimed at forcing the integration of Mississippi's bus terminals by having integrated groups of rides enter the segregated terminals. Before my departure, my friends held a small send-off party. Among the well-wishers was Martin Sklar, the brilliant and nurturant *Studies* editor, whom I and a number of peers looked to as an idol and model. He took me aside to offer a piece of advice: rather than go on the Mississippi project and spend time in jail, I should consider remaining at my desk in Madison to do theoretical work. The danger, as Sklar saw things, was that theory would get lost in the shuffle of action. Perhaps no one but Marty Sklar could have made such a proposal. Yet, the episode is in its way characteristic of the Madison situation, its preoccupation with ideas and intellectuals. Far from considering the advice bizarre, I was deeply honored to have been deemed capable by the likes of Sklar of even doing theoretical work. But I rejected his advice and went South.

Once there, several things relevant to these notes happened. Arrested for disturbing the peace (violating racist codes), the group I was with found ourselves in the Jackson, Mississippi, county jail. From there we would be

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4. I recall no discussion of the Jewish business in the Socialist Club. In *Studies* the one pertinent article appeared in 1965, written by one of the newer New York editors, Norman Fruchter: "Arendt's Eichmann and Jewish Identity," a fine and provocative essay.

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transported to the State Penitentiary at Parchman Farm. It happened that I had a book with me, John Hersey's *The Wall,* a novel about life in the Nazi camps, which someone had given me during the training session in Nashville prior to the action. I was able to read bits and pieces of it in the cell. At one point I was awakened by a warden, who was shouting: "All o'youse get your shoes on and get ready to line up out here!" I was certain, semi-awake, that he had yelled: "All Jews."

After several days we were transferred to the Parchman Farm Penitentiary. Freedom Ride prisoners were kept apart from the rest, and among us, Black males, white males, white females and black females were kept in separate dormitory-like cells. The only direct contact we had with things outside came in the form of periodic visits from a priest, a minister and a rabbi, all from Jackson. My initial impulse was to meet with the priest or minister. In flight from Jewishness as a stigma? Or in a gesture toward the universalism that had brought us all together on the Freedom Rides in the first place? Or both? But I went to the rabbi. This decision, so small in the scheme of the Civil Rights movement and amidst the problems of being in jail, remains large in my memory. But it remains large because of the ambivalences attached to it, not because it involved any sense of homecoming or positive identity. In fact, as an atheist I was discontent that we could connect only to clergymen, although making the visit took courage on their parts, especially on the part of the rabbi.

The other episode revolves around several prisoners who were members of the Catholic Worker Movement. At one point during our confinement they approached a few of us who were Jews — we were a handful out of some thirty-five white males in the cell — with an unusual question. They wanted to know how they themselves could become Jews. What would they need to do, they wondered, so that we could recognize them as Jews? Would conversion suffice, or obeying Kosher dietary laws, or learning Hebrew or Yiddish, adopting Jewish names, or simply declaring themselves Jews? They explained that they saw becoming Jews as the most truly Christian decision they could make — this while in prison as Catholic Workers and participants in the Civil Rights movement which was guided by a Christian liberation theology. Blacks they could not be, but becoming Jewish somehow seemed within reach. By getting there, they said, they would be among the oppressed because of what they *were,* not merely because of what, as Catholic Workers, they did. In the event, they were asking the wrong Jews. Or were we the right ones? In good and bad faith, we were not even clear what made *us* Jews. Our Catholic comrades found our situation as strange as we found theirs.

Mosse, Williams, Goldberg and Gerth

When I subsequently returned to Madison in the fall of 1961, these matters remained in the background, where they had been all along. Yet,

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there was at least one form in which the issue of the Jew and non-Jew on the Left was addressed. It is connected to the question Peter Hohendahl posed regarding relations between Leftism and America in the thinking of particular American Leftists. And it involves at least part of the problem of what is a leftist heritage — or leftist mythology? In Madison in the early 1960s this issue took shape as a counterpoint between several key faculty personalities. William Appleman Williams stood on one side; George Mosse and Harvey Goldberg on the other. It is important to stress that they were friends and far from intending to represent polar currents. Yet, among their students on the Left there was a certain awareness of cultural differences. These were expressed more in jokes and anecdotes than in analytic discussions — which is not to say that the matter was insignificant. If anything, the reverse is true.

Consider Williams. In appearance, style, quirks and background (born in Iowa, athlete, decorated naval captain and so on), as well as in the patriotic impulse of his socialism, he was robustly American. He always noted his intellectual debts to European social theory — I believe he learned some things from Hans Gerth — but it was hard to miss the home-spun character of his radicalism. In his lectures and writings he consistently sought to uncover forerunners, including thoughtful, independently-minded conservatives, in the American past. This last dimension of his work had substantial if complex influence on some of the associates of *Studies on the Left* (and discloses parallels between his own perspectives and those developed by Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society*).

Now as far as I know, the first generation of Williams's graduate students, among them John McCormack, Walter Lefeber and Lloyd Gardner, all of whom had left Madison before I arrived, was not pre-ponderantly Jewish. And I do not know if the numerical picture shifted in the early 1960s. Yet, by that time, the most visible of his students were for the most part New York Jews, primarily those around *Studies on the Left.* His most dedicated and able publicist among undergraduates, for example, was Fred Ciporen, a veritable archetype of *Yiddishkeit.* My dear friend and for two years my roommate, Fred Ciporen influenced me deeply. He did so in part by introducing both Williams's work and one of its sources, Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia.* As Williams himself had been some years earlier, so now in the early 1960s, Fred Ciporen was enthusiastically in contact with Hans Gerth. Thanks to my friend, I began to see everything under the sun in terms of its socially formed theoretical context.

But he exerted a sharper impact on me and perhaps on others not only through what he said, but because of what he was: *Ostjude* as New Left intellectual. Fred Ciporen did not go back to Brooklyn because his family lived there. Yiddish was his native language. He consumed large amounts of garlic, smoked pipes and cigars, and had a kind of rumpled Jewish academic appearance. To me this was nectar. If you asked me right now what is Jewish, I would say it is the smell of Fred Ciporen in the early 1960s in

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Madison. His Jewishness was spontaneous. It was helping to bring mine out. And his immersion in ideas, even for their own sake, was shaping my sense of becoming an intellectual. In and about the Socialist Club, Fred Ciporen was renowned among other things as the transmitter of the theory that when you're in love, the whole world is Jewish. He himself was perfectly capable of being in love. And among his loves at that time was the most *goyische kopf* around: William A. Williams.

I do not know what Williams himself thought about his notably (if not entirely) Jewish audience in the Madison Left. We, though, Jews and non-Jews, took up the matter now and then. I, of all people, in a flash of super-Jew intuition, once proposed to none less than Freddy Ciporen and several others, the following thesis: their enthusiasm for Williams involved the attempt to submerge their Jewishness in a highly Americanized socialism, even a socialist Americanism. In response, some people considered this a moronic subterfuge. They insisted that what mattered was the critical content of Williams's thought and its applicability to our political present. Others argued that both his historiography and his deeply ethical socialism amounted to a kind of realization of historical Jewish socialism in the American context. I distinctly remember the brevity of our debates.

The Jewish dimension *per se* was not the only one that concerned us. For these issues also revolved around relations between American and *European* socialism and social thought. This is where the two European historians, George Mosse and Harvey Goldberg, enter the picture. Yet, they happened to be Jews. For some of us, Jews and not, they rather than Williams, to whom we also felt attached, were the decisive figures. In my own case, the Jewish element was at first only dimly conscious. The real magnets were what lay behind the doors of European, mainly German, culture that George Mosse opened, and European and world socialist history that Harvey Goldberg opened. My interest in their courses and writings, moreover, entailed a rejection of America. Through them I took off, in the company of friends, into a historical (fantasy?) world of European, partly Jewish, leftist intellectual culture. This choice has marked some of us with a sense of being displaced persons within American radicalism. It is some solace that I know Jews on the Left who do not have the same feeling and non-Jews who do.

It bears repeating: none of this was the aim of the teachers. Take Harvey Goldberg. His brilliant lectures on the Sans Culottes, comparative revolutions and French social history often flowed into chanted messages of redemption. They reminded me of the great performances by cantors and rabbis I had never heard or seen. Yet Harvey Goldberg was the representative figure of socialist internationalism in our midst. He was preoccupied with Jean Jaurès, whose biography he was completing, rather than with Jewish matters.

Nor was George Mosse, to whom I felt closest, actively Jewish. He simply, or not so simply, seemed to embody cosmopolitan German-Jewish

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learning. Neither was he really a Leftist. Critical of Marxism, Communism and the totalitarian potential of social revolutions, George Mosse *could* have been the voice of liberal anti-Leftism in Madison. That was, after all, the path taken by so many Jewish intellectuals, American born and German emigré, since the 1950s. But he avoided it. One reason for this belongs to the Madison situation. Mosse's friendships with Williams and Goldberg, neither of whom was an orthodox Marxist let alone a Stalinist, made many Cold War clichés superfluous. The other reason belongs to George Mosse himself. He has always been hostile to what he has spent most of his career as a historian studying: ideology and ideologues. Yet, he has always had a deep empathy, even a taste, for the utopian impulse. More than that, he has always had a kind of affinity with a certain type of Leftist. In his lectures in 1960 and in his book, *The Culture of Modern Europe,* he referred to this type as the "Marxist of the heart" (a phrase adopted by C. Wright Mills in his *The Marxists*).

When he encountered some echoes of this type among his students in the early 1960s, he responded as a supportively critical friend. His lectures in European cultural history were often addressed to the handful of leftist students among the three hundred or more in attendance. And it was there that some of us were first introduced to the early Marx, Lukács, Gramsci, Sartre, Koestler, Orwell, Malraux, Caudwell and others. Beyond that, George Mosse also placed at the center of his course the whole question of intellectuals in revolutionary movements (Left and Right), their post-Christian quests for absolutes, their peculiar susceptibility to both disillusionment and betrayal of humane values. In doing so, he provided us with a set of historical images and reference points which enabled us to begin reflecting on our own situation. After many a lecture, he retired for further discussion to the terrace of the Memorial Union. There he would challenge our Marxism with his insistence on the role of the irrational and mythical in history. Or he would counter our idealism with reminders of the dimension of power and organization in revolutions. We sometimes debated if he was for us or against us. We knew he was with us. In time, George Mosse's own utopia became clearer. It is the utopia of humanistic skepticism, with its hope for a tolerant world, whatever its economic foundations. In this sense he has been a real Liberal and a real friend of the student Left. Much has happened since that would seem to dwarf the significance of the exchanges with George Mosse in the early and mid-1960s. Yet memory of them remains vivid enough.

Some of my friends would say the same not only of Harvey Goldberg, but of the late Hans Gerth as well. He not only introduced European social thought; he *was* it. Neither a Leftist nor a Jew, Hans Gerth was nevertheless not as well assimilated into American society as Harvey Goldberg, who was born here, or George Mosse, who attended college and graduate school in this country. Gerth remained an outsider, an *Einsamer,* scorned and mistreated by the sociology department, which saw him as an academic

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scofflaw. If the scope of his impact on students was relatively low, its quality was high. His most dedicated students in the 1960s were on the Left.

A sub-theme in George Mosse's lectures was the role of *Männerbünde* in European, particularly German, culture. These were circles of males, generally youngish, gathered in an intellectual and emotionally highly charged atmosphere around an older dominant figure, the *Grossmeister.* The prototype was the group around the poet, Stefan George, the George-*Kreis* (in which the reciprocal love-hate relations between Germans and Jews played a significant role). Often, after our own heated discussions with Mosse, some of joked about the *Männerbünde* aspects of the experiences. Such talk was both on and off target. These were but pale shadows of their Germanic forerunners. But the little gatherings were infused with a cultural and political enthusiasm, heightened by the fact that Mosse himself had raised the idea of the *Männerbund.* He was the central figure, and the get-togethers with him plainly contained repressed homoerotic dimensions. Women were present only in a subsidiary way, if at all. Similar occasions took place, if less often, around Williams, Goldberg and Gerth. Yet, while all of these men could have been gurus, none chose to be. They neither wanted nor needed acolytes. As I mentioned, when we gathered around Mosse, we did so to argue with him, often angrily. He encouraged this.

At that time I had in my mind a kind of upside down *Männerbund.* In it there was not a master and a group of disciples, but one disciple, me, and three masters. Our gatherings took place more often and with more effect than any of us was aware. Some of Mosse's gestures became my own. In private moments I imitated the authoritative tone of his lectures, anglicized Prussian accent and all. I bought a pen and cheap yellow writing paper of the sort Sklar used, and planned to produce, like him, the endless Marxist manuscript pages I now and then had a chance to eye on his desk. My patterns of thinking became Ciporenesque. They began to proceed backward toward the subject of a thought-sentence by way of long strings of dependent clauses and qualifiers. Friends sometimes noted that they could not figure out what I was saying. I considered this proof of the great depth of my reflections. My once rounder Scarsdale diction began to give way to a New York accent.[5]

The Mid-1960s

Equipped with pen and accent I left Madison in 1963 for what turned out

5. On the subject of role models and internalizing them, it is bracing to realize that the University of Wisconsin's sizeable history department included not a single woman faculty member. Other liberal arts departments had not many more. This created special problems for women among the Left student milieu, in fact, for any women seeking an intellectual vocation. The issue was not discussed in the early 1960s, except perhaps among the women themselves. We touched on the Jewish question hesitantly, on the woman question not at all.

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to be two years of graduate work in history at Cornell University. I went there more or less on the coattails of a large grant won by my wife-to-be for study in city planning. The emotional impact of Madison was not and could not have been duplicated in Itaca. But the two years were not dull. Kennedy was assassinated; the Free Speech Movement blossomed in Berkeley; the Civil Rights movement tooks its first turns toward Black Power; Lyndon Johnson ordered the bombing of North Vietnamese harbors, and the anti-war movement emerged in response. Amidst these developments, John Laffey, then a graduate student, now a professor at Sir George Williams in Canada, plied me with stories of life in some of the back alleys of Trotskyism and ex-Trotskyism in America and Europe. Then one day, wandering through the library stacks, I came on an unoccupied carel with some intriguing books on its shelves. I was struggling with German and could recognize mostly authors' names. Among them were Hegel, Goethe, Kleist, Lukács, Bloch, Benjamin, and others related. I soon sought their owner, Sam Weber who, with Shierry Weber, opened my and Wini's eyes to the Frankfurt School.

We left Cornell in 1965 to see parts of Europe and because I was by then desperate to learn German. Our first stop was Frankfurt, where Sam and Shierry Weber had already gone to study with Adorno. They were immersed in an intense little group of budding American critical theorists. Among them was Jeremy Shapiro, the one genuinely prophetic figure I have known, and with whom I would later become close friends. The group was too intense for us, and we moved on, finally stopping in Vienna. Our stay there was then interrupted by word from the U.S. Selective Service that married men without student deferments would be inducted into the armed forces. The question of where and how to go back to school was solved when George Mosse passed through Vienna, met with us, encouraged me to return to Madison, with Wini now able to anticipate work in city planning. He also suggested that I begin investigating Gustav Landauer's career.

We returned in 1966 to a Madison and Madison Left in flux. The big developments I leave aside: the unfolding and radicalization of the student revolt and anti-war movement; the rise of Black Power; the expansion of the counter culture and so on. As to the other matters: Mosse, Goldberg, Williams and Gerth remained. A number of new faculty more or less friendly to the Left had arrived. One of them, the late Georges Haupt, was only a visitor. But this Rumanian Jew, survivor of Auschwitz, ex-Communist and *déraciné* left intellectual par excellence, was for some of us a vital vistor. Most of the old *Studies on the Left* group had departed, although a few remained and were joined by several new members of the "Madison Associates." The Socialist Club was all but defunct. Its place had been taken by an energetic and chaotic S.D.S. chapter.

Paul Buhle and *Radical America* had arrived. So had an expanding bevy of student radicals including Evan Stark, with his ingenious mind and voice, and Bob and Vicki Gabriner, who launched one of the decade's first underground papers, *Connections.* Some old timers and newcomers con-

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stituted the little Marcuse community (Russell Jacoby, Lowell Bergman, Bill Netzer, Liz Ewen, Stuart Ewen, Elton Eisenstadt, Evan Stark, Jeff Herf, and Jessica Benjamin along with thousands of lesser known figures). And I had changed, at least in the sense that now I was part of the Madison Left's upper crust, that is, its graduate student segment. While I was still impressionable, I was more formed, not least by the early 1960s in Madison. Politically less volatile than what was coming by mid-decade, the 1959–63 years are for me nevertheless the most vivid.

But between 1966 and 1968, when I left Madison for good, the Jewish theme continued to percolate in the Left. One part of the story is that what had been a small milieu was becoming a movement. And as the student Left grew and became action-oriented, it also got less exclusively Jewish. There is a nice irony in this. By 1968 the Wisconsin State Legislature initiated measures to restrict the number of out-of-state students able to attend the University of Wisconsin. Official discussions of the proposal included a lot of anti-communist and openly anti-Semitic talk. Clearly, the aim was to cut the supposed flow of New York Jewish revolutionaries into Wisconsin's placid middle-American pool of WASP respectability and good works. But this all coincided with the turn of events (nationally, not only in Madison) in which a generation of middle-American students was opting for disrespect and bad works.

Another part of the story is that, within the Left, the Jewish issue momentarily boiled over in response to the 1967 Six-Day War in the Middle East. Several impassioned teach-ins were held at the campus Hillel, although most of the participants were Jewish students and faculty along with non-Jewish sympathizers with the Israeli cause — not, for the most part, Leftists or Jewish Leftists. Among the latter, there were a few fist fights between pro- and anti-Zionists. Some of my Jewish friends shared in the feeling of pride that, at last, our people had a real army. I myself had no deep feeling for Israel and could not readily warm to its military prowess. Among the participants in the Hillel teach-ins was George Mosse, who since his visit to Israel in 1962, had been drawing closer to Zionism. Characteristically, he never sought to bring me or other of his Jewish students along. Overall, within the Madison Left the reverberations of the Six-Day War were less substantial than one might have expected. We continued to be preoccupied, along with theoretical questions of Marxism, with the Vietnam War and the impending race crisis in America.

But for some of us, Jewish preoccupations, apart from Zionist ones, continued apace amidst the undercurrents. So did the earlier Madison concern with relations between American and European leftist heritages. This was the time, for example, of the lively contacts and debates among Paul Buhle and some of the Marcuseans. And it was a time when my own Marcusean perspectives were being filtered through the early 20th century neo-Romantic German anarchist, Gustav Landauer, in whose writings and career I was joyously immersed. The secular religiosity and emotionalism of

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his thinking appealed to me; it clarified the possibility of warmth and affection in social theory and action. These are present in Frankfurt School thought especially in Marcuse and Benjamin — they are its very basis — but present only negatively, only as the unstated hope of unrelenting critique. For me, Landauer let them out. I wonder now: was I attracted to Landauer along with the Frankfurt School because he was a more Jewish Jew than they? Or because his whole program was a more closely attuned forerunner of the New Left? Or because, while even more Germanic than Frankfurt theory, Landauer's millenarianism and communitarianism nevertheless struck specifically American chords? Or because he was a more feminine thinker? Or, once again, all of the above?

The Jewish dimension in Landauer was unquestionably of special interest to me. I was not about to be troubled by the fact that the Frankfurt School intellectuals had fairly consistently muted their own Jewishness. But as a model in this respect they were no longer sufficient. Landauer offered more. For roughly the first 35 years of his life (he was born in 1870), he had been a minimal Jew. Neither the Dreyfus Affair nor the spread of political anti-Semitism across western and eastern Europe at the turn of the century forced any immediate changes in his views. In fact, in the first years of the 1900s, the anarchist paper he edited reprinted, over the objections of some Jewish readers, articles by Eugen Dühring, the socialist and anti-Semite. Even when, around 1910, he spoke out on behalf of Mendel Beiliss, on trial in Russia for the alleged ritual murder of a Christian child, he did so primarily as a libertarian lover of justice. If anti-Semitism eventually pushed Landauer in new directions as a Jew, there were stronger if closely related sources behind his change of heart. One of these consisted of the lower class *Ostjuden,* who were flowing into Germany in flight from pogroms in the east. In their plight and flagrant Jewishness, as well as in their artisan-craft traditions, they provided Landauer with a new image of the Jew; with a positive alternative to that offered by the assimilated bourgeois Jews.

More important still was Landauer's friendship with Martin Buber, which blossomed in the several years before World War One. About their fascinating exchange of thoughts, it is enough to say here that the influences were reciprocal. Landauer did much — unfortunately not enough — to shape Buber's social thought. Buber was vital in drawing out the Jew in Landauer. Yet, unlike his friend, Landauer kept his distance from a univocally Jewish identity. Along with an identity as a Jew, he insisted, he had German and South German identities, European identity, identity as a member of the human species, anarchist identity, literary identity. In a letter to Buber in December, 1914, Landauer said that his family would not have a Christmas tree that year. But this was not because he had become a more affirmatively conscious Jew, which he had. It was because Europe was at war.

In Landauer's experiences, then, there were two stories with which I closely identified. One was the story of his *becoming* a Jew. The other was

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his refusal to be *only* a Jew. At the time, though, my thoughts were in a bit of a whirl. Thanks to George Mosse, for example, I had the opportunity in 1967 to interview Gershom Scholem. The great scholar of Judaism, who was visiting Madison for a lecture, had met Landauer in 1913. Scholem began by describing the meeting, which had taken place at a colloquy of young Berlin Zionists. On that occasion, Landauer and Buber were discussing no less a question than what is involved when a Jew recognizes another Jew on sight. Several hours in Scholem's captivating presence sent my brain into an orbit of Jewish mysticism, anarcho-Leftism and related forms of esoteric belief. When, shortly afterwards, our daughter was born within hours of Landauer's birth, I was sure messages were being sent by my racial-political ancestors.

At this time, too, I read an unusual book: *Die Juden als Rasse und Kulturvolk* (1921), by a leftist German Jew, Fritz Kahn. His thesis is that, from Moses and Christ through Marx and Landauer, revolutionism flows in Jewish blood. I knew this was a popular theme among anti-Semites. But never before had I found it expressed, and with such enthusiasm, by a Jew. I was persuaded. It was clear, of course, that both in Madison and history roughly ninety-eight per cent of the Jews had long since lost whatever revolutionary corpuscles they might have had, while some non-Jews seemed to have had some pretty revolutionary blood of their own. As a statement of fact, Fritz Kahn's claim may be fantastic. As prescription, it may be something else again. In my own case, it seeped quickly into inner-conviction: activity in the radical movement is the best way to be a Jew. If my blood is Jewish, my people are Leftists.

These latter thoughts were encouraged by another writing I came across soon afterwards: Isaac Deutscher's beautiful, semi-autobiographical essay, "The Non-Jewish Jew." Unlike Kahn, Deutscher does not deal in racial concepts. Nonetheless, in his view, from Spinoza through Heine and Marx to Freud, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg, there is a lineage of critically-minded Jews who had transcended Jewry toward a cosmopolitan and radical intellectual culture. As Jews, they already stood at the crossroads of several cultures. Through the power of their wills and imagination, they managed to lift themselves above the peculiarly up-rooted roots of their original community. As "non-Jewish Jews" they had become free, then, to generate revolutionary insights. In Deutscher's view, the Jew who had transcended Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition. But it is a tradition of speaking and acting on behalf of universal human emancipation.

Since I found this personally so full of meaning, I want to add to it two small thoughts. In his essay, Deutscher was in part interpreting and enriching his own development. From a youth spent in an orthodox community of Polish Jews, he had moved into the Communist and then the Trotskyist opposition movements, finally establishing himself in London exile as an independent neo-Trotskyist intellectual. I do not mean to compare myself to Deutscher except to say that my own development and that of others in my generation followed something of a reverse course. My

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parents had become non-Jewish Jews in Deutscher's sense. I was born one; my youth was spent outside Jewry, assimilated, Americanized. To *become* a non-Jewish Jew in anything resembling Deutscher's sense, I had first to find Jewry. The other thought here is that, if there is such a figure as the non-Jewish Jew, there is also the figure of the Jewish non-Jew. It is not just that this type, too, tries to transcend (while preserving!) the particularity of his or her own origins. It is also that, in getting beyond those origins, the Jewish non-Jew has taken a special interest in the question: What, when all is said and done, is a Jew?

After Madison

Guided by this jumble of thoughts, I went ahead not with Jewish but with leftist matters. Throughout the 1966–68 period, the number of students attending the Mosse, Goldberg and Williams lectures kept increasing. So did the number of those demonstrating against university complicity with the war and job recruiting on campus by the Dow Chemical Corporation. Tear gas first made its appearance, as did dope. It was not easy to leave Madison, but in the winter of 1968 we did. We went to West Berlin, where I began work on a dissertation examining the genesis of Marxist ideas presented in the early 1920s by Georg Lukács and Karl Korsch.[6] West Berlin provided us with some continuity with the movement we had left behind. Sam Weber, our Cornell friend, was there. Through him, we came in contact with the group of American anti-war activists, known as the "Berliner Kampagne." We also began spending as much time as we could with David Bathrick and Fina Bathrick. In the spring of 1968, Rudi Dutschke was shot. Mass demonstrations followed and were further energized by the bigger events in Paris. Herbert Marcuse made his memorable appearance at the *Freie Universität. Kommune I* and *Kommune II* were scandalizing the citizenry. In the several movement bookstores, the shelves were packed with inexpensive pirated editions of Lukács, Korsch, Pannekoek, Horkheimer, Reich, Benjamin and more. For the moment, the city seemed to vibrate with New Leftism.

Near the end of the summer, 1968, we returned to the States in time to join friends and listen to radio reports of the Soviet invasion of Prague. We soon moved to the Boston area and have been there since. I cannot recall any sustained preoccupation on my part with Jewish themes between 1968 and roughly the mid-1970s. Periodic discussions and occasional thoughts, but little more. Along with most of my friends, I was caught up in the reverberations of the Nixon-Kissinger butchery in Indochina and at Jackson State and Kent State as well; the New Left movement's suicide by both cults of violence and Stalinism; and the emergence from the ashes of

6. A couple of years later, I briefly saw Gershom Scholem again and told him I had moved from Landauer to Lukács. He said: Yes, well, philosophically you are advancing; morally you are regressing.

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two new movements — Women's and Gay Liberation.[7] I was also at work on Lukács and Korsch, and in 1969–70 I joined the editorial group of *Telos.* The journal is doubtless familiar to most *New German Critique* readers. Regarding the issues at hand, I would describe it as the work of an Italian Jewish male clique into whose shifting ranks WASPs, women and others have entered, often at their own risk — the journal owes much to their courage. I mean to say only that it has not been a Jewish affair, unless you take the view of some *Telos* associates that all Italians are really Jews and vice versa.

But since sometime in the late 1970s my Jewish interests have returned. Without plan or structure, I find myself reading and thinking more about Jews. One specific reason for this is that since 1975 I have been teaching at Boston College, a Catholic, largely Irish Catholic school. Its generally ethnic ambience, including clear streaks of anti-Semitism (and more than streaks of anti-Black racism), has made me particularly aware of being a Jews. Not beleaguered or threatened, just Jewish. As an example, not until very recently had I read a line of Isaac Bashevis Singer's fiction. One of my very Catholic students gave me a copy of his *Shosha,* saying she thought I would find it most interesting. She was right. I had introduced her to some currents of Catholic Leftism; she introduced me to Singer. In this way, it is a funny place, Boston College. Conceivably, were I at Boston University or Brandeis, with their larger Jewish populations, I might have been inclined to flee a kind of Jewish overload. As it is, I have gotten into my own little Jewish groove.

There are probably other reasons for it as well. In a recent letter, Paul Buhle touched on some. "All of us," he writes, "are thinking a little autobiographically now. Is it our age? The end of the 70s?" Or, one could also ask, is it part of the widespread American preoccupation with "self" and identity? Or the rise of a religious mood on a national scale, a mood which, beneath the commercial hype, is bound up with feelings of doom and horror. Then again, in connection with New Left experience in particular, this would not be the first time in history that the dissolution of a universalistic social movement pushed its disoriented participants toward religious-ethnic consciousness; and toward a kind of isolation in the wake of the collapse of a more public, shared movement life.

If these are among the social sources of my recent concern with things Jewish, what of the content? As far as I can fathom it, the crux is something like this. I have not finally found my long lost Jewish identity. Nor have I any new interest in shared expressions of Jewishness through study groups, participation in religious ritual, Jewish training for our children and so on. But I *have* come to a new phase in the *mess* of my Jewish identity. And this is

7. Clearly these developments, especially Women's and Gay Liberation, have a great deal to do with questions of personal identity within the New Left and beyond it. Just not with questions of specifically Jewish identity. While it was quite different, even the phenomenon of Weatherman involved matters of identity more than political matters in any customary sense.

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connected to other messes as well. That is, I wonder more about what a Jew is because I have to wonder more about what a Leftist is and what an intellectual is. As identities, these have never been what you would call crystal clear, at least not in the modern western world. But the last ten years or so, in flagrant disregard for our feelings, have thrown the terms Jew, leftist, and intellectual into radical doubt.[8] If I could be more certain about what a leftist intellectual is in America in 1980, I personally would know better what sort of Jew I am. The problem is that, thanks to Madison, Marxism and Mosse, I cannot imagine having one of these identities without the other two. And neither separately nor together do they have anything approaching firm foundations.

As to the Jewish part of the picture, the anti-Semites can be counted on to lend it some clarity.[9] Beyond that, obviously there is a range of choices — of degrees and types of Jewish identity. Mine consists first of going into the kitchen, rubbing garlic on a piece of stale dark bread, covering it with chicken fat, eating it slowly and feeling Jewish. Often, this will make me think of Freddy Ciporen, Marty Sklar, George Mosse, my father and others. Then I go on thinking about what is a Jew; what is a Leftist; what are our prospects for hope within despair? Outside, now and then someone asks what I do in the way of imparting to my children the meaning of being Jewish. I have always answered, sometimes hesitantly: Nothing. From now on, should our children themselves ask, I will try to tell them as much of this story as they have the patience to hear. It is about a way of being a Jew in the contemporary world. Like most of the other ways, it is not so new.

Weatherman confronted the New Left with strategic alternatives, but these were in many ways secondary. Most incessantly, Weatherman was asking: as white middle-class young people at this historical stage who are we, really, and for what are we prepared to die?

8. And not only these terms. What, for example, is a heterosexual male when more of us can now find that we carry feminine and homosexual impulses?

9. The anti-Semites are no joke. But I am sorry to say neither are Gush Emunim or some of today's Israeli terrorist groups. How should I put it. . . as they clear out more Palestinians, it does not exactly clear up my Jewish identity. Nor do the anti-communist, racist, anti-Feminist, anti-Gay Jewish currents in this country as well as in Israel. There is much in the Middle East situation I do not understand; nor is this the best place for my naive musings regarding it. But I do wonder which is more tragic, Jewish statelessness or the Jewish state?

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