

ADAM SUTCLIFFE, *Judaism and Enlightenment*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003. xv, 314 pp. £32.75. ISBN 0521820154.

Schizophrenia, ambivalence, ambiguity, instability and fracture. These are only some of the tensions in the philosophical and political significance of Judaism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Authors loved and hated, praised and reviled, identified with and distanced themselves from the Jews and Jewishness, often in the same text and even in the same paragraph. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a more contested cultural phenomenon in any part of history. In any case, this volume belongs in what may be called the genre of 'paradox studies'.

Christian Hebraism began with the scholarly purpose of understanding the language and culture of their own roots. After all, Christians knew their religion grew out of Judaism. An additional purpose was provided by millenarianism, which held that the return of the Saviour would come when the Jews converted *en masse*. This created one set of tensions: too much respect for the Jews might cause one to convert back to Judaism, and too little might insult them and prevent their conversion to Christianity.

New developments in the seventeenth century included an interest in the politics of the ancient Hebrews. The English, the Dutch and the Huguenots especially saw themselves as comparable to the ancient Hebrews in their plucky resistance to oppression. John Selden thought the ancient Hebrews had what amounted to an orthodox Christian commonwealth, and Thomas Hobbes thought they had prefigured his Leviathan. James Harrington made the ancient Jews out as model republicans. This eventually led to the paradox that John Toland could praise Moses as a rational law-giver with no connection to God. Many scholars from La Peyrère to Isaac Newton tried to work out a Biblical chronology that would explain the rest of what they knew from pagan and natural history.

Pierre Bayle stands as the final figure in this early reception of Judaism. Bayle's critique of the moral failings of the ancient Jews is understood by the author as part of Bayle's exposure of the irremediable paradox of faith and reason. Following Elisabeth Labrousse and others, this reading takes Bayle at his word that he defends separate spheres for faith and reason, ultimately placing faith above reason as a committed Calvinist. But Sutcliffe does not respond to Gianluca Mori's powerful case that it is the other way around, that Bayle takes the side of reason against faith (*Bayle philosophe*, Paris, 1999). In this interpretation, Jewish faith is unjustified because it is unreasonable. Sutcliffe also discusses only Bayle's early privileging of conscience, even erring conscience, and does not mention that he later takes it back, concluding that he would rather live under an atheist king who would have one less reason to conscientiously persecute.

As Jonathan Israel's *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2001) has argued, the key figure in the origins of the philosophically and politically radical enlightenment was Spinoza, born a Jew. A rationalist, he defended toleration of freedom of thought and expression but not of public worship, since he thought all organised religions were unphilosophical and intolerant. He was excommunicated as a young man, so any reflections on his place in the radical tradition will be ambiguous. Was he radical because he was a Jew, or was he radical because he fled from Jewishness? In any case, all of the later writers who wrote to attack or defend him had to take a stand on his Jewishness or lack thereof. Sutcliffe does a nice job of running through Spinoza and many of his followers and critics, and bringing out their cross-currents. He makes the point that some of the radicals had no positive programme, but just enjoyed attacking the establishment. Some things never change.

By now a pattern is emerging. Christian cabalists faced a similar problem. They were fascinated by the Kabbalah, but could not decide whether to love it or hate it.

Did it represent divine wisdom or foolishness? John Locke also felt the ambivalence, by now usual toward the Jews. As Sutcliffe describes him, he expressed a 'tangled jumble of attitudes' toward Judaism, fundamentally arrogant and intolerant (p. 220). So much for the English nationalist view of this man.

Another group that drew on Jewish arguments to attack Christians were the Deists. Some, like the Marquis d'Argens, wrote as if the Jews *were* Deists. Sutcliffe suggests that these critics found intellectual pleasure in the paradoxes and inversions they produced. It would be useful to have a theory of such intellectual pleasure. Why do paradoxes create pleasure?

One of the novelties of the eighteenth century was the increasing number of bourgeois, semi-assimilated Jews. They changed the terms of the debates because they were no longer totally 'other', and yet they were not 'the same'.

For Sutcliffe, Voltaire brings together in exemplary fashion the ambivalences of Bayle, the Deists and the radicals. He used attacks on the Jews as a way of attacking his real nemesis, the Christians. So he tried to make them look bad as ancestors of the Christians and make them look good as a contrast to the Christians. An important point is that most of this was rhetoric and the posing of a typical public intellectual; he never really probed beneath the surface in his understanding of the Jews.

Sutcliffe concludes with many useful interpretative suggestions, such as the futility of simply dividing up the good things and the bad things that were said about the Jews. As he points out, they were often said by the same people in the same breath, so there is more here than simple philo-semitism or anti-semitism. This may be a general rule for understanding these phenomena in much of world history.

Based on familiarity with a wide range of primary and secondary materials in Latin, French, German and Dutch, this volume makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing reassessment of the Enlightenment(s) by bringing out the central role played by responses to Judaism.

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ADAM ZACHARY NEWTON, *Facing Black and Jew: Literature as Public Space in Twentieth-Century America*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999. xviii, 218 pp. £10.00. ISBN 0-521-65870-5.

This, the seventh volume in CUP's excellent *Cultural Margins* series, deals with 'juxtaposed literary fiction by African American and Jewish American writers' (p. xii). As the title suggests, Newton is interested in 'literary facings', that is, the possibilities of reading Black and Jewish literature alongside each other. Of course, to some extent such an exercise is bound to be artificial, but Newton is less concerned with conscious leanings or borrowings than with the ways these two literary traditions speak to each other and 'create nuances of entanglement, connection [and] proximity' (p. 15).

*Facing Black and Jew* pursues this theme through a series of four case studies (or couplings). Appropriately, Newton starts with Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Henry Roth's *Call it Sleep*, two major texts that in quite different ways explore the theme of 'mobile identity'. This is followed by careful readings of Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and Saul Bellow's *The Victim*, each of which deals with the effects of intensely personalised prejudice, and David Bradley's *The Chaneyville Incident* and Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock*, which deal with the 'defining presence of cultural tragedy' (p. 82), in the shape of African slavery and the European Shoah, respectively. Again, these 'congruences' may seem contrived or artificial, but in Newton's