Introduction: People of the Body

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"People of the Book" is one of the most popular characterizations of the Jews in the modern period. But like all characterizations, it masks as much as it reveals. It defines the Jews as a textual community, as a people that has remained committed to their Book (the Torah) always seeking new ways of making it speak to the distinctive circumstances of each generation. This image of the Jews, of course, does grasp certain significant features of Jewish experience and history. But it also distorts that history by privileging certain dimensions of Jewish experience at the expense of others. The purpose of this introduction is to unsettle this excessively disembodied image of the Jews in order to make possible alternative ways of thinking about Judaism and describing Jewish experience.

The designation "People of the Book" implicitly specifies the kind of Jew who should be taken seriously, that is, who should serve as a symbol for what it means to be a Jew. It defines Jews as those people who participate in the activity of learning and interpreting Scripture. But, of course, not all Jews have engaged in such activities. Illiterate or non learned Jewish men and Jewish women, who generally were not encouraged or allowed to study, do not qualify as "People of the Book" and hence seemingly fall outside the category "Jews." This image thus stands in an interesting tension with the way in which Jews actually learn to define themselves and others as Jews. With the exception of converts who do in fact become Jews through a process of learning, Jews are products of genealogy. Certain kinds of sexual unions produce Jewish children; others do not. For much of Jewish history, a Jew was defined as anyone born to a Jewish mother. Recently the Reform movement has opted for bilateral descent; a child is Jewish if either parent is Jewish. But even this recent contestation, as radical as it seems to some, has not challenged the basic underlying mechanism that treats genealogy as the definitive criterion: A Jew is a person born a Jew.

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Yet the characterization of Jews as a "People of the Book" defines Jews, not in terms of a genealogy of seed, but in terms of what I have elsewhere called a "genealogy of knowledge."[1] Jews are designated as those people who have been involved in studying and interpreting texts, or to put it another way, who have participated in the reproduction and dissemination of Torah. Intercourse with texts serves as a definitive marker of Jewish identity. There is a danger, then, that the description "People of the Book" will enable the issue of bodily reproduction and sexual intercourse to slide out of sight behind the symbol of the Jew pouring over the text. This elision is particularly ironic in the modern period when proportionately fewer and fewer Jews are knowledgeable about their texts than in the past. If anything has defined Jews in the past three centuries, it has been the commitment to producing children with a Jewish spouse. During the period when Jewishness has become dependent almost entirely on the choice of sexual partners, Jews are preferring to imagine themselves as a textual community. "People of the Book" is thus a romantic image that idealizes a past that it helps to create. And that imagined past in turn helps to sustain a community in which traditional texts are relatively forgotten or ignored. Yet it would be a mistake to understand the ideas of a textual community and a community of seed to be completely antithetical. The two representations of Jews are and may always be deeply entangled in one another. Ideas about how Jews reproduce themselves physically have always provided ways of thinking about how Jews remake themselves culturally. "Disseminating knowledge" and "textual intercourse" are thus much more than playful metaphors. They remind us of the ways in which ideas about knowledge are shaped by ideas about bodies and vice versa.

There is a second and for the present purposes more important distortion encouraged by the image of Jews as a "People of the Book." Since the content of "the Book" is not specified, what Jews study is treated as less significant than the fact that they are committed to books generally. One would never know, for example, that those books, which were of such obsessive interest to Jews, were deeply concerned with the body and bodily processes. Nor would one suspect that these books talk at length and in rich detail about matters such as bodily emissions, skin diseases, circumcision, proper positions for sexual intercourse, how to urinate, how to empty one's bowels, and so forth. This substantive evacuation of the tradition, permitted by the image of "the book," creates an empty space which encourages other associations to be imported, specifically, all the

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modern connotations that normally trail along behind the image of the book.

The book is not a neutral image in the post-Enlightenment period. Like Rodein's "The Thinker," it is evocative of wisdom and the pursuit of knowledge. In this way, the image of the Jew (who is always male) pouring over a book is misleading. He appears to be involved in an elevated, spiritual pursuit. But if we could peer over his shoulder and see what his text says, he may in fact be reading about matters as mundane as which hand to use in cleaning himself or as erotic as what positions to use during sexual intercourse. The pages, in other words, are not blank and a glance at their subject matter puts a different slant on the activity of reading and study. What is going on in "the thinker's" head or perhaps more interestingly in his loins? "People of the Book" is thus a deceptive image. It directs the gaze to the thinker but not to the subject that is tantalizing his imagination. One might reasonably object that to emphasize the "grosser" side of the tradition is also to misrepresent it since the tradition also deals with ethical or spiritual matters. That of course is true. But no one would be surprised to learn that "the thinker" is studying such elevated matters. It is the other sorts of subjects that raise suspicions about this powerful image of the thinker.

The designation "People of the Book" is thus one of the visible expressions of a larger modern strategy that attempts to disembody Jews and Judaism in hopes of spiritualizing them. In another context, I have explored how important strands of modern discourses on Judaism exhibit nervousness and anxiety over issues related to the body.[2] In the modern period, the majority of Jews came to regard various parts of Judaism, particularly those having to do with the body and sexuality, as primitive and embarrassing. These sorts of feelings and judgments partially explain why Jews have been so enthralled with the designation "People of the Book" in the post-Enlightenment period. Since the late eighteenth century when Jews were able to join European intellectual life, there has been an embarrassment over parts of Jewish tradition dealing with the body, despite the importance of such matters in Jewish sources. Texts dealing with bodily emissions, circumcision, rules for defecation and urination, rules about how to perform sexual intercourse, and so forth evoked embarrassment and shame.

These feelings have to be understood against the background of European discussions of primitive religion. From the eighteenth century onward, there was a consistent attempt to differentiate

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primitive and higher forms of religion, a pressing intellectual, moral and political problem given the discovery of and continuing European encounter with the peoples of the Americas, among other peoples. Unfortunately for Jews, the definition of savage or primitive religion developed as a contrast for Enlightenment views of a "Religion of Reason" or "Natural Religion," which has in turn been influenced by Protestant views of ritual and law as well as European aesthetic tastes that emerged after the breakdown of feudal society.[3] According to these criteria, much of Judaism appeared to fall into the category of primitive.

It is against the background of this discussion that the emerging Jewish disgust with certain central dimensions of Judaism must be understood. Jews found themselves in the position of trying to explain why Judaism was not a primitive religion and why it was as reasonable as Christianity, the absolute religion. In order to make that claim, however, Jews had to hide, jettison, or explain away the texts and practices that fell into those categories already defined as primitive. It would be a mistake to understand these Jewish responses as simply an intellectual exercise if we fail to grasp the ways in which Jews internalized new aesthetic tastes that fundamentally changed not just their minds, but their whole persons, including what they experienced as disgusting and what kinds of matters evoked shame and embarrassment. Jews would learn to react viscerally to certain dimensions of Jewish tradition. The desire to spiritualize Judaism, to rid it of lower practices and texts, was an attempt to make Judaism palatable to Christian and rationalist tastes, which Jews had made their own. I have recently traced out the effects of this changed aesthetic on how Jews interpreted their past in my book, *The Savage in Judaism.*

This story is further complicated by the fact that in Christian and subsequently secular European discourse, Jews were often stigmatized by various bodily characterizations, as Sander Gilman and Jay Geller show in this book. In European imagination, Jews smelled; they had long noses and big feet; Jewish men menstruated; Jewish women were sexually alluring, etc. The Jew, along with the woman and black, was regarded as closer to nature, more animal-like, and hence more embodied than the white, Protestant, male European. Geller, for example, shows these kinds of associations operating within the stereotype of long Jewish noses. The extended Jewish snout signified that Jews could smell better and depended more heavily on that sense than Europeans. Since humans had by and large superseded the use of smell in the transition from animal

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to human, and since men had traveled a greater distance in this development than women, the Jewish nose simultaneously feminized the Jew and signified a closer relationship between Jews and animals. But it was not just Jewish noses that were subject to stereotype. The Jewish foot was physically inferior in European imagination, being much more prone to being flatfooted and to various other medical ailments and diseases. Gilman explores how these images of Jewish feet were intimately linked to European discussions about whether Jews could and would participate in the armed forces of developing nations.

Jewish bodies, therefore, were doubly damned. On the one hand, Jews were told that they were inadequately embodied since their bodies had inherent defects which made them inferior to other kinds of peoples. Yet, on the other hand, Jews were accused of being too embodied, too close to nature, too reliant on gross bodily sense. And this overabundance of embodiment was evident in their carnal tradition as well, a tradition with overly concrete modes of thought, embodied in ritual practices, and focusing too much on matters of the flesh. The representation of the Jews as a carnal people had a long history to it, extending back to Patristic ideas of the Jews as a people of the flesh.[4]

Two different strategies emerged for dealing with these contradictory charges. The first, already mentioned, was to flee embodiment through the spiritualization of the tradition and, by extension, Jews themselves. This sort of strategy, with its roots in and nourished by earlier philosophical writings, led Jews to adopt the image of themselves as a "People of the Book" and to suppress those aspects of the tradition that dealt with bodily concerns. Issues of the body were thus relegated to marginalized Jews in the modern period. Orthodox Jews, for example, have been less embarrassed about such topics since they have been more resistant to the aesthetics of secular culture.

The second strategy was to pursue embodiment, exemplified most obviously among some Zionist thinkers such as Max Nordau (1903), but also among other reformers as well.[5] These thinkers agreed with European charges that Jewish bodies were in fact weaker than those of their European counterparts. But in their judgment, this sad state of Jewish bodies was not inherent or irreversible; it was the consequence of contingent historical circumstances that could be corrected. Jewish bodies were weak because Jews had not been permitted to own property and work the soil. Moreover, living in ghettos had produced anemic bodies that paled

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in comparison with peoples who lived on and worked the land. Nor could the emaciated Jewish body be blamed exclusively on external causes, for the undeveloped and frail body of Jewish men was often produced by the experience of studying in a yeshiva (a rabbinical seminary). For Nordau among others, returning to the land of Israel and becoming involved in agriculture would restore the health of Jewish bodies. In looking back on Jewish history and tradition, therefore, these modern reformers believed Jews and Judaism had been far too spiritual. The fact that learning was the highest form of Jewish activity, an activity that was essentially disembodied, contributed to the weakness of the Jewish body. Muscle-bound bodies thus became a symbol of Jewish hopes for this worldly redemption.[6] These themes are very much at the heart of David Biale's essay "Zionism as an Erotic Revolution." Biale explores the various ways in which Zionism was understood as a kind of erotic revolution that was to free Jews, particularly Jewish bodies, from the emaciated impotence of exile. Yet Biale also explores the inner conflicts in this ideology, showing how these ideas, as well as the actual sexual relationships, were beset with tensions that never were and never could be completely resolved.

In one sense, this Jewish view of history which desired to emancipate the body and sexuality obviously differed from that of other Jewish reformers and intellectuals who believed Jews and Judaism had not been spiritual enough. But in another sense, these two groups of reformers were talking past one another. Zionists wanted to subject Jewish bodies to physical labor while other reformers labored to free Judaism of the subject of the body. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to sort out the similarities and differences of various sorts of modernizers on these matters, a topic that is certainly ripe for further study.

The point I wish to make is that the Jewish struggle to find and create a place in the modern world is very much entangled in a larger project of thinking about the status and character of Jewish bodies. It would be a mistake to think that this project has or ever can be terminated. Riv-Ellen Prell's "Why Jewish Princesses Don't Sweat?" and Rebecca Alpert's "Challenging Male/Female Complementarity: Jewish Lesbians and the Jewish Tradition" show just how central the issue of human bodies remains in contemporary constructions of Judaism and Jewish experience. Prell's chapter explores the image of Jewish women in "Jewish American Princess" jokes, a form of humor that portrays Jewish American women as passive, sexless creatures who do not labor or sweat. Resisting the temptation to treat such jokes as simply misogynist or anti-Semitic

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humor, Prell enables us to see how representations of the female Jewish body articulate the Jewish experience of entering the affluent middle class in the post–World War II period.

Rebecca Albert in turn explores the dilemmas facing Jewish lesbians struggling to make a place for themselves in a tradition that assumes a complementarity between men and women. Alpert argues against the widespread assumption that it is their sexual relationships which pose the greatest obstacle to the lesbian's acceptance in Jewish communities. Rather, it is the relationship between women generally that poses a difficulty, for such relationships disenfranchise males and thus disrupt the complementarity between men and women which Judaism both assumes and helps to produce.

As is now evident, this book has both historical and constructive motivations, motivations that are inextricably tied to one another. As a constructive project, this book attempts to describe, renew, and participate in this complex and ongoing modern discussion about Jewish bodies and the place of bodies in Judaism. At the most general level, it seeks to unsettle the longstanding and excessively spiritual image of the Jews as a "People of the Book" and to explore in its place an image of the Jews as a "People of the Body." In this sense, it is a reminder that Jews do not simply read and write books. Like other people, they have bodies. And because they have bodies, they worry about what those bodies mean and how they should be handled. By shifting attention from the image of the Jews as a textual community to the ways Jews understand and manage their bodies—for example, to their concerns with reproduction and sexuality, marriage and death—we hope to contribute to the emergence of a different picture of what Jews and Judaism are and have been.

At the same time, this rethinking of Jewish experience and tradition also represents an attempt to bring the study of Jews and Judaism into contact with the questions of the age. There has been a recent explosion of interest in human bodies stemming from a convergence of critical developments since the sixties, including the emergence of gender as a fundamental concern, the philosophical challenges to Cartesian dualism of mind and body, the corresponding challenge to the theory/practice distinction, the emphasis on the "person" and "self" in poststructuralist anthropology, and the rediscovery of Freud. Central to this theorizing has been the work of numerous feminist writers who have explored the way in which female bodies are culturally represented and how those representations contribute to the control of women's bodies and lives. The body, particularly the reproductive female body, has been central to the

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early feminist writings, such as Millet (1969); Rich (1976), to more recent theorists such as Bynum (1987) and Martin (1987) as well as to French feminists such as Kristeva, Irigaray, Wittig and Cixous, who desire to find a language in which to express feminine desires.[7] The work of Foucault has also been important in exploring how the rational disciplines of modernity developed by exercising increasing control over the body through diffuse power systems that were concretized in micro-practices which regulated human subjects.[8] In the wake of Foucault's work, the human body has become a central issue in social theory.[9]

These theoretical issues, coupled with a variety of social developments, including the women's and gay rights movements, advances in reproductive technology, the development of a holistic health movement, the recognition of eating disorders, and the development of AIDs have made human bodies a site where a variety of social and disciplinary concerns meet.

The constructive project of re-membering the Jewish body is necessarily linked to a historical project of memory. The images that Jews have of themselves and the stories they tell about who they are and whom they wish to be presuppose and produce a memory of who they were and what Judaism had been once upon a time. History at its best, therefore, is a constructive enterprise that simultaneously describes the past even as it critiques and challenges the present.

At issue in this historical revisioning described here is the way in which the Jews in different times and places have situated their bodies as well as the bodies of others in the larger project of making sense of what it means to be and to live as Jews. My own work, *The Savage in Judaism,* was in part an attempt to begin thinking of Jews as a people whose religious culture pondered the dilemmas of embodiment. This book carries that project forward. Judaism, as construed here, is an unfolding religious culture that provides various answers to the questions What does it mean to have and to be a body? and How should bodies be handled? These questions, in turn, engender a host of others: What are bodies for? How should bodily processes (such as defecation and urination) and bodily experiences (such as hunger and sexual need) be treated? In what ways is the body incorporated as a metaphor into the larger religious cosmology and in what ways does the later "organ-ize" the body? What sorts of factors (e.g., historical, social, cultural, symbolic) shape the treatment of the body in given formations of Judaism? These questions cannot be answered without also attending to

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the ways in which differences in bodies are constructed and construed (such as the differences between male and female bodies, old and young bodies, hermaphrodites and bodies that have traits of both sexes, Jewish and gentile bodies) and the ways in which the body may figure in the making of differences (such as that between humans and God, humans and animals, Jews and gentiles, etc.). As these questions suggest, the description of Jews as a "People of the Body" carries within it its own distortion since "the body" is itself a reification which hides the fact that there is no single body but many different kinds of Jewish bodies.

It is within this matrix of questions that the following chapters all find their place. These chapters do not begin to exhaust the subject of Jewish bodies. But they are intended as a stimulating and provocative conversation starter, a conversation, that already includes interlocutors whose voices could not be present in this book, a conversation which we hope will continue to expand and pique the interest of others.[10]

The chapters that follow are all interested in some respect in why Jewish bodies are represented as they are. The chapters are loosely organized in historical sequence, beginning with Israelite religion and the Hebrew Bible and ending with issues relevant to American Jews. But a great deal would be lost if these chapters were read simply as an unfolding sequence of unrelated windows into the history of Jews and Judaism. For there are also multiple intersecting issues that create subconversations, circulating like eddies around the edges of a larger stream. In some cases, therefore, I have departed from a historical sequence so as to put into the foreground certain issues that emerge in the juxtaposition of these chapters. By far the largest recurring theoretical issue, which cuts across almost all of these chapters, is the place of human bodies in the making and sustaining of difference or otherness. There are two specific forms of difference that draw attention: differences between various groupings of people (men and women, Jews and non Jews, heterosexuals and gays, dead and living people) and differences between humans and God. As previously mentioned, Geller and Gilman deal with European stereotypes of Jewish bodies. Prell's essay on JAPS takes a somewhat different tact, looking at how an internal differentiation within the Jewish community (men's views of women's bodies) becomes the vehicle for expressing changing Jewish (male?) experiences in the larger culture. Rahel Wasserfall explores the ways in which ideas and practices concerning menstruation figure in Moroccan, Jewish women's understandings of what makes

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them distinctively Jewish in contrast to their Muslim neighbors. Daniel Boyarin's chapter explores the representations of the grotesque rabbinic body. Focusing on stories about sages with huge bodies, Boyarin explores the ways in which ideas about cultural and physical reproduction intersect and conflict in the tales of these big men.

Boyarin's discussion of these grotesque bodies dovetails in interesting ways with a second major issue in the subject of bodies and difference: namely, the relationship between human bodies and divinity. In the modern period, as a legacy of medieval Jewish philosophy and under the spiritualizing tendencies in modern Jewish discourse, Jews have generally come to regard their deity as disembodied. Finkelstein is typical in arguing that "man differs from all other creatures in that he is made 'in the image of God.' Because Judaism denies that God has any physical form, the image of God in this passage refers to man's mind, unduplicated self, individuality."[11] But in fact, there is a representative number of texts that do imagine God as having or at least taking a humanlike form, as has been pointed out by numerous interpreters.[12] Three chapters in this book ponder the scope and meaning of this idea for human embodiment.

In my chapter, I discuss the biblical idea that humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–28). Interpreters debate the meaning of this claim. Some assume that it refers to various qualitative similarities between God and humans. Others argue that it assumes the human form is made in the divine image. By contrast, I argue that the whole debate about whether God has a humanlike form actually masks a deeper and more problematic issue, namely, the problem of talking about the sex of God. I suggest that the dilemma of representing the sex of God generates a series of cultural conflicts that is partly responsible for turning the human body into a problem which needs to be reckoned with.

Both Elliot Wolfson and Naomi Janowitz take up this issue of God's body. Wolfson explores the theological and symbolic associations of the image of God's feet. Tracing the image from its biblical and rabbinic roots, Wolfson shows how the mystical tradition of imagining the deity's feet is both in continuity with the earlier tradition but develops it in unpredictable ways.

Naomi Janowitz takes up a discussion of God's body as represented in the *Shi'ur Komah,* a medieval mystical text that describes the dimensions of the deity's limbs. Taking a very different tact, Janowitz argues that the question of whether God has a body is beside the point. In her judgment, *any* form of theophany posed a

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problem in late antique Judaism. The idea of God's body was no more or less problematic in her judgment than the notion of hearing God speak. In her view, the modern debate about whether God has a human form or not improperly introduces our concerns into our reading of the past.

Larry Fine's chapter begins with the ways in which bodily metaphors are co-opted in mystical descriptions of God. The "Sefirot" or emanations of God are both described in metaphors drawn from human bodies and bodily experiences. Fine then goes on to explore the ways in which this metaphorical organ-izing of divinity is contradictory since what is imagined as going on in the body of God is not always acceptable at the level of human experience. Sex in the divine realm is less fraught with ambivalence than in the human realm.

From this major theme of body and difference emerge a number of other recurring subjects, especially the reproductive and sexual body. Sexual intercourse, marriage, reproduction, menstruation repeatedly figure in these chapters. The chapters by myself, Anderson, Boyarin, Biale, Prell, and Alpert explore the ways in which marriage and sexuality are imagined and the ways in which images of those cultural activities become symbolic of other cultural values and experiences. The chapters by Anderson, Biale, Prell, and myself intersect in particularly interesting ways around the issue of sexuality. I argue that sexuality is rendered particularly problematic by the claim that humans are made in the image of a monotheistic God. Since God cannot have anything but a metaphorical sexual experience, sexuality at the divine level is necessary disembodied. Anderson's chapter, by contrast, suggests a much more positive attitude toward sexuality, as is evident in Jewish interpretations of the Garden of Eden story. Whereas Christian interpreters generally regarded sexual intercourse as a result of the Fall, Anderson shows how Jewish interpretations regard consummation as having taken place in the garden of Eden before Adam and Eve's sin. Biale and Prell both show how the issue of marriage and sexuality is simultaneously central and problematic in Jews' representations of themselves in the modern period.

As noted above, the body is in many ways a problematic abstraction. In fact, different kinds of bodies are often recognized within cultural systems, and they are symbolized in diverse ways. It is thus important to remember that male and female bodies are often represented quite differently. For this reason, several of the chapters in this book deal with the representation of women's bodies and women's experience. Whereas many of these chapters

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explore such images from the hegemonic perspective of masculine culture, the chapters by Weissler and Wasserfall explore the meanings of women's bodies for women. Weissler's chapter in particular considers the extent to which women's own self-representations resist the hegemony of elitist male culture. It thus provides a very interesting contrast to Boyarin's, which focuses primarily on the male rabbinic body. Wasserfall, for her part, is more concerned with how one group of women (Jewish Moroccan) understand their own bodily practices as differentiating them from other women (non-Jewish Moroccan women).

A sensitive and playful reader of this book will also notice how the Jewish speculation about God's feet, analyzed in Wolfson's chapter, sets the stage for Gilman's discussion of the way in which Jewish feet are symbolized in European imagination. These chapters, as well as Geller's on the nose, Weissler's and Wasserfall's on menstruation, Prell's on sweating JAPS, show that the human body is in many ways a misleading abstraction. All cultures contain a multiplicity of assumptions and practices with regard to specific organs, parts, or processes of the body. These pockets of assumptions and practices may or may not be coordinated with one another into larger complexes of coherent meanings or practices. The notion of the body is thus an abstraction that, if reached at all, is constantly in dialectical tension with lower-order concepts and practices that potentially threaten the hegemony of the abstraction. The current fascination with "the body" is in danger of reifying an entity that is in reality constructed piecemeal, organ by organ. There is often no coherent theory of the body, but a multiplicity of competing assumptions about different body organs, parts, and processes and a variety of practices that more or less successfully incorporate these assumptions.

This fragmentation of the body thus leads away from a discussion of the body as such toward a cultural history of specific organs, parts, and processes. Various organs of the body are often endowed with specific cultural messages. The handling of these various organs is thus an engagement of these larger values. When people relate to discrete organs of their bodies, they are not just relating to themselves but to symbols of their culture. The symbolic investment of body organs is the outcome of complex cultural, social, and historical processes.

Methodologically, these chapters are quite diverse. While all of them are innovative in making Jewish bodies and desires a focus of inquiry, there are also methodological innovations as well. My chapter, Boyarin's, Prell's, and Geller's are most representative of the

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new impulses in cultural studies. These chapters grapple quite explicitly with the nature of symbols and images and are most directly engaged with interlocutors outside the context of Jewish studies. Each, in its own way, takes as its problem to understand how representations of Jewish bodies come about, how and why they are sustained, and what kinds of effects they may have. Each is attentive to the multiplicity of interlocking and sometimes contradictory meanings represented in a symbol. In a sense, each of these chapters attempts to think through what a symbol is and how it works.

Several chapters are important for moving the discussion of the body away from what are traditionally defined as classic sources of Judaism. Weissler, as noted above, turns to prayers of women as a way of looking behind the veil of the elitist masculine culture. In an analogous vein, Yasif argues that the folk traditions of medieval Jews are an important source for understanding how Jews other than the elite came to terms with their bodies. Images of the body in these sources are much more graphic and explicit than in elite sources, which tended to repress certain kinds of imaginative speculation about the body. Yasif asks interpreters of Judaism to consider what unusual tales about the body say about the experience of Jews. Prell, for her part, turns to popular culture as a critical index of how Jewish images of female bodies point to larger cultural dilemmas. Finally, Wasserfall's chapter points to a bias that this book has not overcome. The majority of chapters in this book remain text-focused. That is, the subject of the body is developed through an analysis of texts. Wasserfall's chapter, by contrast, is based on an ethnography, an embodied practice of interpretation. This book, therefore, fails to unsettle the image of the "People of the Book" in one important respect. While it challenges the spiritualizing tendencies that eclipse matters of the body within the tradition, it does not challenge the centrality of texts in representing Jewish history or experience, a challenge, which has been made by others and needs to be repeated.

Indeed, this criticism points to one of the contradictions inherent in the academic practice of writing about the body. As I sit here at my computer, aware of the strain on my back and eyes, I know that a remembering of the body can only begin in the academy but it cannot culminate there. It is not just our minds that we must change: it is our practices as well.

Notes

1. See Eilberg-Schwartz 1990, 217–240.

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2. Eilberg-Schwartz 1990, 31–86. See also Eisen's (1987, 283–316) discussion of the idea of Spirit in the strategies of modern Jewish faith.

3. See Elias 1982, 1983.

4. See Daniel Boyarin's forthcoming book *Carnal Israel: Sex and Gender in Late Antique Judaism* (University of California Press) which argues that Judaism, at least in certain of its varieties, did resist the sharp polarities of Hellenistic thought and hence dwelled in the ambiguities and contradictions of the body.

5. I would like to thank Steven Zipperstein for his help in understanding the way this impulse was part of broader stream of reform than I originally thought.

6. See the informative discussion of Luz (1987, 371–401) on the tension between spirituality and earthliness in Zionism. Breines (1990) discusses similar impulses in other contexts.

7. For a review of these French thinker's work, see Jones 1981 and now Butler 1990.

8. See especially Foucault 1979, 1980.

9. See, for example, B. Turner 1984.

10. In seeking contributors for this book, I found that many more people were working on the subject than I had originally known about, including Michael Wyschograd, Shaye Cohen, Marsha Falk, Susan Sered, Ivan Marcus, Alon Goshein Gottstein, among others. In addition, several of the contributors to the present book are working on larger projects of related interest, including myself, David Biale, Daniel Boyarin, Sander Gilman, Riv-Ellen Prell, Rahel Wasserfall, and Chava Weissler. The idea for this book originally grew out of my own earlier work on related matters (Eilberg-Schwartz 1990).

11. Finkelstein 1949, 1338.

12. For references to this literature see my chapter in this book.

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