

The Un-Americans

Joseph Litvak

**JEWES, THE BLACKLIST,
AND STOOLPIGEON
CULTURE**



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CULTURE

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TO LEE



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Sycoanalysis

An Introduction

A sycophant will always say to himself that in biting what has some value he might thereby make a little profit.

—ALAIN BADIOU, “The Word ‘Jew’ and the Sycophant”

Lillian Hellman recounts the following exchange with her lawyer just before what would become her famous “uncooperative” testimony—her refusal to name names—in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1952:

“Don’t make jokes.”

“Make jokes? Why would I make jokes?”

“Almost everybody, when they feel insulted by the Committee, makes a joke or acts smart-aleck. It’s a kind of embarrassment. Don’t do it.”¹

Hellman took her lawyer’s advice and maintained an impeccably dignified, resolutely *noncomic* bearing throughout her appearance, the fame of which derives from her courageous refusal to “cut [her] conscience to fit this year’s fashions.”² For all the deserved fame of her testimony, however, Hellman’s repudiation of mere show in favor of “the good American tradition” made her a fairly typical uncooperative witness.³ Accusing HUAC and its many informers—the “cooperative” or “friendly” witnesses—of a contemptible *trendiness*, Hellman pointed to a larger irony, whereby the congressional investigation of alleged Communist influence in show business itself became an exercise in show business: a

media spectacle—one of the first of the postwar period—acted out before newsreel cameras and then, a little later, with the triumph of a new technology, under television’s menacing (if distracted) gaze.⁴ The converse irony is that Hellman, like so many other left-wing figures from Hollywood and Broadway, emphatically identified herself with the very Law that was investigating and ultimately persecuting her. To put oneself on the side of this Law, to align oneself with a certain *righteous left*, moreover, one did not need to avoid the comic as rigorously as did Hellman. Even those uncooperative witnesses who “ma[d]e jokes” and “act[ed] smart-aleck” did so, as Hellman’s lawyer explained, because they felt “insulted” or “embarrassed,” their “embarrassment” and their wounded pride testifying to a seriousness, at least about themselves and their reputations, that in turn bespoke an underlying respect for the norms of self-presentation in the postwar American public sphere.

Not that HUAC was appeased by these displays of respect. The committee itself, I propose in this book, was so enraged by jokes and other manifestations of the comic that it was prepared to end the career of anyone who used them, or who might have used them, to “act smart-aleck,” even if that behavior, originating in embarrassment, revealed a fundamentally law-abiding disposition. In its investigative, and punitive, zeal, HUAC deployed a hermeneutic of suspicion too implacable to be taken in by mere assertions of patriotic probity, or by the kind of joking that pays tribute to seriousness by dreading the loss of its own face. Behind both straight seriousness and comic seriousness, HUAC detected the clear and present danger of forces whose radicalness consisted in their lying beneath and beyond the saving disciplinary reach of insult and embarrassment, and that, since they could not be rehabilitated, had to be destroyed. It was just such destruction, in fact, that the practice of blacklisting attempted, and in large part achieved. Imposed by the committee on the film and television industries, which proved all too eager to enforce it, the blacklist, in effect from 1947 to the mid-1960s or later, constituted a purge of all those who would neither discuss their politics with HUAC nor “give” it the names of their fellow Communists (names that it already had).⁵ As the following chapters will show, however, the committee’s official project, the investigation of Communism, served mainly as a screen for its even more obsessive and therefore much less allowable business: going after those smart alecks who, without even having had

to appear before it, embarrassed it by their very being—by embodying not just the comic, but the whole scandalous, indeed criminal, conspiracy of smartness, acting, pleasure, happiness, imitation, mobility, and play, centered in yet reaching well beyond Hollywood and New York, that I will be delineating here under the rubric of *comicosmopolitanism*.

HUAC was not about to be put off the scent of this conspiracy by the uncooperative witnesses' frequent professions of patriotism, religiosity, and other forms of good citizenship. If comicosmopolitanism is more often a matter of unintended meanings and of performative implications than of explicit political and ethical belief, this covertness corresponds exactly to the committee's relentless suspicion that jokes were being made at the nation's expense even when, as in the case of Lillian Hellman's testimony, or of her work as a playwright and screenwriter, nothing funny seemed to be going on. As far as HUAC was concerned, in other words, making jokes was not merely a tactical gaffe that uncooperative witnesses might have avoided if they had just not let themselves get so flustered, or if only they had had a lawyer as astute as Lillian Hellman's. Rather, their making of jokes, or, more precisely, their quasigenetic propensity to make them, whether or not they ever did, was the reason the uncooperative were subpoenaed by HUAC in the first place. Once in front of the committee, they had to be made examples of, in the pedagogical sense, since they already exemplified the operations of an obscure and sinister international network of comedians, next to which "Communism" itself might aptly be said to function as a Red herring, its legendary drabness and humorlessness conveniently drawing attention away from the more driving preoccupations of those who made such a spectacle of investigating it.⁶

Even before the uncooperative witnesses arrived in front of the committee, *in order to* arrive in front of it, that is, they had to have been perceived as insulting *it*, essentially and fundamentally, by representing the "un-American activity" of an intolerable enjoyment: an enjoyment that—insofar as it seems to bear the distinctive mark of the Jews, who have long been thought to have a particular gift both for the comic and for cosmopolitanism, and who have almost as long been resented for "controlling" American mass culture—might as well be called en-Jewment.⁷ HUAC's acting chairman, Congressman John Rankin of Mississippi, was less circumspect in his Jew-hatred than some of his colleagues on the committee (which included the by no means philo-Semitic Richard Nixon). In a

statement that has become a set-piece of blacklist historiography, Rankin revealed the “real names” of various Hollywood figures—not Communists, but merely liberals—who had signed a petition criticizing the committee’s encroachment on the First Amendment:

One of the names is June Havoc. We found out from the motion-picture almanac that her real name is June Hovick.

Another one was Danny Kaye, and we found out that his real name was David Daniel Kaminsky.

Another one here is John Beal, whose real name is J. Alexander Bliedung.

Another one is Cy Bartlett, whose real name is Sacha Baraniev.

Another one is Eddie Cantor, whose real name is Edward Iskowitz.

There is one who calls himself Edward Robinson. His real name is Emmanuel Goldenberg.

There is another one here who calls himself Melvyn Douglas, whose real name is Melvyn Hesselberg.⁸

When uncooperative witnesses make jokes or act smart-aleck in the course of their almost always bullying and unnerving interrogation by HUAC, these local transgressions merely confirm what the committee and other enforcers of Americanism suspect, and prosecute, as a prior degeneracy: a “subversive” tendency much broader and deeper than any particular political ideology, as Rankin’s attack on the Hollywood liberals shows; a “subversive” tendency, indeed, of an ontological or even racial kind.⁹

Madeline Gilford, the wife of a blacklisted actor and a blacklistee herself, relates how, posing as an NBC secretary, she called a Syracuse grocer, then terrorizing NBC by threatening to boycott products advertised on shows with blacklisted personnel:

“We’re not gonna carry those products [Kellogg’s cereals and Pet Milk], if you’re gonna have those people on your shows. You people down there in New York may think it’s all right, but it isn’t all right with us up here in the country. I told him [the network executive] you can’t have those people on like George Kaufman and Sam Levinson,” and he proceeded to name only Jews, so “you people down in New York” was another euphemism.¹⁰

Kaufman and Levinson were hardly Communists, but they did not need to be: it was enough that they were comic denizens (one as an author,

the other as a performer) of the New York–Jewish world of show business. If the defenders of “the country” were insulting, this is because they felt insulted by the very presence, “down there in New York,” and in all sorts of less obvious cultural and academic nooks and crannies, of what they apprehended as virtually a *race of jokers*, far larger than the considerable parade of witnesses whom, in an exercise of synecdochic justice, HUAC summoned before itself.

For its part, the committee itself was as synecdochic as the justice it meted out, so fashionable, as Hellman perceived, was the antic cosmopolitanism it represented. Here, for instance, is Congressman George Dondero of Michigan, not a member of HUAC but what we might call a fellow non-traveler:

The art of the isms, the weapon of the Russian Revolution, is the art which has been transplanted to America, and today, having infiltrated and saturated many of our art centers, threatens to overawe, override and overpower the fine art of our tradition and inheritance. So-called modern or contemporary art in our own beloved country contains all the isms of depravity, decadence, and destruction. . . .

All these isms are of foreign origin, and truly should have no place in American art. . . . All are instruments and weapons of destruction.¹¹

Like the Syracuse grocer, Congressmen Dondero and Rankin, less wary than most of their colleagues, come close to articulating the inarticulable fantasy behind the anti-Communist fashion show of which HUAC, before and after Joseph McCarthy, was the nation’s principal impresario: a fantasy of revenge against those who had inflicted on it, and on the nation as a whole, the massively insulting joke—depraved, decadent, destructive—of comicosmopolitanism and en-Jewment themselves.

To be a cooperative witness, as I have noted, one had to do more than just renounce Communism: one had to recite for HUAC the names of one’s associates in the Party, thereby becoming what I will be calling a *sycophant*—literally and archaically, one who shows the fig, or, by extension, one who points the finger at fig-thieves, or, by further extension, an informer.¹² In keeping with the more familiar understanding of the term, the sycophant, the object of *sycanalysis*—the discipline introduced and unfolded throughout these pages—certainly flatters the committee, mitigating the insult that the uncooperative and their fellow-traveling,

indeed all-too-nomadic, kind have already inherently inflicted upon it. An uncooperative witness, of course, is one who refuses to inform. But behind this refusal lies the image of another refusal, even more outrageous in the minds of those who would avenge it: a refusal of that American *seriousness* that HUAC sees itself as both protecting and, since its members, after all, belong to the House of Representatives, representing. I have suggested that anyone capable of feeling insulted and embarrassed, as many uncooperative witnesses undoubtedly were, cannot have relinquished all claims to seriousness, at least in relation to him- or herself. But despite their often explicit endorsement of this value, and despite their not infrequent recourse to the language of dignity, pride, and strength, the most uncooperative of the uncooperative witnesses—the least righteous of the left—incur the wrath of the committee by rejecting its very rhetoric of national self-presentation: by enacting a comedy grounded not in the anxious imperative to cover or to recover from embarrassment, but, on the contrary, in an indifference to embarrassment and therefore to the norms of citizenship that it presupposes.

Consider, for instance, this excerpt from the HUAC hearing of the actor Lionel Stander in 1953:

MR. VELDE [THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN]: Let me tell you this: You are a witness before this Committee—

MR. STANDER: Well, if you are interested—

MR. VELDE:—a Committee of the Congress of the United States—

MR. STANDER:—I am willing to tell you—

MR. VELDE:—and you are in the same position as any other witness before this Committee—

MR. STANDER:—I am willing to tell you about these activities—

MR. VELDE:—regardless of your standing in the motion-picture world—

MR. STANDER:—which I think are subversive.

MR. VELDE:—or for any other reason. No witness can come before the Committee and insult the Committee—

MR. STANDER: Is this an insult to the Committee?

MR. VELDE:—and continue to—

MR. STANDER:—when I inform the Committee I know of subversive activities which are contrary to the Constitution?

MR. VELDE: Now, Mr. Stander, unless you begin to answer these questions and act like a witness in a reasonable, dignified manner, under the rules of the Committee, I will be forced to have you removed from this room.

MR. STANDER: I am deeply shocked, Mr. Chairman.¹³

The “subversive activities which are contrary to the Constitution” turn out to be those of the committee itself, whose members Stander characterizes as “a group of fanatics who are desperately trying to undermine the Constitution of the United States by depriving artists and others of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (643).¹⁴ Anticipating this punch line, Congressman Velde would avert its “insult” by threatening the witness. But this is an insult that pays a hidden compliment: implicit in Stander’s disapproval of the subversive activities perpetrated by the committee is a regard for the law and the nation, albeit a more benign law and a more democratic nation than those the committee purports to defend. Stander was not the only uncooperative witness to accuse it of the very un-Americanism it claimed to be investigating. “You are the non-patriots, and you are the un-Americans, and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves” (789), Paul Robeson would reproach his interrogators; after laughing during his testimony, and being warned, “This is not a laughing matter,” Robeson replied, “It is a laughing matter to me, and this [hearing] is really complete nonsense” (774). However provocative and even antagonistic, Robeson’s attempt to shame the committee, like Stander’s attempt to charge it with subversion, or like Hellman’s tactic of smearing it with fashionability, still plays by the rules of a national style of seriousness that the committee itself enforces, far more aggressively and vigilantly than any particular ideology, anti-Communist or otherwise. For Robeson to describe the hearing as a “laughing matter” is for him to dismiss it as “complete nonsense”—as though the comic were equivalent to the merely absurd. Similarly, for Stander to invoke the Constitution against the committee is for him to confront one earnestness with another.

The real insult to the committee is Stander’s refusal to “act like a witness in a reasonable, dignified manner.” The insult is indeed one of manner rather than of matter, of form rather than of content. What the committee can’t stand about Stander is his *acting*—not *that* he is acting, but *how* he is acting. Photographed by newsreel and television cameras,

broadcast on radio, conducted in “executive [i.e., closed] sessions” that the committee does not hesitate to publicize, HUAC’s investigations of show business are themselves show trials, with elaborate, if unwritten, rules about what one should “act like” and how one should carry out that performance.¹⁵ On the national stage presided over by the committee, Lionel Stander has the audacity to deviate from the decorum of a theatrical orthodoxy that no Stanislavsky or Strasberg ever maintained more rigorously. For the conventions of testimony are nothing less than the conventions of citizenship: HUAC’s rules of testimonial etiquette rule over the performance of Americanness itself. Leftist and liberal theorists of citizenship value it as the potential basis of a democratic polity, a realm apart from and salutarly larger than the exclusionary circles of the tribe and the community.¹⁶ But even this inclusive democratic space cannot constitute itself without both collective assent to the sovereignty of the national, or transnational, order (citizenship as collaboration) and collective vigilance against “abuses” of the freedom of expression (citizenship as informing).¹⁷ Even in its most benign forms, that is, citizenship entails a perpetual readiness to bear witness in the name of the law, to give evidence about oneself and others. Dispensing with the blandishments of a more *civil* or more *civilized* inflection of citizenship, HUAC has the rude merit of laying bare the irreducible complicities of citizenship tout court, whereby every citizen necessarily has within him- or herself at least a little bit of the collaborator and at least a little bit of the informer.¹⁸

In *I Married a Communist*, Philip Roth’s 1998 novel of the blacklist, one of the characters says of the epidemic of betrayal in the United States during the years between 1946 and 1956:

It was everywhere during those years, the accessible transgression, the *permissible* transgression that any American could commit. Not only does the pleasure of betrayal replace the prohibition, but you transgress without giving up your moral authority. You retain your purity at the same time as you are realizing a satisfaction that verges on the sexual with its ambiguous components of pleasure and weakness, of aggression and shame: the satisfaction of undermining.¹⁹

I would modify this lucid account in two ways. First, I would argue, and do argue below, that, while the betrayal of which Roth’s narrator speaks was indeed “everywhere” during the immediate postwar decade, it has

pervaded American life both before and after that decade as well. Second, I would argue, and do argue below, that the quasisexual transgression of betrayal was and remains not merely permissible but *obligatory*. Enforcing the *rules* of sycophancy, HUAC put on display the *rule* of sycophancy: a regime of transgression-as-moral-authority that has yet to show any signs of waning.

For now, let us note that when Lionel Stander deviates from the rules of American sycophancy, and defies its rule, he does not do so merely by “acting funny”: in that case, he would reaffirm the opposition between seriousness and the comic from which the former derives its power—including the power to distinguish between itself and its opposite. The witness’s offense, rather, consists in acting seriousness in such a way that his audience can no longer know whether to take him seriously or not: “I am deeply shocked, Mr. Chairman”; “Is this an insult to the Committee?”—or, a little later in the hearing, “I have never been more deadly serious in my life” (644). Not only does Stander thus contaminate seriousness with apparent mock-seriousness: he adds injury to insult by drawing Velde, the committee chairman, into a scene that, with its farcically interrupted dialogue, overlapping malentendus, and bad puns (“regardless of your standing in the motion-picture world”), plays like something from a Marx brothers movie—here lies the authentically pernicious Marxism—with Stander in the Groucho role and Velde as Margaret Dumont’s dimly indignant dowager. Casting Velde as his straight man, Stander casts both his straightness and his manhood into question.²⁰ In the context of this travesty, the chair’s exhortation to “act . . . in a reasonable, dignified manner” can only call attention to his own acting, whose effects of reasonableness and dignity, nowhere more histrionically emblazoned than by indignation itself, thereby assume the campy guise of unwitting self-parody.

Velde does not, as it happens, make good on his threat to have Stander “removed from this room.” Instead, after their comical pas de deux together, he pronounces a more exquisitely indefinite sentence: “It is the order of the Chair and this Committee that you be continued under subpoena, and the investigation and hearing be continued in your case until a future date, at which time you will be notified by our counsel” (653). For Stander, who had never joined the Communist Party, “the blacklisting was complete,” and would last another ten years.²¹ He does not help

his cause when, near the end of his testimony, he says, “My name is Stander. It was adopted . . . because, unfortunately, in feudal Spain my ancestors didn’t have the protection of the United States Constitution and were religious refugees” (652). Velde’s reply: “I asked you a question . . . which had nothing to do with religion” (652). The chair is only half-right: the “questions” put to Stander have to do not with his Judaism but with his Jewishness. He has been summoned before HUAC, and will be kept dangling under its subpoena, not because of his religious beliefs but because of the racial difference that they stand in front of, as if to protect a refugee.²² They of course fail to protect that difference: that deviant performance style (as pungent as a strange perfume) that no adopted name or constitutional right can ever fully legitimate. Try as he might to seek dignifying cover in a democratic American tradition, one of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” Stander’s particular way of pursuing happiness—comically, by mocking the putatively reasonable and the dignified—remains radically unassimilable, even to that necessarily capacious tradition, let alone to the far narrower Americanism promoted, with a vengeance, by HUAC.

In making jokes and acting smart-aleck, Stander may betray an embarrassment, an insultability—which is to say, a pride—that in turn bodes well for his susceptibility to the essentially normal, normalizing charms of citizenship: not just to its rights but to its *rectitude*. Only those whose narcissism has been wounded, after all, can know what it means to want to protect it, even if protecting it means taking shelter within the humbling apparatus of the state. “I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country,” Paul Robeson told HUAC. “And they are not” (778). Stander’s stand may be as patriotic, in its joking, smart-aleck way, as Robeson’s shaming laughter. But the very same joking, smart-aleck behavior may also, and simultaneously, betray a shamelessness that thwarts all efforts to bully the joker and smart aleck into conformity with the dominant national style: a shamelessness that Robeson, too, evinces when he says of the cameras documenting his appearance before the committee, “I am used to it and I have been in motion pictures. Do you want me to pose for it good? Do you want me to smile?” (774). While relying heavily on the respectabilizing discourse of rights, Robeson tropes on the figure of the black trickster; while accusing HUAC of subversion, Stander practices it by making jokes and acting

smart-aleck in a way that aligns him with a strand of Jewish culture even harder to domesticate than the one represented by his religious refugee ancestors. Refugees, after all, seek refuge, whether they find it or not; and if they are *religious* refugees, they may hope for the special deference that American culture tends to reserve for religiosity (provided, of course, that it is the right kind of religiosity).²³ Stander may stand instead with those insolently, incorrigibly comic Jews whom Hannah Arendt, after Bernard Lazare, calls “conscious pariahs”:

Modern Jewish history, having started with court Jews and continuing with Jewish millionaires and philanthropists, is apt to forget about this other trend of Jewish tradition—the tradition of Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, Sholom Aleichem, of Bernard Lazare, Franz Kafka, or even Charlie Chaplin. It is the tradition of a minority of Jews who have not wanted to become upstarts, who preferred the status of “conscious pariah.”²⁴

Not that the pariahs, according to Arendt, have an exclusive claim to comic Jewishness. The upstarts, or the parvenus, as she also calls them, have evolved their own repertoire of Jewish—or perhaps more accurately, non-Jewish—jokes:

It is true that most of us [refugees] depend entirely upon social standards; we lose confidence in ourselves if society does not approve us; we are—and always were—ready to pay any price in order to be accepted by society. But it is equally true that the very few among us who have tried to get along without all these tricks and jokes of adjustment and assimilation have paid a much higher price than they could afford: they jeopardized the few chances even outlaws are given in a topsy-turvy world.²⁵

Arendt is writing in 1943. But even in the post–Second World War American scene that is the focus of the present book, the Jewish outlaws, the conscious pariahs, are an embarrassment to society. Indeed, a certain postwar American desire to forget European fascism—as if there had only ever been two antithetical political ideologies, Democracy and Communism—may have helped, if not exactly to reenact it here at home, then at least to replicate its regime of “adjustment and assimilation,” with all its attendant “tricks and jokes.” If, accordingly, most Jews in America in the 1950s were “ready to pay any price in order to be accepted by society,” one of the prices paid was, precisely, sycophancy, by which I

mean the betrayal of the outlaw relatives: a betrayal of the comic as well, not despite the sycophantic parvenu's recourse to the tricks and jokes designed to win society's approval, but because of it.²⁶

Any parvenu by definition practices a kind of pseudocomedy: the techniques of ingratiation obviously have the comic aim of *pleasing*; but eagerness to please entails the triumph of eagerness *over* pleasure, where pleasure is always compelled to pay tribute to the tension, fear, and threat of *displeasure* driving the eager performer. But this book is not about the parvenu per se. It is about the category of parvenus—so large a category as to constitute a condition, by no means limited to Jews—who are best designated as sycophants in the “classic” sense of the term. And the sycophant does more than just purvey an anxiously false comedy, a cringing imitation of comedy. He or she does that, to be sure, but, as I have suggested, sycophancy is not mere flattery of the master: to qualify as a sycophant, one must also inform on the members of one's own group—inform on them for the purpose of destroying them. When Lionel Stander tells HUAC that he has never been more “deadly serious” in his life, his assertion, however sincere, is seriously compromised by the comic performance in which it is embedded. The uncooperative witness turns seriousness into comedy; the cooperative witness turns comedy into seriousness. For “tricks and jokes” that are indeed no laughing matter, so aggressively do they support a seriousness that well deserves to be called deadly, we must look, in other words, to the “friendly” witnesses, who, in informing on their friends, in effect helped the state to assassinate them. “Get ready to become nobody”: thus did screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, one of HUAC's first casualties, formulate the consequence of “unfriendliness.”²⁷ No one who was blacklisted could work openly in Hollywood or in television; to be blacklisted (unless, as a writer, one could work, tenuously, behind a “front”) meant the death of one's career in American film and television, and, in some cases, death itself.²⁸

Watch this deadly serious pseudocomedy, this *anticomedy*, at work in the testimony of (in Ed Sullivan's words) “ballet star and choreographer,”²⁹ and soon-to-be director, Jerome Robbins, one day before the testimony of Stander:

INVESTIGATOR: You were at one time a member of the Communist Party, is that correct?

MR. ROBBINS: Yes.

INVESTIGATOR: For how long were you a member?

MR. ROBBINS: I attended my first meeting in the spring of '44. At one of the earliest meetings, I was asked in what way did dialectical materialism help me to do my ballet *Fancy Free*!

*Laughter.*³⁰

This is the laughter of the comedicial state: a state every bit as humorless as its mortal enemy, the Soviet regime echoed in the question allegedly put to Robbins; a state, moreover, that will not hesitate to rid itself of jokers and smart alecks, since its very existence is endangered by anyone whom it cannot intimidate into assuming the “reasonable, dignified manner,” which is to say, the petrified rigidity, that constitutes “acting like” a citizen.³¹ Acting that part to the hilt, distinguishing himself as a model witness-citizen, Robbins plays out his role in the national drama by proceeding to re-deliver to the committee the names of eight of his former associates in the Communist Party, including that of the actress-comedian Madeline Gilford, also known as Madeline Lee, the Party member who asked him the “ridiculous” and “outrageous” question, as he explicitly characterizes it elsewhere in his testimony, of how dialectical materialism helped him to do *Fancy Free*.³² The anti-laughter that he dutifully elicits from his audience already colludes with him in the murders he will commit, or complete, by naming names: exposing the question’s “ridiculousness,” Robbins reveals as well the deadly seriousness, the vengeful bloodthirstiness, of this collective, this almost *tribal* derision.

At the same time that Hannah Arendt was bitterly marking the dismal fate that parvenus, for all their labors of “adjustment and assimilation,” had nonetheless come to share with pariahs, her fellow German-Jewish refugees, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, had this to say about the genocidal hatred that had driven them all out of Europe:

The anti-Semites gather to celebrate the moment when authority lifts the ban [on pleasure]; that moment alone makes them a collective, constituting the community of kindred spirits. Their ranting is organized laughter. The more dreadful the accusations and threats, the greater the fury, the more withering is the scorn. Rage, mockery, and poisoned imitation are fundamentally the same thing.³³

Organized laughter, of course, is no more laughter than authorized pleasure is pleasure. Not just a Jew but a homosexual Jew—that is, doubly implicated in comicosmopolitanism’s lightness—Jerome Robbins may figure here as the exemplary sycophant, a virtuoso of betrayal: he performs and instigates, on cue, a “*poisoned* imitation” of the comic, a “mockery” of the comic, that is “fundamentally the same thing” as an annihilating, outraged “rage” against the comic.

Not only is Robbins the exemplary sycophant: sycophancy itself, this book argues, is exemplary. The sycophant is not merely a self-hating Jew, whose self-hatred is so advanced that it makes him betray other Jews to the anti-Semitic authorities. To be sure, anti-Semitism, and the systematic recruitment and display of Jewish collaborators, were very much on HUAC’s only half-hidden agenda. HUAC’s anti-Semitism produced its most hysterical symptom in the “ranting” of its one-time chairman, Congressman Rankin; six of the Hollywood Ten, the first uncooperative witnesses—all of whom were imprisoned as well as blacklisted—were Jews; two of the four who were not, as we shall see in chapter 3, landed in front of HUAC in large part because their work on Hollywood’s first anti-Semitic film effectively made them “honorary” Jews; a third non-Jew among the Ten was accused of “writing like a Jew”;³⁴ and Jews made up an overwhelmingly large percentage of the witnesses (both “friendly” and “unfriendly”) who appeared before the committee throughout its investigations of show business in the fifties. Yet the aim of this book is not to belabor the obvious (and well-established) point that HUAC, like many “anti-Communist” entities, was motivated by anti-Semitism.³⁵ Its project, rather, is to show how the “friendly” witness’s murderous complicity in the war on comicosmopolitanism—the real Cold War, the one that has yet to end—illustrates, with pathological clarity, the normal functioning of both citizenship (in the political sphere) and mass entertainment (in the cultural sphere).

And while the book takes HUAC’s mission to be the staging and enforcement of a normative style of American seriousness, its implications are confined neither to “the blacklist era” that supposedly ended around 1960, nor even to the American scene, over which the blacklist exercised its particular reign of terror.³⁶ Indeed, one of this book’s theses is that, at the very moment when HUAC and its partners are seeking to impose a xenophobic national (or nationalist) style, the “Americanism”

thus promoted paradoxically testifies to a foreign entanglement more complex than any Communist conspiracy: the entanglement of a proud, even truculent “Americanism” with the European fascism that the nation had recently helped to defeat. Cold War American anti-Semitism is neither strictly “American,” nor strictly “Cold War,” nor, for that matter, strictly “anti-Semitism”: HUAC did not invent, but, rather, modified and expanded and presided over, a “community of kindred spirits,” a system of sycophantic treachery, of “dreadful . . . accusations and threats,” of “fury” and “withering scorn,” that has roots at least as far back as nineteenth-century Europe, and that persists to this day. The ostensible “breaking” of the blacklist—mythically fixed at the moment when Dalton Trumbo was credited as the screenwriter of *Exodus* and *Spartacus* in 1960—attests, rather, to its success: some (though by no means all) of the blacklisted would be openly employable once again, but only because the blacklist’s war on comicosmopolitanism had implanted itself so deeply in the culture as a whole that the blacklist—never acknowledged, in any case, by the Hollywood that was enforcing it—could appear simply to fade away. (Of his “post”-blacklist career, blacklisted screenwriter and director Abraham Polonsky remarked, in 1976: “Suddenly I realized I was just as blacklisted even when they wanted to hire me as when they didn’t want to hire me.”)³⁷ With greater discretion than in the forties or fifties, but no less “poisonously” for all that, the sycophantic community of “anti-Semites” continues to epitomize the deadly seriousness of American citizenship. It no longer even requires Jews as its objects—these days, in fact, “homosexuals,” “terrorists,” and “immigrants” usually do much better—as it continues, with the same anticomic rage, to shape not only the products of mass entertainment but the most refined and high-minded cultural criticism as well.

Elsewhere in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the book in which the passage about anti-Semitic “laughter” appears, Horkheimer and Adorno, programmatically and ungratefully blurring the line between the Europe from which they have fled and the America in which they have taken refuge, predict the blacklist that is three or four years away. “The culture monopolies,” they write, “have to keep in with the true wielders of power, to ensure that their sphere of mass society, the specific product of which still has too much of cozy liberalism and Jewish intellectualism about it, is not subjected to a series of purges.”³⁸ The blacklist *was*

that series of purges, but it reflected less the failure of the Hollywood studios to “keep in with the true wielders of power” than their attempt to stay ahead of the game: to prove themselves more American than the Americans. All but one of the major studios was run by a Jewish executive; all of those executives endorsed the “Waldorf Statement,” the founding document of the blacklist, whose existence, as I have said, the studios nevertheless made a point of denying.³⁹ Thus did the Jews who “invented Hollywood” think to divest their product of its “cozy liberalism and Jewish intellectualism.”⁴⁰ But what of the cozy liberalism and Jewish intellectualism represented by, say, liberal Jewish intellectuals? I am referring not to the screenwriters who figured prominently in the Hollywood Ten, or in the much larger, second group of blacklistedees, but to writers and critics working outside the “culture monopolies,” in the more distinguished and presumably more disinterested worlds of the academy and high journalism. Lillian Hellman claims that she was not surprised by the sycophantic capitulation of the Hollywood moguls when HUAC came to town: “It would not have been possible in Russia or Poland, but it was possible here to offer the Cossacks a bowl of chicken soup.”⁴¹ Hellman’s disappointment came from another source:

I had no right to think that American intellectuals were people who would fight for anything if doing so would injure them; they have very little history that would lead to that conclusion. Many of them found in the sins of Stalin Communism . . . the excuse to join those who should have been their hereditary enemies. Perhaps that, in part, was the penalty of nineteenth-century immigration. The children of timid immigrants are often remarkable people: energetic, intelligent, hardworking; and often they make it so good that they are determined to keep it at any cost. The native grandees, of course, were glad to have them as companions on the conservative ship: they wrote better English, had read more books, talked louder and with greater fluency.⁴²

Keeping the blacklist to keep in with the true wielders of power, Hollywood sought to dissociate itself from Jewish intellectualism. But Jewish intellectuals were just as busy dissociating themselves from Hollywood, and for similar reasons of self-preservation: each saw that the other was perceived as excessively “cozy,” as vulnerably soft; the intellectuals, because of their negative capability, and Hollywood, because of its frivol-

ity. Hellman's view of "timid immigrants" and their children no doubt evinces the snobbery of the more socially (though not more politically) assimilated American Jew. Yet disapproval of her attitude should not exempt us from considering the extent to which a certain timidity still informs the American intellectual landscape. I have argued elsewhere that contemporary Anglo-American criticism is dominated by the strictness of conscience that Matthew Arnold called Hebraism—and that what this Hebraism excludes is less a "Hellenistic" free play than a "Jewish" levity.⁴³ Even the academy's theoretical interlude of the seventies and eighties, its encounter with a more or less French "playfulness," seems to have left its most enduring legacy by congealing into a corpus of prestigious rationales for the practices of virtue and rigor that would have prevailed in American literary studies anyway. Notwithstanding the appearance (or the advertisement) of an almost total reversal of values since the timid hegemony of the "apolitical" New York intellectuals and the New Critics, today's political, historical, and ethical criticisms rejoin the formalisms, aestheticisms, and moralisms of Hellman's day in their profound "accommodation to the world," to adopt a phrase of Adorno's.⁴⁴ Now as then, literary intellectuals, and not just Jewish ones, ground their authority in a repudiation of the irresponsible pleasure of the comic: of that comic "light-heartedness," to use another Adornian term, still associated with Jewish entertainment at its most embarrassingly *impudent*.⁴⁵

The repudiation is not necessarily a matter of elitist disdain for Hollywood and mass culture in general. For while that disdain indeed constituted something like an article of faith among Cold War literary intellectuals, their postmodern heirs do tend to differ from them in treating nonelite culture at least with a certain tolerance, and often with outright affection and respect. But even the affection and respect typically stop short of that point at which cultural studies begins to assume the features of its unreasonable, undignified object. That point, as we might try to imagine it, indeed as this book tries to illustrate it, is where critical engagement with the object ceases to be merely conceptual or interpretative and takes on the character of stylistic mimesis: where the object's unseriousness crosses over into the commentary on it. Since the mutual disavowal of Jewish Hollywood and the intellectuals, such mimesis has become virtually unthinkable: the very idea of it seems too "ridiculous"

to entertain. For a comparable “ridiculousness,” in fact, one would have to revert to the question Madeline Lee asked Jerome Robbins in the spring of 1944, about how dialectical materialism influenced him in his creation of the ballet *Fancy Free*. To be sure, the question is ridiculous in part because, aping a certain Stalinist ideological policing—“ironically” aped again by HUAC—it exemplifies all too well the left’s famous and often fatal humorlessness. But the question’s ridiculousness also has to do with its awkward mixing of registers, tones, and genres—indeed, of humorlessness with humor, of the heavy with the light. The Congressional “laughter” that greets Robbins’s rehearsal of the question seconds him in his destructive rage not just against the comic, but against the peculiar tendency of the comic, already demonstrated by Lionel Stander, to confuse the serious with the unserious. Just as the power of seriousness depends upon its ability to distinguish between itself and the comic—to know, for example, when it is being mocked and when it is being revered—so must that power remain confident in its regulation of the boundary between the often dangerous gravity of Philosophy (“dialectical materialism”) and the mere gossamer lightness of Art, which a ballet with a title like *Fancy Free* seems destined to figure forth.

Not, of course, that ballet by itself seems much more likely than, say, Marxism to win the admiration of the House Un-American Activities Committee (although one committee member does thank Robbins for his testimony by plugging the Broadway musical he had recently choreographed: “I am going to see *The King and I* tonight, and I will appreciate it much more” [Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, 633]). What is most “ridiculous” about the confusion of dialectical materialism with *Fancy Free*, what most provokes the collective violence of Robbins and HUAC, is that the confusion reveals not how laughably incommensurable intellectuality and levity are, but, on the contrary, how irritatingly similar they are: as similar as smart aleck and joker. Far from colliding with each other, they explain each other, and they do so all too well, as though calling undue attention to the un-Americanism, more precisely, to the comicosmopolitanism, that they share. “Outrageously” juxtaposed with each other in such a way that they seem to egg each other on, the baleful philosophical smart aleksei and the high-flying, light-hearted ballet “insult the Committee” by repeating, in different registers, the same threat to its regime of national style. Dialectical materialism brings out the ele-

ments of system and speculation in the work of art, even in a trifle like the ethereally titled *Fancy Free*; *Fancy Free* calls attention to the buoyant choreography of thought in any theoretical construct, even in the oppressively elephantine dogma that dialectical materialism seems to be. Put together by the “ridiculous” question, like improbable but somehow magically congenial dancing partners, the heavy, earthbound philosophy and the airy, evanescent ballet double and interpret each other as products of *fancy* indeed, where fancy implies imagination, caprice, ornament, and desire—all inimical to the petrifying rule and rules of American performance of which HUAC, by no means alone in this law enforcement, took particularly watchful custody.

Which is why, when the committee’s counsel imitates the Communist interrogation by asking Jerome Robbins to describe the ballet, “so that we may know what the Communist Party had in mind when you were asked that question,” the witness replies:

The purpose of it was to show how an American material and American spirit and American warmth and our dancing, our folk dancing, which is part of jitterbugging, part of jazz, could be used in an art form. The story concerns these three boys in New York for the first time, having a good time, trying to pick up some girls. It’s always been identified everywhere, [*sic*] it’s played as a particularly American piece, indigenous to America, and its theme has great heart and warmth, as far as representing our culture is concerned. (628)

This reply is obviously sycophantic in the familiar sense of the term. Bending over backward to demonstrate his patriotism—one can never say “America” or “American” often enough—Robbins strikes the well-known pose of the servile underling desperate to placate his superiors by telling them what they want to hear: in this case, not just a fulsome pledge of allegiance, but a tribute, all the more gratifying coming from a homosexual Jewish dancer and choreographer, to the red-blooded American male heterosexuality (“trying to pick up some girls”) that often simply is “America.”

In both popular wisdom and expert opinion, as we shall see, this willingness to grovel before the master seems to give sycophancy not only a Jewish inflection (think of the eagerly assimilationist parvenu) but a distinctly homosexual coloring as well: a coloring evoked, in fact, by

expressions like “bending over backward,” not to mention more vulgar and more overtly homophobic ones such as “sucking up,” “kissing ass,” and so forth.⁴⁶ Just as there were non-Jewish, heterosexual unfriendly witnesses, so, to be sure, were there non-Jewish, heterosexual friendly ones: this book’s most illustrious sycophant, Elia Kazan, is in fact neither a Jew nor a homosexual. But since I am discussing Jerome Robbins, and since he is not this chapter’s only Jewish and homosexual paradigm of sycophancy, let me make a claim here that I will develop later: that sycophancy in general is a mode of internalized anti-Semitism as it is a mode of internalized homophobia—that all sycophancy is a turning against a primary and universal “Jewishness,” from which an equally primary and universal “homosexuality” can never be stably differentiated. Far from being essentially Jewish or essentially homosexual, sycophancy is essentially anti-Jewish and essentially anti-homosexual.⁴⁷

In contemporary France, Alain Badiou has argued, the sycophant’s function is to restrict the signification of the word “Jew,” lest it assume, or recover, a revolutionary “vivacity” irreducible to “the tripod of the Shoah, the State of Israel and the Talmudic Tradition.”⁴⁸ This book shows that, in Cold War America as well, the sycophant is the antithesis of the Jew: a semiotic cop, the sycophant works to strip the word “Jew,” as well as particular Jews in American culture, of the radicalness that would otherwise make Jews unlikely candidates for American (or any other) citizenship. If Jews and male homosexuals are nevertheless regarded as specialists in sycophancy, this is because they have been constructed as such, in order to conceal the sycophancy of *all* subjectivity—not least that of the Christian, heterosexual, American man, who can take shape only by subjecting himself to another Christian, heterosexual, American man, or to the idealized version of that figure. The Jewish homosexual sycophant worships the Christian heterosexual master—but so, as we shall see, does the Christian heterosexual sycophant. Only the comicosmopolitan, as we shall also see, realizes the possibility that the Jew shares with the homosexual: the possibility of becoming a *happy pervert*. And this is why, in the period with which we are concerned, sycophants are often—but not exclusively—drawn from the sphere of Jewish and homosexual comicosmopolitanism.

In other words, if Robbins is to stand as an exemplary sycophant, we must note that he goes beyond the sycophancy of fawning, self-abasing

flattery: beyond the celebration of America's straightness, in which the serious, the heterosexual, and normatively Christian coincide. His sycophancy, that is, works in two directions at once, both upward and downward: to appease the "true wielders of power," he must be seen "offering" them the names (and lives) of those jokers and smart alecks whose un-American fancies and fanciness henceforth condemn them to a comicosmopolitan *underworld*, with its suggestions of criminality and death.⁴⁹ Denouncing those below to serve those above, the sycophant emerges as the quintessential middleman. And if he stands, or, rather, creeps, halfway between his masters and his victims, his attitude toward each is in turn split. That the sycophant resents those before whom he abases himself, and to whom he betrays others, is perhaps not news. Nor would it come as a surprise to learn that his love of the powerful, or of power itself, acquires, through its essential submissive identification, a considerable charge of "oedipal" hatred. Yet, his ambivalence toward the betrayed, if less well established in the repertoire of common sense, is in fact closer to the present book's concerns. For the sycophant, I will be showing, depends even more crucially on the comicosmopolitanism that he puts beneath himself—as a ground to stand on—than on the patriotic seriousness to which, with the same gesture, he aspires. The informer resents those he informs *on*, of course, at least as much as he resents those he informs *for*: the informed-on, after all, remind him both of his own inferiority and of the price he was willing to pay to overcome it. But if his desire for power in no way precludes resentment of power, his resentment of the "ridiculous" rationalizes an intense and envious attachment to them or to it. Better expressed, and estranged, as *ressentiment*, this ambivalent formation discloses itself, to cite Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's gloss on the Nietzschean term, not only as a relatively abstract "resentment," but also as "re-sniffing . . . or re-tonguing, re-palpating," the French verb *sentir* meaning "to taste," "to feel," and "to smell."⁵⁰ Here is the transgressive satisfaction verging on the sexual of which Philip Roth's narrator speaks: not a Jewish or a homosexual satisfaction, but an all-American one; a compulsory satisfaction, dressed up not just as moral "purity" but as moral *purification*. Resenting the comic, the sycophant gets to re-sent it: to re-taste it, to re-feel it, to re-smell it; to sniff after it under the pretext of sniffing it out; to repeat it in an act of "poisoned imitation" that is no less an imitation for being poisoned.

If the sycophant flatters those above, his flattery, somewhat surprisingly, achieves its sincerest form in extending to those below.

So there is something attractive, something worth imitating, in comi-cosmopolitanism, even if the attraction is fatal and the imitation poisoned. Understandably, the poison in resentment is enough to make one wary of its embrace—so wary that one might well be inclined to follow today’s academic criticism in keeping the comic at a distance, in circumscribing it as an acceptable topic of analysis but refusing it entry into analytic discourse itself. To be sure, many contemporary critics have made a point of renewing and espousing cosmopolitanism *without the comic*, whether in the name of dialectical materialism or in that of “cozy liberalism” (philosophies less incompatible with each other in the eyes of, say, HUAC or the Hollywood studios than they themselves would allow).⁵¹ And if the new, Hebraic cosmopolitanisms dispense with the comic, they also typically do without the Jews—who, before the Second World War, before the establishment of the state of Israel, *and before the blacklist*, its diasporic complement—figured as the cosmopolitan, as well as the comic, “race” par excellence. “Jews no longer represent the cosmopolitan citizen of the world,” Sharon Marcus has noted, “particularly not in the United States, the country that now serves as the primary reference point for theorists of cosmopolitanism.”⁵² This trend requires little explanation. Why, after all, should an academic culture of high seriousness have trouble assimilating these earnest, forward-looking neo-cosmopolitanisms, when they already work so hard to affirm their ethical and political good intentions? As long as cosmopolitanism refrains from becoming *comic*—as long as smartness doesn’t act smart-aleck—its bona fides goes unquestioned. And yet, keeping the comic out of the cosmopolitan may not be so easy, particularly when the comic inhabits the cosmopolitan from the outset. As Rebecca L. Walkowitz has recently proposed, an element of “unseriousness” inheres, at any rate, in what she calls “critical cosmopolitanism,” with its “ethos of uncertainty, hesitation, and even wit that is sometimes at odds with political action and with the interventionist paradigms of critical theory.”⁵³ Unlike “planetary humanism,” with its heroics of judgment and commitment, critical cosmopolitanism permits, indeed promotes, an “apparent abnegation of agency,” a “willingness to relinquish physical or psychological control.”⁵⁴ At least as witty and as unserious as critical cosmopolitanism,

comicosmopolitanism resembles it in realizing the possibilities afforded by cosmopolitanism's constitutive *irresponsibility*, in the literal sense of the term: its failure to snap into action at the command of the officials in place, a failure caused by its preference for being in many different places without being arrested by any one of them in particular.

The most uncooperative witnesses, I would argue, embody such a comicosmopolitanism, the neologistic conflation underscoring the mutual inherence of the comic and the cosmopolitan, and signaling the self-abnegating, self-relinquishing tendencies that they share. As I have also suggested, however, the uncooperative witnesses stand in for a larger, more diffuse race of jokers and smart alecks, whose range extends from the sphere of mass culture (where one would of course expect to find them) to the high end of the cultural elite: namely, the sphere of academic intellectuals. For all the zeal with which Hollywood and Jewish intellectualism rushed to disown each other at the start of the Cold War, the threat of their persistent, covert complicity hardly failed to cross the suspicious minds of those in charge. Indeed, HUAC by no means restricted its investigations to Hollywood or even to the performing arts in general, although the worlds of show business of course offered it the advantage of maximum publicity: the committee's reach comprised the academy, as well as (even) less exalted levels of education, bureaucracy, and civil service—as though a shameless resistance to the obligatory national seriousness could spread even into the best-disciplined sectors of cultural production and administration. Without ever having been a member of the Communist Party or having worked in show business, one could—and still can—find oneself charged with an intolerable comicosmopolitanism.

The sycophant tries to please those above by abusing those below, but if his superiors are the true wielders of power, his inferiors do not exactly correspond to “the powerless”—at least, not before they are blacklisted. For the comicosmopolitanism that makes them resistant to the intimidation of ridicule is not a mere loss or lack of power. Rather, it is a peculiar kind of power in its own right: the power to become powerless. When, as often happens these days, cosmopolitanism thinks itself uncomic, when it *takes itself seriously*, the resulting accommodation to the world and its power can of course appear to *define* cosmopolitanism rather than to deform it. A citizen of the world, as her name makes

clear, the cosmopolite, or a certain type of cosmopolite, might in fact be said to have worldly accommodation as her very *raison d'être*—even, or especially, when she respects the world enough to want to make it a better place. In view of the current academic prestige of this reasonable, dignified cosmopolite, this “realistic” cosmopolite, the present study attempts to recover a “radical” cosmopolite: one whose radicalism involves less an overt political program—although such programs sometimes accompany comicosmopolitanism—than a return to cosmopolitanism’s comic roots. Comicosmopolitanism—the cosmopolitanism that doesn’t repress or (more moderately) control its comic implications—is a way of moving in and through the world, but without internalizing the world’s terrible rigor.

The ongoing war on comicosmopolitanism seeks to dissolve the links, both etymological and conceptual, between the *citizen* and the *city*. Comicosmopolitanism dissolves citizenship—even worldly citizenship—while expanding our sense of “the city,” while multiplying “cities.” Accommodating cosmopolitanism can accommodate the hardness of all the various national dispensations that provincially take themselves *to be* the world, or that, like Cold War Americanism, no less provincially, but with the provinciality of empire, identify themselves with the world’s very survival. Cosmopolitanism can also be accommodating, however, when it accommodates hardness in the mode of resistance: as an ethico-political imperative to *oppose* nationalism and imperialism, where the combat has the odd, specular effect of turning resistance into collaboration. Next to the hardness engendered by compliance *or* resistance, the unembarrassed softness of comicosmopolitanism, its “homosexual” and “Jewish” effeminacy, its unabashed disintegration of the self, footloose and fancy-free, into the multiple worlds it encounters, could look almost obscenely delectable—in other words, like happiness itself, like the life everyone would want if he or she were permitted to imagine it. And this is precisely why it must instead be made to look repulsive, to seem far worse than “a kind of embarrassment”: as bad, in fact, as *humiliation*, the devastating fate from which all citizenship, including and especially citizenship of the world, is supposed to save us.

Explicitly citing Arendt on refugees, Giorgio Agamben has called attention to the way in which even enlightened, democratic political thinking (e.g., the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*) reduces the

human to citizenship: "Rights . . . are attributed to the human being only to the degree to which he or she is the immediately vanishing presupposition (and, in fact, the presupposition that must never come to light as such) of the citizen."⁵⁵ Against this fetish of citizenship, Agamben would center a new political philosophy on the figure of the refugee: "Only in a world in which the spaces of states have been . . . perforated and topologically deformed and in which the citizen has been able to recognize the refugee that he or she is—only in such a world is the political survival of humankind today thinkable."⁵⁶ But what if, instead of privileging the tragic figure of the refugee, we were to discover in ourselves that other Arendtian figure, the refugee's comic cousin, the pariah? Members of the unpatriotic, un-Christian cultural elite, academic critics and other intellectuals are ideally situated to recognize themselves (or at least to invent themselves) as this particular kind of "Jew." The tragic role may be more appealing, for all the obvious psychic and ideological reasons; but the comic one suits us better, since intellectuality is already widely and, I would claim, accurately construed as a joke anyway: as a perverse and perverted deviation from the rules of thinking and feeling on which all serious, normal, responsible people automatically agree. To opt for tragedy over comedy, in fact, would not be so different from the maneuver by which an enviable image of happiness gets transformed into the sorriest abjection. Better, I think, to accept and to cultivate that "ridiculous" happiness, one that is otherwise all but unimaginable—better to elicit the longing latent in the ridicule—than to participate in the vast political and cultural project of making happiness look like humiliation, and humiliation look like strength.

For this latter project, which is still taking place all around us, the sycophant is indispensable. Where his complicity and perfidy would make him an object of almost universal revulsion, he does his most effective cultural work, for, however despicable his actions may be, they model "dignity" itself by reclassifying another order of beings as *truly* despicable.⁵⁷ The sycophant serves as the fulcrum of the chiasmic operation whereby someone else's ecstatic release from citizenship gets rewritten as wretchedness, while his own subordination to power seems to confer on him the admirably virile attributes of solidity, durability, and authority. Whether male or female, the sycophant always wants to be a man. Most of this book's references to the sycophant will use the male pronoun,

which, given the often desperate wishfulness of the sycophant's masculinity, should probably be enclosed in quotation marks—a punctilio that I will be forgoing, so as to avoid both the bristling defensiveness and the sheer clutter that it can produce, but that the reader can take for granted. That masculinity, in any case, derives from a certain passivity is by now familiar to students of “subjection,” whose essential ambiguity is built into the term itself, with its simultaneous connotations of agency and inferiority. Judith Butler, for example, has written extensively on how the subject is formed in the act of turning against itself, on how “the subject is the effect of power in recoil.”⁵⁸ In Butler's account, the subject takes shape through and as an imitation of power's mastery. Much less familiar, however, than the subject's, or, rather—since every subject is potentially and implicitly a friendly witness—the sycophant's self-constituting imitation of power is his equally self-constituting imitation of those with the power to *give up* power: to enjoy, or to en-Jew, the stateless state of *desubjectification*.⁵⁹ The sycophant imitates the comicosmopolitan, of course, to the extent that eagerness to please always produces a sort of pseudocomedy. But the sycophant's imitation (or flattery) of the comicosmopolitan goes further: to keep the authorities informed of what the comicosmopolitan may be up to, one must *follow* her, staying on her scent by copying her actions. And what are those actions? A generalized comicosmopolitanism might well have as one of its consequences that “the spaces of states” are “perforated and topologically deformed”; as though to prefigure that political disorganization, the comicosmopolitan herself practices the art of falling apart. Abrogating the virile privileges to which the sycophant aspires, the comicosmopolitan, of whatever gender, is as indicatively female as the sycophant is indicatively male. And if she becomes the envied object of a necessarily imitative re-sentment, this is because she gives herself over to the enviable experience of a primitive sentiment or scentment, an ur-smelling, that is itself a kind of primary imitation:

Of all the senses the act of smelling, which is attracted without objectifying, reveals most sensuously the urge to lose oneself in identification with the Other. This is why smell, as both the perception and the perceived—which are one in the act of olfaction—is more expressive than other senses. When we see we remain who we are, when we smell we

are absorbed entirely. In civilization, therefore, smell is regarded as a disgrace, a sign of the lower social orders, lesser races, and baser animals.⁶⁰

Thus do Horkheimer and Adorno interpret anti-Semitism as hatred of what they call “mimesis”: the “disgrace” of losing oneself in a chameleonic imitation of the environment. Unlike colonial mimicry, mimesis—a central concept in the chapters ahead—promotes not subversion, but “deliquescence.” “It makes little difference,” Horkheimer and Adorno point out, “whether the Jews as individuals really display the mimetic traits which cause the malign infection or whether those traits are merely imputed.”⁶¹ Once the Jews as a group, like blacks as a group, are numbered among the “lesser races,” the races of olfaction—and Horkheimer and Adorno are writing both in and about the moment of “enlightened” culture when the Jews are being exterminated as that race par excellence—anti-Semitism is a form of anti-mimeticism: a violent aversion to the “malign infection” of mimetic behavior. But if, as Horkheimer and Adorno argue, “the ego has been forged by hardening itself against such behavior,”⁶² the forging entails a double act of forgery: the ego counterfeits the iron force of the state, yet that act of upward imitation must continually be stimulated and sustained by one of downward imitation as well. That is, the ego hardens itself by reminding itself obsessively and fearfully of the suicidal temptation of softness against which it has materialized: by recalling the ever-present danger of dissolution from which it has barely escaped, and with which it must in fact keep making petrifying contact. A sycophant through and through, the ego cannot identify itself with the master, therefore, without also mimicking the mimics.

In Horkheimer and Adorno’s account, this mimicry can sometimes seem like a rare, if carefully dissimulated, treat:

The civilized person is allowed to give way to such [mimetic] desires only if the prohibition is suspended by rationalization in the service of practical purposes, real or apparent. One is allowed to indulge the outlawed drive if acting with the unquestionable aim of expunging it.⁶³

Yet the “civilizing” process does not simply “allow” one “to indulge the outlawed drive”: it *compels* one to do so. What makes the sycophant the model citizen is that he keeps scaring himself straight by returning over

and over to his criminal origins. Strictly speaking, as I have suggested, the informer, at least during the reign of HUAC, does not inform: the state already knows the names he pretends to be giving it. But in show business, and in the branch of show business known as politics, appearance is of course everything. Even when the informer really does offer the authorities information they do not already possess, what matters more than the information itself is the show of gathering and transmitting it. The cooperative witness stars in what Victor S. Navasky calls a “degradation ceremony,”⁶⁴ whose captivating power consists of its ambiguity, in which the degradation, ostensibly and ostentatiously aimed at those named as criminals, already attends the informer himself—not only because of the baseness of informing, but also because he constantly risks re-immersion in the underworld that he can never stop investigating and that, in the best film-noir fashion, he can never leave behind as the scene of his own confessed crimes. If the informer tells the state what it already knows, the ceremony centered on him owes no small degree of its spectacularity to his dangerous reconstruction and re-enactment of the “outrages” practiced by the underworld’s denizens (as when, to cite a relatively mild example, they ask him how dialectical materialism helped him to do *Fancy Free*). Imitating outlawed en-Jewment, but in order to police it, the sycophant mobilizes against it the counterseduction of the law itself, that hard master whose hardening effects on him must thus appear identical not just with citizenship but with “civilization” as such, lest he, or anyone else, continue to prefer the far greater “sensuous” delights of mimetic self-loss.

Imagine, for instance, Lionel Stander’s pleasure in losing himself in his comic mimesis of congressional high seriousness, even outrage (“I am deeply shocked, Mr. Chairman”). Perhaps imagining that mimetic pleasure all too well, one of the congressmen interrogating Stander warns him: “Unless you [answer the questions], your performance is not going to be regarded as funny.”⁶⁵ Indeed, the point of the whole chiasmic operation of sycophancy is to make sure that comic mimesis is not regarded as funny: to relocate it under the horrifying sign of the uncivilized, the inhuman, the abject; to replace en-Jewment with the mere Jew, as anti-Semitism construes that figure. What is anti-Semitism at its genocidal extreme if not an attempt to punish the insult of en-Jewment by turning desubjectification-as-comedy into desubjectification-as-horror? Arendt

famously characterized the Dreyfus affair as a dress rehearsal for the Holocaust; the blacklist was its sanitized, Disneyfied revival—no less effective an instrument of terror for being sanitized and Disneyfied.⁶⁶ In this revival, the sycophant-star enacts for the nation as a whole an object lesson in how to rise above what might have seemed paradise itself until he cooperated with the lawmakers in transforming it into a foul-smelling swamp inhabited by “the lower social orders, lesser races, and baser animals.” And if this swamp turns out to be the ground on which the sycophant stands, we should not be surprised by the precariousness of his footing. By informing, the informer separates himself from the underworld in which he would otherwise find himself mired—by informing, the informer continues working in Hollywood—but that separation can never be complete: even after he has named names, he must be prepared to keep sniffing after the swamp-dwellers among whom he once lived, and back into whose fetid ranks he thus always risks falling. For the work that he continues to do—the films and the television shows that he continues to make—reveals what is inherent in all mass entertainment: that to entertain is not just to please those in power, to bow before their law, but to please them *by denouncing and betraying the outlaw*—the outlaw one once was and always risks becoming again. Every citizen, as I have suggested, must be ready to turn state’s witness, to *perform* by *informing*—which is to say that, unless she melts into comicosmopolitanism, every citizen must be ready to perform a patriot act in a show, or a show trial, for the instruction of other citizens. When the citizen in fact works in the world designated as show business, and when he does so because he has in fact named names for HUAC, the *sycophantic imperative*, the compulsion to inform under which every citizen labors, simply becomes more visible. The entertaining ego—that is, the ego—hardens itself for the law and against the outlaw. Yet the process of hardening never quite ends, and never quite succeeds: every sycophantic performance takes place on the edge of softness, requiring as it does yet another journey into the underworld of en-Jewment, where the performer who forgets what (and whom) he’s there for can easily lose himself in comicosmopolitan mimesis, the outlawed drive that he indulges, at least ostensibly, “with the unquestionable aim of expunging it.”

Should that aim become questionable, should the “civilized” treachery of the ego succumb to the treacherous instability of the ground beneath

its feet, the performer-informer, during the blacklist period, opens himself to the charge of being “soft on Communism,” where “on” evokes the shakiness of a dependency masquerading as a superiority: a dependency, like that of an addict, in which to be “on” something is to be “under” it, or under its influence. Keeping in with the power-wielding politicians, American mass culture of the Cold War indeed sycophantically portrayed Communism as just such a softening, narcotizing influence.⁶⁷ But the more seductive and more dangerous softness, against which the sycophant hardens himself and, by his example, his fellow citizens, comes from something prior to Communism, and for which Communism, alleged to operate behind various legitimating “fronts,” itself provides an oddly reassuring front: it comes from mimetic behavior, which, ontologically and historically preceding any ideological formation whatsoever, has the capacity to break ideologies down as well. The mimetic “urge to lose oneself in identification with the Other,” especially when generalized as the cosmopolitan urge to lose oneself in identification with *many* Others, poses a greater threat to the hardened ego, and the hardened nation, than any ideology, however pernicious, since ideology, to *become* ideology, has already paid civilization the compliment of hardening *itself*.

Against and before all the ideologies, mimesis might be described as an *archaic cosmopolitanism*, as a kind of cosmopolitanism *sauvage*. In its fluidity, in its fluency, in the way it “makes itself resemble its surroundings” instead of “mak[ing] its surroundings resemble itself,”⁶⁸ mimesis implies a *relaxed* attitude toward ideology, even an indifference to it—in short, a comic inability to freeze up around it. (Quite un-Bergsonian, this version of the comic is soft, not hard.) And, despite the Jewish associations that it shares with other cosmopolitanisms, mimesis no more offers refuge in ethnic identity politics than it promotes the comfort of ideological warfare. To be sure, “the act of smelling,” which best exemplifies the pre-ideological atavism of the mimetic urge, appears to make mimesis a Jewish thing, at least in that Enlightened, Western world where, among the “lesser races” assigned to bear the disgrace of olfaction, the Jews seem chosen people indeed. In that world, the most “symptomatically” Jewish feature is of course the nose. Moreover, in an instance of the very olfactory identification between “the perception and the perceived” to which Horkheimer and Adorno refer, the nosy Jews

have stereotypically been represented as *smelling* in both subjective and objective senses of the term.⁶⁹ Yet the Jew's mimetic aptitude—a blessing that *must be* disguised—remains at odds with any attempt to claim mimesis as an essentially or uniquely Jewish practice, as one that “defines” the Jew, or the Jewish “community.” Like “comicosmopolitanism” and “en-Jewment,” its conceptual partners, “mimesis” is a kind of embarrassment indeed, because, while it undoes the individual ego, on which the very possibility of embarrassment rests, it similarly corrodes the group ego, the site of an always vulnerable ethnic pride, and thus one of the most important foundations of social control in a “multi-cultural” society.

“Jewishness,” then, functions in this book as a signifier for the pleasure of the pariah amid the deadly seriousness of nations *and* races: the comic pleasure of relinquishing or refusing the dubious privilege of national and racial dignity and belonging, by “losing oneself in identification with the Other.” For Arendt, this comic pleasure is embodied by figures like Heine, Kafka, and “even [the Judaized or ambiguously non-Jewish] Charlie Chaplin”; for Horkheimer and Adorno, it can be seen again in Chaplin, as well as in the Marx brothers, in Karl Kraus, and in the Austrian and German dialect comedians.⁷⁰ What comes into being as “Jewish” mass entertainment in twentieth-century America is thus the precipitate of a more diffuse set of energies circulating through and from nineteenth-century Europe. When, at least twenty years before the advent of the Hollywood blacklist, those energies coalesce as the American film industry, the time of the sycophant has already begun, for the industrialization of comic pleasure—its “rationalization in the service of” ego-formation and social discipline—fundamentally betrays it along with its practitioners. But even in the nineteenth century, the precursor of the Hollywood movie, namely the Victorian novel, proves capable of featuring a Jewish informer drawn from the ranks of the comedians in whom that early form of mass entertainment encounters its own uncanny underworld. Consider the following passage from *Oliver Twist* (1837–39):

Mr. Fagin laid great stress on the fact of his having taken Oliver in, and cherished him, when, without his timely aid, he might have perished with hunger; and he related the dismal and affecting history of a young

lad whom, in his philanthropy, he had succoured under parallel circumstances, but who, proving unworthy of his confidence and evincing a desire to communicate with the police, had unfortunately come to be hanged in the Old Bailey one morning. Mr. Fagin did not seek to conceal his share in the catastrophe, but lamented with tears in his eyes that the wrong-headed and treacherous behaviour of the young person in question, had rendered it necessary that he should become the victim of certain evidence for the crown: which, if it were not precisely true, was indispensably necessary for the safety of him (Mr. Fagin) and a few select friends. Mr. Fagin concluded by drawing a rather disagreeable picture of the discomforts of hanging; and, with great friendliness and politeness of manner, expressed his anxious hopes that he might never be obliged to submit Oliver Twist to that unpleasant operation.⁷¹

“Mr. Fagin,” whom Dickens elsewhere simply calls “the Jew,” is of course the head of a gang of thieves, into which he is now endeavoring to reinsert Oliver. To be a criminal, however, is not necessarily to be an outlaw of the kind with which *The Un-Americans* is concerned. Fagin’s flamboyant criminality, at any rate, by no means prevents him from enjoying friendly relations with the law, starting with the law of capitalist exchange, by which his activities as a fence and a pimp perversely abide. Then, of course, there is his routine production—or, if need be, fabrication—of “certain evidence for the crown.” To forestall the “treacherous behaviour” of his protégés, he beats them at their own game, “communicat[ing] with the police” before they do, even if the information he provides is “not precisely true.” But we have not yet reached the limit of Fagin’s cooperativeness. The treacherous specular-ity obtaining between him and the ungrateful “young lad,” for example, derives from the more systematic treachery that informs his informing: the treachery that consists in poisoning imitation itself. Not just a shrewd businessman but also an adroit clown and mimic (Fagin knows how to put on a show that leaves Oliver “laugh[ing] till the tears ran down his face”⁷²), Dickens’s “Jew” places his mimetic virtuosity in the service of what Horkheimer and Adorno call a “mimesis of mimesis.”⁷³ D. A. Miller’s *The Novel and the Police* has demonstrated how thoroughly the novel as a genre is implicated in police work; a character like Fagin has the virtue of specifying what that work necessarily betrays, in the

flattering mode of imitation.⁷⁴ Implicit in the “organized laughter” of the anti-Semitic mass “celebration,” the mimesis of mimesis permits the crowd at once “to indulge” and to attack “the outlawed drive” of the Jewish pariah: to indulge it in the mode of attack; to mock it, with all the contemptuous simulation signaled by that word. Imagine how effective this spectacle can be with a mock-comic Jew, a Jew who mocks the comic, as its pivot. Like Jerome Robbins in front of HUAC, Fagin obligingly communicates with the police in his deadly tour de force, his pseudocomic turn, his turning against the comic. Even when he is not actually naming names—even when he is just “relating” and acting out a story of naming names—Dickens’s “Jew” is putting the comic to work for the criminal justice system. In telling his frightening story, Fagin wants to keep Oliver *away* from the police, of course. To do so, however, he must threaten to hand him over to them, thereby cooperating with them himself, as he has done in the past—and as, more fundamentally, he is doing even now, by using his formidable narrative and histrionic powers to scare his spectator halfway to that death which he so impressively foreshadows for him: “Little Oliver’s blood ran cold, as he listened to the Jew’s words, and imperfectly comprehended the dark threats conveyed in them.”⁷⁵

How different is “the Jew”’s undertaking here from that of the kindly Mr. Brownlow (who ultimately adopts Oliver) when, at the end of the novel, he takes him to visit Fagin in his prison cell just before that old villain undergoes “the discomforts of hanging” himself?

“Is the young gentleman to come too, sir?,” said the man whose duty it was to conduct them. “It’s not a sight for children, sir.”

“It is not indeed, my friend,” rejoined Mr. Brownlow; “but my business with this man is intimately connected with him; and as the child has seen him in the full career of his success and villainy, I think it as well—even at the cost of some pain and fear—that he should see him now.”⁷⁶

How different, for that matter, is Fagin’s blood-chilling tale from the pedagogical project of the novelist himself, who interpellates his reader on the model of the abused child, for whom still more “pain and fear” are the “cost” of that civilized subjectivity that this novel, like all Victorian novels, works to forge in its audience? Both Oliver’s protectors and his exploiters—both law-abiding citizens and criminals, both the good

and the evil—agree in wanting to make a “man” of him. That the villainous “Jew” conspicuously shares his author’s gift for performance and storytelling points to Dickens’s own implication in entertainment as a civilizing, that is, terrifying, betrayal of the comic. “I shall tear myself to pieces,” he announced just before taking the stage, for what would indeed be the last time—the performance contributing to his death—to give one of his famous public readings as Fagin: in effect, to impersonate his impersonator.⁷⁷ If this authorial self-dismemberment suggests the mimetic “urge to lose oneself in identification with the Other,” the suggestion is a grisly one: like the novel’s series of hanged bodies, of which Fagin draws such a “disagreeable picture,” and in which his own body is the last, the author’s deadly serious pursuit of death-by-imitation testifies to the element of ghastly travesty in the mimesis of mimesis, whereby a certain violence, mocking mimetic desubjectification, gets misrecognized as the dignity of the “living” ego, while the comic pleasure—the “Jewissance,” to borrow Daniel Boyarin’s happy neologism—against which it mockingly hardens itself assumes an aspect of corpse-like stiffness.⁷⁸ Thanks to the sycophant’s mockery of it, in other words, that comic pleasure is made to seem a fate far worse than the petrification that passes for viability in the civil society synonymous with civilization. As the sycophant turns, so does the whole chiasmus whereby mortification comes to resemble life itself, and the voluptuous escape from mortification comes to look like death. Who, after this star turn, would want the ecstasy of desubjectification, when it involves, precisely, a mortifying loss of that social intelligibility known as the self—when, instead, she can be toughened into social membership, with all its privileges?

“The cost of some pain and fear” appears negligible when it buys one the priceless rewards of psychic and political identity: rewards for which one is never more grateful than when they are conveyed by and as entertainment itself. When Fagin, that consummate entertainer, scares Oliver stiff, he takes care to do so “with great friendliness and politeness of manner.” In addition to befriending the police and the power for which they stand, the friendly witness directs his friendliness at his fellow citizens, those spectators and readers whom he instructs, and constructs, by the example of his own cooperation. Dickens of course ironizes Fagin’s “friendliness,” implicitly proposing himself, in contrast with “the Jew,” as a *true* friend, both of Oliver and of the Oliver-identified reader. Yet,

as if in defiance of the ironic frame, Fagin keeps figuring as an appalling portrait of the artist. Like “the dismal and affecting history” that he relates to Oliver, the dismal and affecting history that is the novel itself is perhaps most dismal in presenting the terror with which it affects us as a testimony of friendship: of friendship that binds us in “that phenomenon of participation outside of which we are generally reluctant,” in the words of Roland Barthes, “to consider any entertainment possible.”⁷⁹ To be entertained is to be bound in a veritable community of sycophants, where the constant possibility that the friend will turn friendly witness—as in Fagin’s little band of thieves, in which Fagin is not alone in his “desire to communicate with the police”—must be mitigated by the comfort that community, and indeed communication, themselves afford. Identity, after all, presupposes identification—not just identification *with* others, but also identification *by* others: by those “friends” with whom we commune in the power that unites us, not least in our mutual suspicion. In the age of sycophancy, entertainment communicates with the police in its very essence. And if one effect of this communication is to produce petrified (hardened *and* frightened) subjects—subjects who have every reason to suspect and fear one another—another effect is to put *all* of those subjects in communication with the police: if they cannot help being entertained to death, they are each thereby animated, rendered life-like, assuming, along with some of the authority of the law that takes charge of them, a semblance of its “vitality.” Epitomized by the performer-informer, mass communication turns its whole audience, potentially stretching from coast to coast, into a band of insiders.

The cold comfort of belonging to this immense and awesome network of “friends,” this monstrous collective body of the entertained, is another sycophantic travesty of mimetic identification with the Other, where, far from being preserved in a state of frozen panic and paranoia, one melts into the delicious statelessness of being, as Horkheimer and Adorno put it, “absorbed entirely.” Mass entertainment is itself a mimesis of mimesis: mocking mimetic pleasure, it produces at the same time an anticomic parody of mimetic intimacy. That intimacy needs to be parodied because, otherwise, it would be intolerably seductive: more than just a sympathetic relation between stable and coherent subjects, it marks their blissful *disintegration*. The tears in Fagin’s eyes as he sutures Oliver back into his gang betoken not only a treacherously crocodile-like

imitation of sympathy, but also a cynical sham of the dissolving subject. I have glossed mimesis as a form of chameleonism, but the sycophant is also a chameleon, a prodigy of upward and downward imitation—except that, where the mimetic chameleon delightedly ceases to be himself, the adaptations of the sycophant-chameleon serve the anxious cause of self-protection. As a sycophant, Dickens's entertaining Jew is not above doing a creepy imitation of the happier lizard he might have been:

The mud lay thick upon the stones, and a black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.⁸⁰

Everything in this passage promotes an aversion therapy designed to make a mouthwatering en-Jewment seem disgusting: to turn a luxurious meal (o liver!) into shit. Always ready to communicate with the police, Fagin helps Dickens help us appreciate the miserable mock-intimacy of the regime of entertainment under which the novel is bringing us together: we are all the more grateful for the *mock*-intimacy after we have had a whiff of the real thing. “When we smell we are absorbed entirely. In civilization, therefore, smell is regarded as a disgrace, a sign of the lower social orders, lesser races, and baser animals.” A lonely crowd, we, the entertained, can at least be glad that we do not smell like the Jew, even if reading about him means constantly sniffing after him.

Its members linked to one another in fearful isolation, the mass audience of what Horkheimer and Adorno dub the culture industry emerges as another version of that “community of kindred spirits” that they see in the mass audience of anti-Semitism. With its “organized laughter,” with its “rage” against what it desires, with its love of assassination passing for good clean fun, the anti-Semitic audience indeed explicates the audience for entertainment of a more general kind. And there is nothing particularly forced or far-fetched about the explication when, as in the case of the Dickens novel, a slimy Jew serves as both agent and object of poisoned imitation. The crowd's organized laughter, as well as its organized tears, are themselves instances of poisoned imitation. In an

act of collective sycophancy, the mass audience, with or without a Jewish informer to set an example, turns on its own “Jewishness”: on the primitive mimetic impulses that both individuals and the human species must overcome if they are to survive in the modern environment, and whose return or persistence, instead of occasioning joy, must be felt as an unforgivable, unbearable regression. “In the bourgeois mode of production,” Horkheimer and Adorno write, “the ineradicable mimetic heritage present in all praxis is consigned to oblivion. The pitiless ban on regression appears like an edict of fate; the denial is so total that it is no longer registered consciously.”⁸¹ Once the Jews, who are closely linked with the cosmopolitanism of enlightenment, modernity, and progress, are also symbolically tied to the protocosmopolitanism of the mimetic heritage that must not be inherited, “the bourgeois mode of production” becomes almost inevitably “anti-Semitic.”

Mimesis is indeed “consigned to oblivion,” but this forgetting is not the same thing as an absolute loss or repudiation: it not only permits but demands contact with what is “denied” and yet remains “ineradicable.” To the extent that the mass audience engages in poisoned imitation of mimesis, its act of turning on “Jewishness” is not simply a turning away from it; this “self-hating” turn is also a *return*, a turning back, but with the difference that this second encounter with “Jewishness” can take place only as an exercise in its destruction. All the better if a Jew can be recruited to enact, on a novelistic stage or in the House of Representatives, the “self-hating” turn that every good citizen must perform: that turn without which there is no citizenship at all. Whether fictional or real, this exemplary Jew, of course, covers the guilt that the “community” might otherwise have to acknowledge. Like the gay homophobe, the Jewish informer—even better, the Jewish *and* gay informer⁸²—clears everyone else of a hatred that, however colorfully it manifests itself as individual psychopathology, is endemic and pervasive. Where sycophancy is the normal condition of citizenship, where subjectivity, subjection, and resentment are one and the same—that is, everywhere in the West since the rise of the culture industry in the nineteenth century—Jewish cooperative witnesses are never more cooperative than in distracting attention from cooperativeness as a requirement that no one who wishes to be taken seriously can escape. From the perspective of sycoanalysis, however, the Jewish sycophant reveals instead of covering up: he or she

literalizes a condition of subjectivity to which everyone is subject, but that usually passes unnoticed, so natural does it seem. When “the pitiless ban on regression . . . is so total that it is no longer registered consciously,” when the repression of mimesis has itself been repressed, the Jewish sycophant, and the Jewish comic pariah on whom he or she resentfully informs, allow the sycoanalyst to bring back from oblivion both the “Jewishness” and the “anti-Semitism” on which civilization rests.

Sycoanalysis, therefore, will find itself especially drawn to a novel like *Oliver Twist*, with its comic Jew eagerly lending his talents to the deadly serious business of entertainment. As instructive as it is, though, to reflect on the central role of the Jew in this product of the nascent culture industry—and we might have considered other Victorian novels as well⁸³—*The Un-Americans* focuses on a more recent moment in the history of mass communication as communication with the police: a moment that has lately come to feel all *too* close to many inhabitants, and to many observers, of the American scene. This book emphasizes the particular sycophancy of blacklisting not with a view toward producing another history of the blacklist—however historically informed, this is not a work of historiography—but with a more theoretical aim: it takes the period of the blacklist less as an object of historical reconstruction—although I hope that the student of the period will find these readings useful—than as a highly favorable matrix of sycoanalytic theory, as a densely symptomatic expression of broader cultural forces, at work even in less obviously and less obligingly hysterical times and places, should there be any.⁸⁴

“Oh the moral horror of this parade of stoolpigeons,” wrote one of the Hollywood Ten, the screenwriter Albert Maltz, to another, the director Herbert Biberman, as the second round of HUAC hearings was producing a new legion of show-business informers; “what a sickness it spreads over the land.”⁸⁵ Maltz’s eloquent dismay is eminently understandable. Unlike the second, larger group of unfriendly witnesses, who invoked their Fifth Amendment rights and thus were “merely” blacklisted, the Hollywood Ten, who mistakenly counted on the protection of the First Amendment, were blacklisted *and* imprisoned for their refusal to cooperate with HUAC. To see their suffering turning out to have been act one in the collapse of the Hollywood left, and indeed of the American left in general, can only have been deeply embittering. In no way mini-

mizing the “moral horror,” this book hypothesizes that the “sickness” of which Maltz writes had spread throughout the body politic well before the blacklist began, even before there was a Hollywood; that it is as old as the culture industry and the bourgeois mode of production; that, characteristically taking itself not as a sickness at all but, to the contrary, as the cure for whatever “malign infection” is threatening the nation, it continues to rage to this day; and that its ultimate horror lies in its frighteningly convincing imitation of health itself.

As a manifestation of that sickness, the postwar American “parade of stoolpigeons” is indeed horrifying, not least in the stoolpigeons’ desire to communicate with the police by projecting the horror of their conspiratorial complicity onto the comic comrades they are assassinating. For sycoanalysis, however, the parade has the value of, precisely, the spectacular. Showing what ordinarily stays hidden, it discovers horror not in the aberrant and the alien—in what descends on the land like some unthinkable disaster—but, rather, in the normal and the familiar—in what grows out of the land like its inner truth. “Yes. Government by stoolpigeon. Everybody investigating everybody else”: with these words, the Hollywood Ten, on their way to jail, raised the specter of a whole nation gone sycophantic. Only the strange interlude of the Second World War, necessitating a tactical, partial, and highly reluctant suspension of hostilities against the left and its cosmopolitan sympathizers (including the “Jewish” President Roosevelt himself), prevented this specter from being recognized as the boy next door.⁸⁶ Ominously evoked by the Hollywood Ten as an unprecedented national crisis, “government by stoolpigeon” was in fact a return to business as usual. What *was* unprecedented, or at least unusual, was the way in which the war against fascism temporarily relaxed or even scrambled the rules of good citizenship—not quite to the point of en-Jewing or comicosmopolitanizing America, but enough to make a certain progressive internationalism seem almost patriotic.⁸⁷ Reacting against this turn of events, the blacklist was aberrant only in making a parade out of the normal conditions of civic responsibility.

A *parade* of stoolpigeons, indeed: if Maltz, like the other Ten, was taken unawares by the spectacle of sycophancy, he nevertheless subtly identified the particular subgenre to which it belongs. A parade, after all, is a patriotic spectacle, one that, with quasi-military ostentation, and with the brutal insistence of all state-sponsored festivity, puts on display

the machinery of national “pride.” To be sure, there are other episodes of collective sycophancy that are even more horrifying than the blacklist period in America. Vichy France, for instance, suggests itself as an alternative model, offering a pertinent lesson in the paradoxes, discerned by the period’s most trenchant historians, of nationalist hegemony deriving from national humiliation, and of patriotism from treason.⁸⁸ Though perhaps the classic paradigm of modern collaboration, Vichy, of course, is not an example of *Jewish* informing. Nor, for that matter, is the blacklist: if a significantly large number of the friendly witnesses, and of their victims, were Jews, and if the blacklist period, as I have speculated, constitutes a case of civilization turning on its own “Jewishness,” it is important to point out again that there is nothing inherently or uniquely Jewish about either friendly or unfriendly witnessing. Chapter 3 considers a film by two of the four non-Jews among the first group of unfriendly witnesses, although it argues that these non-Jews were persecuted for not seeming non-Jewish enough; chapter 4 features the most renowned and the most powerful of all the friendly witnesses, who was also a non-Jew, albeit a non-Jew who, to his dismay, was mistaken for a Jew. As for specifically Jewish informing and collaboration, should one wish to adduce it, there are the usual notorious and controversial suspects: the recently “rehabilitated” figure of Judas, or the *Judenräte*, the Jewish Councils that cooperated with the Nazis. Yet in none of these cases, and nowhere in the canon of nineteenth-century fiction, is the element of organized spectacle as clear or as strong as it is in HUAC’s parade of stoolpigeons, where the political show translates with diabolical fidelity what is already going on behind the scenes of that very *business* of show from which the witnesses were enlisted. For the purposes of the discipline elaborated in the pages ahead, the parade of stoolpigeons, in short, is a kind of embarrassment: an embarrassment of riches.

To call sycoanalysis a discipline, of course, is to admit its own communication with the police. The reader may already have remarked its debt to psychoanalysis, in the use, for example, of terms like “ego,” “identification,” “symptomatic” “repression,” and so forth. Like psychoanalysis, sycoanalysis could even be characterized, in the manner of Karl Kraus’s *bon mot*, as the very disease that it purports to cure. (It is no doubt symptomatic that the word “sycoanalysis,” looking like “psychoanalysis,” sounds like “sickoanalysis.”) The language of disease and cure, like the

language of concealment and revelation, indeed bespeaks the participation of both analyses, psycho- *and* syco-, in the civilizing project of forming the suspicious ego. Tracking, exposing, denouncing: these are the work of the sycophant, proud to serve his masters by sniffing out subversives, for whom, because like whom, he has a preternaturally, prehistorically acute nose. On the trail of the sycophant, the sycoanalyst does to him what he does to the comedian. But if sycoanalysis thus takes its place in a transferential chain—if it is necessarily derivative, belated, vicarious, and tied to the sadistic power of the law (even though that law may not always coincide with the law of the state)—sycoanalysis differs from sycophancy in one important point: where sycophancy is a rationalized imitation of mimetic pleasure—an imitation that sycoanalysis must imitate in turn, in order to “catch” sycophancy—sycoanalysis also permits itself an *unrationalized* indulgence of the mimetic drive. Sycophancy is condemned to remain a *pseudocomic* practice, and an *anti-comic* one; no stranger itself to the pleasure of detecting and expunging, the sycoanalytic bloodhound, however, pursues the almost opposite olfactory pleasure as well: the pleasure of sniffing to the point of its own disintegration.⁸⁹ As an analysis, it can hardly escape either the imperative to break its objects down, or the thrill of “empowerment” that accompanies the execution of this task. But the task does not constitute the limit of sycoanalysis (as it constitutes the limit of Victor S. Navasky’s in many ways admirable book, *Naming Names*, the canonical study of informers during the Cold War, which the author frankly presents as “less a history than a moral detective story”⁹⁰). Not content to stop at breaking its object down, sycoanalysis aspires to break *itself* down as well. A comic practice, a performing comicosmopolitanism, sycoanalysis indulges a fantasy of working through and beyond sycophancy, through and beyond the mimesis of mimesis, to become the mimetic en-Jewment that both it and sycophancy are studying—sycophancy in the name of patriotic surveillance, sycoanalysis with open and even “ridiculous” admiration.

Obviously informed by psychoanalysis, sycoanalysis at the same time takes a certain inspiration, as some readers may have guessed, from the antipsychoanalytic activity that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari called “schizoanalysis.”⁹¹ In its deterritorializing aims, particularly as demonstrated by the “minor literature” of Kafka, or by the “black humor” of another exemplary comic pariah, Proust, schizoanalysis is an important

precursor of sycoanalysis. The influence is not merely thematic: sycoanalysis resembles schizoanalysis in wanting to go beyond “interpretative examination” or analytic decoding to become a comic event in its own right, one that releases and mobilizes flows and energies that are systematically blocked in the ego- and nation- and civilization-building operations of making serious.⁹² The unblocking agent in schizoanalysis is of course the schizo, with its lines of escape “well below conditions of identity.”⁹³ The syco cannot play an analogous role in the less euphoric science of sycoanalysis, for the syco is in some sense blockage itself. Nor is there any way around this blockage: sycoanalysis cannot go directly to the mimesis it wishes to become. Instead, it must work through the sycophant to get to mimesis, because the latter is mediated by the former—by the *informer*. What we know about mimesis—especially once its representatives are blacklisted into oblivion—is in large part what the sycophant has told us. He *betrays* in the full ambiguity of the word: in delivering his friends to the police, he makes them known. That is, the blockages formed by the sycophant are not insurmountable. Not only does he yield as much he congeals: he yields *by* congealing. His solidity, one might say, has a curiously gelatinous character. Insofar as the process of sycophantic hardening is never complete, insofar as the risk of softness is one of sycophancy’s occupational hazards, sycoanalysis will in fact favor those moments of intense envy and resentment in which the sycophant *almost* loses his self-discipline: when the organized, organizing comedical rage that makes him hard *almost* results in an ecstatic meltdown.

The cruel pleasure of the sycoanalyst’s examination of these moments is not easy to distinguish from the pleasure that the sycophant himself takes in his assassinations. But if we are familiar by now with this structure of interpretative implication, sycoanalysis has another, less predictable “embarrassment” in store. For the sycoanalyst does what the sycophant cannot. He allows his “own” discipline to go soft, to become an undiscipline: an “undisciplined mimicry” of the sycophant, and thus, on the far side of sycophancy, the mimesis mimicked so warily *by* the sycophant.⁹⁴ The sycoanalyst is never more like the sycophant than in subjecting him to the same hermeneutic of re-resentment to which the sycophant subjects the comedian. Yet perhaps the sycoanalyst is also never more *unlike* the sycophant in this moment: what the sycoanalyst

wants, anyway, is for her re-resentment, by virtue of its very lack of disciplinary restraint, or by its failure to provide a sufficient cognitive alibi for its disciplinary excesses, to stop resembling its rationalized, intermediate object and to approximate instead its unrationalized, ultimate one: a mimeticism *without reserve*.

So while the sycoanalyst is implicated in the dynamic of denunciation, I hope that the anger directed at the parade of stoolpigeons in this book will not seem entirely reducible to the stoolpigeon's anger at the comedian. The sycoanalyst's rage at the sycophant may well be, as one reader of these pages has suggested, the rage of Caliban looking at himself in the mirror. But rage is not, I think, the only affect impelling this book, or providing its dominant tone. Comedy is of course no stranger to aggression, as the funniest of the blacklisted—Lionel Stander, Abraham Polonsky, Judy Holliday, Zero Mostel, Ring Lardner Jr.—abundantly demonstrate. Imitating them with a view toward modeling a comic criticism, this book necessarily takes on the violence inherent in their joy. But if violence inheres in joy, the latter may nonetheless exceed the former. The anger informing my analyses here is anger at the (continuing) war on comicosmopolitanism; but the extravagance with which I sometimes express it is not (or not just) an overflow of moral indignation. Rather, this extravagance is itself an attempt to bring back some of the comicosmopolitanism that the blacklist would have destroyed.

In the same comic (or at any rate would-be comic) vein, the sycoanalyst, like the schizoanalyst, will “claim the right to a radical laxity, a radical incompetence.”⁹⁵ In an academy ruled by Hebraic strictness of conscience, where cosmopolitanism is permitted only if the citizen of the world makes a solemn commitment to both citizenship and the world, sycoanalysis exploits the un-Hebraic “Jewishness” in cosmopolitanism: what makes it unassimilable to the ethico-political norms of academic respectability today. Indeed, “laxity” and “incompetence,” which so many critics and theorists are trying to take out of cosmopolitanism, are precisely what sycoanalysis wants to keep in. Cosmopolitanism's “laxity” is the floating calm that prevents it from being terrorized into obedient identification, affording it a polyglot fluency—a promiscuous urge to lose itself in multiple identifications, rather than to find itself in just one—that puts it “well below conditions of identity.” Cosmopolitanism's “incompetence,” apparently the antithesis of fluency, consists, rather, in a

way of being so un-self-consciously absorbed in the language of the Other that one speaks it well but not *too* well—not, that is, with the proprietary arrogance of the “native speaker” or the overbearing presumption of the arriviste. “Competence,” in the vocabulary of sycoanalysis, designates the provinciality of overidentification, the chauvinism that delights in its rigorous command of the orthodoxy in which all credible subjects find themselves mirrored. That this provinciality and chauvinism sometimes assume the guise of cosmopolitanism itself—call it the cosmopolitanism of knowingness, the cosmopolitanism of the insider, the cosmopolitanism of the consummate professional—makes incompetence all the more precious. Amid the many *bien-pensant* professionalisms—which it is by no means above imitating—sycoanalysis wishes to become an *amateur* science.

As an amateur science, it would arise out of a flirtation with a number of other sciences: psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, of course, but also the sort of literary criticism exemplified earlier in this chapter by the discussion of *Oliver Twist*, and the kinds of philosophy variously represented by Arendt, Horkheimer and Adorno, Agamben, and Badiou. This book also engages crucially with scholarship in film studies, both academic and nonacademic—most obviously, with Michael Rogin’s *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* and Neal Gabler’s *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*. Less obviously, but still decisively, the book draws on the work of such scholars of film and television as Jon Lewis, who provocatively and incisively reads the blacklist as the unacknowledged charter of postwar Hollywood down to the present, the basis of its shift from entrepreneurial to conglomerate capitalism; James Naremore, who argues against a stereotypically “pessimistic” construction of film noir and demonstrates the genre’s vital progressive affiliations; Robert Sklar, whose writing on left-leaning stars like Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, and, both least remembered and most important for this book, John Garfield, opens up intriguing perspectives on the vertiginous politics of career and performance in the Hollywood of the studio system; and Thomas Doherty, whose history of television and the Cold War offers exemplary resistance to received ideas about the medium in its ascendancy.⁹⁶

One science to which sycoanalysis remains alien, however, is political science. For all that this book concerns itself with American politics of

the postwar period, and with certain questions of political theory, sycoanalysis offers no suggestions for a new political order: for a new, post-modern citizenship, for a politics of the refugee, or for a radical democracy of pariahs. Far from encouraging the self-congratulatory illusion that the aesthetic and the erotic turn magically into the ethical and the political, this book refuses to flatter progressive literary and cultural critics by pretending that comic mimesis is itself a significant resistance to power. That resistance requires funds of seriousness, and a willingness to invest them in the world, that sycoanalysis lacks. Let others pursue the work of political resistance, as they are doing now, and as they will no doubt continue to do.⁹⁷ But if sycoanalysis has no prescriptions for what Agamben calls “the political survival of humankind,” its psychoanalytic affinities include, among other things, a broadly therapeutic orientation. Again, though, a difference must be marked. Less euphoric than schizoanalysis, sycoanalysis is less wary than psychoanalysis: where the psychoanalytic cure would promote a certain accommodation to the world, a certain acceptance of civilization and its discontents, the sycoanalytic cure would consist in *uncivilizing* the ego by showing it how to disintegrate into mimesis.

Toward this end, moreover, sycoanalysis has another therapeutic ambition: to heal the wound, exacerbated if not inflicted by HUAC, between the two branches of the Judaized cultural elite in America. Sycoanalysis, that is, wants to be both the method and the scene of a reconciliation between the jokers and smart alecks of the academy and the jokers and smart alecks of mass entertainment. The war against the American left that began or, more accurately, resumed in the late 1940s found its sycophantic echo, I have noted, in the film studios and the television networks themselves, as they began attempting, by means of the blacklist—and with more frenzy than success—to disown or at least to disguise their affiliations with cozy liberalism and Jewish intellectualism. Pinning their survival on their talent for reading the minds of both their masters and their masses—categories less easily separated from each other than one might think—the mostly Jewish studio heads and network executives picked up on, and then subscribed to or even developed, the postwar American policy of hiding anti-Semitism behind the more respectable anti-liberalism and anti-intellectualism that are already bound up in it. And while the “culture monopolies” would thus have

projected these linked stigmas onto the more loathsome elites of the university, of the higher journalism, and of high culture, the intellectuals, as I have also noted, retaliated by looking down their noses at the products of mass entertainment. Though the contempt may have abated somewhat, at least on the academic side, its consequences are still in force, in (for example) the persistent Hebraism of an academy that is popularly construed, whatever its actual composition, as a bastion of liberal Jewish intellectuals, and that keeps projecting its attendant “ridiculousness” back onto low art, even if the academy now agrees to find that ridiculousness charming, once it has been exorcised. Intervening in this long-running (if rather flimsy) melodrama of mutual disavowal, sycoanalysis not only acknowledges but also deploys its own low art of “Jewish” ridiculousness, which is built into critical thought, whether or not critical thought can stand to admit it. As far as sycoanalysis is concerned, what Adorno says about the ridiculous in art would also apply to the ridiculous in criticism:

The ridiculous in art, which philistines recognize better than do those who are naïvely at home in art, and the folly of a rationality made absolute indict one another reciprocally; incidentally, when viewed from the perspective of the praxis of self-preservation, happiness—sex—is equally ridiculous, as can be spitefully pointed out by anyone who is not driven by it. . . . Human beings have not succeeded in so thoroughly repressing their likeness to animals that they are unable in an instant to recapture it and be flooded with joy; the language of little children and animals seems to be the same. In the similarity of clowns to animals the likeness of humans to apes flashes up; the constellation animal/fool/clown is a fundamental layer of art.⁹⁸

Simian, incompetent, and unserious—animal, fool, and clown at once—the sycoanalyst enacts comic irresponsibility as fundamental to any thinking that would differ from the dreary praxis of self-preservation. The spiteful philistine cannot help ridiculing such thinking: it produces a happiness that embarrasses and insults him by reminding him how much self-preservation has cost him. No fool, despite the folly of his rationality, the philistine does not need an informer to help him spot a joker and a smart aleck a mile away, because he is himself an informer. He knows what he has lost in refusing to lose himself. Every time his own likeness

to an ape flashes up—every time he finds himself looking “Jewish”—he must make sure that the joy of this image turns to hatred instead.⁹⁹ With informers everywhere, including inside himself, the sycoanalyst responds by reversing the process.

Accordingly, the next chapter of this book discusses the transformations of “Jew Envy,” whereby the *image* of the Jew’s privileged access to happiness—“sex,” as Adorno baldly puts it, but also happiness as the comic and as the related unseriousness sometimes called “style”—is systematically trashed, made repellent rather than desirable. Continuing the elaboration on Horkheimer and Adorno’s account of anti-Semitism—an elaboration that is the book’s leitmotif—the chapter develops their insight into the need to refigure Jewish happiness as aversive, lest the mass public recognize it *as happiness* and demand the same for itself. To speak of the sexy, comic, stylish Jew in early-twenty-first-century America is obviously anachronistic: the outrageous image of the Jew invoked here recalls nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe. The anachronism, however, is the point: outlining a genealogy of the blacklist, the chapter shows, in a series of readings of Jewish images in America from the 1920s to the 1950s, how, despite the attempt to produce an *unenviable* American Jew—a Jew who would at last be spared the vengeful tribute of anti-Semitic re-resentment—something all-too-desirably “European” continues to stick to American Jews during and even after the blacklist.

Chapter 3, “Petrified Laughter: Jews in Pictures, 1947,” focuses on three Hollywood films from the first year of the blacklist period—*Crossfire*, *Body and Soul*, and *Gentleman’s Agreement*—all of which prominently feature Jewish characters, performers, and themes. These films testify to the American Jew’s ambivalent location between “America” and “Europe.” Figuring a certain Old World or prehistoric Jewishness, a comic-mimetic Jewishness, the films *freeze* that Jewishness, as if already internalizing the Cold War chill in the air, which would have profound consequences for virtually everyone associated with the films (the producer and director of *Crossfire*, for example, were among the Hollywood Ten). But freezing has an ambivalence of its own: while it immobilizes, it also preserves. The surprisingly cold shoulder to which these three anti-Semitic films submit their comic Jews becomes less surprising once we see that it may in fact help surreptitiously to protect them throughout the dangerous years (and decades) ahead.

The fourth chapter, “Collaborators: Schulberg, Kazan, and *A Face in the Crowd*,” interprets that 1957 film, directed and written by two friendly witnesses, not just as a sophisticated apologia for sycophancy but as a portrait of America itself as a nation of sycophants. Unlike the film’s screenwriter, Budd Schulberg, its director, Elia Kazan, was not Jewish. But he was famous for “looking Jewish,” and for being misidentified as a Jew—or rather, in his own language, as a “Jew boy.” Hardly pleased by this misidentification, Kazan responded to it by becoming a patriotic informer before HUAC; without denying his own Jewish identity, Schulberg nonetheless joined Kazan in producing a film that, more hysterically than their previous collaboration, *On the Waterfront*, attempted to show all American citizens how to rise above the en-Jewment out of which, as out of a marsh, they are all engendered, beginning as comic Jewish women, but ending as serious American men.

Chapter 5, “Comicosmopolitanism: Behind Television,” looks at the new and emblematic Cold War medium, television, considering the risks involved in broadcasting from the cosmopolis of New York City a comic Jewishness, whose reception, or at least whose anticipated reception, by the rest of America—by what the broadcasters themselves regarded as the real America—resulted in the timidity, indeed the servility, that continues to define network television in the United States. While historians of television have identified a gradual Jewish self-closeting at work in television programming in the fifties, I emphasize here a concomitant but less well-noticed pattern: a strategy of turning comic Jews into tragic Jews, of turning Goldbergs into Rosenbergs. Against the now-dominant image of the tragic Cold War Jew (or of the benign and earnest Cold War Jew in the case of the recent film, *Good Night, and Good Luck*), I adduce the 1976 film *The Front*, an underrated revisiting of the blacklist and of fifties television, written, directed, and acted by blacklist survivors. This film, I show, re-comicizes both fifties Jewish television and its blacklisted personnel, rescuing them from the oblivion of tragic nobility.

The final chapter, “Bringing Down the House: The Blacklist Musical,” continues the book’s move away from the American film industry, toward the two other dominant commercial entertainment media of the Cold War. This move is also a move eastward: away from Hollywood to the even less American cultural capital, New York City. Although Broadway did not have a blacklist, it felt the effects of Hollywood’s, not least

through such central figures of the postwar musical theater as Jerome Robbins; his fellow informer, the writer Abe Burrows; the blacklisted actor Zero Mostel; and the actor Judy Holliday, whose performances both in the musical, *Bells Are Ringing*, and before a HUAC-like Senate subcommittee complicate the opposition between cooperative and uncooperative witnessing. Beyond these particular “cases,” however, the chapter articulates the role of postwar musical *comedy* in constituting, like the island of Manhattan itself, a space at once inside and outside America: a space where the comic *promesse de bonheur* talks and sings with a distinctly un-American accent.

The book’s coda explicitly engages the present, linking the contemporary sycophantic regime consolidated by the blacklist in America with the current state of Israel—“the country in the world,” as Alain Badiou has recently styled it, “where there are the fewest Jews.”¹⁰⁰ Almost exactly simultaneous with the institution of the blacklist, the founding of Israel as a “*Jewish state*” represents, for Badiou, the antithesis of the sort of *cosmopolitan state* that a Jewish politics of universalism and contingency might have made possible. The cosmopolitan state, posited alongside what Badiou calls “the basic anti-Semitism of all states,” may be a theoretical fiction, not to say an oxymoron.¹⁰¹ What gives it both a certain usefulness and a certain plausibility, however, for radical and liberal theorists alike, is that there is something conservative in cosmopolitanism itself, something that *likes a state*. Against this relatively assimilable element of cosmopolitanism, and against the new cosmopolitanisms—the most approved forms of labor in the academy today—I offer one last evocation of the soft, ridiculous, mimetic cosmopolitanism that perhaps even radical political theory cannot tolerate. Banished not just from the United States and from Israel, but even from the “cosmopolitical” academy, this primitive Jewish cosmopolitanism, this *comicosmopolitanism*, may find a hospitable greeting only in the secret, erotically charged recesses where literary studies originate as a kind of comparative literature *avant la lettre*: in that preconceptual xenophilia of which, oddly enough, we have grown reluctant to speak, as if it were as dangerous as making jokes or acting smart-aleck in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

(2)

Jew Envy

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno posit envy as one of the “elements” of anti-Semitism:

No matter what the makeup of the Jews may be in reality, their image, that of the defeated, has characteristics which must make totalitarian rule their mortal enemy: happiness without power, reward without work, a homeland without frontiers, religion without myth. These features are outlawed by the ruling powers because they are secretly coveted by the ruled. The former can survive only as long as the latter turn what they yearn for into an object of hate.¹

Exiled to America, as totalitarian rule is destroying European Jewry, Horkheimer and Adorno are writing before the establishment of Israel; hence “a homeland without frontiers.” No less “dated” from a contemporary U.S. perspective, however, is the first of the characteristics they associate with the image of the Jews: “happiness without power” evokes a decidedly prewar and markedly European stereotype of the Jew, a stereotype almost quaint in its inapplicability to postwar America, in which Jews, far from lacking power, are often alleged to have too much of it, and in which, far more than happiness, the “feature” of the Jew most reliably disseminated by mass culture would seem to be neurosis. Happiness without power? The image of Jews in today’s America might better be characterized as one of power without happiness.

Not that Horkheimer and Adorno’s portrait of the enviable Jew is all sweetness and light. That portrait is “dialectical” enough, at any rate, to accommodate its apparent opposite. Earlier in the same discussion of

anti-Semitism, the authors conjure up a Jewish face on which one sees not the signs of happiness but, rather, a grimace. The trace of “undisciplined mimicry . . . inherited through an unconscious process of imitation in early childhood from generation to generation, from the Jewish rags-and-bones man to the banker,” the grimace, curiously enough, proves no less enviable than the smile over which one might think it casts a chilling shadow: “The grimace seems like play-acting because, instead of performing serious work, it prefers to portray displeasure. It appears to evade the seriousness of life by admitting it without restraint.”² In the very excess of its portrayal, the grimace pushes grimness to the point at which it bizarrely resembles a grin. Emblematising unhappiness with hyperbolic abandon, it rejoins the happiness to which it seems antithetical; registering seriousness “without restraint,” it becomes a cipher of *nonseriousness*. The Jew’s genetically transmitted gift of “undisciplined mimicry” is perhaps never more infuriatingly enviable than when, in a triumph of style over content, “it appears to evade the seriousness of life” precisely by embracing it—when it makes even “displeasure” look like “play-acting.” Admittedly, apparent play-acting is not the same thing as apparent happiness (everything here, in this anatomy of anti-Semitism as spectacle, taking place on the level of image and semblance). But in its insolent simulation of freedom from the discipline of seriousness, play can be an exemplary signifier of happiness. For Horkheimer and Adorno, in any case, both *nonseriousness* and powerless happiness, if only apparent, bespeak the Jew’s exemption from the rules with which “the ruling powers” keep “the ruled” in their place. What could be more desirable, and what therefore more urgently needs to be refigured as despicable, than this Jewish talent for overacting—for a mimicry so undisciplined that it renders even subordination as escape?

Envy in general tries to refigure the desirable as the despicable. As Melanie Klein theorizes, envy insists on *spoiling* the desired object.³ Horkheimer and Adorno formulate the “secretly coveted” Jewish “characteristics” in terms of withoutness (happiness without power, reward without work, a homeland without frontiers, religion without myth); to spoil these characteristics is to rewrite the desirable “without” of freedom as the despicable “without” of lack. Thus taught to “turn what they yearn for into an object of hate,” the anti-Semiticized masses perform

the “serious work” of envy as group psychopathology. And what their envy works on and over, making it the object of a violent aversion therapy, is a Jewish desirability bordering on the sexual.

To be sure, when Jewish happiness manifests itself, as it sometimes does even in the “neurotic” postwar American mode, it is most likely to show up as a propensity for the comic.⁴ But the enviably comic has a tendency to shade into the enviably erotic, happiness assuming more than one set of “features.” In 1946, just two years after Horkheimer and Adorno published *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and echoing their diagnosis of desire turned into hatred, Jean-Paul Sartre proposes a model for anti-Semitism as a kind of “sexual attraction”:

In Berlin I knew a Protestant in whom sexual desire took the form of indignation. The sight of women in bathing suits aroused him to fury; he willingly encouraged that fury and passed his time at swimming-pools. The anti-Semite is like that, and one of the elements of his hatred is a profound sexual attraction toward Jews.⁵

To put the Jew into a bathing suit has in effect been the aim both of certain anti-Semitismisms and of much feminist- and queer-theory-inflected scholarship in the past decade or so.⁶ In their attention to the politics of embodiment, queer and feminist examples have helped Jewish cultural studies to reconstruct what one of the founding texts in that field has called the Jew’s body.⁷ It is not so much a question, to be exact, of putting the Jew into a bathing suit as of putting the Jew *back* into a bathing suit: of retrieving a distinctly un-American image of the Jew not just as sexual but as the object of “sexual desire [taking] the form of indignation.” If, as in Sartre’s analogy, this Jewish image resembles that of the woman, it also resembles that of the male homosexual, insofar as the latter image, too, is elaborated by a phobia mythically containing an “element” of “profound sexual attraction.” The present book participates in the scholarly project of bringing back the Jew of enjoyment, the Jew of *en-Jewment*. Strategically anachronistic, this project reactivates a politically risky old-school and even old-world construction of Jewishness, a “degenerate” Jewishness of the type that a European philosopher might have taken for granted as late as the 1940s, but that seems embarrassingly out of place in the racial imaginary of post-Second World War U.S. culture, in which the Americanization of the Jew has consisted

precisely in *unlinking* Jews from women, homosexuals, and queers—in which the Americanization of the Jew, the Jew's (rather equivocal) success story, has consisted largely in "her" desexualization.

The desexualization is "hers" because the desexualized person is not exactly a man, but not exactly a woman either—more thing, in fact, than gendered human subject.⁸ Consider, for example, an image circulating in newspapers and magazines in the United States at the time of this writing: an advertisement for TCM's "Thirty-One Days of Oscar" series, showing Barbra Streisand holding her Oscar for *Funny Girl*, with the caption: "When you're with the most desired man in Hollywood, that's enviable. When he's only 13½ inches tall, that's classic."⁹ Awarding Streisand, still one of the iconic Jewish-American celebrities, an enviability that it then replaces with classicism, the ad offers an image of the Jew-as-woman quite different from that intimated by Sartre. If it is enviable to be with the most desired man in Hollywood, it might in fact be even *more* enviable for him to be "only 13½ inches tall," not just because his diminutiveness makes a giant of the woman with him, but also because that diminutiveness is oddly compatible with her enjoyment of him as a rather large ("only 13½ inches"?) sex toy. And yet, the ad typifies the ironizing hygiene with which Barbra Streisand is almost always represented in today's mass culture, with the result that, even outside the journalistic circles of the professionally blasé, it is becoming increasingly difficult to utter her name without a smirk of derision. The ad turns, that is, on a preemptive spoiling of the fun—preemptive because, where envy wants to spoil the envied object, the whole idea here seems to be to prevent the object from becoming enviable in the first place. No one must envy Barbra Streisand's good fortune, because, in the disparaging doxa to which the ad subscribes, it is no good fortune at all. Streisand's gigantic stature in relation to her little "man," for instance, gets re-signified as that of a dinosaur, like the Godzilla-esque "Mecha-Streisand" (a puerile or Yiddishizing corruption of "Mega-Streisand"?), the colossal, hideous creature that terrorizes the children on television's *South Park*. Not only has it become almost mandatory to represent her as a grotesque relic of mass entertainment's unhip prehistorical era, the 1960s and 1970s: the ad plays on other ambient elements of the Streisand mythology—the overbearing diva, the devourer of men—and so insinuates into her gigantic shape the sketch of a monstrous Jewish mother, who,

not content merely to castrate men, collapses them into their severed members, which she then uses to gratify her monstrous sexual desire. And precisely because that desire, not to mention the ability to gratify it, might seem all too desirable itself, it must be patheticized as an out-of-control case of penis envy—a condition about as enviable as Streisand’s famous nose, plainly (in the meanest sense of “plain”) a symptom of that very condition, in its sad prosthetic attempt to substitute for what she can never have.¹⁰

In its own conspicuous antiquity, moreover, as in its caricatural irony, the black-and-white photograph of the star at the center of the ad effectively turns *her* into a statuette, albeit a colossal one. Or, rather, it cites and repeats her by-now well-established reification as a kind of kitsch object herself, a “funny girl” whose funniness not only, predictably enough, guarantees her exclusion from the sphere of female beauty—as if, notwithstanding the ugly duckling’s best efforts, “funny” could only ever mean “funny-looking”—but also, more cruelly, reduces her even in her comic “homeland” to the butt of a stale joke, in which she is routinely enlisted as an unwitting self-parody of Hollywood vanity, megalomania, middle-brow banality, etc.¹¹ At once monumentalized and shrunken, even her legendary comic iconicity signifies less a saving freedom from seriousness than imprisonment in a cultural repertoire of sardonic knowingness. Neither funny nor a girl, the funny girl is denied both comic and erotic happiness. It is as though the point of the entire exercise were to erase any residual image of the Jew as enviable—indeed, to install a counterimage of the Jew as *unenviable*, despite all the evidence (wealth, fame, talent, awards) to the contrary. The envied image is a desired object turned into an object of hate. But here, it seems, everything conspires to ensure that Streisand’s image never arouses more than a semi-amused indifference.

No doubt I am placing a fair amount of weight on a single magazine ad, but I am doing so in the belief that it represents more than just the late-career repackaging of one Jewish-American celebrity. The mock-innocence that the ad shares with almost all other mass-cultural artifacts requires that Streisand’s Jewishness remain at the level of mere connotation, so that, while the “sophisticated” mass public is expected to pick up on her Jewishness, any explicit attempt to *read* it is doomed to appear paranoid, as every suspicion of mass culture’s mock-innocence is apt to

be called. And yet, the blurring and dimming of the star's Jewishness are of a piece with the putting-under-erasure of the enviability that her Jewishness, at least according to Sartre and Horkheimer and Adorno, might have conferred upon her. That putting-under-erasure, I would argue, stands in miniature for the story of Jews in America since the 1920s, but especially over the past fifty or sixty years. As my quotations from the mid-twentieth-century European theorists suggest, Jews, especially during and just after the Second World War, had reason to suspect that being envied isn't so enviable. As the secret logic of anti-Semitism, Jew envy has turned out to be at best a backhanded compliment, one that its recipients may well have come to think they could live without.

The villain of the 1947 film *Crossfire*—as we shall see in the next chapter, one of that year's two prominent Hollywood films about anti-Semitism—hates Jews, to the point of killing one, because they “live off the fat of the land.” “You know the kind,” he sneers, adopting the pseudo-discretion of innuendo. “Guys that played it safe during the war. . . . Got swell apartments, swell dames. . . . Some of them are named Samuels, some of them got funnier names.”¹² Entirely resonant with the contemporary accounts of anti-Semitism advanced by the European writers I have cited, the killer's justification of his crime may have sounded a warning to American Jews that they had better take steps to shrink or even eliminate the parasitic swellness that the envious might otherwise attribute to them.¹³ The avowed aim of the filmmakers, of course, was to educate Gentiles, not to frighten Jews, but when the producer and the director were sent to prison three years later for refusing to “cooperate” with the Communist-hunting House Committee on Un-American Activities, their fate, even though they were both non-Jews, may have served to reinforce the unintended message that, for Jews in America, a certain amount of image-revision was in order. For while the film made a point of discrediting the anti-Semite's Jew envy—revealing Joseph Samuels, the murdered Jew, to have been nothing more than an average Joe—its mistake had perhaps been to remind the American audience of what needed discrediting in the first place, to flaunt the Jew's “secretly coveted” features if only by way of dismissing them as so many stereotypes.

How is this effort to preempt Jew envy different from what happens in the ad featuring Barbra Streisand? Both the film of 1947 and the ad of

2006, after all, raise the specter of a certain Jewish happiness, or “fun-niness,” in order to send it packing. The difference has something to do, doubtless, with that between old left earnestness and postmodern irony. Yet it is also, more broadly, the outcome of a large-scale and long-running, if to some extent unconscious and uncoordinated, campaign of public relations dating back to the Jewish invention of Hollywood, but assuming a special urgency and intensity since *and because of* the inadvertent provocation constituted by a film like *Crossfire*. This campaign is epitomized by, though by no means restricted to, Hollywood’s “voluntary” self-censorship in the form of a blacklist. Instituted in 1947 and continuing into the 1960s, containing the names of alleged Communists and “Communist-sympathizers,” and thus ending or at best suspending their Hollywood careers, the blacklist worked precisely to weaken the American Jew’s enviability, thereby appeasing the enraged myrmidons of national identity, whose prosecution of Reds, I suggested in chapter 1, functioned mainly as a red herring, the search for political subversives legitimating a quasi-sexual obsession—not unlike that of Sartre’s indignant Protestant at the swimming pool—with the “outlawed” features of a happiness so dangerously desirable that it must be wiped off the face of the land. Explicitly dedicated to the *pursuit* of happiness, the country, by the middle of the last century, began pursuing it with a vengeance.¹⁴

It is a commonplace of Cold War history, at any rate, that anti-Communism provided a cover for anti-Semitism.¹⁵ In an apparent paradox, historians of anti-Semitism also agree that the period of the Red Scare—roughly, the years from 1946 to 1956—coincides with the marked diminishing of anti-Jewish sentiment in America, and with the triumphant entrance of Jews into the American mainstream.¹⁶ The rise of American Jews in an age of political anti-Semitism may be less paradoxical, however, than it seems: Barbra Streisand’s “failure” typifies the conditions for American-Jewish “success” since the forties. “Is a nose with deviation such a crime against the nation?” To the question posed in the mid-sixties by funny girl Fanny Brice’s mother in the Broadway and Hollywood musical that made Streisand a star, the answer, at last, is a relieved “no”—provided that the deviant nose belongs to someone who *denounces* crimes against the nation. Once upon a time, the nation may have been excited and outraged by Jewish deviation; but the dominant, anti-invidious Jewish image-making of the past half-century—the long

1950s, whose end is not yet in sight—has managed, without recourse to plastic surgery, to carve out a Jewish face whose deviation hardly makes a difference.

“Hardly,” because, like all such operations, the operation of putting Jewish enviability *sous rature* never quite covers up what it crosses out. Even in the TCM ad, the largest typeface is accorded to the words “enviable” and “classic,” the former in fact enjoying pride of place at the top of the ad. If the ad takes away with one hand what it gives with the other, the gift—a dubious one, to be sure—nonetheless leaves a trace of itself. The process of turning Jews into Americans required the elimination of everything that made Jews look provocatively (i.e., at once irritatingly and excitingly) *un-American*. Calling that alien substance “Communism” had the advantage of masking the witch-hunters’ envious pursuit—both persecutory and erotic—of a more subversive, if less recognizably political, crime against the nation: the crime of appearing to refuse the seriousness of being American, to shirk the interminable labor of patriotic performance ranged under the banner of what never quite announces itself as *American activities*. But the alibi (in Cold War jargon, the “front”) of anti-Communism had a corresponding *disadvantage*: that of failing to expunge the less “ideological” signs of Jewish *un-Americanness*. Beneath the counterimage of the desexualized Jew, that is, there may still be something to yearn for; there may yet be something criminal about Barbra Streisand’s nose.

The Jewish-American story that I would tell here has two different temporalities: a temporality of change, corresponding to a movement from the image of Jews as “the defeated,” as Horkheimer and Adorno write, to that of the victorious, where “defeat” is European-style happiness without power and “victory” is American-style power without happiness; and a temporality of persistence, working beneath the whole ambitious process of Americanization to preserve an archaic residue of unassimilated, prewar Jewishness in its intolerably sexy alterity. Occasionally, as we shall see, the interplay of these two temporalities will produce uncanny effects, as when the topoi of 1920s anti-Semitism, supposedly so remote from the way we live now, reappear in the discourse of today’s self-appointed protectors of the American family and the American child.

What gives the story yet another layer of opacity, moreover, is that the envious subject is no less veiled than the envied object. Even before the

palimpsestic counterimage has been imposed, that is, Jew envy itself will have taken care to put on a disguise—like, for instance, the mask of anti-Communism. For Jew envy, like all envy, is a *shameful* emotion: what E. L. Doctorow, in his fictional account of the Rosenberg executions, calls “the emotion of a loser.”¹⁷ Envy begins in the wound of inferiority, real or perceived, which is why it cannot stop at the sour-grapes technique of turning what it yearns for into an object of contempt: it must go further and hide even from itself, masquerading as moral indignation, political rigor, pious “concern,” bemused condescension—in short, as an expression of *social authority*, the very thing that it so poignantly lacks. When one confesses to being envious, one almost never is. Or rather, the envy one confesses to must be so light that the confession involves little or no loss of face. And envy (the word comes from the Latin verb *invideo*, meaning “to look askance at”)¹⁸ has a great deal to do, as we have seen, with the management of looks and faces, with “features” and “images” and “figures” and “masks”: envy wants nothing so much as to wipe that grin off the face of the envied one, although, while it is in the make-over business, it must also dissimulate its own sneer and clenched teeth and narrowed, sidelong gaze. Avowed envy is usually offered and received as a kind of compliment, as admiration with the added tribute of mock-rancor, and the charade flatteringly testifies to a certain intimacy, a certain understanding, between sender and receiver—between, in effect, benefactor and beneficiary. But while avowed envy implies generosity, which in turn betokens the relative comfort and success of the one who envies, unavowed, unavowable envy—what well deserves to be called *serious envy*—clutches at seriousness itself to avoid recognizing the frustration out of which it festers.

“A breakdown of Gentile seriousness is the opportunity of the Jew.” So warned Henry Ford’s weekly, the *Dearborn Independent*, in 1922, in a series of articles later published under the rubric of *The International Jew*, with the aim of introducing an American audience to the anti-Semitic forgeries known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.¹⁹ Even restored or fantasmatically unviolated, however, “Gentile seriousness” may be mere compensation for the insult of Jewish *nonseriousness*—the insult, that is, of Gentiles’ inability to participate in it. Among the multiple threats posed by Ford’s *International Jew*, well before the post-Second World War accomplishment of the Jew’s Americanization, is one that even

contemporary U.S. readers will recognize: that of a leftist, secularizing cultural elite, dividing its subversive operations between Hollywood and the academy:

Colleges are being constantly invaded by the Jewish Idea. The sons of the Anglo-Saxon are being attacked in their very heredity. The sons of the Builders, the Makers, are being subverted to the philosophy of the destroyers. . . . The youth is captured by influences which deliberately lie in wait for him in the colleges. True, in after years a large proportion come to their senses . . . and they come back to sanity. They find that “free love” doctrines make exhilarating club topics, but that the Family—the old-fashioned loyalty of one man and one woman to each other and their children—is the basis, not only of society, but of all personal character and progress. They find that Revolution, while a delightful subject for fiery debates and an excellent stimulant to the feeling of supermanlikeness, is nevertheless not the process of progress.

And, too, they come at length to see that the Stars and Stripes and the Free Republic are better far than the Red Star and Soviet sordidness.²⁰

Famed for its destructiveness, Jewish intellectuality—here, “the Jewish Idea”—is especially pernicious because it *gives pleasure*: it seduces “the sons of the Anglo-Saxon” with “exhilarating,” “delightful,” “excellent stimulant[s].” This pedagogical seduction might seem an all-male affair, except that the invader precisely undermines the maleness of the “invaded,” not least when appearing to exalt it: the role of superman (another Jewish *Luftmensch*) is too flighty for any real American man to play. Yet the unmanning of America, its *undermanning*, may prove all too attractive—as enviable as the Jewish image of “the defeated.” Jewish lack becomes Jewish luck: the international Jew’s airy rootlessness translates itself happily into the promiscuity of “free love.” And like the “free love” that it promotes, the Jewish invasion—an invasion *by* the defeated—affords a release from the prison of heterosexual monogamy known as “the Family.” In place of the club with which the latter beats its members into docility, “the Jewish Idea” entices with the offer of membership in a “club” of a less violent kind. The figure lurking not too far behind this “Idea,” of course, is the sinister (malevolently leftist) Jewish college professor: a stereotype that, as a Jewish college professor myself, I would much sooner embrace than repudiate, especially when

so many others of my kind are busy pledging allegiance to the dominant seriousness in its most available forms (historicist diligence, political gravitas, ethical responsibility). In the face of all this virtue, the present book is in fact dedicated to the redeployment of the destructive Jewish professor—whom Henry Ford’s ideological heirs have not hesitated to mobilize for their own purposes anyway. A perennially popular stock villain in the nightmares broadcast by the mass media’s guardians of the Family, and of the *Christian* Family in particular—even if, nowadays, the cagier among those cops usually tone down the Jew-baiting—this Jewish professor reveals the oppressiveness of American morality by proposing, as an alternative to it, the pleasure of thought, as the similarly seditious Jewish Hollywood producer proposes the pleasure of “mere” entertainment.²¹ In 1922, the professorial villain resembles a pederastic drug dealer pushing a lethally foreign and cosmopolitan combination of Nietzsche and Bolshevik “Revolution.” But he will not look too different in 1953, or in 2009. Minus the Nietzsche, he will return (or remain) to haunt the fever dreams of McCarthyite America; minus the obvious Jewishness—except, of course, when he is waging war on Christmas, like a bicoastal, Streisandish superwoman looking down her nose at the rest of America—he will figure, in our own time, as the *bête rose* of Fox News and the less “respectable” right-wing media.²²

Whether in the twenties, the fifties, or even the first decade of the twenty-first century, whether international, un-American, or unpatriotic, a certain Jew, then, is interposed between “the ruling powers” and “the ruled” (Henry Ford, of course, being no more an average American than Rupert Murdoch). This interposed Jew serves not only to absorb the anger the latter might otherwise direct at the former, but also to embody an “outlawed” deviation from the discipline of national identity in a “Free Republic.” For the freedom of that republic risks seeming almost totalitarian unless the alluringly *international* is wrapped in “sordidness,” or unless the banalizing magic of ideology causes the Jew’s insidious, exotic “influences” simply to lose their charm, so that “a large proportion” of American “youth,” “subverted to the philosophy of the destroyers,” somehow nonetheless routinely “come to their senses,” “back to sanity” and “the Stars and Stripes.” To be sure, the political and economic elites need the “cultural elite,” in both its academic and its show-business divisions, as a screen for their own power and privilege. Yet the “cul-

tural elite” is not *just* a screen for other elites. What is being attacked in the cultural elite (by which “the sons of the Anglo-Saxon are being attacked in their very heredity”) is indeed something imagined as specifically “cultural”: in this case, happiness not exactly without power, but not exactly with it either. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, American Jews today may be resented for having “too much” power; but this resentment is not the same as the animus against a covertly or implicitly Jewish cultural elite, since the “power” of such an elite is always vitiated by the impotence that attends the cultural *tout court* in a world where real power belongs to the politician or the businessman, like Henry Ford. Next to this real power, and next to the capitalist ideal of “serious work,” what simultaneously offends and attracts in the cultural elite is “reward without work,” to recur to Horkheimer and Adorno’s list of enviable Jewish characteristics: the cushy life of that *pays de cognac* that the wits of the right call Hollyweird; or, in the less glamorous but perhaps even more degenerate groves of academe—not far, by the way, from the Communist workers’ paradise—work turning into play, sobriety into exhilaration, discipline into delight. Although the Jew’s enviousness includes “religion without myth” (rounding out Horkheimer and Adorno’s list), and although there may be other reasons for non-Jews to envy Judaism (as distinguished from Jewishness), the Jew who gets envied in America is thus more typically the “cultural” Jew than the religious Jew. The Jew’s “culture,” however, is not the simple opposite of American seriousness: more invitingly, more threateningly, it introduces and activates a subversive frivolity principle *within* seriousness. The Jewish intellectual “destroyers” must be destroyed for putting a heady pleasure inside the head.

In keeping with the American industrial know-how for which the name “Ford” once stood, the passage I have been discussing illustrates a certain *technology* of envy. Here, the ruling powers protect themselves against the ruled by showing the latter how to turn their desire into hatred and their hatred into “sanity”: the fundamental *racial strength* that binds the target audience—in this case, the old populist and nativist constituency of the rural South and Midwest—to “the Builders,” “the Makers,” the “Anglo-Saxon” masters.²³ So ingenious is this technology, moreover, that, while rebuilding “Gentile seriousness,” it provides its used users with a simulacrum of the Jewish nonseriousness that they

originally coveted but to which they must never accede. No reward without work here, but rather a reward *for* work—a secret bonus granted for performing the inherently rewarding work of making oneself a national subject—this subliminal *Jewishness-effect* is produced by the anti-Semitic discourse's imitation, conscious or not, of the Jewish "philosophy" that it condemns.

That envy should be mimetic comes as no surprise.²⁴ One can perhaps at least be *like* what one cannot be, although the likeness must never be confused with actual liking: there may be imitation, but it must take the sadistic form of mockery. Not, of course, that sadism itself precludes the fondest attachment. Mocking the meat it feeds on, or *would* feed on if it could, the green-eyed monster, after all, merely instantiates mockery's ambivalence, its constitutive wavering between ridicule and homage.²⁵ As a mode of envy, anti-Semitism is a mode of parody as well. Bristling with theoretical affectations and bogus learning, aspiring to become a "philosophy" in its own right, anti-Semitism might also be called pseudo-Semitism. A Jew *manqué*, the anti-Semite mimics the Jew's perverse intellectuality (is there any other kind?), at once reviling it and vicariously enjoying it.²⁶ Consider, for instance, the aping involved in the assertion that the "sons of the Anglo-Saxon" eventually "find that Revolution, while a delightful subject for fiery debates and an excellent stimulant to the feeling of supermanlikeness, is nevertheless not the process of progress." While the readers of this passage are themselves being hailed as the endangered but reliably stout-hearted sons of the Anglo-Saxon, they are also being treated to an ersatz version of the Jewish intellectual's playful irony ("an excellent stimulant to the feeling of supermanlikeness") and impressively incantatory, vaguely "European" jargon ("the process of progress"). Anti-Semitism here offers a double gratification: it flatters its audience into feeling not only "strong" but also "smart." And if the smartness isn't quite as "exhilarating" as Jewish doctrines of free love and so forth, if it must remain a pale imitation of what Daniel Boyarin calls "Jewissance," that pallor, which is to say that whiteness, is of course its own consolation.²⁷

As recent scholarship has shown, at the beginning of the 1920s American Jews had not yet secured their identity, so precious in America, *as* white. It was not until later in the decade, Michael Rogin has argued, with the apotheosis of Jewish blackface in the 1927 film *The Jazz Singer*,

that Jews would establish their whiteness by appearing to “lose” it.²⁸ But while the Jew circa 1922 was trying to get rid of her deviation from the American racial norm, that very deviation may have been what others were secretly coveting.²⁹ In the articles published as *The International Jew*, the coveting is indeed a well-kept secret; the hysteria of Ford’s “extremism” works overtime to conceal the erotic cathexis that motivates it. Only three years later, however, a far more urbane text is still figuring the Jew as “repellently” international: as the avatar of a frankly “Oriental” extravagance. Willa Cather’s 1925 novel, *The Professor’s House*, features a Jewish character named Louie Marsellus, about whom the eponymous professor and his wife have the following exchange (in which the professor speaks first):

“It all comes down to this, my dear: one likes the florid style, or one doesn’t. You yourself used not to like it.” . . .

“I dislike floridity when it is beaten up to cover the lack of something, to take the place of something. I never disliked it when it came from exuberance. Then it isn’t floridness, it’s merely strong colour.”

“Very well; some people don’t care for strong colour. It fatigues them.”³⁰

With the Proustian echo some have heard in his name, Marsellus indeed represents a striking foreignness of style in the Midwestern milieu of Cather’s novel. Whether one “likes” this style or “dislikes” it, whether one calls it “floridness” or “merely strong colour,” it suggests a Jewish difference that has as much to do with language as with race. Whatever Marsellus’s color tells us about his complexion, that is, it equally evokes the colors of rhetoric: what he overflows with, in an “exuberance” that “fatigues” the professor and charms his wife, is tropes; his “floridity” is a surfeit of the flowers of language. Marsellus’s “exuberance” recalls an aspect of Jewish happiness that we encountered earlier, in the “undisciplined mimicry” that lifts the grimace into a mask of levity. In addition to its comic and erotic features, this happiness assumes the guise of style itself—not just of a particular, or particularly excessive, style, but of style *as* excess, as portrayal “without restraint,” as what an Anglo-Saxon college student might find temporarily exhilarating but what must always “fatigue” his professor, provided, of course, that the professor is an American and not himself an international Jew. For, even when he is a Europhilic intellectual and aesthete like the novel’s titular character

(who, for his part, professes to admire the “austere” style), the American man’s American manhood must remain rooted in the seriousness that disavows style. “All style . . . is, ultimately, epicene,” Susan Sontag observed in “Notes on ‘Camp’”; style makes happy, not to say gay, because, like Jewishness itself around 1925, it deviates from the straight path of serious work.³¹ In the same essay, Sontag also claimed, however, that “the two pioneering forces of modern sensibility are Jewish moral seriousness and homosexual aestheticism and irony.”³² Much closer to the latter than to the former, in fact radically *nonserious* in its refusal to stay within bounds, Marsellus’s exuberance epitomizes Jewishness as style transgressing norms of gender and nationality at once, since whatever goes further than the strict requirements of getting the job done, whatever introduces an element of luxury into the performance of the task at hand, is at odds with the rugged masculinity—so easily fatigued—of the American character in general. Unmanly and therefore un-American as well, Marsellus’s Jewish style, while not explicitly “outlawed,” falls outside the law regulating the assimilation of outsiders into insiders. Not just diegetically replacing but symbolically outdoing the resonantly named Tom Outland, a non-Jewish-identified character who nevertheless (as the Professor’s wife remarks) “was highly coloured too,” Marsellus exercises, in the *domestic* scene adumbrated by the novel’s title, the outlandish fascination of the perversely *ausländisch* or alien.³³

Soon, as I have noted, *The Jazz Singer* will arrive to mark a decisive “success” in the long—indeed, perhaps interminable—erasure of this outlandish Jew. The whitening process has been going on for some time, of course, before Al Jolson puts on blackface. But once he does so, it becomes all the more evident that the strong color of Louie Marsellus and his kind has faded into the repressed prehistory of Jews in America: a repressed prehistory that nonetheless remains faintly legible beneath the normative counterimage. If Jolson’s Jewish jazz singer, or, rather, his Jewish-American jazz singer, is a definitive inscription of that counterimage, a somewhat later, but maybe equally decisive move in the “demystifying” project of assimilation will consist in rewriting the too-colorful Louie Marsellus not just as an American but as the worst kind of American. What I am describing is the achievement of *What Makes Sammy Run?*, the 1941 novel by Budd Schulberg, about the rapacious rise of a “smart little yid” from Lower East Side urchin to Hollywood studio

head.³⁴ In the fifties, Schulberg would become a “cooperative” witness before the Committee on Un-American Activities, naming names of former Communist associates, and claiming that he did so in part because of the Communist Party’s attack on his novel. Not that one can blame the Party for smelling a rat, since, even in the novel itself, published six years before the blacklist resumed the work, so effectively performed by blackface, of whitewashing the Jew, Schulberg is already “cooperating”: he produces (and produces himself as) the Good American Jew—a figure whom, after Sontag, we might call the “modern” Jew of “moral seriousness”—by testifying against the Bad American Jew, whose badness, unenviably enough, seems un-American only to the extent of giving America a bad name.

Of course, even the “Communism” pursued by HUAC served as a mere front, as I suggested earlier, for un-American activities of a less politically circumscribed, more diffusely seductive kind. No Communist—in fact, an anti-Communist stoolpigeon in his own right—Sammy Glick, the antihero of Schulberg’s novel, still strangely anticipates HUAC’s official villains, his political opposites, in representing a sublated residue of the “premodern” Jew: the “epicene” Jew of happiness. In the case of the Communists, the strong foreign color of a downright red floridity is obscured, or, better, dulled, by a stratagem that might be dubbed a *ruse russe*: a vast Soviet drabness thrown, like a wet blanket, over the postwar left in general. In the case of Sammy Glick, the policy of envy-reduction centers on the trick of keeping the florid style but grafting the Jewish *fleurs du mal* into a context where they lose their exoticism and instead appear depressingly homegrown. The procedure begins with Sammy’s last name: a variant of the German *Glück* or the Yiddish *glik*, meaning “luck” or “happiness,” “Glick” announces the character’s travesty of the *promesse de bonheur* implicit no longer in the exhilarating international Jewish Idea or in exuberant Jewish cosmopolitanism *à la* Marsellus but, rather, in the American dream itself—an ideal so earnestly maintained, by Schulberg among others (“from the very beginning it was Jefferson versus Hamilton” [327]), that it effectively crushes happiness beneath the weight of seriousness, if not of power.³⁵ What makes Sammy run, in any event, is a pursuit of happiness so compulsive and so ruthless that it resembles a machine for the production of misery. Himself a kind of machine (hence the narrator’s obsession with what makes him *run*),

Sammy, or, as he styles himself, “Uncle Sammy” (81), is less a character than an embodied principle at work throughout American culture “in the first half of the twentieth century” (276): an “epidemic” (102, 275) or a “cancer” (275) of selfish, all-destroying individualism. Universalized as the “sammyglickness” (193) and the “Sammy-drive” (xiv) that have *overrun* America, Schulberg’s backstabbing Jewish parvenu, in short, is “the id of our whole society” (193).

In this presentation of the “yid” as American “id,” neither the yid nor the id fares particularly well: while the former is divested of any foreign glamour, the latter finds its pleasure systematically spoiled by the obtrusion of ego and money. Even that money, moreover—one of the anti-Semite’s most beloved Jewish signifiers—lacks its usual capacity to induce Jew envy, since it serves only to fuel Sammy’s frenzy of upward mobility. And yet, despite the novel’s conscientious attempt to ward off envy by projecting, in and as Glick, an iconic *disfiguration* of Jewish happiness, Schulberg’s “all-American heel” nonetheless preserves some of the features of his undisfigured forerunners: features whose great virtue is that *they can’t be taken seriously*.³⁶ As befits a heel, however, those features have been displaced from the face to the feet. For if Sammy runs like a car, the literalizing insistence with which the novel keeps posing the question of its title necessarily focuses our attention on his footwear. Portraying show business as shoe business, the novel maps Sammy’s rise in Hollywood in terms of his brilliant career as a shoe fetishist. “I’m a sucker for shoes” (44), Sammy says, and the narrative doesn’t hesitate to prove him right, pausing regularly—with all the butch unexcitability one would expect from a good Jewish narrator named Al Manheim—to observe the latest hysterical symptom of his fashion-victimhood: “The chair in front of him was empty and he turned it around and stuck his feet up on it. I couldn’t help noticing the shoes. They were new again. A style I had never seen before, without any laces at all” (132); “Even the customary patent-leather evening shoes weren’t good enough for him tonight. He had discovered dancing pumps, those dainty, ultra-evening slippers with the pointed toes and little black bows” (143); “The crepe soles on his white kid shoes seemed to be half a foot high” (160).

As hysterical symptoms, these fashion faux pas obviously partake of the pathology of *overassimilation*, of *nouveau-riche* vulgarity, Jewish-style.

But the Jewish style on display here evokes the hysterical in its comic sense as well as in its pathological one. Like the exhilaration and the exuberance before it, Sammy Glick's Jewish extravagance—as “female” and as “homosexual” as its hysteria suggests—bespeaks an impulse of style almost antithetical to the deadly serious, all-American “Sammy-drive”: a comic impulse, and also an erotic one, to trample upon the dreary decorum of American masculinity. Behind Sammy's lifetime of shoe-shopping stands this primal childhood scene: “Sammy played in the streets without shoes. For his fifth birthday he was given a pair that Israel [his older brother] had outgrown. But they were still several sizes too large for him, and the way they flapped like a clown's made the other kids laugh” (212). Clearly traumatic—the other kids laugh at Sammy, not with him—this scene at the same time contains the seed of the clownish frivolity principle that will keep Sammy running as much as his grim American quest for riches and fame. Obviously, his entire career can be read as an endless attempt to master or to avenge the trauma of childhood humiliation. And, like many fashion-crazed overachievers, he plays a “sucker”'s game indeed: the more he tries to overcome that trauma, the more he repeats it. “He swung his feet up on his desk and I noticed his camel's hair socks and tricky shoes, leather strips woven like a Mexican basket, with a space left for the toes to stick out. ‘These are swell shoes for working,’ he said” (44). But if “swell” cruelly reinscribes “several sizes too large”—as though “swell” really meant “swollen”—if, that is, the very swellness of each new pair of shoes condemns them to replicate those original flapping, clown-like hand-me-downs, the swell, as we saw earlier, is one of the stylistic signatures of a Jewishness far more enviable than pathetic. Grown-up Sammy is just as laughable as little Sammy. But to call the dandy's “tricky” and “dainty” shoes ridiculous is not necessarily to put them down: in the “ridiculous,” we sometimes hear the laughter of style itself as it dandily dances its way, in its increasingly light loafers, out of the confines of manly dignity. The voice of quasirabbinical morality, Manheim predictably insists on reading this dance as the desperate race of that Schulbergian specter (and *semblable*), the American rat, who can never do anything more than run in ironic circles. Yet the piety and banality of his reading cannot account for the enthralled obsessiveness with which he imposes it. Even more

than what makes Sammy run, what makes Manheim keep asking what makes Sammy run is the comic, erotic, stylistic pirouettes whereby the latter decorates the crude and conventional “blueprint” (276) in which Jewish moral seriousness keeps him trapped.

The Jew’s tribute not only to “modern sensibility” but to America as well, moral seriousness yearns for its prisoner as the anti-Semite yearns for the forbidden features of the Jew. More fundamentally, there is no Manheim without Sammy, no modern American Jew without an atavistic clown to keep an eye on—with the result that it is not entirely clear who is imprisoning whom.³⁷ At any rate, it is as if the good Jew, in his wary attempt to reduce the causes of Jew envy, had ended up internalizing it. Hence the often-repeated charge that Schulberg’s novel is anti-Semitic. And, after all, how could it not be, with Schulberg’s surrogate, Manheim, so relentlessly “horrified” by his captivating captive? When, ten years after publishing the novel, Schulberg goes before HUAC to name names, it is no longer the Republican parvenu but the left-wing pariah whom he is patriotically betraying. Yet the parvenu and the pariah are both Glicks: both traces of a Jewish happiness still worth envying, despite the considerable pains taken to trash it.

So dangerous was this residual enviability still thought to be, moreover, that “friendly” witnesses like Schulberg were by no means the only Jews to make friends with American seriousness. One of the pariahs themselves, in fact, would become an enduring heroine of the left while doing some serious envy-avoidance—almost *by* doing some serious envy-avoidance. Here, again, is Lillian Hellman, explaining to HUAC why she would talk to the committee about her own political beliefs but not—as all witnesses were required to do if they wished to escape the blacklist—inform on other people: “To hurt innocent people whom I knew many years ago in order to save myself is, to me, inhuman and indecent and dishonorable. I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year’s fashions.”³⁸ Wrapping herself in the prestigiously dowdy mantle of *anti*-style, and her persecutors in the less flatteringly oxymoronic frippery of reactionary chic, Hellman would appear the staunchest of American patriots. Her letter to the committee continues:

I was raised in an old-fashioned American tradition and there were certain homely things that were taught to me: to try to tell the truth, not to

bear false witness, not to harm my neighbor, to be loyal to my country, and so on. In general, I respected these ideals of Christian honor and did as well with them as I knew how. It is my belief that you will agree with these simple rules of human decency and will not expect me to violate the good American tradition from which they spring. (93–94)

If the line about “this year’s fashions” insinuates a feminizing, homosexualizing dig at the guardians of Americanism—as late as 1976, when she publishes *Scoundrel Time*, her blacklist memoir, Hellman is not above making homophobic wisecracks about Roy Cohn, the Sammy Glick of the Cold War—the flag-waving that ensues is as much finger-wagging as appeasement.³⁹ Elsewhere in *Scoundrel Time*, as we have seen, she describes the craven Jewish studio heads of Hollywood, HUAC’s accomplices in blacklisting, as trying “to offer the Cossacks a bowl of chicken soup” (68). Hellman has devised a recipe for shaming the Cossacks by offering them chicken soup that tastes downright unkosher. For, with the exception of patriotic loyalty, the “ideals of Christian honor” that constitute her “good American tradition” come right out of the Ten Commandments; those “old-fashioned American” values, even more old-fashioned than she claims, are as old as the Old Testament.

Combining modern sensibility with divine authority, Hellman’s Jewish moral seriousness masquerades, then, as the old-time American religion that the committee members themselves, all Gentiles, ought to be practicing. Yet her performance before HUAC is not simply an anti-old-fashion show: not simply—to use the terms of the ad featuring Barbra Streisand—a performance of the “classic” rather than of the enviable. To be sure, her challenge to the committee—which could have sent her “straight to jail” (101) for trying to negotiate as to the limits of her testimony, but which “merely” blacklisted her instead—is remembered for its straighter-than-thou gutsiness. Who remembers, though, that, when she stood up to HUAC as a better Christian and thus a better American, one whose “homely” morality compelled her to repudiate “this year’s fashions,” she was wearing the latest Paris original? Understandably, Hellman makes much of her bold anti-fashion statement. But she also points out that she took great care to choose the outfit in which she would appear before the committee: on the day before she testified, she bought herself a “beautiful, expensive Balmain” (96) dress,

along with “a very expensive hat and a fine pair of white kid gloves” (98). Like Sammy Glick’s “white kid shoes,” and indeed like the rest of his wardrobe, Hellman’s gloves and her hat and her dress all hail from the realm of luxury in which secretly coveted Jewish happiness now itself lives in semi-secrecy, in the Cold War’s cold storage, such that its rare public appearances are attended by an acute sense of just how “expensive” expensive things are.

In her diary notes on the day of her testimony, Hellman wrote: “My dress, my hat, my gloves . . . will be the last extravagances for many years. They felt good” (98). They will be the last extravagances because, like everyone else who refuses to name names, Hellman will soon find herself unemployed. But once the project of reducing Jew envy has begun, *all* extravagances are the “last” extravagances: anything that *feels good* must be experienced as if it were about to be renounced. Even a cooperative witness like Budd Schulberg, whose cooperation wins him the privilege to continue working in Hollywood, does so on the condition that he continue giving up Glick, where giving him up entails both turning him over to the authorities and going without him. But if one must keep on kicking the habit, then of course one must keep on indulging in it—with all the *abuse* that both the kicking and the indulgence suggest. In other words, the abuse may be a kind of cultivation. At a certain point in the career of Jews in America, trashing what is enviably Jewish may become a furtive way of preserving it—perhaps the only way of preserving it, other than by letting it look female or homosexual rather than Jewish, as when Lillian Hellman’s extravagances become forgivable, and forgettable, because readable as a woman’s but not as a Jew’s prerogative, or when Hollywood’s gay cabal covers for Hollywood’s Jewish cabal.

The enviable is obviously worth preserving. But because it just as obviously attracts the murderous hostility of envy itself, it must be preserved in disguise. Like the “homeliness” that descends on certain faces lest anyone begrudge them their joy, the unenviable Americanized counterface shields what it is written over and thereby mars. Without this protective disfiguration, the face of Jewish happiness risks exciting the kind of envious rage whose genocidal consequences impelled Sartre and Horkheimer and Adorno to write their analyses of anti-Semitism in the first place. To read a series of American texts with the help of these mid-century European theorists, as I have done here, is to de-Americanize

not only the texts but also the Jewishness variously featured within them. In uncovering an archaic, “European” image beneath the blandly respectable Jewish-American countenance, I have no doubt been courting Jew envy as well as studying it. But the alternative is not necessarily preferable. While it may be safer to keep the enviable Jew, along with Jew envy, covered up, the safety entails a certain risk of its own. As the recent war on the “war on Christmas” shows, envy-avoidance is not a foolproof strategy. And when it fails, it offers no critical leverage over the aggression it has been trying to prevent. However far American Jews may have come since the days when Horkheimer and Adorno could write about organized anti-Semitism under totalitarian rule, enough of pre-Second World War “Europe” has stayed with them, I have been suggesting, to attract the notice of those who can’t stand the sight of other people’s happiness without power. Even in America today, some people still can’t take a Jewish joke. There is much to be said for giving it to them anyway.

Petrified Laughter

Jews in Pictures, 1947

Nominations

In his book on the Jews of Hollywood, Neal Gabler recounts the following story of how the actor John Garfield got his name:

“What kind of a name is Garfield, anyway?” Jack Warner asked a young actor from New York’s Group Theater. “It doesn’t sound American.” Jules Garfield, formerly Julius Garfinkle, protested that it was the name of an American president, so Warner countered that it was the Jules that had to go. How about James—James Garfield? “But that’s the president’s name,” Garfield objected. “You wouldn’t name a goddamn actor Abraham Lincoln, would you?” “No, kid, we wouldn’t,” answered a Warner executive, “because Abe is a name that most people would say is Jewish and we wouldn’t want people to get the wrong idea.” So Julius Garfinkle became John Garfield.¹

“We wouldn’t want people to get the wrong idea” of course means “we wouldn’t want people to get the right idea”: an idea they could get—since you can never be too careful—even from a name like “Abraham Lincoln.” True to type, however, the moguls proved as shrewd as they were self-hating. After all, you *wouldn’t* name a movie actor “Abraham,” even today. And though Jack Warner may not have known much American history, his immigrant ear was acute enough to pick up some bad vibes around the name “Garfield.” For, like Lincoln, the American president who bore it was one of the three assassinated presidents at the time of

John Garfield's christening. That this "goddamn actor" would share a Christian name with the *fourth* president to be assassinated is no doubt what they call an accident of history. Another accident of history—but an utterly predictable accident, an accident waiting to happen—was the assassination of John Garfield himself: by which I mean the targeting and tormenting of the actor by the House Un-American Activities Committee, which, intent on humiliating him into the violent redundancy of naming names, played a large role in causing the heart attack that would kill him in 1952 at the age of thirty-nine. For refusing to become a fink, the former Garfinkle paid with his life.

"What kind of a name is Garfield, anyway?": as though to naturalize his own name, Jack Warner doesn't so much ask a question as issue a warning. No one more alert to what "doesn't sound American" than a Jewish studio head in Hollywood's golden age—especially as that golden age gave way to a more overt reign of terror conducted in the name of patriotism, and supported with abject enthusiasm by every Jewish mogul, including Jack Warner. If Warner, assisting in the naming of John Garfield, darkly intuited the fatality of that name, his endorsement of the blacklist would help turn his intuition into a self-fulfilling prophecy, and his caution into a death wish. "How about James—James Garfield?" With warners like these, who needs stalkers? With bodyguards like these, who needs assassins?²

In 1947, the same year in which the Un-American Activities Committee began its inquisition in Hollywood, and in which, eager to please their Christian masters in Washington and on Wall Street, even at the cost of self-destruction, Warner and his fellow studio heads instituted the blacklist, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, living in Los Angeles, the very capital of what, through their indictment of it, would come to be known as the culture industry, published that indictment in the first printed edition of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. We have already encountered this passage, but it is worth considering again what the authors had to say about "culture monopolies" like the Hollywood studios: "They have to keep in with the true wielders of power, to ensure that their sphere of mass society, the specific product of which still has too much of cozy liberalism and Jewish intellectualism about it, is not subjected to a series of purges."³ At once the purge and the deflection of the purge, the blacklist, far from proving Horkheimer and Adorno wrong,

conveniently illustrates their whole oxymoronic ontology of the culture monopolies, or the culture industry, as domination by the dominated, as liberal totalitarianism, as the Nazism of the Jews—as the very granddaddy of all those baby-faced tyrannies that cultural studies loves to hate. If the Warner brothers hadn't existed, Horkheimer and Adorno would have had to invent them.

And while we're at it, here's one more Accident That Isn't One: also in 1947, Hollywood released two high-profile films about anti-Semitism, as well as a third picture, which, though less explicit in its representation of Jewishness, may be the most "Jewish" of them all. This last film, in which John Garfield played the starring role, was Robert Rossen and Abraham Polonsky's *Body and Soul*. One of the two films about anti-Semitism—whose producer in fact invited Horkheimer to comment on it—was *Crossfire*, which I discussed briefly in the previous chapter, and to which I will return in a moment. The other was the Academy Award-winning *Gentleman's Agreement*, in which Garfield had a supporting role, and which Elia Kazan directed. Garfield was HUAC's most stellar target, and Kazan, to whom we will turn in the next chapter, its most eminent collaborator, but a remarkably large number of those involved in all three films would in fact end up, whether "uncooperatively" or not, in the committee's cross hairs, lending plausibility to the view that Cold-War anti-Communism was inseparable from Cold-War anti-Semitism. No doubt the inquisitors in Washington owed much of their zeal to the assumption that *all* Hollywood movies were Jewish pictures—even when, like Darryl Zanuck, the studio chief responsible for *Gentleman's Agreement*, their makers were Gentiles. Adding insult to injury, the three films of 1947 that I discuss in this chapter had the effrontery to be not just Jewish pictures but pictures of Jews. This alone may seem to account for their evident *non*appeasement of "the true wielders of power." But what exactly is the trouble with Jews in pictures? Is it as plain as the noses on their faces? Is the answer as simple as Jewishness and left-wing politics in the first year of the Cold War? Are these things really so simple, especially when they come together in pictures? What is it about these films, and about *Body and Soul* and *Crossfire* in particular, that so inflamed HUAC, and that threw the Jews behind pictures—the mostly Jewish heads of studios—into a veritable *frenzy* of appeasement, whose effects, some have argued, are still in the air, even though the Cold War

is over?⁴ To answer this question will be to suggest the extent to which recent cultural-studies accounts of the distinctively (though not exclusively) Jewish culture industry, whether or not they are explicitly derived from Horkheimer and Adorno, continue the work of the blacklist by suppressing not just the “cozy liberalism” but indeed the radicalism of these Jewish pictures, and not just the radicalism of the Jewish minority but the radicalism of the Jew as minor performer: a radicalism of the character actor, a radicalism of the comedian, and therefore, to be sure, a radicalism not recognizable by the most approved political signs.⁵

Comic Materialism

Less celebrated than *Gentleman's Agreement*, *Crossfire* in fact opened a few months before it, and has the added distinction not only of showing how a Hollywood of Jewish liberals is always already a Hollywood of assassins, but also of revealing exactly what gets caught in the crossfire of “always already,” crossed out in the chiasmic intersection of “culture” and “industry.” Directed by Edward Dmytryk and produced by Adrian Scott, both of whom, in part because of the film, would soon end up in prison as members of the Hollywood Ten—the first casualties of HUAC and the studios—and based on Richard Brooks’s novel *The Brick Foxhole*, *Crossfire* takes place in a claustrophobically noirish milieu of soldiers and civilians in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. But where Brooks’s novel is about the murder of a homosexual and the pursuit of his killer, the film, playing by the rules of a Production Code that, as film scholars such as James Naremore and Peter Lev have noted, insisted on keeping homosexuality unnameable—substitutes an anti-Jewish hate crime for a homophobic one.⁶ While this substitution dutifully works to appease the true wielders of power, the censors seem not to have caught the pederastic implications of the narrative’s liberal pedagogy, implications that survive the degaying of the murder victim. First entrusting that pedagogy, in a flashback, to the middle-aged Jewish man with whose killing the film begins, *Crossfire* wears its bleeding heart on the sleeve of a figure, part rabbi, part therapist, who all too vulnerably embodies the very “sensitivity” that, in 1947—that is to say, in that brief interval after the Holocaust and before the establishment

of the state of Israel—a lot of Jewish men were trying to shed, or at least, in the semi-tough manner of, say, John Garfield, trying to hide.⁷ In the first of the film's two scenes of instruction, both featuring, as students, young, handsome, confused, male soldiers, the part of teacher is played by a character named Joseph Samuels, played by Sam Levene. As a certain name game itself thus gets played, the teacher, at last giving a diegetic face to Hollywood's cozy liberalism and Jewish intellectualism, makes that liberalism and intellectualism look *so* cozy that the scene of instruction, enacted with remarkable intimacy between two men in a bar, closely resembles a scene of seduction:

SAMUELS: My girl is worried about you. We were talking about you when that kid spilled that drink on her. She says you're not drinking but you're getting drunk anyway. Anybody that can do that has got a problem. It's a funny thing, isn't it?

MITCHELL: Very funny.

SAMUELS: It's worse at night, isn't it? I think maybe it's suddenly not having a lot of enemies to hate anymore. (Picks up peanut from bowl.) Maybe it's because for four years now we've been focusing our mind on one little peanut. The win-the-war peanut. That was all. Get it over with. Eat that peanut. (Pops it in his mouth.) All at once, no peanut. Now we start looking at each other again. We don't know what we're supposed to do, we don't know what's supposed to happen. We're too used to fightin'. But we just don't know what to fight. You can feel the tension in the air. A whole lotta fight and hate that doesn't know where to go. A guy like you maybe starts hatin' himself. Well, one of these days, maybe we'll all learn to shift gears. Maybe we'll stop hatin' and start likin' things again, huh?

Samuels will be killed shortly after inviting the soldier, Mitchell, up to his apartment. But though Mitchell is suspected of committing the murder, he is being framed by the real killer, a fellow soldier named Montgomery, or Monty, and played with frighteningly believable thuggishness by Robert Ryan, who, looking like the sleek, movie-star version of Patrick Buchanan, needs no fiery cross to evoke the special horror of anti-Semitism, American-style. Monty kills Samuels not because he fears that Samuels is coming on to him or to Mitchell ("eat that peanut"), but because he is enraged by what he regards as Samuels's typically Jew-

ish parasitism—by the way the Jews “live off the fat of the land.” “You know the kind,” Monty, we have seen, observes to the detective investigating the murder; “guys that played it safe during the war. . . . Got swell apartments, swell dames. . . . Some of them are named Samuels, some of them got funnier names.” The swell dames, of course, keep the censors themselves out of the swell apartments, which, alone, might have signaled too close an affinity between Jewish luxuriousness and homosexual decadence. Yet if the film takes as much trouble to clear Samuels of the invidious charge of Jewish parasitism as to provide him with a “girl” and an interest in baseball—it turns out that he has no money, and that he served in Okinawa during the war—his softness, as though resisting total abstraction into liberal humanitarianism, preserves traces not only of gay hedonism but also of the Jewish “materialism” from which, in any case, a guy like Monty might not bother to distinguish it. For although Samuels, judge and prophet like his biblical namesake, concludes his fable of the peanut with what we might be tempted to banalize as a plea for tolerance—“One of these days, maybe we can stop hating and start liking one another”—what he actually says is “One of these days, maybe we’ll all learn to shift gears. Maybe we’ll stop hatin’ and start likin’ things again.” “Likin’ things”: consistent with the terse, manly “poetry” of the screenplay as a whole, the phrase is sufficiently general that “things” can no doubt be taken to include “people.” But if “things” includes “people,” people are nonetheless things: like the “funny thing” that Samuels mentions at the beginning of the scene—when he refers to Mitchell’s getting drunk without drinking—or like the funny thing at the center of his lesson, the “win-the-war peanut” that he ends up popping into his mouth.

Insofar as the point is to stop hating and start liking things again—to stop hating *things* and to start liking them again—then the funny thing would seem to be a good place to start. For the funny thing would seem to be an eminently likeable thing—unless, of course, you’re Monty, in which case the funniness of the funny thing, like the funniness of the funny name (“Some of them got funnier names”), causes not fun or liking, but envy, resentment, and an urge to wipe out the happily funny difference that can only signify pathologically funny deviation. Monty’s anti-Semitism, in fact, consists not in his treating Jews as things, but in his failing to treat them as *likeable* things. To be sure, his hatred and



Sam Levene in *Crossfire*

violence dehumanize his victim; but that victim proposes, against the postwar paranoia of which Monty is the most egregious symptom, and which threatens to continue the war by bringing it home, a more than easygoing, indeed a fundamentally comic, relation to the world, whereby people, named things—transformed *into* things through the medium of the name—become available once more as objects of affection.

Murderously anticomic, Monty cannot tolerate Samuels's comic materialism. And as the hard-hitting story of a murder investigation, this well-intentioned film, necessarily following the murderer, itself repeats his deadly seriousness, casting its murder victim out into the world where the actor who plays him seems to belong: the alternative universe of Broadway comedy and musical comedy, where no self-respecting film-noir citizen would be caught dead.⁸ Horkheimer worried that, for all its overt anti-anti-Semitism, *Crossfire* unconsciously invited the audience's identification with the hunky anti-Semitic killer: an identification, we might add, that, by virtue of its genre, the film cannot but share.⁹ Yet, while the narrative pursues the taut, lean svelteness of Monty's killer body, the swellness that Monty not-so-mistakenly attributes to Samuels produces a certain quiet counternarrative of its own. Within the rippling, tense angularity of the suspenseful narrative, that is, something swells:

and what swells is precisely the word “thing.” Almost by virtue of its very *imprecision*, its colloquial elasticity, that word—manly in its plainness but somehow, to quote Michael Rogin’s description of Samuels himself, “vaguely effeminate,”¹⁰ or perhaps effeminately vague—proliferates in the second of the film’s scenes of instruction, where the role of student is now played by a soldier named Leroy, and where the teacher, Samuels in the previous scene, is now a police detective named Finlay:

FINLAY: Leroy, has Monty ever made fun of your accent?

LEROY: Sure, lots o’ times. He . . .

FINLAY: Why? He calls you a hillbilly, doesn’t he? Says you’re dumb. He laughs at you because you’re from Tennessee. He’s never been to Tennessee. Ignorant men always laugh at things that are different, things they don’t understand. They’re afraid of things they don’t understand. They end up hating them.

LEROY: You get me all mixed up. You know about all these things I don’t know anything about. How do I know what you’re trying to do? How do I know you aren’t a Jewish person yourself, or something?

FINLAY: You don’t. But would it make any difference? Well, alright, Leroy. But I’d like to tell you one more thing.

“Ignorant men always laugh at things that are different, things they don’t understand.” “You know about all these things I don’t know anything about. . . . How do I know you aren’t a Jewish person yourself, or something?” “But I’d like to tell you one *more* thing.” “Thing”s are beginning to get out of hand here, especially as “thing”s swell into “something” and “anything.” What prevents anything funny from happening (“How do I know what you’re trying to do?”) is that *this* teacher keeps both the proper distance from the student and the proper straight face to go with it. The star system having dispensed with the comic functions of minority character (Samuels) and minor actor (Levene) alike, the Law finds its appropriately major embodiment in Robert Young’s pedagogically earnest detective: a figure as humorless, albeit in the name of “understanding,” as is the churlish heavy, Monty, who at any rate never even laughs *at* things, but merely marks them as funny the better to hate them. As if it weren’t enough for the two actors (Robert Ryan and Robert Young) to share a first name, their characters must also attempt to match each other in their general grimness. Not that

there is anything unusual in the kinship between criminals and police, especially in a genre like film noir, where almost everyone, even the egg-head, comes hard-boiled. That Monty was a cop before the war merely reinforces the specular relation between the anti-Semitic villain and the anti-anti-Semitic hero. At the end of the film, after Finlay talks Leroy into helping him catch Monty, the detective guns down the killer from a high window, eerily anticipating the fourth presidential assassination. Thus liberal Hollywood indeed seems to stand unmasked as the double, and as the accomplice, of its ostensible opposite: the right-wing terror that, in 1947, was taking over the country but that, even in the happiest days of the New Deal, demanded to be served. Teaching Monty a lesson, benign pedagogical narrativity seems to reveal itself as the brutally arresting force of interpellation that it always was.

In this gloomy light, it is difficult not to take a dim view of Finlay's answer to Leroy's question: "How do I know what you're trying to do? How do I know you aren't a Jewish person yourself, or something?" When Finlay replies, "You don't. But would it make any difference?," a cynical voice might be heard to whisper the dirty secret of the culture industry: that the rabbi-therapist doesn't *turn into* a cop who turns into an assassin, because rabbinical-therapeutic Hollywood is already by definition policial-terroristic Hollywood. "No," the rhetorical question bitterly answers itself, "it wouldn't make any difference." Needless to say, Finlay will go on to establish for Leroy that he *isn't* a Jewish person, or something—or rather, that the something he is isn't a Jewish something: the "one more thing" Finlay tells Leroy is a story about how his Irish-Catholic grandfather was murdered by a racist mob in Philadelphia in 1848. And while the overt moral of the story is that hatred can strike anywhere and anyone, even a white Gentile soldier from Tennessee, its barely hidden assurance, for all the Leroy's out there in the dark, is that the film itself isn't just "Jewish propaganda."¹¹

But Leroy may not be as dumb as Monty says he is, or as the film itself seems to think he is: if only because of all the "thing"s he and Finlay have to say—that is, if only because of the swelling thingness of the dialogue—he knows very well not only that there's a Jewish person behind the non-Jewish cop, and behind the film's non-Jewish director, producer, and writer, but also that it makes a difference. One name for that Jew—indeed, one of those funnier names "some of them got"—is

Dore Schary, the liberal head of production at RKO, the studio that made *Crossfire*, and the co-author, in 1947, both of the film, in whose shaping he was involved, and of the founding text of the blacklist, the classically sycophantic “Waldorf Statement,” which, via HUAC, would send Dmytryk and Scott, the film’s director and producer, to jail.¹² As we know, however, another name for the Jew behind Finlay is Joseph Samuels, and still another, behind Samuels, is Sam Levene. Names like these—“Samuel,” for instance, means “name of God”—aren’t quite as funny as Dore Schary. But in this film “starring three Roberts,” as Robert Osborne calls it¹³—for along with Robert Ryan and Robert Young, the film also features Robert Mitchum—names of non-stars, *minor* names, names like Joseph Samuels and Sam Levene, are funny enough.¹⁴ “Perhaps names are nothing but petrified laughter,” Horkheimer and Adorno write elsewhere in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, accidentally suggesting what gets left out of their ontology of the culture industry, lost between Hollywood liberalism and the more frankly petrifying fascism that Hollywood liberalism, by always appeasing, always already is.¹⁵ If names are no more (and no less) than petrified laughter, funny Jewish names, on the one hand, may be names that, in becoming *unpetrified*, threaten to liberate the dream of happiness implicit in all names, a dream that cooler names, icily glittering star names like Robert, merely keep locked up and in suspense. On the other hand—though there’s no reason why these two hands can’t meet—Jewish names, especially at the beginning of the Cold War, may be the most tongue-twistingly thing-like of them all: the un-American-sounding names that fail to flow naturally, and so intensify their funniness as they turn petrification into something other than the extremity of fear: into the sign of the “magic” whereby the Jewish dream factory preserves, as through a process of deep-freezing, the whole swell *mise en scène* of a comically likeable material world.¹⁶

Without being Jewish persons themselves, Dmytryk and Scott perform this magic well enough to find themselves implicated in en-Jewment—which, together with their refusal to talk about their politics, a politics of left materialism, after all, is why they went to jail. For all their success in liberalizing Leroy, if not in putting one over on him, *Crossfire*’s producer and director had no such luck with a committee of Montys, who, like Leroy, couldn’t be fooled into believing they weren’t Jews or something—what kind of a name is Dmytryk, anyway?—but for whom their

difference made the worst kind of difference. To clear his name—that is, to resume working in a Hollywood from which he would otherwise have been frozen out—Dmytryk, on leaving jail, would himself name names. “He ought to look at a casualty list sometime. There are a lot of funny names there too,” Robert Mitchum says to Robert Young after Robert Ryan makes his unfunny crack, in the film that would help put the names of its producer and director on another, but not unrelated, casualty list. Dmytryk got his name off that list by putting other people’s names on it; he survived the assassination attempt by assassinating his friends. The blacklist turned a series of funny names into a list of the dead. It parodied, by inverting, the “sentimental” lesson of Joseph Samuels and Sam Levene: that it is only by following Hollywood’s example and seeing people as things that we can imagine a world that could make us happy—a world we could ask about without interrogating. What kind of a name is Garfield, anyway? If only we did “know the kind.”

Comic Formalism

Swollen with “thing”s—that is, with the word “thing” and thus with a certain thingness of words in general—the dialogue of *Crossfire* at times borders on what Horkheimer and Adorno, in the chapter on anti-Semitism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, call “uncontrolled mimesis.” Uncontrolled mimesis, “proscribed” by civilization, is precisely what makes the Jew so fascinating to the anti-Semite:

There is no anti-Semite who does not feel an instinctive urge to ape what he takes to be Jewishness. The same mimetic codes are constantly used: the argumentative jerking of the hands, the singing tone of voice, which vividly animates a situation or a feeling [*ein bewegtes Bild von Sache und Gefühl*] independently of judgment [*unabhängig vom Urteilssinn*], and the nose, that physiognomic *principium individuationis*, which writes the individual’s peculiarity on his face.¹⁷

Funny how the Jew’s comic materialism (“vividly animates a situation or a feeling”) coincides with a comic formalism (“independently of judgment”)—with a mimetic flair for bringing out what genteel language shuts up: its gestural or even animal unconscious. Later, Adorno will

locate an example of this comic formalism in the Austrian-Jewish critic Karl Kraus:

The sympathy that Kraus showed many dialect writers and comedians, in preference to so-called high literature and in protest against it, is inspired by complicity with the undomesticated mimetic moment. It is also the root of Kraus's jokes: in them language imitates the gestures of language the way the grimaces of the comedian imitate the face of the person he parodies. For all its rationality and force, the thoroughgoing constructivism of Kraus' language is its translation back into gesture, into a medium that is older than that of judgment.¹⁸

Translating language back into gesture, Kraus's jokes, like those of the dialect writer or the comedian, make so-called high literature speak against itself: in their radical complicity with undomesticated mimesis, they turn that literature back into the gestural prehistory that, like an anxious immigrant parvenu, it struggles to overcome. How many Jewish jokes, from Freud and Proust to the Borscht Belt and Wendy Wasserstein, play on just this reversal of gentility into its repressed antecedents? How many of these jokes, that is, show the reversal as, precisely, an effect of gesture, where gesture is the part of language that, like a funny accent or an unassimilated parent, *embarrasses* language? That the embarrassment should strike at the very moment when language is most concerned to make a good impression accounts, of course, for the particular sting with which the jokes themselves strike. Just when language thinks it has everything, especially itself, under control, it starts gesturing, or even gesticulating, thereby hysterically displaying one of the classic signs of an always excessive Jewish identity. The Jewish comedian in Kraus does his most mischievous work when—to trope on Sander Gilman's term—he voices “the hidden language of the Jews” in authors whom the revelation would mortify, when—to invoke one of Freud's Jewish jokes—he changes “anti-Semitism” to “ante-Semitism.”¹⁹

The radical comedy of undomesticated mimesis may once have played a role in what has become the culture industry: Horkheimer and Adorno evoke “the pure nonsense which, as buffoonery and clowning, was a legitimate part of popular art up to Chaplin and the Marx Brothers.”²⁰ For the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the culture industry, of course,

is neither popular nor art, but rather a travesty and a betrayal of whatever buffoonery and clowning it may piously invoke in its occasional *nostalgie de la boue*. Yet the petrified laughter of a film like *Crossfire* alerts us to what is not so much excluded from as suspended in Horkheimer and Adorno's totalizing chiasmus of entertaining totalitarianism. Anticipating a time of "liking things *again*," *Crossfire* simultaneously gestures back toward a happiness as ancient as the gestural medium itself. The "funniness" of this otherwise straight-faced film suggests, that is, that not every Hollywood movie of 1947 is merely fraudulent and self-congratulatory in its relation to its comic antecedents. Indeed, audiences of 1947 were offered, along with *Crossfire*, an even more ambitious (if also more ambivalent) example of a Hollywood product that, in the name of leftist art, translated language "back into gesture," back into authentically popular culture and "proscribed" Jewish mimetic origins. I am referring not to *Gentleman's Agreement*, but to the other film with John Garfield, Rossen and Polonsky's *Body and Soul*. Unlike *Crossfire's* producer and director, none of the personnel involved in *Body and Soul* wound up in jail, but almost all of its authors and major players would soon find themselves *treated* like criminals. And while the film's complicity with an illegal and "undomesticated" mimesis was by no means its most obvious offense, that complicity could only have had an aggravating effect, like that of a thumbed nose ("that physiognomic *principium individuatio-nis*"), in the eyes of a vengeful Americanism. At any rate, in addition to Garfield, whom HUAC hounded to death, the committee's victims from this film alone included the actors Canada Lee, whom it also drove into an early grave; Anne Revere, Art Smith, and Lloyd Goff (also known as Lloyd Gough), all of whom were blacklisted; the director, Robert Rossen, who was first subpoenaed as one of the Hollywood Nineteen before the Nineteen became Ten, and who later, like Dmytryk, saved his career by recanting and informing; and the screenwriter, Abraham Polonsky, whose fateful middle name, Lincoln, wasn't all that likely in the first place to keep his un-American-sounding first and last ones off HUAC's hit list, where they too ended up, and where they would stay for a decade and a half after his appearance as an "unfriendly" witness in 1951.

Notoriously paranoid, the committee needed no incisive hermeneutics of suspicion to detect the un-Americanism of *Body and Soul's* makers, whose left-wing politics the film quite frankly propounds.²¹ As Michael

Rogin observes, “If any film gives [credibility] to the hallucinatory charge that a Communist conspiracy was seizing control of Hollywood . . . this is the one.”²² Though less programmatically anti-anti-Semitic than either *Crossfire* or *Gentleman’s Agreement*, *Body and Soul* is emphatically anticapitalist and unabashedly systematic in its critique of American society, far bolder than the other two films in linking racial oppressions—of blacks as well as Jews—with economic ones. Elaborating its critique in the form of a rags-to-riches story about a Lower East Side street kid named Charley Davis, played by Garfield, who becomes a boxing champion by submitting to the control of a crooked promoter, impudently named Roberts, after the film’s producer (one Robert Roberts, to be exact—as though there weren’t already enough Roberts in 1947), *Body and Soul* pulls no punches in presenting the promoter’s manipulation of both boxers and their public as a metaphor for the ruthlessness, corruption, and mendacity of American capitalism as a whole. But the same left hand that strikes out at the capitalist system also gestures toward the possibility of resisting it. For, at the end of the film, after Charley has watched his friend and coach, the black former champion named Ben Chaplin and played by Canada Lee, stand up to Roberts (Lloyd Goff), even though he dies as a result, Charley wins a fight that he had agreed to throw, and walks away from an angry, threatening Roberts, saying, “What are you going to do, kill me? Everybody dies. . . . I never felt better in my life.”

Commenting on the disagreement between the director, Rossen, and the screenwriter, Polonsky, as to how the film should end, Robert Sklar writes:

Rossen, as Polonsky recalls it, wanted Charlie [*sic*] to be shot down for his defiance as he leaves the arena after the fight. Polonsky says that he prevailed on the ambiguous, but surely upbeat, ending. “Bob Rossen was fundamentally an anarchist by disposition,” Polonsky later said. . . . “He also thought that death was truer than life, as an ending. But we who are radicals know the opposite is true.”²³

Sklar goes on to argue that, much as we might applaud the victory of the soon-to-be-blacklisted Polonsky over the soon-to-be-informing Rossen, Polonsky’s account of the film and its ending should be viewed with a certain skepticism. And Sklar has a point. Despite Polonsky’s intelligence

and moral force and political commitment, and despite his status as one of blacklist's great heroes and martyrs—as “the anti-Kazan,” the leftist intellectual in Hollywood who gave up twenty years of a filmmaking career rather than betray himself and assassinate his friends—one has to admit that the text of *Body and Soul* doesn't quite support Polonsky's oppositions between himself and Rossen, between radicalism and anarchism, between life and death.²⁴ The film indeed ends happily, as Polonsky wanted it to, with Charley defiantly *walking away from* the capitalist villain. Luckier than the actor who played him, *Body and Soul's* hero escapes assassination, at least for the time being. Within Polonsky's screenplay itself, however, the dominant voice is less life-affirming than preciously surly: the noirish voice of “urban poetry,” a fancier version of *Crossfire's* already self-consciously “literary” guy-talk; a voice one might even call the Rossen voice, were it not such a distinctive feature of Polonsky's own style.²⁵

To an interviewer who remarked of Rossen, “His pictures frequently seem a mishmash of blue-collar melodrama and art film, as though he had always wanted to do both types of films and constantly mixed them up,” Polonsky replied, “You have him down cold.”²⁶ Of his own style, however, Polonsky once observed, “I live dangled between the formal and argot without solution.”²⁷ Exemplifying the very condition it describes, this statement also suggests how one man's mishmash may be another man's dangling without solution. Especially as embodied by John Garfield, who portrays his character with what one critic has called “a combination of tough cynicism and urban dreaminess,”²⁸ the film's style seems less a mixture of Rossen and Polonsky than the product of their surprisingly consonant, because similarly mixed, voices. And yet, the conflict over the ending does begin to open up what is more-than-Rossen in Polonsky, revealing Polonsky to be more “radical” than his tendentious formulation allows. Prevailing in that conflict, so that Charley Davis can finally affirm “I never felt better in my life” over “everybody dies” (the film's chilling refrain), Polonsky in effect recovers a possibility of the formal-argotic, and indeed of popular culture itself, that gets put on ice by its reification, in 1947 and after, as urban poetry or arty toughness. Just before he spoke about being dangled between the formal and argot, Polonsky, asked whether he had been influenced by Clifford Odets (whose *Golden Boy*, written for Garfield, *Body and Soul*

deliberately revises), answered, “We both derive from Jewish jokes and street quarrels.”²⁹ The word “argot” itself derives from the French *argoter*, meaning “to quarrel,” and *argoter* in turn derives from the Latin *ergo*. But just as Karl Kraus’s dialect writers and comedians show how language-as-gesture precedes and underlies language-as-rationality, so Jewish jokes, rehearsing the translation of *ergo* into argot, translate dialectic back into the dialect it always implicitly was. They reveal the comic or mimetic roots—not just the happy endings but also the happy beginnings—of political argument in general, in which, to recall Horkheimer and Adorno, argument becomes “the argumentative jerking of the hands,” like a “singing tone of voice, which vividly animates a situation or a feeling independently of judgment.” The “radicalism” of Jewish jokes consists in translating street quarrels back into plays of form, in shifting the action from the street to a kind of theater behind the street.

The happy ending of *Body and Soul* is best understood in relation to a short scene much earlier in the film, where Charley is standing out on the street in front of the boarded-up remains of his family’s candy store, which we have just seen bombed in an attack on a neighboring speakeasy that has killed Charley’s gentle, humorous father (played by Art Smith). A figure appears out of the grocery next to the candy store: it is the grocer, a metonymic shadow of the murdered father, who says, in the Yiddishly inflected accent of the Lower East Side, “Charley, it’s cold out. Why don’t you come in and get a little warm?” To which Charley responds, with a little coldness of his own, “Thanks, I’m waiting for somebody.” Obviously feeling the chill, the grocer says, “okay,” and disappears back into his store—located on but also, like the stage set that it is, literally behind the street where Charley continues to stand shivering. The grocer disappears, anyway, until a scene near the end of the film, where Charley, now a rich and famous boxing champion, has to confront the implications of his throwing an upcoming fight, on Roberts’s orders. Charley and his girlfriend, Peg, are visiting his mother in her apartment above the old candy store, when the grocer, now identified as “Shimen,” comes in carrying a box filled with bags:

SHIMEN: Charley, Charley. You’re a sight for sore eyes.

CHARLEY: Hello, Shimen!

SHIMEN: Good to see you, you look wonderfu . . . (begins to drop the box)

CHARLEY (CATCHING THE BOX): Oh!

SHIMEN (TO MRS. DAVIS): He looks fine.

MRS. DAVIS: You know Miss Born, Charley's fiancée?

SHIMEN: This I suspected. Here y'are, Mrs. Davis. Charley, something special for you (handing him grapes from one of the bags)—straight from the Garden of Eden.

CHARLEY: Thanks.

MRS. DAVIS: Have some wine, Shimen.

SHIMEN: What's the occasion?

MRS. DAVIS: Charley's last fight.

SHIMEN: You don't say?

CHARLEY: Well, don't spread it around, Shimen.

SHIMEN: I'm like a grave. Does that mean you won't fight anymore?

CHARLEY: That's right.

SHIMEN: Well? So you'll retire champeen. That's bad? It's good. (Charley laughs.) To the future retired champeen of the world, good luck. And to my five dollars that I bet on the fight, good luck too. (Drinks.) Mmm, good. Excuse me. Charley, everybody is betting on you, the whole neighborhood, like you was the Irish sweepstakes.

MRS. DAVIS: People shouldn't bet.

SHIMEN: No, no, Mrs. Davis, it isn't the money, it's a way of showing: over in Europe the Nazis are killing people like us, just because of their religion. But here, Charley Davis is champeen. (To Charley): So you win and retire champeen, and we are proud. Period. (To Peg): I'm glad I met you. And Charley, when you leave, stop in and say toodle-do. (Exits.)³⁰ . . .

CHARLEY: Suckers like Shimen shouldn't bet.

MRS. DAVIS: Suckers like Shimen? You didn't hear what he said, Charley. It isn't the five dollars, it's the . . .

CHARLEY: (getting angry) I know, I know. I can still lose.

After admitting to Peg and to his mother that he in fact *must* lose, or lose his boxing career, the sixty thousand dollars he's betting on the fight, and probably his life, Charley returns to the training camp where Ben tries to talk him out of fixing the fight. Interrupted by the arrival of Roberts, Ben defies Roberts's order to leave, frenetically acts out a fantastic comeback, collapses, and dies from the blood clot on the brain

that Charley, having won the championship from Ben, has unknowingly exacerbated.

Although Ben's defiance of Roberts ("You don't tell me how to live"), a defiance he shows even in his death, gives Charley the courage *not* to throw the fight in the climactic scene that follows, a certain analytic focus on the guilt-laden symbolic negotiations between the black boxer and the Jewish boxer has occluded the narrative logic that situates the box-carrying Jewish grocer, a box-er in his own right, *alongside* the black mentor, effectively making them Charley's co-teachers. Even the few critics who notice Shimen have a way of not noticing him. Michael Rogin, for instance, writes: "Everybody's betting on you,' a local named Shimin [*sic*] tells Charley. The only character marked by name and accent as distinctively Jewish, Shimin appears in this scene (and no other) to remind Charley, 'Over in Europe the Nazis are killing people like us. Just because of their religion. But here Charley Davis is champeen.'"³¹ Of course, Shimen does appear in another scene. And if his appearance there is fleeting enough to be forgettable, this is itself significant, since Charley himself rebuffs Shimen, choosing the cold street over the warm grocery—choosing tough, bitter urban poetry over a different concoction of the formal and the argotic, one that the later scene will imbue with the tenderness and sweetness of grapes straight from the Garden of Eden.

But though Rogin, editing Shimen out of the street scene, gives him an even colder shoulder than Charley does, he is right about how Shimen is the only character in the film with a distinctively Jewish name and accent. And he aptly points out the "documentary effect" whereby "Shimin Rishkin"—immigrant names often undergoing revision—"was played by a Jewish comedian of the same name."³² According to his 1976 obituary in *Variety*, Shimen Ruskin, as he semi-anglicizingly called himself in Hollywood, "began his career as a child actor in Vilna, Poland, giving recitals of Yiddish poetry and performing with the Vilna Troupe, where he played the child bridegroom in the premiere of 'The Dybbuk.'" After emigrating to the United States at the age of fourteen, Ruskin "for many years was associated with the major Yiddish acting companies," performed with John Garfield on Broadway, and went to Hollywood in 1940, appearing in such films as *Dark Passage*, *Letter to an Unknown Woman*, and *Murder, My Sweet* as well as *Body and Soul*, until he "was



Shimen Ruskin in *Body and Soul*

called before the House Unamerican Activities Committee, where he denounced the Committee's campaign of political intimidation and refused to recant his convictions or to inform on friends and associates. As a result he was blacklisted for 10 years and expelled from the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists."³³ Over in Europe the Nazis were killing people like us, but here. . . .

Being blacklisted wasn't the same thing as being killed by the Nazis, although I am not sure that the survivors of John Garfield and Canada Lee would take much comfort from this observation. A colleague of both Garfield and Lee, and a survivor of their victimization and his own, Polonsky, for his part, said of the blacklist years: "It was like collaboration under the Nazis. And it was like the resistance. The spectrum took in everything human including the inhuman."³⁴ The "like" in "like collaboration under the Nazis" and "like the resistance" somehow seems safer, more hygienically metaphorical, than the all too pointedly indeterminate "like" in "killing people like us" (even if "people like us" are killed "because of *their* religion"). Yet Shimen Ruskin, comedian and martyr, born

in Poland and banned in America, appearing like if not as himself in Polonsky's film of 1947, has the accidental, retroactive effect of making the safer "like" look a little like the scarier "like": he calls into question the reassuring distance he seems to affirm between over there and over here, between the violence that he and people like him had escaped and the violence that he and people like him would not escape, between the state-sponsored terror that had just ended and the state-sponsored terror that was just beginning.

Appearing like if not as himself, that is, Shimen Ruskin both enhances *Body and Soul's* documentary style and does something that only seems to undermine it: as though anticipating the sitcom practice of giving characters the same first names as the actors who play them, Shimen-playing-Shimen causes a bit of show business—but in this case, a bit of "undomesticated," indeed un-American, show business—to seep into the everyday life of ordinary people.³⁵ This theatricalization of the everyday by no means renders it frivolous, or mitigates the film's affront to the patriotic. Heir to Karl Kraus's dialect writers and comedians, Shimen, with his background in the Yiddish theater, delivers not just the groceries but also, straight from the Garden of Eden, a whole tradition of outlawed comic mimesis, where language reverts to gesture and where argument gets translated back into the expressive forms that make it possible.

Or, to put it in more Polonskyan terms: where the formal and argot, far from standing in dialectical opposition, as high to low, operate in dialectical partnership, as process to product—specifically, as joke-work to joke. The ambassador to the film from an all-but-annihilated culture—a culture as un-German as it is un-American—Shimen represents what remains of a radical Jewish comic formalism, a formalism ("independently of judgment") that, bringing out as it does the gesturing, gesticulating body hidden in genteel language, is also inevitably a materialism. For though Charley Davis indeed ends up repudiating one materialism—typified by the corrupting world of swell dames and swell apartments to which capitalist success condemns him—Shimen purveys another: a materialism of sensual pleasure—he's a grocer, after all—without the usual sycophantic costs of betrayal and assassination. As Joseph Samuels/Sam Levene articulates *Crossfire's* comic-materialist dream of a likeable world, so fellow character actor Shimen/Shimen

Ruskin, whose own funny name is never funnier than when it, too, traverses the line between life and show, stands for an intolerable happiness, the final destruction of which HUAC and its many collaborators will soon undertake, seeking to complete the work begun by their counterparts over in Europe.

Here again are Horkheimer and Adorno on the psychology of anti-Semitism, from their text of 1947:

Those blinded by civilization have contacts with their own tabooed mimetic features only through certain gestures and forms of behavior they encounter in others, as isolated, shameful residues [*als isolierte Reste, als beschämende Rudimente*] in their rationalized environment. What repels them as alien is all too familiar: it lurks in the contagious gestures of an immediacy suppressed by civilization: gestures of touching, nestling, soothing, coaxing. What makes such impulses repellent today is their outmodedness.³⁶

The antimimeticism—the mimetic shame—that can turn into genocidal anti-Semitism is by no means limited to the most obvious forms of Jew-hatred: it manifests itself in, say, the Charley Davis who rejects Shimen's offer of warmth and calls him a sucker, or in the Michael Rogin who represses one of his two scenes, or in the latter-day Jack Warner who decided, bizarrely but perhaps not so astonishingly, to delete Shimen's line about Nazis killing Jews both from the latest reissue of the *Body and Soul* videotape and from the recently released DVD. Those “repelled” by Shimen and his kind might even include the Abraham Polonsky who, “when asked about the continuing Yiddishist themes in his work, . . . made jokes.”³⁷ If the jokes themselves put off the Yiddishist themes, they also, of course, continue those themes. With his “tabooed mimetic features,” with his gestures and accent and name—“isolated, shameful residues in [the] rationalized environment”—Shimen, comedian and grocer, constitutes for Polonsky himself a guilty pleasure: the guilty pleasure of the primeval, old-world self, of the Pol(e) in Polonsky. For Rogin, whose account of “Jewish immigrants in the Hollywood melting pot” has achieved a certain paradigmatic status in cultural studies, a figure like Shimen is off-putting because he resists the masterplot of the Jewish-American success story, where “success” depends upon the masterful Jewish appropriation and exploitation of African American symbolic

labor: if not the Nazism of the Jews, Rogin's culture industry is at least the racism of the Jews.³⁸ For Polonsky, the trouble with Shimen—what makes the pleasure *guilty*—is also his failure to play the Man, albeit the Man of the left. In contrast with the muscular leftist popular culture to which the screenwriter of *Body and Soul* aspires, and which he embodies not just in Garfield but in a character like the angular, sharp-tongued, rigorously antistereotypical Jewish mother played by Anne Revere, Shimen, for all his radicalism, conjures up the “wrong” popular culture: metonym of the murdered maternal father, antonym of the feisty paternal mother, he recalls an “outmoded” popular culture of schmaltz and shtick and kitsch, a popular culture of the *yiddishe* Mama, of the *Mamaloshen*. Where the leftist egghead cracks wise to show he knows the ways of the street, Shimen's comedy is of the more disconcertingly “touching” kind. A tender comrade indeed, Shimen, like Joseph Samuels, tenderizes comradeship to the point at which it might make another comrade nervous.³⁹

Not that one has to be a leftist male intellectual like Polonsky, or like Rogin, to have this embarrassed relation to the film's ambassador from mimetic prehistory. Repellently alien yet “all too familiar,” off-puttingly “outmoded” in the intimacy of his impulses, Shimen, inviting Charley to come in from the cold, would lure every shivering Cold War subject back into someplace like a winter garden: a pleasure dome like the Yiddish theaters that were themselves anachronistic survivors on the mean streets of Charley Davis's Lower East Side. His initial invitation refused, the repressed Shimen returns to figure not just the gravity (“I'm like a grave”) that the film is otherwise reluctant to name as distinctively Jewish, but also the performance matrix from which it even more ambivalently derives: that of the distinctively Jewish levity (“say toodle-do”) to which his name itself pays documentary tribute.

Acknowledging its origins in an alternative and older Jewish popular culture—a comic culture less of the street than of the (undomesticated) playhouse, less of quarrels than of the “infectious gestures” behind the quarrels—the film nonetheless takes care to circumscribe the acknowledgment. If it names its comic Jewish character after the comic Jewish actor who plays him, it makes sure that, even when Shimen returns for his “big” scene, this avatar of tabooed mimesis stays within the confines of a role so minor as to border on a cameo, and ends up—even before

the 1993 censoring of his speech all but reduces him to a face on the cutting-room floor—looking less like an honored ancestor than like an “isolated, shameful residue” indeed. Nor can this circumscription of the acknowledgment, this freezing of the film’s assets, simply be dismissed as the work of the treacherously cynical director. About Polonsky’s own reticence concerning his work’s persistent *Yiddishkayt*, Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner write:

He was preoccupied with universal issues that go to the heart of Western culture and history, of capitalism and revolution, of loyalties and betrayals that have less to do with ethnic identities than with the rise and fall of cultures and states. No doubt he long regarded the Jewish elements in his work as incidental, the necessary accretions to any story line that grows out of personal experience.⁴⁰

Had Horkheimer and Adorno been asked to comment on *Body and Soul*, they might have pointed out what the film already knows: that the Jewish elements in Polonsky’s work *are* its universal issues. The “isolated, shameful residues that survive in their rationalized environment,” or—in a phrase of Polonsky’s that makes him sound remarkably like Horkheimer and Adorno, “the undestroyed element left in human nature”⁴¹—Polonsky’s continuing Yiddishist themes, emblemized and minoritized in Shimen’s “outmoded” name and accent and person, atavistically rehearse a tabooed mimetic stage whose contagious gestures no one, not even the toughest modern customer, ever entirely escapes. As the unhappy fates of *Body and Soul*’s personnel attest—thanks to НУАС, no film has a longer casualty list, extending from star to screenwriter to supporting cast—something about the film seemed so repellently alien as to provoke the xenophobic rage of a congressional committee. The provocation, however, may have come less from the film’s overt political ideology than from its form, like “the singing tone of voice, which vividly animates a situation or a feeling independently of judgment”: from its traces of undomesticated mimesis, whose gravest offense, sufficient to raise the specter of the enemy within, consists, uncannily, in not being alien *enough*.

The film, that is, may construct a *cordon sanitaire* around the embarrassing icon of its “proud” ethnic identity, an ethnic identity that is at the same time an aesthetic lineage; and yet, one wonders about the efficacy

of this protective device, even as a means for producing an *illusion* of containment. For all that Shimen's old-world performance style makes him seem as distant and archaic as the Garden of Eden, he personifies the capacity of the film itself—a critical and commercial hit—to deliver, into the homes not only of the self-avowedly Jewish Mrs. Davis and her neighbors, but also of the ethnically unmarked Mrs. America and hers, something juicier than a rather schematic anticapitalism: the promise, like that of grapes straight from Eden, of “an immediacy suppressed by civilization.” More subversive than the film's explicit political theme, the tempting, staining fruit of mimesis is as sweet, as sticky, and as intoxicating as the wine with which Shimen and the others toast Charley's upcoming victory and retirement. Charley himself, or the charismatic Garfield, is of course the official body and soul of the film's leftist popular art. But like HUAC's most monstrously representative member, John Rankin of Mississippi, who, as we have seen, entertained his colleagues by revealing the “real” Jewish names of various left-leaning movie stars, the committee as a whole would have had little trouble sniffing out the film's “real” Jew, the racial precursor behind John Garfield and even Julius Garfinkle, the true performing body hidden within the virile, “American” encrustations of Hollywood star and New York actor alike. Behind Garfield, behind Garfinkle, the committee could easily have detected the funny-sentimental bit player who would end up denouncing it—and who, without ever threatening to steal the show, never ceases to be disturbing, since a sucker like Shimen, at once victim and vampire, could suck even good Americans “back into a medium that is older than that of judgment.”

Figures like Shimen and Samuels/Levene are disturbing, that is, because, instead of merely satisfying the demand for prescribed ethnic performance within the great American variety show, they implicitly, and radically, reach out to “ethnicize” those who must seem untouched by them, who must appear to regard them from a safe distance. (Anglicizing “Rishkin,” “Ruskin” in turn gets yiddishized by “Shimen.” What kind of a name is Ruskin, anyway? Russian?) It is precisely such disturbing figures who embody the mimetic Jewishness that every anti-Semite “has an instinctive urge to ape” but that, ashamed of this urge (itself mimetic), he sets out to destroy instead. For the blacklister as for the Nazi, “people like us,” that is, like Shimen, present the risk of a contagion too

desirable to be endured. With the pushiness ascribed by anti-Semites to Jews in general, a figure like Shimen mimes the regression of language to those “gestures of an immediacy suppressed by civilization: gestures of touching, nestling, soothing, coaxing.” Thus, when he says, for instance, “This I suspected,” he sounds a little suspect himself, issuing his invitation to inversion, performing, in his “awkward” Yinglish, the pleasure of the syntactical somersault. But then, no less awkwardly, no less suspiciously, he flip-flops again, this time semantically: “That’s bad? It’s good.” As written by Abraham Lincoln Polonsky, these lines rewrite American English so that it “doesn’t sound American.” Or rather, they coax out the un-American accents already latent in American speech.⁴² In the best Krausian way, Shimen’s—and Polonsky’s—“language imitates the gestures of language,” as the syntactical reversals continue: “To the future retired champeen of the world, good luck. And to my five dollars that I bet on the fight, good luck too.” No, no, Mrs. Davis, it isn’t the money: more than the Jewish greed that routinely accompanies Jewish pushiness in one of anti-Semitism’s drearier vaudeville acts, what arouses suspicion here, along with the mimetic agitation of language’s body, is a similarly regressive “vivid animation,” in which things *have* feelings, a primitive, even Edenic, state of affairs, not to be confused with commodity fetishism, whereby luck, or happiness—the Yiddish *glik* means both—redounds to things and people alike. Thanks to Shimen’s happy idiomatic “mistake,” in other words, we glimpse a world like *Crossfire*’s world of likeable things, where “things” includes “people,” and where this objectification needn’t inspire terror. Indeed, the argotic acrobatics of the immigrant tongue bring us even closer to that world, by fracturing civilized rules of objecthood, affect, and affection.

What Horkheimer and Adorno call uncontrolled mimesis in fact evokes just such a precivilized world, for this mimesis bespeaks nothing so much as “the urge to lose oneself in identification with the Other,” especially the inanimate other.⁴³ In mimesis, formalism and materialism become one. When, as in Karl Kraus’s or Shimen Ruskin’s jokes, language imitates the gestures of language, the gestures it imitates are those in which the personality animating language becomes saliently thing-like. Just as *Crossfire*’s things included people, so *Body and Soul* invites us to imagine how, to borrow Polonsky’s words, the human might

include the inhuman, but an inhuman that has yet to assume the aspect of barbarism and cruelty. Hence, of course, the film's intolerable seduction. Whether merging with "earth and slime"⁴⁴ or, if he lives in the modern city, just with money, the mimetic comedian exemplifies the dirtiness anti-Semites love to hate, and hate to love, in all Jews—all of whom, conversely, they see as mimetic comedians, as "playing themselves," albeit less obviously than Shimen or Jack Benny or Jerry Seinfeld or Roseanne. Far from compromising the moral gravity of his reference to European genocide, Shimen's comic performance embodies the very thing that the Nazis had just tried to wipe out, and for which their nicer American cousins were busy preparing less drastic solutions. Over in Europe the Nazis are killing people like us *because* we make them laugh. Against that would-be final solution, *Body and Soul* tenders one last image. As Charley, who "never felt better in [his] life," walks with his lover Peg away from the menacing Roberts, we see, just above the words "The End," a sign saying "candies": a sign, of course, of the old candy store, damaged but undestroyed, like "the undestroyed element in human nature," back to which Shimen Ruskin would lead us.

That the destruction is neither over nor simply "over in Europe," and that "people like us" doesn't just mean "Jews," are signaled in the film's other decisive scene of instruction—like *Crossfire*, it has two—which immediately follows the scene with Shimen in Mrs. Davis's apartment. After Shimen leaves and Charley explains to his mother and Peg that he's throwing the fight, the champ returns to the training camp where he witnesses the death of Ben. The force of this scene undeniably has a lot to do with Ben's lesson in courage: seeing him defy Roberts, Charley ultimately chooses to do the same in the film's climactic fight scene. As in *Crossfire*, however, the shift from a Jewish to a non-Jewish teacher doesn't mean that Jewish teaching has dropped out of the picture. Though that shift, in *Crossfire*, supposedly removes the taint of "Jewish propaganda," it replaces "a Jewish person . . . or something" with something Jewish. And though the shift from Shimen to Ben, in *Body and Soul*, presumably helps the film transcend its "incidental" "Jewish elements" in favor of "universal issues," the resulting universality must remain colored by the specificity of the Jewish and black performers who exemplify it. Moreover, if the final scenes of the film imply a continuity of Jewish and African American pedagogies, this continuity extends beyond the message

of racial pride. To be sure, Ben, as Rogin points out, “echoes [Shimen’s] message: ‘It always felt so good after the fight. Walk down Lenox Avenue. Kids all crazy for you. And proud.’”⁴⁵ But like Jewish pride, black pride occasions embarrassment because it expresses itself in the shameful rudimentary gestures of mimetic intimacy. The broadly histrionic, even pantomimic, manner in which Canada Lee performs Ben’s defiant death scene—as Rogin describes it, “the distraught black man collapses backward, gets up, starts swinging wildly, . . . and falls face down”—suggests the mimetic excess attending the translation of language back into gesture.⁴⁶ And the fact that Ben’s last name is Chaplin, just as the hero’s first name is Charley, locates both the black teacher and the Jewish pupil in a tradition of “popular art up to Chaplin and the Marx Brothers”: a pariah tradition that, as Charles Chaplin’s emblematic place in it reminds us, neither limits its membership to Jews nor ever quite casts off the aura of Jewishness that surrounds it—and that would account for the anti-Communist harassment of both Chaplin and the actor who plays his fictional namesake.⁴⁷

What makes Lee’s performance of Ben’s death scene almost painfully embarrassing is not just the “wildness” of his gestures but the way in which they inflect tragedy toward comedy. While powerfully evoking pity and terror, Ben’s delirium and death are staged in a way not inconsistent with Chaplinesque and Marxian modes of “buffoonery and clowning.” Even in his enactment of black pain and rage, Lee reveals a certain face of comic mimesis: his performance of anguish brings to mind “the grimaces of the comedian imitat[ing] the face of the person he parodies.” Not that Ben, or Shimen, or even Charley Davis, lacks something to grimace about. But when is comic formalism ever a purely formal exercise, empty of affective content? With his voice, his face, his body, Canada Lee vividly animates a feeling like the pleasure Ben and Charley both experience after winning more than a fight (Ben: “It always felt so good”; Charley: “I never felt better in my life”)—or like the anger blacks and Jews both feel as a result of the genocidal violence directed against them because of their “tabooed mimetic features.”

Of course, to the extent that the film itself continues to find these mimetic features embarrassing, Charley’s big fight at the end will have to play up the virilizing anger at the expense of the feminizing pleasure—so much so, in fact, as to go beyond, or rather, below, mimesis. For in

place of such gestures as “touching, nestling, soothing, and coaxing,” the climactic boxing match offers punching, bruising, maiming, and stupefying. And to the extent that the film’s embarrassment compels it to embrace a tough-guy popular culture instead of a tender-comrade popular culture—even Shimen, of course, wants Charley to win, though, importantly, to win the title of “retired champeen”—the big fight will seem to mark the knockout victory of an aesthetic derived from “street quarrels” over one derived from “Jewish jokes.” As a result, critics will forget about Charley’s relationship with Shimen and focus instead on his relationship with Ben, reducing the film to yet another instance of Jewish blackface, in which Jewish men appropriate the “authentic” masculinity of black men, all the while submerging the jazz standard with which the film shares its title and making Peg a painter with a European accent, so as to effect what Rogin calls the film’s “European high-culture choice” and its “African American sacrifice.”⁴⁸ But “European” doesn’t always have to mean “high-culture,” as demonstrated by Karl Kraus’s “sympathy for dialect writers and comedians, in preference to so-called high literature and in protest against it.” Just as Polonsky acknowledged his debt to “Jewish jokes *and* street quarrels” (emphasis added), making them one aesthetic rather than two, so are the black boxer from Harlem and the Jewish grocer from Europe performers in the same mimetic mode. Behind many a black prizefighter and many an Irish cop, today as in 1947, one can no doubt discover a soft or sweet Jewish man who mustn’t be seen too much. Sometimes, though, when there’s a Jewish person behind one of these butcher-looking figures, this may be because, as performers, the cop and the prizefighter are themselves radically “Jewish” comedians.

Best Picture

What happens when Jewish performance, far from being a matter of too much, becomes one of not enough—when the anxiety that you will turn into a Jew gives way to the anxiety that a Jew will turn into you? What happens, in other words, when the Jew is played by a WASP? This is the question posed by the third “Jewish” picture of 1947. The year’s big Oscar winner, *Gentleman’s Agreement* is now the least watchable

of the three films—for many of the same reasons that made it the big Oscar-winner. While *Crossfire* and *Body and Soul* both cannily assume the protective shading of noirish intrigue, mitigating the earnest didacticism of the “social problem” picture or the improbable optimism of Popular Front melodrama, *Gentleman’s Agreement* makes no such generic amends for the middlebrow piety with which it treats its theme of anti-Semitism in America. Not that the film can be called artless. On the contrary, while *Body and Soul* and *Crossfire* revel in a look of low-budget grittiness, *Gentleman’s Agreement*, in the tradition of Important Pictures from *The Life of Emile Zola* to *Crash*, takes care to wrap its high-mindedness in an equally imposing glossiness. It even goes so far as to theorize the latter, in a speech one of its characters makes in defense of “things” and the human cathexis of them. But while *Crossfire* associates the fantasy of a world of likeable things with the film’s one Jewish character, *Gentleman’s Agreement* plays it safer and chooses as its spokesperson for materialism a young Christian divorcée, the hero’s girlfriend, who, showing him the quietly tasteful house she has built and decorated deep in the Connecticut suburbs whose “restricted” housing policies give the film its title, explains: “When you’re troubled and hurt, you pour yourself into things that can’t hurt back.” This observation almost amounts to the housing policy, or at least the design scheme, of the film itself which, recognizing that some things *can* hurt back, preemptively swathes itself and its characters in folds of discreet plushness, its silken empire flung from the hills of Darien to the offices and restaurants and apartments of Manhattan.

Pouring *itself* into an aesthetic of things-that-can’t-hurt-back, of gentle things, *Gentleman’s Agreement* becomes a textbook illustration of the gentility it takes to task.⁴⁹ Elia Kazan, who would win an Oscar for directing it, would remark, many years later: “Whenever I see it, it reminds me of the illustrations in ‘Redbook’ and ‘Cosmopolitan’ in those days. I mean, those people don’t shit.”⁵⁰ (Or, as Kazan put it in 1952, in a supplement to his aggressively sycophantic testimony before HUAC: “I think it is in a healthy American tradition, for it shows Americans exploring a problem and tackling a solution.”⁵¹) The film’s thing-love, its materialism, that is, represents a choice of WASP good taste over *Crossfire*’s Jewish luxuriousness: a choice of safe things over funny things, of a defensive materialism over a comic materialism. To pour oneself into things that can’t hurt

back is not to “lose oneself in identification with Other,” as Horkheimer and Adorno articulate the aim of mimesis, but rather to guard against such mimetic self-dissolution. Unlike the Rabelaisian unfreezing of the laughter preserved in funny Jewish names, this liquefaction brings, in place of happiness, mere insurance against pain. And if liberatory thawing in no way precludes the luxurious comic congealment that makes things and people swell, the an-aesthetic of *Gentleman’s Agreement* reveals, as double of the liquid self, the brittle self. So fundamental is the film’s defensive protocol that it undergirds, and thus itself restricts, whatever comic “relief” the film provides.

“Fundamental,” to be sure, need not mean “total”: the film cushions itself against being “hurt back” in part because it risks *giving* offense. If not quite as daring as it pretends to be—the film, for instance, fails to make the obvious connection between anti-Semitism “over in Europe” and anti-Semitism over here—*Gentleman’s Agreement* has enough audacity to identify John Rankin as a professional anti-Semite. “Give me the lowdown on your gut when you hear about Rankin calling people kikes,” Phil Green, the Gentile hero, played by Gregory Peck, imagines saying to his Jewish friend. Though usually dismissed nowadays as timid and naive, *Gentleman’s Agreement* has the distinction of being the only pre-seventies Hollywood film, as far as I can tell, to denounce, if not HUAC itself, its then-presiding genius. Here playing the Jewish friend, Dave Goldman—a man of gold, what Robert Sklar calls “the Canada Lee role,”⁵² this film’s Jewish counterpart to *Body and Soul’s* dignified African American—John Garfield observes, “There’s a funny kind of elation about socking back.” Which is to say that John Garfield is also playing the John Garfield role. And if this film’s idea of a happy ending is to have his character buy a house in previously “restricted” Connecticut, this assimilationist triumph nonetheless puts the slugger from the street in the heart of Anglo-Saxon suburbia.⁵³ Yet this happy ending is only structurally comic. As in *Body and Soul*, John Garfield throws the punches while somebody else throws the punch lines. There may be a funny kind of elation about socking back at gentleman’s agreements and genteel anti-Semitism, but that elation has nothing funny about it.

Rather, funniness here devolves into a merely parrying function, as comedy shrinks back into its anxious culture-industry stereotype. Lacking *Crossfire’s* Jewish comic materialism, the film also lacks *Body and*

Soul's Jewish comic formalism. Instead of imitating the gestures of language, the comedy of this "solemn and self-important" film consists in deflecting them.⁵⁴ Relegated to "supporting" status, but deprived, unlike their confreres in the other two films, of the contagiousness minority can confer, its two comedians epitomize two different ways of fending off an intimacy, whether with things or with people, that, in 1947, it is by no means paranoid to imagine as potentially hurtful. One of these two characters is an Einstein-like Jewish scientist, implausibly named Joe Lieberman, whose irreverently "brainy" jokes about Jewishness and anti-Semitism exemplify, for Kathy Lacey, the film's Christian heroine, the salutarily *non*paranoid relation to those subjects, a refreshing exception to the rule of Jewish "oversensitivity." As her journalist boyfriend, masquerading as a Jew, begins to merge alarmingly with the mask, Kathy, wanting him to lighten up a little, offers him the counterexample of Professor Lieberman, who "feels the problem [of anti-Semitism] deeply, but . . . has a sense of humor about it." That Lieberman is played by Sam Jaffe, who would become another victim of the blacklist, testifies ironically to the ever greater *need* for a sense of humor against the crushing evidence of its defensive inefficacy.

As Jaffe shares Sam Levene's first name and Shimen Ruskin's fate, so his old-fashioned, almost vaudevillian, character resembles Levene's in *Crossfire* and Ruskin's in *Body and Soul*—or would resemble them, were *Gentleman's Agreement* the kind of film to indulge in such comic activism.⁵⁵ Preferring a sleeker, more "modern" comic personation, it more prominently features its other comic character—a chic but good-hearted fashion editor played by Celeste Holm, who, polishing her trademark role as the wisecracking gal who gets the laughs but not the guy, picked up as her consolation prize an Oscar for her supporting performance. Of that performance, Kazan rather ungraciously remarks: "Celeste Holm did well, but she got an Oscar because she had [screenwriter] Moss Hart's wittiest lines."⁵⁶ In 1947, the same year in which he was writing those lines, Hart—as if he had read Horkheimer and Adorno, or at least met them—said of Hollywood: "It is a very totalitarian town. Its people are the most frightened of those in any industry."⁵⁷ Without endorsing Kazan's backhanded compliment, I would still suggest that Hart explicates the political terror behind both his own (Jewish) wit and Holm's hysterical (but non-Jewish) embodiment of it. With HUAC and

the studio heads cracking down, and with assassination in the air, the witty woman's wisecracks signify not a potentially subversive sharpness and looseness of tongue, but rather a self-consciousness so compulsive as to become self-policing, beating the cops themselves to the punch. And though Holm's character, Anne Dettrey, does finally stop biting her tongue long enough to accuse Kathy of "hypocrisy" with respect to the Jewish question, this "catty" outburst, as Anne characterizes it, marks both wit's end and the end of her viability in the narrative. Proposing to replace Kathy in Phil's affections, in effect proposing to him period, she commits sexual suicide, driving him back into Kathy's arms, so that, after the happy ending that puts a Jew in Connecticut, comes the even happier one that puts the Christian male and Christian female leads together again.

Thanks to Holm's fashion editor, the repellent "pushiness" of the Jew gets displaced onto the secondary, not to say minoritized, woman—a self-styled "sophisticated New Yorker," rather like Moss Hart himself. Comic and cosmopolitan (or at least as cosmopolitan as *Cosmopolitan* magazine), but not comicosmopolitan—she must not be permitted to relax long enough for wit to soften into pleasure—Holm's Anne is frequently paired with Garfield's Dave, as if to imply an affinity less romantic than sibling. Ring Lardner Jr., is said to have quipped that the moral of the film is "that you should never be mean to a Jew, because he might turn out to be a gentile."⁵⁸ But the film—which could have been called *Jewish Like Me*—also shows how a Gentile might turn out to be a Jew. In keeping with the assimilationist project of *Gentleman's Agreement*, racial cross-dressing here presupposes—and demonstrates—the *minimalism* of Jewish difference, as opposed to its mimetic hypervisibility in *Crossfire* and *Body and Soul*. Peering into the mirror as he conceives his plan to play Jewish, Phil sizes himself up thus: "Dark hair, dark eyes. Sure. So has Dave. So have a lot of guys who aren't Jewish. No accent, no mannerisms. Neither has Dave." In this decor of upholstered things and subtitled people, "Jewish" and "Gentile" traits are exchanged so equitably that the film even ends up producing a paranoia for Christians.

Yet comedy's role here is to allay anxiety, not to provoke it. Like Lieberman's healthy sense of humor, Anne's pathological wit seeks to appease the true wielders of power. The film's comedy, that is, can only compensate for its Garfield-like pugnacity, instead of reinventing more

shamefully rudimentary gestures, like the reaching and touching that get rebuffed as pushiness. The film's strategy worked insofar as it got its three Oscars—more than *Body and Soul's* one or *Crossfire's* none. Almost at the same moment, however—in October and November of 1947, to be exact—the comedians were beginning to face the assassins, and we know what would happen in the next few years to John Garfield, and to Sam Jaffe, and to Anne Revere, who here plays mother not to Garfield but to Peck. Of course, everybody dies, to quote Garfield, or, rather, Garfield's character, in *Body and Soul*. Moody, tough, or solemn, all three Jewish pictures of 1947 record an increasingly petrifying climate for Jews, for African Americans, for Communists, for liberals, for witty women, and for comedy itself. All three of them accordingly subject comedy to a certain isolating procedure, as a result of which not too many laughs seem to be in store. Two of them, however, take advantage of the chilly climate as a means precisely to store the laughter that might appear merely dead but that, like a deadpan expression, keeps the promise of happiness alive. By turning their apparent seriousness into a medium for comedy's survival, these Jewish pictures, pictures of forgotten ancestors coming back to life, show us radically old ways to come in and get a little warm.

Collaborators

Schulberg, Kazan, and *A Face in the Crowd*

About Kazan, I put it three ways: One, I wouldn't want to be buried in the same cemetery with the guy. Two, if I was on a desert island with him I'd be afraid to fall asleep because he'd probably eat me for breakfast. Three, we've already given him the Benedict Arnold award, which is usually reserved for presidential assassins.

Except he didn't kill a president, just his friends.

—ABRAHAM POLONSKY

The writer Budd Schulberg and the director Elia Kazan made two films together: *On the Waterfront* in 1954 and *A Face in the Crowd* in 1957. The first, a widely celebrated and hugely influential Hollywood classic, perhaps the definitive fifties American film, was the Oscar champion of its year, winning awards for best picture, best actor, best director, and best screenplay, among others. The second fared considerably less well. As François Truffaut observed in *Cahiers du cinéma*, *A Face in the Crowd* “was a vivid disappointment to the American public and to the French public as well—almost surely because it is the exact opposite of *On the Waterfront* and because one must attack today whomever one flattered yesterday.”¹ No mere extrinsic circumstance of the films' reception, the imperious protocol of flattery and attack, as we shall see, inheres definitively in both Schulberg-Kazan collaborations, not only as subject matter but also as organizing principle. But why does Truffaut think that *A Face*

in the Crowd is “the exact opposite of *On the Waterfront*”? The opposition, it seems, consists in the fact that while the earlier film is “basically demagogic,” the later one can be described as “anti-fascist,” even as a brilliantly satirical analysis—“as inexorable as a ‘Mythology’ of Roland Barthes”—of “the capricious career of Senator Joseph McCarthy (whom the authors had in mind).”²

Kazan, for one, denied that *A Face in the Crowd* is about McCarthy, but, in his autobiography, he quotes extensively from a review of the film in the Communist Party’s *People’s World* that makes Truffaut’s broader point rather more polemically:

When two stool pigeon witnesses before the Un-American Committee [sic] conspire to produce one of the finest progressive films we have seen in years, something more than oversimplification of motives is needed to explain it. Both Budd Schulberg . . . and Elia Kazan . . . did not hesitate to betray what both believed in before the witch-hunting House Committee. But they must have learned something during their days in the progressive movement and motion picture audiences will be the beneficiaries. *A Face in the Crowd* is a hard-hitting exposé of the television industry and the way a hillbilly guitar plucker can be built up to be a national menace.³

With its sexy, Christ-like stoolpigeon of a hero, *On the Waterfront* has been viewed, even by its star, Marlon Brando, as a defense, indeed as a glamorization, of Kazan’s and Schulberg’s own “friendly” testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, for which they both obligingly recited the names of their former associates in the Communist Party.⁴ A diabolical inversion of Polonsky and Rossen’s *Body and Soul*, *On the Waterfront* turns gangster capitalism into gangster communism, and locates its boxer hero’s triumph not in his choice of radical solidarity over the glittering corruptions of “success,” but rather in his decision to cooperate with a remarkably avuncular “Crime Commission,” by informing on the crooks who run the labor union to which he belongs. If not as inexorable as one of Barthes’s “Mythologies,” *On the Waterfront* provoked Barthes to write one, distinguishing itself, in his words, as “a good example of mystification,” whose aim is a “passive acknowledgment of the eternal boss,” and in which “what is orchestrated for us . . . is the *restoration of order*.”⁵ Coming three years after the demagogic *Waterfront*, and in the year of Joseph McCarthy’s death, *A Face in the Crowd*

might well seem to stand as an antifascist palinode, as a *demystification* of the very media-powered, pseudopopulist demagoguery—figured here less as McCarthyite, to be sure, than as generically southern-fried—with which the more successful film and its authors had collaborated. I want to argue, however, that *A Face in the Crowd* is in no way the opposite of *On the Waterfront*, and that both Schulberg-Kazan collaborations are acts of collaboration in the political as well as the professional sense. Far from atoning for *On the Waterfront*, and far from attesting to the victory of an irrepressible “progressive” spirit over collaborationist treachery, *A Face in the Crowd* extends and refines *On the Waterfront*’s project of glorifying that model citizen of the long 1950s whose end we have yet to see: the American sycophant. However eagerly (forgivingly, vindictively) one might expect the sycophant’s apology, what one gets instead is the sycophant’s apologia—or rather, *more* of the sycophant’s apologia, since *A Face in the Crowd* picks up where *On the Waterfront* left off.⁶ *A Face in the Crowd* failed where *On the Waterfront* succeeded, I will also argue, not because of a nonexistent thematic opposition, but because of the different way in which it misrepresents the sycophant’s essentially adolescent experience of humiliation as the sycophant’s essentially adolescent fantasy of revenge.⁷

This difference can be evoked, perhaps, in terms of temperature: where the perverse genius of *On the Waterfront* centers on its trick of taking the stoolpigeon—hitherto, in Hollywood anyway, a despicable, even repulsive figure, as exemplified by the simian title character in John Ford’s *The Informer* (1935)—and making him *cool*, which is to say making him Marlon Brando, *Face*, as I will sometimes call it, typically gets characterized as “hysterical,” “frenetic,” and “overheated.”⁸ Notoriously anything but a cinematic prude, Pauline Kael, for instance, remarks of the film’s cast, “They could all use a good cold shower.”⁹ “It never hurt none to play hard-to-get,” says the film’s mock-folksy protagonist, but the film itself seems not to be listening. Though by no means free from stridency, *On the Waterfront*, like its permanent teen rebel of a star, seduces with its general aura of rough, brooding naturalism.¹⁰ Less winningly, *A Face in the Crowd*, playing up Actors Studio “intensity” rather than Actors Studio “grittiness,” invests this intensity in a bullying tendentiousness as grotesque as its supposedly charismatic hillbilly guitar-plucker’s totalitarian megalomania.¹¹

That the film itself, like its media-spawned monster, registers as “hysterical” points to a difference of genre as well as to one of temperature between the two Schulberg-Kazan collaborations: unlike the impeccably “dramatic” *On the Waterfront*, *A Face in the Crowd* hysterically aspires to be hysterical—in the sense of the term that movie reviewers (no strangers to sycophancy themselves) increasingly prefer to “hilarious.” “There’s a lot of humor in it,” Kazan told an interviewer. “I’ve never done anything as funny as this.”¹² Which may not seem to be saying much: Kazan’s status as the preeminent American director of the 1950s, in Hollywood as on Broadway, never rested on his comic touch. And yet, in its very shrillness, Kazan and Schulberg’s will-to-comedy in *A Face in the Crowd* is not without value for the fledgling discipline of sycoanalysis. For, whatever its defects from the viewpoint of seduction, the authors’ hysterical pursuit of funniness reveals, more clearly than their solemnity in *Waterfront*, how much the sycophant—whose canary-like informing typically pigeonholes him as a singer—owes to a certain type of comedian: the type of comedian, in fact, whom Kazan and Schulberg had to inform on to continue making movies in the Hollywood of the blacklist, and whose mutilated body, I would go so far as to claim, constitutes the unacknowledged, unacknowledgeable ground of any collaborationist film whatsoever, not just the two by these particular collaborators.

As I have suggested, HUAC’s preoccupation with alleged Communist influence in Hollywood was itself a “front”—to speak the committee’s own language—for a more diffuse, more powerful, and far less *presentable* obsession.¹³ Under the pretext of hunting for Communists, HUAC, and later McCarthy and company, conducted a campaign against a related but rather different form of international or subversively un-American activity: the cosmopolitan mimesis whose universality modern civilization refuses to tolerate, or even to recognize, and circumscribes instead in the figure of the comic Jew. Sam Levene’s Samuels in *Crossfire*, Shimen Ruskin’s Shimen in *Body and Soul*: these are the redundantly named atavistic avatars of the infectious comic materialism and comic formalism that must be exterminated lest, in their incorrigibly *touching* way, they reach out and en-Jew the entire American population, completing the work of cultural contamination already begun by “Franklin D. Rosenfeld”’s New Deal and by the recently ended Second World War.¹⁴ More unnervingly intimate, more insidiously inviting, than any

“Communist ideology”—in which, for all their own manifest hysteria, the members of HUAC had little interest, and of which they had even less knowledge—the Jewish mimetic comedian, or chameleon, nonetheless raised the specter of a radical foreign conspiracy to undermine the American way of life, which is why a wildly disproportionate number of both blacklisted and informers were Jews. When, by a happy coincidence, one of the comedians turned out—like Shimen Ruskin, or Abraham Polonsky, or, as we shall see in chapter six, like Judy Holliday or Zero Mostel—to have been a member or an ally of the Communist Party as well, the war on Jewish cosmopolitan comic chameleonism found its alibi, along with a “c” word it could use, in a war on Communism, the alibi deriving more credibility still from the official left’s partly deserved reputation for humorlessness. Who would take seriously a Committee against Comedy? But a committee to rid the nation of “screwballs” and “crackpots” and “kooks” *with recognizably leftist politics*: that is no laughing matter.¹⁵ HUAC’s investigations extended beyond the world of entertainment, but the committee members would not have been the first or the last tourists to have trouble tearing themselves away from Babylon for more wholesome destinations. To fulminate against “Hollyweird” is to advertise the psychosexual animus for which fifties anti-Communism provided a more sober and more respectable cover.¹⁶ Denunciations of “Hollyweird,” of course, perpetuate the homophobia that has played such an indispensable role in U.S. culture at least since the Cold War. But the same oafish *bon mot* also betrays the resentment that has always suspected, among the “cultural elite”—as opposed to, say, the real elite—about whom there is by definition something funny, and who would shove or push themselves down the nation’s throat, the homosexual’s Jewish cousin, the Svengali behind the “liberal media” for which the fifties “Communist,” least enviable of all these weirdos, proved a highly convenient surrogate.

Both self-styled liberal anti-Communists, Kazan and Schulberg liked to imagine themselves as manfully resisting all tyranny, “whether fascist or Communist.”¹⁷ Here is a typically symmetrizing comment from Schulberg on his leftist critics: “They question our talking [about them]. I question their silence [about Stalin]. There were premature anti-fascists but there were also premature anti-Stalinists.”¹⁸ Or, as he says of his blacklisted former friends: “These are Nazis posing as libertarians.”¹⁹

In sycophantic theory—a morality of revenge, like most moralities—I betray you because you betrayed me, or rather, the democracy of which I am the champion. In sycophantic practice, however, the liberal anti-Communist’s fetish of symmetry breaks down, ostensibly because the tyranny of the left is in fact even worse than the tyranny of the right. I quote Schulberg again: “You’re called by HUAC, and you don’t want to act to endorse its thought control, but you know the greatest thought control you’ve experienced was from the Party.”²⁰ Because Communist thought control is so egregious, you act to endorse anti-Communist thought control even though you don’t want to. The asymmetry works the other way, however, once the abstractions are dropped and “Communism” or “the Party” becomes, say, the group of left-wing screenwriters whom you name, while “anti-Communism” becomes the bloodthirsty congressional committee before whom you name them. At this point, in other words, the act of naming names presents itself in its dual aspect, as at once a surrender and an assassination: a surrender to those with the power to get you fired, and an assassination of those without power, whose blacklisting indeed reduces them to the silence for which you reproach them.²¹

As we have seen, the “friendly” performance before HUAC, which Victor S. Navasky calls a “degradation ceremony,” required both the surrender *and* the assassination: it was not enough merely to degrade oneself, to confess one’s own political sins; in order to escape blacklisting, one had to give the committee the names of one’s associates in the Communist Party—or rather, in most cases, to repeat back to the committee the names that it already had from its collaborators in the FBI.²² To become the “friend” of the state, in other words, one had to be seen helping the state to kill one’s friends, as Polonsky puts it. And when two such friendly killers, two such friend-killers, get together and befriend each other—“there was an immediate warm sympathy between us. We became brothers,”²³ Kazan remarks of his first meeting with Schulberg, soon after they both testified—the treachery built into the American social contract, and increasingly routinized in the postwar war on cosmopolitanism, betrays itself with chilling clarity. Not that HUAC invented the figure of the good citizen as assassin. In a book on Vichy France and its legacy that might itself have been called *Sycoanalysis*, but

whose actual title is *Psychanalyse de la collaboration*, the co-author Jean-Paul Aribat formulates the imperative of the collaborators as follows: “asservir les autres, en se faisant les servants de cet Autre obscur qui n’existe pas.”²⁴ How quickly, though, America translated this principle into its own reign of terror, as if desperate to import the very thing it had just spent four years helping to defeat overseas. And how easily, not to say how predictably, American state terror, in its rush to flex its muscles by making spectacular examples of bad citizens, recruited accomplices among the semicriminal classes themselves: among, that is, the artists, intellectuals, and “foreigners” most likely to cause trouble for the regime, and whose treasonous tendencies needed to be counteracted by a carefully staged, widely publicized, government-sponsored *trahison des clercs*. When collaboration came to the States in the late forties and early fifties, Schulberg and Kazan, at any rate, distinguished themselves as unusually diligent servants of the big American Other: few could match them in the zeal with which they served that Other by producing and then standing on the piled-up remains of the un-Americans among whom they otherwise risked losing themselves.²⁵ (Kazan, an Anatolian Greek, on being treated as a social nonperson during his undergraduate days at Williams College: “Those Anglos making the choices, what did they think? That I was a Jew boy? Yes, I looked like one.”²⁶) Helping the authorities by pointing out the sinister jokers in our midst, doing their best to please their illusory yet no less intimidating masters, performing, in short, the abject pseudocomedy of appeasement, Schulberg and Kazan, not just in *A Face in the Crowd* but already in their HUAC testimonies, both commit comedicide and, as murderers sometimes do, assume their victims’ identity. With an exemplarity more than bordering on overkill, each of these friendly witnesses pays the sycophant’s sincerest tribute to the comedian he has just slain: virtuosos of imitative betrayal, mimics of the mimesis they destroy, they pay, that is, the backhanded compliment of the flattery that attacks and the attack that flatters.²⁷

Schulberg testified before HUAC in 1951, still indignant about how, ten years earlier, the Communist Party had compelled one of its book reviewers to supplant a flattering review of his novel, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, with an attack on it. Driven by that instance of thought control not only to renounce his own Communist Party membership but also, now,

to give the committee the names of fifteen other Communists, Schulberg, like most “cooperative” witnesses, finds his cooperation rewarded with a demand for more of the same. “I am sure that I, as a member of the committee,” says Congressman Clyde Doyle of California, “would not want to lose the opportunity to give you every opportunity to give us any suggestion you might have, if you have any, any processes or any action, any attitude that we should take with reference to any possible remedial legislation to meet the present subversive misconduct of people.”²⁸ Every inch the Hollywood prince—as he dubs himself in the subtitle of his autobiography, which stops well before his *НУАС* testimony²⁹—Schulberg, evincing throughout this testimony the peculiar combination of entitlement and panic that is the birthright of every studio executive’s son, knows his audience well enough to give it what it wants: a slightly improved imitation of its ineloquent, fatuous, terrifying self. Here is his response to the congressman’s invitation:

On the subject of outlawing the Communist Party, my mind itself is not made up. I think there are some reasons for that. As long as some line can be drawn between simply political action and all this other business that goes on. I feel if the thing is outlawed it will probably spring up under some other name. That part is the problem . . . which is how do you get people not to join these other groups, whichever they are, that come out under this name. I feel that that is a question of finding an American organization, American activities which will give the American people the ability they have always had to protest, to talk up for the underdog, to have humanitarian impulses and so forth without falling into the hands of these people who use these causes, and the Civil Rights Congress I am convinced is an example of that.³⁰

To be a sycophant, in other words to be a pseudocomedian, is necessarily to imitate the powerless as well as the powerful, the imitators as well as the imitated. As “pseudo” suggests, however, Schulberg’s imitation of the comedian he attacks is no less approximate than his imitation of the congressman he flatters. Roger Caillois characterizes the animal behavior of *mimétisme*, ordinarily taken to be a means of self-defense—for a human analogy, think of the practice, in the American melting pot, called assimilation—as in fact “un luxe dangereux,” because the mimetic animal, as if carried away by the sheer thrill of mimesis, mimics its sur-

roundings even at the risk of its own destruction.³¹ Where a cosmopolitan comedian-chameleon, pushing imitation beyond the boundaries of identity governing flattery *and* attack, would have thrown himself with almost suicidal extravagance into the jargon of American patriotism, Schulberg's sycophantic chameleonism, a mockery of the mimesis that might have been, distinguishes itself by the cringing, calculating self-protectiveness of its crowd-pleasing antics, by the *piety* of its parody.³² "An American organization," "American activities," "the American people": this is no doubt parody of the dominant discourse, parody filled with ambivalence "and so forth," but it is parody *Hollywood-style*, which is to say, the Jewish parvenu's attempt to keep the Cossacks from killing him by singing them their favorite songs—and also, in Schulberg's case, where the parvenu becomes a pigeon, by singing, period.³³ Far from "talk[ing] up for the underdog," and even further from letting the underdog talk up for itself, this chauvinistic blather, so earnestly rehearsed here for official consumption, not only talks up for the *top-dog*, but does so by offering it new underdogs to chew on ("the Civil Rights Congress I am convinced is an example of that"). To be sure, Schulberg stops short of endorsing the "outlawing of the Communist Party"—a move that, in 1951, would have been somewhat superfluous³⁴—but he no more hesitates to entice HUAC with the prospect of fresh victims ("these people who use these causes") than he has balked at throwing the committee the red meat of the fifteen people he has already named, and whose careers in the dog-eat-dog world of Hollywood he has thus helped to end, while of course saving his own. (Before his HUAC appearance, Schulberg had himself been named by another informer.)³⁵

As much pseudomimesis as pseudocomedy, sycophancy is grimly parodic for another reason besides its devotion to telling the big Other what it wants to hear. In its contempt not just for those it imitates but for the mimetic and comic principle of pleasure itself, it resembles "the practical joke," which, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, "is a wretched parody of fulfillment." In this respect, or rather, in this disrespect, sycophantic pseudomimesis is a paradigm as well as a parody. As Horkheimer and Adorno go on to suggest,

Anyone who sniffs out "bad" smells in order to extirpate them may imitate to his heart's content the snuffing which takes its unrationalized

pleasure in the smell itself. Disinfected by the civilized sniffer's absolute identification with the prohibiting agency, the forbidden impulse eludes the prohibition. If it crosses the threshold, the response is laughter. That is the schema of the anti-Semitic reaction.³⁶

The sycophant's literal resentment is the very model of anti-Semitism: a mimesis of mimesis, anti-Semitism is essentially (to borrow once again from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's declension) a re-sniffing, a permissible indulgence of the lowly sense of smell, an "imitation"—for the purpose of detection, and for the good of social hygiene—of somebody else's "unrationalized pleasure," somebody else's dangerous luxury, somebody else's perverted eroticism of the nose.³⁷ The mimetic organ par excellence, as Horkheimer and Adorno point out, the Jew's nose affords him or her so intimate and so intense a "pleasure in the smell itself" as to dissolve the boundaries between him or her and it, between smeller and smell. (Indeed, the nose may be the only part of the Jew that survives all chameleonic metamorphoses.) When comic mimicry goes this far, not just individual subjects but the social order itself is threatened with disintegration, since *everyone* might want to mimic the mimic, to enjoy en-Jewment. And when this crisis arises, it is time for that special investigator, that professional re-smeller, that re-resentment artist known as the sycophant to go to work, tracking down the "bad" smell that the mimetic Jew has become. And if the sycophant "happen[s] to be Jewish,"³⁸ as Budd Schulberg says of himself, all the better: with the primitive and yet highly evolved sensory apparatus that is at once his racial blessing and his racial curse, he will know just whom to smell, and just how to smell them.

A civilized bloodhound on the scent of dirty underdogs, Schulberg the collaborator may not betray any more Jewish self-hatred than Schulberg the author of the allegedly anti-Semitic *What Makes Sammy Run?*³⁹ But, in his "absolute identification with the prohibiting agency," with the comedicial state, where laughter is allowed only if it destroys the comic, Schulberg the collaborator inflicts that state's violence as he puts on its power. Of course, for the sycophant, neither an underdog nor a top-dog but always a middle-dog—like the snob, with whom he has so much in common—that power can *only* be put on. Like his brother sadist, the practical joker, the sycophant takes pleasure in giving pain, his

cruelty not just sanctioned and rewarded by the state but in fact *required* by it. Sycophancy, we recall, is a *normal perversion*: an *obligatory perversion*.⁴⁰ Yet the sycophant knows very well, whether or not he admits it to himself, not only that his license to kill can be revoked if he fails to maintain the proper patriotic straight face while using it, but also that, in the no-nonsense “organization” that he serves, the extirpators can easily become objects of extirpation themselves. In its middleness, sycophancy might seem like a strategy for having it both ways, for being at once Jew and Nazi: for enjoying the “forbidden impulse” of comic mimesis and, at the same time, for assuming the deadly force of the eternal boss in whose service you keep busy extirpating it. Yet sycophancy lets you have it neither way. For though “the forbidden impulse eludes the prohibition” as long as it does not “cross[. . .] the threshold” into mortifying laughter, the possibility of that social death reduces your sniffing to the furtive, vicarious exercise of a *rationalized* pleasure, to the mere eagerness-to-please that is a “wretched parody” of *comic* pleasure. And though your identification with the prohibiting agency makes you feel like a man, that very identification, as any Hollywood prince should know, is what keeps you a boy, since identifying with power means submitting to it. (Even in his nineties, Schulberg remains “Budd.”) “Yes, sir.” “No, sir.” “I will cooperate with you in any way I can”.⁴¹ Schulberg’s testimony demonstrates that he learned his lines well, even if he persists in not quite understanding their implications, retrospectively according himself, for example, a fantasmatic critical distance from HUAC’s power, as though he had negotiated with it in the manner of a free agent. His misgivings about “act[ing] to endorse” HUAC’s “thought control” evade the recognition that, instead of endorsing it, he *enforced* it, in the subordinate way in which a prince, or any other court favorite, carries out the orders of the king.

As we turn from Schulberg to the even feistier Kazan, misgivings about HUAC and company give way to outright disdain: “I never said I liked McCarthy, I despised him, I really and truly did, I said that publicly all the time. I said, ‘I’m embarrassed at being connected at all with these people.’”⁴² But what is more authentically adolescent than “really and truly” despising your parents? And who is more “embarrassed at being connected” with such losers than the cool suburban teenager?⁴³ To an interviewer who asks him how the hostility toward his friendly

testimony has affected him, Kazan responds: "I think it made a man of me. Up to then, I was the blue-eyed boy, everybody's darling. . . . I was essentially an other-directed man, I was really working for the praise of others, for the notices in the papers. This thing made me say: well, not everybody likes me, I've lost many of my best friends. . . . I said, okay, I'm going to satisfy myself now, not the critics, not even my friends."⁴⁴ In his autobiography and elsewhere, Kazan made a point of portraying his youthful self as an angry immigrant outsider in America, hiding his resentment of "Anglos" and other insiders beneath the serviceability that earned him the nickname "Gadg," short for "Gadget."⁴⁵ (The sycophant does not resent *just* the Jew, although resenting the Jew, or anyone else thought to enjoy the perversion of unrationalized pleasure, is one of the requirements for becoming a sycophant.) Having spent the first half of his life as a non-Jewish "Jew boy" (who even looked Jewish), as an "other-directed" pariah longing in vain for the love of his hated WASP oppressors, Kazan regarded his HUAC testimony as the crisis that liberated him into the tragic grandeur of manly maturity:

I don't say that what I did was entirely a good thing. What's called a "difficult decision" is a difficult decision because either way you go, there are penalties, right? What makes some things difficult in life is: if you're marrying one woman you're not marrying another woman, if you go one course you're not going another course. But I would rather do what I did than crawl in front of a ritualistic Left and lie the way those other comrades did, and betray my own soul. I didn't betray it, I made a difficult decision.⁴⁶

What Kazan did, of course, was to crawl in front of a ritualistic Right. But, like Schulberg flattering himself with the fantasy that he "endorsed" HUAC, Kazan mistakes his abjection for existential heroism. So grossly misreading his servile complicity with the committee, he can also, like many informers, ignore (or pretend to ignore) the larger resemblance between American anticommunism and the Soviet totalitarianism that it showily opposes. The American sycophant needs America to be the land of the free so that he can construe his sycophancy as the act of a free man: a difficult but brave act, like dumping one woman to marry another, or like betraying your friends so as not to betray your own soul.

One is never a sycophant *now*: one can only have been a sycophant *then*. (“I was ratting on *myself* all them years,” *On the Waterfront*’s Terry Malloy says of his subservience to mob—i.e., Party—discipline.) Kazan’s conversion narrative turns obsessively on the image of crawling: he would rather do what he did than “crawl in front of a ritualistic Left”; he quit the Communist Party because, as he wrote in his prepared statement to HUAC, “the last straw came when I was invited to go through a typical Communist scene of crawling and apologizing and admitting the error of my ways.”⁴⁷ The equivalent, for Kazan, of Schulberg’s humiliation by the Party over *What Makes Sammy Run?*, the “typical Communist scene of crawling,” or Kazan’s recollection of it, is also the straw that finally overcomes his reluctance to name names—he met with HUAC in January of 1952 but refused to inform—and sends him back to the committee three months later, to offer the names of eleven former “comrades,” along with an account of how each of the films and plays he has directed thus far is “thoroughly and wonderfully American,” “opposite to the picture which Communists present of Americans.”⁴⁸ (“*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. . . . It is a typically American story and could only happen here, and a glorification of America not in material terms, but in spiritual ones.” “*Gentleman’s Agreement*. Picture version of the best-selling novel about anti-Semitism. It won an academy award and I think it is in a healthy American tradition, for it shows Americans exploring a problem and tackling a solution.”⁴⁹) Nor was Kazan content to stop there: two days after his cooperative testimony, in an apparent access of hit-man’s euphoria, he published an advertisement in the *New York Times* in which he congratulated himself for shattering the “secrecy [that] serves the Communists” and thus for showing “the people of this country . . . how to protect ourselves from a dangerous and alien conspiracy and still keep the free, open, healthy way of life that gives us self-respect.”⁵⁰ These are noble words, even nobler for Kazan’s omission of any reference to how his Hollywood studio had been pressuring him to give in to HUAC.⁵¹ They are nobler, too—though perhaps less candid—than the words with which Kazan describes his soul-searching in his autobiography: “Cornered and angry, I wanted to name everybody, break open the secrecy, not only of those in our cell but of everyone else I knew to be ‘in,’ at any time. . . . I was against them all. I wanted to hit

the Party's elite especially hard; pull them down into the muck with me. I knew damned well they weren't good for the country."⁵² Here, Kazan's patriotism looks like a mere afterthought, a flimsy cover not just for his lifelong vindictiveness—which, he admits, propelled him into the Communist Party in the first place⁵³—but for something even “darker”: the re-resentful compulsion to imitate, even to wallow in, another's smelly nasal eroticism, a compulsion that constitutes the subtext of his sycophantic crawling *tout court*, whether in front of the left or in front of the right.

For, in Kazan's case, the “forbidden impulse” indulged by “anyone who sniffs out ‘bad’ smells in order to extirpate them” directs itself both at the former comrades he wants to “pull . . . down into the muck with” himself and at the committee that he “really and truly” “despise[s].” (“The mimetic function,” Horkheimer and Adorno write, “is sneeringly enjoyed as something despised and self-despising.”)⁵⁴ That this impulse is forbidden explains the distaste with which Kazan speaks not just of his youthful Communism but even, at certain moments, when he is not altogether denying his surrender to the right, of his middle-aged collaboration with HUAC: “Obviously,” he told Michel Ciment in 1974, “there's something disgusting about giving other people's names. . . . One feeling is that what I did was repulsive.”⁵⁵ The other, stronger feeling, of course, is that the Soviet Union is even more repulsive, so Kazan—the one ex-Communist who, given his bicoastal preeminence, might have been able to discredit HUAC, some have speculated⁵⁶—was right, he inevitably concludes, to do the difficult thing that he did. Even franker, though—and Kazan prides himself on his frankness, a virile virtue, as Barthes points out⁵⁷—might have been an acknowledgment of the *pleasure* (however derivative) attending the difficulty. To become a “man,” to achieve “self-respect,” is to sniff after not only the little others whom you police but also the big Other *for* whom you police. A sycophant is literally one who shows the fig, and we will return at the end of this chapter to the obscenity of fig-showing. But let us not forget the “dirtiness” of the more available and more colloquial synonyms for “sycophant”: “bootlicker,” “asskisser,” “arselicker,” “buttsniffer,” “suck-up,” “brownnose,” and, in other languages, “Arschkriecher,” “leccaculo,” “lèche-cul.” The sycophant, in other words, is a man in love.⁵⁸ If the middle-dog is condemned merely to imitate both the pleasure of the Jew and the power

of the Nazi, this double vicariousness is its own consolation: the vicariousness, I mean, finds its consolation in the doubling of its libidinal field, which includes the high as well as the low. “Fuck you all, big and small!”: this, Gadg tells us, was his mantra, the cry of his “truer” self.⁵⁹ One must attack today whomever one flattered yesterday? The law of sycophancy might be written thus: one must attack today whomever one flatters today. Or, more crudely: there can be no ass-kissing without ass-assinating. As long as the sycophant remembers to despise both his erotic aim (sniffing) and his erotic objects (those whom and for whom he sniffs), as long as he remembers to rationalize his perversion, he can take comfort, and pleasure, even in the submission to the Man that makes a man of him.

Even? Isn't it obvious that the sycophant positively rejoices in his own submission? Not always, the case of Kazan seems to suggest. “Disinfected by the civilized sniffer's absolute identification with the prohibiting agency, the forbidden impulse eludes the prohibition.” Sometimes, the absolute identification not only disinfects, but is itself disinfected, to the point where its mucky absoluteness vanishes behind a sneering mask of revulsion, as though dependency did not thrive on such “oedipal” theatrics. The inventor of Marlon Brando and James Dean, Kazan was the master of these theatrics, in Hollywood and on Broadway, and perhaps never more so than in the staging of his own life. An actor himself in the Group Theatre before he became a director, he continued, even into old age, to epitomize the “Method,” not least as a method for obeying the “other-directed” imperative to entertain by appearing to refuse it in favor of something far superior: the manly-yet-sensitive pursuit of Honesty. In collaborating with HUAC, Kazan was not saving his ass by kissing the state's: unlike “those other comrades,” busy betraying their souls like the whores that they were, he was finally being true to his own soul.⁶⁰ In naming names, he was not sacrificing his friends to ingratiate himself with the neighborhood bullies: he was at last ceasing to be a gadget and starting to say, “I'm going to satisfy myself now.”⁶¹ The humorlessness that is one of the clichés of Method acting—as of that other Cold War phenomenon whose “Russian” accent is more pronounced, namely, Communism—reflects the skill with which Kazan himself, on-screen and off, practiced the seductive theatricality of antitheatricality, the *sprezzatura* of the twentieth-century courtier. America's teenagers

may once have wanted to be Brando and Dean, but it was the big-nosed Kazan—with help, on *Waterfront*, from the big-nosed Schulberg—who taught these two heartthrobs the adolescent art of a *surlly servility*.

And yet, sometimes even the coolest teenager becomes a little hysterical. Sometimes, that is, he loses his cool by clutching it desperately, and allows “Fuck you all, big and small!” to sound too much like what it really means: “You’re gonna love me!,” in the words of “Lonesome” Rhodes, the pathetically well-nicknamed hillbilly superstar of *A Face in the Crowd*, as he crashes and burns at the end of the film. Entertainment’s almost ontological sycophancy—its inherent obligation to oblige, an obligation overtly politicized in HUAC’s theater of collaboration—is generally tolerated as long as the entertainer’s kisser, as Lonesome calls a face, doesn’t seem too much to be kissing anything. In Kazan’s disappointing stab at comedy, however, it is as though entertainment had ineptly given away its horrible pseudocomic “neediness,” not by rationalizing comic pleasure too little but by rationalizing it too much, like a hip-hop performer whose gangsterish contempt for his audience suggests nothing so much as a temper tantrum. No less manically than the demagogic monster whose rise and fall the film chronicles, *Face* wears on its face a hyena’s sneer that is all too reminiscent of a logo, out of which issues Madison Avenue’s latest scream for attention. (The film’s last words: “Don’t leave me! Come back! Come back! Come back!”) What crowd, American or French, would *not* have recoiled, as if seeing its face in a mirror, from this, the “funniest” of Kazan’s films, its signature rictus (*ce rire qui n’en est pas un*) emblemizing a “wretched parody of fulfillment”? “In America,” Truffaut noted in his review of *Face*, “politics always overlaps show business, as show business overlaps advertising.”⁶² The ultimate target of the film’s satire, the world of advertising, has nothing on Kazan, whose belated attempt to save *Face* perpetuates its aggressively conformist hipness:

What I like in the film is the energy and invention and bounce which are very American. It’s really got something marvelous about it, this constantly flashing, changing rhythm. In many ways, it’s more American than any picture I ever did. . . . It has a theme that even today is completely relevant. Finally what I think is that it was ahead of its time.⁶³

“Even today”—that is, in the early seventies, twenty years after he sang for HUAC, diligently supplementing his performance with an enumeration of the American qualities of his plays and films—Kazan is still at pains to update his patriotic c.v. “Marvelously American” plus “a little bit avant-garde” would seem to be a winning formula in the upper-middle-brow cultural sphere of which Kazan was one of the most luminous postwar commissars. In this formula, in fact, lies much of the success of earlier Kazan films, like the teen-idol vehicles *On the Waterfront* and *East of Eden*. In contrast, what “doesn’t work” in *A Face in the Crowd* is that it works too hard: its determination to be cool reeks of flop-sweat. (Needless to say, I mean that as a compliment. As the sycophant delights in sniffing out “bad” smells, sycoanalysis delights in the stench of the sycophant himself.) The film’s problem is not that it was “ahead of its time,” but rather that its desire to be ahead of its time is so hysterically, so symptomatically, *of its time* (and therefore “completely relevant,” “even today”): the film’s “energy and invention and bounce,” its “constantly flashing, changing rhythm,” are “very American” indeed—as American as the hyperkinetic belligerence of a nation of servants so afraid of losing the Boss’s love that they would kill to keep him happy.

America America: this is the title of Kazan’s favorite—though not the most American—of all his films, from 1963.⁶⁴ It is also the refrain that both Kazan and Schulberg sing before HUAC and after it. Even once the immigrant has made it, he can never stop singing, never stop repeating his lines in the musical pseudocomedy of American life, in which not just entertainers but all citizens, naturalized or native-born, peddler or prince, are conscripted into the endless postwar “parade of stoolpigeons,” in the phrase of Albert Maltz’s discussed in chapter 1.⁶⁵ Of course, bouncing, flashing, swaggering hyper-Americanism, which stands out in the already frenetic crowd as a symptom stands out in a neurosis, is not the only thing that embarrassingly calls attention to itself. Here is Kazan’s description of his father amid the alien corn of WASP New England, on the day that he and Kazan’s mother took Kazan to college: “My father wore his business suit, cut full at the waist to contain his pot, and a high, hard collar, clutching a bow tie of blue polka dots. He looked what he was, a small cosmopolitan importer, uncomfortable out of his environment.”⁶⁶ You don’t have to be the bitterly self-conscious, resentment-ridden

seventeen-year-old son of immigrant parents to know that there is nothing necessarily paradoxical about a cosmopolitanism that *doesn't fit in*. Cosmopolitanism is a dangerous luxury because of the recklessness with which the chameleon makes use of its mimetic versatility, tending to adapt itself out of existence. But it can also be a dangerous luxury insofar as this mimetic versatility, whether used or not, is perceived to differ from the provincial fixity all around it. Cosmopolitanism's fluency can then stick out like a "high, hard collar," and its conspicuous talent for imitating its environment can seem as insolently dandyish as a "bow tie of blue polka dots," in which case it provokes the murderous resentment of sons, and daughters, whose demand for a *real* father, imaginary ruler of a land that one might be stuck-up enough to call a *patrie*, frequently goes by the name of patriotism.

Against the hapless father's dangerously luxurious chameleonism, Kazan, like Schulberg, practices the son's cautious, conservative, sycophantic chameleonism. The mimesis of profligacy—both the cosmopolitan importer and the studio executive lost their fortunes—is replaced by the mimesis of panic, and the panic is nowhere more evident than when the two collaborator sons get together to collaborate on the overheated *Face in the Crowd*. One can almost smell the fear, for instance, in the caginess with which these two buddies manage their shared family romance, narrowing it to the classic lineaments of an assault on the bad totalitarian father and an affirmation of the good American father, so that all other histories, especially less schematic ones, are either subsumed by this narrative or, better yet, erased by it. This "progressive" film, which agrees with the Communist *People's World* in considering itself "a hard-hitting exposé" of the antidemocratic conflation of politics and mass entertainment in postwar America, does not hit so hard as to expose, or even to acknowledge, what might seem the most "relevant" instance of that baleful phenomenon: the motion-picture blacklist, the result of that unholy alliance between Hollywood and Washington that both Kazan and Schulberg, only a few years earlier, had gone out of their way to promote, and that, in 1957, was still very much in force, working to preserve a rigid distinction between those who got to produce hard-hitting exposés and those who got to produce nothing at all. Just as the appeal of Andy Griffith's *Lonesome Rhodes* derives, Kazan claims, from his "down-to-earth truthful[ness],"⁶⁷ so the film itself projects an aura of

bold satirical iconoclasm, of trenchancy so refreshingly irreverent as to command the admiration of all but the most cowardly or hypocritical of spectators. And yet, like those husbands who abuse their wives because they “don’t got gumption enough to take it out on the boss,” as Lonesome puts it in one of his early radio broadcasts, Kazan and Schulberg, with their keen sycophantic noses for rank and status, direct their satire not at the movie business, but at the commercially ascendant and therefore culturally inferior medium of television. This is not simply a matter of snobbery, although the snobbery is undeniable, and indeed puts *A Face in the Crowd* in the vanguard of “sophisticated,” television-bashing Hollywood films, like *Network*, *The King of Comedy*, *Quiz Show*, and *To Die For*.⁶⁸ In attacking television rather than movies, this movie’s authors protect more than just “the industry” as a whole. More specifically, they make sure to exempt from their satire the studio heads who maintained the blacklist, the politicians who imposed it, and the ideal of American manhood behind the whole inquisition, aiming their punches instead at the gray flannel suits presiding over the more remote television-advertising complex, safely located in New York City, rather than in Hollywood or Washington, and, despite the authenticating presence of real media celebrities like Walter Winchell and Mike Wallace, blown up to such caricatural proportions as to seem barely plausible. The two bloodhounds who made this film know better than to bite the hand that feeds them. To be sure, the film’s truth-telling doesn’t exactly spare American politics. But, for such a cutting-edge satire, its political villains are a curiously anachronistic (not to mention somewhat ideologically ill-matched) couple: an aristocratic, neofascist tycoon with an English accent, and an elderly, pedantic senator described by “some of those left-wing New York papers” as “the last of the isolationists.” So intent on being ahead of the curve—Kazan thought that the film “foretells Nixon”⁶⁹—this ruthless critique of contemporary culture spends a curious amount of its time recycling the leftovers on the cutting-room floor of Frank Capra and Preston Sturges.⁷⁰

Obviously, Kazan and Schulberg could not have made a film explicitly criticizing the blacklist, even if they had wanted to, since one of the blacklist’s principal effects was to police not just film personnel but film content as well, and since the first rule of this censorship was to censor the fact of its own existence. Some might therefore see in *Face*’s strategy

of displacement the cunning of allegorical indirection. But the “allegory” of *A Face in the Crowd* functions like the allegory of *On the Waterfront*, not like the allegory of, say, *The Crucible*. In changing the subject, that is, the film doesn’t transform it; it evades and misrepresents it. Giving a fancy English accent to General Haynesworth, the evil genius pulling the hillbilly’s strings, is like that other Hollywood ruse of portraying Nazis as homosexual aesthetes rather than as the hard-working family men that they were. And in case we fail to notice the pinkish hue of the general’s fascism, Schulberg names his company “International Drug.”⁷¹ Kazan and Schulberg would have us believe that American totalitarianism, for all its ostentatious just-plain-folksiness, could never have its roots in the American *Volk* itself, which, though boorish and dim-witted, always wises up in the end. Lonesome’s father may have been a con man—no surprise there—but only an un-American “adopted father” like the General, only a “dangerous and alien” mastermind, could turn a con man into a dictator. In place of the coarse faux-populist xenophobia that Kazan and Schulberg lampoon, then, they offer a refined faux-populist xenophobia. A composite—in his own witticism, a “compost heap”—of Huey Long, Will Rogers, and Arthur Godfrey, Lonesome himself represents that virulent (and, one might add, by no means diminished) strain in American politics and culture that Kazan calls “hayseed fascism.”⁷² As some viewers have noticed, however, although the television tyrant’s swan song (to invoke Godfrey again) features snatches of a hymn, Lonesome has been pretty well divested of the militant Christianity that accounts for much of the power enjoyed by hayseed fascists, then and now, including the power to intimidate their would-be critics into silence, for fear of seeming antireligious, or even Jewish.⁷³ And when, to complete the obfuscatory incoherence, Kazan and Schulberg put the hillbilly and his puppeteer into bed with a feeble, high-wasp dinosaur of an isolationist presidential candidate—an old-school reactionary, as opposed to the new-school reactionaries with whom the authors so recently made nice—they execute perhaps the cleverest dodge of all: by turning 1957 into 1940, they neatly conjure away the whole Communist-loathing Cold-War national security state for which they both performed such exemplary service, and to which they thus owe their continuing careers.⁷⁴

No doubt a more “balanced” assessment of the film would give it credit for its antiauthoritarianism, however selective, in an age of conformity.

Yet even this putative antiauthoritarianism bespeaks the filial piety of the American sycophant. As the deliciously recognizable face and voice of Mike Wallace might remind us, the hard-hitting exposé, singularly fastidious as to whom it hits and what it exposes, finds its cozy home in a media machine whose marshmallow softness serves as an immense cushion not so much enveloping as constituting the official version of *The Way We Live Now*. That this machine needs hard-hitting exposés as a cat needs canaries is clear from the alacrity with which publishers vie for the manuscript of *Demagogue in Denim*, the book Mel Miller (played by Walter Matthau) has written to “pull the mask off” Lonesome Rhodes and “let the public see what a fraud he really is.” To no one does it come as news, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that the unmasking and ritual dismemberment of celebrities is as essential to the infotainment empire as is their production and worship. But the news is just as old in 1957: when the first Mrs. Rhodes shows up to blackmail her famous husband by threatening to sell her story to *Confidential* magazine, the film is assuming in its audience a familiarity with an already firmly established regime of scandal-mongering, *Schadenfreude*, and *resentiment*, as American as apple pie. And well it might: the HUAC hearings in which its writer and director both participated so cooperatively opened up the giddy postmodern phase of the venerable, all-American spectator sport that Philip Roth has called “moral disgrace as public entertainment.”⁷⁵

Indeed, Mel Miller’s hard-hitting exposé, like the film of which it is the ego ideal, continues the project of informing begun by Kazan and Schulberg in 1952 and 1951 respectively (“I wanted to hit the Party’s elite especially hard”) and embodied most glamorously in *On the Waterfront*. But while it wouldn’t be easy to miss the collaborationist politics of that earlier film, its air thick with pigeons both literal and figurative, little attention has been paid to the ways in which, in *A Face in the Crowd*, Kazan and Schulberg are still testifying, which is to say, still justifying testifying, with all the guilty conscience, bad faith, self-delusion, and redoubled aggression that that anxious undertaking involves. Insofar as the collaborators’ friendly testimony comes up at all, it tends to be cited as the source of the film’s admirable aesthetic richness and ambiguity, qualities that Kazan himself, for one, preferred to the “simplistic” taste for “either-or” answers that he lamented in the work of “liberals” such as

Arthur Miller and Lillian Hellman.⁷⁶ An aesthetics of ambiguity: there is much to be said for this excellent thing, especially when it dresses up an ethics of “difficulty” *à la* Kazan (What I did was disgusting but heroic, and all the more heroic for *being* disgusting), or a rage for symmetry *à la* Schulberg (The left is really the right, only worse). Even after the aestheticizing, however, what is “difficult” is still a betrayal, and what the symmetry would neutralize is still an assassination.⁷⁷ Unlike Terry Malloy, Mel and Patricia Neal’s Marcia Jeffries—the two murderous collaborators of *A Face in the Crowd*, or, as it was subtitled in an earlier version, *The Assassins*—do not testify in front of a crime commission, or any other quasi-governmental body: the film itself *is* their testimony.⁷⁸ Nor do they follow the lead of *Waterfront*’s dreamy working-class hero of an informer in bringing down an unmistakably Stalinoid thug like the loathsome union boss, Johnny Friendly (with friends like these . . .). But then, these two friends and witnesses, these two friendly witnesses, don’t *need* to follow in Terry Malloy’s humble, punch-drunk footsteps, because, like Budd Schulberg and Elia Kazan, they are both well-educated, well-placed, well-paid show-business intellectuals. In Malloy’s betrayal and assassination of Johnny Friendly, the working class avenges its persecution by its own self-styled leaders; the evil Communist boss is slain so that the eternal boss of American democracy may be embraced the more passionately. That a Hollywood prince and a bicoastal *Wunderkind* should choose as their fictional representative an inarticulate, sullenly handsome boxer-longshoreman with a heart of gold merely reflects the insatiable appetite of upper-middle-class American men, especially those in the “soft” professions, for fantasies of their own virilizing *déclassement*.⁷⁹

Casting the *Wunderkind* and the prince as a female producer with a degree from Sarah Lawrence and a pipe-smoking, bespectacled Jewish male writer would seem to constitute one example, at least, of how *A Face in the Crowd* is the “opposite,” as Truffaut claims, of *On the Waterfront*. As we shall see, though, this “protofeminism” and ethnic realism in fact play no more than supporting roles in a process—not so different, after all, from the butchering-down at work in *On the Waterfront*—of making a man out of the sycophant. In any case, having situated the fight against Communism on the waterfront—that is, in a working-class milieu—Schulberg and Kazan move the battleground, three years later,

a bit closer to home: not, as I have said, to Hollywood, but to the kind of mass-cultural sphere around which two such apparatchiks could still be counted on to know their way (Schulberg had actually written scripts for television). In this sphere, moreover, what they are pleased to see as the fascism of the left might well take hold in the manner of regular fascism, typically showing its face as the grinning media spectacle of a Lonesome Rhodes rather than as scowling labor gangsterism of a Johnny Friendly. By locating the anti-Communist agon in a showbiz arena like, but not the same as, the film colony to whose own collaboration with HUAC they had lent their talents, and to whose resulting sponsorship their muck-raking film owes its existence, Schulberg and Kazan afford themselves the apparently contradictory advantages of *semiautobiography*: while escaping from the scene of their earlier violence, and so avoiding its implications, they get to inflict it again.

But why this need to re-inflict the violence one is avoiding, to avoid the violence one is re-inflicting? Why not either stop testifying altogether or just keep testifying without trying to justify it? Because sycophancy is love—that is, a sick fancy or an incurable disease—the sycophant can never stop kissing ass, or kicking it. But sycophantic love is really two loves: a love of “bad” smells, and a love of the agency that prohibits them. And the sycophant’s second love, his identification with the Man, not only mustn’t know itself (how can you be the Man if you love the Man?) but prevents him from ever knowing the first either: instead of knowing it, all he can do is to keep rationalizing it, misreading both his sniffing and his sniffing-out as acts of rectitude of which a free man can be proud. Hence the double gesture of avoidance-as-repetition, and hence a film such as *A Face in the Crowd*, hysterically mystifying and hysterically mystified in its hard-hitting honesty.⁸⁰ Happily for sycoanalysis, the sycophant, like any hysteric, performs what he cannot know, betraying himself along with his victims. Sycoanalysis is nothing other than the psychoanalysis of a social order (Vichy France, the United States since 1947) in which the sycophantic character of all citizenship is not so much flaunted—a certain “democratic” decency discourages such explicitness—as imbued with a kind of epidemic salience.⁸¹ Precisely because Schulberg and Kazan think they’re producing something else—say, “a punch in the nose” (as Mel Miller nasally describes his exposé) to those who would threaten American democracy, or a tough-loving homage to

American “energy and invention and bounce”—*A Face in the Crowd* is a veritable textbook for “Sycoanalysis 101,” an anatomy of postwar America as Assassin Nation.⁸²

Lonesome Rhodes is meant to be initially charming, as is the audience that finds him so. “The real source of his power,” Kazan explains, “was not his trickiness but his knack of seeing something that everybody feels but doesn’t dare say, and he dares say it.”⁸³ When Marcia Jeffries discovers him sleeping like a dog on the floor of an Arkansas jail cell, she immediately senses the appeal, and the show-business potential, of his earthy authenticity. Having persuaded him to sing for the listeners of *A Face in the Crowd*, as she abysmally calls her radio show, she introduces him as follows: “When I went east to Sarah Lawrence—that’s a college—I majored in music. And I learned that the real American music comes from the bottom up. When George Gershwin played it in New York, it was black-tie music. But the real beginning of it was in folks who never owned a tie.” From the outset, however, the charm of the bottom is exceeded by its petty, envious opportunism: before Lonesome will agree to sing for Marcia, he wants to know, “What do I get out of this? I mean Mr. Me, Myself, and I.” “Better watch him. He’s mean,” somebody warns the deputy as he goes to wake the prisoner who’s been arrested for being drunk and disorderly, and who’s about to be made a star. The warning seems to go unheard—otherwise, how could we, like Marcia, be charmed?—but it registers nonetheless. While barring it from her consciousness, Marcia is shrewd enough an impresario to admit it into her formulation of Lonesome’s alleged charm: a charm in which she smells the animal magnetism of that *chien méchant*, the angry white male who hates mimetic New York Jews like George Gershwin for stealing “his” music—this film is too progressive to make the one African American prisoner sing and dance—and putting a black tie on it.⁸⁴ Back east at Sarah Lawrence, Marcia may have majored in music, but, the condescending *faux pas* of “that’s a college” notwithstanding, she seems to have learned almost as much about public relations, so skilled is she in the sycophantic art of simultaneously flattering her audience’s wounded narcissism and attacking the cosmopolitan parasites who have deprived these “real American[s]” of their rightful status as cultural top-dogs. Better watch him indeed: in the hands of his media-savvy female Pygmalion—Marcia even names him Lonesome—this American idol’s



“Better watch him. He’s mean”: Andy Griffith in *A Face in the Crowd*

meanness will be fashioned into a captivating image of his mass audience’s resentment of those un-Americans above who ought to be below, into a hypnotic personification of the indignant glee with which the toppled tops sniff at the upturned bottoms of those perverts who get to put on the dog. “My public love dogs,” Lonesome, now a television megastar, tells the prissy senator whose presidential campaign he is making over (and planning to ride into the White House). “One pitch with a hound is worth ten thousand words.” Of course it is, for a pitch *with* a hound is a pitch *to* hounds, as a Dartmouth-educated middle-dog like Budd Schulberg demonstrated in his HUAC testimony, or as clever Marcia may have intuited even before she walks into the jail cell, from the minute she conceives her search for the all-American hyena.

“I could make ’em eat dog food and think it was steak!” Lonesome boasts of his hold over his audience. Sycophantically catering to the doggy resentment of a nation of sycophants, where everyone, it seems, is some kind of adman or press agent or drum majorette or—to use Lonesome’s own word for his underlings—bootlicker, Marcia, who majored in music but minored in “communications,” constructs in Lonesome Rhodes the fascist demagogue as supersycophant, the secret of whose success is not, as Kazan thinks, his knack for saying “what everyone else feels but doesn’t dare say,” in the bracing style of the politically

incorrect satirist, but rather his ability to enact his public's fantasies of revenge against their illegitimate pseudomasters, the stand-ins for all the Gershwins of the world, all the Jews of the liberal media, from the more conveniently local substitutes (at the beginning, the radio-station owner, the mattress manufacturer, any "softies who 'sist on sleeping on a bed," and the sheriff, to whose house—in a particularly virtuoso piece of hound-pitching—he gets his listeners to send their dogs) to the more conveniently distant ones ("our limey cousins," as his fame grows bigger and his reach more global). Of course, Marcia doesn't see herself as a sycophant, nor, even though she is Lonesome's "producer," in both the parental and the artistic senses of the term, does she see herself as being in the business of sycophant-making and sycophant-entertaining. When she christens the singing drunk in the jail cell, giving him the name Lonesome, she in effect gives birth to him as well, in an act of maternal authorship that, if it doesn't suggest the enchantment of "Pygmalion in reverse," evokes scarier references to Frankenstein.⁸⁵ And yet, the monstrosity of her creature—the collaborator's golem, a "living doll" (in the words of one ad agency secretary) who protects patriotic show people by siccing the "folks" on the cosmopolitan ones—is not supposed to be part of his original nature. ("Why, he's a *monster!*," one of Lonesome's fans clucks in surprise after the doll-gone-bad has been exposed at the movie's end.) Or rather, his monstrosity is supposed to consist in how his good instincts—the "humanitarian impulses," as Schulberg would say, that allow him to feature a "colored" woman on his Memphis television show, and to get his viewers to send her money to rebuild her house—are perverted, to such an extent that he ends up screaming at the waiters at his aborted dinner party: "Get out, you dressed-up black monkeys. You turn my stomach."⁸⁶ Look, Schulberg and Kazan seem to be saying: this is how the idealism that made us join the Communist Party was betrayed, how two impressionable American boys were taken advantage of by something that seemed so appealing and yet turned out to be so appalling. Even though Kazan insists that the "realest story of *A Face in the Crowd*" is the story, encoded in Lonesome's relation to Marcia, of his and Schulberg's relations to their wives at the time, and even though Lonesome initially seems to share the co-authors' penchant for satirical truth-telling, Lonesome is not Schulberg and Kazan.⁸⁷ Instead, Lonesome is at once Schulberg and Kazan's idea of the tragic corrupt-

ibility of the American left and a warning that, given our in many ways salutary childlike vulnerability, it could still happen again.

"You're getting to be all the things you used to harpoon," Marcia tells Lonesome after an especially wounding manifestation of how he has begun to go bad—under the influence, of course, of some effete, vaguely foreign villains from Capraland. Yet what sustains this fiction of innocence corrupted is not just a fond mother's sentimentality about her rotten son: with equal poignancy, Schulberg and Kazan deny that the rot was there from the start, lest it corrode their *amour-propre*, their sense not just of their past selves as innocents abused, but also of their present selves as satirists rather than, say, publicists.⁸⁸ Unlike Lonesome, they have never become, nor ever will become, the things they harpoon; their harpoon is indeed sharper and harder than ever, not despite but because of their youthful flirtation with Communism. But what if that hard-hitting harpoon is always already a softball, a Madison Avenue pitch for—to quote Kazan's ad in the *New York Times* again—"the free, open, healthy way of life that gives us self-respect"? "You were taken in [by Lonesome], just like we were all taken in," Mel tells Marcia at the film's end. "But we get wise to 'em. That's our strength. We get wise to 'em." Like *Gentleman's Agreement*, *A Face in the Crowd* "is in a healthy American tradition, for it shows Americans exploring a problem and tackling a solution."

Satire's attack may well advance a normative agenda of social reparation. Whether or not *A Face in the Crowd* does anything for the nation's health, this brutally truthful film certainly tackles a solution to the problem of how to leave the American audience feeling good after all. For the attack launched by the film comes thickly wrapped in flattery: flattery of "our strength," not least the strength of the wisened-up attackers, whose object, moreover, is never really a good (ol') boy like Lonesome Rhodes, for all that the film makes a point of having Marcia assassinate the monster she's created, and for all that it invites us to get off on seeing Mel shoot bullets into the corpse. (I am speaking figuratively, of course. Lonesome does not really die, any more than does Johnny Friendly. As Kazan himself points out, however, there are many kinds of assassination besides what he calls "actual assassination."⁸⁹ "I don't figure him for a suicide," Mel reassures Marcia at the film's end, as she looks up anxiously at the penthouse from which Lonesome's screams are

issuing. Mel is right: a victim of homicide can't very well commit suicide.⁹⁰) Rather, what the attackers are after is a figure lurking behind the front provided by Lonesome: a much more dangerous figure, so corrupt and so corrupting that he can never even appear on the screen—as if he had never existed at all, or as if, after having been annihilatingly named, he had to be annihilatingly *unnamed*.⁹¹ That figure, of course, is the one whom the satirist—one of those “mild men [who] hate themselves for being mild,” as Mel Miller defines himself—can only resent, and whom he resents a lot more than the star-spangled red herring after whom he sniffs with such well-rehearsed repugnance. I am referring not to the mimetic Jewish composer, but to that even bigger softy, the mimetic Jewish comedian, whose luxuriously unrationalized pleasure stands in infuriating contrast to the rigorously rationalized pleasure of satire and sycophancy alike. One of the film's daring theses is that, in today's superficial society, the selling of a presidential candidate is no different from the selling of a product like Vitajex, an update of “the old patent medicines” and an ahead-of-its-time Viagra. But much as Kazan and Schulberg send up the hard- *and* soft-sell fakery with which Madison Avenue pushes the fantasy of phallic potency in politics as in the bedroom—the film's acme of funniness is a sequence of Vitajex commercials, in which, for instance, the pills lengthen and stiffen the tail of a cartoon pig—*A Face in the Crowd* itself is one long, stiff commercial for the phallic potency of American guys who get strong by getting wise: guys, it turns out, like Elia Kazan and Budd Schulberg. “Precisely because he does care about people,” Kazan wrote in a puff piece for the film published, like his earlier, more notorious self-advertisement, in the *Times*, “Budd has a hard core of morality.”⁹² And precisely because Kazan and Schulberg are both still scared stiff, petrified by the thought of the en-Jewment always threatening to engulf them if they fail to stand at attention, their joint *Bildungsroman* demands that they make a man out of the sycophant, rewriting Marcia—“short for ‘marshmallow,’” Lonesome, with typical nastiness, observes—as Mel, or rather, rewriting both the woman *and* the Jew as, in effect, the Marshal, the officer of Our U.S. Law.⁹³

The rewriting has already begun, in fact, as soon as Marcia is named “Marcia,” with its etymological relation to “martial.” And it is also at work in the highly determinate indeterminacy surrounding Mel's Jew-

ishness, a triumph of connotation over denotation.⁹⁴ Unlike Abe Steiner, Lonesome's first agent and, with his "*Semitic face*,"⁹⁵ the only character the film, or rather, the screenplay, explicitly identifies as Jewish, Mel is the locus of a Jewishness that *isn't* as plain as the nose on his face. Instead, starting with his "ambiguous" name ("Miller"?—not necessarily; "Mel"?—probably), Mel Miller is Jewish in the wary style of the assimilationist fifties.⁹⁶ In this as in so many other ways taking after Schulberg, who wrote in 1952, "I despise [. . .] anti-Semitism not because I happen to be Jewish myself but because I have always opposed Neanderthalism in any form,"⁹⁷ Mel finds himself the bearer of an *accidental* Jewishness: a Jewishness that his loathing of Neanderthalism wouldn't let him deny, should anyone be so vulgar as to ask, but, at the same time, a Jewishness that he wouldn't want to push in anyone's face, should there be any Neanderthals in the room with whom you just can't reason. "What are you, Eastern college?" Lonesome sneers at the writer, after Marcia introduces Mel to the star of the Memphis television show on which she and Mel are now collaborating. ("Writer! You're going to have the softest job in the world, boy.")⁹⁸ "No," answers Mel, with the nervous, would-be-propitiatory grin that one hailed as "boy" might use on, say, one of the czar's constables, or a storm trooper, or a congressional investigator. "As a matter of fact, I went to school over in Nashville. Vanderbilt '44."⁹⁹ But Lonesome is not about to be put off the scent by this jittery attempt at *Lokalpatriotismus*: for though he "never learned to do much reading"—that's why Mel's job will be so soft—he's smart enough to sense something vaguely foreign in this dark interloper, perhaps even smart enough to hear the New York accent that Walter Matthau fails to conceal beneath his shaky Southern drawl. Not that Mel, or Matthau, or Schulberg, has anything to hide, exactly: for the Hollywood prince, the maven's maven, anyway, his racial patrimony, if contingent, is nonetheless a point of some pride, a fountainhead, as he sees it, of his showbiz moxie, intelligence, and, not least, class privilege. But the media insider must take care, lest he *outsmart* himself, and his Jewishness degenerate, in an almost *fin de siècle* way, into the "mere" softness that Lonesome resentfully ascribes to Mel and his bookish tribe. "All those months he was calling me 'Vanderbilt '44' and 'Frontal Lobe,'" Mel himself resentfully recalls as he tells Marcia about *Demagogue in Denim*. "Well, now I've got the book to punch him in the nose." The

boxing-loving Schulberg *would* choose this metaphor, whose masculine pugnacity would be subverted by the telltale Semitism of its nasal fixation, if it weren't already subverted by itself, pugilophilia being perhaps the definitive mania of Jewish boys of Schulberg's generation, especially the intellectuals among them. All of which is why, finally, it is not quite enough for Marcia to become Mel. Mel himself must rise above his already toned-down Jewishness to become a not-too-ethnic wise guy: a hit man *for America*. "You're not throwing me off the train like poor Abe Steiner," an angry Marcia tells Lonesome after he has jilted her to marry a seventeen-year-old drum majorette instead.¹⁰⁰ Marcia doesn't exactly get thrown off the train, like the insufficiently ruthless old Jewish agent, but, amid the general streamlining conducted by the film's energetic narrative, she does get sent to the second-class car, along with anything too softly "Semitic" in her young Jewish male collaborator himself. As we have seen, the sycophant is nothing without the nose he uses to track down former comic comrades; for this reason, *A Face in the Crowd* is not about to cut off Mel's nose to spite his, or its, face. Yet a nose alone is not enough: Mel must continue to sniff, but, in America, a man must also stand up straight; the Jew must be virilized. Softness's mimicry of hardness, the comic simulacrum of an erection, the travesty of a top gun, the Jewish man's nose, in short, needs to be fixed. And if Dr. Frankenstein herself—the easternized but *apparently* non-Jewish Marcia—has to get a little roughed up in the process, who ever said that freedom was free?¹⁰¹

Lonesome lucidly interprets his own repeated cruelty to Marcia (whom he plays, to recall the title of one of his signature tunes, like a "Mama Guitar") as a response to his dependency upon her—"You made me, Marcia. . . . I owe it all to you"—and to her superiority, both moral and intellectual. So when he calls her "my marshmallow," this belittling term of endearment easily betrays his resentful awareness that "Marcia" has warlike associations—that the marshmallow is herself one tough cookie. Nonetheless, Kazan's and Schulberg's progressivism doesn't quite extend to letting the woman stick up for herself.¹⁰² To be sure, it is Marcia who finally has the honor of bringing down the monster she has helped to build up ("as if she were throwing an execution switch on him," Schulberg's screenplay specifies,¹⁰³ she turns on the sound dial in the control room to make sure that Lonesome's television audience hears him expressing his contempt for them). But her merely honorary

role here reflects more than just an effort to attenuate the responsibility of the American media intellectual—I mean, of course, the repentant and patriotic American media intellectual—for the totalitarianism that she has authored, a totalitarianism that must instead be blamed on the obscurely alien interference of the bad company of “International Drug”-dealers her boy has fallen in with. As Marcia pulls the switch that destroys Lonesome, the closing title on the television screen reads, ironically, “Produced by Marcia Jeffries.” But the real irony here is that the producer-executioner has herself been infantilized. Marcia’s diminished responsibility—her demotion from author to co-author, and from co-author to “little ol’ gal Friday”—fulfills the film’s need to remake the mother as a girl. One collaborator is not enough: a collaborator has to have a collaborator—less to work with, however, than to work under, and less to turn to than to turn into. “I hear you just wrote the ending to my book,” Mel says to Marcia after she’s exposed Lonesome to his public, in effect informing on him. Yet it is still Mel’s book, just as it is he who now takes charge of the whole exhilaratingly sadistic process of sending the hillbilly Stalin crashing back to the dirt from which he came. Even more jubilantly than Terry Malloy punching out Johnny Friendly after he has already gunned him down by informing on him for the Crime Commission (“I’m glad what I done to ya!”), Mel, Schulberg’s latest edition of the Jewish prince turned boxing champion, ecstatically transforms himself, with the zeal of a Christian soldier, into a righteous American killing machine: a machine built on the assumption that one must keep on killing what is already dead, since, like Johnny Friendly, Lonesome Rhodes, Stalin, Communism, terrorism, etc.—all threatening, in authentic horror-movie style, to come back—it can never be dead enough.

Not only does mild but hard-hitting Mel (with what Schulberg’s screenplay pantingly calls “*quiet authority*”¹⁰⁴) get to make the big hit, delivering the climactic *second* death blow to the monster by throwing the book at Lonesome in the form of the film’s final baroque harangue: in the best husbandly way, or like a Reform rabbi who knows when to crack jokes and when to crack down, he also assumes control over the moral education of Marcia herself, goading her into throwing the switch on Lonesome by rubbing her nose in his exploitation of her (“You’re the locker room where he eases up after the fight,” and so on), and then bullying her into telling Lonesome that it was she who did him in.¹⁰⁵ (Marcia’s

life with this caring intellectual promises to be even more “Gothic” than all the abuse and betrayal dished out by her churl of a son and demon lover.) As I have said, Mel is obviously Schulberg’s idealized incarnation of himself; but there is also plenty of Dartmouth-educated Schulberg in Sarah Lawrence-educated Marcia. It is not as if Marcia simply represented Kazan and Mel simply represented Schulberg. The two collaborators *in* the film do not correspond in any neat way to the two collaborators *behind* the film. Kazan and Schulberg both start out as Marcia, but they must both turn into Mel, and Mel must end up as the fully Americanized avenger of Us. Female collaboration, that is, must give way to male collaboration, so that the “femininity” of collaboration itself may be put in its place and risen above, leaving no doubt about the collaborator left standing in the end: like any self-respecting sycophant, “he does care about people,” but the point of this care is to implant within his requisite malleable mildness “a hard core of morality,” without which the four-eyed superhero—introduced in Schulberg’s screenplay as “*an intelligent, hulking but not-too-forceful-looking young man*”¹⁰⁶—cannot smash the false idols always ready to pop back up and make us go all girlish. Out of the marsh, out of the en-Jewing muck, Kazan and Schulberg must erect a real killer of a strong and wise American Man.

In an essay entitled, “The Psychology of Quislingism,” Ernest Jones, after having asserted that the quisling typically handles his “fear of the dangerous Father” either by “submit[ting] to” him or by “ally[ing]” himself with him, concludes: “Both are *exquisitely homosexual solutions*.”¹⁰⁷ Yet these solutions, adopted by Kazan and Schulberg, are not exquisitely homosexual *enough*. Collaboration with the enemy—call it vertical collaboration—may suggest the sort of cryptofascist muscle-worship supposedly limited to gay male culture; but nothing could be straighter than identifying with the power of the invader. As for collaboration with another man—call it horizontal collaboration—this too has been thought, not necessarily homophobic, to entail a certain homoeroticism; but, at least in the case of the two collaborators in question, collaboration works hard to spirit away any gay content, establishing, in its place, the joy of an essentially abstract participation in a vast corporate entity, a thoroughly masculine and yet disembodied body, membership in which gives one the hardening thrill of being able to say “*our strength*.” Far from being deviant, sycophancy is all too normal—even among those

who cultivate an image of “almost outrageous” unconventionality, to quote from the jacket copy praising Kazan’s autobiography. “Many of the men I’ve liked best,” Kazan writes in that book, “have had strong ‘feminine’ characteristics,” and Schulberg is among the male friends he then praises for their “sympathetic yielding qualities.”¹⁰⁸ “Strong” is the operative word here: whatever sympathetic yielding qualities it takes to be a sycophant, they must finally yield, indeed, to the “masculine” identification with power that is an even more important requirement for the job. What this masculine-feminine schema represses, of course, is that the “masculine” identification is no less a surrender than the “feminine” compliance: sycophantic assassination is as much a bid for the father’s love as is sycophantic groveling, and sycophantic revenge betokens the same adolescent manipulability as does the sycophantic humiliation that it undertakes to punish. “Once I was a girl,” says the sycophant, “but now I’m a big boy, because I kill for Daddy.” As a girl, the sycophant can be “taken in”; as a big boy, he can “get wise.” As a girl, the sycophant can experience Communist “thought control”; as a big boy, he can control the controllers. The more sycophants change, though, the more they stay the same. The sycophant can never be anything other than the eternal boss’s eternal servant. And never is he more the eternal servant than when he thinks he’s “his own man,” as a pre-wised-up Marcia calls Lonesome.

But try telling this to a nation of sycophants. Needless to say, Schulberg and Kazan don’t, even if their film does. As sharply focused on the main chance as the self-described “shlockmeister” Joey De Palma—the slick, venal, bad sycophant to Mar-Mel’s anguished, earnest, good sycophant—they know all too well, and therefore show all too well (as *Face*’s disappointing box office suggests), that the one thing that must never be advertised is the sycophant’s permanent subjection: hence the sycophant’s *Bildungsroman*—which necessarily doubles as a national *Familienroman*. Not only does Lonesome Rhodes “seem like a redneck relative of Schulberg’s Sammy Glick,” in Nora Sayre’s phrase¹⁰⁹: *A Face in the Crowd* repeats the heterosexual triangulation of *What Makes Sammy Run?*, presenting itself as a contest in which, for the good of the nation, the Schulbergian hero takes the girl away from the symbol of the American Dream Turned Nightmare. Like “Uncle Sammy,” his city-slicker kinsman, corny old Lonesome makes a mockery of the promise that,

in America, even the most oppressed underdog can be a “Free Man in the Mornin.’”¹¹⁰ Not to worry, though: in both cases, the Schulberg surrogate is there, as dependable as a “Jewish American” politician out to prove that he’s as much an American as a Jew, to redeem that promise after all, inscribing love of the Fatherland in the equally reassuring idiom of heteroerotic rivalry.¹¹¹ Mel spells it out for Marcia: after pleading guilty to the self-hatred of “all mild men,” he adds: “And they hate the windy extroverts whose violence seems to have a strange attraction for nice girls—who should know better.” But the Schulbergian mild man will not be denied the sweet smell of success (to cite 1957’s other big film by and about sycophants¹¹²): Mel’s ultimate triumph over Lonesome affords the classic wish-fulfilling comfort of the Jewish nerd’s revenge against the studly swine whom all the girls go for—a revenge all the sweeter not only for the Jew- and gay-baiting (“Vanderbilt ’44,” “Frontal Lobe”) brainy Mel has had to endure from the steaming pile of *ressentiment* that is the American Everyman, but also for Mel’s own “strange attraction” to this big brute of a goyishe golem.

The murky, mucky affective glue without which book-long demystifications do not get written, Mel’s fascination with his rival must of course be disinfected by his identification with the prohibiting agency in whose name the fatal exposé takes place: the redeemed strong man of “our” American democracy. To prepare for this film, Schulberg and Kazan conducted extensive research in advertising agencies; as their previous work testifies, however, they hardly needed Madison Avenue to teach them that nothing fights germs and eliminates odors like patriotic heterosexuality. Among those odors may be not just “strange attraction” but, indeed, the hatred that often feeds on it: in this case, hatred of a quite specific genre of “windy extroverts,” whose all-American “violence” Lonesome Rhodes uncannily replicates. Like Mel’s book, *A Face in the Crowd* thinks it’s unmasking an affable monster, but, also like Mel’s book, it ends up showing a little more of its own face than flattery might countenance. What Schulberg and Kazan’s cover story doesn’t quite cover, for example, and what some critics have reprehended as their “elitism,” may be their abiding resentment of the Jew-hating wind-bag politicians whose Neanderthalism they haven’t exactly opposed and to whom, if they want to stay in the American movie business, they can’t stop selling themselves: the whole gang of publicity-crazed demagogues,

whose *right Stalinism*—to coin a phrase in Schulberg’s symmetrizing manner—finds its unflattering mirror image in Lonesome’s left fascism.¹¹³ Especially by the end of the film, that fascism, to be sure, emits a perfume more evocative of cracker-barrel American nativism than of anything stereotypically left: in Rhodes and his poisonously honeyed mystique of “just plain folks,” Kazan and Schulberg do seem to have captured what has become the compulsory style of American politics, a style even more compulsory for liberal Democrats, of course, than for conservative Republicans. And yet, in the authors’ disdain for “hayseed fascism,” it is the hayseed that repels them far more than the fascism: Marcia’s need to mention Sarah Lawrence and then explain that it is a college bespeaks a distaste for the simple folk exceeded only by Mel’s reverence for the strength of our national boss man, *cet Autre obscur qui n’existe pas*. Besides, even Kazan and Schulberg’s hatred, doubtless sincere, of rural American culture partakes of their interminable sycophantic effort to rationalize their perversion—to reduce their resentment, a sniffy nasal eroticism, to mere rancor. Wearing the masks of parody and satire, the authors can estrange themselves from their own strange attractions: the strange attraction to country music, for instance, that drove Schulberg to write the film’s songs, this time with another co-author, Tom Glazer. And while they are working so hard to turn their strange attractions into repulsions, Schulberg and Kazan do not forget to hate their attraction to strangeness itself, by which I mean the strangeness that keeps threatening to be their own: that un-American activity, or rather, that blissful un-American *in*activity, from which they must struggle ceaselessly and manfully to dissociate themselves. As show-business royalty, as eggheads, and as “Jew boys”—biologically or otherwise—Kazan and Schulberg constantly teeter on the verge of being “pull[ed] . . . down into the muck” of a “dangerous and alien conspiracy,” for which, as I have argued, the Communist Party is merely a politically expedient pretext. “I’ve never done anything as funny as this”: *A Face in the Crowd*’s satire, and for that matter its parody, are a “wretched parody” of comic pleasure, yet they stand as signs of Kazan and Schulberg’s longing to sink, without vindictiveness, disgust, contempt, or any of the other usual precautions, into the marsh of en-Jewment, the impossible, unrepresentable ground not only of collaborationist Hollywood but of Vichy America in general.

“All mild men are vicious,” Mel tells Marcia, with snappy Schulbergian semi-self-awareness. “They hate themselves for being mild.” The sycophantic writer is certainly vicious, and his viciousness is no doubt an expression of his self-hatred. But the self-hatred derives from a resentment much greater than any animus Mel can acknowledge, because this resentment in turn derives from an envy so acute that even admitting to it could melt the mild man, the already “sympathetic” sycophant, entirely out of shape. Mel has no trouble confessing that he hates himself, and windy extroverts like Lonesome Rhodes. What he *cannot* say is that the man he hates most of all is the mild man who *doesn’t* hate himself for being mild, and whose mildness, instead of serving the self-protective purpose of mollifying the Cossacks *du jour*, indicates a fundamentally and unforgivably *relaxed* attitude toward the self and the Cossacks alike. This *other* mild man, not self-hating but not particularly invested, either, in having a self to love, not exactly vicious but not so sympathetic that he’d want to be eaten for breakfast by a guy like Elia Kazan, is of course the mimetic comedian, whose intolerable pleasure consists in *not* disinfecting his forbidden olfactory impulse—in snuffing his way out of manly American strength and wisdom, into and even beyond a luscious marshmallow suavity, finally “cross[ing] the threshold” (in Horkheimer and Adorno’s phrase) into marshy, stinky, disintegrating laughter. Merely to show such a dangerously luxurious animal would imply the possibility of men who neither hate nor love their mildness, but simply enjoy letting it make them cease to be men. For men like Kazan and Schulberg, showing this creature—no Marlon Brando, but a much sexier beast than Lonesome Rhodes—would carry an especially grave risk: it would signify that, worse than being soft on comedy, they might become, or even want to become, soft *from* comedy. Needless to say, for all their bouncing, flashing “funniness”—which is not just pseudocomic but even, finally, in its hysterically pliant rigidity, *anticomic*—these two almost outrageous organization men would not be caught dead looking like so much as the comedian’s fellow travelers. And so, unrepresentable exactly insofar as he is resentable, the mimetic comedian must be punished. For his suicidal deliquescence, he gets assassinated (smell this!), not once but twice: first, when he is named by a collaborator’s collaborator in front of HUAC; second, when he is system-

atically excluded from the semiautobiographical film the collaborator and his collaborator get to make *because of* their collaboration.

Recalling the multiple hits to which Lonesome Rhodes is subjected, the repeated assassination of the comedian suggests, however, that, although he is unrepresentable, his exclusion may not be absolute. Just as Lonesome and his monstrous kind are never quite dead, so through Marcia's misbegotten golem does something of the murdered comedian seep onto the screen. "I owe it all to you, Marshy," Schulberg's screenplay has Lonesome say, putting the resonant regionally inflected diminutive—which Andy Griffith often uses in the film—in place of the more standard "Marcia."¹⁴ Earlier, I wrote that Marcia is *apparently* non-Jewish. Unlike Mel, she really has gone to an Eastern college—but without arousing in Lonesome the racial suspicion or the racial antipathy for which his "Eastern" is a front (a bit like "Frontal Lobe"), the code word with which the discreet anti-Semite lets the discreet Jew know that he's "wise to" him. Of course, given the dog-like indiscriminateness with which Lonesome conducts his adventures in heterosexuality, it is quite possible that he simply manages to "overlook" any Jewishness he may detect in the fetching Marcia, confining his aversion to Jewish men. Despite certain effects of surrogacy, neither Mel nor Marcia, neither the male author nor the female author, let me repeat, simply "stands for" Schulberg. As I have argued, the collaborators *in* the film do not line up allegorically with the collaborators *behind* the film. This is not to say, however, that Schulberg, in Flaubertian fashion, has not put a little something of himself into all of his characters, or that his co-author, the virtual Jew, has not done the same. Or, to frame it as a rhetorical question: why not presume Jewishness, rather than the usual generic WASP-ness, as the default ethnicity of the dramatis personae in a mainstream American film? Particularly when the American mainstream flows out of the marsh of en-Jewment—when, that is, normal citizenship is predicated on a *soft and softening* mass body of dangerous strangers, whom all normal citizens have the patriotic duty to sniff out—such a presumption seems no more than the tritest common sense. *Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands*—which is why we must report them to the authorities. A Jewish Marsh-a, at any rate, might engender just such a creature as Lonesome Rhodes, and might give him just such a name, fashioning him not

only out of the Arkansas dirt but out of the richer soil, the mother lode, of comic mimesis. Having done so, she would immediately, of course, have to clean up his act by converting it into satire's wretched parody of comic pleasure: into the hayseed pap that he indeed purveys, and that passes for invigoratingly "down-to-earth" home truths on the timid (if ravenous) American palate. But the resentment that is Mel's repelled attraction to Lonesome may attach itself to more than just the latter's pale imitation of mimesis: Mel may be attracted to the mimesis that Lonesome imitates. For this mimesis is nothing other than the matrix out of which, like all good Americans in this nation of immigrants, he himself has crawled, and in which even his own name seems to be inscribed: the marshy, mellow, unhealthy muck of strangeness that lies just beyond Lonesome's crusted-over façade, and into which ruggedly Americanized intellectual assassins, even more heavily armored themselves, might well yearn to collapse, or to return, along with all the other Jew-boys and Jew-girls without whom this country could not have been built.

Mel in fact seems to give voice to such a yearning in the very scene where he tells Marcia why all mild men are vicious. She has come to pay a visit to the writers' room: "Hey, welcome to the Black Hole of Calcutta," he cries as she walks into the smoky office, whose walls are decorated with signs that say things like "Do Not Feed or Annoy the Writers" and with posters of Lonesome, at which the swarthy prisoners throw darts, in a prolepsis of the big assassination(s) at the end of the film. "Here you see the lepers of the great television industry," Mel continues. "Men without faces," he says, displaying a fellow writer who lacks not a face but hair, which is a good start. "Why, they even slide our paychecks under the door so they can pretend we're not here." Soon comes the mild man's ostensibly incisive self-analysis. Yet the banter leading up to it is far more revealing. In some sense, to be sure, this is just a rehash of a rancid tune, call it the hack's lament, that occurs in virtually every Hollywood novel, including *What Makes Sammy Run?*: the hacks have been relocated from Hollywood to New York, from movies to television, but the jokes and the whining are the same.¹¹⁵ Like his movie-business counterpart, the television writer is stereotypically an *unhappy* sycophant, one who knows just how wretched his wretched parody of fulfillment is: he hates himself for the mildness that causes him to betray Art, and that

prevents him from becoming a Real Artist, which is to say, from becoming “his own man.”¹¹⁶ But within this song of the stoolpigeon, a less familiar, and less grating, tune can be heard. On the way to getting hard, Mel articulates, in the mode of denegation, a desire to get soft: or rather, to get even softer than he already is, becoming not his own man (that is, somebody else’s) but no man at all. “I wouldn’t want to be buried in the same cemetery with the guy,” Abraham Polonsky said of Elia Kazan: even the mimetic comedian won’t sleep with just anyone. But when Marcia drops into the Black Hole of Calcutta, she enters something like a *happy* cemetery, a graveyard marked by nothing so much as the *levity* of its occupants. For a moment, the film itself takes a detour into a fantasy space of male decomposition: a smelly, mellow marsh filled with lepers, men without faces, and animals. The film’s comedy central, a repository of self-pitying wisecracks as stale as the cigarette smoke that hangs in the air, the writers’ room is at the same time almost a scene of the *obscene*, the closest *Face* can get to representing its unrepresentable desire for the facelessness of comic mimesis. Because Kazan and Schulberg cannot face the mortification that would ensue if they stopped rationalizing their forbidden impulse to sniff out “bad” smells, their hysterically “funny” film does not in fact dare to cross the threshold into the peculiarly side-splitting kind of *soft-core* pornography that, in its very softness, remains much more dangerous, in American culture, than the violence of any hard-core morality, and that must therefore be infused with a foul aroma, compounded of male-homosexual anal eroticism and the fetor of “undeveloped nations” (the marsh of en-Jewment already spreading, in the 1950s, to take in gay male culture and the Third World, the cesspools of un-Americanness in which *new* conspiracies would be hatched). And yet, if the film must not cross the threshold into soft-core comic pornography, some soft-core comic pornography crosses the threshold into the film, via the very crack under the door through which they slide the writers’ paychecks, or via the very wisecracks with which the future wise guy keeps his nose clean. In its wary, titillated excursion into the black hole of the writers’ room, the film permits itself a whiff of unrationalized comic pleasure. Before it closes the door on this otherwise forbidden colony, it remembers not only how strangely attractive the leper’s misery can seem next to the sycophant’s wretchedness, but

also how strangely attractive a cemetery filled with guys you *would* want to be buried with can seem next to the life of the assassin the sycophant is supposed to “turn into” when he “grows up.”

In other words, the film quickly opens, and then almost as quickly closes, a door onto its own swampy ground: the burial ground of mimetic comedians, whose dissolute, even self-decomposing, tendencies demand that they be finished off repeatedly, with a vengeance. Paying a visit to writers without faces, *Face* pays tribute, in the only way that it can, to the writers whose defacing, whose obliteration by the blacklist, is its condition of possibility: to those Hollywood lepers without whom it could not have been made. But if the writers’ room is a repository of guilt, it is also an object of desire. As if overcome by a smell that offends all the more because, oddly, it isn’t quite as repellent as it should be, *A Face in the Crowd* rushes back to the business of building an American killer: of getting mild-mannered Mel Miller out of the writers’ room and into his superhero costume. Once transformed, of course, Mel still looks like Clark Kent; but don’t let the glasses fool you. “*Intelligent, hulking but not-too-forceful-looking,*” Mel owes his real strength to the wisdom that he gets from being not just an intellectual but an *American* intellectual. Precisely because of their elitism, Schulberg and Kazan know better than to make the “we” in Mel’s triumphal “We get wise to ’em” so narrowly royal as to designate only a class of princes and princesses with degrees from schools like Dartmouth, Williams, Sarah Lawrence, and even Vanderbilt: this “we” packs a punch because behind it stand the American people, who prove that pseudopopulist menace Lonesome Rhodes wrong by knowing the difference, at the end of the day, between dog food and steak. “It is your most misanthropic film,” Michel Ciment, speaking about *A Face in the Crowd*, says to Kazan, who seems to take the remark as a compliment, supporting it with this example: “The journalist played by Walter Matthau was not dealt with mercifully. I’ve never been very favourably inclined toward ‘intellectuals.’ . . . Budd thinks that character *is* sympathetic. I don’t think he has much gumption, or strength.”¹¹⁷ “Budd Schulberg and I were very close in our views of everything,” Kazan tells another interviewer.¹¹⁸ The two statements do not contradict each other, and neither do the two collaborators. That Schulberg likes the “intellectual” while Kazan dislikes him merely conforms to the rules of the game of good cop–bad cop, that masterpiece of aesthetic



The Writers' Room: Patricia Neal, Walter Matthau, and others in *A Face in the Crowd*

ambiguity, in which these two informers excel.¹¹⁹ Mel hates himself for being mild, but his buddy Schulberg hates him even more, at least as much as his enemy Kazan does, since no one is as hard on the intellectual would-be tough guy as another intellectual would-be tough guy. The egghead must be turned into a patriotic hit man, but no egghead, not even a non-Jewish one, will ever really have gumption or strength enough for the job—not just because, as an egghead, he can never fully rid himself of the softness that he shares with writers and comedians, but also because, as a patriotic hit man, he can never be anything other than a good little soldier. *Pour faire une hommelette*—to amend one of Lacan’s better cracks—*il faut casser des oeufs*.¹²⁰ Always already a broken man, the intellectual who wants to be a supercop can never quite forgive himself for never quite pulling himself together.

Clearly, being a sycophant is no joke: even when the sycophant makes his funniest movie, he can’t help feeling like the saddest of clowns. Indeed, the funnier he tries to be, the less he escapes his own hysterical wretchedness. Then again, the sycophant can always console himself with the thought of how normal it is to be a sycophant, especially a misanthropic one. Who is quicker to tell the world to go fuck itself than one who makes a living sniffing after it? In America, of course, such a one has plenty of company, or at least stiff competition: there are many faces in the lonely (or is it lonesome?) crowd of flag-wavers, baton-twirlers, baby-kissers, and other publicity-seekers. To stand out in this crowd, as in a sea of billboards, one must in fact adopt Kazan’s policy of being *almost* outrageous: outrageous enough to attract the public’s easily distracted attention, but not so outrageous as to affront its merciless morality. Consider, with this end in view, the end of *A Face in the Crowd*, where what the film puts in the crowd’s face looks a lot like a *fesse* in the crowd: instead of kissing the American public’s ass, as Mel’s pious valedictory peroration has just been doing, this assassinating film—here, it seems, firmly under the control of its “misanthropic” director—sticks its own ass in the air, cheekily sabotaging, one might imagine, the final flourish of patriotic congratulation and self-congratulation toward which it appears to be heading. I am referring to the huge neon “Coca-Cola” sign that fills the screen as Mel and Marcia drive off into the night, and beneath which the even bigger words “The End” are flashed.¹²¹ “Look how Kazan has managed to ridicule the capitalists.”¹²² So writes Barthes,

at his most ventriloquially sarcastic, in his analysis of the end of *On the Waterfront*. And just as that film is never more reactionary, Barthes shows, than “at the moment when many supposed that Kazan had skillfully insinuated his leftism,” so its successor is never more a cheerleader for the American way of life than when it mockingly brandishes the brand name that virtually spells “America” throughout the world.¹²³ With the adman’s flair for the provocation that provokes no one, the end of *Face* covers its ass while appearing to show it. Like the hard-hitting exposé that maintains the cushiness of the doxa, the “ironic” ad, which sells its product by making fun of it, is of course a mainstay of the post-war publicity machine—as illustrated, say, by Lonesome Rhodes’s bad-mouthing of Luffler and his mattresses, which has the predictable effect of increasing sales. Operating on the same principle, the final image of *A Face in the Crowd* is wicked only in its cleverness as a piece of product placement. In this case, the product being placed is not exactly Coca-Cola itself, since there is no such thing as Coca-Cola itself. There is only what “Coca-Cola” is a sign for: namely, “our strength,” which comes from our “healthy American tradition” of “getting wise,” this wisdom consisting both in our particular ability eventually to see through demagogic frauds like Lonesome Rhodes and, more important, in our generalized knowingness, like that of a pack of hardened mall rats, who are always more inclined to buy something if the commercials for it flatter us for being hip enough to look down our noses at it. Is capitalism the end of America? Of course it is: but only if we invoke the hipster lingo of 1957 and interpret “the end” as beatnik slang meaning “the best,” “the greatest,” “the most wonderful.” Not only is capitalism the end of America: America is Endsville itself.

“What I like in the film is the energy and invention and bounce which are very American. It’s really got something marvelous about it, this constantly flashing, changing rhythm. In many ways, it’s more American than any picture I ever did.” But a hit isn’t always a hit. If the American public didn’t share Kazan’s affection for his “funny” *Face*, this is neither because the film fails to be flashy enough to capture the limited attention span of its already Coked-out audience nor because, “ahead of its time,” it goes too far in its assessment of how much outrageousness that audience can tolerate.¹²⁴ The film has as much energy as an overstimulated teenager, and as much obsequious cunning as an overstimulated

teenager with tyrannical parents. The trouble with the film is not that it lacks bounce, or that it fails to keep that bounce within national bounds, making sure that everyone perceives it as “very American.” Rather, the trouble with *Face* is that, in the ghastly jauntiness of Kazan and Schulberg’s hip hype for the Daddy-o who, precisely a zero, doesn’t exist, the crowd saw a much uglier monster than Lonesome Rhodes. The mid-twentieth-century-American dislike of *A Face in the Crowd* is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass. That the 1950s French disliked it too, as Truffaut notes, suggests that France and the United States, frequently estranged from each other—the one so “feminine,” the other so “masculine”—have more in common than either country might care to think. As the long 1950s continue, the prospect of a renewed Franco-American friendship is nothing to sneer at, of course.¹²⁵ French and American audiences once agreed in their dislike of a film by two friends and friendly witnesses. If only they could learn once again to dislike it together—this time, however, not on the basis of their common revulsion from its familiar and yet disturbingly strange face, but on the basis of their common repelled attraction to its strange and yet disturbingly familiar smell: the “bad” smell both of sycophancy itself and, even “worse,” of the pleasure that sycophancy is after. If the sycophant is after the comedian, the sycoanalyst, after all, is after the sycophant. But though “after” indicates both belatedness and pursuit, the pursuit by the belated need not take the apparently inevitable form of a pursuit of suspects, or even the cheerier but still excessively American form of a pursuit of happiness. What we sycoanalysts are after is a comic pleasure more exotic, more fragrant, and dirtier than any mere happiness could ever be.

Like Elia Kazan, the word “sycophant” has Greek roots. The Greek word *sykhophantes* means “informer,” as we have seen, and is constructed by combining *sykhos*, “fig,” with *phanein*, “to show.” According to some accounts, informers were called sycophants because they informed on those who broke the law against exporting figs from Athens; according to others, informers collected taxes in the form of figs, which they then dutifully presented to the authorities; according to still others, “showing the fig,” still an obscene gesture in Italy, for instance, and a sign of the female genitalia, suggests the informer’s contempt for those on

whom he informs (what better way, after all, of giving someone the finger than by fingering him?).¹²⁶ In his “memories of a Hollywood prince,” Budd Schulberg recounts what we might consider his own primal tale of sycophancy. In this tale, Schulberg and his then-partner in crime, Maurice Rapf, another Hollywood prince—who would also become a screenwriter and a member of the Communist Party, but who refused to cooperate with HUAC and was therefore blacklisted—are both fourteen years old, and they have the run of the lot at MGM, where Maurice’s father is an executive. Here is how they amuse themselves:

Just inside the MGM auto gate . . . was an enormous fig tree, a relic of the days when the whole western basin of Los Angeles was fragrant with fruit orchards. The old tree was a studio ornament now, for no one ever seemed to pick the fruit. The figs would ripen to squashy black missiles, ideal weapons for us to hurl against moving targets. . . .

Maurice and I would crouch behind the thickened trunk of the giant tree, under the dark-green protection of its heavy branches, rear back with juicy figs in our hands, and throw them with all our small but considerable might. Black fig skins and pinkish-white pulp would splatter against expensive sports jackets and famous profiles.¹²⁷

Schulberg makes a point of explaining that “there was an inverse caste system to our target priorities”: these two princes weren’t primarily out to get the little people, the more or less proletarian studio workers; it was the stars they most wanted to hit:

What we were really after was a John Gilbert in a dapper ascot, a chic Billy Haines, a strutting Erich von Stroheim, a swashbuckling (or swish buckling) Ramon Novarro. Nor were the glamorous ladies neglected. . . . The fact that the ladylike Norma Shearer was known to be under the protection of Irving Thalberg provided no shield against the rotting figs that come flying mysteriously from the depths of our leafy barricade.¹²⁸

It is not long before a snake appears in the garden, in the form of Maurice the Mailroom Boy, yet another version of that familiar Schulbergian anti-hero, the flunky on the make, the perfidious all-American hustler:

He seemed to enjoy our assault on studio dignity. But we soon learned never to trust the mailroom boy. He would turn his own mother in to the

studio cops if it meant a step up the ladder. So our mailroom Judas ratted on us, revealing us as the perpetrators of the soft-fig massacre. . . .

I do not say that Maurie the Mailroom Boy earned his promotion as a direct result of his betrayal of our youthful figging. It was simply a symbol of his readiness to please the stronger by turning on the weaker.¹²⁹

As the perceptive reader will have guessed, the soft figs—not to mention the somewhat shaky ground on which Schulberg, himself a fig-shower, is standing—are about to yield to his famous hard core of morality:

You had to impress somebody at least one rung above you, scramble to get an *in*, and then use that *in* to climb up over the back of your benefactor if you could. Horatio Alger would do no less. You might call it the American way of life, to gnaw and claw your way to the top, like the Rockefellers and the Morgans and all the robber barons who aced themselves into the American aristocracy. Hollywood, after all, was only a picture of America run through the projector at triple speed.¹³⁰

Here, Rabbi Schulberg flatly tells what *A Face in the Crowd* hysterically shows: that America is a nation of rats. And yet, Schulberg once again proves himself a master, like Kazan, of an honesty that is only *almost* outrageous. Schulberg's bluffly universalizing move provides a leafy barricade behind which his own particular treachery can recede, either as though self-serving betrayal were so pervasively and so definitively American as to make his collaboration disappear into what must henceforth be understood as just the great national rat race, or, better yet, as though he simply exempted himself from the general condition he is diagnosing, by virtue of diagnosing it, sycophantic nosology unmasking sycophancy everywhere except in the nosologist. (Schulberg's autobiography, or this volume of it, at any rate—a sequel has been promised—ends with his leaving home for college, keeping his HUAC testimony in the distant future and past.) Of course, even before he thus covers himself, Schulberg, with his publicist's genius for self-protection, has already sought a shield in the claim of inverse snobbery. Not only is he the victim of "Maurie the finger-boy,"¹³¹ the object rather than the subject of informing: with his Robin Hood-like "target priorities," he is the very antithesis of the hateful "mailroom Judas," the model of the thoroughly *loveable* outlaw. But there is no more safety in Schulberg's picaresque

pose as the *antisycophant* than Norma Shearer could find in Irving Thalberg, once the figging began. For even the wistful antisycophantic masquerade has something sycophantic about it. (As a hysteric, the sycophant can always be trusted to rat on himself, as Terry Malloy would say.) Long before Schulberg names a single name, even as he plays the anti-Maurie, the kindhearted princely scamp, who just wants to throw figs, not to show them, he displays his own “readiness to please the stronger by turning on the weaker.” At the unripe age of fourteen, little Budd already has the impressively developed political nose, the subtle rodent intelligence with respect to hierarchies of all kinds, that will serve him so well in his permanent adolescence as an American citizen. His gift for sniffing out weakness and strength in others certainly manifests itself with regard to the class structure, or what he calls the “caste system”—who other than a Hollywood prince could have such refined contempt for the ambitious mailroom boy, or such a longing to punish his impudence?—but he is equally astute in his perception of sexual vulnerability, by which I mean not only his eagerness, in keeping with the traditional genital symbolism of the fig, to make fig-pulp splatter against “glamorous ladies,” but also his killer instinct for softness in men, or for the signs of any effeminate cosmopolitanism, as evinced by, say, “a John Gilbert in a dapper ascot, a chic Billy Haines, a strutting Erich von Stroheim, a swashbuckling (or swish buckling) Ramon Novarro.” Obviously, Schulberg’s “inverse caste system” does not preclude a desire to target male “inversion” itself. Schulberg has always opposed Neanderthalism in any form, but boys will be boys—especially when a certain supplementary fruitiness might threaten to attach itself to them, by dint of their status as the “spoiled” offspring of vaguely foreign royalty from vaguely degenerate racial stock running a suspiciously soft business in a notoriously decadent town.

Nothing could be more banal than the homophobia of a pampered male adolescent, except perhaps his emergence as a full-blown finger-boy in the sycophantic America of his middle age, or his attempt, at both stages of his life and in his late-life memoirs, to present himself as a tough, independent humanitarian. In literalizing what we might consider the basics of sycoanalytic theory, Schulberg’s fig-tale, however, reveals the outlines of a less normative figure than either of those budding good citizens, the figger and the fingerer, the fig-thrower and the fig-shower

badly hidden inside of him. I have in mind not the antisycophant, who is nothing more than the sycophant's vain shadow, but, rather, the *sycophile*, whose rotting love-bombs or "squashy black missiles" convey a wish for collective mimetic self-decomposition, and for a much juicier comic pleasure than can be squeezed out of a brittle, projective piece of wit like "swashbuckling (or swish buckling)." The sycophant, who after all hates himself for being mild, hurls figs at his soft targets to rid himself of his hated softness. And when he gets a little older, he discovers bigger and more profitable ways of giving softies the finger. The sycophile throws figs at the swells not to differentiate himself from their dangerous luxury, but further to enmarsh himself in it, the splattered pulp making not a humiliating stain but a palpable, sticky, stinky connection. Young Budd Schulberg, I want to insist, is both sycophant and sycophile, and so is young Maurice Rapf (who advised Schulberg on this autobiography, and who, despite their continuing disagreement about the blacklist, did not deny the story of the figs).¹³² Just as, thirty years later, Schulberg and his co-assassin Kazan would both be Mel and Marcia, so Schulberg and his present collaborator are both "perpetrators of the soft-fig massacre." Every sycophant, as I hope this chapter has suggested, was once a sycophile, and always risks falling back into sycophilia unless he polices it vigilantly, going to work, like everyone else in town, for "the studio cops." And yet, as Rapf's presence in Schulberg's fig-tale reminds us, not every collaborator becomes, or perhaps I should say *remains*, a sycophant: there may be ways of staying in touch with one's fig-love without fingering it. There is only one difference between "Maurie" and "Maurice": the letter "c," the letter of "Communism" and "comedy" alike, the latter, of course, making for much juicier forbidden fruit than the former. Let it stand, then, as what Schulberg would call "simply a symbol," a symbol of "what we [are] really after": laughter as delectable as the smell of rotting figs.

Comicosmopolitanism

Behind Television

As a critique of the complicity between politics and show business, *A Face in the Crowd*, we have seen, takes care to direct its aim away from Hollywood and the motion-picture industry of which it is a product, sending its satire to New York instead, where the interlocked worlds of television and advertising furnish a much safer target. But if this deflection spares the film's satirists the embarrassment of having to acknowledge the ongoing Hollywood blacklist in which they have both collaborated, we should note that (unlike the theater, as we shall see in the next chapter) television had a blacklist of its own. In his history of Jews in and on American television, David Zurawik, having observed that the television networks, like the Hollywood studios, were run by anxiously assimilationist Jewish executives, explains why the networks were so cooperative: "The fledgling networks were even more vulnerable than the film studios in the early 1950s, because television was so dependent on Madison Avenue. . . . In terms of programming, the advertising industry controlled prime-time television up until about the quiz show scandals of 1958, and Madison Avenue was decidedly WASP."¹ Where the cruelty of the Hollywood blacklist is often evoked by citing the death of John Garfield, the greater vulnerability of the fledgling networks hardly made their policies of blacklisting any less murderous, or any less apt to produce martyrs. Registering vulnerability's penchant for inflicting wounds of its own, Zurawik adduces the most manifestly tragic episode in the history of the television blacklist: the firing, in 1951, of the actor Philip

Loeb, co-star of the situation comedy *The Goldbergs*; followed by the cancellation of the show; followed in turn by Loeb's suicide in 1955.

Much of the value of Zurawik's account, however, consists in his demonstration of how the brutality of blacklisting extends both structurally, beyond specific practices of firing and nonhiring into a more or less conscious and systemic de-Judaizing of television content, and temporally, beyond the quiz show scandals of the late fifties into the seventies—in fact, into the nineties, where even the supposed mainstream triumph of uncloseted Jewishness in the blockbuster sitcom *Seinfeld* offers evidence of persistent Jewish self-censorship in the shadow of a normatively Christian and presumptively anti-Jewish mass audience of “American viewers.” Some writers, directors, and actors who had been blacklisted could work openly in television once again after, say, 1962; but the medium to which they were returning, Zurawik suggests, remained, and remains, sufficiently traumatized by the blacklist to keep acting as if it were still in force: to keep imposing it on itself, at the level of content if not at the level of personnel. And so it is in force, its genius consisting in having implanted itself so firmly in the mass media it had terrorized that, appearing finally to have been “broken” in the early sixties, it could pretend to put itself out of business. This chapter later looks at the work of blacklist survivors; but let us note now that, long past reports of its demise, the blacklist itself survives, all the more robustly for being presumed dead.

Like American movies, American television proves the truth of the claim—not always a malevolent one—that Jews play a dominant role in running the mass media. But perhaps even more than American movies, American television constitutes the paradox of a Jewishly dominated mass medium *without Jews*—or, to put it more cautiously, in which Jewishness, if not kept entirely out of sight, must show its face as little, or as guardedly, as possible, for fear of alienating the non-Jewish majority, whose image, in the collective unconscious of network executives, probably still resembles that of the adoring audience of Lonesome Rhodes in *A Face in the Crowd*. Blacklisting in American television, Zurawik suggests, is never just about anti-Communism, or even primarily about anti-Communism, though of course anti-Communism provides it with its alibi, as it does in the film industry as well. In what might pass for a slip, Zurawik writes, “When the House Un-American Activities Com-

mittee (HUAC) first started formally looking for Jews in the motion picture industry . . .”² “Formally,” or at any rate officially, HUAC was looking for Communists, not for Jews. In previous chapters, I have argued, however, that the hunt for “Communists” legitimated a much broader and murkier pursuit: indeed, a pursuit of “Jews,” insofar as that term stands for those entertainers and intellectuals, those Jewish, or (like Charlie Chaplin) Jewishly associated, jokers and smart alecks, whose mimetic tendencies put them dangerously at odds with the dominant national seriousness. Despite having been named in the television blacklist’s bible, *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*, Philip Loeb denied that he had ever been a Communist; it was enough, however, that, as a liberal member of Popular Front organizations, he could be characterized as politically “controversial,” thus giving the network and the sponsor an excuse for firing him. Meanwhile, those “controversial” politics just happened to coincide with an overt Jewishness—a holdover from radio, *The Goldbergs* featured recognizably Jewish actors playing explicitly Jewish characters—whose distinctive tone was comic, and whose distinctive accent belonged to that least American of American cities: its eccentric and exotic cultural capital, namely, New York.³

Loeb was fired, in short, for what I have called comicosmopolitanism, not for the Commiecosmopolitanism—the participation in a putative international Communist conspiracy—of which *Red Channels* accused him, and for which a nervous NBC dismissed him, after picking up *The Goldbergs* from an even more sycophantic CBS. Zurawik speculates as to the latter network’s motives for dropping the show:

Though not reported until May [1951], the decisions by General Foods and [CBS head William] Paley to cancel [*The Goldbergs*] had actually been made in early April, shortly after the conviction on March 29, 1951, of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg as spies for the Soviet Union. Their three-week trial in New York and subsequent death sentences made daily headlines across the country. To the best of my knowledge, the connection between the conviction of the Rosenbergs and the cancellation of *The Goldbergs* has never been made, but the timing is such that one cannot help but wonder if the official branding of the Rosenbergs as spies at the height of the Cold War didn’t have a direct impact on what happened to *The Goldbergs*. Both were, after all, young Jewish families with two children. Would gentile

viewers think of the Rosenbergs when they saw *The Goldbergs* on their television screens?⁴

Zurawik is right to notice a “connection between the conviction of the Rosenbergs and the cancellation of *The Goldbergs*.” But where he construes the former as the cause of the latter, I want to propose instead that *The Goldbergs* gave rise to *The Rosenbergs*, as a thesis provokes its antithesis: that the sitcom produced its own negation in the form of the sensational, long-running show constituted not just by the Rosenbergs’ three-week trial, but by the whole process culminating in their executions two years later. For the point of that show was to replace Jewish situation comedy with Jewish situation tragedy: to substitute tragic Jews for comic Jews, or, rather, to turn comic Jews *into* tragic Jews. After *The Goldbergs*, Jews could still be seen on television, but they had to be seen *as chastened*—as symbols of laughter reduced to tears. “Phil is not a symbol for us,” write Loeb’s friends Kate Mostel and (fellow actor and blacklisted) Madeline Gilford. “We remember him as one of the funniest, dearest men we ever knew, our true and funny friend. To this day we find ourselves constantly telling Phil Loeb stories.”⁵ Fired and, in effect, executed too, Philip Loeb had to be tragicized, like the Rosenbergs—he had to be, as the French might say, *suicidé*—less because gentile viewers might have seen him and his fellow cast members as Soviet spies than because he represented something even more threatening to national discipline than Communist subversion: the exemption from that discipline enjoyed by the comic actor descended from a tribe of shape-shifting wanderers, and practicing his art in the geographically extreme, polyglot show-business cosmopolis.

Loeb’s tragic fate, then, is not the consequence of the Rosenbergs’ conviction; rather, their conviction, or the *spectacle* of their conviction and its protracted denouement, stands as the logical fulfillment, the telos, of the larger cultural process that his tragicization exemplifies: a process, begun as early as the first HUAC hearings in 1947, of transforming the intolerably undisciplined, enviably un-American, in a word, comicosmopolitan, Jew into an object of pity and terror, not to say contempt. The Red Scare, as I have suggested more than once, was something of a red herring; by the same token, the blackmailing insinuation that the television networks functioned as “red channels” mainly afforded a plausible

pretext for a campaign of *ressentiment* designed to punish those public figures perceived as having it too easy. Here, as quoted in Thomas Doherty's study of television and the Cold War, is Jack O'Brian, television critic at the *New York Journal-American*, gleefully revealing Loeb's listing in *Red Channels* as "the real reason *The Goldbergs* disappeared from the Columbia Broadcasting System after a long and luxurious hiatus in that network's pink-tinged boudoir": "The Columbia Broadcasting System may deny it," O'Brian continued, "but won't most of the flagrant *Red Channels* nominees find it necessary to earn their crackers and caviar on other networks next fall?"⁶ The authors of *Red Channels* themselves—three enterprising former FBI agents, now operating a patriotic "protection" racket—refer to "the great prestige and crowd-gathering power that derives from having glamorous personalities of radio and tv as sponsors of Communist fronts and as performers or speakers at front meetings and rallies (which incidentally adds to the performers' prestige)." For all their animus against "Communism," these bloodhounds almost risk losing its scent, so distracted are they by the more intoxicating stench of "prestige," "glamour," and "power" that fills the air like the flagrant fragrance of caviar in some luxurious, pink-tinged boudoir.⁷ From the perspective of the Red-hunters, "Communism," ominously and relentlessly advertised as a clear and present danger to American democracy, was nothing so much as a happy accident: the lesser charge on which they could nonetheless convict the perpetrators of far more serious—which is to say, far more comic—crimes.

Even after *The Goldbergs* was purged of Philip Loeb, the show's fortunes declined rapidly: having fallen from CBS to NBC, it would pass from the low-rent DuMont network to the *bas-fonds* of syndication, where it would die in 1956. Its demise is often related to a larger demographic shift that students of American television observe in the early years of the medium. Thomas Doherty writes:

Like Milton Berle, whose vaudeville antics on *Texaco Star Theater* made him television's first superstar when a New York City minority owned a majority of television sets, *The Goldbergs* was destined to be ethnically anomalous as television spread across America. "There is some hinterland TV trade and audience opinion that there's too much borscht tinting TV comedians," cautioned *Variety's* veteran reporter Abel Green in

1951. "The Catskill Mt. resort-trained comics are coming into their own in vaudeo, and while the New York metropolitan area has almost 50% of the 10,000,000 TV sets in U.S. homes today, there is still a sizable audience away from a melting pot metropolis like Gotham." The future of television lay out in the heartland, away from the Judeo-centric regions of the greater New York area. Warning against what he called "Lindy's patois," "dialectic boobytraps," and "nitery asides," Green argued that the wisecracks exchanged at Jewish delicatessens like Lindy's in New York "don't belong on tv."⁸

If less luxurious than caviar, borscht of course resembles it in signifying "Russia." But while "Russia" in turn signifies "Communism," what makes early television comedy's borscht tint a taint, for Green, is that this pink tinge betrays more than just an infusion of Red ideology. That ideology may provide the most convenient reason for "warning against" the stain of borscht, but *Variety's* veteran reporter reads hinterland tastes, or distastes, as spreading well beyond mere ideological aversion, to constitute a whole system of aesthetic and erotic phobias, rooted in a racial hatred that can never be identified (much less condemned) as such, only connoted through its supposed bêtes noires, including, but by no means limited to, such elements self-evidently in need of ethnic cleansing as "Lindy's patois," "dialectic boobytraps," and "nitery asides." It is not just the red herring, in short, but the whole delicatessen that gives the heartland heartburn. Small wonder if the finicky *Volk* spits such unwholesome fare back into the "melting pot metropolis" from which, at the beginning of the 1950s, before television production more or less moves to California, most TV dinners are being served. The patois, the booby traps, and the asides, after all, are ingredients of the piquant, Jewish-tasting linguistic soup that is comicosmopolitanism.

William Paley and his counterparts at the other networks probably did not require Abel Green's transparently encoded warnings to make the change toward blander fare, effecting a profound and constitutive split between the site and the agents of television production, on the one hand, and the content and the imagined audience of television production, on the other. A Jewish-controlled medium that put Jews in the closet, early television thereby became a technology for putting New

York City in the closet as well. The Jews who ran television were not slow to join the Jews who ran movies in enforcing the first rule of mass entertainment: never offend the palates of the dreaded (and yet revered) American Cossacks “out in the heartland.” Indeed, given “Gotham”’s image as an even more Jewish (and even less American) city than Hollywood—as what the less genteel among the anti-Semites still call “Jew York City”—the Jews of television had an even greater incentive for enforcing that rule. (George Clooney’s film, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, about Edward R. Murrow’s confrontation with Joseph McCarthy, gets everything about the period right, from the haircuts to the coffee tables to the cigarettes—everything, that is, except the thick haze of New York-Jewish anxiety about “the American people” suffusing the world of network news, and determining its every calculation, now as well as then.)⁹ With that rule firmly in mind, the big-city caterers in charge of network programming frantically revised their menus to minimize not just the local flavors of “Russia,” which is to say, of that part of Jewish “Russia” transplanted to the New York metropolitan area, but everything disgustingly *heterogeneous and unlocalizable* that this Jewish particularity seems to carry with itself.

For if Jews, prestigious pariahs, have often been associated with cosmopolitanism tout court—the institution of the blacklist and the founding of the state of Israel, roughly contemporaneous events, having gone a long way toward weakening that association—comicosmopolitanism represents Jewishness as *diffusion*. Even more stereotypically Jewish by virtue of the *comic* embedded within it, comicosmopolitanism at the same time works against stereotypicality’s hardness and boundedness. While the comicosmopolitanism of early television has a pronounced regional and ethnic marking—its authors and performers are mostly New York Jews not far removed from Eastern Europe—what makes it comicosmopolitanism, after all, is that it exceeds this marking. Lindy’s patois, dialectic booby traps, and nitery asides all figure in the distinctive showbiz vernacular of the Judeo-centric metropolis. Yet, taken together, they are not merely metropolitan but cosmopolitan as well, since, as a repertoire of codes, they represent the multiple fluencies—the conversancy with a variety of jargons and idioms and argots—that make up so much of the texture, and indeed so much of the pleasure, of everyday

life in the modern urban landscape: a space characterized, to be sure, by fiercely “protected” turfs and by all sorts of invidious stratification, but also by displacement and circulation, and by a promiscuous crossing and recrossing of boundaries. Even among themselves, the patois, the booby traps, and the asides display a notable heterogeneity: the wise-cracking lingo of the delicatessen is not the same as the comic mother lode of immigrant malapropisms, which in turn is not the same as the racy *bavardage* of nightclubland. Nor, for all their appearance of perilously inbred tribalism, do the “native speakers” of these three discourses constitute a monolithic category. The reporter for *Variety* obviously knows what he is doing when he refers to Lindy’s, dialect, the Catskills, and borscht: himself deploying a patois or two—in this case, the baroque, know-it-all patter of *Variety*-speak, plus the telegraphy with which showbiz Jews signal danger to other showbiz Jews—he says “Jewish,” of course, without saying “Jewish.” But the Jews of Lindy’s, the Jews of dialectic booby traps—epitomized by *The Goldbergs’* matriarch, Gertrude Berg’s Molly—and the Jews of The Stork Club do not form one economically or culturally homogeneous clientele: to move among these three speech communities would already be to perform in miniature a comicosmopolitan trajectory, consisting of many minute negotiations, transfers, and translations, the deft maneuvers of that now nearly extinct human type, the inventive city-dweller who, without actually having to work in show business, is necessarily, and luxuriously, a mimetic virtuoso, and who, in the course of a day, travels in much wider and more numerous overlapping circles than those described by this very limited sample.¹⁰

No wonder the firing of Philip Loeb was not enough to save *The Goldbergs*: the politically “controversial” co-star was gone, but the comicosmopolitan irritant remained, in the unlikely person of the show’s star herself, playing that apparently antic cosmopolitan Jewish stereotype, the Jewish mother—whose dialectic booby traps (“I don’t like your latitude one bit, young lady”; “It’s late, Jake, and time to expire”; “Patience is a vulture”¹¹), although easy to laugh off as “charming” signs of the unlettered ethnic’s verbal ineptitude, at the same time register a less self-congratulatory laughter within language itself, whereby fractured English reveals standard English as already fractured, as already inhabited by its erring, Yiddishizing self-parody. It is as though, thanks to Gertrude

Berg's "Mollypropisms," the English language cracked up on discovering its own internal cracks. Inside these dialectic booby traps, a dialectic—a comicosmopolitan process of linguistic deterritorialization—may indeed be at play. Continuing the tradition of the dialect comedians favored by Karl Kraus and evoked by Adorno as avatars of mimesis, Berg practices a cosmopolitanism whose primitiveness—whose lack of cosmopolitanism's usual signs—in fact consists in the deconstructive tour de force of returning language to its gestural prehistory. Precisely because this comicosmopolitanism seems disarmingly naïve, rather than imposingly urbane, and precisely because it operates at the "innocent" level of the signifier, rather than at the "controversial" level of what passes for politics, it is difficult to locate and thus to uproot. In a case like that of *The Goldbergs*, therefore, drastic measures were called for: the excision of the "controversial" Loeb having failed to make the show palatable to the heartland, nothing short of cancellation would do.

And yet, as television programming underwent a general de-Judaizing and de-citifying—a conspicuous suburbanization and rustication both of its locales and of its general ethos, in accordance with the shifting demographics of the audience—neither Jews nor New York City simply disappeared from the picture. I am not referring merely to the survival of a certain New York–Jewish "sensibility" despite and within the apparently de-urbanized landscape, or to the fact that that landscape is itself the product of a certain New York–Jewish fantasy of "America." In the age of Lonesome Rhodes—and of all of his clones, ready to replace him just as quickly as he falls—certain televisual *images* of the comicosmopolis are still disseminated. The most iconic television show of the 1950s, *I Love Lucy*, has no central Jewish characters or performers, but its leading man is a Cuban American bandleader who owns and performs in a New York "nitery." A greater challenge to the thesis of an early-fifties war on comicosmopolitanism would seem to be constituted, moreover, by the most celebrated comedy-variety show of the period, *Your Show of Shows* (which mutated into *Caesar's Hour*), performed and taped not in the pseudo–New York of *I Love Lucy* and of almost all subsequent sitcoms set in New York (including *Seinfeld*) but in New York itself. Featuring a largely Jewish cast (Sid Caesar, Carl Reiner, Howard Morris), written by a mostly Jewish staff (Reiner, Mel Tolkin, Mel Brooks, Lucille Kallen, and, for *Caesar's Hour*, Neil Simon, Larry Gelbart, and Woody Allen),

and expressing, however inexplicitly, a brashly literate New York–Jewish sensibility, *Your Show of Shows* would seem to bespeak comicosmopolitanism’s triumph in Cold War television, not its collapse.¹²

Two points must be made regarding this apparent triumph, however. The first is that, even during the show’s heyday, its comicosmopolitanism kept it under suspicion, if not under attack. The show’s star, Sid Caesar, claims that he himself attracted the attention of McCarthy and other witch-hunters: “They had actually come after Lucille Ball and me, but they couldn’t find anything on either of us.”¹³ HUAC did actually find something on Ball, if not on Caesar. But the committee’s failure to “find anything” in any given case should not be surprising, since the aim of the blacklisters was not necessarily to convict: indeed, harassment and intimidation, more sadistically open-ended and suspensive than mere conviction, in many ways better served the needs of state-sponsored terror. The failure to find incriminating evidence is equally unsurprising, moreover, because the blacklist, as we have seen, was less about punishing political subversives than about pursuing—that is, persecuting—cultural enemies, whose “guilt” could never be proven, only repeatedly alleged, or, more menacingly yet, obscurely intimated. In any case, although *Your Show of Shows* and *Caesar’s Hour* lasted longer than other borscht-tinted television entertainments of the 1950s, Caesar and company ultimately fell afoul of the same hinterland taste that rejected *The Goldbergs* and Milton Berle. Of the cancellation of his second show, Caesar, echoing such media historians as Doherty, observes: “as the television audience was expanding outside of the big cities, audience tastes were changing and attention spans were shrinking. They didn’t understand the foreign movies we were parodying. We were writing high-class comedy and were not willing to dumb it down.”¹⁴

But the second, more important point about this apparent triumph of comicosmopolitanism amid rumors of its death is that a certain comicosmopolitanism was in fact permitted to survive, even to flourish for a while, so that it could be made an example of. Like many wars, the war on comicosmopolitanism does not always seek merely to eliminate its object: just as terror is sometimes happier dangling its victim indefinitely than nailing it with a conviction, so might the taste police prefer a prolonged and exquisitely public disciplining of the offender to a simple extermination. Instead of being destroyed, that is, the comicosmopolis

can be colonized, as Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner suggest when they remark that the “attempt to suppress the social possibilities in the new medium of television was also meant in part to show that even New York, if only under extreme duress, could be as ‘normal’ and as ‘American’ as Indiana—or at least New Jersey. And if New York could be forced into line, so could the rest of the country.”¹⁵ As we have seen, one way to treat a comic Jew was to turn him into a tragic Jew; but a subtler variation on this technique was to make comicosmopolitanism periodically banalize itself, in the name of nationalist conformism. Along with Gertrude Berg’s Mollypropisms, Caesar’s famous double-talk—his macaronic, Yiddish-sprinkled simulations of French, German, Italian, Japanese—represents the comicosmopolitanism of early television at its most prodigious: more recognizably “high-class” than Berg’s signature practice of televisual *littérature mineure*, especially when, as was frequently the case, it accompanied the parodies of foreign films and operas in which *Your Show of Shows* and *Caesar’s Hour* specialized, double-talk here defied the xenophobic monolingualism and monoculturalism of the new Cold War dispensation. All the better, then, for America to see this comicosmopolitanism “forced into line,” as when, for instance, Carl Reiner, introducing a sketch about a Russian talent show, with Caesar as double-talking, balalaika-strumming host named Arthur Gorki (the Russian Arthur Godfrey), is made to sneer: “The Russians claim to have invented everything.”¹⁶ A comicosmopolitanism compelled to interrupt its cheeky Joycean boundary-crossings to mouth the ideological pieties of the day demonstrates for the entire nation the inescapability of the American consensus: if even the jokers and smart alecks in New York can condemn the imperialist arrogance of “the Russians,” there are no limits to the normalizing power of “America.” New York, for all its xenophilia, and indeed for all its own apparent status as a “foreign movie” in relation to the vast hinterland that passes for the real America, turns out to be merely an extension of that blandscape, whose antic cosmopolitan language—call it single-talk, the talk of the single-tongued “American people”—forms the remote but ever-present horizon keeping the court jesters in line.

In other words, as television comedy comes to be dominated, at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, by wise small-town sheriffs to whom no one “gets wise”—far from dying, Andy Griffith’s Lonesome

Rhodes simply hides his fangs and becomes a sitcom star—and by WASP families where father knows best, comicosmopolitanism does not altogether fade away: rather, it assumes its place in the new national order—the place of the residual formation, of the vanquished enemy—the better to display the docility it has learned. Thus, for example, Carl Reiner makes a sitcom out of his experiences as a writer for *Your Show of Shows* and *Caesar's Hour*—but has to recast it as *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, with the Jewish hero converted into a Midwestern Protestant, and with the private, familial, naturalistic world of suburban New Rochelle providing necessary “balance” against the public, professional, presentational world of showbiz Manhattan, where, in keeping with the quota system that is no less an open secret than the blacklist from which it derives, the writing staff of the comedy-variety show for which Van Dyke's character works includes exactly one Jew.¹⁷ In this context, *Seinfeld*, often invoked as the apotheosis of Jewish television comedy finally liberated from the closet of gentility, or recognized and embraced for what it is after its long exile in heartland drag, emerges less as a great coming-out or coming-back than as one more instance of comicosmopolitanism disciplined.¹⁸ I would not be the first to note the systematic timidity governing *Seinfeld's* representation of Jewishness, which continues to be subjected to the standard methods of occultation, euphemism, and containment that television has almost always applied more stringently to this one ethnicity—which we might be tempted to call “its own,” were it not that television still refuses to own it—than to any other. Nor would I be the first to comment that, for all the show's ostensible diffusion of a “New York” sensibility into the American mainstream, its image of the cosmopolis betrays nothing so much as a suburban and adolescent fear of and disdain for the cosmopolis; one critic has traced *Seinfeld's* “ideology of Manhattan” to “the smugly defensive posture of teenagers from some affluent Long Island town . . . in Manhattan for the first time, putting down as abnormal or stupid everything that went beyond what they knew at home.”¹⁹ *Seinfeld's* pseudo-New York—its pale and at the same time improbably “colorful” imitation of the city, the simulacrum that it shares with almost all the situation comedies purporting to take place in the Judeo-centric metropolis—keeps the city at a prophylactic distance, revealing not only the defensive posture of the Long Island teenager but the whole hygienic machinery of American normativity, of

which that teenager is only one of millions of agents. The phenomenal success of *Seinfeld* testifies to the success of an operation dating back to the early years of television: an operation not content to stop at the mere homogenization of the cosmopolis at the level of televisual representation, but striving, even more imperially, to reduce the real New York City to a simulacrum of its televised simulacra.

Still a work in progress, the reduction has thus far proven startlingly effective and extensive, as many have observed. But while the “mall of Manhattan” is usually explained as one effect of an increasingly global economy, globalization is not the whole story here: globalization has advanced in partnership with the equally powerful, only apparently antithetical process of *provincialization*, the bad or false cosmopolitanism of the one reinforced by the franker antic cosmopolitanism of the other, the two combining not to annihilate the city, in the manner of mere barbarians, but, rather, to *occupy* it—and, once having done so, to make it pay its occupiers the tribute of imitation. So now that, concomitantly, urban life has been bullied into imitating sitcom art—now that the term “Jew York City” has an almost nostalgic ring to it, the city of shows, or at least Manhattan, too well resembling such shows of the city as *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, and *Will and Grace*—it may be useful, and not merely for reasons of nostalgia, to revisit what was itself a revisiting of an already lost urban paradise: the blacklisted and whitewashed city par excellence, the city that show business abandoned the better to conquer it. I would like to turn, that is, to the 1976 film, *The Front*, one of the few films that a supposedly repentant Hollywood has made about the blacklist since it supposedly ended in the early 1960s. Like *A Face in the Crowd* and the more recent *Good Night, and Good Luck*, *The Front* addresses the politics of Cold War mass culture in the preferred way of Hollywood films: by focusing on the New York-centered television industry rather than on the Hollywood-centered film industry. As a film about television, *The Front* can shed a light on television that television cannot shed on itself. But it has an even greater advantage: if the film performs the obligatory deflection away from its *sponsor*—it was financed and distributed by Columbia Pictures—its New York setting allows it to activate the repressed comicosmopolitan energies of the city that remains its *source*, the more “foreign” of the two American show-business capitals. Unlike the pseudo- and anticomic *Face in the Crowd* and the earnestly uncomic

Good Night, and Good Luck, *The Front* deliberately brings out the comic in the comicosmopolis that the blacklisters and their heirs have never stopped forcing into line.²⁰ To recall our discussion of early Cold War cinema: *The Front* undertakes the project of thawing out the laughter that various Cold Wars have sought to keep frozen. In an interview, the film's screenwriter, Walter Bernstein—himself a blacklist survivor, like the film's director, Martin Ritt, and a number of its actors—explains how the solemn subject of blacklisting came to be treated comically:

For a long time, Marty and I had been talking about doing something about the blacklist. We wanted to do a straight dramatic story about someone who was blacklisted. We could never get anybody interested at all. It wasn't until we came up with the idea of a front and making it as a comedy that we were able to get the film done. *The Front* became my first true comedy.²¹

Like the casting of a then-hot Woody Allen as the film's protagonist, the decision to make it as a comedy at first appears to be a commercially expedient adulteration of its authentic nature—a regrettable but necessary retrofitting and Hollywoodizing of a properly dramatic story, one perhaps *too* dramatic (too intense, too political, too depressing) to be told, or at any rate sold, “straight.” Bernstein's interviewer remarks, “When I spoke to Marty, he seemed to feel the film should have been done dramatically, and that the comedy aspect was a compromise.” But Bernstein challenges this view of the comic as compromise, replying, “I don't agree with him [Ritt], really. The idea that you can't be serious in a comedy, I don't agree with.”²² Although the decision to make *The Front* as a comedy came belatedly, its belatedness, I would argue, developing Bernstein's point, reflects a delayed recognition that the blacklist was precisely about the comic—that the seriousness of blacklisting turned, in fact, on the politics of the comic. No mere sugarcoating mandated by insipid studio taste, or—what amounts to the same thing—by the studio's typically craven catering to the insipid taste of the American hinterland, the belated comicizing of the story rediscovers the comedy at its core: the un-American, comicosmopolitan impertinence, the disgustingly borscht-like bad taste, that blacklisting was designed to remove. Far from supervening, in the fashion of a *false* front (like those “fronts” for Communism that Communist-hunters were always suspecting) on an

essentially “straight dramatic story,” *The Front*’s “comedy aspect” brings to the surface and flaunts the very *affront* to mainstream taste that the blacklisters, and their sycophantic mass-cultural collaborators on both coasts, worked so hard to put down, or at least to cover up.

“It was a lot of fun during those days,” Bernstein’s friend and fellow blacklistee Abraham Polonsky reminisced, with a truth-teller’s perversity, in the course of a 1997 panel discussion of the blacklist in television.²³ Polonsky—whose comic touch we have observed in his screenplay for *Body and Soul*, as well as in his wisecrack about Elia Kazan—went on to cite, as examples of the fun, the comical misunderstandings surrounding the practice, adopted by some of the blacklistees, of continuing to write for television and films by using “fronts”: a practice that both Bernstein and Polonsky engaged in, and that indeed gives Bernstein’s autobiographical film its title, its story, and its theme. For *The Front*, set in 1952, is about a television writer, modeled on Bernstein, who suddenly finds himself blacklisted, and who can survive as a television writer only with the help of some unblacklisted person who is willing to pose, at meetings with producers, directors, network executives, and sponsors, as the author of his scripts. In the film, the Bernstein character, here called Alfred Miller, and played by Michael Murphy, employs as his front an old friend named Howard Prince, a cashier, bookie, and all-around underachiever, played by Allen. Once Howard recognizes the advantages of pocketing ten percent of what Miller earns for the scripts he now ghostwrites, he is more than happy to front for two of Miller’s friends as well: blacklisted writers who correspond to Polonsky and Arnold Manoff.

Working behind a series of fronts, Bernstein, Polonsky, and Manoff wrote most of the episodes of the legendary television series *You Are There*, before the show’s executive producer fired its producer for using blacklisted writers, and followed the industry-wide shift then in progress by moving the show to California.²⁴ Forerunners of the genre we would now call docudrama, the *You Are There* scripts focused on a series of historical figures (Galileo, Milton, Joan of Arc, Michelangelo, Freud) whose stories the three blacklisted writers, engaging in what Bernstein describes as “a kind of guerilla war against McCarthyism,” turned into allegories of resistance that, thus equipped with fronts of their own, managed to evade network censorship. “In that shameful time of

McCarthyite terror, of know-nothing attempts to deform and defile history, to kill any kind of dissent,” Bernstein recalls, “we were able to do shows about civil liberties, civil rights, artistic freedom, the Bill of Rights.”²⁵ As this characterization suggests, the dominant tone of this guerilla war was not a particularly comic one: for the most part, the *You Are There* episodes, which were introduced, by Walter Cronkite, in the pompous style of news telecasts, exemplify the strand of high-pedagogical earnestness in left-liberal entertainment, the strand recently represented by *Good Night, and Good Luck*.²⁶ Indeed, it as though, in their war against “attempts to deform and defile history,” the undercover writers of *You Are There* had identified themselves so strongly with the *straight* version of history, or perhaps with the straightness of war itself, as to renounce the very “artistic freedom” that had got them into trouble in the first place: the freedom of the comic.²⁷

Bernstein claims that he and Polonsky and Manoff “chortled over” the *You Are There* shows, but then, more plausibly, equivocates, saying, “chortle is really not the right word.”²⁸ The “fun during those days,” it seems, resided less in the work itself than in the behind-the-scenes back story of the work. And it is this comic back story—the back story of working behind fronts—that *The Front* moves to the front. Where *You Are There* sought to recount history against those who would deform and defile it, *The Front* recounts the history in back of—both behind and before—the recounting of history. The guerillas who wrote the television show tried to set the record straight; the guerilla who writes the movie about writing a television show starts out trying to “do a straight dramatic story,” but, finding that “we could never get anybody interested at all,” uncovers that story’s more interesting, and less straight, ur-story. Reinventing *The Front* as a comedy, Bernstein foregrounds that “aspect” of the blacklist story that a pious regard for history’s seriousness—a desire to do history itself as a straight dramatic story—would have kept back, in the wings of anecdote, archive, and memoir: the comedy that provoked the drama of blacklisting. Bernstein’s film, that is, backs up Polonsky’s perverse reminiscence by putting upfront the fun of the blacklistees: the fun they had during the blacklist, but also the fun that caused them to *be* blacklisted, and that blacklisting aimed precisely to render unimaginable.

Even a certain liberal “sympathy,” for instance, might refuse to countenance this fun—discerning in Polonsky’s remark a pathetically wishful rewriting of the past, as if, forty-five years later, the only way to deal with the trauma of having been blacklisted were to deny it: to insist, hysterically, on how hilarious it all was. Or, again: another “sympathetic” response might accept Polonsky’s claim, but only on the condition that the fun stay grounded in pathos, in this case that of some brave little troupers whistling past the graveyard. It is less easy, though, to patheticize a comment like the one Polonsky makes, in that same 1997 panel discussion, apropos of the blacklist victims who did not survive: those, like Philip Loeb, who were blacklisted to death. Evoking his Second World War experience in the Office of Strategic Services, Polonsky says: “But I’m used to walking around among the dead. It’s so refreshing to walk among the dead.” And then, after a pause for extra comic effect: “Don’t tell ’em it’s a joke.”²⁹ Flippant, tasteless, shocking—like Polonsky’s quip that he “wouldn’t want to be buried in the same cemetery with” Kazan—this joke is not, however, an act of dancing on graves: its fun does not result from *making fun* of the dead, from taking their deadness as grounds for celebrating one’s survival. Walking among the dead, Polonsky—who would himself die two years later—does not necessarily separate himself, or his listeners, from them. Who, after all, is not supposed to tell whom that “it’s a joke”? If it is the audience that is not supposed to tell and the dead themselves who must not be told—if there is still a possibility of telling or not telling them things—perhaps the dead are not so different from the audience, or the audience from the dead.

To a member of that “live” audience who asks Polonsky, a little earlier in the discussion, whether he is bitter about how long it has taken Hollywood to apologize for the blacklist, Polonsky, speaking for his fellow “survivors,” answers: “We feel like the Jews in France, who went to the concentration camps. They’re dead now. But they just learned that six Catholic archbishops are apologizing for not helping.”³⁰ Blurring the boundary between the living and the dead, between “we” and “they,” between the refreshed and the rotten, between gaiety and bitterness, this joke, like the one about walking among the dead, bears the disintegrating signature of the mimetic comedian, whose favorite place, as we know from our excursion into a room full of television writers in the previous

chapter, is a happy cemetery, site of the decomposition that is mimetic identification with the other. As opposed to the discipline of citizenship, which uses the threat of death to keep its subjects scared straight, not to say scared stiff, this mimetic identification becomes the ground of an undisciplined comicosmopolitanism, whereby the dissolution of the self into the other loses its power to terrorize, affording instead a luxurious escape from the regime of national rigor.

As a scene of comicosmopolitanism, in other words, the mimetic cemetery is not a graveyard one whistles *past*: more disconcertingly, it is a graveyard one whistles *in*. The fun to be had in it comes not despite the fact that it is a place of the dead, but, rather, *because* it is a place of the dead. For the fun depends upon the comicosmopolitan's surrender of the proud selfhood that keeps him intimidated and thus in line—upon his willingness, say, to die into an identification with the dead French Jews who nonetheless “feel” and “learn” as if they were alive. The comicosmopolitan “survivor” refuses the pathos of survival, and the nobility of death, tastelessly taking bitter pleasure in his resemblance to a talking corpse. Far more than just a ghoulish comedy *about* death, comicosmopolitanism is a comedy *of* death: a comedy of the dead. To be blacklisted, therefore, was to undergo a *second death*: a “tragic” death, whose repellent gravity was designed at once to punish and to conceal the transgression—from a patriotic point of view—of the comic death whose pleasure one had the bad taste to keep unhidden. *Always* a ghostwriter, Polonsky, for one, still performs his first death, more than thirty-five years after his second. The worst taste of all is that of the “survivor” who will not stop dying, for he thus reminds you why you had to kill him, or, rather, to kill him again, in the first place.

If Polonsky makes tasteless jokes about the blacklist, Bernstein makes an entire tasteless movie about it. *The Front* has the effrontery “to be a comedy rather than the dark history it really was.”³¹ Buhle and Wagner, whom I am quoting, presumably mean that the episode of the blacklist itself was really a dark history; but their conflation of history and story works against their apparent certainty about the distinction between the fictional and the real, pointing to how the comedy of *The Front* represents the dark reality of the blacklist as itself a struggle over fictions: *comic* fictions that, like the film about them, have the bad taste to mix light with dark, to make jokes out of matters of the utmost gravity. The

darkest part of the film, for example, centers on a character named Hecky Brown, an actor and comic played by Zero Mostel. Hecky, born Herschel Brownstein, is a composite of Mostel himself and Philip Loeb. Like Mostel, Hecky finds his career in ruins once he is blacklisted; one of the most powerful sequences in the film, in which Hecky is paid two hundred and fifty dollars to perform in the same Catskills Hotel where, the year before, when he was still unblacklisted, he was paid three thousand, is based on an experience of Mostel's.³² Like Loeb, Hecky is fired from the television show in which he appears, and ends up checking into a hotel where he commits suicide. Yet *The Front* refuses to do to Hecky what the blacklist did to Loeb: reduce him to a symbol of the comic Jew turned tragic. Even "darkened," or rather, especially "darkened," Hecky never ceases to be a comic figure. He stages even his suicide as a comic performance: laughing to himself, mugging in front of a mirror, sipping champagne—all before he disappears out the window. "Every little cloud has got a silver lining," he sings to Howard in his penultimate scene, where, although Howard does not know it, Hecky is saying goodbye to him—and, as we shall see, preparing a decisive mimetic connection between them. In the light, or the dark, of Hecky's suicide, the bouncy consolation in his swan song seems macabre, to be sure. But the mixing of the cheerful and the macabre is just the point. The point, in other words, is not to find the silver lining in every cloud: it is to recognize the mutual implication of the light and dark, and to tease out its comic possibilities—as Polonsky does when he makes jokes that, far from simply lording it over the dead, derive their funniness from his mimetic identification *with* the dead.

Like those tasteless jokes of Polonsky's, Hecky's comedy is a comedy of unseemliness: a comedy based on the violation of boundaries, especially the boundary between subjects suitable for comedy and subjects unsuitable for it, between what can be brought to the front and what must be kept in back. From the beginning of the film, Hecky is in trouble with the authorities: a cloud hangs over his head because he is one of *those people*—in the racially tinged term—who refuse to keep clouds and sunshine separate. In an early scene, he meets with one of the film's villains, a Mr. Hennessy, from the "Freedom Information Service," a "clearance" racket like the one run by the authors of *Red Channels*. Hoping to escape blacklisting and to keep his job as host of the popular television show for

which Miller, fronted by Howard, writes, Hecky explains to Hennessy why he attended a May Day rally six years earlier: "I was only trying to get laid. This girl, this Communist girl—she had a big ass." Mixing up the class struggle with the ass struggle, as Ralph Ellison's invisible man might put it, turns out not to be the best move on Hecky's part.³³ Hennessy, indeed, could not be more chillingly unamused: "I am not interested in your sex life, Mr. Brown." "Hecky," replies Hecky, trying, unsuccessfully, to ingratiate himself. Hecky's impudent comic charm is not just not working on the deadly serious Hennessy: it is working to antagonize him further, since—more than that May Day rally, or Hecky's subscription to the *Daily Worker*, or a petition for loyalist Spain that he signed, or money that he gave for Russian war relief—it is this charm that has landed Hecky in Hennessy's office in the first place. A desire to charm the authorities is of course one of the prerequisites of good citizenship: what is the sycophant, after all, without his charm? But Hecky's particular kind of charm has this fatal defect: failing to be serious in the approved patriotic way, putting its own ass upfront, where the Symbolic Father cannot miss it, this charm bespeaks the "glamorous personality"'s exemption from or resistance to the normalizing discipline of fear. This is the charm, in short, of the joker and smart aleck: charm apparently lost on much of the audience in the changed show-business environment of the early 1950s, to the point that, far from mollifying them, it seems to strike them as an insult. As long as Hecky is cracking jokes about Communism and asses, he might as well take out some crackers and caviar and rub them in Hennessy's face.

Nor does he help his case when he reminds Hennessy, "I'm a household name," or when he says, "My whole life has been acting"; the combination of celebrity and theatricality is not likely to appease the agents of *ressentiment* (masquerading as champions of "freedom"). Not that Hecky, obviously terrified, does not affirm his desire to do whatever it takes—short of naming names—to keep his job. But his docility is sabotaged by the mode in which he stages it. His balking at becoming an informer—an indispensable step, as we know, in the process of proving one's Americanism—angers Hennessy less, in fact, than his general *tone*: a tone too suggestive of Lindy's patois, dialectic booby traps, and nitery asides—of a world that thinks itself beyond the demand that Americans speak in one voice only. Instructing Hecky to write a letter



Zero Mostel in *The Front*

renouncing Communism and declaring himself its dupe, Hennessy advises him: “Sincerity is the key, Mr. Brown. Anyone can make a mistake. The man who repents sincerely—” “I repent sincerely,” Hecky interrupts, his manner not quite sincere enough. “Write me the letter, Mr. Brown. I’ll see what I can do,” Hennessy says coldly, as he turns away from Hecky and goes back to the papers on his desk. Ever the showman, Hecky tries one last gag before he leaves the room: “And I didn’t even get laid!” This time, Hennessy does not even look up to acknowledge the joke. As Hecky walks out of the office, his would-be winning grin having fallen from his face, he has the look of a condemned man. Having spent his whole life as an actor, he clearly knows when a crowd wants blood.

But while the film thus reveals Hecky’s place in the blacklist’s machinery of tragicization, it by no means collaborates in reducing him to that abject and dreary figure, the sad clown. When the producer of Hecky’s show—played by Herschel Bernardi, another of the blacklisted actors Bernstein and Ritt make a point of featuring in the film³⁴—fires Hecky, he denies the truth that Hecky suspects, which is that his letter to Hennessy has not been deemed sufficiently “sincere”; protecting the blacklist and the extortionate system around it, the producer fumblingly tells Hecky: “It’s . . . your personality is too dominant. You belong out front, like Berle. . . . In a dramatic series, you’re throwing the

whole show off balance.” Hecky may belong out front, but by the time the producer has finished covering his own and other people’s asses, Hecky is merely out. And yet, his diegetic expulsion has just the effect of putting Hecky where he “belongs”: out front in the film’s performative space. “I thought Z [Mostel] was terrific in the film—incredibly himself, and unashamedly, fantastically theatrical,” Martin Ritt recalls.³⁵ “Incredibly himself” indeed; exploding the distinction between actor and character, between history and fiction, between extradiegetic back story and diegetic show, Mostel-Hecky embodies comicosmopolitanism’s affront to “sincerity,” which cannot tolerate any contamination of reality’s seriousness, or at least its credibility, by art’s frivolity. (After Mostel himself was named in *Red Channels*, he is reported to have said, “I am a man of a thousand faces, all of them blacklisted.”³⁶) In the television show from which Hecky has been fired, he played a cabdriver-narrator named Hecky the hackie, already breaking down the wall between the inside and the outside of representation. Once removed from the frame of the dramatic series, once released from the imperatives of semi-naturalism and semi-respectability, he becomes even more dominant a figure (as Mostel himself, considered too theatrically *big* an actor for films, dominated everything in which he appeared). Professionally humiliated and financially desperate, Hecky looms even larger in the film’s closely watched milieu—its ever more intensively policed cosmopolis—than he did as a star.

Because he is unable, or unwilling, to give Hennessy the names of his Communist associates, he reluctantly accepts Hennessy’s assignment to spy—in the name of patriotism—on the suddenly successful “writer,” Howard Prince, whose political past and associations Hennessy is busy investigating. Even reduced to sycophancy, however, Hecky still fails to perform with the sincerity required of what Hennessy calls “a true patriot”: at the end of the scene in which Hecky agrees to spy on Howard, he erupts, indecorously and ill-advisedly, into spasms of almost alarmingly lugubrious laughter. If this laughter expresses the clown’s self-disgust at having become implicated in the betrayal of the comic, it keeps faith, in its very indiscretion, its very theatrical bigness, with what he is betraying. “Unashamedly, fantastically,” it evinces Hecky’s fundamental *incorrigibility*: the comic “incredibility” that keeps him from acting like a good American—which is to say, like a credible informer. Once again,

he “throws the whole show off balance.” Hennessy and his fellow black-listers would cut Hecky down to size, or fix him as a symbol of laughter congealed into pathos. In the face of this assault, Hecky puts up the front of *The Front* itself: the tastelessness that laughs when it should be keeping a straight face, that opts for comedy at the very moment when sycophantic pragmatism most calls for seriousness.

It is in the episode of Hecky’s return to the resort in the Catskills—that borscht-soaked training ground of “vaudeo” comics—that his, and the film’s, “comedy aspect” acquires its most disturbing hypersalience. Making the trip in the company of Howard, the better to spy on him, Hecky gives a bravura performance to an adoring audience at the hotel; he ends the show with an over-the-top vaudevillian number in which he sings that he will do “anything for a laugh.” The bravura character of Hecky’s performance does not lack a considerable element of hysteria, induced, no doubt, by guilt and anger over what he is doing to Howard (“anything for a laugh,” indeed), rage at the humiliating circumstances under which he is performing (and barely eking out a living), and perhaps a sort of seething, inarticulate amazement at the general horror that is taking over and devastating his world. After the show, as Hecky drinks and flirts with some of the guests, the hotel owner hands him the envelope containing his paltry fee, fifty dollars less than what the owner had said he would try to come up with—at which point a freshly humiliated Hecky stops the show again, only this time in the mode of disaster rather than of triumph. Starting out drunkenly, “playfully,” pawing at the owner’s pocket, Hecky is soon literally at his throat, until he is pulled off and thrown out of the hotel while the owner, equally enraged, snarls at him, “You’ll crawl in the gutter, you Red bastard, you Commie son of a bitch!”

That night, Howard takes Hecky back to his apartment in the city, and, as Howard makes coffee, Hecky mutters, “It’s all Brownstein’s fault. I wouldn’t be in this trouble if it wasn’t for Brownstein. . . . You can’t make a deal with him. That’s the trouble with him. He won’t listen to reason.” Then, in a renewed access of rage, Hecky screams out the window: “Brownstein! Lay off, do you hear me? Lay off, or I’ll kill you!” Yet, collaborate though he may with the prosecutors of the war against comicosmopolitanism, Hecky cannot divest himself of the unreasonable Jewish pariah at the root—and at the back—of his trouble. For

Herschel Brownstein is not just Hecky Brown's "real name," as Howard puts it. Rather, "Herschel Brownstein" is another avatar of that radical Jewish comic drive—that cosmopolitanism *sauvage*—that we have encountered elsewhere in this book (it also goes by the name of "Shimen Rishkin," for example). A name for the mimetic prehistory that "you can't make a deal with"—for the primitive, desubjectifying, theatricalizing insincerity that one must "kill," or at least put behind oneself, if one is to give a credible performance of good citizenship—"Herschel Brownstein" (characteristically breaking the diegetic frame to carry an echo of "Herschel Bernardi") is the joker and smart aleck who subverts Hecky's performance of his assigned role as a sycophant in the patriotic "drama series" captivating Americans from coast to coast. To be sure, we soon see Hecky, whom Howard has invited to spend the night at his apartment, rummaging through Howard's papers, and he seems to provide Hennessy with enough information for Howard (who has blacklisted friends, and who was a bookie, after all) to be summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee in the film's climactic scene. The "trouble with" the irrepressible Herschel Brownstein, though, is that, when the superficially de-Judaized Hecky Brown tries to Americanize himself further by doing some patriotic spying, Brownstein refuses to let him play the good American with anything like the sincerity and credibility that the role requires. As a spy, the Mostelian Hecky overplays to a point bordering, indeed, on the *unbelievable*. Just as he is too big for his television show, so there is always something "off-balance," something improbably bombastic and self-defeating—something *gauche*—about his espionage; whenever he asks Howard about his friends and their politics, he seems to be doing everything he can to give the game away.

So it is not surprising that Hecky never gets his job back. He informs on Howard, of course, but informing, as we know, is never just a matter of giving information: it is also, above all, a matter of tone and style, in which, as Hennessy says, "sincerity is the key." Not that the comedian is utterly lacking in conviction. In the scene just before his suicide, Hecky in fact shows up at Howard's apartment, to apologize for "that terrible night" after his show in the Catskills. What Hecky is really apologizing for—although Howard cannot know it yet, and may never know it—is having spied on Howard for Hennessy and his accomplices; his suicide

will be his attempt to complete the apology. (Here, we must note the difference between Hecky and Philip Loeb, whose suicide has been attributed in part to the fact that he “never forgave himself” for accepting a cash settlement when he was fired from *The Goldbergs*, but who did not become an informer.³⁷) Hecky’s apology, of course, does not preclude his continuing, “unashamedly, fantastically,” to clown around and make jokes. Nor, conversely—bearing out Bernstein’s claim about comedy’s compatibility with seriousness—do Hecky’s typically big histrionics prevent him from mustering enough sincerity to leave Howard with these words of advice: “Take care of yourself. The water is full of sharks.”

Howard ends up taking this advice, but in a different way from the one in which his own sycophantic tendencies would have led him. “How many times have I told you? Take care of number one,” he scolds Miller at the beginning of the film, when the latter explains to him that he has been blacklisted. At the film’s end, Howard takes care of himself—and of the left that he has now joined—by refusing to swim with the sharks. Finally called as a friendly witness before HUAC (“What does it hurt if I’m friendly?”), the once-venal front finds himself radicalized—*Brownsteined*, we might say—when the congressional sharks on the committee try to get him to name Hecky, now dead, as a Communist, as if in an exchange of treacheries. “They’re willing to make a deal,” Howard’s (or, rather, the network’s) lawyer reasons with him. “Look, they’re being very reasonable. You don’t have to give them more than one [name]. . . . If it bothers you, give them Hecky Brown. . . . He’s dead anyway. What difference does it make?” But when the committee members coach the witness by asking him repeatedly if he knows “Herschel Brownstein, also known as Hecky Brown,” Howard Prince, instead of letting them hector him into “being friendly,” responds as though he himself were being *addressed as Herschel Brownstein*—as though he had *become* the one “you can’t make a deal with,” the one who “won’t listen to reason.” One might say that H. B. had suddenly come back to “life” in the person of H. P.

Or perhaps not so suddenly. That the too-friendly frog is about to become a spectacularly uncooperative prince (true to his last name) is intimated by the brash, almost insolently improvisational style that the front unexpectedly assumes in front of HUAC, from the beginning of the hearing. It is as though Hecky’s shameless, Borscht-Belt theatricality had morphed into its younger, hipper version: a nightclub—or

niterity—performance idiom associated with such edgy stand-up comics of the fifties and early sixties as Mort Sahl, Lenny Bruce, and Woody Allen himself.³⁸ Clearly, HUAC has been planning to conduct this hearing as one more sycophantic charade, one more demonstration of its power to command good citizenship by making witnesses name names; but Howard, his manner as comically “off-balance”—as *frontal*—in its own way, as Hecky’s, has changed his mind and is refusing to perform according to the script, channeling Hecky when he was supposed to name him instead. Howard, in short, is doing exactly what Lillian Hellman’s lawyer warned her not to do: he is insulting the committee (“You’re getting them mad,” the lawyer warns him) by “acting smart-aleck.” After a suspensefully prolonged pause, during which Howard has moved his hand over his forehead (in French, his *front*) in such a way as to signal a self-transformation, the would-have-been friendly witness rises from his chair, turns to his interrogators, and says, “Fellas, I don’t recognize the right of this Committee to ask me these kind of questions. And, furthermore, you can all go fuck yourselves.”

Whereupon he walks out of the room, as the committee members are frozen in place and the soundtrack begins to play Frank Sinatra singing “Young at Heart.” The song, with its opening lines, “Fairy tales can come true, it can happen to you,” is in fact being reprised here, since it also accompanies the film’s opening montage, a pseudonostalgic evocation of early-1950s culture (with newsreel footage of McCarthy, the Rosenbergs, Marilyn Monroe, Eisenhower, the Korean War, etc.). If the film thus frames itself belatedly as an act of belated comic wish-fulfillment—not even Lionel Stander showed his rear end to the state with as much *front* (French not only for “forehead” but also for “cheek”) as *The Front*’s front displays now—“belated” does not always mean “too late.” For there is a kind of *timely belatedness*, like the belatedness of the recognition behind this film: the recognition that the question of the comic was always behind blacklisting. Howard’s carnivalesque defiance of the committee represents more than just a happy anamnesis, whereby the blacklist survivor finally recognizes what his experience was all about; it represents more, even, than a jubilant exercise in *esprit d’escalier*. Like the tasteless punch line uttered by its unlikely Prince, the entire film makes good on the promise that, after all, *fairy tales can come true*. And what makes the realization of this particular fairy tale possible, indeed,

what makes it necessary, is that, while the film obviously arrives after the fact of the 1950s blacklist that it portrays, it shows up just in time for the *long blacklist*—the war against comicosmopolitanism—that is still in force in 1976, when the film appears, and in 2007, at the time of this writing.

The Front arrives, that is, not merely to remember the comicosmopolitanism that the blacklist has forced into line, but to put it back into play. The film's most striking (and most moving) demonstration of this performative end comes *at* the end: the very end, after Howard, in the best fairy-tale way, having done what every unfriendly witness wanted to do, leaves the HUAC members immobilized in their chamber as he walks into what the film projects as a happy ending *that would not be an end*. While "Young at Heart" continues to play, we see Howard embracing his leftist princess, while a crowd of supporters cheers him on.³⁹ He is being led off to prison, presumably for contempt of congress, but he has thus become a new icon of the left, its yiddishe prince. And then, in what is effectively a punch line *after* the punch line, the hero *in* the film, or the hero in front of it, is aligned with the heroes *behind* it: Walter Bernstein, Martin Ritt, Zero Mostel, Herschel Bernardi, and two other actors in the cast, Lloyd Gough and Joshua Shelley, all of whose names now appear prominently on the screen, each name accompanied by the word "blacklisted," and by the year in which each blacklisting began. At *The Front's* end, the film puts its blacklisted, backlisted personnel in front. Advertising the rupture of the barrier between the diegetic and the extradiegetic that—especially around the destabilizing Hecky—it has been inducing all along, it identifies itself as the work not only of blacklist survivors but also of blacklist resisters: as an act of belated *but also continuing* resistance.

And yet, the final notation of the film's back story has a remarkable effect: the names and dates of the blacklisted personnel suggest a necrology, or a series of inscriptions on tombstones. As Polonsky's jokes about the dead would remind us, surviving the blacklist does not necessarily mean that one is alive—which is to say, *merely* alive. Even more tasteless than Howard's vulgar parting shot at HUAC is the way the film's closing credits underscore its strategy of resistance as comic death—and as a comic death one refuses to stop performing. The song playing over the credits tells us: "You can go to extremes / With impossible schemes / You

can laugh as your dreams / Fall apart at the seams.” The film we have been watching shows us how the falling apart of our dreams—how the falling apart of *ourselves*—might be the very *occasion* for laughter. Or, to stay in the register of popular song, we could recite the line Hecky sings to Howard when he comes to say goodbye: “Every little cloud has got a silver lining.” Hecky is unable to kill Brownstein, but he succeeds in killing himself. His suicide, we have suggested, is an attempted apology for sycophantically betraying Howard, as well as Hecky himself, and the left to which he was once drawn, if only for the asses. But Hecky’s suicide is not just an apology: killing himself, he dies into Howard, who, as we have seen, finds it in himself to become the mimetic comedian that Hecky—or, more radically, Brownstein—always was. When he moves his hand across his forehead, Howard turns into that shameless, vulgar, fantastic, incredible clown who, having informed on him, now *informs him*. Faced with HUAC’s desire, in its chairman’s words at the beginning of Howard’s hearing, to “keep America just as pure as we possibly can make it,” Howard revives Hecky’s “big ass” as “go fuck yourselves.” The dead Hecky “lives” in Howard, that is, as the dead French Jews “live” in Polonsky. What this “survival” also means, of course, is that Howard “dies” into Hecky as Polonsky “dies” into the French Jews. Out of this identification between the “living” and the “dead,” however, comes mimesis, or comicosmopolitanism: an art of dying, a comedy of disintegration. Without the falling apart of and into dreams, without the collapse of silver linings into clouds, there can be none of that undisciplined laughter that this film, against the Hennessys of its own time and ours, has the bad taste to put out front.

“Front” has one other meaning that we have yet to consider, a meaning not without pertinence to a film about the left. For a “front” can be a coalition, as in “Popular Front,” or *Front populaire*. As a title, *The Front* of course refers to Howard’s fronting for blacklisted writers. But the title also points to the front or coalition formed between Hecky and Howard, as they disintegrate into each other. Together, the two comic characters, seconded by the comic actors who play them, constitute a comicosmopolitan front against the blacklisters’ heirs: the provincializing network of forces, and force of networks, that still occupy the pocket of un-Americanism that, unless vigilantly policed, New York City threatens to become, even after 9/11 and the ostensible advent of a sophisticated,

big-city patriotism, with flags flying from every apartment house. In the coalition forged by Howard-Allen and by Hecky-Mostel, or by Hecky-Mostel-Brownstein, more than two, or even three, comic Jews are joining forces. Insofar as Hecky is himself a coalition, that is, a composite of Mostel and Philip Loeb, the latter is also a member of *The Front's* front. Loeb's membership in it honors Kate Mostel and Madeline Gilford's sense of him as "one of the funniest, dearest men we ever knew," and helps to undo not only his tragicization but the whole mortifying project of patriotic *ressentiment*, which will not rest until every clown is an object of dread.

In this front, men indeed fall apart, and, as they fall, they fall into one another. In other words, the relations of these mimetic jokers differ radically from those of collaborators. Where the point of collaboration is to harden and to magnify the self, the point of the comicosmopolitan front is to dissolve it. And in dissolving the self, this front uncovers the ways in which a certain dissolution has always already begun *within* each of its members. Consider the effect of what happens between Mostel and Allen. When the man of a thousand faces and the younger comic actor and auteur melt into each other, we remember, for example, that Allen has his own history of 1950s comicosmopolitanism, having written for *Your Show of Shows* and *Caesar's Hour*.⁴⁰ Finding Mostel inscribed in Allen, we might resituate Allen's own films in relation not only to *The Front*, but also to the broad front that could be unfolded out of it, with the result that, in Allen's films too, we might begin to see comicosmopolitanism's ghosts making a stand against the hinterland, the back country, that never ceases advancing on every front.⁴¹ To go back to *The Front*, thirty years later, is to encounter a film that itself goes back, to events twenty-five years earlier. To revisit the film now, therefore, is to mark the erasure of a whole world of performance, at once real and fantastical: the world of Catskills hotels, Lindy's patois, dialectic booby traps, nitery asides. But if we go back to *The Front*, *The Front* at the same time comes back to us. It might well be described, in fact, as a *haunting* comedy: its vanished world is an ever-encroaching graveyard. Happily, Bernstein's film refreshes our sense of how refreshing it can be to walk among the dead.

Bringing Down the House

The Blacklist Musical

In the previous chapter, we turned from Hollywood to New York: more specifically, from the film industry to the television industry, before it, too, *went Hollywood*—before, that is, the disciplining of the comicosmopolis. This chapter continues the turn from Hollywood to New York, considering a mass-culture form that has proven somewhat more resistant to discipline than did television. I am referring to the Broadway musical, or to the historically particular realization of it that I am calling the blacklist musical, whose long run, stretching approximately from 1950 to 1964, or from *Call Me Madam* to *Fiddler on the Roof*, coincides with the Broadway musical’s “golden age.” But the next thing to say about the blacklist musical, and perhaps a reason why the golden age *was* golden, is that Broadway never *had* a blacklist—at least, not in the way that Hollywood and television did. To some extent, the lack of a blacklist on Broadway had to do with circumstances of reception: television shows were broadcast *from* New York, but they were broadcast *to* a national audience—from coast to coast, in the medium’s old phrase. Like the film industry, the television industry is a mass medium whose claim to massness consists in its transcendence—or, at least, in its attempted erasure—of its point of origin. Less advanced in its technology (despite the nation-wide dissemination, in its heyday, of its songs as popular standards), the Broadway musical, in contrast, is typically consumed on its own ground: it does not go to the American mass audience; the American mass audience goes to it.

In accounting for Broadway’s lack of a blacklist, moreover, we could

invoke its archaism of production alongside its archaism of reception. According to the Broadway legend Arthur Laurents, “The blacklist . . . never would reach the theatre, not so much because theatre folk were so liberal but because the producers were self-employed individuals, not companies, and weren’t beholden to corporations or banks.”¹ Unlike their Hollywood counterparts, who, in the words of Horkheimer and Adorno, had “to keep in with the true wielders of power”²—conducting an appeasement starting in the late 1940s and supposedly ending in the early 1960s, but in fact, as I and others would argue, still going on,³ and entailing the systematic purge of leftist personnel and thus of leftist film content—Broadway producers, practitioners of an older, entrepreneurial capitalism, enjoyed the luxury of sheer economic anachronism. Doing business the old-fashioned way, they could pass along the profits of uneven development to the authors and performers of what we now recognize as the masterpieces of the postwar musical theater: authors and performers many of whom, when not in fact refugees, like Laurents himself, from Hollywood in the grip of the Red Scare, would never have been permitted to do the work there that they could legitimately attempt in the leathery embrace of old Broadway.

And yet, though left-leaning talent during the Cold War indeed found a warmer climate on Broadway than in sunny California, the chill disciplinary winds blowing from the West Coast could still be felt on the tropical island of Manhattan—which is why the term “blacklist musical” designates more than just musicals that happened to get written while the blacklist was in place three thousand miles away. Take, for instance, what is perhaps the most depressingly obvious case of a blacklist musical: *Silk Stockings*, Cole Porter’s 1955 adaptation of the film *Ninotchka*. In the show’s opening number, three Soviet commissars, sent to Paris only to succumb to its decadent pleasures, sing:

Too bad we can’t go back to Moscow.
 Lenin, pity us, do!
 Instead of counting chickens on each farm ev’rywhere,
 In case a party member has a chicken to spare,
 You’ll see us counting chickens at the Folies Bergère,
 Too bad—ai!
 Too bad—ai!
 Too good to be true, hai! hai! hai!⁴

There may be funnier examples of bourgeois-hedonistic self-congratulation, but these lines are nothing if not hysterical. Counting chickens at the Folies Bergère no doubt beats counting them on each farm everywhere. Yet the compulsion to turn what-goes-without-saying into what-must-be-said, like the compulsion to turn *Ninotchka* into a Broadway musical at just this moment, affirms the truth it would deny: that play itself has turned into work; that Western-style fun has come to resemble Soviet-style drudgery. “Aldous Huxley,” Adorno wrote, “has raised the question of who, in a place of amusement, is really being amused. With the same justice, it can be asked whom music for entertainment still entertains?”⁵ If the joyless *joie de vivre* of a show like *Silk Stockings* shrinks the distance between Moscow and Paris with every desperate, clunky insistence that they’re poles apart—too good to be true, indeed—this is both cause and effect of the uneasy proximity of two other “opposite” cities: in an entertainment industry already fully bicoastal by the late forties, and in age when Broadway musicals, even not very successful ones—like *Silk Stockings*—were almost routinely made into movies, how could New York *not* have felt Hollywood (to say nothing of Washington) breathing down its neck? How surprising is it that, although the blacklist never reached the theater, it got close enough to play a decisive role in the shaping of the Broadway musical in its classic phase?

For *Silk Stockings* is only one example, and by no means the most distinguished one, of a postwar Broadway musical haunted by the menacingly indeterminate presence, somewhere out there (around the corner, or whistling down the river) not just of the “true wielders of power” but also of the real Americans through whom they exercise that power, and who may be as near as the nearest tourist. Indeed, as I will show in discussing *Fiddler on the Roof* at the end of this chapter, the Broadway musical may be most American when it does go back to Russia, and it may reveal the blacklist’s imprint most clearly when it seems to have overcome the blacklist. I begin with *Silk Stockings* only because of its egregious eagerness to display its credentials as the *good* kind of “party member,” or as a member of the good kind of party: an eagerness even more egregiously modeled by one of the co-authors of its book, Abe Burrows, who, in his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952, a virtual dress rehearsal for *Silk Stockings*, gave the committee the names of suspected Hollywood Communists he had

known, and blamed these dangerous liaisons on his habits as a promiscuous *life* of the party:

In Hollywood, in those days, I was invited everywhere. I attended more parties, I guess, than anyone. The *Saturday Evening Post*, in 1945 or at the end of 1945 [1944?], did an article about me and the fact that I played at parties all over Hollywood. As a matter of fact, it got a little out of hand. I used to go to too many, and I began to quit going when I started to get asked by people I didn't know. You know, people would say, 'Come to the party,' and you would sit, and then you would sit down to the party and go to work. So I attended parties, with all kinds of people, the right wing and the left wing, and the middle, and all down the line. I guess I never turned down an invitation to go to the piano. It was in a period before I became a performer, and I guess maybe I was hammy about it. I liked to sing. I played up these songs.⁶

Though, by 1952, Burrows may have kicked the habit of indiscriminate party-going, his abjectly informative testimony proves that he still liked to sing. And not just to sing, either, but to play the clown while doing so. When the committee's lawyer remarks, "Our observations have been that ridicule is about one of the most effective weapons against members of the Communist Party," Burrows obligingly replies: "They can't take it. . . . I know in Russia . . . they don't like jokes, they don't like funny stuff" (567). As though someone were threatening to send *him* back to Moscow, Burrows, in his hammy way, performs a travesty of musical comedy as stoolpigeon fun: he stages both an out-of-town tryout of the mediocre Broadway show on which he'll collaborate three years later and, even more drearily, an in-house demonstration, for an audience of representative Americans, of how to ruin a party by reducing it to the party line, of how to betray, along with your friends, the pleasure principle at the heart of entertainment itself.⁷

Performer as *informer*, court jester as good citizen, Abe Burrows, in a one-man orgy of sycophancy, does his bit for the Cold War hardening of entertainment into *mere* appeasement: a hardening that in turn supports the consolidation of American politics and American show business into one interminable patriotic reality show. If Burrows's audience remains cool toward his performance, this is partly because, uninhibited in his fingering of others, he never exactly confesses to his own Communist

Party membership, but partly because his performance itself (“I guess, I guess, I guess”) is too darn hot: it conspicuously lacks the cool that was becoming the approved style, especially for friendly witnesses, at the dawn of both the television age and youth culture.⁸ For a state-of-the-art performance of American sycophancy, which accordingly met with a much warmer reception, consider, once again, the 1953 HUAC testimony of Jerome Robbins, the choreographer and director who had done the dances for shows like *Call Me Madam* and *The King and I* and who would go on to stage such other canonical Broadway musicals as *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, *Bells Are Ringing*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. Robbins’s cooperative testimony ends with this exchange between him and one of the committee members:

MR. DOYLE: Again, I want to compliment you. You are in a wonderful place, through your art, your music, your talent, which God blessed you with, to perhaps be very vigorous and positive in promoting Americanism in contrast to Communism. Let me suggest to you that you use that great talent which God has blessed you with to put into ballets in some way, to put into music in some way, that interpretation.

MR. ROBBINS: Sir, all my works have been acclaimed for its [*sic*] American quality particularly.

MR. DOYLE: I realize that, but let me urge you to put even more of that in it, where you can appropriately.

With which the committee chairman concludes: “Mr. Robbins, I do want to reiterate, you have performed a patriotic service to the Committee, and I am sure all Congress and the American people are very thankful to you for it” (Bentley, 634).

In addition to informing, Robbins, to be sure, produces the confession of political sins that Burrows, for all his antic, frantic ass-kissing, can never quite cough up. But Robbins’s success before this tough crowd, like Burrows’s relative lack of it, depends as much on the showbiz savvy that God blessed him with as on the “patriotic service” that he “performs.” Or rather: Robbins succeeds because, theatrical genius that he was, he knew how to perform for the committee in such a way as to make patriotic service, or ideological servility, sound almost hip, so that even his

grammatical mistake, his putting “its” for “their,” plays not as a gaffe but as a piece of Brandoesque looseness. And just as Marlon Brando himself would redefine film acting one year later when he played the stoolpigeon hero of Elia Kazan’s *On the Waterfront*, becoming an American idol by showing his fellow citizens how to inhabit the adolescence humiliatingly imposed on them as an adolescence sexily chosen by them, so, when Jerome Robbins went on to direct and choreograph *West Side Story* in 1957, would he conceive it as “the first Method musical” (Laurents, 357)—toward which end, according to Arthur Laurents, who wrote *West Side Story*’s book, Robbins kept everybody on his toes, not only, for instance, by ordering the actors playing the Jets and the Sharks not to eat, sit, or talk together in or out of the theater (*ibid.*), but also by shouting “faggot!” over and over at the show’s male lead (*ibid.*, 358), no doubt in the hope of eliciting from him a plausible impersonation of Brandoesque rough trade, for reasons as political as they were sexual.⁹ “Let me urge you to put even more of that in” your work: there can never be enough of “that,” of course, when “that” is “American quality particularly,” and “you” are a gay Jewish choreographer in 1953. Very smart, Maria. If, for Jerome Robbins, putting in even more of that meant subjecting others to the homophobic bullying implicit in the committee’s praise for his testimony, he thus applied all too diligently the civics lesson he had so shrewdly learned: a lesson in the wisdom of disguising docile subjects as juvenile delinquents—a method for, among other things, *staying* in the “wonderful place” where he could exercise the talent with which God blessed him.

Robbins understood that place—not so wonderful, perhaps, for the actors and dancers working under his direction—to be Broadway and Hollywood together: Laurents and others have claimed that Robbins, like Kazan, named names because he wanted to work on both coasts (332).¹⁰ But insofar as Robbins in fact ended up abandoning his plan to make *West Side Story* the first Method musical—not surprisingly, the result of all his would-be Methodizing was a lot of “labored acting” (Laurents, 359)—insofar, that is, as something wonderful did come out of the show, that something has everything to do with the *fantasy* of a wonderful place. The protest of comicosmopolitanism under colonial control, this fantasy—this insistence on living in the city of one’s dreams—is what

grounds *West Side Story* in a place (call it Broadway, or the West Side, or Manhattan, or New York City) imagined to exist, rather like, say, Puerto Rico, both inside and outside “America,” and as yet incompletely ruled either by stoolpigeon fun à la Abe Burrows or by stoolpigeon seriousness à la Jerome Robbins.

“Just think,” writes D. A. Miller in *Place for Us*, his book on the Broadway musical that takes its title from *West Side Story* and that takes the genre as a place of gay fantasy:

The golden-age musical that best persuaded the general public of the artistic “seriousness” of the form—and did so, naturally enough, on the basis of a virility so sure of itself, or at any rate, so truculently put forward, that it could even get away with the *jetés* of classical ballet, without anybody daring to say, though anybody might have seen, from their first cigarette, that the Jets were leaping straight out of the pages of Genet—this was entirely the conception of four gay men who must have been, in a strict sense of the phrase, nothing if not brilliant.¹¹

Its “seriousness” somehow uncompromised, even promoted, by a certain conspiracy to keep it gay, *West Side Story* confronts a perhaps graver levity in its other artistic line of descent: its vexed relations with a distinctively Jewish world of musical *comedy*. Playing down the gay connection (with the usual not-so-convincing results), Arthur Laurents argues: “There is one sensibility all four of us share which is more important and really *does* inform the work. We’re all Jews. . . . *West Side Story* can be said to be informed by our political and sociological viewpoint; our Jewishness as the source of passion against prejudice.”¹² But what if the “political and sociological viewpoint” of *West Side Story* derives as much from a relatively frivolous, and frankly commercial, Jewish theatrical background as from a perfectly respectable Jewish “passion against prejudice”?¹³ This is a question that the show’s four authors—along with Laurents and Robbins, composer Leonard Bernstein and lyricist Stephen Sondheim—took considerable pains to preclude, from the moment, early in its history, when *West Side Story* emerged from the ruins of *East Side Story*, a musical with a Jewish Juliet and a Catholic Romeo, rejected on the basis of its “old-fashioned” content—“‘*Abie’s Irish Rose*’ to music,” quipped one detractor—and, in Bernstein’s words, because of its “too-angry, too-bitchy, too-vulgar tone.”¹⁴

Moving the story from the East Side to the West Side, and replacing its Jewish-Catholic conflict with one between Puerto Ricans and (mostly indeterminate) white ethnics, may well have afforded a more up-to-date expression of the show's liberal theme, as well as a more pertinent setting for it. Yet *West Side Story's* distinction as a blacklist musical—its failure to sing entirely in tune with its illiberal time, Jerome Robbins's "patriotism" notwithstanding—owes a great deal to the "old-fashioned" origins that it never entirely overcomes: not just to the archaic modes of reception and production that characterized Broadway in general, but to the stylistic repertoire bound up with it, the very stylistic repertoire whose obsolescence the show—the song titled "Cool" would say it all—works so hard to accelerate. For the most progressive thing about this self-consciously modern, emphatically youth-oriented musical, even the most radical thing about it, is what I would like to call its *geriatric* delinquency. I am not thinking here of the kindly old druggist named Doc, the one recognizably Jewish character in the show, and also its comic-sentimental spokesman for liberal tolerance ("Weapons. You couldn't play basketball?"¹⁵)—a role, incidentally, played in the original Broadway cast by the blacklisted actor Art Smith, one of the "comrades" named by Elia Kazan. Rather, the show's geriatric delinquency occurs in those moments when the teenage characters themselves drop their Cold War cool—which is to say, their good citizenship—just long enough to turn into vaudevillians, Broadway babies at least three times their age. Needless to say, these moments, when "musical tragedy," as Laurents would have it (346), regresses to musical comedy, are the "flaws" in the show, according to its critics and its creators alike: songs like "I Feel Pretty," with its alarmingly charming lyrics, too witty, too literate, too *My Fair Lady* by half;¹⁶ or like "America," also too un-American for its own good; or like the trio "Kids Ain't," aborted out-of-town "because it was too much of a crowd-pleaser";¹⁷ or—best example of all—like "Gee, Officer Krupke," which the *New York Times* critic especially disliked for its "spectacle of 'little ruffians' relating their experience of mordant gang life with 'a good cheer that would be suitable in a comic scene of a conventional musical show.'"¹⁸

This return of the comic repressed is not to be confused with the "funny stuff" that they can't take in Russia but that Abe Burrows serves up so obsequiously for his Christian masters here. Rather, what returns

is the lightened-up version of a too-angry, too-bitchy, and too-vulgar tone: a tone that comes out brash, clever,¹⁹ and just-vulgar-enough, displaying, in short, the classic “qualities,” as Jerome Robbins might say, of musical comedy’s New York–Jewish accent, which it can’t seem to lose, no matter how many times it sings “ok by me in America” (Laurents et al., *West Side Story*, 167)—or even “God Bless America.” Drumming “God” and “bless” and “America” into Robbins, the committee member who “compliments” him doesn’t just get “American quality” in return: he gets “American quality particularly” *with* the particular American quality of inarticulateness—in other words, *without* the Jewish lip that would call Robbins’s patriotic (lip) service into question, and that, as much as any alleged Communist subversion, provoked the vengeful, long-running counter-spectacle conceived, directed, and choreographed by the House Un-American Activities Committee. And yet, in the great American musical “conceived, directed, and choreographed by Jerome Robbins,” as he insisted his credit should read (Laurents, 363), “Gee, Officer Krupke” opens up a wonderfully Godforsaken place, if only by making room for *West Side Story*’s one eruption into vulgar Yiddish:

Dear kindly social worker,
They say go earn a buck,
Like be a soda jerker,
Which means like be a schmuck . . . (208).

But this isn’t just the song in which “little ruffians” revert to Yiddish. Even cleaned up for the cast album—“They say go earn some dough / . . . Which means like be a schmo”—this is the song that still in effect says “schmuck” *to the police*: the police who, as it happens, begin the show by attempting to recruit informers from the Sharks, asking, as though rhetorically: “Didn’t nobody tell ya there’s a difference between bein’ a stool pigeon and cooperatin’ with the law?” (139).²⁰ Denying that difference as it refuses to join the chorus of stoolpigeons being heard throughout the land, mocking the various policing discourses of midcentury America, from the law to psychiatry to social work, “Gee, Officer Krupke” constitutes a little allegory of noncooperation with HUAC and company. But let us not fixate on content, any more than HUAC did: let us consider the politics of tone, to use Leonard Bernstein’s word, and let us take our cue from Stephen Sondheim, who wrote the words for this song:

There are very few times when you laugh out loud in the theater at a lyric joke. One laugh per score is a lot for me, and I think most of my shows have one laugh. In *West Side* there's the section in "Gee, Officer Krupke" which uses a favorite technique of mine, parallel lines where you just make a list:

My father is a bastard,
 My ma's an S.O.B.
 My grandpa's always plastered,
 My grandma pushes tea.
 My sister wears a mustache.
 My brother wears a dress.
 Goodness gracious, that's why I'm a mess!

That's not exceptionally funny on its own, but it brought down the house every night because the form helps make it funny.²¹

You just make a list? Sondheim is too modest. In an age where list making had become public policy and national mania, his lyric joke brought down the house every night thanks not only to the genius of form, but to a more local genius as well: to the smartass, brassy, and yet radically *uncool* tone that means "Broadway," "musical comedy," and "Jews" all at once, and that, however loudly it trumpets its "American quality," still sets a lot of American teeth on edge. As well it might: bringing down the house isn't the same thing as bringing down the House (of Representatives), but Sondheim's parallel lines, like the streets of some imaginary city, map out a wonderful place, in which singing need not mean "cooperatin' with the law."

The serious or "integrated" Broadway musical is thought to begin in 1943, with Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* Andrea Most argues that this founding text is also both an allegory and a vehicle of Jewish assimilation. While much of Most's argument depends on a reading of the show's villain, Jud Fry, as an encoded embodiment of the African American abjection on which Jewish American success supposedly rests, Most eventually qualifies this reading, acknowledging the signs of Jewishness, as well as of blackness, clustered around the figure of Jud:

He is associated *not* with “black” entertainment forms in the play but with elite European performance genres. . . . Jud is both uncivilized and too civilized. These contradictory negative characteristics are similar to those ascribed by antisemites to Jews, who were perceived as both poverty-stricken Communists *and* powerful bankers threatening to control the world. Jud is not specifically a black man in a white body but an uncomfortable projection onto a “black” character of the nonwhite and un-American traits that Jews feared being persecuted for.²²

Feared with good reason, we might add, since, in 1943, a thoroughly racialized and unassimilably cosmopolitan European Jewry was undergoing not just persecution but destruction. Indeed, the “European performance genres” with which Jud is associated—in the “Dream Ballet,” for instance, he presides over a wicked Parisian dance hall, a horror-show Folies Bergère, complete with scary cancan dancers—evoke the “Jewish degeneracy” for which the Nazis attempted a final solution: the Jewish degeneracy whose specter, back in America, would energize HUAC, McCarthy, and their collaborators well into the next decade. But to describe Jud as a “projection” of what Jews feared, as Most does, seems somewhat misleading in view of his name, on which Most does not comment. “Jud,” after all, virtually means “Jew,” as the German-Jewish Rodgers and Hammerstein would have known. Why allow a “‘black’ character” to retain such a transparently Jewish name?²³ And why link this avatar of “nonwhite and un-American traits” specifically with the musical spectacles of the metropolis—in this case, Paris, but a Paris that might double for an entertainment capital better known, by 1943, for its large and culturally influential black *and* Jewish populations: namely, New York City?

Most is right to argue that, in *Oklahoma!*, it is Rodgers and Hammerstein themselves who cannot stop singing “we know we belong to the land.” In the person of their *landsman* Jud Fry, however, there arises the unsung counter-refrain, “we know real Americans don’t believe we do.” And while poor Jud’s fate—he really does end up dead, of course—imbues the show’s assimilationist anthem with the strains of wishful thinking, so that “we know we belong to the land” begins to sound like a desperate mantra recited to drown out evidence to the contrary, this very evidence, or rather, the very obviousness with which the show advertises

its Jewish fear of nonassimilation, suggests that fear may not be the only affect at work here. The musical theater may well have served as a means of Americanization for the Jews who, “since the 1920s,” according to John Bush Jones, have accounted for “at least 90 percent of the book writers, lyricists, and composers of Broadway shows.”²⁴ But if nearly every Broadway musical thus claims to plant itself in Oklahoma, that claim originates from—and in a sense never leaves—a place as far as one can go, symbolically speaking, from any heartland or middle America whatsoever: the national margin of Manhattan, from whose literally or at least littorally insular perspective the most up-to-date Kansas Cities are imagined, and imagined, inevitably, to come up a little short: “They went and built a skyscraper seven stories high!”²⁵ If not frankly superior, this perspective is not simply the space of anxious denial either. The seminal Broadway musical reassures itself that it belongs to the land, but never quite erases the site of not-quite-belonging that constitutes the transnational scene of its enunciation. Even in 1943, when American Jews had excellent reasons for feeling patriotic, the definitive Jewish-American genre of the Broadway musical recognizes that, emotionally and aesthetically, if not quite geographically, it lives as close to Paris, or, for that matter, to Moscow, Vienna, and Budapest, as to Kansas City, Oklahoma City, and Omaha.

Twelve years later, when American Jews still had reasons, albeit less excellent ones, for feeling patriotic, a Broadway musical like *Silk Stockings* would align itself much more explicitly with Paris, but not with Paris as a metonymy for New York’s own foreignness to the rest of the United States. On the contrary, far from signifying a locus of un-American, or at best unstably American, activities, the Cold War Paris of *Silk Stockings* stands congealed in a geopolitical opposition to Moscow, frozen into place as the polar synecdoche for the Western “pleasure” bloc *tout court*, as the ego ideal of the American entertainment industry, of which Hollywood is the center and New York is only one more colonial outpost. A similarly imperial logic of subsumption seems to inform *West Side Story*, when the Puerto Rican Anita’s “I like the island Manhattan” leads into “I like to be in America” (Laurents, 167). Standing for America, even as its towering symbol, Manhattan would suffer the dubious blessing—and how dubious recent history shows all too well—of merely being subordinated to it. But the segue from “Manhattan” to “America” is not in

fact uninterrupted. Before “I like the island Manhattan” gives way to “I like to be in America,” it meets its more immediate match in its rhyming partner: “Smoke on your pipe and put that in!” (167). Might this “Latin” sassiness, as well as this wittily scrambled idiom, bespeak more than just the superpatriotism of one overeager to identify herself as “an American girl now” (166)? After all, the song “America” that Anita goes on to sing includes such impertinent Sondheimian lyric jokes as “Everything free in America / For a small fee in America!” (167) and “Nobody knows in America / Puerto Rico’s in America” (168). Not exactly national anthem material. The irreverence that points out America’s repression of its own heterogeneity also points up, by exemplifying, the position of Manhattan as another insular, insolent national other—as “in” but not exactly *of* America, even the America for which it sometimes tropically substitutes. Perhaps less alienated than Jud Fry, but not necessarily less alien, the authors of “America” both know their place and like it.

In 1956 Judy Holliday starred in the musical comedy *Bells Are Ringing*, a show whose very title announces an essentially musical sensitivity to the politics of tone. In March 1952, Holliday, who, the year before, had won the Best Actress Oscar for *Born Yesterday*, but whose film and television career was being threatened by various anti-Communist groups—television was blacklisting her, and groups like the American Legion were picketing her films—testified before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee in an executive or closed session. At the end of the hearing, the presiding senator, a Utah Republican named Arthur Watkins, took elaborate pains to impress upon Holliday the importance of preserving its confidential status: “You are not going to release anything about this?” She replied: “Release anything? I would rather die.”²⁶ Six months later, the government would send the transcript of her testimony to the press. Even if, according to one of Holliday’s biographers, she and her lawyers and the movie studio that arranged the hearing knew from the outset that the transcript would be released in a matter of months, this assault on her fictitious privacy was no less violent for being expected.²⁷ Holliday’s career in film and television did not suffer permanent damage, although the networks were slower to rehabilitate her than were the studios. Both the assault and her survival of it may be explained by Holliday’s virtuosity in exploiting what I would call an ambiguously female

privilege, since the only other witness to have exercised it, as far as I know, was Lucille Ball.²⁸ I have in mind the finesse with which Holliday, assuming her *Born Yesterday* dumb blonde persona for her Washington inquisitors, which is to say, playing dumb like a fox, carved out a space, and performed a role, halfway between friendly witness and unfriendly witness: while repudiating the Communist Party and deploring her “stupidity” and “irresponsibility” in supporting its “front” organizations, she persistently frustrated the subcommittee’s aggressive attempts to make her name names.

Holliday’s own name, moreover, occasioned a good deal of suspicious questioning. Here she is being interrogated by Richard Arens, the staff director of the subcommittee:

MR. ARENS: Your name is Judy Holliday as a stage name, is it?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Yes.

MR. ARENS: A professional name?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Yes.

MR. ARENS: What other name have you used in the course of your life?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Judy Tuvim, T-u-v-i-m.

MR. ARENS: Do you have a married name?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Yes.

MR. ARENS: What is your married name?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Mrs. David Oppenheim.

MR. ARENS: What was the occasion for the use of the name Judy Tuvim?

Was that the name under which you were born?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Yes.

MR. ARENS: You subsequently adopted the name Judy Holliday as a stage or theatrical name? (1:2)

One aim of this line of questioning is obviously to fix Holliday in the narrative of compulsory heterosexuality, pinning her down as “Mrs. David Oppenheim,” and to some extent pinning her political transgressions on Mr. David Oppenheim, who, the sexist reasoning seems to go, might have prevented them had he provided the proper husbandly supervision; whether aware or not of Holliday’s lesbian past—the interrogation will in fact extend to the politics of her former female lover—the subcommittee never forgets that the personal is the political.²⁹ Nor does it forget that the personal includes the racial as well as the sexual.

Interpellating the witness as “Mrs. David Oppenheim,” even better as a Mrs. David Oppenheim “born under” the name “Judy Tuvim,” has the by no means secondary advantage of bringing out the Jew behind the blonde. As another Holliday biographer observes, “translated liberally, [Tuvim] is Hebrew for ‘holiday.’ Arens asks as though Holliday were not a stage name but an alias. He seems especially eager to establish that she is Jewish.”³⁰ His ear keenly tuned to the “Jew” in “Judy,” the interrogator is shrewd enough, at any rate, to pounce on the Hebrew surname, which “Holliday” liberally translates. Neither as wretched as Jud nor as heroic as Judith, Judy owes both her resilience and her vulnerability to the space of unholy holiday (“Are you a member of a church?” Senator Watkins disingenuously asks her [13:1]) that she almost synonymously represents: the comicosmopolis of New York City, typified, in the conservative imaginary, not by the observance of the Jewish holy days, which might at least betoken a mitigating piety in the proto-Liebermanian vein, but, far worse, by the perpetration of the indecent, and indecently overlapping, carnivals of urban Jewish left-wing politics and urban Jewish show business.

Hence, for instance, the suspicion directed not only at Judy Holliday’s name but also at her place—the place of her birth and residence, the place that, she makes no effort to deny, she much prefers to Hollywood—as though the scene of her theatrical and political activities were an exotic and sinister foreign country:

MR. ARENS: In what area or what section or what segment of the American Labor Party did you register? Where were you at the time?

MISS HOLLIDAY: 1948 I was already married, but I don’t know whether I was living at my mother’s or down in the village then.

MR. ARENS: What do you mean by the “village”?

MR. RIFKIND [Holliday’s lawyer]: Greenwich Village.

MISS HOLLIDAY: It could have been either on Seventy-fifth Street or it could have been—

MR. ARENS: Manhattan or Brooklyn?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Everything is in Manhattan. (7:4)

Clearly, the witness is not the only one playing dumb. Even Senator Watkins of Utah confesses at one point, “I used to live in New York City for about five years,” taking care to add, “but I never had occasion

to go down to the piers" (3:3). Staff director Arens, bad cop to Senator Watkins's good cop, knows very well what Holliday means by the "village," but he also knows that his own American credentials are reinforced by his pretending not to. Like the American tourist who insists on speaking English in Paris, the interrogator understands the power that comes from refusing to converse in the language of the other.³¹ Needless to say, conversation is exactly what must not happen here—which is why, when Holliday attempts to ask a question of her own, the bad cop hastens to remind her, "I do not want to be in a position of testifying, I want to be in the position of interrogating" (3:2). But if the hierarchy of juridical roles remains rigidly nonnegotiable, if Holliday fails to engage the state in conversation, she succeeds nonetheless in getting the state to say "I want": she makes it speak its desire. Having done so, moreover, she proceeds to accentuate, since she cannot diminish, the difference between her own local dialect and the language of intimidation that is the would-be global discourse of the Law:³²

SENATOR WATKINS: A person would be expected to know the organizations to which he contributes money?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Yes.

SENATOR WATKINS: You watch it now; do you not?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Ho, do I watch it now. (6:1)

Three years before, Holliday had played the comically vulgar defendant in the film *Adam's Rib*. Here, on trial again, she revives the trick of talking back to the Law in the vernacular: her bitter iteration "Ho, do I watch it now" not only mocks the state that imposes such self-policing but also gives the official language of Americanism an ethnic and demotic inflection that it cannot wish to have. Holliday returns the senator's message to him in a tone that—to echo Jack Warner—"doesn't sound American."

Hardly a "ho ho ho," Holliday's "ho" has nothing jolly about it. Insofar as it "humorously" affects a certain friendly informality, it enacts friendliness as hostility, its breach of decorum constituting a small but emblematic piece of civil impudence. In contrast with the fairy-tale version of disobedience at the end of *The Front*—Howard Prince's carnivalesque defiance of HUAC—the comic resistance Holliday offers in her real testimony may seem almost wan in its subtlety. Yet this very subtlety—the

deftness, for instance, with which Holliday blurs the boundary between cooperation and defiance—has its own tendency to offend. Along with brashness, cleverness, and similarly treacherous elements of the show-biz vulgate of sophistication, it evokes the cultural capital that the arbiters of Americanism helped to isolate in, precisely, the cultural capital. Consider the following exchange:

SENATOR WATKINS: You hired people to investigate you?

MISS HOLLIDAY: I certainly did; because I had gotten into a lot of trouble.

MR. ARENS: What do you mean by you had gotten into a lot of trouble?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Yes.

MR. ARENS: Has anybody tried to prosecute you?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Yes.

MR. ARENS: Who?

MISS HOLLIDAY: Prosecute? No; I thought you meant persecute. (7:3)

Unlikely to get Holliday *out* of trouble, this kind of verbal wit minimizes it only by masquerading as feminine naïveté. But even this ruse suggests the street-smart ways of the notoriously unfriendly town that Judy Holliday calls home. Unable to make the witness name names, the subcommittee faces the additional problem of not knowing whether it is being insulted or apologized to or both. But how often does the state find itself immobilized by undecidability? In eventually releasing the transcript of Holliday's testimony, the subcommittee may have been playing out an agreed-upon scenario; yet in subjecting her to publicity that, as kindly Senator Watkins prompted her to say at the end of that testimony, she regarded as a fate worse than death, the state—not, after all, without its own desire—managed to procure a little supplementary fun for itself. As one of the more enduring blacklist musicals would be savvy enough to acknowledge, the Washington senators could hardly fail to avenge themselves on those damn Yankees. As the same blacklist musical would be savvy enough to deny, the senators are no underdogs.

Four years after her appearance in Washington, Judy Holliday would star in a blacklist musical of her own. Directed by Jerome Robbins, with music by Jule Styne, and with a book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, Holliday's former partners in the cabaret act known as the Revuers—whose "Communist-front records" (5:1) Richard Arens

tried to make her confirm—*Bells Are Ringing* takes Holliday back, as she puts it in one of the show's songs, "where I can be me": not to the *Bonjour Tristesse Brassière Company*, but to the place that, like Holliday's own name, itself figures as a *promesse de bonheur*. Like *On the Town* and *Wonderful Town*, the previous "New York musicals" of Comden and Green, *Bells Are Ringing* presents the city as a space of dreams come true. To call it a Cinderella story, in other words, is to touch on only one of its fairy-tale aspects. Instead of the dangerous, subversive hellhole constructed by right-wing fantasy, the New York of *Bells Are Ringing* is a helluva town, where, when the people ride in a hole in the ground, they end up breaking into song and dance. Comden and Green write in their preface to the published text of the show: "Somewhere in this seemingly cold and indifferent town there lurk unexpected pockets of warmth and love."³³ The liberal showbiz sentimentality—New York really is just a village, as friendly as the rest of the country—covers a more radical image of the seemingly cold and indifferent metropolis as itself perhaps the *only* pocket of warmth and love in an authentically cold and indifferent Cold War America. Wonderful town, indeed.

Not that the cold cannot be felt in the show's cozy rhizomatic Never-Never-Land (to invoke another fifties Comden and Green lyric). Indeed, so deeply marked is *Bells Are Ringing* by Judy Holliday's political persecution that the entire show might be described as an attempt to rework and thus work through that trauma. A Cinderella story, to be sure—where the bells that ring are finally, of course, wedding bells—but a Cinderella story for the age of McCarthyism: this is a fairy tale whose heroine is tormented not by two wicked stepsisters, but by two cops. Just as Holliday's interrogation four years earlier was conducted by a good senator cop and a bad staff director cop, so she, or rather, her character, Ella (a Cinder-less Cinderella), is pursued here by a hard-nosed Inspector Barnes and a more lenient Officer Francis. Just as Holliday "got into trouble" for letting political subversives take advantage of her humanitarianism, so it is Ella's desire to help people that allows her to become the instrument of an unsavory conspiracy. Just as the telephone played a crucial role in Holliday's political drama—it was a principal means both by which "Communist-front" organizations solicited her support and by which the FBI kept tabs on her (making an anonymous call to her answering service, for example, to find out if she was in California³⁴)—so,

as the show's title suggests, the aptly named Mr. Bell's invention is of decisive importance in *Bells Are Ringing*, where Holliday plays an operator for an answering service, and where that answering service, itself suspected of being a front for the drug trade, for a group of counterfeiters, for a prostitution ring, in short, for everything but the Communist Party, actually provides a cover, without Ella's knowledge, for a group of bookies working for the mob. But while Holliday was made to suffer for her misguided humanitarianism, Ella is vindicated for hers. Not only is she vindicated, but she succeeds in winning over her nemesis, Inspector Barnes, who, after rescuing her from the mob's henchmen, ends up apologizing to *her*. "Is it a crime for a man to have made a human mistake? I misjudged you" (Comden and Green, *Bells Are Ringing*, 279), he confesses, before assuming the role of her "butler" (283) and joining the rest of the cast in a finale celebrating her as "that wonder girl" (285).

Is it a crime? While staff director Arens contemptuously refused to speak Holliday's language ("What do you mean by the 'village?',"), Inspector Barnes humbly echoes Ella's. For she has tried earlier in the show to "con' her way out of his clutches" (218), as the stage directions indicate, by performing a number entitled, precisely, "Is It a Crime?" That the hitherto unmovable cop finally affirms her goodness and admits his mistake in persecuting her is already gratifying enough; that he does by adopting her, and Judy Holliday's, and Broadway's, New York–Jewish idiom ("Is it a crime?," "so sue me") makes clear as a bell the intensity of the wish-fulfillment underwriting this show.

But what if one of the wishes fulfilled is the wish never to have been political in the first place? What does it mean that gambling, counterfeiting, drug-dealing, and prostitution all have to substitute for the unspeakable crime of leftist politics? Does *Bells Are Ringing* simply repress, rather than work through, Holliday's political trauma? If the show's recipe for mastering political trauma amounted to getting rid of the political, if Holliday's fairy-tale victory over her oppressors required the exchange of her political commitments for a vacuously generalized philanthropy, and if the method of humanizing the state consisted not only in forgetting its crimes against her and other citizens but also in counting on its protection, then *Bells Are Ringing* would be a rather *triste* fairy tale after all, a self-congratulatory rehearsal of the more self-abasing moments in Holliday's testimony, like her statement: "I don't say yes to anything

now except cancer, polio, cerebral palsy, and things like that" (8:1). Holliday's symbolic vindication might indeed seem predicated on her having said no to everything but a handful of platitudes:

Is it a crime to start each day
 With a laugh and a smile and a song?
 And is it a crime to end each day
 With a laugh and a smile and a song?
 Is it wrong?
 . . .
 If it's a crime to help old ladies cross the street,
 Then put me in jail!
 Without bail!
 Bread and water from an old tin pail
 If that—if that's a crime! (218–19)

Comden and Green's notation that the song itself is a con job signals that its empty-headedness may be no less deceptive than Judy Holliday's dumb blonde act. Like many of the songs in *Bells Are Ringing*, indeed like many Comden and Green songs in general, "Is It a Crime?" is in fact a kind of urbane neovaudeville number, an old-fashioned song-and-dance routine reinvented for a modern, downtown crowd: for a certain "village vanguard," to drop the name of the nightclub where the Revuers got their start, and which almost every number in *Bells Are Ringing* nostalgically re-creates. A song like "Is It a Crime?," that is, itself constitutes not just a "pocket of warmth and love," but a pocket of satire and bohemism, a cabaret in miniature, a cultural cell (or cellar) whose language must remain partly opaque to, say, an Inspector Barnes, who can thus be counted on to take it at face value—as he does here, finding himself "completely dissolved in tears" (220), though not completely ready yet to stop his investigation.³⁵ Playing dumb, the song fends off unfriendly outsiders, or prepares to enfold them in its space of friendly insiders, the "village" people united in their appreciation of the smartness of its subterfuge and the lightness with which it wears its literacy, as when Ella imagines how she might have saved Romeo and Juliet:

Hello. Veronaphone. Oh, yes Mr. Romeo. Juliet Capulet called. The message is: "To avoid marriage with the other fellow am playing dead. Friar

Lawrence gave me great big sleeping pill. When I wake up, we'll head for border." Oh, don't thank me. It's all in the day's work—
(She hangs up the imaginary phone and turns to BARNES fiercely.)

See what I could have done?
 Maybe I'm right!
 Maybe I'm wrong!
 But if I'd got that message through on time,
 I'm telling you—

THOSE TWO KIDS WOULD BE ALIVE TODAY! (219–20)

Faithful to its own fairy-tale logic, *Bells Are Ringing*, one year before *West Side Story*, recasts *Romeo and Juliet* as a comedy. (In the words of Senator Watkins, "That did ring a bell with you, did it not?" [8:3].) As we have seen, however, *West Side Story* itself is most radical when it is most comic, and comic in a vaudevillian mode of its own. As we have also seen, most commentary on the show, including commentary by its authors, tends to regard this mode as an aesthetic defect, an embarrassing lapse into the prehistory that, like a second-generation American or a gawky teenager, *West Side Story* so much wants to have put behind itself. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to read in Arthur Laurents's memoir that he was relieved when Betty Comden and Adolph Green declined Leonard Bernstein's invitation to help him write *West Side Story*'s lyrics: "Fond as I was of both of them, I thought their strength was light satire, not exactly suitable for a musical tragedy" (Laurents, *Original Story By*, 346). Nor is it surprising that Laurents praises *West Side Story* at the expense of *Bells Are Ringing*—Jerome Robbins's previous show—dismissing the latter as nothing more than a "commercial success" (*ibid.*, 351).

But Comden and Green's light satire may not be as lightweight as it seems, just as the "merely" commercial may turn out to have unexpected underground appeal. With a criminally frivolous showbiz credo of a laugh and a smile and a song, the neovaudeville of Comden and Green proleptically explicates the radical anachronisms of *West Side Story*, developing more systematically the strategy of what might be termed a regressive avant-garde. Comden and Green's stage directions frequently remark on the "corniness" of the numbers or the action being described, but this self-conscious "corniness" advances a technique of

pastiche and allusion ideally intended for a subcultural or minority audience, a *comicosmopolitan* audience defined by the promiscuity of its taste: by its preference for an eclectic mixture of highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow registers over the corporate homogeneity coming to distinguish postwar mass culture. Not only does Comden and Green's ironically affectionate citation of "corny" musical-comedy styles run counter to the oppressively cool youth culture everywhere in the ascendant in postwar America: it also opens up pockets of urbane intimacy, in which satire's edge cohabits with a whole ethos of the light, opposed to the prevailing national heaviness, darkness, and cold. Not for nothing, perhaps, did the senate subcommittee's suspicion fall on the Revuers, to whom Richard Arens insisted on referring as "that unit" (2:1). As elaborated in *Bells Are Ringing*, their cabaret sensibility conjures up a world sufficiently un-American that, while indeed penetrated by the police, it remakes them on its own terms: a warm and bright world of ingenuous sophistication that might be called Showbiz Land, and that resembles nothing so much as an idealized New York City.³⁶

The only-in-New-York dreamscape of *Bells Are Ringing* is thus a big-city utopia of little performance spaces, of nightclubs and apartments and cafes; even the shabby subterranean office in which Ella works turns into a virtual *boîte de nuit*. Utopian and anachronistic at once, seeking to evade normative American space and time, *Bells Are Ringing* would exempt itself from stoolpigeon fun as much as from stoolpigeon seriousness. And yet, if it evades the complicity that befalls a dismally *au courant* fifties musical like *Silk Stockings*, its utopia does not lack topicality; Comden and Green may do light satire, but it is satire all the same. Take, for example, the scene in which Holliday's character tries to help an unemployed actor named Blake Barton—one of America's innumerable Marlon Brando wannabes—by persuading him to "turn Walter Pidgeon":

ELLA: So you're Barton, huh? Havin' any luck?

BARTON (*He takes from his pocket a white woolen mitten and pulls it on while speaking*): Naah—thought I had a chance with that new show, *The Midas Touch*. I coulda been a contender—but—I—I—dunno—

GUYS (*Doing the same with mittens*): Uhhh—I dunno—

ELLA: D'j' ever try wearing a suit?

(All freeze, shocked)

BARTON: What? I can't do that! What d'ya take me for? A traitor? We gotta name for actors dat wear suits. I ain't turnin' Walter Pidgeon for nobody.

ELLA: Sure! Be a punk imitation for the rest of your life! I'm tellin' ya! If you want da job, you gotta cut da blue jeans action! Look around ya! You're a glut on the market. You're *nothin'*! (Comden and Green, *Bells are Ringing*, 238)

Turning Walter Pidgeon is in effect the opposite of turning stoolpigeon, since the star all these punks are imitating—the business with the mitten mimics the famous glove scene from *On the Waterfront*—is the one whose adolescent surliness has glamorized the adolescent malleability of that new political creature, the citizen as informer, the most illustrious of whom, the director of *On the Waterfront*, is mentioned later in *Bells Are Ringing*, when Ella learns at a party of show-business insiders not how to name that name but how to drop it. “*Wearing flats and leather jacket and motorcycle cap*” (238), affecting the verbal mannerisms and body language of the American wild one’s Method, Ella herself is doing Brando, of course, as she urges Barton to undo Brando. Like the political subversives with whom she sympathized, like the agent of a foreign power, she infiltrates stoolpigeon America to turn it against itself. Even her Brando drag implies, in advance of “Gee, Officer Krupke,” the geriatric delinquency of staging cinematic cool as vaudeville travesty: after she arrives on the scene, Barton and his fellow drugstore Brandos might as well start spraying one another with seltzer. But if Ella’s travesty makes Brando’s motorcycle cap look old hat, what previously seemed old hat—to borrow Robert Hullot-Kentor’s characterization of Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*—begins to glitter with the promise of “what would be new if it were not blocked.” As Hullot-Kentor notes, “what is perceived as old hat masks the disappointment of what can no longer be hoped for,” which in turn figures “what is American that is not American, none of which could be put on a list of national character traits.”³⁷ Ella’s satiric intervention against the mechanical reproduction of the hipster-sycophant indeed inspires Barton to pursue squareness to its archaic or radical limit. Recognizing that she is right about why he is not “havin’ any luck,” he grasps that reversing the process of turning stoolpigeon means regress-

ing so egregiously, putting on a conservatism so outré, that everything old becomes new again:

All right, come on fellas! On to Brooks Brothers! (*They turn from him as from a leper*) Okay! I'm not afraid of you. I'm going all the way! (*In a strong British accent*) Tennis, anyone?

(*He does royal ballet leap and flies out the door.*) (238)

With this flight of the Pidgeon, this leap of the leper, it seems as though Jerome Robbins were sending up—or is it fleeing?—the seriously American virility that he would “so truculently put forward” one year later, in *West Side Story*. Unsuitable for that musical tragedy, this comic gayness feels right at home in the lightly satirical world of *Bells Are Ringing*, whose director and choreographer might well dream of flying out the door after the suddenly “British” Blake Barton, following him, like the children following Peter Pan, in turning back the clock to the time before turning stoolpigeon.

That *Bells Are Ringing* permits such fantasies—in which the disappointment of what can no longer be hoped for ups and disappears—betokens musical comedy's commitment to happiness. As *Bells Are Ringing* knows, however, happiness comes “just in time”: it is as much an accident of history as a necessity of genre. Happiness, linked etymologically and conceptually with happenstance, is inseparable from luck: the diegetic kind of luck that Blake Barton ultimately does have, thanks to information Ella just happens to pick up while taking messages from a Broadway producer; or the extradiegetic kind of luck that made it possible for *Bells Are Ringing* to sketch a comic alternative to stoolpigeon fun. How, one might wonder, did Comden and Green escape the fate of Abe Burrows, so that they could flourish both on Broadway and in Hollywood all through the fifties without having to name names? Betty Comden writes in her memoir: “Before and during World War II, having worked for Spanish War Relief and Russian War Relief as well as British War Relief, I wound up in a group lumped as ‘prematurely antifascist’ but by sheer luck never had my life blighted by the House Un-American Activities Committee.”³⁸ Green seems to have enjoyed the same luck. Like Abe Burrows, Comden and Green were famous for performing at parties. Unlike Burrows, they never had to decide whether to renounce this practice, whether to replace the party principle with the party line.

Not only did they continue to perform at parties: when they performed a two-person Broadway show, in 1958 (and again in 1977), they titled it *A Party with Betty Comden and Adolph Green*. Indeed, the party, especially the party with entertainers, became the signature scene of the Comden and Green musical, nowhere more clearly than in *Bells Are Ringing*.

And yet, this is also the show whose most famous song is called “The Party’s Over.” If the show conspicuously goes on to prove this melancholy conclusion hasty and mistaken, it also understands, perhaps in part because Judy Holliday was not quite as lucky as Comden and Green, how easily the party *could* have ended—say, with a subpoena—and in fact could *still* end, as late as 1956.³⁹ To keep the party going, this blacklist musical takes a flying leap back into the past before the blacklist. But the willfully escapist levity with which it executes the leap comes weighted with some baggage of its own: the Broadway cleverness (“turning Walter Pidgeon”) that risks getting one into trouble not only with the patriotic right but also, as Arthur Laurents’s disparaging comments suggest, with the creative and intellectual left.

Let us recall, from the beginning of this book, the advice Lillian Hellman’s lawyer gave her as she was about to testify before HUAC: “*don’t make jokes. . . . Almost everybody, when they feel insulted by the Committee, makes a joke or acts smart-aleck. It’s a kind of embarrassment. Don’t do it.*”⁴⁰ We have seen by now how impolitic jokes and smart-aleck behavior are in the context of a HUAC hearing—even when the congressional audience, like Abe Burrows’s, feeds the performer lines about Russian humorlessness. As Senator Watkins pointed out to Judy Holliday with unwitting wit, “We have several Moscows in the United States” (4:2). The show trials staged by HUAC and its fellow impresarios of terror had as little room for comedy as does any other sadism, state-sponsored or not. But if it comes as no surprise that xenophobic reactionaries can’t take a joke, the anticomic disposition is almost as deeply embedded among various lefts—including many that style themselves as cosmopolitan—for which the importance of being earnest takes precedence over the pursuit of happiness, with the result that jokes constitute *prima facie* evidence of political irresponsibility, and that cleverness can never be anything more than *mere* cleverness. Though hardly unresponsive to its political context, *Bells Are Ringing* makes a virtue of irresponsibility. Four years after Judy Holliday confessed and lamented

her own irresponsibility before the senate subcommittee, she starred in a blacklist musical about an *over*responsible operator for an answering service, a woman who cares too much about the strangers on the phone. But any ethical respectability that might accrue from promoting Holliday as the icon of a liberal counter-Momism—one of the show's running jokes is that her Prince Charming calls her "Mom"—flies out the door with Blake Barton. For, the show is light not only of foot but also of heart. "What is lighthearted in art," Adorno observes, "presupposes something like urban freedom."⁴¹ Luck, that is, has a geographical dimension as well as a temporal one. Leaping back from fifties time, *Bells Are Ringing* also leaps away from American space, into that holiday world that, far more resoundingly than wedding bells, signifies art's promise of happiness, Broadway musical-style: that impossible urban paradise where the freedom to make jokes and act smart-aleck, easy to condemn as bourgeois frivolity or smirking self-indulgence, implies a life free of fear—the very thought of which, after Auschwitz, and under *НУАС*, may be too embarrassing to tolerate.

For such an image of happiness evokes all too poignantly the disappointment of what can no longer be hoped for. "Merely" commercial as it is "merely" clever, *Bells Are Ringing* tries in vain not to hear the bell toll. No matter how it pretends, it knows that the party's over—that, with the disciplining of comicosmopolitanism, the time has come to say *bonjour, tristesse*. The show mixes its comedy with a certain pathos, a pathos often ascribed to the vulnerability shading Holliday's brassiness. As we have seen, this vulnerability has a political prehistory. Though Holliday refused to name names before a senate subcommittee, she underwent a certain "cooperative" mortification nonetheless. In *Bells Are Ringing*, Holliday's character hands over to the police a miscreant with an almost too-nameable name. J. Sandor Prantz, the ringleader of the bookies using the answering service as a front, a "*suavely Middle-European*" (205) con man, is not only the show's most salient representative of the non-American but also a bundle of Jewish musical comedy signifiers: the comedian as the letter J, the prancing Jew, the [S]and/or of treacherous middle-European sexual, racial, and political indeterminacy. If J. Sandor Prantz embodies a certain guilt of lightness, this is because he takes the fall for the guilty lightness of the show itself: a blacklist musical comedy that purchases its buoyancy by throwing inconvenient fellow

travelers overboard, by rewarding the law for “listening in” (213) on the party line. Blake Barton gets to fly out the door; Sandor, who would “fly . . . to” “Salzburg, lovely Salzburg” (269), lands in jail. What lands him there, or at least what seals the case against him, is in no small part the deliriously vaudevillian song in which he expresses that wish, a wish to go back both in time and in space to a city somewhere between Paris and Moscow and a little bit of both, “where”—speaking of impossible urban paradises, far from Oklahoma—“the schnitzel is high as an elephant’s eye” (269).

Yet for all that the show seems willing to give him away, it keeps something of him in reserve. Something of suavely retrogressive J. Sandor Prantz lives, for instance, in the show’s final number, “I’m Going Back,” the song-and-dance routine in which Judy Holliday, camping it up in French, singing the blues, channeling Al Jolson, goes back, *through* the Bonjour Tristesse Brassière Company, to the brassier company of musical-comedy origins. Or consider Ella’s alias, the foreign-sounding “Melisande,” where part of “Sandor” finds itself reinscribed, reminding us that the show’s heroine is a bit of a con artist herself, as much a Sandorella as a Cinderella. Or, for that matter, take the name “J. Holliday,” which now reads like a translation not just of “Judy Tuvim,” but also of “J’s and/or prance.”⁴² Like pieces of Jud Fry, pieces of Sandor, arrestable but incorrigible, survive at the very heart of the show, which betrays him in one sense, that of delivering him disloyally, only to betray him in another, that of revealing him within itself. Saying *bonjour* to *tristesse* but perversely clinging to *bonheur*, pushing the illusion that the party continues, *Bells Are Ringing* does something more: Sandor-like, it insists on modeling a levity that would rise above embarrassment, not to say terror. It would perform urban freedom *shamelessly*—that is, with a New York–Jewish accent, much like Judy Holliday’s.

As we leave *Bells Are Ringing*, consider this comic shamelessness in “Drop That Name,” a 1950s show business Who’s Who set to music, where the names dropped include, for instance, those of friendly witnesses like Elia Kazan and José Ferrer. To appropriate a grimly self-reflexive joke from *Silk Stockings*, the number might thus be called a “Who’s Still Who.”⁴³ As if the whole sycophantic Cold War *Zeitgeist*, and Holliday’s particular encounter with it, did not make names and naming heavy enough, the whiff of danger is intensified by the setting: an elegant

showbiz party, where Holliday's Cinderella, not ready for the ball, strikes what the stage directions call "*the discordant note*" (264). While the other guests rattle off a rhyming list of marquee names, punctuated by "Mary and Ethel," a clueless Ella can only keep asking "Mary and Ethel who?" (answers: "Mary Martin and Ethel Merman," "Mary Pickford and Ethel Barrymore"), and working dopey variations on the one celebrity name she knows, Rin-Tin-Tin. But if the song's assault of names recalls the trauma of Holliday's interrogation four years before, and if Ella is at first as intimidated by this brutal name game as Holliday was at her hearing, Ella's fear gives way to a kind of vulgar exhilaration:

GIRL: My Christian Dior I wore then tore,

Got fitted for a new Balenciaga.

Then to Jacques Fath for just one hat—

Got something that will drive you ga-ga—

SECOND GIRL: Valentina's where I've been; I just adore Val—

THIRD GIRL: Things with *good* lines—

ELLA: Like things from Klein's!

(*There is a shocked silence, then Ella continues grandly.*)

I do all my shopping there with Mary and Ethel.

THIRD GIRL: Mary and Ethel who?

ELLA (*very flatly*): Mary Schwartz and Ethel Hotchkiss. (265)

Bells Are Ringing opened in the same year as *My Fair Lady*, whose ethnic subtext it brings out as sharply as it anticipates the vaudeville of *West Side Story*.⁴⁴ On Broadway, Cinderella's faux pas are never just about class: they are also about the vulgarity that, on Broadway, especially in the fifties, meant Jewishness—the Jewishness that in some sense *was* Broadway. In *My Fair Lady*, vulgarity is of course transformed into gentility. The magic of *Bells Are Ringing* works differently: here, in keeping with musical comedy's New York–Jewish lineage, vulgarity recovers its nerve in a sister act with brashness and cleverness, and the smart aleck finds her own kind of smartness amid the smart set. This joking Cinderella's success in mastering her fear doubtless owes much to the fact that her discordant note fits right in at the lightly satiric party that is Comden and Green's New York, where "*shocked silence*" never stops the show, and where the unfriendly might prove to be the best friends of all. If happiness like this can happen only in musical-comedy New York, where

even Mary is a Schwartz, if the show constructs for its wonder girl the outlandish wonderland of an un-American American city, then *Bells Are Ringing* gives us an antinational holiday all the more worth celebrating.

In 1962 the Broadway-bound musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* was in trouble out of town, and the producer wanted to bring in Jerome Robbins to save the show. But the star, Zero Mostel, and one of the major supporting players, Jack Gilford, had both been blacklisted, and, as we saw in chapter 1, Madeline Gilford (of the “ridiculous” question) had in fact been named by Robbins at his HUAC hearing. Mostel’s response when the producer nervously broached the question of hiring Robbins was the now-legendary line: “We of the left do not blacklist.”⁴⁵ Not quite as legendary, but just as memorable, are the words with which Mostel reportedly greeted Robbins, as the latter was introducing himself to the cast: “Hiya, Looselips.”⁴⁶ The show would of course be saved, and Robbins and Mostel would go on to even greater glory two years later, with *Fiddler on the Roof*, to which I will soon turn. But for now, let Mostel’s two lines epitomize the two principal strands of the blacklist musical: that of “Jewish moral and political seriousness,” more Sontag than Sondheim (recall Laurents on the Jewish “passion against prejudice” informing *West Side Story*); and, speaking of “Looselips,” that of “Jewish lip” (the Jew’s lip enjoying a prominence and an importance that put it just below the Jew’s famous nose).⁴⁷ Like his cinematic avatar, Hecky Brown in *The Front*, Mostel, behind the scenes of *Forum*, sticks out his Jewish lip—sign of the joker and smart aleck—with a typically in-your-face comic shamelessness that puts him at a certain risk, despite the (tenuous) protections of time (by 1962, the blacklist is supposedly breaking up) and place (the context is the supposedly safe Broadway theater).⁴⁸ Hailing Robbins as “Looselips,” Mostel loosens his own lips with enough abandon to remind Robbins—and anyone else present—of the sycophantic tightness implicit in the director-choreographer’s sycophantic volubility. Anything *but* loose, the patriotic Jerome Robbins of 1953, modeling the disciplined subject at his most tautly alert, snapped into action the minute the law snapped its fingers. In the face of this disciplined citizen, Mostel’s loosened lips perform what Horkheimer and Adorno have taught us to call undisciplined mimicry. When Mostel puts

his lips in the face of the powerful and notoriously terrifying Robbins—when their lips speak together—the noble magnanimity of “We of the left” finds itself desublimated into a vulgar, clownish, carnivalesque transgression of the gentlemanly decorum (the stiff upper lip?) that would keep a face-saving distance, mask indignation, and let bygones be bygones.

The Irigarayan allusion in the previous sentence evokes, perhaps, the homoeroticism of mimesis. But if Mostel’s mimicry of Robbins has something homoerotic about it, it is hard to escape the suspicion that his particular way of getting in Robbins’s face bespeaks a certain homophobia as well. To call Robbins “Looselips” is to call him on his sycophancy, of course; as we have seen, however—for instance, in Ernest Jones’s analysis of “quislingism”—hostility toward the sycophant can nourish itself, more or less openly, on hostility toward the homosexual. Issuing from Mostel’s mouth, “Looselips,” in other words, may sound a little like, say, “Cocksucker”—a name that this man of the left was not too righteous to hurl at Stephen Sondheim during the rehearsals for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.⁴⁹ Nor, apparently, did Mostel moderate his homophobia as his post-blacklist career continued to flourish, and as he and Robbins worked together again on *Fiddler on the Roof*. Remembering the bitter antagonism between the show’s star and its director-choreographer, one of Mostel’s fellow cast members says: “He called him ‘the Jewish fag.’”⁵⁰ But the grammatical ambiguity here may be telling. Clearly, “he” refers to the heterosexual Mostel, and “him” to the homosexual Robbins. What makes the picture a little less clear, though, is that, instead of simply calling Robbins a “fag,” Mostel calls him a “*Jewish fag*”: with “fag,” Mostel seems to put Robbins at a distance; with “Jewish,” he seems to bring him closer to himself. Mostel’s use of “Jewish” here may betray as much self-hatred as Robbins’s shouting “faggot!” at *West Side Story*’s leading man: it is as though, the sexual stigma seeming insufficiently disfiguring, Mostel required the added wound of the racial or ethnic one as well. But if Mostel’s slur against Robbins reveals his self-hatred, this would not be the first time that a self-hating projection betrayed an otherwise unavowable *identification*, bringing closer what it pushes away. And that identification need not stop at the ethnicity that Robbins and Mostel share: in calling Robbins

a “Jewish fag,” Mostel may be signaling his own history of comicosmopolitanism, in which lippy Jewish back-talk becomes indistinguishable from the “fag”’s sexual perversion.

In another back story of the blacklist, at any rate, Mostel himself bears, comically, the very double stigma that he will uncover in Robbins. Like other luminaries of Broadway’s golden age, Mostel had figured in the provincial melodrama of the HUAC hearings. Here, taken from the transcript of his testimony before the committee in 1955, is the exchange that ensues after a question about Mostel’s appearance at an anti-HUAC meeting:

MR. MOSTEL: If I appeared there, what if I did an imitation of a butterfly at rest? There is no crime in making anybody laugh. I don’t care if you laugh at me.

MR. JACKSON: If your interpretation of a butterfly at rest brought any money into the coffers of the Communist Party, you contributed directly to the propaganda effort of the Communist Party.

MR. MOSTEL: Suppose I had the urge to do the butterfly at rest somewhere?

MR. DOYLE: Yes, but please, when you have the urge, don’t have such an urge to put the butterfly at rest by putting some money in the Communist Party coffers as a result of that urge to put the butterfly at rest. Put the bug to rest somewhere else next time. (Bentley, *Thirty Years*, 722)

Anticipating Judy Holliday’s rhetorical question (“Is it a crime?”), Mostel says there is no crime in making anybody laugh, but what really bugs the committee, enough to keep Mostel blacklisted (he has been unable to work in film or television), is indeed his comic imitation of a butterfly at rest. As we know from *Bells Are Ringing*, lightheartedness is not always as innocuous as it pretends to be. Indeed, what image better suggests levity’s heft than that of the Falstaffian Zero Mostel as a butterfly at rest? And what image better exemplifies the mimetic “urge” that Horkheimer and Adorno have linked with the Jew? As we have seen, they theorize anti-Semitism as a malignant fascination with the Jew’s mimetic talent for dissolving himself in identification not only with “the Other,” but also “with earth and slime.”⁵¹ Relating this talent to the Freudian death drive and to Roger Caillois’s examples of *le mimétisme* in the animal world, Horkheimer and Adorno liken it as well to the regressive ten-

dency represented by the kind of criminal rendered anachronistic by the state criminality of fascism: the “tendency to lose oneself in one’s surroundings instead of actively engaging with them, the inclination to let oneself go, to lapse back into nature.”⁵² Mostel’s imitation not just of a butterfly but of a butterfly *at rest* embodies the forgotten mimetic side of cosmopolitanism, where mobility meets repose. More than his putting money into the Communist Party coffers or his refusal to cooperate with the committee, it is the perverse mock-insouciance with which this big Jewish butterfly flaunts his peculiar mimetic urge that guarantees his continuing exclusion from films and television, as well as, more generally, his continuing relegation to the status of a pariah.

To be sure, the committee puts on a show of making the Jew a criminal because of his “subversive” political affiliations. Yet, however authentically the committee members may loathe Communism, even these lunk-headed American politicians are shrewd enough to use their highly ritualized political aversion as a front for a more diffuse and less presentable constellation of motives, such as envy, contempt, and, perhaps most of all, resentment: resentment, in particular, of one whose insolent insistence on performing shamelessness—whether or not he really is shameless—bespeaks an infuriating failure to be terrorized into the rectitude of good citizenship. Not, of course, that resentment precludes imitation of what is resented: indeed, as I have argued, imitation *inheres in* resentment. Chasing Mostel’s imitation of a butterfly at rest, the committee members end up enacting the “mimesis of mimesis” that Horkheimer and Adorno see as one of anti-Semitism’s characteristic elements. Note, for instance, how the butterfly chase generates an almost surreal silliness in the speech of Mostel’s interrogators, who—as though forgetting to be unamused, like Hennessy freezing out Hecky Brown—seem to be following Mostel’s flirtatious lead, and whose would-be straight-faced admonitions begin to resemble the loopy prose of Gertrude Stein as rewritten by, say, Comden and Green.⁵³

We encountered a version of this comicosmopolitan travesty in chapter 1, where we saw Lionel Stander turning HUAC’s chairman into his straight man—which is to say, into a comically indignant dowager. Perhaps the prototype of the unfriendly witness as campy comedian is the screenwriter Ring Lardner Jr., who, when asked by a previous HUAC chairman, “Are you now or have you ever been a member of the

Communist Party?," replied: "I could answer [the question], but if I did, I would hate myself in the morning" (Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, 187). Lardner was one of the non-Jewish unfriendly witnesses, but his impudent "answer" helps us to understand why Samuel Goldwyn accused him of "writing like a Jew": brash, bitchy, vulgar, this joker and smart aleck shows that you don't have to be Jewish to represent en-Jewment—or to get yourself blacklisted, not to mention imprisoned, like Lardner, one of the Hollywood Ten, as a result.⁵⁴ Lardner's friend and fellow blacklistee Zero Mostel proves no less brilliantly epicene as an uncooperative comic. Like Stander and Lardner, he refuses to "act like a witness in a reasonable and dignified manner," as one HUAC chairman articulated the committee's theatrical imperative. Refusing to play their role straight, moreover, all of these witnesses compromise the straightness of the spectacle around them, where straightness is at once seriousness and heterosexuality: seriousness *as* heterosexuality, heterosexuality *as* seriousness. The comedy of the unfriendly witnesses—the un-witnesses—introduces a disturbing levity into the proceedings, but what is especially disturbing about that levity, that lightness, is that its comic effect is also an erotic one. Comicizing the hearings, that is, these witnesses homoeroticize them as well. Or, rather, in view of HUAC's all-male cast, let us say that these witnesses demonstrate the normal, already-existing homoerotics of the congressional inquisition with unnerving stylistic inappropriateness, with a flamboyance that, resembling Hecky's in *The Front*, "throws the whole show off balance."

For the purpose of maximum pedagogical exemplarity, HUAC—imitating show business as much as investigating it—imposes an aesthetic regime derived from such genres as the courtroom melodrama and the espionage thriller. Against this regime, the unfriendly witnesses—gauche in more than one sense of the term—insist on performing, and on making their interrogators perform, in the wrong genres: in Stander's case, the Marx brothers movie; in Lardner's, the sex farce; and in Mostel's, the light-hearted, light-footed genre of which he would emerge as one of the giants. Chasing after Mostel's butterfly, the congressional heavies sound as dizzily self-parodic as if they were performing on a Broadway musical-comedy stage. Unlike the more conventionally sexy Judy Holliday, Mostel seduces his persecutors into speaking his language despite themselves: "I suggest we put this hearing butterfly to rest" (Bent-

ley, 722), concludes Congressman Jackson. For this seduction, Mostel of course remained blacklisted: HUAC was not about to let radical butterflies forget that they were just bugs, especially not when those butterflies exercised a certain embarrassing comic charm over their would-be captors and exterminators.

In *Cosmopolitan Style*, Rebecca L. Walkowitz discusses Adorno's critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's claim, in 1947, that "it is a matter of knowing what one wants to write about, whether butterflies or the condition of the Jews."⁵⁵ "Butterflies," for Sartre, represent the decadence and frivolity of style, while "the Jews" stand for moral and political weightiness: the value of a properly *engagé* cosmopolitanism. Using Adorno's acid analysis of Sartrean "commitment" to break down this opposition, Walkowitz proposes that "refusing to think about butterflies may only hurt the Jews."⁵⁶ Mostel allows us to glimpse the danger of that refusal, for he undoes the opposition between butterflies and Jews in his very person. A Jewish butterfly himself, Mostel would be the emblem of a suppler cosmopolitanism than Sartre's either-or formula would allow. But, more than cosmopolitanism's mascot, he is also one of its most prodigiously versatile practitioners. From the nineteenth century until the institution of the blacklist (and the nearly simultaneous founding of the state of Israel), Jews, through their enforced rootlessness, were closely, almost proverbially linked, of course, with cosmopolitanism; the Jewish butterfly—Mostel's "Jewish fag" makes explicit the impulse to "hurt" such a beautiful creature—embodies that version of cosmopolitanism that we have been calling comicosmopolitanism. He embodies it, moreover, as at once seduction and insult: as the all-too-charming quality—the unbearable lightness—of those who remind others how much pleasure they give up in exchange for the virile privileges of citizenship, how much they lose in standing up straight. For if the cosmopolitan is a citizen of the world, the *comicosmopolitan* wears his worldly citizenship so lightly that it ceases to *be* anything as grounded and responsible as citizenship, even of a transnational kind, and so loosely that worldliness sheds its connotations of urbane conformism, becoming a kind of restful floating or floating rest. Blacklisting, I have been arguing, is the attempt both to punish and to conceal—lest anyone think to imitate—the offense of enjoying a permanent holiday from citizenship. The Jewish "homeland" put an end to Jewish cosmopolitanism; the blacklist

put an end to Jewish comicosmopolitanism. Mostel's HUAC testimony shows how a certain campaign to "hurt the Jews"—in this case, the committee's, although Sartre's and Adorno's Europe offers far more hideous examples—is provoked by the very butterfly lightness of which certain Jews, or certain "Jews" (like Lardner), make a spectacle, rendering lightness so "unashamedly, fantastically theatrical" (as Martin Ritt described Mostel's acting) that it assumes the *enormity* of a crime.

Jews have been persecuted, then, not despite their resemblance to butterflies but because of it. Far from diminishing the Jews' status as objects of ethicopolitical seriousness, in other words, the dismantling of the butterfly-Jew opposition enhances it, as it would enhance the Jews' traditional role as spokespersons of ethicopolitical seriousness. Comicosmopolitanism, however, goes beyond the ethicopolitical seriousness of which Jews conspicuously remain both subjects and objects. Mostel's "We of the left do not blacklist" belongs in the long line of Jewish ethicopolitical seriousness; his "Hiya, Looselips" interprets that seriousness. For the reasons that I have suggested, the virtuoso Jewish butterfly does a better job than the virtuous Jewish moralist of explaining why Jews get hurt. But he also explains why the virtuous Jewish moralist *wants to be* a virtuous Jewish moralist. Separating "Jewish" from "fag," aligning himself with the former and repudiating the latter—in short, disowning the butterfly—the serious Jew accords himself a moral rectitude, a reasonable, dignified, manly verticality, that can almost pass for the straightness of American citizenship. Even proudly gay Jews can succumb to this heterosexualizing, naturalizing temptation. Accounting for *West Side Story* by rejecting gay sensibility in favor of "Jewishness as the source of passion against prejudice"—as if "Jewish" and "gay" were as distinct from each other as, say, Jets and Sharks—Arthur Laurents, for one, constructs a straightened-out Jewishness that, notwithstanding its merits (including the merit of respectability), could never by itself have produced *West Side Story*.

Once the blacklist was "broken," Zero Mostel would work again in television and movies (*The Front* would be his last film); but it was on Broadway, fittingly, where he would achieve his greatest success. Starring in the blockbuster hit, *Fiddler on the Roof*, in 1964, the larger-than-life Mostel would seem not just to have survived the blacklist, but to have triumphed over it, so monumentally as to dwarf any mere fairy-tale

happy ending. As Jared Brown, Mostel's biographer, relates, "Perhaps the ultimate confirmation of Zero's superstar status came not from the awards and medals and honorary degrees he was given, but when he and [his wife] Kate, both of whom had been treated as political pariahs for so long, were invited to a reception at the White House in June 1966."⁵⁷ This caterpillar-like metamorphosis of pariah into superstar—into presidentially certified American superstar—no doubt marks a larger change in the weather of the Cold War. That the bug who was being put to rest by HUAC in 1955 could end up in the White House eleven years later indeed betokens a warming of the American political and cultural climate. But Mostel's triumphant return to our nation's capital, from which he had been symbolically cast out eleven years earlier, was made possible less by that (temporary) warming trend under two liberal Democratic presidents than by the chill that had been taking hold of our nation's cosmopolis—by the Americanization of New York City that had been under way since the early 1950s.⁵⁸ And the musical vehicle that made Mostel a superstar did a great deal in its own right to facilitate his comeback: it might even be said to have met Washington halfway. If, in the historical arc I am sketching here, *Fiddler in the Roof* figures as the last blacklist musical, this is not, as one might like to think, because its phenomenal, star-making success represents the end of the blacklist, or a victory over it. Nor is it the last blacklist musical for the humbler reason that it is the last major Broadway show in which important players in the HUAC melodrama were centrally involved. Rather, *Fiddler on the Roof* is the last blacklist musical because its iconic triumph, and that of its star, testify to the triumph of the blacklist itself, which had done such a good job of turning Jews into Americans—the process that *Fiddler* allegorically rehearses—that, like all successful disciplinary operations, it could simply disappear into the subjects it had colonized.⁵⁹

Although it was not the first Broadway musical with a Jewish theme—and although *Funny Girl* arrived in the same year, giving spectacular prominence to Barbra Streisand's deviant nose—*Fiddler on the Roof* is justly credited with being the first Broadway musical to make explicit the Jewishness of the genre itself. As Pauline Kael commented, "it is a show that reveals . . . what has made American Jewish show business."⁶⁰ And what has made American Jewish show business, or at any rate what has caused it, this show reveals, is Russia: both the Communist Russia

of *Silk Stockings* and the Tsarist Russia from which Jews like those in *Fiddler on the Roof* fled at the turn of the last century. At the beginning of the show, someone asks the rabbi, “Is there a proper blessing for the Tsar?” The rabbi replies: “A blessing for the Tsar? Of course. May God bless and keep the Tsar—far away from us!”⁶¹ By 1964 “the Tsar” has become an overdetermined signifier: it points not just to the Tsar but to such other Judeophobic tyrants—varying, of course, in the degrees, modes, and consequences of their Judeophobia—as Hitler, Stalin, Joseph McCarthy, the members of HUAC, and the contemporary leaders of the Soviet Union. American Jewish show business, as revealed by *Fiddler on the Roof*, is a response to all of these “Tsars” and their “Russias” and their “Cossacks.” Or, more precisely, the once-vital part of American show business to which the show belongs—the Broadway musical—is *two* responses to these “Tsars.” The first response is of course Jewish moral and political seriousness: we will keep the Tsar far away from us by expressing our passion against prejudice, thus proving ourselves not only good Jews but upstanding Americans as well. And despite our anti-authoritarianism, we will indeed ask God to bless the Tsar, because our very rectitude implies our respect for the *principle* of authority—not for nothing is the speaker a rabbi—if not for all of its representatives. The second response to the “Tsars” is the comicosmopolitan lip, the smart-aleck nerviness, that turns rabbis into geriatric delinquents capable of delivering one-liners like the one we are discussing. *Fiddler on the Roof* does not just “reveal” the disciplining of comicosmopolitanism: it *continues* the disciplining of comicosmopolitanism. As we saw in the previous chapter, though, this disciplinary project—so well internalized, by 1964, as to have become a *self-disciplinary* project—requires that something of comicosmopolitanism remain *undisciplined*, all the better to be “forced into line.” In its brassy, wisecracking tone, as well as in a certain mimetic, improvisational back-and-front-story to which we will soon turn, *Fiddler on the Roof* keeps in reserve, and sometimes sets loose, a butterfly that has yet to be put to rest.

Diegetically, *Fiddler on the Roof* does not lack a radical Jewish voice: that voice belongs to the revolutionary student, Perchik, who becomes the second son-in-law of Mostel’s character, Tevye the milkman, and who is given to saying things like: “In this world, it’s the rich who are criminals. Some day their wealth will be ours” (Stein et al., *Fiddler on*

the Roof, 29), and “the Bible clearly teaches us, you must never trust an employer” (55). For beliefs such as those Mostel himself might once have endorsed, though not for any of Mostel’s butterfly style—as though proving Abe Burrows right, the Bolshevik intellectual is utterly humorless—Perchik ends up imprisoned in Siberia, and there is no indication that he and his wife will be joining the rest of the family in America upon his release.⁶² *Fiddler* promotes the safer politics of a Kennedy-Johnson liberalism, whereby Tevye, the patriarch, learns to moderate his commitment to Tradition by “bending,” within reason, to accommodate the changes brought about by Modernity: in particular, by “modern children” (69), like Tevye’s three oldest daughters, who indeed are modern enough to accord themselves the hitherto-unheard-of right to choose their own husbands. The whole narrative of *Fiddler on the Roof* systematically undermines Tevye’s claim in the opening hymn to “Tradition” that the “master of the house” gets “to have the final word at home” (3). Yet Tevye can accept with wry resignation this feminist “subversion” of his mastery, because the “subversion,” like a strong-willed but more or less filiofious modern child, never really loses touch with certain fundamental orthodoxies: that of heterosexual desire, without which there can be no Broadway-musical narrative, and that of the responsible, self-determining citizen, without whom there can be no America.⁶³ For while *Fiddler on the Roof* tells the story of the Jews just before they left Russia to come to the United States—it ends with Tevye and his family preparing to emigrate—the patriarch and his daughters start turning into good Americans almost from the beginning of the show, in fact with its second musical number, when the daughters begin to appoint themselves their own matchmakers.

If the Americanization of the daughters begins early in the show, from the moment when they articulate their desire—their passion, against prejudice—the Americanization of the father must wait until the end for its confirmation. But the confirmation arrives resoundingly when, faced with the local constable, who has come to evict Tevye and his fellow Jews from their shtetl, Tevye says: “Get off my land! . . . This is still my home, my land. Get off my land!” (141). In the play’s ostensible time and place, Jews would not have been permitted to own land.⁶⁴ As I have suggested, however, the Jews of *Fiddler in the Roof* are already living in America even before they get on the boat: their Jewish passion against

prejudice proves distinctly *proprietary*, and thus entirely compatible with liberal American norms of freedom. While the daughters claim a right to control their own bodies, the father proudly defends his “own land,” the seductive butterfly having turned into a thoroughly respectable (not to mention impeccably religious) suburban family man. Why *not* invite him to the White House? After *West Side Story* says “Krup you!” (Laurents et al., *West Side Story*, 209) to Officer Krupke, and after *Bells Are Ringing* gets Inspector Barnes to talk New Yorkese, *Fiddler on the Roof* rewrites history by showing that, even before they set foot on American soil, Jews learned to speak to the American constables in a language the latter can understand. The definitive Jewish Broadway musical may still be performed in Manhattan, but its true home is the family-oriented bedroom community to which much of its audience has emigrated.

And yet, even amid the comfort of that pale settlement, the Pale of Settlement—the name for the region in which Jews under the Tsar were increasingly ghettoized—may not be far away: “Russia” may seem to lie hidden within the most snugly bourgeois Westchester shtetl. This threat, after all, would explain the show’s embrace of an “America” strong enough to protect it from the Tsar: its embrace of a *good Tsar* who would protect it from the bad one. If the very existence of an explicitly Jewish Broadway musical bears witness to, and celebrates, the degree to which, by the middle of the 1960s, Jews in America have “made it,” having made it—after Auschwitz, after the blacklist—by no means precludes the fear that it will be taken away. But the same terrifying possibility may also account for a certain perverse comicosmopolitan persistence in the show, and for the audience’s evident delight in that persistence. *In* the show, this persistence nonetheless struck the show’s authors as coming from outside of it, and as disrupting it. The agent of this perverse comicosmopolitanism, not surprisingly, was Zero Mostel, whose notorious way of “throwing the whole show off balance” began to manifest itself early in its run. Indeed, many of those involved in the show report that, after opening night, Mostel began taking increasingly outrageous and exasperating liberties with his performance and thus with the show as a whole—mugging, interpolating incongruous ad libs and other bits of shtick, playing tricks on the other actors, throwing in Yiddish phrases in a manner that, to the show’s authors, recalled the

pandering of a nightclub comedian.⁶⁵ Richard Altman, the show's assistant director, relates, for instance, how Mostel would embellish the "good-bye-and-good-riddance gesture" he was supposed to make at the back of the constable, who has just warned him that there will be a pogrom against his fellow Jews:

One night, before making this gesture, Zero reached up to his own neck and maniacally began to "strangle" himself—though obviously it was the constable he was pretending to strangle. He got a big laugh. He strangled and strangled, crossing his eyes for good measure. . . . On subsequent nights he embellished the routine even more. After strangling the constable, he threw the body to the ground and kicked it—also to roars of laughter. Eventually, the routine consisted of strangling the constable, throwing the body down and kicking it, picking up an imaginary shovel, digging an imaginary hole, picking up the body and tossing it into the hole and then covering the hole with dirt.⁶⁶

Of this and other shameless extravagances on Mostel's part, Altman observes: "The years of repression had left their mark; he was now irrepressible."⁶⁷ Not quite irrepressible, perhaps. Put *this* bug to rest, Mostel indeed seems to say, to all the constables who kept him blacklisted and out of work. But self-vindication and self-mortification are never far from each other in the age of the congealed subject, which is to say, in the Cold War, even during a brief interlude of relatively mild weather. If, in his pantomime of overkill, Mostel enacts his revenge against the blacklists, he is also "strangling" himself: he is dramatizing not only his "repression" by the blacklist but also his subjection to the discipline enforced by the very Broadway musical that is completing his recovery from it. What Mostel is miming, in other words, is precisely the disciplining of comicosmopolitanism: a project that began long before *Fiddler on the Roof*, but that *Fiddler on the Roof* advances and refines. In Mostel's hands, however, the miming of disciplined comicosmopolitanism is also an act of undisciplined comicosmopolitanism. Performed voicelessly, Mostel's increasingly elaborate mimetic excesses evoke the continuing censorship imposed upon lippy butterflies in postwar America. Yet the pantomime, like Mostel's infamous impression of a butterfly at rest, displays the genius of the mimesis of which it is a version: a genius for uncovering

the affinities between joke (lip) and body (lip), between speech and silence, between language and its gestural prehistory, between the human and the animal, between laughter and the grave.

Even Zero Mostel can be forced into line; yet this does not prevent him from “writing” his own “lines,” in the margins of the show, but also effectively in front of it. And while this sort of incorrigible fiddling-around infuriated *Fiddler’s* authors, Mostel’s deviations are not exactly extraneous. He is not simply obtruding his own back story on the production, but, rather, revealing the back story both of that Jewish genre, the Broadway musical as a whole, and of this, its most openly Jewish self-representation. Mostel is bringing out, that is, the Broadway musical’s geriatrically ancient origins in the refusal of seriousness that enrages every Tsar—that, neither blessing him nor cursing him, instead takes him as a mere occasion for the disintegration of the self in laughter. Not that Mostel’s mimesis lacks its own element of what we have learned to call deadly seriousness: the mimetic resemblance, to the point of identification, between the mimed killing of the constable and the mimed suicide of the Jew symptomatizes an underlying connection between constable and Jew in the disciplined world, where the subject is constituted through its aggressively anticomic (self-)policing. Obviously, both the “killing” of the constable and Mostel’s “suicide” express a violent desire to punish the Tsar whose murderous policies drove Jews out of Russia, as well as the more recent Tsars of American anti-Communism, who would have strangled into silence Mostel and others of his kind. The fantasy of punishing the Tsar is at the same time a fantasy of becoming the Tsar. And the “roars of laughter” that greet Mostel’s pantomime bespeak more than a mere *souçon* of vengeful violence in the law-abiding, middle-class, suburban audience as well: an audience still, perhaps, fleeing its own private Russia. Still, Mostel’s success in bringing down the house points beyond both his and the audience’s self-vindication: toward their shared joy in losing themselves *and* their Tsars, however briefly, in their return to a rapidly disappearing city—a city to be found neither in Russia nor in America, but only in the “New York” of the Broadway musical.

CODA

Cosmopolitan States

“Truly contemporary states or countries are always cosmopolitan, perfectly indistinct in their identitarian configuration.” So writes Alain Badiou in reply to his rhetorical question: “Israel: the Country in the World where there are the Fewest Jews?” Unlike the “Jewish state,” truly contemporary states, he continues, “assume the total contingency of their historical constitution, and regard the latter as valid only on condition that it does not fall under any racist, religious, or more generally ‘cultural’ predicate. Indeed, the last time an established state in France believed it should call itself the ‘French state’ was under Pétain and the German occupation.”¹ Thus ignominiously linked with Vichy France, Israel, sometimes characterized as the only democracy in the Middle East, instead enjoys the distinction, in Badiou’s polemic, of figuring as a *rogue state*. And yet, the polemic is nuanced enough that Badiou can acknowledge, if only in passing, the fictionality of those truly contemporary, cosmopolitan states from whose company Israel egregiously sets itself apart. If Israel is “a country where there are ever fewer Jews,” this is because it exemplifies, with more painfully obvious irony than any other, what Badiou calls “l’Antisémitisme essentiel des États”: their “hostility to wandering, to minorities, to the universal, to revolutions.”²

For reasons this book has tried to explain, the United States would have to come out near if not at the top of any current list of countries with ever fewer Jews. Of course, it is not hard to imagine why, after Auschwitz, Jews in *any* country might have wished to de-Judaize themselves: to stop being wanderers, minorities, representatives of the universal and of revolutions. What began, at any rate, in the immediate

postwar period, in the aftermath of the genocidal rage directed at Europe's cosmopolitan Jews, was a large-scale, transcontinental project of uncoupling Jews and cosmopolitanism. One name for that project, of course, is "Israel"; another is the blacklist. At the same moment when the Jewish state was being founded, the decosmopolitanizing of the Jew, and the de-Judaizing of cosmopolitanism, were also taking place—in the most aggressive sense of the term—in the United States, as a stunningly successful campaign of postwar Jewish assimilation: a campaign launched in 1947, just one year before the founding of the state of Israel, by Hollywood's studio heads—all but one Jewish—in collaboration with the House Un-American Activities Committee. As we have seen, the movie-industry (and eventually television) blacklist constituted an expulsion of the Jews—the wanderers, the minorities, the revolutionaries, the believers in the universal—not just from the Jewish empire of American show business but from the national imaginary that it is the function of that Jewish empire to promulgate. Hollywood's purge of Jewish Communists, and its parade of Jewish informers, taught every Jew in America how to become that model citizen, the cooperative witness. Starting with the blacklist, and continuing to this day, the Jewish-controlled media in the United States stage nothing less than the Jew's disappearance: the Jew's disappearance, that is, into just another American.

Along with the disappearance of Jews from Israel, then, this Jewish-American success story might well testify to the "basic anti-Semitism of all states"³: to the impossibility of the cosmopolitan state that Badiou simultaneously posits. No more than Badiou do I invoke the basic anti-Semitism of all states to excuse, as if by generalizing away, the particular brutality and arrogance with which Israel and the United States keep on prosecuting their wars on cosmopolitanism. If the basic anti-Semitism of all states prevents there from ever being such a thing as a cosmopolitan state, the *fantasy* of a cosmopolitan state nonetheless helps us to think about how some states might at least be less antic cosmopolitan than others. This is in some sense Amanda Anderson's project in her reading of *Daniel Deronda*, a notable exception to the tendency of the new cosmopolitanisms—the recent academic theories of cosmopolitanism—to repeat the general dissociation of the cosmopolitan and the Jew.⁴ Anderson uses Eliot's novel to imagine an Israel, and thus any state, in which "openness to otherness and radical particularity need not be seen as fa-

tally compromised” by that state’s formal political organization.⁵ Even for the more radical Badiou, as we have seen, the cosmopolitan state may be impossible, but it is not implausible. For despite his acknowledgment of “the basic anti-Semitism of all states,” he can still write, both confidently and convincingly, about how truly contemporary states are “always cosmopolitan,” about how “they assume the total contingency of their historical constitution,” and so forth—as though there were, or at least might be, a whole bunch of them out there in the world.

Cosmopolitan states? Why not? Let’s go! But what makes these utopias seem curiously accessible is not just our desire for them: they also owe their verisimilitude to what we might call cosmopolitanism’s dirty little secret. For all the often-violent incompatibility of cosmopolitanism and the state, for all the murderous antic cosmopolitanism of so many states in particular, there is something in cosmopolitanism *that likes a state*. There is, in other words, a principle of self-preserving hardness within cosmopolitanism: to quote one of the cosmopolitan characters in an Iris Murdoch novel, “a sheer concern for one’s dignity, a sense of form, a sense of style”;⁶ in short, a commitment to *looking good*, where, as that expression suggests, goodness is at once morality stylized and style moralized. Which is why it has not been so difficult, in the academy, to produce and to promote a thoroughly *responsible* cosmopolitanism. To the extent that the cosmopolitan is indeed a citizen of the world, cosmopolitanism lends itself almost naturally to the process of being made respectable, its potentially scandalous aesthetico-erotic promiscuity submitting, without much trouble, to the discipline of ethico-political seriousness.

In the previous chapter, I cited Rebecca L. Walkowitz’s critique of Sartre’s claim that cosmopolitan writing should focus on Jews, not butterflies—where “Jews” signifies the heaviness of politics, and “butterflies” the lightness of style. If, as Walkowitz proposes “refusing to think about butterflies may only hurt the Jews,” this may be, I suggested, because sometimes butterflies *are* Jews.⁷ There are tragic figurations of the Jew as butterfly, as in the poem “The Butterfly,” written by a child in a concentration camp.⁸ But, as the case of Zero Mostel shows, there are comic Jewish butterflies as well, and the impulse to hurt them arises precisely from their *being* comic. Mostel interprets mimesis as the joy of what we

might call becoming-zero. Against this unbearable image of happiness, anti-Semitism at its genocidal extreme exacts its revenge by turning joyful self-loss into horrifying self-loss.

Already disappearing well before the recent academic transformation of cosmopolitanism into a rigorous cosmopolitics, the soft Jewish underbelly of cosmopolitanism is what got not just lost but repudiated in the postwar decosmopolitanizing of the Jew. More specifically, this Jewish underside is the Jewish side that could not be assimilated. Much less able to pass, anyway, than the sleeker, more reasonable Jewish cosmopolitanism of enlightenment, modernity, and progress, Mostel's mimesis exemplifies a primitive cosmopolitanism that resembles the criminal's inability, as Horkheimer and Adorno put it, to "take the detour through the current forms of labor."⁹ What makes this ridiculous Jewish cosmopolitanism offensive, in today's academy, is that it has nothing explicitly to do with such approved contemporary practices as anti-imperial intellectual work, postcolonial agency, diplomatic negotiation, and transnational citizenship, but everything to do with the disreputable desire *to be something and somewhere else*.¹⁰ Like that "early craving for foreign words" which Adorno evokes in another essay—and which might once have seemed cosmopolitanism's very *élan vital*—this mimetic cosmopolitanism wants nothing more, as Adorno puts it, than "to escape from the sphere of what is always the same, the spell of what one is and knows anyway."¹¹ As Zero Mostel and others have discovered, one cannot indulge this mimetic urge without enraging the professionally righteous, any more than one can speak foreign words with impunity. "Since language," Adorno explains, "is erotically charged in its words, at least for the kind of person who is capable of expression, love drives us to foreign words. In reality, it is that love that sets off the indignation over their use."¹²

The new cosmopolitanisms—the most approved of the current forms of academic labor—have little room for the oldest cosmopolitanism, whose longing for expressive imitation, whether by saying French words or by doing the butterfly at rest, must give way to the dignifying imperative of good form. What drove some of us into literary studies, perhaps, was a certain "Jewish" impulse to rest, butterfly-like, in permanent mimesis. Throughout this book, I have theorized that impulse as comicosmopolitanism, and practiced it as the unseriousness of sycoanalysis. I

began this coda with Badiou's account of why Israel is a country where there are ever fewer Jews. It is not ethico-political seriousness alone that compels me to end with an image of Israel's de-Judaization: an imitation of a butterfly at rest. But where Mostel's imitation of a butterfly at rest was intended to make people laugh, there is no comedy in the image of Israel as resting butterfly—as the quintessential figure of lightness, motion, and wandering finally grounded, landed, identified, immobilized. Mostel's imitation exemplifies mimesis; Israel's, what Horkheimer and Adorno call “the mimesis of mimesis,” by which, as we have seen, they mean a vengeful mockery of mimetic behavior.¹³ Here, rest is cruelly parodied as *arrest*. Imitating an imitation of a butterfly at rest, the Jewish state becomes a butterfly pinned to a wall by its own hostility toward the very wanderers for whom it would have made a home, but whom, instead, it has fixed in a state of fear, while it fixes others in a state of siege. Given this state of affairs, it might be best to begin imagining how colorful, how funny, and, in a sense of the term that does not merely applaud the sufferer for his suffering, how *moving* Zero Mostel's imitation of a butterfly at rest must once have looked.

NOTES

(I) Sycoanalysis

1. Hellman, *Scoundrel Time*, 103.
2. *Ibid.*, 93.
3. *Ibid.*, 94. The quoted phrase occurs in Hellman's letter to Congressman John S. Wood, then the chairman of HUAC. Earlier in the same letter, she refers to the "old-fashioned American tradition" (93) in which she was raised. For further discussion of Hellman's testimony, see chapter 2 of the present book.
4. On the history of HUAC's relation to television, see Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium*, 116–26.
5. The definitive history of the blacklist is Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*. Another excellent study, focusing on the back story of the blacklist from the screenwriters' perspective, is Nancy Lynn Schwartz, *The Hollywood Writers' Wars*, completed by Sheila Schwartz. The most notable and ambitious discussion of HUAC informers is still Navasky, *Naming Names*. For a critique of Navasky, and an incisive discussion of the blacklist in general, see Andersen, "Red Hollywood." Andersen has recently published a disarmingly candid assessment of his earlier essay in the context of older and newer blacklist scholarship; see Andersen, "Afterword."
6. Hofstadter long ago perceived the substitutive or metonymic role of "Communism" in "anti-Communism." See his *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 39–42.
7. "En-Jewment" might be considered a cognate of Boyarin's "Jewissance." See his *Unheroic Conduct*, 256.
8. Cited in Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own*, 371–72.
9. On Jewishness and degeneration, see the recent work of Reizbaum—for example, "Max Nordau and the Generation of Jewish Muscle."
10. Cited in Kisseloff, *The Box*, 417.
11. Cited (from the *Congressional Record*, August 16, 1949) in Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*, 14–15.
12. Alain Badiou, to whose work I will be turning at the end of this book, points to the long history of the sycophant. In "The Word 'Jew' and

the Sycophant,” his devastating critique of journalistic attacks on his recent volume of writings on Israel, the Holocaust, and other themes related to Jewishness, Badiou writes: “The pair of Socrates and the petty characters who accused him of corrupting the youth, Anytos and Meletos, is inaugural. The technical name for these professional accusers is sycophant.” Both Badiou’s book and his critique of its detractors, which in effect constitutes its postscript, are to be found in Badiou, *Polemics*; the quotation is on 234. Later in this introduction, I draw a parallel between the contemporary sycophants who have attacked Badiou and his work and the Cold War American sycophants (no less diligent than their ancient precursors in denouncing the corrupters of youth); both schools of sycophancy are devoted to a semiotic policing of the word “Jew.”

13. Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, 641. Subsequent quotations will be included parenthetically in the text.

14. For a recent fictional variation on Stander’s joke against the committee, see Epstein’s novel, *San Remo Drive*, 36–37.

15. On the televising of the HUAC hearings, see Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium*, 116–26.

16. See, for example, Balibar, “Citizenship without Community?,” in his *We, the People of Europe?*, 51–77; and Lupton, “The Literature of Citizenship,” 205–16.

17. See, for example, one of the founding texts of modern democratic citizenship, the “Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen,” two of whose articles I quote from here: “Le principe de toute souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la Nation”; “tout citoyen peut . . . parler, écrire, imprimer librement, sauf à répondre de l’abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la loi.” de Vindé and Terray, vicomte, *La déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*, 46, 68. (“The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation”; “Every citizen may . . . speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law”; Mason and Rizzo, *The French Revolution*, 103–4).

18. Althusser’s famous account of interpellation (in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses [Notes Towards an Investigation],” 127–88) emphasizes the production of subjects. In the theater of citizenship so brutally managed by HUAC, however, the overwhelming effect of interpellation is to produce subjects as *witnesses*. The subject is formed by answering the call of the police, but it is only when he or she enters the intersubjective circuit of testimony that he or she really begins to work for the apparatuses of the state.

19. Roth, *I Married a Communist*, 264.

20. The canonical example of this comic move on the part of an uncooperative witness occurs in this exchange between the screenwriter Ring Lardner Jr., and J. Parnell Thomas, then the chairman of HUAC:

THE CHAIRMAN: It is a very simple question. Anybody would be proud to answer it—any real American would be proud to answer the question, “Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?”—any real American.

MR. LARDNER: It depends on the circumstances. I could answer it, but if I did, I would hate myself in the morning.

THE CHAIRMAN: Leave the witness chair.
(Bentley, *Thirty Years of Treason*, 187)

Lardner was one of the non-Jewish blacklistees, but one can understand from this exchange why the mogul Samuel Goldwyn accused him of “writing like a Jew” (Strugatz and McGilligan, “Ring Lardner Jr.: American Skeptic,” 1208).

21. See Stander’s interview with McGilligan and Ken Mate in McGilligan and Buhle, eds., *Tender Comrades*, 607–25. The quotation is on 624.

22. Invoking his right against self-incrimination, Stander associates himself—at this point, it is hard to tell how “seriously”—with “Jesus Christ”: “and I am not being sacrilegious”; “I am a deeply religious man” (ibid., 652).

23. For a recent example of the surprising advantages conferred by the “refugee” designation—the subject is the terminological politics surrounding the victims of Hurricane Katrina—see Shaila Dewan, “Call Them ‘Refugees,’ if It Gets the Job Done,” *New York Times*, Sunday, 14 May 2006: WK14.

24. Arendt, “We Refugees,” 65–66.

25. Ibid., 65.

26. For a detailed account of the “collaboration” of American Jewish mainstream organizations with HUAC, see Navasky, *Naming Names*, 97–143.

27. Trumbo makes this comment in an interview included in the 1976 documentary about the blacklist, *Hollywood on Trial*, directed by David Helpman Jr., written by Arnie Riesman, and produced by James Gutman (MPI Home Video, 1989).

28. The actors John Garfield, Canada Lee, and J. Edward Bromberg were harassed by HUAC to the point that they died of heart attacks, the first at the age of thirty-nine, the second and third still in their forties. The actor Philip Loeb, blacklisted and desperate, committed suicide.

29. The phrase appears in Sullivan’s Red- and gay-baiting article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1951; the article bore the headline “Tip to Red Probers: Subpena [sic] Jerome Robbins.” Quoted in Lawrence, *Dance with Demons*, 167. For more on Robbins, see chapter 6 of the present book.

30. Bentley, *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been*, 102. This text is Bentley’s dramatization—it has been performed as a play—of the material he had selected and annotated for the first edition (1971) of *Thirty Years of Treason*. The passage I have just quoted differs from the transcript as represented in *Thirty Years of Treason*, mostly in its condensation of the more repetitious version of

Robbins's testimony offered in the much longer scholarly text of the previous year. The latter, less dramatically structured, includes no indication of laughter after Robbins's remark about dialectical materialism, but it is clear from the context that Robbins has been coached to go for a laugh with this line, and that he is milking it for all it is worth:

MR. TAVENNER: Now, that [question] was as to how dialectical materialism influenced you in the production of *Fancy Free*—

MR. ROBBINS: That's right.

MR. TAVENNER:—which had been a huge success?

MR. ROBBINS: That's right. I had prepared *Fancy Free* before attending any meetings of the [Communist Political] Association, and I found the question a little ridiculous and a little outrageous.

(*Thirty Years of Treason*, 627)

In its tortured repetitions, the excerpt in *Thirty Years of Treason* is, if anything, an even better example of pseudocomedy's "deadly seriousness." I quote from the more condensed version for the sake of brevity.

31. According to his sister and other family members, Robbins may have cooperated with HUAC because Ed Sullivan, then a gossip columnist as well as the host of his own television variety show, had threatened to publicize Robbins's homosexuality unless he "cleared" himself of the taint of Communism. On this question of homophobic blackmail, see Lawrence, *Dance with Demons*, 156–60. Whether or not Robbins was in fact being gay-baited by Sullivan, HUAC and its journalistic accomplices presupposed and exploited a generalized terror of exposure among both the witnesses it interrogated and the public it thus policed.

32. Robbins names Lee in *Thirty Years of Treason*, 632. Lee and her husband, Jack Gilford, who were both blacklisted, along with their friend Zero Mostel, will figure again in chapter 6 of this book. With Kate Mostel (Mostel's widow), and with secondary contributions from their husbands, Lee published a memoir, *170 Years of Show Business*.

33. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 152.

34. I have cited Ring Lardner Jr.'s "writing like a Jew" in note 20, above. Lardner tells the story that, after he was asked by the producer Samuel Goldwyn to write the script for a film about anti-Semitism, Goldwyn rejected it, saying, "One of the reasons I hired you for this particular script was that you are a Gentile. But you betrayed me by writing like a Jew." Strugatz and McGiligan, "Ring Lardner Jr.: American Skeptic," 208.

35. The best account of the racial or ethnic politics at stake in HUAC's investigation of Hollywood remains Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own*, 311–86.

36. On the term "the blacklist era" (rather than "McCarthyism"), and on the periodization that posits 1960 as that era's terminal point, see Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, xv.

37. Here is some of the context of Polonsky's remark: "I went through more or less 17 or 18 different kinds of [film] proposals of one kind or another, and suddenly I realized I was just as blacklisted even when they wanted to hire me as when they didn't want to hire me, so I had to assume that there is a kind of aesthetic and social blacklist which I create, which I carry around me, like a halo on my head, you know, and when they see that halo on my head, they say not him." "Dialogue with Martin Ritt and Abraham Polonsky," in Gabriel Miller, ed., *Martin Ritt*, 40–41.

38. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 96. The phrase about "a series of purges" is in fact from the 1947 version of the text. Already in the 1944 version, however, the authors deserve credit for remarkable prescience; in that earlier version, the phrase at the end of the sentence reads: "expropriated even before fascism" (269).

39. The four-paragraph-long text of "The Waldorf Statement" can be found in Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 455. I quote its final paragraph:

We will not knowingly employ a Communist or a member of any party or group which advocates the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force or by illegal or unconstitutional methods. In pursuing this policy, we are not going to be swayed by hysteria or intimidation from any source. We are frank to recognize that such a policy involves dangers and risks. There is the danger of hurting innocent people. There is the risk of creating an atmosphere of fear. Creative work at its best cannot be carried on in an atmosphere of fear. We will guard against this danger, this risk, this fear. To this end we will invite the Hollywood talent guilds to work with us to eliminate any subversives, to protect the innocent, and to safeguard free speech and a free screen wherever threatened.

40. I am alluding to the subtitle of Gabler's book.

41. Hellman, *Scoundrel Time*, 68.

42. *Ibid.*, 40–41.

43. Litvak, "Adorno Now," 33–39.

44. Adorno, "Commitment," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 2, 93. For an incisive discussion of alternatives to the norm of critical seriousness—for a "critique of critique"—and for an adroit analysis of the Adorno essay from which I have quoted, see Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 1–27.

45. See "Is Art Lighthearted?," in Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, vol. 2, 247–53.

46. On the Jewish inflection, see Silbermann, *Grovelling and Other Vices*; on the homosexual coloring, see Ernest Jones, "The Psychology of Quislingism," 4–5. I discuss Jones's homosexualizing of sycophancy in chapter 4.

47. My use of the word "essentially" here should not give the impression that I am promoting an essentialist view of Jewishness (or of homosexuality). The quotation marks in the previous sentence are meant to signal that

“Jewishness and “homosexuality” are functioning in this book not as trans-historical essences but, rather, as signifiers for what Horkheimer and Adorno see as disavowed mimetic impulses, whose return in the contemporary world can be so disturbingly uncanny as to cause blacklists and other reactions of a kind that have become even more oppressive, at least in the United States, since 2001.

48. Badiou, *Polemics*, 233, 230.

49. The notion of a “cosmopolitan underworld” figures in the Nazi-era discourse around Jews in the French film industry. Le Roy, “Quand les nazis pillaient dans le cinéma français,” 2, quotes a 1941 article on “Le Juif et le cinéma” that speaks of films by Jewish artists in France as “d’autant plus dangereux qu’ils étaient parfois de qualité, où l’on assistait invariablement à l’apologie de la pègre cosmopolite des capitales” (all the more dangerous insofar as they were sometimes of quality, where one invariably witnessed the apologia of the cosmopolitan underworld of the capitals). The Hollywood blacklist would be a pale imitation of the Nazi occupiers’ eradication of this criminally cosmopolitan Jewish presence in French cinema.

50. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 149. See 141–50 for a discussion of *ressentiment* in relation to sentimentality and antisentimentality.

51. For examples of the “new cosmopolitanisms”—variously rigorous, responsible, *anticomic* cosmopolitanisms—see the essays collected in Robbins and Cheah, eds., *Cosmopolitics*.

52. Marcus, “Anne Frank and Hannah Arendt, Universalism and Pathos,” 90–91.

53. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 5.

54. *Ibid.*, 2, 4. “Apparent abnegation of agency” is a quotation from Warner, “Uncritical Reading,” 18.

55. Agamben, *Means without End*, 20.

56. *Ibid.*, 25.

57. For a survey of “the revulsion with which our country, our culture, and the entire Judeo-Christian tradition view the informer,” see Navasky, *Naming Names*, x–xiii.

58. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 6. The entire book elaborates the principle that there is no self apart from what the author calls “self-beratement.”

59. The French *apatride* (person without nationality) is less pathos-laden than “refugee.” For a firsthand account of the experience of the *apatrides* blacklisted in French exile, see Barzman, *The Red and the Blacklist*.

60. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 151.

61. *Ibid.*, 189, 152. On “colonial mimicry,” see Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 85–92. From the vast theoretical literature on mimesis, I would cite, along with Bhabha, the politically and psychoanalytically astute essay by Ruth Ley, “The Real Miss Beauchamp,” 167–214.

62. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 148.

63. *Ibid.*, 151.

64. Navasky, *Naming Names*, 314–29. Navasky borrows the term from the sociologist Harold Garfinkel.

65. Bentley, *Thirty Years of Treason*, 644.

66. Here is Arendt's formulation: "the main actors of the Affair sometimes seem to be staging a huge dress rehearsal for a performance that had to be put off for more than three decades" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 45). The Disney reference is not merely metaphorical. Walt Disney, whose anti-Semitism was well known in Hollywood, helped to instigate the blacklist by railing publicly against the "Communist agitation" of labor unions at his studio. See Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 155–56. On Disney's anti-Semitism and anti-Communism from the perspective of one of the blacklisted, see the interview with the writer (and "front") Joan Lacour Scott in *Tender Comrades*, McGilligan and Buhle, eds., 585–606. Schwartz, *The Hollywood Writers' Wars*, 288, refers to the blacklist as "the Hollywood Holocaust."

67. See the discussion of Communism and "Momism" in Rogin, "Kiss Me Deadly," 236–271.

68. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 154.

69. On the Jew's nose, see Gilman, *The Jew's Body*; on the *fetor judaicus*, see Reizbaum, *James Joyce's Judaic Other*.

70. See Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 109. On Kraus and the dialect comedians, see Adorno, "Morals and Criminality."

71. Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 177–78.

72. *Ibid.*, 110.

73. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 152.

74. D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police*. See 2–10 for a discussion of *Oliver Twist*. Whereas Miller, taking off from Foucault, locates the novel's communication with the police under the rubric of "discipline"—that is, of discipline as opposed to an older, frankly terroristic mode of power, where discipline may be defined as communication with the police that does not typically look like communication with the police—the present study finds in the Hollywood blacklist an apparently anachronistic, but perhaps strangely timely, example of modern power as at once disciplinary *and* terroristic.

75. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 178.

76. *Ibid.*, 471. I discuss this passage in "Bad Scene," 33–49. My comments here elaborate on my observation that "Brownlow, subjecting Oliver to what's good for him, knows that, as a 'sight,' the painful and frightening encounter with Fagin will be its own best cure" (42).

77. Cited in Collins, ed., *Charles Dickens*, 471. I discuss this remark, and the novelist's identification with Fagin, in "Bad Scene," 41.

78. On "Jewissance," see note 7 above. As a "drive," what Horkheimer and Adorno call mimesis has important affinities with Freud's death drive. Indeed,

Horkheimer and Adorno acknowledge these affinities when, speaking of “the inclination to let oneself go, to lapse back into nature,” they add, “Freud called this the death impulse, Caillois *le mimétisme*” (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 189). For a lucid discussion of mimesis that attempts to differentiate it from certain ecstatic or “masochistic” versions of the Freudian death drive, see Jay, “Mimesis and Mimetology,” 29–53, esp. 44–45. On the queerness of the death drive and the mortification that passes for normative vitality, see Edelman, *No Future*.

79. Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, 40. Barthes is discussing “the phenomenon of participation” whereby we identify with the hero of *On the Waterfront*, a film written and directed by friendly witnesses, and committed not merely to justifying but to glorifying their friendliness. On this film, see chapter 4 of the present book.

80. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 186. I have commented on this passage in “Bad Scene,” 36–37, and in an unpublished essay, “Unctuous,” a version of which I presented at the English Institute at Harvard University in September 2004.

81. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 149.

82. On Fagin as both Jewish and homosexual, see Litvak, “Bad Scene,” 42–43.

83. Other pertinent Victorian novels would include, for example, George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* and Anthony Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* and *The Prime Minister*.

84. Because this book is a work of cultural theory and cultural criticism, not a work of history, it does not pretend to anything like comprehensiveness. Throughout the book, my aim is to provide models that suggest where future scholarship might go, rather than to cover all of the relevant cases. While, for example, there are other notable “blacklist musicals” besides those I discuss in chapter 6 (I am thinking, for example, of the Lillian Hellman-Leonard Bernstein-Richard Wilbur-Dorothy Parker-John Latouche collaboration, *Candide*), the reader may imagine the directions that analyses of other musicals might take. The book’s focus on mass culture, moreover, prevents it from considering such subjects as, say, the novels of Abraham Polonsky.

85. Quoted in Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 376.

86. The lines about “government by stoolpigeon” are spoken by two of the Hollywood Ten, John Howard Lawson and Edward Dmytryk (later a stoolpigeon himself; see chapter 3); Lawson and Dmytryk use the phrase in a film made to raise funds for the legal defense of themselves and the other Ten. Excerpts from that film are shown in the documentary *Hollywood on Trial* (see note 27 above). The anti-Semitic and Nazi canard claiming that Roosevelt was a Jew—his family name a variant, supposedly, of “Rosenfeld”—is discussed by Berman in his Foreword to Kaplan’s *Reproductions of Banality*, xii. Quoting from an article entitled “Roosevelt Rules America,” *World-Service* (*Welt-Dienst*) No. V/22 (November 15, 1938), 3, Berman notes: “*World-Service*

was a Nazi press service with a viciously anti-Semitic character. It was published in Erfurt in several languages" (xxiii). How tactical, partial, and reluctant was the wartime suspension of hostilities against the left is suggested by Polan on Hollywood's projection of "wartime unity," in *Power and Paranoia*, 45–99.

87. Roth's novel, *The Plot against America*, plausibly imagines a scenario in which an isolationist United States would in fact have stayed out of the Second World War; the anti-Semitism, anticommopolitanism, and nativism grounding this "counterhistorical" scenario are especially chilling, in Roth's nightmare vision, because they also seem so uncannily at home in U.S. culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

88. On this paradox, see, for example, Golsan and Schoolcraft, "Nationalisms," 299–304, esp. 301–2; see also Rousso, "Collaborators, Those 'Patriotic Traitors,'" 157–59.

89. Contrast this animal with the similar-looking sycophantic beast evoked by Gilles Deleuze, after Nietzsche: "The man of *ressentiment* is like a dog, a kind of dog which reacts only to traces (a bloodhound)." Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 115.

90. Navasky, *Naming Names*, xv. References to morality occur with polemical frequency in Navasky's prose. For a critique of Navasky's emphatically moral approach, and for an argument that the problem of the blacklist is fundamentally political rather than moral, see Andersen, "Red Hollywood," 238–43.

91. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*. See also Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*.

92. For the reference to Proust's "black humor," see Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 318. The reference to "interpretative examination" occurs on 322.

93. *Ibid.*, 362.

94. "Undisciplined mimicry" appears in Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 149.

95. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 334.

96. Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core*; Naremore, *More than Night*; Sklar, *City Boys*; Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium*. A work that lies in the background of the present book is Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism*.

97. See, for example, Brown, *States of Injury*. Brown demonstrates the persistence and pervasiveness of *ressentiment* in the contemporary scene, and proposes to overcome this *ressentiment* in the name of a "radically democratic political culture" (75).

98. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 119.

99. "If you could see her through my eyes, she wouldn't look Jewish at all," sings the master of ceremonies of *Cabaret*, a musical about the rise of the Nazis in Germany, as he dances with his beloved, an actor in a gorilla costume.

100. "Israel: the Country in the World where there are the Fewest Jews?" is the rhetorical question that provides the title of an article that Badiou first published in 1982 and that reappears in "Uses of the Word 'Jew,'" in *Polemics*, 166–71.

101. *Ibid.*, 170.

(2) Jew Envy

1. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 164–65. The chapter in which this passage appears is entitled "Elements of Anti-Semitism."

2. *Ibid.*, 149–50.

3. See Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," 176–235, esp. 183–90.

4. Indeed, the "neurotic" comedian, in a not so happy development, has become in effect the only permissible face of the Jew in American mass entertainment over the past fifty years. For their part, despite their undeniable reservations about jokes and laughter, Horkheimer and Adorno themselves invoke the figure of the comedian, not yet neurotic but nonetheless a virtuoso of the grimace, in theorizing the apparent Jewish escape from seriousness. They particularly reprehend the "organized laughter" of the anti-Semitic mob (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 152). But here, for example, in a passage that echoes the one I have just been discussing, is Adorno on Karl Kraus: "The sympathy that Kraus showed many dialect writers and comedians, in preference to so-called high literature and in protest against it, is inspired by complicity with the undomesticated mimetic moment. It is also the root of Kraus' jokes: in them language imitates the gestures of language the way the grimaces of the comedian imitate the face of the person he parodies" (Adorno, "Morals and Criminality," 55). I discuss this passage at greater length in chapter 3.

5. Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 46. Earlier in the same text, Sartre writes: "The first thing the Germans did was to forbid Jews access to swimming pools; it seemed to them that if the body of an Israelite were to plunge into that confined body of water, the water would be completely befouled. Strictly speaking, the Jew contaminates even the air he breathes" (34).

6. On the anti-Semitic history of this linkage, see Birnbaum, *Anti-Semitism in France*, esp. 147–77. For examples of the Jewish- and queer-affirmative uses of this linkage, see, most programmatically, the essays collected in Boyarin, Itzkovitz, and Pellegrini, eds., *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*.

7. Gilman, *The Jew's Body*.

8. In *Performance Anxieties*, Pellegrini has written, "All Jews are womanly; but no women are Jews" (18), by which she means that the womanly Jew is nonetheless normatively male. My discussion of Barbara Streisand suggests a different reason why "no women are Jews."

9. This advertisement has appeared, for instance, in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, Sunday, January 29, 2006, 11.

10. The canonical text, in this regard, is the chapter on the Jew's nose in Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, 169–93.

11. For a more upbeat reading of Streisand as an embodiment of a Jewish-female queerness—a reading that centers on the early, expansive phase of her career rather than on its late, ironic contraction—see Wolf, “Barbra’s ‘Funny Girl’ Body,” 246–65.

12. *Crossfire*, produced by Dore Schary, directed by Edward Dmytryk, screenplay by John Paxton (RKO Pictures, 1947).

13. Horkheimer had in fact advised Schary on *Crossfire*, of which he was critical. On this background, see Koch, *Die Einstellung ist die Einstellung*, 94–102.

14. In *Happiness*, McMahon argues that “the pursuit of happiness” “had a harder meaning” for eighteenth-century readers than it does today. Linking “pursuit” “with its cognates ‘prosecute’ and ‘persecute,’” and citing Johnson’s *Dictionary*, which defines “pursuit” as “the act of following with hostile intention,” he observes: “If one thinks of pursuing happiness as one pursues a fugitive . . . the ‘pursuit of happiness’ takes on a somewhat different cast” (320).

15. See, for example, Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own*, 319–86, and Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hardcore*, 17–32.

16. See, for example, Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, 178–96, and Ginsberg, *The Fatal Embrace*, 119–25.

17. Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel*, 32.

18. The derivation of “envy” from *invideo* is briefly discussed in Klein, “Envy and Gratitude,” 181.

19. *Aspects of Jewish Power in the United States*, vol. IV of “*The International Jew*,” 66. The volume has the further designation, “A Fourth Selection of Articles from ‘The Dearborn Independent.’”

20. *Ibid.*, 47–48.

21. See Garber, “Gentility,” 75–105, for a discussion of how the 1945 Danny Kaye film, *Wonder Man*, reflects the mid-century American division of Jewish symbolic labor between the academy and show business. In the film, Kaye plays twin brothers: “And the two brothers, Edwin, the timid ‘genius’ in wire-rimmed glasses who is most at home in the library, and Buzzy, the ebullient comic who is most at home on the stage, are *both* fantasmatic avatars of the 20th-century Jew in culture” (100).

22. I am alluding to the book by the Fox News anchor John Gibson, *The War on Christmas*. For a witty discussion of the explicit anti-Semitism of this fantasy, see Frank Rich, “I Saw Jackie Mason Kissing Santa Claus,” *New York Times*, 25 December 2005, “The Week in Review”: 8.

23. On the readership of the *Dearborn Independent* and the audience for anti-Semitism in the 1920s more generally, see Ginsberg, *The Fatal Embrace*, 95–96.

24. *To be the envy of someone*: the expression suggests how envy may secretly project a fantasy in which imitation leads to reciprocity, so that, because I envy you, you envy me back.

25. See Klein, “Envy and Gratitude,” 182, for a brief discussion of this image from *Othello*.

26. See Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 151–52, on anti-Semitism as an imitation of the Jew. On anti-Semitism and semi-erudition, see Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*.

27. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 256–58.

28. Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*.

29. For a discussion of representations of “Jewish fluidity” as both “enviable” and frightening in early-twentieth-century texts by African American and white American authors, see Itzkovitz, “Passing Like Me,” 35–57.

30. Cather, *The Professor’s House*, 36–37.

31. Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’” 280.

32. *Ibid.*, 290.

33. Cather, *The Professor’s House*, 38. Of the figurative relation between Outland and Marsellus, Jonathan Goldberg writes: “Louie is the flaming version of Tom, easy enough to be scorned; he is the protective flare that draws off from Tom the signs of a flamboyance that might otherwise be all too legible.” “Strange Brothers,” 470.

34. Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, 4. Subsequent references will be included parenthetically in the text.

35. In the original German text of the passage from Horkheimer and Adorno cited at the beginning of this chapter, “happiness without power” appears as *Glück[. . .] ohne Macht*. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 208.

36. The description of Sammy as an “all-American heel” comes from Mordecai Richler, quoted on the back of the Vintage paperback edition of the novel.

37. Sammy himself points to this symbiosis when, in Schulberg’s 1959 adaptation of his novel for television, Sammy turns to Manheim and asks: “What about the other question, the real question? What makes you and all the rest of you keep running after me?” *What Makes Sammy Run?*, *NBC Sunday Showcase*, script by Budd Schulberg and Stuart Schulberg, directed and produced by Delbert Mann (available in the archive of the Museum of Television and Radio, New York City).

38. Hellman, *Scoundrel Time*, 93. Subsequent references will be included parenthetically in the text.

39. Here is an example of Hellman’s homophobic wit (one of the comic modes that seriousness allows): “We were not shocked at the damage

McCarthy had done, or the ruin he brought on many people. Nor had we been surprised or angered by Cohn and Schine playing with the law as if it were a batch of fudge they enjoyed after the pleasure of their nightly pillow fight” (151). For a discussion that situates Hellman in the larger company of Cohn’s left-liberal gay-baiters, see Cadden, “Strange Angel,” 94–104.

(3) Petrified Laughter

1. Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own*, 301. Gabler cites as his source Swindell, *Body and Soul*. Although the story seems too good to be true, I have seen no refutation of it. Sklar, in *City Boys*, 81, notes simply, but eloquently, that “when Warner Bros. signed [the actor then known as Jules Garfield], Jack Warner rechristened him ‘John.’”

2. On the irony of Warner’s complicity with HUAC, see Garber, “Gentility,” 84–85. Garber relates the same anecdote about the naming of John Garfield.

3. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 96. Although the book’s first printed edition appeared in 1947, it had in fact been published in a limited edition, as a hectographic typescript, three years earlier. On the genesis of the book, see Noerr’s editor’s afterword, “The Position of ‘Dialectic of Enlightenment’ in the Development of Critical Theory,” 217–47.

4. For an argument that the effects of the blacklist continue to manifest themselves in U.S. mass culture, see Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core*.

5. I am alluding here to the sense of “minor” elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka*, esp. 16–27. For them a certain radicalism attaches to the minor itself—*miner* in French means, among other things, “to undermine”—with the result that it is no longer automatically necessary to lament the marginality to which Jewish characters and actors are typically assigned by Hollywood. For an example of this tendency, see Spiegel, “The Vanishing Act,” 262: “The Victimized Jew was not only as ethnically ill-defined as the Nominal Jew, but in both *Crossfire* and *Gentleman’s Agreement* he was still essentially a supporting player (Sam Levene in the former, and John Garfield and Sam Jaffe in the latter), fading off behind either the character of the bigot (Robert Ryan in *Crossfire*) who would proceed to nail him to his ethnic cross, or his Gentile benefactor (Peck in *Gentleman’s Agreement*, Robert Young in *Crossfire*) who, like Ivanhoe for Rebecca, would frequently make speeches on his behalf.”

6. Naremore, *More than Night*, 115–16: “To avoid potential objections from censors, Scott and Paxton eliminated all references to homosexuality, emphasizing instead the theme of race hatred.” Naremore, 98, cites specific strictures against “pansy” characters and behavior in other films of the forties besides *Crossfire* (e.g., *The Maltese Falcon* and *Farewell, My Lovely*). On the Production Code’s continuing vigilance against homosexuality in the fifties, see Lev, “Censorship and Self-Regulation,” 91–94. Ever since its inception

in 1930, the Production Code had prohibited “inferences of sex perversion.” Documentation can be found in the appendix to Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core*, 301–15.

7. On the politics and history of modern Jewish masculinity, see Breines, *Tough Jews*.

8. Sam Levene would in fact assume his most famous role three years later, when he played Nathan Detroit in the Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls*.

9. Horkheimer’s critique of the film, published as “Anmerkungen zu *Crossfire*,” in *Gesammelte Schriften* 12:213–19, is discussed in Koch, *Die Einstellung ist die Einstellung*, 98–101. This discussion is part of Koch’s extensive account of Horkheimer and Adorno’s dealings with the Hollywood studios, including their involvement in the planning for *Below the Surface*, a film that was never made but that was conceived in relation to the research project on anti-Semitism in which the authors participated. See Koch, *Die Einstellung ist die Einstellung*, 54–120.

10. Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 241.

11. On the charge of Jewish propaganda, see Naremore, *More than Night*, 120, and Scott, “Some of My Worst Friends,” 408.

12. On Scharj’s involvement in the film, see Naremore, *More than Night*, 123; Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 130–31; and Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, 442–46. According to Dick, Scharj inflated the importance of his work on the film.

13. Robert Osborne, Introduction, *Crossfire* (videocassette), Turner Broadcasting System, 1996.

14. “Levene” derives from “Levite”: a member of the tribe who assisted the priests in the temples. I would emphasize here the assisting—that is, the secondary character of the role—as much as the quasi-ministerial status.

15. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 60. The original text reads: “vielleicht sind die Namen nichts als versteinerte Gelächter.” Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 85.

16. Abraham Polonsky invokes this “magic” when he says: “There’s something extraordinary about seeing someone on a screen, and if you don’t understand that it’s extraordinary, then you don’t understand how films are made or the strange effect that film has on people—that is to say, film’s ‘magic.’” Buhle and Wagner, interviewers, “Abraham Polonsky,” 493.

17. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 148, 151. The interpolated phrases in German are from Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 216.

18. Adorno, “Morals and Criminality,” 55.

19. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*; Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, 36. This paragraph reproduces material that I have published in “Adorno Now,” 33–39.

20. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 109.

21. Philip Kemp has argued (in "From the Nightmare Factory," 266–70) that HUAC was much less interested in interpreting allegedly subversive films than in investigating the political affiliations of the figures involved in them. While the political content of a film like *Body and Soul* may seem so obvious as not even to need interpreting, the film has both a political content and, as I argue, a political *form* that may well have interested HUAC without HUAC's knowing it: it may not be possible, in other words, to distinguish so sharply between the diegetic politics of the film and the extradiegetic politics of its personnel.

22. Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 211–12.

23. Sklar, *City Boys*, 186.

24. "The Anti-Kazan" is the title of a short article by Atkinson on Polonsky, on the occasion of Kazan's being awarded a Lifetime Achievement Oscar. In an interview (Buhle and Wagner, "Abraham Polonsky," 486), Polonsky characterizes Rossen in terms similar to those he uses to describe Kazan (see the next chapter's epigraph), and explicitly compares the two "friendly" witnesses: "You wouldn't want to be on a desert island with Rossen, because if the two of you didn't have any food, he might want to have you for lunch tomorrow. . . . He was talented like Elia Kazan was talented, but like Kazan he also had a rotten character. In the end they both became stool pigeons. I figured all along that Rossen couldn't be trusted, but no one asked me."

25. There is an extensive literature on the politics—particularly the leftist politics—of film noir. In addition to the titles by Naremore and Kemp cited above, see Buhle and Wagner, *Radical Hollywood*, 321–68; May, *The Big Tomorrow*, 215–56; Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 279–302; Neve, *Film and Politics in America*, 112–70; Andersen, "Red Hollywood," 141–96.

26. Buhle and Wagner, "Abraham Polonsky," 485.

27. Pechter, "Abraham Polonsky and *Force of Evil*," 52.

28. *Ibid.*, 47.

29. *Ibid.*, 52; on Garfield and *Golden Boy*, see Sklar, *City Boys*, 82.

30. This dialogue is reproduced from the 1980s version of the videotape of *Body and Soul*. In the 1993 reissue of the videotape, and in the 1999 digital video disk version, Shimen's speech has been edited so that it no longer includes the lines: "over in Europe the Nazis are killing people like us, just because of their religion. But here, Charley Davis is champeen. So you win and retire champeen." I have yet to determine how and on whose authority this change (which I discuss below) was made, although it is not hard to imagine why it was made. *That* it was made, as late as 1993, nevertheless remains perplexing. It is as though someone in Hollywood, carrying appeasement to its paranoid extreme, had not been told that the Germans *lost* the war.

31. Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 214–15.

32. *Ibid.*, 307, n.12. In his insistence on a Jewish masterplot, a plot of Jewish cultural mastery, Rogin suppresses the more radical possibilities of Jews in film, here embodied by the minor character whose role he makes even more minor. In Rogin's influential account, Jewish "success" in American mass culture seems to involve the evacuation of Jewishness, its construction as an entirely negative identity. For Rogin, that is, Jews succeed only insofar as they manage to define themselves as not-black.

33. Bartelt and Bergeron, eds., *Variety Obituaries* (5 May 1976; unpaginated).

34. Pechter, "Abraham Polonsky and *Force of Evil*," 53. The parallel between the blacklist and the Nazi period has also been drawn by, among others, Mann, in his foreword to Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial*, v; Trumbo, *The Time of the Toad*; Ornitz, HUAC testimony, quoted in Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial*, 98–99. The parallel is anticipated by Scott, "Some of My Worst Friends," 408–19. He would soon, of course, have the dubious opportunity to assess it through personal experience.

35. In *A Very Dangerous Citizen*, 129, Buhle and Wagner propose that "these Jews [New York intellectual immigrants from Eastern Europe] were popular culture."

36. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 149. The interpolated German phrase appears in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 214.

37. Buhle and Wagner, *A Very Dangerous Citizen*, 126.

38. For other examples of the tendency I am associating with Rogin's work, see Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues*, and Most, *Making Americans*.

39. For obvious reasons, the term "tender comrade"—which furnished the title of a 1944 Ginger Rogers vehicle directed by Edward Dmytryk and written by Dalton Trumbo—has acquired left-wing resonances, but, as befits its homoerotic associations here, it comes from a translation of Sappho. For a trenchant analysis of the film *Tender Comrade*, which places it in the context of U.S. affectivity from the Second World War to the George W. Bush administration, see Berlant, "The Epistemology of State Emotion."

40. Buhle and Wagner, *A Very Dangerous Citizen*, 127.

41. Quoted in Hamilton, *Writers in Hollywood, 1915–1951*, 299.

42. How the un-American might inhere in the American is suggested by the following reminiscence of Polonsky's (quoted in Buhle and Wagner, "Abraham Polonsky," 491–92): "I heard from my mother's mother all the stories that I would someday need. She used to get the stories out of the [*Jewish Daily*] *Forward*, stories that were translated into Yiddish to educate the Socialist readers. Later on in life, I realized that I had learned from her the stories of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, who happened, according to her version, to be Jewish boys on the Volga, with a Russian serf in the role of Jim, instead of gentiles on the Mississippi."

43. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 151.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 215.

46. *Ibid.*, 216.

47. Especially after his portrayal of a Jewish barber in the film *The Great Dictator* (1940), Chaplin was thought to be a Jew (as well as—or is it, and therefore?—a Communist). For Arendt, Chaplin, “even if not himself a Jew, . . . epitomized in an artistic form a character born of a Jewish pariah mentality” (*The Jew as Pariah*, 69; see also 79–81). On Chaplin’s place in progressive Hollywood, and on his interactions with HUAC, see Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, esp. 384–85. In her typology of the pariah, Arendt points out that Heine’s *schlemihl* takes his name from “Shelumiel ben Zurishaddai mentioned in the Book of Numbers as the leader of the tribe of Simeon” (70). It seems appropriate that Shimen’s name (which derives from a Hebrew word meaning “harkening”) should hark back to the tribe led by a *schlemihl*.

48. Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 220.

49. For a reading of the film under this rubric, see Garber, “Gentility,” esp. 79–88.

50. Quoted in Baer, ed., *Elia Kazan*, 131.

51. Quoted in Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, 493.

52. Sklar, *City Boys*, 187.

53. On the “integrationist” ideology of the film (versus the “segregationist” ideology of *Pinky*, directed by Kazan two years later), see Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 220–28.

54. The description of the film is from Sklar, *City Boys*, 188.

55. Jaffe reappears in *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* (1951), the last film Polonsky wrote before he was blacklisted. Polonsky remarks: “The Sam Jaffe character was my invention—the voice of experience. That character came from my own life. I had a grandmother like that; we all had grandmothers like that” (Buhle and Wagner, “Abraham Polonsky,” 491).

56. Kazan, *A Life*, 334.

57. Quoted in May, *Big Tomorrow*, 202.

58. Paraphrased in Sayre, *Running Time*, 40. The wittiest of the Hollywood Ten, Lardner himself “turned out to be a gentile.”

(4) Collaborators

Chapter epigraph: Abraham Polonsky, on the occasion of Elia Kazan’s receiving a Lifetime Achievement Oscar; quoted in Atkinson, “The Anti-Kazan.”

1. Truffaut, *The Films of My Life*, 113.

2. *Ibid.*, 113, 115.

3. In a book of interviews with Michel Ciment, Kazan says: “The film was in advance of its time. It foretells Nixon. I don’t think it was about McCarthy

particularly.” Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 115. The quotation from the review appears in Kazan, *A Life*, 566. Kazan claims that he found the review “stupid” (567), though he does not explain why. According to Sayre, in *Running Time*, 166, “Budd Schulberg told me that they . . . had Joseph McCarthy in mind—as a man who had ‘used television to destroy others until it helped to destroy him.’”

4. In Brando and Lindsay, *Brando*, cited in Beck, *Budd Schulberg*, 144. Pauline Kael’s review of *On the Waterfront* is entitled “The Glamour of Delinquency.” See Kael, *I Lost It at the Movies*, 44–62.

5. Barthes, “A Sympathetic Worker,” 39, 40.

6. Treating his imagined reader to a demonstration of his defiant individualism, Kazan writes in his autobiography: “If you expect an apology now because I would . . . name names to the House Committee, you’ve misjudged my character. The ‘horrible, immoral’ thing I would do, I did out of my true self” (Kazan, *A Life*, 460).

7. What this chapter, and this book as a whole, propose, then, is a theory of the American citizen as *adolescent*. Lauren Berlant has elaborated a “theory of infantile citizenship” focused on the “strong and enduring belief that the best of U.S. national subjectivity can be read in its childlike manifestations and in a polity that organizes its public sphere around a commitment to making a world that could sustain an idealized infantile citizen” (*The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, 28; for a fuller account of this theory, see 25–53).

8. In his *Naming Names*, 209, Navasky notes the transformation of the stoolpigeon that takes place between *The Informer*—one of the favorite films, by the way, of the moralizing narrator of Schulberg’s *What Makes Sammy Run?*—and *On the Waterfront*.

9. Kael, *5001 Nights at the Movies*, 177.

10. As the example of Barthes reminds us, of course, not everyone is seduced. Roger Tailleur perhaps best characterizes a line of critics, particularly on the left, who have resisted the film’s charms, finding in it precisely the stridency usually ascribed to its less successful sibling: “*Sur les Quais* est ainsi l’affreux de la famille, le film *mauvais*, ce dernier mot compris davantage dans le sens moral de méchant que dans celui de dénué de qualités, le bouc émissaire sur lequel déverser sa bile une fois pour toutes et pour tous” (*On the Waterfront* is thus the monster of the family, the *bad* film, “bad” being understood more in the moral sense of evil than in the sense of being denuded of qualities—the scapegoat onto which one can spill one’s bile once and for all). Tailleur, *Elia Kazan*, 83.

11. In a penetrating discussion of Brando’s performance in *On the Waterfront*, James Naremore situates the film alongside *A Face in the Crowd* in a context of naturalistic fifties “social problem” films with Actors Studio personnel. See *Acting in the Cinema*, 200.

12. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 116–17.

13. Writing only a few years after the heyday of the blacklist, Richard Hofstadter observed: “Had the Great Inquisition been directed only against Communists, it would have tried to be more precise and discriminating in its search for them: in fact, its leading practitioners seemed to care little for the difference between a Communist and a unicorn” (*Anti-intellectualism in American Life*, 41). Hofstadter argues that the real target of the inquisition was New Deal–style intellectualism.

14. On the “Jewishness” of Roosevelt, the New Deal, and the Second World War, see chapters 1 and 2 of the present book.

15. “Screwball” and “crackpot” are McCarthy’s terms, quoted from Emile de Antonio’s 1964 documentary film, *Point of Order*.

16. On “Hollyweird,” see chapter 2.

17. The phrase cited in this sentence could be found in countless places, but this particular quotation comes from a letter written in Schulberg’s defense by his wife, Geraldine Brooks, quoted in Navasky, *Naming Names*, 242. The apparent symmetry of the formulation is already belied, of course, by the fact that “fascism” gets a lower-case f while “Communism” gets a capital C.

18. *Ibid.*, 246.

19. *Ibid.*, 244. Schulberg continues: “I think it would be very hard to get Lillian [Hellman] to criticize the death of a Soviet writer. They could be stretched on the rack at Lubianka Prison and Lillian would go back on the ferry to Martha’s Vineyard. I think they have been toads. They have been unwilling to attack [Russia].” “Hellman” is my interpolation; “Russia” is Navasky’s.

20. *Ibid.*, 245.

21. Both Kazan and Schulberg have insisted, although both have been challenged on this point, that the people whose names they gave HUAC had already been named by others. It might be easier to fire bullets into an already-dead body than to kill someone outright; either way, however, one is serving the “eternal boss.”

22. See Navasky, *Naming Names*, 314–19. In his elaboration of the concept of the degradation ceremony, Navasky builds on the work of the sociologist Harold Garfinkel.

23. Kazan, *A Life*, 487.

24. Mattison and Aribat, *Psychanalyse de la collaboration*, 202. The phrase may be translated: “to subjugate others, while (or by) making themselves servants of that obscure big Other who does not exist.” I attribute the phrase to Aribat, because he introduces it in the context of a dialogue with Mattison.

25. In *Original Story By*, 242, Arthur Laurents writes: “The House Un-American Committee didn’t subpoena Budd Schulberg; he sent a telegram offering to testify and literally chased the Committee from one city to another before he caught up and could inform on his friends.” We will soon see how eagerly Kazan, too, undertook the project of collaboration, once he committed himself to it. Let us note for now that, just as the figure of the informer played

a prominent role in his work both before and after his own naming of names, so, too, did the figure of the assassin continue to loom large in his career, well after the period of the blacklist. In an interview with Michel Ciment, he says of his 1971 novel, *The Assassins*: “The book is about the various kinds of assassination that are going on in this country: character-assassination, actual assassination, the frustrations of young people as they face the way authority is manipulated and put down.” See Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 172. On the various informer figures recurring in Kazan’s work as a playwright, director, and novelist, see Navaksy, *Naming Names*, 200–22.

26. Kazan, *A Life*, 41. In the notes he kept during the making of *A Face in the Crowd*, Kazan, addressing himself, wrote: “You are falsely aggressive in the most adolescent way. Stop being a nigger or a Jew. Look at things without fear of threat. You are so old and nothing can happen to you. You are the only person who can hurt you.” (This material can be found in the Wesleyan University Cinema Archives.) The present chapter argues that the kind of “Jew” Kazan and Schulberg most dread (becoming) is not the resentful adolescent that they already are but, rather, the self-dissolving comedian.

27. I am echoing here the phrase “the mimesis of mimesis” in Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 152. This chapter, like the book as a whole, owes a much larger debt to Horkheimer and Adorno’s analysis of mimesis and antisemitism, as will become evident.

28. Beck, *Budd Schulberg*, 123. Unlike Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, this book contains the complete transcript of Schulberg’s HUAC testimony.

29. Schulberg, *Moving Pictures*. Schulberg’s father was B. P. Schulberg, the head of production at Paramount.

30. Beck, *Budd Schulberg*, 123.

31. Caillois, *Le Mythe et l’homme*, 103. Here is more of the context: “On a donc affaire à un *luxé* et même à un *luxé* dangereux, car il n’est pas sans exemple que le mimétisme fasse tomber l’animal de mal en pis: les chenilles arpeuteuses simulent si bien les pousses d’arbuste que les horticulteurs les taillent avec un sécateur; le cas des Phyllies est encore plus misérable: elles se broutent entre elles, se prenant pour de véritables feuilles, en sorte qu’on pourrait croire à une sorte de masochisme collectif aboutissant à l’homophagie mutuelle, la simulation de la feuille étant une *provocation* au cannibalisme dans cette manière de festin totémique” (We are thus dealing with a *luxury* and even with a dangerous luxury, for it is not unheard-of for mimeticism to cause an animal to go from bad to worse: surveyor caterpillars so well simulate shrub shoots that gardeners cut them down with shears; the case of leaf insects is even more wretched: they graze on each another, taking each other for real leaves, so that one could believe in a sort of collective masochism ending in mutual homophagy, the simulation of the leaf being a *provocation* to cannibalism in the manner of a totemic feast). First published in 1938, Caillois’s book is one of the sources for Horkheimer and Adorno’s

theory of mimesis in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. As Horkheimer and Adorno point out, Caillois's "mimétisme" resembles Freud's death drive (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 189).

32. I borrow the term "chameleonism" from Mattison and Aribat, who use it in *Psychanalyse de la collaboration* to describe the Vichy mentality.

33. I am alluding again to Hellman's remark about the collaboration of the Hollywood moguls with HUAC: "It would not have been possible in Russia or Poland, but it was possible here to offer the Cossacks a bowl of chicken soup." Hellman, *Scoundrel Time*, 68. When the parvenu is a cooperative witness, he deflects the Cossacks not only by singing to them, but also by tossing them the bodies of Jewish pariahs.

34. Just before the passage from his testimony quoted above, Schulberg says: "The problem [of Communist influence] to me falls into two parts. One is to check in every way the manipulators and conspirators of this, who do use these other people who are, I would call, innocents. I think personally the best way to do that is to tighten up in every way the laws on espionage and sabotage, which probably is being done." Beck, *Budd Schulberg*, 123.

35. The other friendly witness was Richard Collins. According to Maurice Rapf (interviewed in McGilligan and Buhle, ed., *Tender Comrades*, 534), Schulberg "named [Richard] Collins, because he wanted to get even with Collins." (The interpolation is the editors'.) An opponent of the blacklist, and Schulberg's sometime friend, Rapf makes a number of valuable observations about Schulberg and his testimony (530–34).

36. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 151–52. I discuss this passage briefly in "Glad to Be Unhappy," 525. Some of that discussion is reworked in these pages.

37. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 149. In a disappointing book entitled *Groveling and Other Vices*, Alphons Silbermann suggests that "the simultaneity of enforced adaptation and necessary arse-licking . . . affects all Jews as a result of their Jewishness." This claim for the universality of Jewish sycophancy needs to be contextualized in relation to Horkheimer and Adorno's anatomy of anti-Semitism.

38. Schulberg, "Introduction to the Modern Library Edition," *What Makes Sammy Run?*, xiv.

39. I invoke again a passage I alluded to in chapter 1: "The man of *ressentiment* is like a dog, a kind of dog which only reacts to traces (a bloodhound)." Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 115.

40. On the way in which the Red Scare afforded the pretext for a regime of permissible sadism, see Roth, *I Married a Communist*, 262: "Every soul its own betrayal factory. For whatever reason: survival, excitement, advancement, idealism. For the sake of the damage that can be done, the pain that can be inflicted. For the cruelty in it. For the *pleasure* in it. The pleasure of manifesting one's latent power. The pleasure of dominating others, of destroying people

who are your enemies. You're surprising them. Isn't that the pleasure of betrayal? The pleasure of tricking somebody. . . . When before had betrayal ever been so stigmatized and rewarded in this country?" In chapter 1, I quote from a passage two pages later that extends this theme.

41. Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, 436. I am quoting from Schulberg's telegram to HUAC and from the first page of his testimony, a veritable riot of sir-vility.

42. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 87.

43. Kazan grew up in the New York City suburb of New Rochelle.

44. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 88.

45. See, for example, Kazan, *A Life*, 137–38.

46. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 86–87.

47. Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, 489.

48. *Ibid.*, 493. For an analysis of Kazan's cooperative testimony, and his use of the traumatic memory that motivated it, as a triumph of Method acting, see Hoberman, "A Snitch in Time," 6.

49. Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, 493.

50. *Ibid.*, 483, 482.

51. But see Kazan, *A Life*, 450–56, for an account of the pressure exerted upon him by Spyros Skouras and Darryl Zanuck, the heads of Twentieth Century-Fox.

52. *Ibid.*, 459.

53. On his resentment of his college classmates: "Every time I saw privilege from then on, I wanted to tear it down or to possess it. During those cold, dark years at Williams, the emotional groundwork for me to join the Communist Party was laid down." *Ibid.*, 44.

54. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 151.

55. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 83.

56. See, for instance, Hoberman, "A Snitch in Time," 7.

57. "According to a familiar crasis, physical plenitude establishes a kind of moral clarity: only the strong can be frank. As we can imagine, the essence common to all these powers is virility." Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, 131. "These powers" are the attributes of the "lieutenants" of the anti-Semitic demagogue Pierre Poujade (mentor of Jean-Marie Le Pen).

58. In a review of Silbermann's *Grovelling and Other Vices* (whose German title is *Von der Kunst der Arschkriecherei*), Thomas M. Kemple, drawing on Freud, calls for "a consideration of 'ass-licking' practices that have more to do with pleasure and love than grovelling and sycophancy." "Editorial," 2. The interest of the present study is indeed in how ass-licking and its variants reveal sycophancy as a form of pleasure and love.

59. Kazan, *A Life*, 138.

60. In Kazan's view, sycophancy is by no means limited to the Communist Party. Indeed, he displays the sycophant's talent for diagnosing sycophancy

everywhere (except in himself). In his introduction to the published screenplay of *A Face in the Crowd*, he recalls, for instance, his first day at lunch in the Twentieth Century-Fox commissary: “The center tables were taken by the stars. They were surrounded by their favorites and sycophants: make-up men, hairdressers, stand-ins, agents, girl- or boyfriends.” Kazan, “Introduction,” viii.

61. Kazan’s language echoes that of Schulberg, who, having preceded Kazan in his HUAC testimony, in some sense served as the model for the latter. “I was comforted by something Budd Schulberg wrote me; his experience paralleled my own. ‘The person in my difficulty,’ he said, ‘since he cannot please all his old friends, must settle for pleasing himself.’” Kazan, *A Life*, 471. That one’s capitulation to the state must be called “pleasing oneself” makes clear how “wretched” the sycophant’s “parody of fulfillment” is. Not that the informer’s dividend of sadism is in doubt. But “pleasing oneself” leaves out both the considerable political coercion and the considerable aggression toward others that are involved in this supposedly autonomous pleasure. (It is not just that Schulberg “cannot please all his old friends”: “pleasing himself” has required that he actively *harm* old friends.) In his recent *Elia Kazan*, xxviii, Richard Schickel calls attention to a passage in Kazan’s autobiography, in which Kazan departs from his stance of persistent defiance (“If you expect an apology”; see note 6 above) and expresses remorse about the human cost of his testimony. Imagining apologizing to Tony Kraber, one of those he named before HUAC, Kazan writes (*A Life*, 685): “I felt that no political cause was worth hurting another human for. What good deeds were stimulated by what I’d done? What villains exposed? How is the world better for what I did? It had just been a game of power and influence, and I’d been taken in and twisted from my true self. I’d fallen for something I shouldn’t have, no matter how hard the pressure and no matter how sound my reasons. The simple fact was that I wasn’t political—not then, not now.” Kazan’s words here are compelling. It is still worth noting, however, that, even in the mode of apology, he promotes the heroism of the “true self” over and against the political—while maintaining the “soundness” of his political reasons. It doesn’t take too much perspicacity to see that being true to oneself (instead of “being political”) may be another move in the “game of power and influence.”

62. Truffaut, *The Films of My Life*, 114.

63. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 118–19.

64. The title of Kazan’s most autobiographical film and, according to him, “my favorite of all the pictures I’ve made.” Quoted in Young, *Kazan*, 288.

65. Quoted in Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 376. In his *Life*, 451, Kazan has this to say about Spyros Skouras, the president of Twentieth Century-Fox at the time of the HUAC hearings, and his brothers: “Like most immigrants then, they would defend themselves by flaunting their patriotism. [paragraph break] I do not altogether exclude myself from this characterization.”

66. Kazan, *A Life*, 40.

67. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 114.

68. Although Kazan took pride in despising Hollywood (along with so much else), and although *A Face in the Crowd* was produced by his own company, Newtown Productions, the film was distributed by Warner Brothers. Regardless, then, of its aura of “independence,” of hailing from a new town, it was still a Hollywood film, as any film that wished to enjoy any viability or visibility in the fifties had to be. For a discussion of *A Face in the Crowd* that places it in the context of the competition between film and television, and in the larger 1950s discourse about mass culture, see Maloney, “The Faces in Lonesome’s Crowd,” 251–77. Despite Kazan’s claim that the film was ahead of its time, Maloney argues that it participates in an “on-going controversy about the value and danger of ‘mass culture,’” and that “by the time *A Face in the Crowd* came out, the terms of this debate were about as familiar to the general reader (and film and television viewer) as were the modalities of popular culture itself” (255).

69. *Ibid.*, 115. Kazan means Nixon the president rather than Nixon the former HUAC member—although, as Lillian Hellman, for example, has pointed out (see *Scoundrel Time*, 152–55), Watergate was in many ways a continuation of the blacklist. Foretelling Nixon future, and repressing, which is to say, thoroughly shaped by, the trauma of Nixon past, *A Face in the Crowd* explicitly refers to Nixon present—or at least to the Nixon of the “Checkers” speech, which Lonesome invokes in his praise of “a pitch with a hound.” The claim for the film’s prescience has been diligently updated by Schickel, *Elia Kazan*, 343: “When I spoke with Kazan about the film in 1990 he laughed: ‘It anticipates Ronald Reagan. And I can’t say anything better than that . . .’ We can. It also anticipates George W. Bush’s manipulations of the crowd.”

70. Indeed, Eric Smoodin goes so far as to characterize *A Face in the Crowd* as a “remake” of Capra’s *Meet John Doe* (among such other “reinventions” of the Capra film as Stephen Frears’s *Hero* [1992] and Spike Lee’s *Bamboozled* [2000]). See Smoodin, *Regarding Frank Capra*, 238. With its closer source in Schulberg’s short story, “Your Arkansas Traveler” (see note 73 below), *A Face in the Crowd*, it seems to me, is less a remake of *Meet John Doe* than a reinterpretation of it—but, in any case, a far more retrograde film than it imagines itself to be.

71. The pinkish hue is underscored by Kazan’s notes in the Wesleyan University Cinema Archives. Likening Senator Fuller to such “unphysical types” as Adlai Stevenson and Robert Taft, Kazan writes: “The son of a bitch is a bachelor and the American public can only think one thing: he’s queer!”

72. Young, *Kazan*, 238.

73. Arthur Godfrey’s own Lonesome-like on-air self-betrayal occurred when he fired Julius LaRosa, a popular singer on his show, by announcing to the

television audience that LaRosa had just “sung his swan song.” On the rather improbable secularization of Lonesome, see Glenn Erickson’s online review of *A Face in the Crowd*:

What Schulberg and Kazan don’t dare touch is the role of revivalist religion in the real-life trends behind *A Face in the Crowd*. Televangelists became extremely popular in the early 1950s and often tried to parlay their fame into political power, with mostly middling results. Lonesome Rhodes is strictly a secular, *Hee Haw* kind of demagogue. The born-again minority would eventually find influence way beyond their numbers, eventually arriving at their present ability to warp and steer public policy.

It should be noted, however, that in “Your Arkansas Traveler,” Schulberg’s short story on which the film was based, Lonesome is not completely de-Christianized: in one of his broadcasts, he asserts that “what we need is a little more good old-fashioned Christianity and a whole lot less of this new fangled bee-you-rock-racy”; later, the narrator (the precursor of Patricia Neal’s character), says, “I had toned down the views that would have made him sound like a sweet-talking Father Coughlin.” Schulberg, “Your Arkansas Traveler,” 29, 38. In the film, Lonesome’s religiosity has been toned down to the aforementioned snatch of hymn, to the nondenominational platitude, “The family that prays together stays together,” and to a passing reference to the “ol’ Bible my daddy give me.” Discussing the film with Ciment (*Kazan on Kazan*, 118), Kazan claims that Billy Graham (along with Huey Long and Arthur Godfrey) was a “model [. . .] for the character.”

74. In a scene that appears in Schulberg’s published screenplay but not in the film, Lonesome tries to fire the writer, Mel Miller (the Schulberg figure), for insubordination. After Mel beats him to the punch with a bravura rendition of “You can’t fire me—I quit!,” Lonesome says, “You won’t work any show on this network. I’ll get you blacklisted from hell to Honolulu” (Schulberg, *A Face in the Crowd*, 118). It is as if the blacklist could be acknowledged—and, even here, the disappearance of this scene from the film might exemplify the rigor with which Hollywood censorship *censors itself*—only on the following terms: that blacklisting take place in the world of television rather than in the movie business; that its agents be associated with what Schulberg considers the fascist left (Stalin, Lillian Hellman) rather than with the fascist right (HUAC and McCarthy); and that the Schulberg figure be its victim rather than its accomplice. A similar policy of displacement governs references to “sycophancy.” Like Kazan, Schulberg finds sycophancy everywhere except in himself, and when he names it, he is careful to imply that it has nothing to do with him. In the text of the screenplay, he describes Lonesome’s “*success with its accompanying sycophancy*” (124). In his preface, he persists in his admiration for the film *The Informer* (*ibid.*, xx).

75. Roth, *I Married a Communist*, 284.

76. Kazan, cited in Navaksey, *Naming Names*, 210. In “Facing the Past,” the documentary that accompanies the recently released DVD of *A Face in the Crowd*, Leo Braudy comments on how the co-authors’ HUAC testimony resulted in the film’s richness and ambiguity. This view is consistent with the larger argument about Kazan’s films that Braudy elaborates in his essay, “‘No Body’s Perfect,’” 191–215. Schickel, *Elia Kazan*, 344, has observed that the film’s mainstream reviewers failed to appreciate it because “they were dead set against ambiguity.”

77. A few years later, John Frankenheimer’s *The Manchurian Candidate* will propose, in the service of the same sycophantic, anti-Communist agenda, that the right is really the left, and therefore even more pernicious than we thought.

78. The words *The Assassins*, at any rate, are scribbled below the title, *A Face in the Crowd*, on an envelope found in one of the many versions of the shooting script; this material is housed in the Wesleyan University Cinema Archives.

79. Schulberg has written extensively about boxing, perhaps most notably in his novel, *The Harder They Fall*.

80. Comparing Kazan to the sorcerer’s apprentice, Tailleux writes: “Or dépasser, c’est doubler, et doubler c’est trahir, et le film trahit Kazan et Schulberg en révélant plus qu’ils n’ont voulu dire” (To transcend is to get ahead of [*doubler*], and *doubler* means to betray, and the film betrays Kazan and Schulberg by revealing more than they want to say). Tailleux, *Elia Kazan*, 102.

81. I have discussed Agamben’s distinction between the citizen and the refugee in chapter 1; here, I would merely cite a pertinent passage from his *Means without End*, 20: “If the refugee represents such a disquieting element in the order of the nation-state, this is so primarily because, by breaking the identity between the human and the citizen and that between nativity and nationality, it brings the originary fiction of sovereignty to crisis.”

82. In “Polonsky and Kazan,” 262, Butler writes: “In *Force of Evil* [1948] . . . Polonsky diagnosed American society as conducive to the informer even as HUAC was barely under way.” Nine years later, well into HUAC’s “parade of stoolpigeons,” *A Face in the Crowd* reveals American society as not just conducive to the informer but as *requiring* the informer. Despite, or because of, the greater deference with which Kazan and Schulberg treat American power—Polonsky, of course, was blacklisted for refusing to answer HUAC’s questions—*A Face in the Crowd* shows American society as *essentially* a society of informers. Butler comments acutely on how Kazan buys into the fantasy of individualism, tracing his investment in part to his Greek-American identity: “in flight from the experience of poverty, the ethnic group is driven to assimilate into American society by the promise of eventual wealth and success, yet seeks to obscure the extent of its conformism by clinging to notions of

patriarchal individualism, redolent of past traditions” (ibid., 263). Butler also, however, relates Kazan’s conformist individualism to an impulse in postwar America that is not necessarily limited to immigrants (by which I mean recent immigrants): “in *Viva Zapata* and *On the Waterfront* the affirmations of a familiar American commitment to individualism would have appealed to an America needing to hide from its mob mentality” (ibid., 263).

83. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 114.

84. In Young, *Kazan*, 235–36, the director is describing his work with the then-inexperienced Andy Griffith: “I showed him what I wanted a lot. Take for example the early scene in jail when the sheriff wakes Lonesome. I knew from my own experience that a lot of animals fight on their backs. It’s their favorite position because they fight with their claws.” The black prisoner’s refusal to be turned into a “minstrel,” and perhaps his mere presence, are consistent with the film’s general “progressivism” where African Americans are concerned. Nevertheless, it is almost as evasive around questions of race as it is around questions of religion. In keeping with the overall pattern of his corruption, Lonesome Rhodes seems to start out as an enemy of antiblack racism, and to end as one of its agents. What this trajectory overrides is a more candid appraisal of racist resentment in American “populism” itself.

85. “Pygmalion in reverse” is Kazan’s phrase (Young, *Kazan*, 115). In his review of the film Bosley Crowther, bypassing Marcia, writes that “Mr. Schulberg and Mr. Kazan spawn a monster not unlike the one of Dr. Frankenstein” (*New York Times*, 29 May 1957: 33). Truffaut gives Marcia full credit for her creation; referring to how she names him Lonesome, Truffaut writes: “A small journalistic trick starts the whole machinery. The girl is honest and sensitive; nevertheless, all the fraudulence of the journalistic world is fully expressed in that little trick” (*The Films of My Life*, 114).

86. The becoming-fascist of Lonesome’s racial politics has its equivalent in the perversion of his gender politics: he starts out speaking up for oppressed housewives, and ends up complaining that there are no longer any “unliberated” women.

87. Kazan, *A Life*, 568–69.

88. Truffaut, for his part, subscribes to the fiction of innocence corrupted—although, in classic fifties fashion, he blames the mother herself for the corruption: “From this point on [the point at which Marcia gives Lonesome his name], whatever may happen, whatever his crimes and however innocent she may be, we are unable to pity the good girl; she represents corruption, he is the corrupted. It’s he who has the right to complain right up to the end.” *The Films of My Life*, 114.

89. See note 25 above for the full quotation.

90. In an earlier version of the screenplay (housed in the Wesleyan University Cinema Archive), Lonesome does, however, end up jumping, or at least falling, to his death.

91. One of those Kazan named before HUAC was Art Smith, his Group Theatre colleague and co-author, with him, of the agitprop drama *Dimitroff*; in Kazan's eight-hundred-page autobiography, there is one reference to Smith, and it appears in a letter that Kazan quotes (*A Life*, 467).

92. Kazan, "Paeon of Praise for a Face Above the Crowd," *New York Times*, Sunday, 26 May 1957: 2:5.

93. In *A Life*, 469, Kazan reports that, after his cooperative testimony, the *Daily Worker* "predicted the loss of my manhood. Actually I'd heard of a fellow film director, Bob Rossen, who'd confessed that for a year after he'd testified cooperatively he'd been unable to maintain a satisfactory erection." Kazan implies here, and in *A Face in the Crowd*, that he had no such problem—even that testifying was something of a turn-on. Abraham Polonsky, an uncooperative witness, points out that "one informs not only to escape punishment and regain acceptance but to share once again in the authority of the state" (Pechter, "Abraham Polonsky and *Force of Evil*," 53). Sharing in the authority of the state, Kazan and Schulberg seem to suggest, can make a man hard. They also suggest, however, the extent to which that excitement can be bound up with fear (of losing one's share in the state's authority).

94. On connotation versus denotation (in relation to male homosexuality rather than to Jewishness, though, as I have suggested, the two identities can overlap or even coincide), see D. A. Miller, "Anal Rope."

95. Schulberg, *A Face in the Crowd*, 30.

96. "Melvin" comes from a Celtic word meaning "chief." In other words, it is a typical Jewish man's name of its period.

97. Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, xiv (introduction).

98. *Ibid.*, 42. In the film, "softest" becomes "easiest."

99. The date of Mel's graduation—why was he still in college in 1944?—might contribute to the impression of his initial softness. Although both Kazan and Schulberg served in the armed forces during the Second World War, they seem to suggest that Mel is in greater need of being toughened up. I thank Caroline Levine for calling my attention to this point.

100. Could "Abe Steiner" stand in for "Art Smith"? The character somewhat resembles the actor, not only nominally and physically but also experientially (in having been "thrown off the train").

101. In one of the notebooks that he kept during the period of *A Face in the Crowd* (and which is available in the Wesleyan University Cinema Archives), Kazan indicates that Marcia is of Irish descent.

102. Marcia, or her literary precursor, is the narrator of "Your Arkansas Traveler." Staging the process of Marcia's marginalization, the film of course demonstrates Hollywood's sexism, as well as the more general (though historically specific) timidity of which that sexism is a symptom.

103. Schulberg, *A Face in the Crowd*, 153.

104. *Ibid.*, 170.

105. Mel's manly and yet heimish predecessor, that earlier Schulberg surrogate Al Manheim, the narrator of *What Makes Sammy Run?*, is in fact the son of a rabbi, to whom he gratefully attributes the moral seriousness underlying his Broadway pizzazz. See *What Makes Sammy Run?*, 25.

106. Schulberg, *A Face in the Crowd*, 42. Mel of course comes from a long pop culture line of mild-mannered Jewish (or crypto-Jewish) superheroes.

107. Jones, "The Psychology of Quislingism," 4–5. If we put Silbermann's suggestion (see note 37 above) that all Jews are sycophants together with Jones's suggestion that all sycophants are homosexual, we arrive at the syllogistic conclusion that all Jews are homosexual. I have no quarrel with this conclusion, although I do object to the logic by which it is reached. Let me repeat and amplify what I have just said in the text: the problem with sycophants—that is, what makes them sycophants—is that they aren't homosexual or Jewish enough. I have addressed the putative Jewishness and homosexuality of sycophancy in chapter 1.

108. Kazan, *A Life*, 27. The book jacket congratulates the author for his "almost outrageous honesty." On the use of "the feminine" by male collaborators, see Koestenbaum, *Double Talk*.

109. Sayre, *Running Time*, 166. In addition to being reborn as a redneck, Sammy—that Schulbergian archetype, the office boy on the make, the Satanic avatar of the Horatio Alger hero—gets split into a second, secondary character in the film. Roger Tailleur writes: "Le monde satirique de Schulberg est là tout entier, tout au long de cette odysée si semblable à celle de ses héros romanesques, dont le personnage de Joey De Palma semble en outre ressusciter le fameux Sammy Glick" (The satirical world of Schulberg is here in its entirety, throughout this odyssey so similar to that of his novelistic heroes; the character of Joey De Palma seems, moreover, to resuscitate the famous Sammy Glick). Tailleur, *Elia Kazan*, 100.

110. Sammy Glick at one point calls himself "Uncle Sammy." See Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, 81.

111. I am of course alluding here to the erotic triangle theorized by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men*.

112. *Sweet Smell of Success* is about a sycophantic press agent in the service of a gossip columnist based on Walter Winchell. One of its producers (Harold Hecht) and one of its screenwriters (Clifford Odets) were cooperative witnesses before HUAC.

113. The film's portrait of the American public has been judged "elitist" by, for instance, Maloney, "The Faces in Lonesome's Crowd," and Yates, "Smart Man's Burden," 19–28.

114. Schulberg, *A Face in the Crowd*, 144.

115. In the documentary "Facing the Past," Brady comments on how the portrait of Mel comes out of Schulberg's experience and previous treatment of the Hollywood writer's hatred of himself for "selling out."

116. But see Nietzsche on the real artist the sycophantic hack longs to become: "Let us, first of all, eliminate the artists: they do not stand nearly independently enough in the world and *against* the world for their changing valuations to deserve attention *in themselves!* They have at all times been valets of some morality, philosophy, or religion; quite apart from the fact that they have unfortunately often been all-too-pliable courtiers of their own followers and patrons, and cunning flatterers of ancient or newly arrived powers. They always need at the very least protection, a prop, an established authority: artists never stand apart; standing alone is contrary to their deepest instincts." Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 102.

117. Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, 116.

118. Young, *Kazan*, 233.

119. It is of course entirely consistent with the rules of this game that the players reverse roles, or—which comes to the same thing—that each of them contain both roles within himself. About *A Face in the Crowd*, Roger Tailleur writes: "La méchanceté de Schulberg, sa verve, sa misanthropie, son impétuosité, sa noirceur, son humeur, on n'en finirait pas d'alterner." In fact, Tailleur considers Schulberg too much the bad cop, from whose influence Kazan must liberate himself: "Il faudra que Kazan quitte Schulberg, et surtout l'actualité, il faudra qu'il regarde vingt-cinq, trente et cinquante ans en arrière, pour qu'il délaisse une si radicale indignation et retrouve, sans émousser beaucoup sa virulence critique, quelque tendresse et quelque espoir" (Schulberg's nastiness, his eloquence; his misanthropy, his impetuosity; his darkness, his humor—one will never finish with these oppositions. Kazan will have to leave Schulberg, and especially the present; he will have to look back twenty-five, thirty, and fifty years, in order to abandon so radical an indignation and to re-discover, without excessively softening his critical virulence, some tenderness and some hope). Tailleur, *Elia Kazan*, 100, 102–3. Kazan's notes on *A Face in the Crowd* in the Wesleyan Cinema Archives seem to support this view both of his collaborator and of his collaborator's primary surrogate in the film. Kazan schematizes (and "assassinates") the character of Mel as follows: "Seems reasonable, is pigheaded; Seems bold, is hysterical; Seems fair, is rigid; Seems moral, is puritanical." Of Mel's resemblance to Schulberg, Kazan writes: "Mel: Budd Schulberg—his little looks away—the disgust and violence deep down behind the compliance and the 'gentleness.' In fact he's much tougher and much more business like than anyone else. (Budd, that is.)"

120. What Lacan actually says is "A casser l'oeuf se fait l'Homme, mais aussi l'Hommelette." "Position de l'inconscient," 845.

121. Place this final image of the glittering Coca-Cola sign next to the final image of the candy store sign in *Body and Soul*. One film ends with a pseudomockery of capitalism; the other, true to its dialectical ancestry, points to a way out of its capitalist hell.

122. Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, 40.

123. *Ibid.* To reinforce the point about Coca-Cola as American icon, the camera captures, just beyond the “Coca-Cola” sign, a neon sign reading: “Hotel Empire.”

124. *Funny Face* is of course the title of another film of 1957—about, among other things, Franco-American relations.

125. Although, in the aftermath of the recent presidential election in France, that renewed friendship threatens to take a dismaying form. In a *New York Times* article, Elaine Sciolino quotes Nicolas Sarkozy’s victory speech: “Addressing his ‘American friends,’ Mr. Sarkozy said, ‘I want to tell them that France will always be by their side when they need her, but that friendship is also accepting the fact that friends can think differently.’” Some consolation might be derived from Sarkozy’s reserving the right to think differently. Less consolingly, however, the article goes on to quote a liberal Democratic U.S. Senator, Charles E. Schumer of New York, as saying, “It would be nice to have someone who’s head of France who doesn’t have a knee-jerk reaction against the United States” (“An Admirer of America Sets a New Course for France.” *New York Times*, 8 May 2007: A8).

126. From *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 17, 442: “The origin of the Gr. Word, lit. = ‘fig-shower,’ has not been satisfactorily accounted for. The explanation, long current, that it orig. meant an informer against the unlawful exportation of figs cannot be substantiated. It is possible that the term referred orig. to the gesture of ‘making a fig’ or had an obscene implication.” A quotation from North’s *Plutarch* (1595) follows: “Wee may not altogetehr discredite those which say, they did forbid in the olde time that men should carie figges out of the countrie of Attica, and that from thence it came that these picke thankes, which bewray and accuse them that transported figges, were called *Sycophantes*.”

127. Schulberg, *Moving Pictures*, 212.

128. *Ibid.*

129. *Ibid.*, 213.

130. *Ibid.*

131. *Ibid.*

132. On Rapf’s long and complicated relationship with Schulberg, see the interview with him in McGilligan and Paul Buhle, eds., *Tender Comrades*, as well as his memoir, *Back Lot*.

(5) Comicosmopolitanism

1. Zurawik, *The Jews of Prime Time*, 72.

2. *Ibid.*, 71.

3. For a lucid account of the Loeb affair, see Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium*, 37–48. Also helpful is Hoberman, “*The Goldbergs*,” 124–27.

4. *Ibid.*, 72–73.
5. Kate Mostel et al., *170 Years of Show Business*, 117.
6. Doherty, *Cold War*, 43.
7. *Red Channels* (http://www.authentichistory.com/images/1950s/red_channels/redchoo1.html). On *Red Channels* and the blacklist in general as a “classic protection racket,” see Doherty, *Cold War*, 36.
8. Doherty, *Cold War*, 47. Others who have noted this shift include Marc, *Comic Visions* and Buhle and Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight*.
9. Apart from one anodyne reference to CBS producer Fred Friendly’s Jewishness, Clooney’s well-meaning film simply ignores the ethnic politics of the showdown between Murrow and McCarthy: a showdown as ethnically charged and overdetermined as everything else in McCarthy’s career, not to mention in the much longer and more successful career of McCarthyism. For a subtler and wider-ranging analysis of the Murrow-McCarthy confrontation, see Doherty, *Cold War*, 161–88. On William Paley’s vexed relation to his Russian-Jewish background, and on how that relation affected the content of CBS programming well beyond the 1950s, see Zurawik, *Prime Time*, 62–77.
- The existence of a marked pro-Israel bias in American network news coverage of Middle-Eastern politics might suggest that the anxiety of which I speak above has finally subsided. I would argue, however, that the relatively undisguised identification with Israel on the part of the mainstream U.S. media reflects the extent to which Israel has ceased to be “Jewish,” that is, comicosmopolitan, becoming instead an extension of the American imperial (and fundamentalist-Christian) *imagininaire*. On the de-Judaization of Israel, see, for example, Badiou’s article “Israël,” originally published in 1982, and reprinted in his *Circonstances*, 3, 21–28; see also, in the same volume, Winter, “Signifiant-maître des nouveaux aryens,” 101–24. These texts have been translated by Steve Corcoran in Badiou, *Polemics*. For more on Badiou, Israel, and Jewishness, see the Coda to the present volume.
10. This account of comicosmopolitanism is informed by the writings of Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, and de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. On de Certeau as a theorist of cosmopolitanism, see Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Styles*, 26–27, 134.
11. The first two examples are cited in Zurawik, *Prime Time*, 24; “Molly,” Zurawik remarks, “had her own version of the malapropism that came to be known as the Mollypropism” (24). The third example is related by Abraham Polonsky (who, early in his show-business career, wrote for Berg) in *Writing for Television: Television and the Blacklist*, a videotaped 1997 panel discussion featured in the Museum of Television and Radio Seminar Series, and available for viewing at the Museum of Television and Radio in New York City.
12. In “Our Show of Shows” (in Hoberman and Shandler, *Entertaining America*, 144), Hoberman and Shandler cite “one reviewer in the *New York Journal-American* [who] wrote that producer Max Liebman’s ‘years of dipping into

entertainment borscht gives [*Your Show of Shows*] a definite flavor, experience, adaptability, and taste.’” The persistence of the borscht tint or taint—*Your Show of Shows* ran from 1950 to 1954, and *Caesar’s Hour* from 1954 to 1957—might suggest that Abel Green’s warning was not being fully heeded, or the hinterland’s intolerance fully respected. I offer an alternative reading below.

13. Caesar (with Friedfeld), *Caesar’s Hours*, 66. I have not yet “found anything” myself to substantiate this claim—which, given the secrecy and duplicity with which McCarthy, HUAC, and company operated, hardly invalidates it. Lucille Ball’s case, however, was not entirely parallel to Caesar’s; on her better-documented encounter with HUAC—Ball had registered as a Communist in the thirties—see Kanfer, *Ball of Fire*, 152–154, 167–175.

14. Caesar, *Caesar’s Hours*, 115.

15. Buhle and Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight*, 1.

16. From *Max Leibman Presents*, a 1976 television special consisting of a compilation of sketches from *Your Show of Shows*, in the archive of the Museum of Television and Radio, New York City.

17. For an analysis of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, with particular attention to how it manages the problems of New York City and Jews presented by its ur-text, *Head of the Family*, in which Reiner himself starred, see Marc, *Comic Visions*, 84–120.

18. For a discussion of *Seinfeld* in terms of its greater or lesser degree of overt Jewishness, see Zurawik, *Prime Time*, 200–17.

19. Siegel, “The Insignificance of Larry David,” 4.

20. Buhle and Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight*, 1, discuss the film in relation to their point about the pedagogical and disciplinary project of “forcing New York into line”; for them, however, the importance of the film’s setting has to do not with comicosmopolitanism but, rather, with “the loss of New York’s role as the leading forum for the Popular Front culture of the 1930s and 1940s.”

21. “Walter Bernstein,” in McGilligan, *Backstory* 3, 108.

22. *Ibid.*, 108.

23. Polonsky, *Writing for Television* (see note 11). Polonsky’s remark occasions a certain amount of consternation in one of the other panelists, black-listee and screen- and television writer Joan LaCour Scott. Scott, whose husband, *Crossfire* producer Adrian Scott, figured in the Hollywood Ten, and was one of those driven to an early death by HUAC, takes exception to Polonsky’s comment, and to fellow panelist Robert Lees’s suggestion that a book should be written about the “funny side” of the blacklist. Polonsky finally apologizes to Scott—but only after making a series of “tasteless” jokes about the blacklist in relation to death, murder, and the Holocaust. I will have more to say about “tastelessness” in the course of this chapter.

24. For an account of the work that Bernstein, Polonsky, and Manoff did on *You Are There*, see Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 216–37. In his interview with McGilligan in *Backstory* 3, 96, Bernstein explains that, while he, Polonsky,

and Manoff sometimes helped each other with scripts, they wrote them more or less independently, each author having his own historical and thematic interests and talents. The process of writing *You Are There*, in other words, appears to have been some combination of the semi-collaborative and the semi-autonomous.

25. *Ibid.*, 222.

26. An anecdote by Bernstein, *ibid.*, 222, suggests the aesthetic continuity between *You Are There* and Clooney's film, with Edward R. Murrow as mediator. Bernstein relates an encounter between Murrow—the McCarthy-slayer hero of *Good Night, and Good Luck*—and the producer of *You Are There*: "Russell encountered Edward R. Murrow one day and Murrow pulled him aside, told him he watched *You Are There* every week and admired it and then, lowering his voice, asked Russell how he got away with it."

27. Most of the *You Are There* scripts written by Polonsky are collected in Schultheiss and Schaubert, ed., *To Illuminate Our Time*.

28. McGilligan, *Backstory* 3, 96. On the same page, Bernstein describes the *You Are There* scripts as "a strange combination of camp and closely reasoned, dramatic stuff." Insofar as the camp element of the scripts, perhaps like camp in general, is not-quite-fun, or not-quite-funny, it might explain the authors' not-quite-chortling.

29. Polonsky, *Writing for Television* (see note 1).

30. *Ibid.*

31. Buhle and Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight*, 1.

32. Bernstein describes this experience in *Inside Out*, 190–93.

33. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 418. Ellison's phrase is actually "confusing the class struggle with the ass struggle."

34. Bernardi replaced Mostel in the role of Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* on Broadway. As we shall see in the next chapter, this starring role in a hugely successful show constituted a triumphant vindication of the once virtually untouchable performer, but that vindication came at a price: Tevye's respectability, his profound *Americanness*, reflects the efficiency with which the blacklist had disciplined not just the blacklisted actor but perhaps American Jews in general.

35. Cited in Jared Brown, *Zero Mostel*, 300.

36. *Ibid.*, 92.

37. On the circumstances leading to Loeb's suicide, see Kate Mostel et al., *170 Years of Show Business*, 116–17, and Doherty, *Cold War*, 37–48.

38. Allen's performance, particularly in this scene, closely resembles his performances in his own films, and those performances in turn closely resemble Allen's performances as a stand-up comedian in the sixties. Mostel had also worked as a stand-up comedian, and the film suggests a peculiar continuity, of an almost genealogical kind, between his highly presentational style and Allen's.

On Allen's acting in the film, Bernstein recalls:

It was a very happy experience for all of us. Whether he would acknowledge it or not, Woody got a great deal from Marty in terms of his acting. He was on the film purely as an actor. He didn't write anything. He only contributed a couple of jokes. The one time he tried something on he picture was the sequence at the end [of the film] where he's testifying before the committee. We shot the scene and looked at the dailies, then decided we should make it funnier than it was. Woody said, "Let's shoot it again, and let me improvise." Marty set up the camera, and Woody improvised. He was hilarious. Only it had nothing to do with the picture. It was like ten minutes of stand-up comedy. Reluctantly, we couldn't use it. (*Backstory* 3, 109)

Although Allen's improvisation was cut from the scene, the effect of stand-up-comic improvisation persists in Allen's performance throughout the film, but especially here in the film's climax, where it assumes a strategic and even polemical salience. By no means does Allen's style have "nothing to do with the picture." On the contrary, its pseudoextraneousness is what makes it so integral to the film. Like Hecky-Mostel's style, which throws the drama "off balance," Allen's acting is characterized by a comic theatricality—a *frontal* approach—that is not easily assimilated to naturalistic conventions.

39. The supporters are holding signs, in a tableau that recalls a well-known photograph of the Hollywood Ten and their supporters. One of those signs reads: "Howard Prince, the *Real* American." We have seen other instances of the left's attempt to appropriate American identity (see the discussions of Stander and Paul Robeson in chapter 1). That *The Front* pictures this attempt does not, however, mean that it also endorses it, or merely endorses it. As I have been arguing in this chapter, the film's interest consists in its staging of a resistance in no way reducible to a reclaimed (or even, more ambitiously, a resignified) Americanism.

40. Buhle and Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight*, 195, point out that "Allen had broken into big-time comedy writing in the 1950s . . . thanks in part to connections made for him by a distant cousin, Abe Burrows, at a moment when Burrows was a celebrity writer but also one of the nastier friendly witnesses." (We will look at Burrows's testimony in the next chapter.) Buhle and Wagner argue (195–96) that Allen's participation in *The Front* represents one of the ways in which the apparently apolitical actor and auteur "made amends" for his debt to Burrows, and expressed a broader affinity, throughout his career, with the old left.

41. Discussing the careers that the most adventurous of Caesar's writers pursued after the fifties, Marc, *Comic Visions*, 100, writes: "Allen, with his *shiksas* and poetesses, became the bard of the uptown condominium cosmopolitans." Modified by "condominium," "cosmopolitans" clearly has a pejorative ring here. It is this sort of bad press that, as I have argued in chapter 1,

the new, ethically serious cosmopolitanism is especially eager to put behind itself.

(6) Bringing Down the House

1. Laurents, *Original Story By*, 285. Subsequent references to this work will be included parenthetically in the text.

2. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 96.

3. Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core*, 11–49. Lewis argues that today's Hollywood is the direct result—and the extension—of practices instituted during the blacklist period.

4. Porter, *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter*, 311.

5. Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression in Listening," 30.

6. Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason*, 548. The interpolation, "[1944?]," is Bentley's. Subsequent references to this work will be included parenthetically in the text.

7. Burrows had previously written the book for the musical *Gys and Dolls*. In his memoir, *Cy Feuer*, one of the show's producers, cites the following reason why the show was denied the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1951: "they wouldn't honor Abe Burrows because he refused to cooperate with the House Committee on Un-American Activities" (Feuer, *I Got the Show Right Here*, 151). Burrows would not be the first (or the last) uncooperative witness to change his mind.

8. For a discussion of cool as a mode of social control—though the author posits the 1920s as the pivotal decade—see Stearns, *American Cool*.

9. According to Garebian, *The Making of "West Side Story"*, 142–43, Brando reportedly wanted to play Tony in the film version.

10. There is also the persistent but unproven claim—a staple of blacklist lore—that Robbins named names because Ed Sullivan (or the FBI, or HUAC) was blackmailing him by threatening to reveal his homosexuality. Sullivan did in fact publish an article "suggesting" that Robbins be subpoenaed by HUAC; instead of explicitly referring to Robbins's homosexuality, the article adopts the standard practice of using anti-Communism as a front for gay-baiting. Sullivan's article is quoted in Lawrence, *Dance with Demons*, 167–69. On the interactions with Sullivan and other agents of anti-Communism that led to Robbins's testimony, see *ibid.*, 155–60, 165–72.

11. D. A. Miller, *Place for Us*, 39.

12. Cited in Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis, 1940–1996*, 93.

13. Not that this passion for justice could not raise eyebrows. Garebian points out that the State Department balked at the idea of taking the show to Moscow: "Washington was afraid that the Soviets would politically exploit

the show's grim picture of slum life and gang violence" (*The Making of "West Side Story,"* 142).

14. *Ibid.*, 31.

15. Laurents et al., *West Side Story*, 179. Subsequent references to this work will be included parenthetically in the text.

16. See, for instance, Sondheim as quoted in Garebian, *The Making of "West Side Story,"* 124: "Well, when rhyme goes against character, out it should go, and rhyme always implies education and mind working, and the more rhymes the sharper the mind."

17. *Ibid.*, 122.

18. *Ibid.*, 136.

19. But see Sondheim's disparaging remarks about cleverness in relation to "Gee, Officer Krupke," quoted in Zadan, *Sondheim & Co.*, 235.

20. According to Kate Mostel and Madeline Gilford, Zero Mostel, whose Broadway career and HUAC testimony we will be considering later in this chapter, had the same choice word for the police: "when Zero pointed at the Committee chairman [during his HUAC hearing] and, in a loud stage whisper, said, 'That man is a schmuck,' they deleted that." Kate Mostel et al., *170 Years of Show Business*, 108.

21. Zadan, *Sondheim & Co.*, 235.

22. Most, *Making Americans*, 116. On the Broadway musical as a distinctively Jewish American art form, see also Whitfield, *In Search of American Jewish Culture*, 59–87.

23. In *Green Grow the Lilacs*, the play on which *Oklahoma!* is based, the equivalent character is named "Jeeter"; "Jud" thus becomes all the more insistent as a signifier of Jewishness.

24. Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves*, 205.

25. Rodgers and Hammerstein, *Oklahoma!*, 48.

26. Transcript of Judy Holliday's Testimony, in FBI Files, on The Judy Holliday Resource Center, <http://www.wtv-zone.com/lumina/FBI/testimony-13.html>. 13:3. Subsequent references to this document will be included parenthetically in the text; the first numerical reference is to the transcript page, the second to the section of the page as printed out.

27. Carey, *Judy Holliday*, 143.

28. In her statement for HUAC, Ball made a point of dismissing her registration as a Communist in 1936 as "weak and silly and corny" (quoted in Kanfer, *Ball of Fire*, 168). Lillian Hellman might appear to belong in this small company insofar as she also managed to testify about her own beliefs while refusing to inform. But though Hellman evaded a citation for contempt of congress, unlike Holliday and Ball she did not evade the blacklist. That Hellman lacked the "attractiveness" of Holliday and Ball only partly explains why she could not play the gender card with the same results. See chapter 2 for discussion of Hellman's testimony.

29. On Holliday's female lover, see Carey, *Judy Holliday*, 43–45, and 146.

30. Holtzmann, *Judy Holliday*, 10. Holtzmann talks about Arens's "growing reputation for anti-Semitism" (164) at the time of Holliday's hearings.

31. See Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 23: "If M. Mitterand knows English but Mr. Reagan lacks French, it is the urbane M. Mitterand who must negotiate in an acquired tongue, the ignorant Mr. Reagan who may dilate in his native one."

32. "The language of intimidation" is inspired by the example of Roland Barthes's fantasized, never-written book on the *Linguistics of Intimidation*. (Many books that Barthes did write might well have had this title.) See Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, 149–50.

33. Comden and Green, *Bells Are Ringing*, 190. Subsequent references to this work will be included parenthetically in the text. Italicized quotations are taken from stage directions.

34. "Back Story: The New York Report," The Judy Holliday Resource Center, <http://www.wtv-zone.com/lumina/FBI/newyorkbs.html>, 1. The Web site includes the accompanying FBI file documenting the anonymous telephone call.

35. I am indebted here to D. A. Miller's *Place for Us*, not only for its elaboration of the importance of place in the Broadway musical, but also in particular for its evocative emphasis on *underground* places, the basement and the piano bar, as stages leading up to, and down from, the Broadway stage itself. See esp. 1–64.

36. It is interesting, in this regard, to consider Betty Comden's answer to a question about whether the scripts she and Green wrote for Hollywood films were "too subtle for other directors" than Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen: "I wouldn't say subtle so much as *foreign* to other directors. Possibly they wouldn't know what we were talking about." Daniell and McGilligan, interviewers, "Betty Comden and Adolph Green," 81.

37. Hulot-Kentor, "Translator's Introduction," xx.

38. Comden, *Offstage*, 263.

39. Arthur Miller, for instance, was called to testify, and found in contempt of congress, in 1956. In *Thirty Years of Treason* (791), Bentley points out: "it should not be forgotten that Miller was cited for contempt. He received a thirty-day suspended sentence and a five-hundred-dollar fine. In 1958 he was exonerated by the courts, but the time, trouble, and money the process cost must be charged—with a thousand other such bills—to the House Committee on Un-American Activities." As we shall see, Zero Mostel had testified, and remained blacklisted as a result of his testimony, in 1955.

40. Hellman, *Scoundrel Time*, 203. Hellman was herself involved (as librettist) in a noteworthy blacklist musical: *Candide* (1956), which "drew implicit parallels between the McCarthy era in postwar America and the Spanish Inquisition" (Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, 153).

41. Adorno, "Is Art Lighthearted?," 250.

42. In an obituary for the former switchboard operator Mary Printz (*New York Times*, March 2, 2009, A16), Margalit Fox writes: "If the long, helpful career of Mrs. Printz, who died on Feb. 21 at 85, sounds a great deal like that of the Judy Holliday character in the hit Broadway musical 'Bells Are Ringing,' it is no accident. One of Mrs. Printz's clients was Adolph Green, who, inspired by her extraordinary ministrations, wrote the show's book and lyrics with his frequent collaborator, Betty Comden." Hearing "Printz" in "Prantz," we sense an even greater affinity between Ella/Holliday and Sandor.

43. John B. Jones (*Our Musicals, Ourselves*, 171) observes that "the show contrasted Eastern and Western bloc mores and made America's popular notions of Soviet political methods the object of comedy (a bestselling Russian book is *Who's Still Who*)."

44. That *My Fair Lady* is an allegory of Jewish assimilation has been noted by the film historian Lester Friedman, in the documentary (based on Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own*) entitled *Hollywood: An Empire of Their Own*.

45. Quoted in Jared Brown, *Zero Mostel*, 178.

46. Quoted in Lawrence, *Dance with Demons*, 311.

47. On Jewish moral seriousness, see Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp,'" 290.

48. Stephen Sondheim evokes some of the risk for Mostel when he recalls how Mostel was offered the lead in *Forum* (after it had been turned down by Phil Silvers and Milton Berle): "'He [Mostel] gave out stories years later that he hadn't wanted to do it, but it wasn't true at all. He needed the work very badly and took it like *that*,' he said, snapping his fingers." Quoted in Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 151.

49. On this incident, see *ibid.*, 155. Secrest quotes Sondheim's account of how, during rehearsals for the show, he repeatedly corrected one of Mostel's lines, at which point Mostel exploded: "Well, maybe if you'd write me a funny line, you cocksucker!" According to Secrest, Sondheim "believed he was being made the scapegoat for the anger Mostel really wanted to direct against Robbins" (*ibid.*, 155). I am suggesting that Mostel did direct his anger against Robbins: even in the context of the anecdote—it is Robbins who corrects Mostel the third time, after which he explodes—it is possible that Mostel's "cocksucker" is meant for Robbins as well as for Sondheim. At the same time, I do not doubt that Mostel was capable of making Sondheim a scapegoat for Robbins. Mostel was not so undisciplined or so carnivalesque in his mimicry as to lose his sense of just how far out it was safe to stick his lip. Sondheim, while clearly formidable in his own right, even at that early stage of his career, must have seemed a much less dangerous target than Robbins—as anyone would have.

50. Julia Migenes, quoted in Lawrence, *Dance with Demons*, 341.

51. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 151.

52. *Ibid.*, 189.

53. An observer at Bentley's 1972 dramatization of the HUAC hearings, *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been*, remarked that Mostel disliked the play because, as represented in it, he "flirted with the Committee and was cute and coy," while "[Lionel] Stander slapped their face" (Jared Brown, *Zero Mostel*, 279). I am about to suggest that both Mostel and Stander, like Ring Lardner Jr., outrage HUAC precisely by flirting with it—by assaulting it with various butterfly effects.

54. Quoted by Lardner in Strugatz and McGilligan, "Ring Lardner Jr.," 208.

55. Sartre, "What Is Literature?," 40, quoted in Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 24.

56. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 24.

57. Brown, *Zero Mostel*, 233.

58. Symbolically cast out, because Mostel's appearance before HUAC actually took place in Los Angeles. See *ibid.*, 125.

59. *Fiddler on the Roof* would thus be one more example of the enterprise of "making Americans"—that is, of making *Jews* Americans—which, as Andrea Most argues in *Making Americans* (see note 22 above), defines the Jewish genre that is the Broadway musical. The only difference between *Fiddler on the Roof* and its predecessors would be the former's thematization of this enterprise, although, as my reference to allegory suggests, even this finally uncloseted Jewish musical—its very existence the sign of a certain Jewish-American "success"—does not entirely dispense with the mechanisms of protective opacity.

60. Kael, "A Bagel with a Bite out of It," 397.

61. Stein et al., *Fiddler on the Roof*, 6–7. Subsequent references to this work will be included parenthetically in the text.

62. On the question of Mostel's politics, see Jared Brown, *Zero Mostel*, 41–48.

63. On the oppressive inevitability of the heterosexual narrative in the Broadway musical, see D. A. Miller, *Place for Us*. Concerning *Fiddler's* "feminism," Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, 219, observes: "The show projects a cultural transformation from feminine to masculine from within, as the community is debased and destroyed by the outside world, a plot structure easily correlated with the emergence of the State of Israel in the wake of the Holocaust, and resonant with the fact that, late in the show's original run, Israel's leader was a particularly strong-willed woman (Golda Meir, prime minister from 1969 to 1974)."

64. See Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia*, 60–61.

65. Sheldon Harnick is quoted in Altman and Kaufman, *The Making of a Musical*, 118, as saying: "When we were working on the show . . . the question of using Yiddish words had come up, and we decided not to. I remember see-

ing too many nightclub comics, including Lenny Bruce, get cheap laughs by throwing in Jewish phrases.”

66. *Ibid.*, 117.

67. *Ibid.*, 114.

Coda

1. Badiou, *Polemics*, 163. One might place Badiou’s critique of Israel in relation to the work of, for instance, Jacqueline Rose. See her *States of Fantasy*, *The Question of Zion*, and *The Last Resistance*.

2. Badiou, *Polemics*, 169. The French phrase occurs in the original version of Badiou’s text, published under the title, *Circonstances*, 3, 27. The second English phrase is from the translation of this text in *Polemics*, 170.

3. Badiou, *Polemics*, 170.

4. This dissociation has been observed, and in some sense resisted, by Sharon Marcus in “Anne Frank and Hannah Arendt, Universalism and Pathos,” 89–131.

5. Anderson, “The Power of Distance,” 145.

6. Murdoch, *The Black Prince*, 116.

7. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 24.

8. The poem, by Pavel Friedmann, appears in Volavkova, ed., *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*.

9. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 189.

10. Examples of the dominant contemporary forms of cosmopolitan labor are well represented in *Cosmopolitics*, edited by Robbins and Cheah. See, in particular, Robbins, “Comparative Cosmopolitanisms,” 246–64, and Cheah, “Given Culture,” 290–328. See also Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?*.

11. Adorno, “Words from Abroad,” 1:187.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 152.

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He is the author of *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory, and the Novel* and *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*.

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