The Un-Americans

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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 “made jokes” and “acted 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 avowable 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 here 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, \textsc{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 anticosmopolitanism it represented. Here, for instance, is Congressman George Dondero of Michigan, not a member of \textsc{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.\footnote{11}

Like the Syracuse grocer, Congressmen Dondero and Rankin, less wary than most of their colleagues, come close to articulating the inarticulate fantasy behind the anti-Communist fashion show of which \textsc{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 \textsc{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.\footnote{12} In keeping with the more familiar understanding of the term, the sycophant, the object of \textit{sycoanalysis}—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: \(\text{HUAC’s rules of testimonial etiquette rule over the performance of Americanness itself. Leftist and liberal theorists of citizenship value it as the potential basis of a democratic polity, a realm apart from and salutarily larger than the exclusionary circles of the tribe and the community.}^{16}\) 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 \textit{civil} or more \textit{civilized} inflection of citizenship, \textit{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 \textit{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:

\begin{quote}
It was everywhere during those years, the accessible transgression, the \textit{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.\(^{19}\)
\end{quote}

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. 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. 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. 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 humiliating 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 jok ing, 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). 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.”

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.

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.25

Any parvenu by definition practices a kind of pseudocomedy: the techniques of ingratiating 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.  

This is the laughter of the comedicidal 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. 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.* 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.
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”; 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. 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. 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.”) 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.” 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. Thus did the Jews who “invented Hollywood” think to divest their product of its “cozy liberalism and Jewish intellectualism.” 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 blacklistees, 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.” 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.

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. 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. 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.

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 oppres-
sevenly elephantine dogma that dialectical materialism seems to be.
Put together by the “ridiculous” question, like improbable but some-
how magically congenial dancing partners, the heavy, earthbound phi-
losophy 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 Commu-
nist 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 cul-
ture 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 homo-
sexual 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 will-
ingness 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 re-sentiment, 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 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). 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.” 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.” 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.” 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.” 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.” 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. 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.” 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. 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-sentiment, this is because she gives herself over to the enviable experience of a primitive scentment 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 dis-
grace, 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 cha-
meleonic imitation of the environment. Unlike colonial mimicry, mi-
mesis—a central concept in the chapters ahead—promotes not subver-
sion, 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 vio-
lent aversion to the “malign infection” of mimetic behavior. But if, as
Horkheimer and Adorno argue, “the ego has been forged by harden-
ing 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 remind-
ing 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,” 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.” 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. 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. 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,” 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. 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 “multicultural” 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. 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 specularity 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. 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.”

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.”

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. 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.

Thanks to the sycophant’s mockery of it, in other words, that comic pleasure is made to seem a fate far worse than the petrifaction 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.” 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 chameleonic imitation, 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.”

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 informer—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. 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. 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. 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 un rationalized indulgence of the mimetic drive. Sycophancy is condemned to remain a pseudo comic 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. 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”). 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.” 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. The unblocking agent in schizoanalysis is of course the schizo, with its lines of escape “well below conditions of identity.” 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 sycophant 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 comedicidal 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. The sycoanalyst is never more like the sycophant than in subjecting him to the same hermeneutic of re-sentment 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-sentiment, 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 unrationaled, 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.” 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 psychoanalysis, 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—psychoanalysis 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 conglomerase 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.

One science to which psychoanalysis 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, postmodern 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 naively at home in art, and the folly of a rationality made absolute indifferent 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. 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-sentiment—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 the 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 blacklist ed 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.” 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. 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.