cies) became involved in Jewish education reform. But the government tended to leave girls out of the picture, opening the path for private schools. Among the first schools in the 1830s was Betsalel Stern’s in Odessa, showing the extent to which parents in that economic boomtown wanted their girls to learn skills that would enable them to succeed in integrating into Russian life. Odessa of course differed from the religious center of Vilna, but surprisingly even parents there supported Jewish girls’ schools. In Vilna the new movement of the Haskalah (education movement) was gaining ground, with the maskilim (reformers) placing emphasis on girls’ education in the belief that an educated mother would spread the message to her children.

Ultimately it is impossible to say exactly how many girls’ schools there were and how many girls studied in them. However, the numbers are not negligible. For example, Adler tells us that by 1899, there were 644 Jewish schools in the Pale of Settlement, and out of 50,773 students, 16,546 were girls (42). Thus, one can accept the author’s claim that it was through these educated girls that the succeeding generations of Jewish children in Russia received their own early training and modeling. The exponential growth of Russian education over the course of the last decades of the nineteenth century can be seen as a direct consequence of these earlier schools, among other factors. . . . They could not have foreseen the directions that transformation would take, nor even less the terrible forces the twentieth century would unleash on the Russian Jewish community, but they recognized that teaching Jewish girls had consequences. The story of the girls, the schools they attended, and the educators who taught them must now be rediscovered and integrated into the larger story of Jewish life in late imperial Russia. (150–51)

Although one might have wanted more discussion of the battles in the various communities (Orthodox, Hasidic, Maskilic), the author’s modest tone, and her acknowledgment that this attempt is only the start of research, disarm me. The book is well researched and well written and will surely be of use to scholars in Jewish education, Eastern European history, and Jewish life in nineteenth-century Russia.

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Who is a Jew? In recent years, the question has arisen in discussions about Israeli citizenship and the “right of return,” British schools, and even kosher food in American prisons. These recent battles over who can legitimately call herself a Jew have been fought on the grounds of halakhah, religious observance, ethnicity, and bloodlines.

But Sarah Hammerschlag demonstrates that the question of who is a Jew has a long history and cannot be confined to the realms of adjudicating who has or lacks certain social and political privileges. In twentieth-century French existentialist and postmodern philosophy, she shows, the idea of the Jew played an integral role in describing the human condition, imagining the other, and constructing ethics. When French (mostly student) protestors united behind the cry “Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands” in 1968, they staked an exis-
tential claim. But how could these students claim the particular identity of the outsider and the other in this universal way? And if “we all” are German Jews, is the identity of “actual” German Jews then effaced? Hammerschlag returns to this episode to explore the paradoxes and complexities that constitute the figure of the Jew. Ultimately, she argues, the Jew comes to represent deracination and rootlessness but in doing so is simultaneously associated with both universality and particularism.

The Figural Jew sets its foundations by analyzing the ways three prewar thinkers—Maurice Barres, Bernard Lazare, and Charles Peguy—conceived Jewishness, largely through the events surrounding the Dreyfus Affair. Barres, an anti-Dreyfusard, argued that France was suffering from decadence and cosmopolitanism, exacerbated by a class of people including Jews and intellectuals, whom he termed les deracines. This association of Jewishness and rootlessness, Hammerschlag explains, allowed Barres to claim that “the only freedom we have is to recognize our rootedness” (35), where Jews could never do so because of their alienation from “the land and the dead” of France. The Dreyfusard and assimilated Jew Bernard Lazare echoed some of Barres’s thematic anti-Semitic tropes, but instead of denouncing Jews he called for the cultivation of a Jewish national identity and cultural Zionism as remedies to uprootedness. Peguy, a Christian and friend of Lazare, likewise associated Jewishness with alienation, wandering, and the ills of modernity. However, for Peguy, these traits not only become emblematic of the modern but also become valorized. “The Jews have roots, according to Peguy; they are just not in the soil” (64), Hammerschlag writes. All three thinkers, then, espouse racial determinism in their philosophical troping of the Jew, but their evaluations of these tropes served politically disparate ends.

Hammerschlag then analyzes Jean-Paul Sartre’s representation of the Jew. By acknowledging but not dwelling on the well-known criticisms of Sartre’s ignorance of Judaism, she is able to demonstrate the paradoxes and productivities of Sartre’s writings and interviews (with Benny Levy) on Jewishness. She demonstrates how Sartre recasts and relies on the earlier themes of race, particularity, and universalism in order to use the “trope of the Jew . . . as a figure of critique, as a means to oppose a dominant discourse” (116) in the otherwise sometimes incongruent writings Reflexions sur la Question Juive and Hope Now.

The heart of The Figural Jew lies in its treatment of Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida and the ways each draw on these tropes to re-create and complicate the idea of Jewishness. In essence, Hammerschlag argues, Levinas refigures the Sartrian Jewish alienation as the foundation for his ethics of subjectivity. A person becomes uprooted through desire—which is always initiated by the other—and this uprootedness serves as the foundation of ethical interpersonal relations. Religion in general, and Judaism in many of his examples, serves as the uprooter of subjects, as opposed to a Heideggerian paganism. Responding to Hegel, Levinas also positions Judaism as that which is necessarily external to history. This externality, for Levinas, becomes its promise as a site for political critique, especially of Western nationalisms.

Blanchot and Derrida both then take the building blocks of Levinasian phenomenology and, through subtle critique, rearrange them to create a new account of the Jew. Blanchot “suggests that Judaism is universalizable only insofar as it cannot be taken up, claimed, or inhabited as an identity” (167). In the end, for Blanchot, the figure of the Jew is the corollary of literary language:
both inhabit a world of exile and wandering, and although neither can fully escape the world, the exile itself becomes the (impossible) goal.

Hammerschlag continues her lucid treatment of the postmodern refigurations of Levinas when she argues that Derrida uses the trope of the alienation of Judaism to deconstruct and critique any uncontaminated claim to universality or particularity. Through analyses of Derrida’s work on circumcision, writing, and literature, she shows how this complexity inaugurates a political critique of both (ethnocentric) claims to particularity and the fantasy of a universalism purified of all particularity.

Hammerschlag’s careful analysis shows that universality and particularism are neither opposites nor mutually exclusive. Through her readings of Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida in particular, she demonstrates that the two categories are less like two sides of the same coin and more like a Mobius strip. She highlights the productive tension in Levinas’s fluctuation between concern for the survival and renewal of the postwar Jewish community and the elevation of Judaism’s potential for universality, and traces its critical reformulation through Blanchot and Derrida.

Her discussions consistently demonstrate insight while maintaining accessibility, no small feat when treating postmodern texts that self-consciously play with language and systems of meaning. Moreover, despite its close attention to text and philosophical language, The Figural Jew never becomes detached from the historical and political contexts in which the texts were produced. It therefore engages questions pertinent to the bodies of literature concerned with the construction of identity and race as well as intellectual history. Like a fractal, the structure of The Figural Jew demonstrates the spiral repetition and reconfigurations of the figure of the Jew, all while the work as a whole exhibits a captivating elegance.

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Tariq Ramadan’s book Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation argues that change is needed in the field of Islamic law in order for Muslim communities and nations to find ethical solutions for new problems. Ramadan’s work is written from the perspective of a Muslim scholar who believes that the West can be home to different Muslim communities. A work that respects Islam’s history, beliefs, and diversity, it seeks to find solutions for the problems that arise from the accelerated modernization of societies in which Muslims live.

Ramadan’s argument is that Islamic law should continue to be formed on the basis of traditional sources but that scholars should see secular sources as fundamental as well. Ramadan calls for the formation of a body of Islamic scholars and scientists of all fields (including sociology, biology, medicine, etc.) that integrates religious and nonreligious knowledge for the purpose of “promoting and protecting Physical Integrity, Health, Subsistence, Intelligence, Progeny, Work, Belongings, Contracts, and our Neighborhoods” (142). These goals fall under three categories that Ramadan sees as the objectives of Islamic law: “respecting and protecting Life (hayyah), Nature (khalq, tabi’ah), and Peace (salam)” (138).

Ramadan’s book is divided into two parts: one outlining the theoretical basis