Jews and Feminism

The Ambivalent Search for Home

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LAURA LEVITT

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In de fremd
iz ir heym
here
ot do
muz zi lebn.

among strangers
is her home.
right here
she must live.

—Irena Klepfisz, “Di rayze aheym /
The journey home”
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This is a book about passionate embraces. It is about the interplay between the need to hold on and the need to let go of the places, relationships, and traditions we call home. It is about the delicacy of all such attachments and the ways we have come to make them seem lasting. In order to place this desire for home in a particular personal and cultural context, I want to begin by considering that peculiar journey known as immigration. In working through this book, I have come to see that immigration, in both a historical as well as a conceptual sense, marks most profoundly my own sense of being especially at home in America. I bear the legacy of my grandparents’ journey as well as their fierce attachment to their new home—an immigrant legacy that haunts this project. And, as in immigration, my journey as well as my desire to settle down mark the ambivalence connected to my own longing for home.

In their act of leaving one country to settle permanently in another, immigrants desire both permanence and change. Even within this opposition though, I wonder about permanence as a fixed term. Is anything forever? With this question in mind, I turn to my American Heritage Dictionary to look up “permanent.” I find the following definitions:

1. Lasting or remaining without essential change: “the universal human yearning for something permanent, enduring, without shadow of change.” (Willa Cather)  
2. Not expected to change in status, condition, or place. . . .
permanent n. A long-lasting hair wave produced by applying a chemical lotion to the hair while wet, winding the hair on rollers, and drying it with heat. Also called permanent wave.2

The word “permanent” derives from a Latin term meaning to endure, to remain, perhaps also “to survive”?3 How is it then that, even within these definitions, that which is permanent becomes ephemeral? A note about the history of this word that builds on the ludicrously hopeful final noun form, the permanent as hairdo, addresses precisely this problem, the tension between stability and change with which I began. This note reads as follows:

In this world of impermanence it seems that we have tried to hold on to a few things at least by using the word permanent. Coming ultimately from the present participle permanens of Latin permanere, “to endure,” Middle English permanent (first recorded around 1425) also had to do with the enduring and the stable. When we consider some of the applications of this adjective, as in permanent press, permanent tooth, we are struck by the relative evanescence of the so-called permanent. But perhaps never more so than in the case of the permanent wave. When asked what this phenomenon was, one journalist wrote in 1932, “(so far as my experience goes): a wave that is anything but permanent.”4

I focus on “permanent” because it marks the ambivalence at the heart of immigration, the realization that nothing is ever really “permanent”—including home.

This contradiction is at the heart of this book for this is a book about my attempts as an immigrant granddaughter to claim from my various homes the legacies I both lost and found in my parents’ home. It is about my attempts to reclaim certain Jewish traditions lost to them as well as my efforts to lay claim to still other liberal and feminist positions in the present. In these efforts I try to both resist the nostalgia of lost pasts as well as the allure of all that is new. I do this by tracing a single journey within and between a series of American and Jewish traditions.

This is not a linear narrative. As with immigration itself, here too the desire to find a place to settle belies its own precondition in the journey. Although I take positions and dig in my heels, I also move on and find other places to stand, at least for a time. This book is
about my search for home, a journey that begins with my immigrant Jewish family's ambivalent embrace of America. I seek stability in specific Jewish religious and cultural traditions as well as in the liberal academy. Despite my forays into an ancient Jewish past and back to Europe at various points, this journey both begins and ends in America, that place in the world I continue to call my home.
introduction

Home

Further research will, I hope, flesh out the domestic space in such a way that this postcolonial feminist will no longer need to revisit French feminism as a way in, although it might remain an exigency in academic Cultural Studies...

The way in through French feminism defines the third world as Other. Not to need that way in is, paradoxically, to recognize that indigenous global feminism must still reckon with the bitter legacy of imperialism transformed in decolonization.

—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine

Since this book is about the connections between home and identity or identity as a kind of home, I want to begin with the concrete space, the house where I began writing, the first floor of 317 East Ninth Street (it took me a while to recall the exact address; I kept writing down the wrong numbers). I lived at this address from August of 1987 through December of 1991. It was my only home in Atlanta. It was large and sunny. The yard was extremely well taken care of by my landlord, an elderly woman living alone on the second floor. The building was about sixty years old, unrenovated but clean and neat. When I moved in the first floor apartment, all it needed was a new coat of bright white paint, which my parents and I applied during three scorching days that August.

When I moved in the apartment echoed. I liked the emptiness of the space. I had little furniture, and for the first two years I had no soft furniture. I enjoyed the stark beauty of my home. Although it was often difficult to entertain, I was able to do my work. Among the first purchases I made were a computer and a desk, which I settled in the second bedroom. Then, in the summer of 1989, I bought a futon couch and chair. They felt big and bulky, but I got used to them. My
home became so much more livable. It was easier to invite friends over, to share my space. In September of 1989, I fell in love with a man who lived just a block away. He visited often. My home was filled with the promises of a new relationship.

In November of 1989 I was raped in my home by a stranger. After that I considered moving but could not imagine another home. I was angry at having to give up a place that was so much mine, a place where I had a history. I refused to move and chose instead to reconfigure my home. I painted the walls of my bedroom, the site of my rape. There were now two bruised purple walls and green trim. They matched a Botticelli poster on the wall, although, in truth, even the poster did not fully bring the room together again. I also moved the furniture. Since no walls felt safe, the bed floated in the middle of this room until I left Atlanta for good. The futon couch came in very handy, as I could no longer stay at home alone. Friends became a regular presence in this home. I also got a dog who remains my constant companion.

The house was never as neat or stark as it had once been. In the fall of 1990, as I began writing there, I also tried briefly to stay at home alone. I was not comfortable. In October a friend moved in, and I moved my office into a breakfast nook that was small, bright, and sunny. Nestled in between a file cabinet and a window, I felt safe and secure at my desk writing. The house filled up. There were lots of plants and lots of people. Another friend also spent much of this time living with us. With the dog that made four. Of course, there is much more to tell.

This home was the site of a great many conflicting desires. It was a place of both comfort and terror. The knowledge that home could be both del and re/constructed was visceral. That knowledge lived in the walls of this place I called my home in Atlanta. From the beginning I was engaged in a process of reconfiguring home on many fronts.

I began writing this book in 1990 in Atlanta, a year after I was raped and just months before I was to end an important relationship. Between then and now I have moved several times; the physical places I have called home have changed. The relationships that offered safety and protection have also shifted. “Home” has become something quite different, and yet some things have also remained constant. This book began as and remains an interrogation of what it
means to claim and configure a Jewish feminist identity in the midst of conflicting visions and material conditions. It makes explicit how and in what ways it is crucial to theorize out of the contingent places we call home. Location matters.

It also demonstrates how theory can help explain in nuanced and powerful ways the complexities of our lives. It shows how theory can enable us to explore the seams in the construction of our identities within the constraints of various social, cultural, and political configurations of power and desire.

As Gayatri Spivak must revisit French feminism as a way into her cultural criticism, there are specific American feminist texts that have enabled me to write about these issues—to claim my various homes. As I will demonstrate, they form a critical part of my story.

My narrative is also situated within the various promises of a home in America made to Jews, women, and Jewish women. Broadly speaking, I critique these promises as part of liberalism and colonialism. I look at how some of these promises have been kept while others have not. What concerns me are the various ways that these grand liberatory dreams have not been met within the parameters of the American social contract or within the liberal academy. In exploring some of these disappointments, my narrative is not unique. It is part of a larger "horizon of meanings and knowledges available in the culture at [this] given historical moment, a horizon of meaning that includes modes of political commitment and struggle. . . . [as well as] particular discursive configurations." It shares much with Spivak's critique of colonialism.

In these ways this book invites readers into a landscape that is both familiar and unfamiliar—a landscape shaped by a series of traditions, texts, social institutions, expectations, and desires. These are the horizons of meaning and possibility within which, as I understand it, American Jewish feminists are living our lives at the end of the twentieth century.

**Liberal/Colonial Dreams of Home**

A consideration of home raises serious questions for me about my place as a Jew in the West. I begin with a consideration of Jews "in the West," because it was within the promises of the liberal revolutions of the late eighteenth century that Jews throughout western Europe and the United States were granted citizenship and offered
access to liberal education, through which they could become a part of liberal culture. Emancipation was granted to Jews as individuals. More specifically, liberalism emancipated Jewish men, but inclusion came at a price. It meant they had to relinquish various forms of communal authority: virtually all aspects of Jewish communal life came under the aegis of the liberal state. Out of this history, American Jews have embraced the promises of American liberalism. We have become loyal American citizens.

In the Jewish home I was raised in, Jewish values were liberal values. There was seemingly no difference. Liberalism was filled with promise. It was through liberal lenses that my parents taught me about justice, about fairness, and about liberation. Liberalism had promised my immigrant grandparents a safe home, hospitable soil, a place to grow and to prosper by entering into the American social contract. In my family, being a citizen of the United States was considered sacred.

When my maternal grandmother's citizenship was called into question in the 1970s as she applied for a passport, it was a family crisis. In her sixties at the time, my grandmother had never before considered travel that would require a passport. In fact she was most committed to staying home. Having not been born in this country, she was especially proud to be an American. After spending the vast majority of her life in this country (she was three when she arrived from Russia), she was devastated to receive an alien card in the mail in response to her request for a passport. This reinvocation of her almost, but not quite forgotten, otherness was a problem. For months my family zealously sought proof of her citizenship in the annals of the New York City Hall of Records and HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. It was understood that being an alien was unacceptable, it was also incorrect. Nevertheless, this incident was a dramatic reminder of just how precious U.S. citizenship was for not only my grandmother but also for so many American Jews. Once my grandmother's situation was finally cleared up and her citizenship reaffirmed, she was never willing to leave this country. Although legally free to travel, she never used her passport, did not venture forth beyond the borders of the United States. There is a photograph of my grandmother taken not long after this crisis, taken on her first trip to Washington, D.C. She is dressed in red, white, and blue. Her arms are outstretched. The dome of the Capitol building is behind her. My
mother recalls that her mother cried for joy having finally made it to the Capitol.

There is a statue, built in the 1930s, of George Washington with Robert Morris and Hyam Salomon in Chicago's Herald Square. The men are depicted arm in arm. This is, as I understand it, the only statue of Washington where he is not figured alone. The statue is named for Hyam Salomon, a Polish Jew who died broke after helping finance the American Revolution. While the statue was being constructed, Barnet Hodes, the Chicago lawyer who commissioned the work, pleaded with the sculptor to depict the men locked arm in arm. He was afraid of vandalism, and he thought that linking the figures would assure that the statue would not be defaced. It being the 1930s, he was worried about antisemitism and assumed that Washington's image would protect Salomon. Although there are important differences, this image of protection offered to a loyal American Jew reminds me of my grandmother. It echoes her precarious status in that photograph. Although never quite secure, as an active agent she embraces Washington, metonymically figured in the dome of the Capitol.

I am haunted by these images. They are a reminder of the complicated legacy of liberalism for contemporary Jewish women in the United States. Like my grandmother, many Jewish women fought hard for a place within the American dream and, despite their loyalty, these women, their daughters, and granddaughters have had to face time and again strategic limitations and prohibitions built into liberalism's promise of home.

This legacy of promise and effacement has also characterized Jewish feminist dreams of liberation. As the twentieth century comes to a close, I am arguing that part of this struggle for liberation must include an interrogation of these loyalties. The sheltering arms of Washington are not enough. Although powerful, these images keep us from imagining other possibilities, from seeing the limitations and contradictions built into the discourse of liberalism. I am asking that we begin to let go of these images, that we stop imagining ourselves as always already within this liberal horizon.

Offering American Jews a new vision of home, liberalism opened up both a conceptual and a political terrain within which Jews could participate in American culture. Even as the history of the American Revolution makes clear, this liberal emancipatory project was never
just a way of constructing political, social, or cultural relationships in
the West. In the North American colonies there was already discursi­
ve slippage between “the West,” as in western Europe, and a vision
that included at least North America. Aside from “West” being a
complicated signifier, the distinction between liberalism and colo­
rialism was also unclear. The American Revolution was built on the
legacy of European colonialism, and the implications of these con­
nections and complications are only beginning to be appreciated.¹¹
In
part, by speaking about liberalism in terms of a horizon of possibili­
ties I want to indicate the breadth of these connections. Liberalism
includes a series of material and discursive cultural configurations of
power.¹² As such, liberalism and colonialism are intertwined.
I offer a critique of what I call “the liberal/colonial project,”
because the pairing of these two discourses has given me a vantage
point from which to see the larger implications of my own attach­
ments to liberalism. Like Spivak, I struggle with my commitment to
this legacy.

Liberalism and colonialism share an ambivalent promise of eman­
cipation and assimilation. In both, power is organized asymetri­
cally, and some people are necessarily excluded. Building on cultural
critic Homi Bhabha’s critique of colonialism, I have come to see the
liberal/colonial project in terms of promise and effacement, a kind of
mimicry. Like colonialism, liberalism offered formerly subjected peo­
ple a kind of partial emancipation. As Homi Bhabha explains, “By
‘partial’ I mean both ‘incomplete’ and ‘virtual.’ It is as if the very
emergence of the colonial [liberal] is dependent for its representation
upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative
discourse. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a prolif­
eration of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so
that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.”¹³ In other words,
there are limitations built into both liberalism and colonialism. As
much as their subjects try to become western or mainstream, they are
bound to fail. Asymmetries of power not only remain in place but are
essential to the perpetuation of these systems. So, lulled by the
promises of a place in the social contract, they keep trying to fit in.
No matter how hard the colonial tries, he or she will remain “a sub­
ject that is almost the same, but not quite” (126). This is the bitter
irony of mimicry: In order to be effective, it must continually produce
this kind of slippage or excess (126).
It is my contention that Jews like many others in the liberal West—including women, the poor, various peoples of color, and queers find themselves struggling up against a “strategic limitation” or “prohibition.” This is especially true for those who claim identities within and between these various designations of otherness. With this in mind, I have found it helpful to understand the dynamics of Jewish assimilation in the West in terms of mimicry. Jews have desired to fit in, to be like everyone else. The problem is that there is an excess expressed in this desire that is aptly captured in the joke that says that Jews are just like everyone else, only more so; this is the kind of difference that Homi Bhabha was talking about. In other words, as hard as Jews try to be like everyone else, the excess of our effort marks us as different. In my parents’ home, this desire often translated into the need to be better than everyone else in our small town. We had to be smarter, better read, more politically active and socially involved in the community in order to be accepted. This dynamic is part of what has made it so difficult for me to talk about my Jewish home in America.

By juxtaposing the two sides of the liberal/colonial coin—sameness and difference—I want to expose some of the gaps in liberalism’s narrative of Jewish emancipation. Although we remain grateful to the liberal revolutions of the late eighteenth century for bringing Jews into the dominant cultures of the West, this is not the entire story. Our acceptance remains partial. Ironically it has been the fierceness of our loyalty to the liberal state that has marked many of us as different.

**Education as Promise**

As part of citizenship, liberalism also laid out a series of cultural promises, with education as a way into western culture. In the United States, “the [western] canon [was] like the Statue of Liberty, transforming the huddled masses into an intellectual community.” It offered Jews status, prestige, and authority. As literary critic Marianna Torgovnick eloquently explains, “Universities were sites of acculturation and advancement that serve in the United States...[as] the ‘melting pot’ project of American culture.” Building on a rich legacy of Jewish learning, a generation of primarily immigrant Jews made academic achievement their way of getting into American culture.
By reading western canonical texts and writing about them, American Jewish intellectuals in the humanities reinvented Jewish study as a secular practice. Textual study held out the promise of entry into an American intellectual community. Thus, for a luminary like Lionel Trilling who taught literature at Columbia University for almost forty years, the western canon became sacred.20

Despite his erudition, much less his devotion to this tradition, even Trilling’s status within the American academy was tenuous. As Torgovnick explains, “Thinking of Trilling, I recall immediately certain facts: his immigrant origins, his Jewishness, his embattled status as a young professor at Columbia, which had not previously tenured Jews and told Trilling, when it tried to terminate his contract, that he would be more comfortable somewhere else” (267). Like the colonial subject Bhabha describes, “Trilling tended to be ‘always amazed and appreciative of his good fortune’ in the profession—even though he had to negotiate his relationship with ‘the tradition’ and fight, tenaciously, for what he got” (267).

These same ambiguous promises inspired members of my immediate family to pursue the liberal arts. On a much more modest scale, my parents showed their devotion to this tradition by teaching “The Great Books” to high school students in our home for over twenty years. My brother and I were included among these students.

Although I have grown critical of this tradition, my own work remains deeply bound to this legacy of textual engagement. When I came to Atlanta in 1987 to enter a Ph.D. program in religion, like my parents I was committed to reading canonical texts and writing about them; the difference was the texts I chose to study. Because I wanted to understand more about the various dynamics that structure contemporary American Jewish life, I decided to return to Jewish religious texts both ancient and modern for some answers. For me this meant taking seriously the complicated relationships between rabbinic, liberal, and liberal Jewish feminist texts over and against my parents’ Great Books. By engaging with these Jewish texts, I hoped to find ways of articulating the complexity of my own position and looked to theology for some answers.

While an undergraduate in religion and a master’s candidate at the Reform Seminary, I had done extensive work in theology; I simply planned to continue these studies in Atlanta as a feminist.21 When I got to graduate school, isolated as a Jewish student in religion, I
became increasingly dissatisfied with theology and its answers. Instead, by using feminist and critical theory I found that I could read Jewish texts differently. In working with feminist literary theory in particular, I began to question many of my basic assumptions: my desire for answers as well as my commitment to liberalism’s notion of a unified self. I began to appreciate how and why my own positions were partial. Through a feminist critical practice of self-consciousness, I began to appreciate the complexity and contradictions within contemporary Jewish life.

Through their careful reading of “Identity: Skin Blood Heart,” an essay by a “white, middle-class, Christian southern, lesbian,” poet, and activist Minnie Bruce Pratt, feminist literary critics Chandra Mohanty and Biddy Martin gave me a model for thinking differently about how I read texts. These essays in particular taught me to pay attention to the material and discursive differences among and between women. They helped me begin to rethink many of my assumptions about the necessity of a unified position. They also helped me to appreciate how “feminism” continues to be a site of political struggle that requires my critical engagement. As Martin and Mohanty explain:

The implicit assumption here, which we wish to challenge, is that the terms of a totalizing feminist discourse are adequate to the task of articulating the situation of white women in the West. We would contest that assumption and argue that the reproduction of such polarities [West/East, white/nonwhite] only serves to concede “feminism” to the “West” all over again. The potential consequence is the repeated failure to contest the feigned homogeneity of the West and what seems to be a discursive and political stability of the hierarchical West/East divide. (193)

By challenging the notion of a monolithic western feminist position, Martin and Mohanty opened up for me complexities within my own position. They explained how the dismissal of these complexities only serves to reenforce the stability of western cultural and political hegemony. They demonstrated how Pratt’s partial account of her own identity, “partial in at least two senses of the word: politically partial, and without claim to wholeness or finality,” (193) disrupted this economy.
In working with these texts, I learned how, and in what ways feminist theorizing is a politics. By reading Jewish texts differently I learned that I could challenge the assumptions of the liberal/colonial project as they continued to inform contemporary Jewish thought. I also learned how a more partial kind of feminist writing can “demonstrate[e] the importance of both narrative and historical specificity in the attempt to reconceptualize the relationship between ‘home,’ ‘identity,’ and political change” (192). I came to see that I did not need a metadiscursive stance to write about contemporary Jewish feminists. Instead I learned how gender figures into not only the liberal/colonial project’s promise and effacement of home for Jews but also how and why returning to rabbinic Judaism could not solve this problem.

“a way in”

In the context of claiming a Jewish feminist position, this book illustrates how, as Martin and Mohanty have argued, in relation to Pratt’s narrative:

Change... is not a simple escape from constraint to liberation. There is no shedding the literal fear and figurative law of the father, and no reaching a final realm of freedom. Since neither her [Pratt’s nor my] view of history nor her view of herself through it is linear, the past, home, and the father leave traces that are constantly reabsorbed into a shifting vision. (201)

In the chapters that follow I offer close readings of particular texts out of my various Jewish pasts, feminist theory, and contemporary Jewish feminist writing. Each chapter demonstrates how and in what ways “the past, home, and the father” are reabsorbed into a shifting vision of Jewish feminist identity/ies in the present. I take discrete positions within particular contexts while appreciating the contingency of any of these claims, acknowledging the interrelationship between singular and plural positions.27

In chapter 1, “Embraces,” I offer a reading of Pratt’s text. By intertwining Pratt’s narrative with my own, this chapter demonstrates how and in what ways reading for home is a feminist practice. I show how Pratt’s text has given me a way of claiming an identity in terms of home. I address the difficulties as well as the possibilities of this
kind of writing for recla

The chapters that follow are arranged in three parts. The first part, "Jewish Women at Home: Rabbinic Judaism, Liberalism, and Liberal Jewish Theology," focuses on the institution of marriage as codified in marriage contracts, rape laws, and contemporary Jewish theology, since these are the sites where Jewish women have often been most visible within these traditions. The second section "Feminist Study: Reconfiguring Jewish Identity," addresses the place of Jews within feminist texts and academic practices. These chapters raise questions about Jewish dreams of being at home within feminist study. By returning to Pratt, Mohanty, and Martin, these chapters both acknowledge the strategic usefulness of some of this feminist discourse for Jews as well as some of its limitations. In section three, "Ambivalent Embraces," I reclaim the various places, traditions, and relationships I have called my homes in America through a reading of specific contemporary Jewish feminist texts.

Part 1 begins in chapter 2 with a close reading of the ketubbah, the rabbinic marriage contract. This chapter historicizes the ketubbah through a close reading of a standard rabbinic text. By reading against the grain of this legal text, I highlight the traces of its construction. I also raise questions about the text's normative configuration of Jewish women as wives. I then juxtapose the ketubbah, with a talmudic text about rape in order to show the interrelationship between rabbinic rape and marriage laws in defining Jewish women.

Chapters 3 and 4 offer a specific critique of liberalism by focusing on the relationships between emancipation, Jewish women, and the institution of liberal marriage. Through a reading of Napoleon's questions to the Jewish notables, chapter 3 raises questions about liberal promises of home to Jews as citizens of France. By looking closely at the dynamics of promise and effacement within, especially, the first three of Napoleon's questions, which were the questions about marriage, I raise concern about the limitations of marital fidelity as a trope for defining Jewish citizenship and cultural acceptance.

Chapter 4 further challenges the notion of civil emancipation by denaturalizing liberalism's sexual contract. Building on the work of feminist political theorist Carole Pateman, I draw connections between this contract and liberal rape laws in order to show how the
dynamics of promise and effacement within liberalism explicitly define the position of Jewish women in the West as wives.

Building on the critique of liberalism in chapters 3 and 4, chapter 5 “Covenant or Contract? Marriage as Theology” discusses the internalization of liberal values within contemporary Jewish theology. Through a close reading of the work of my teacher Eugene Borowitz, an important liberal Jewish theologian, I show how the trope of liberal marriage has come to define the relationship between God and the Jewish people. I then problematize this theological move by showing how this same trope also continues to define material relations within Borowitz’s liberal Jewish ethics.

In chapter 6, I draw on Judith Plaskow’s feminist critique of liberal Jewish theology and its implications for Jewish women. Through a close reading of her ground-breaking Jewish feminist theology of sexuality I make clear the promise, as well as the limitations, inherent in her liberal feminist approach to right relationships. By returning to feminist literary theory at the end of this chapter, I argue for a more thorough feminist critique of Jewish liberalism. In this way, I return to feminist theory in order to envision other, not necessarily theological, possibilities for claiming Jewish feminist positions.

Chapter 6 marks the point of transition from Part 1 to Part 2. Chapter 7, “Feminist Dreams of Home,” is framed by a reading of Nancy K. Miller’s “Dreaming, Dancing and the Changing Locations of Feminist Criticism, 1988.” I begin with this essay because it is one of the only texts in feminist literary theory that explicitly addresses questions of Jewish inclusion. I then offer a reading of feminist literary critic Teresa de Lauretis’s introduction to Feminist Studies/Critical Studies, a classic introduction to the field. By reading this text in relation to Miller’s essay, I examine my own dreams of being at home in academic feminist study. Through a close reading of de Lauretis’s account of the 1985 feminist conference out of which her volume emerged, as well as Miller’s account of this same conference, I raise serious questions about the place of Jews in feminist studies.

In chapter 8 I focus on “Personal Histories,” the second half of Miller’s essay. Through a close reading of this section of her essay, I demonstrate how I believe it is possible to read, write, and speak as a Jew in feminist classrooms and at feminist conferences.

Part 3 begins in chapter 9 with a return to Atlanta. I come back to Atlanta through a reading of Jewish feminist poet and activist
Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz’s poem “Notes of an Immigrant Daughter: Atlanta.” I use this poem to reconsider my relationship to the place where this book began in the form of a textual embrace.

In chapter 10, “Claiming America,” I offer a reading of Part 3 of Irena Klepfisz’s prose poem “Bashert.” I use this text as a way of reimagining my own relationship to this country. The ambivalences within my embrace of America become even more explicit in chapter 11, “What’s in a Name?” Here I reconsider Jewish and feminist acts of naming in terms of being at home in America. Finally, in my conclusion, “Writing Home,” I offer an account of where I have come to in my own journey home. Here I reflect on what it has meant for me to embrace all of these homes in this writing and to let them go.