

Talking Sex: The Distinctive Speech of Modern Jews

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ABSTRACT: This essay aims to draw a Jewish countergenealogy to the one traced in Michel Foucault's famous *History of Sexuality*, volume 1, to account for Jewish-Christian tensions unexplored within Foucault's history. Foucault suggests a connection between Christian pastoral confession and the imperative to tell "everything concerning... sex" in psychoanalysis; this essay argues that the outsider status of Jews in relation to this imperative helps account for the distinctively Jewish contributions to the discourse around sex in the modern West.

IN HIS "genealogy of sexuality" in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault traces the unfolding in modernity of an incitement toward sexual discourse in which each of us takes on anew and heroically "the task of telling everything concerning his sex."¹ Foucault sees early expression of this compulsory task in (among other places) the tribunals of the Inquisition and the rituals of Christian confession; and this "duty" sees its ultimate expression in psychoanalysis. "From the Christian penance to the present day," writes Foucault, "sex was a privileged theme of confession."² The result has been a "singular imperialism that compels everyone to transform their sexuality into a perpetual discourse," producing "an immense verbosity" in the areas of economy, pedagogy, medicine, and justice.³ This project culminates, for Foucault, in Freud's "good genius" at transforming sex into discourse, an aim Foucault terms "worthy of the greatest spiritual fathers" of an earlier age, who similarly demanded sexual confession.⁴ The very act we moderns see as a heroic struggle against the forces of "Victorian" prudery

¹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1980), 23.

² *Ibid.*, 61.

³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

and repression—everything about our sex—is in fact obeisance to the “singular imperialism” that begins in the confession booth and reaches primary expression on the psychoanalyst’s couch.

To Jewish ears, there is something immediately striking in Foucault’s link between the Christian practices of Inquisition and confession, in which Jews (or, rather, Christian Judaizers) were targeted as victims but never acted as officiants (unless, of course, they were converts to Christianity), and the famously “Jewish science” of psychoanalysis, in which Jews were the exemplary confessors, in both senses and cases of the word. Foucault seems singularly unaware that the Europe whose genealogy he traces is not composed entirely of Catholics and Protestants, and that the moments that serve as origin and end of his genealogy are implicated in the various (religious, discursive, and sexual) attempts and failures of Jews to integrate into Christian society. It is true that Freud finds his place in this genealogy only after a centuries-long period in which secularized state apparatuses and discourses—medicine, law, pedagogy, and so on—had taken over the confessor role from priests and pastors. But Freud’s difficulty in finding a place as a Jew in the medical establishment of late nineteenth-century Vienna suggests that this secularization was less complete than might appear (and of course Foucault would agree that these “secular” arenas still held religious energies and “translated,” rather than vacated, religious practices).

My project in this essay is to follow Foucault in attempting a genealogy, but one that runs somewhat counter to his, uncovering the Jewish story lurking in the interstices of Foucault’s history of modern sexuality. My initial question is: How did Jews go from outsiders to or victims of the practice of confession (as in the Inquisition) to its supreme ideologues and practitioners (as in psychoanalysis)? This apparent irony, I would argue, is no irony at all, once one recognizes discursive alternatives behind Foucault’s notion of modern sexual discourse as essentially one kind of speech, characterized in the span of time between Torquemada and Freud by the telling of sexual secrets that emblematically takes place within the asymmetrical power relation between parent and child, teacher and student, doctor and patient; in this form of sexual confession, shame and the ferreting out of secrets become an engine for sexually charging these family, medical, and pedagogical relationships with pleasure as well as power. As Foucault argues,

The pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it. The power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing; and opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing, or resisting. . . . These attractions, these evasions, these circular incitements have traced around bodies and sexes, not boundaries not to be crossed, but *perpetual spirals of power and pleasure*.⁵

The suspicion of homosexuality is a recurring theme in this variety of sexual confession, and I need hardly rehearse the discourse that explores the ubiquitous link, in the acculturating process that is the cultural background of the emergence of psychoanalysis, between Jewish difference and homosexuality, degeneracy, hysteria, and so forth. The queer studies approaches of the 1990s demonstrated that Jewish “deviants,” products of the cultural mismatch between Jewish and Christian-European sex-gender orders, were exemplary instances of those whose sexuality was a prime source of fascination and stigma, inviting pleasurable monitoring and “palpating” by those in power. That a Jew, subject to these same sexual suspicions, should have also placed

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45, emphasis in the original.

himself in a position “worthy of the greatest spiritual fathers” of an earlier Christian era is not so surprising. I would argue, however, that this reading of psychoanalysis is partial, guided by the very Christian assumptions about the particular primacy of sexuality in discourses of sin, shame, and confession that Foucault apparently sets out only to combat. But sexual discourse comes in more flavors than Foucault acknowledges, and Jewish speakers of sex have been associated with talking dirty not only in “confessing to” or “rooting out” homosexuality. The most distinctively Jewish form of modern sexual discourse is, rather, sexual discourse as assertion and aggression; this form of sex talk is marked as *ethnic* discourse rather than perceived as the expression of a deviant individual or member of a sexual minority. Even psychoanalysis—allegedly devoted to bringing confession to its highest pitch—participated in this form of discourse, with Freud regularly acknowledging the potential of his work to offend the sensibilities of his bourgeois audiences. Foucault, of course, also speaks of the pleasure the pervert takes in scandalizing his monitors, teachers, and doctors. But this pleasure, it seems to me, only partially explains the effects of psychoanalytic discourse, in which perversion (or scandal or sexual offensiveness) and (medical, pedagogical) mastery are intertwined and ensconced in the position of dominance and power rather than trading places in the “perpetual spirals of power and pleasure” that energize the “confessional” scene.

The power of Freud’s sexual discourse should be linked, it seems to me, not with the Christian pastoral Foucault sees it as expressing but rather with Jewish, and “outsider,” discourses. In a recent study of the connection between Jews and obscene speech, Josh Lambert acknowledges a widespread association in American culture between Jews and obscenity, while resisting the construction of a genealogy that would connect Lenny Bruce, Philip Roth, Erica Jong, Sarah Silverman, and the other pornographers, comedians, and novelists whose stories he tells. Jewish culture, according to Lambert, can be legitimately characterized as both particularly direct and extraordinarily modest about sexual matters. Acknowledging both the twentieth-century associations between Jews and obscenity and the sexual modesty also central to Jewish culture, Lambert resists the urge to generalize about any particular connection between Jews and obscenity, that is, to draw the Foucauldian genealogy (against Foucault) that I am attempting here.⁶ Lambert does, however, speak of the power (and, no doubt, pleasure) that could accrue to Jews who traffic in obscenity, carving out a space for themselves in a modernist scene in which they are cultural outsiders, exposing the hypocritical “gentility” of Gentiles, and presenting themselves as truth tellers in the face of a culture that allegedly shrinks from confronting sexual truths (of course, Foucault also suggests that this “prudishness” is a pose, covering and feeding the voracious appetite for such discourse in modern culture in the West). Lest one be tempted to view such writers as Henry Roth, Philip Roth, Erica Jong, and Lenny Bruce as courageous free-speech advocates or martyrs, Lambert shows that obscenity worked well for many Jews, however unwelcome they may have been in midcentury American country clubs. Henry Roth managed to parlay memories of his sibling incest—through the cultural capital of obscenity—into a nice literary career. Reading Roth’s late fictionalized autobiography, Lambert writes, “The particular attraction of literary modernism for Ira [Roth’s stand-in] is that its alchemy has been demonstrated to be particularly effective in transforming into valued commodities precisely

⁶ Josh Lambert, *Unclean Lips: Obscenity, Jews and American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 141–74 and passim.

the elements of his own social marginalization: Jewishness, poverty, and sexual abnormality.⁷ Such magic could work for others, too: legal funds used to defend publishers of obscenity sometimes turned “Jewish family fortunes” into “a very precious form of cultural capital” “that some American Jews from wealthy families wanted and needed very much, as they were being denied access to prestige through more traditional channels.”⁸ Lambert moves beyond the clichés of Jewish marginalization to an analysis of Jewish power, discovering in obscene speech the ability to arouse attention and confer status. Deviance, Lambert shows us, can thus be a source of prestige, can be *wielded*. Talking dirty can thus be described as the mobilization by a minority group of alternative cultural options in a competitive field of production.

While Lambert does not directly engage Foucault’s genealogy of sexual discourse, his findings go a long way to demonstrating how this genealogy might be adjusted to account for participants aligned not only with the pedagogical, medical, and juridical poles of student-teacher, patient-doctor, deviant-judge but also with that of Jew-Christian. The Jewish-Christian dimension does not align neatly with the other power dimensions; that is, Jews not *only* are patients, deviants, and objects of the pedagogical-medical-juridical discourse that stigmatizes their sexuality but also play a significant role as outsiders to the system who may thereby also criticize or explode it or otherwise work it to their advantage. It is particularly *Jews* who have demonstrated the way to mobilize the source of sexual power Foucault identifies, for pleasures and benefits far beyond the discursive thrills of fleeing or foiling sexual monitoring. But how have they done this? What constitutes the Jewish genealogy by which one might trace a path between Torquemada’s screws and the *New York Times* best-seller list or Broadway stage? Such a genealogy might in fact be found in the work of that eminent scholar of Jewish culture Lenny Bruce, victim as well as victor, martyr as well as motor mouth in the obscenity battles, who hypothesized that what distinguished Jewish sex talk is precisely the failure of Jews to raise sex above all other bodily functions (by contrast, Foucault suggests that this valorizing of sexuality above all else is central to the sexual history he traces). Attempting to account for the association of Jews and obscenity in one of his comedy routines, Bruce lays out what might be called a Jewish genealogy of sexuality:

To a Jew, f-u-c-k and s-h-i-t have the same value on the dirty-word graph. A Jew has no concept that f-u-c-k is worth 90 points, and s-h-i-t, 10. And the reason for that is that—well, see, rabbis and priests both s-h-i-t but one f-u-c-k-s. You see, in the Jewish culture, there’s no merit badge for not doing that. . . . And since the leaders of my tribe, rabbis, are *shtuppers*, perhaps that’s why words come freer to me.⁹

Bruce performs here—as I do—the dirty words he also analyzes, representing them through an indirection and euphemism that nevertheless implicates the listener by compelling her to produce the taboo sounds in her own head. The phrase “spelling out,” in which a function of writing is represented through speech, captures here the double valence of Bruce’s performance, which simultaneously veils obscenity (through spelling rather than speaking it) and makes it clear (the way only spelling out each letter of a word can accomplish). The indirection, then, is entirely transparent, concealing nothing, only demonstrating the taboo while entirely failing to psychologically work it. A different, more collective, less confessional mode of sexual speech is operative

⁷ Ibid., 75.

⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁹ Lenny Bruce, *The Essential Lenny Bruce*, ed. John Cohen (New York: Random House, 1967), 32–33.

here, one in which the “Christian” ratio of sex over body is upended, and the Foucauldian diagnosis of modern sexual discourse as a heroic confession of individual sexual secrets comes up against alternative discursive options. While Bruce’s performance is indeed “heroically” obscene (despite the veiling), it is also heretical, insofar as Bruce confesses no individual deviance and indeed minimizes (as Foucault less comically attempts to do) the significance of sex within a culture primed to see sexuality as the ultimate and most essential experience and psychic truth. In this sense, Bruce evades the role laid out for him as Jewish deviant in a sexually suspicious culture and contributes, instead, to a Jewish sexual counterdiscourse in the face of the dominant, Christian-inflected discourse on sex in the West.

In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt describes this dominant discourse, which he terms “the sex religion,” as the most widespread religion in the West, a religion that revolves around the central idea “that love between the sexes is to be regarded as the supreme value of life on earth.” Watt traces this secular religion to “the rise of *amour courtois* in eleventh-century Provence.” Unlike Foucault, Watt is explicit that these are Christian formations. Courtly love is, in Watt’s influential view, “the result of the transfer of an attitude of religious adoration from a divine to a secular object—from the Virgin Mary to the lady worshipped by the troubadour. Like modern individualism, therefore, the rise of romantic love has deep roots in the Christian tradition, and so it is very appropriate that it should be the basis of the ideal pattern of sexual behavior in our society.” Watt continues, “the novel is the manual of this religion, supplying its rituals and dogmas.”¹⁰ If the sex religion—which we might summarize and translate as the elevation of the sexual over other bodily functions and pleasures—is based on Christian and post-Christian patterns, as Bruce seems also to believe, then Jews, lacking these precedents, are well equipped (before Foucault) to supply the heretical counterdoctrine to this religion, the perspective in which the tetragrammata s-h-i-t and f-u-c-k are of comparable psychic value. Jewish culture, long after secularization, is shaped by a different relationship between sex and other functions of the body than the one that characterizes Christian and post-Christian cultures, in which celibacy and Mariolatry render sex a unique sphere exalted beyond other, more universally shared operations of the body. That Bruce inserts a Yiddish term to describe Jewish sex, and speaks it whole rather than spelling it out (in the sense of veiling the obscenity), points as well to the function of Jewish languages and discourses, particularly Yiddish, in the construction of a midcentury American sexual discourse. The Yiddish language here is the veil over the obscenity that may not be so directly expressed in English, but Yiddish itself also signifies to an American ear a sexual and bodily directness apparently indigenous to Yiddish linguistic culture.

The connections between Yiddish and obscenity, and traditional Jewish attitudes and their modern and postmodern expression, are not of course as direct as Bruce implies. Equally traditional Jewish norms dictate sexual modesty in speech and act—norms that Bruce flagrantly transgresses. Thus, where Bruce uses a Yiddish word to signal the Jewish character of the sexual attitudes he is describing, traditional Jewish culture would more typically have inserted a *loshn-koydesh* term to euphemistically describe, and modestly obscure, sex or excretion. The use of Yiddish to express obscene or “impolite” bodily functions, far from being the inheritance of a “sexually direct” East European Jewish culture that Bruce describes it as embodying, might also arise from the forgetting of this culture or from the idiosyncratic and anachronistic mobilization of invented Jewish traditions for contemporary ideological purposes.

¹⁰ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 136.

Lenny Bruce's argument is lent some historical heft, however, by recognizing it as an echo of nineteenth-century controversies around Jewish literature and its relationship to European literary models. In a scathing 1888 essay on the derivative character of the Hebrew literature of his day, Moshe Leib Lilienblum lamented "the recent 'epidemic' of love poetry," which had nothing to do with Jewish experience and everything to do with Jewish writers' wish to participate in a literary tradition they were mimicking rather than authentically understanding. Launching into a summary of the development of French romantic poetry from its origins in the chivalric romance, with its near-sacred worship of the inaccessible woman, Lilienblum concludes: "Among us there never was a cult of women, and we never had knights or noblemen. As for love, although it also is a natural feeling, we never valued it more than any of the other human feelings, including the feeling of hunger and so on, or the feeling of love for children." Lilienblum does not deny that Jews experience love, or that the poetic among them might wish to express this experience. What arouses his skepticism is the formulaic quality of these expressions of passion and their unrelenting obsession with one and only one variety of love:

Love expresses itself in many forms, the simplest and most common of which are the love between a man and a woman and the love of parents for children. And while these are not the same—they are both strong and natural emotions. Nevertheless, it never occurs to our writers to write poetry about the love parents feel for their children.¹¹

Lilienblum argues here that in Jewish culture, love shares an affective spectrum with hunger and other appetites, and the love between sexual partners is understood alongside the love that connects parents and children. It is only European literary convention that subsumes all other varieties of love and appetite to the romantic, exalting the romantic over all others. While neither Bruce nor Lilienblum spells this out, this difference might be traced not only to the absence in Jewish culture of veneration for the Virgin Mary but also to the presence of a halachic discourse that views both sex and eating as bodily activities to be similarly regulated rather than privileging the experience of sexual love. Of course, Jewish culture also knows the exaltation of sexual love—as demonstrated by the Song of Songs and the erotic mysticism of the Kabbalah and Hasidic thought. Nevertheless, these sublime discourses share the cultural arena with other, far more prosaic approaches to sex and love.

If it is true that Jews were to some degree outsiders to the cult of romantic love, then secular Jewish discourse may have its beginnings in a kind of Jewish skepticism about the romantic sublime. While some writers may have overcome this skepticism through the adoption of European models (as Lilienblum suggests) or the recovery of "indigenous" Jewish models of Eros (biblical or mystical), others harnessed this skepticism for the sake of a literary and cultural practice that deflated the romantic sublime precisely by linking sex with other body operations. These writers turned the chivalric trope against its more "authentic" cultural bearers, demonstrating what was meretricious about the discourse even while pretending to lament the Jewish lack of capacity to articulate it persuasively. In 1888, the same year that Lilienblum published his condemnation of the epigonism and derivativeness of the Hebrew poets of his day, Peretz published his inaugural Yiddish work, *Monish*, a ballad that begins by describing how the scholarly yeshiva student Monish falls in love, powerfully and conventionally, with the beautiful and non-Jewish Maria.

¹¹ Moshe Leib Lilienblum, *Divrei Zemer*, in *Kol kitvei Moshe Leib Lilienblum*, vol. 3 (Odessa: Tseitlin Press, 1912–13), 181.

Peretz interrupts this love story, however, to pseudo-lament the impossibility of describing true love in Yiddish:

My song would sound very different
 If I sang it for *goyim* in *goyish*,
 And not for Jews, in *zhargon*.
 No proper sound, no proper tone,
 Not one word and no style
 Do I have for “love,” for “feeling.”

 Pay a compliment in Yiddish—
 It comes out with no hands or feet:
 “My life, soul, oy, my treasure!”
 Has a taste like a licorice pretzel.
 It has no spirit, it has no salt—
 And it smells of goose *shmaltz*!¹²

The problem of expressing passion in Yiddish is not only described but also metapoetically embodied in these stanzas, with the narrator’s radical slide from the “sublime” poetry that presumably closely mimics Monish’s exalted state in the previous stanzas of the poem to a “novelized” and prosaic rhyming that reflects, rather, the coarse, down-to-earth quality of Monish’s linguistic and cultural environment. That the more passionate discourse is *also* expressed in Yiddish partly gives the lie to Peretz’s complaint about the impossibility of Yiddish erotic discourse. In fact, modern Jewish culture includes in its wide reach the erotic sublime—if not precisely in the Christian configuration, then in others. S. Y. Agnon’s literary explorations of sublime love, for example, certainly have Jewish sources.¹³ Nevertheless, Peretz’s downshift in register accords with the contrast Lilienblum draws between the erotic/aesthetic sublime associated with Christian-European romantic-literary conventions and the traditional Jewish approach to love. While Lilienblum was describing the artificiality of Hebrew poetry, Peretz directed his attention to the inability of Yiddish to express love: the language can give birth only to a misshapen body “with no hands or feet,” and even in attempting to capture the high sentiment of “love” and “soul,” Yiddish gravitates to the materiality and carnality of eating and food. Dan Miron has aptly described the nineteenth-century sense of Yiddish as “the language of Caliban,” a deformed linguistic medium appropriate only for expressing the ugliness of the life of its Jewish speakers.¹⁴ This ugliness sometimes has a specifically sexual dimension: Peretz’s pinpointing of what might be called the “sexual style” of Yiddish reflects traditional Jewish approaches to marriage, which are characterized by their “extreme rationalism” in calculating the chances of a “proper match” and in which “[s]uch criteria as personal compatibility, not to speak of romantic attachments, were not considered at all.”¹⁵ For the spiritualized erotic discourse around the marital union of

¹² L. Peretz, *Monish (Balade)*, in *Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek*, vol. 1 (Kiev: Y. Sheftl Press, 1888), 155.

¹³ For a discussion, see Ilana Pardes, *Agnon’s Moonstruck Lovers: The Song of Songs in Israeli Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013).

¹⁴ Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 34–66.

¹⁵ Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. and ed. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 119.

“true soul mates,” Jewish culture substituted an open acknowledgment of “practical” matters, the joining of families rather than individuals, and a halachic discourse that traded in the physical details of menstruation, intercourse, and reproduction. Peretz’s language in *Monish* is tellingly echoed in one of the memoirs quoted by Iris Parush: Shlomo Saltzman, writing on the twinned emergence in his childhood circles of novel reading and the love match, recalls that his grandmother was mystified by both new phenomena, wondering, “What is there to ‘love’? One could love stuffed dumplings or fried goose fat, but a maiden’s love of a boy—what could it possibly mean?”¹⁶ The language play of *Monish* emerges from a moment of Jewish sexual “awakening” to the sublimity of love, which is inevitably accompanied by a painful recognition of the absence of such sublimity in everyday Jewish discourse, in which love is recognized as (or reduced to) a matter of appetite and flesh.

Monish catalogs the disadvantages Jews faced in their acculturation to romantic discourse: lacking the very language for love and by cultural convention failing to raise sex above other appetites and habits, they inevitably fail to produce great poetry. Thus, the conventional expressions of undying love for the lover—“*mayn lebn, mayn shatz*”—are interrupted by an “oy” that in a single diphthong functions as both ethnic marker and radical deflator, turning sublime romance into greasy food. Peretz laments this cultural operation he claims to be unable to control, but it would be wrong to read the lament straightforwardly. Peretz, like other Jewish writers, is a master of Jewish sex talk, mobilizing both cultural options to produce a Jewish counterdiscourse that competes with the dominant mode it claims only to admire. The deflation Bruce sees in the American Jewish obscenity of his own time may be derivative not of the language of the rabbis—or only in a very indirect sense—but rather of the language of the rabbis’ sons, who turned their perceived inadequacies in the face of European literary conventions into a more complicated and powerful form of sexual “confession” than Foucault recognized.

Psychoanalysis, understood by Foucault as a secularization and late echo of Catholic confession (mediated by the dramatic burgeoning of sexualized power relations and discourses in psychiatry, criminal law, pedagogy, and family relations), might also be read as a late echo of the Jewish discourse that heretically opposed the exclusive attention to sexuality. Foucault famously suggests at the end of volume 1 of the *History of Sexuality* that the “rallying point for the counter-attack against the deployment of sexuality ought not be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.”¹⁷ That is, the very differentiation between sexuality and “bodies and pleasures” is the logic that determines the modern deployment of sexuality, and the abandonment of sexuality (and our fantasy of its “heroic liberation”) in favor of bodies and their pleasures holds the potential to free moderns from the “singular imperialism” of a sexual discourse that does not cease to categorize, “palpate,” and expose us. Bodies, it would seem, evade such attentions. But is it not Bruce’s point that it is *only for Christians* that “f-u-c-k is worth 90 points, and s-h-i-t, 10”? The submersion of sex within other bodily functions (if not pleasures) is the very hallmark of the halachic discourse that views sex not as the most profound truth of human subjectivity but as yet another ritual act, like eating, subject to rules and prescriptions (but *not* to the mechanism of required confession that constitutes the incitement to discourse that Foucault attempts to resist in the name of the

¹⁶ Shlomo Saltzman, *Ayarati* (Tel Aviv, 1947), 51. Quoted in Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*, trans. Saadya Sternberg (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 166.

¹⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 1:157.

body). But why bring up Bruce in this connection? Was it not already Freud who coolly named the primary pleasures and impulses the oral and anal as well as genital? Moreover, could Freud's suggestion that sexual love is a belated echo of the more primary connection that linked children with parents not also function as a counterdogma to the sex religion that views the love between man and woman as the supreme value in life?

In short, the sex discourse of the West whose proliferation is so lamented by Foucault is a more variegated form of speech than he assumes. Among its most powerful modes are some that resist both the romantic sublime and the shame-infused confession. Jews, outsiders to sexual sublimity as well as to the tradition of confession, are not alone among those who resisted these discourses, but they are certainly well represented in their ranks. Foucault imagined that recourse to the body might serve as a rallying point against the deployment of sexuality, but for Jews, that had already happened, with Peretz, Freud, Lenny Bruce, and Sarah Silverman (who has donned Bruce's mantle). And who can doubt that it is this discourse, the Jewish heresy that regularly subjects both the romantic sublime and the sexual confession to corporeal deflation, that is now regnant, that now serves as the dominant discourse about sex in the West? Foucault's hope that the pleasures of the body might provide a rallying point against the incitement to sexual discourse failed to recognize that the sexual discourse he was decrying already included the Jewish recourse to the body. The revolution, then, both is already accomplished and has slipped further from our grasp. A