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Ruth Harris, *Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2010. xvii+542 pp. Illust., notes, bibliog., index. \$35.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-312-57298-3; \$28.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN10: 0-312-57298-0

Response Essay by Ruth Harris, Oxford University.

I can only thank the reviewers of my book on the Dreyfus Affair for their intellectual engagement in my work and for their searching evaluation of it. Responding to both the praise and criticisms contained in their responses makes me realize how differently my work has been interpreted among various audiences. French, American, and British historians have brought widely differing perspectives to the reading of my work. Although sometimes surprised by what they said, I am glad that I have given them something to think about. Years ago, when I first told colleagues that I was writing about Dreyfus, they appeared surprised that I thought there was anything new to say on the subject. Few can remain indifferent to the moral, philosophical, and political questions that the Affair threw up, but each generation seems to draw new lessons from its controversies. I am re-assured that somehow the Affair still matters so much.

I was particularly grateful to Julian Wright, who re-stated my case more fully and eloquently than I had managed myself. I was delighted that he appreciated my attempt to show how difficult it was for contemporaries to understand the meaning and import of the Affair and the need for a re-assessment of some of the mythical and Manichean interpretations that surround its legacy. Repeatedly, I found that analyzing *feelings* of victimization and existential threat shed light on why individuals reacted as they did during the Affair, while strong friendships with men and women they might otherwise not have met permitted novel forms of political activism. I was delighted that he did not accuse me of slipping into moral relativism. Charting the emotional history of the Affair and the dynamics between intimate and collective psychologies required the exploration of people and ideas that I loathe, such as Drumont's occultism and his poisonous anti-Semitism. There were times when the friendship between Maurice Barrès and Jules Soury nauseated me. There seemed to be a clear relationship between Soury's personal pathology (his anorexic tendencies, inability to connect with people, his acknowledged obsessions) and his investment in the ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic cause. But I concluded that to assert such a link openly was to descend into clichés, and writing off such beliefs as the product of mental illness robs them of their power while minimizing their danger. I hope that the tone of this chapter expressed my feelings without compromising my historical rigor.

Julian explored issues that other reviewers found more disconcerting and was, moreover, willing to entertain my argument on its own terms. Acknowledging the personal—and political—contradictions among the Dreyfusards was not meant to undermine the moral value of their engagement. On the contrary, on several occasions I insisted that they were all the more “heroic” because it involved them in reconsidering long-held prejudices, especially against Jews. Oskar Schindler's rescue of “his” convoy of Jews from Auschwitz was all the more remarkable because of his disreputable past. Similarly, I am convinced that the true heroism of Georges Picquart was that in order to save Dreyfus, he not only put his own career and liberty at risk, but also had to overcome the anti-Semitic reflexes of his Alsatian milieu. Certainly, to begin with he tried to safeguard himself by managing his superiors and fudging the

dates on vital documents, but when forced to choose, he opted to defend a man with whom he had no natural affinity. Picquart openly admitted that he never divested himself of anti-Semitism and was even ashamed of such lurking prejudices at the height of the Dreyfusard campaign. Not to acknowledge this, to skirt over the return of his anti-Semitic outbursts in the years prior to Alfred Dreyfus' rehabilitation and ignore the tensions between Jews and Gentiles in the Dreyfusard coalition, would have falsified the history and diminished the actors. It is easy to take a position when you have no doubts; very much more difficult when you have to win a victory over yourself as well as others.

These remarks are an introduction to my response to Willa Silverman's strongly-written evaluation. I must confess that I was entirely taken aback by her assertion that I had argued that the "Affair was over." Nowhere in the volume did I make this claim; indeed, one of the purposes of the work was to suggest that the Affair lived on throughout the twentieth century both in the interwar years and afterwards. There is no denying that men like Léon Blum and Maurice Barrès looked back to the Affair, but my point was that there was no direct line from the fin de siècle to the interwar and war period. Ideologues of all stripes deployed the legacy of the Affair at various intervals, but it was not always *the* template for determining their political positions in a vastly altered geo-political twentieth-century landscape. It was for this reason that I argued that organizations such as the Ligue des patriotes were not proto-fascist: historians such as Bertrand Joly have shown how the style of Déroulède's insurrectionary politics owed more to 1848 than to the putschist demonstrations of blackshirts and brownshirts. Moreover, several historians (including Julian Wright) as well as those interested in political theory and institutions have shown how frequently the politics of reconciliation and re-adaptation operated.[1] My own work cited examples of how men from across the Dreyfusard/anti-Dreyfusard divide sought out each other to work for similar political ends after the crisis. The vision of the "two Frances" locked in eternal combat simply does not explain the ebb and flow of these shifting political alliances and the possibility of moderation and compromise.

Silverman is incorrect to suggest that I "downplayed the much longer, sinister history of the extreme right's relationship to occultism" or sought some equivalency between men like Mathieu Dreyfus and the likes of Edouard Drumont. I spent pages exploring Drumont's magical fantasies and cite at length his discussion of a Dreyfusard witches' Sabbath to show the full extent of their hallucinatory power. There was nothing of this kind among the Dreyfusards, who saw their interest in the spirit world as emerging from "experimental psychology." At the same time, I did not feel it was possible to gloss over Dreyfusard engagement with the spirit world and the ambivalence that it revealed about their relationship to the "irrational," not least because of the standard characterization of the Affair as a conflict between rational and irrational forces in French society. Mathieu turned to his servant Léonie because he felt he needed her "second sight" to explore the darkness of military plot and subterfuge that kept his brother languishing on Devil's Island. Rather than belittling this I saw their connection as one of the more touching and unexpected relationships that emerged from the Affair. As I suggested repeatedly, these unorthodox experiments were also crucial in developing notions of the "unconscious" that were central to the emergence of psychological analysis in France.

Silverman seemed taken aback that I should suggest that Lazare shared some of the same dangerous assumptions as Drumont about Jewish culture. But in *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes* (1894) published prior to the Affair, Lazare deploys the worst clichés about Talmudic law. He believed that its observance separated Jews from the rest of society, reinforced a tendency towards exclusivity, and fed primitive fears of ritual contamination, creating a world apart that engendered fear, suspicion, and hatred among Christians. Also, Silverman is wrong to suggest that my discussion of Lazare ended there. Even in *L'antisémitisme*, Lazare made a distinction between the Jewish capitalists he despised and the mass of impoverished Jewish workers whose rights he hoped to uphold. Before the Affair, Lazare saw radical potential in the way Jews were concerned with the "here-and-now" rather than with the promises of heaven. I spoke at length about Lazare's ambivalence towards Jewish culture and Jews precisely because I wanted to trace the transformation in his outlook that the Affair accomplished. Nor did he

make this journey alone. In 1896 Zola's plea for the Jews still retained a touch of condescension and prejudice, but his involvement in the Affair purged the last traces of this from his writings. Both men came to place the struggle against anti-Semitism at the heart of their Dreyfusard advocacy. Despite the passionate commitment among Dreyfusards, few were as clear as they about the need to fight this hatred with the full political arsenal.

I was perplexed that my work should have raised the reference to Furet, as I see Furet's concentration on "discourse" as very different to my own approach to history. Although I study discourses as much as anyone and did so when I examined, for example, the way notions of martyrdom figured in religious and political discourse on left and right, I am passionately concerned with human beings, with their motivations and experiences, all concerns that did not interest Furet in the least. Indeed my work was entirely devoted to nuance, agency, and ambivalence, especially within individuals. Moreover, I emphasized relationships and their catalyzing effect in politics, connections that discursive analysis, with its emphasis on texts, largely skates over. At one point in her critique, Silverman alludes to the way I described the Affair as an "emotional adventure." There is no doubt that for many of the activists on both left and right this was the case, but such a description does not mean that I wanted to reduce the Affair to affect or to suggest that its political import was negligible.

On the contrary, my focus on emotion underscored the importance of deep personal philosophies and private experience in shaping political positioning. This discussion was central to unraveling the "politics of commitment," a kind of engagement that distinguishes a *cause célèbre* from more ordinary forms of politics. Rather than emphasizing the way external social codes or language regulated political behavior as social constructionism and poststructuralism would suggest, I wanted instead to highlight ideals, fantasies, values, projections, and desires. Some historians, such as Michael Roper, Lyndal Roper, and Nick Stargardt, would call this approach the history of "subjectivity."^[2] I avoided the word for fear of introducing a term that would soon enough date the book and rob me of a lay, intelligent audience. However, I have sympathy for this approach and the results that it is producing. While there is still a great deal of conceptual work required to incorporate the psychological and psychodynamic into historical analysis, my re-reading of the Affair was a first attempt to place the emotional component at the centre of events.

Similarly, I was both complimented and disturbed by the reference to Tony Judt. Like Tony, I think it important to point to the authoritarian tendencies that sometimes develop within left-wing discourse and politics. It is for this reason that I ended my book with a discussion of the post-Affair crisis, when some Dreyfusards deserted their earlier humanitarian ideals and sought to purge the military and Church of those they believed had robbed them of victory. But Tony's critique of the Left was largely intellectual and sociological: he generally avoided any investigation of emotional dynamics, of why people did what they did. While I reject any charges of moral relativism, I wanted very much to keep multiple perspectives in play, no matter how uncomfortable this juggling act may have sometimes become for the reader.

Silverman also seemed almost surprised that I emphasized contingency. It would be comforting to think that a family's social, regional, and cultural location would determine how they reacted to the Affair. But as the famous Caran d'Ache cartoon of a "Family Dinner" reveals all too well (p. 142 in my book), the Affair tore many families apart in ways that surprised and shocked them. The hurt caused was sometimes searing. Ludovic Trarieux, Minister of Justice and an early Dreyfusard, wrote in pain to his cousin, Paul Déroulède, reproaching him for deserting the Republican cause that he felt was their mutual birthright. Few could have imagined in 1880 that Déroulède, whose patriotic songs filled the hearts of school children after France's defeat, would have become an anti-Dreyfusard, hence the many disappointed letters from supporters who felt betrayed by his political turn. Similarly, I recount how many thought that even Barrès would prove a natural Dreyfusard.

I could not tell if Silverman was worried about my stress on emotion or persuaded by the new insights that my study brought. Her repeated use of inverted commas around the word emotion suggested that she considered my deployment of this word as either too simple—or too broad—a category on which to base historical analysis. Certainly sociology is central to any understanding of networks, institutions, and affiliations, and over the years, we have heard much about the Académie française, the Université, or the petition. Recently, Vincent Duclert's erudite thesis on the "savants" has described still further the networks which bound them together.[3]

Silverman is right, however, that even when I do follow a sociological "line" I prioritized the emotional. As I followed the relationship between Felix Pécaut and the educational minister Ferdinand Buisson, for example, I examined their trajectory from Protestant ministry into Swiss exile and back to France where they began a new moral ministry in the classrooms of the écoles normales. What interested me was the way Pécaut's son, Elie, tried to force Buisson into taking a stance by making him feel guilty. I wanted to see how Elie sought to revivify the religious and educational values of his father's youth during the Affair and how he and Ferdinand created renewed political passion from their shared personal memories and professional histories. Sociology on its own can be dangerously devoid of affect, but joined to an appreciation of personal dynamics it provides a richer portrait of personalities and political culture.

Once again, Silverman is right to say that my discussion of the salons was not primarily sociological. However, I suggested that these networks of semi-private, semi-public interaction—where women held sway—were often linked to the politics of the Académie française and the Ligue des droits de l'homme. The Affair sometimes made clearer the political coloring of a particular salon, as people realized that older associates had now become serious political opponents. I was concerned to look at the plight of the salonnières, powerful and talented women who were none the less boxed in by the lack of public outlets. There were huge psychological costs to this exclusion, and I wanted to highlight the psychic turmoil that they endured no matter which side they chose to champion. Julian Wright suggested that I wanted to concentrate on "roles" rather than to focus too keenly on their extreme, even caricatural behaviour. But I would suggest that the role and the emotional profile were often related, that women who sought to influence political and cultural affairs wanted to become salonnières but then were left with the keen frustrations (and pleasures) of "behind-the-scenes" activism where they often had to depend on male associates to express their views.

The salonnières and the role they played in the Affair are unimaginable without the vibrant cultural life that makes the fin de siècle so fascinating. It was for this reason that I was grateful to Malinovich for taking the trouble to look carefully at some of the work I had done in intellectual history and my attempt to link precisely the content of the research interests of leading Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards to their politics. She has suggested that, on both sides, there was a growing "fascination with the romantic, the spiritual, and the mystical within French intellectual culture, irrespective of political orientation." I would qualify this by suggesting that both sides were dissatisfied *both* with positivism and with conventional religion and sought to apply rational investigation to the "irrational." Keen to break out of the strictures imposed by Cartesian dualism, pioneers in many fields turned for inspiration to the "unconscious" and to religious symbolism. On the left, Jewish theorists such as Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl, and Salomon Reinach worked in sociology, anthropology, and the study of comparative religion, examining the centrality of mythology and collective values in the creation of social cohesion. All three men, as Dreyfusards and as Jews, wanted to puncture the "bad" myths of anti-Semitism and to free the population from the belief that a Jewish syndicate had manufactured the Affair to further its own interests. On the right, men like Barrès and Soury were also interested in "social cohesion" and used evidence from neurophysiology and social evolutionism to justify the ideology of "la terre et les morts," an ancestor cult infused especially with maternalist fantasies. All would have suggested that they were profoundly influenced by scientific findings and the positivist method and that they used such methods to investigate the "irrational." The difference lay in what they prioritized. The

Dreyfusards were wary of the lure of the “unconscious” and often sought the further “disenchantment of the world,” not surprisingly considering the outburst of anti-Semitism. Men like Durkheim, however, recognized the role of “suggestion” in the classroom and hoped to impose on the schoolchildren of the republic the authority and values of his secular creed.

Malinovich is right also to suggest that I was insufficiently attentive to the work of younger Jewish activists. I mentioned Loewengard’s spiritual quest at the very end of the volume—a poet who, like many other younger Jews, was obsessed by Barrès “cult of blood and soil.” She is quite right to insist on the sometimes strange sources of Jewish awakening in this period. Although I mention the excellent work of Aron Rodrigues on the re-articulation of Jewish identity, she is right that I might have strengthened my case about the mythic nature of the “two Frances” had I concentrated even more on the complicated personal trajectories of young Jews like Edmond Fleg and André Spire, whose views on France were very different from the likes of the Reinach brothers.[4]

I have difficulty in responding to Vicki Caron because we seem to be speaking at cross-purposes. She experienced my book as a form of “browbeating,” which is most unfortunate as I tried hard not to overstate my case. She rejected my argument on grounds that I wanted to “cut the Dreyfusards down to size.” The second accusation is even odder than the first, and I’m not sure how to respond to a statement which is so unscholarly. I can only say that my study of the Affair increased my esteem for very human men and women who overrode their prejudices to form a unique moral and political coalition. Flawless heroes belong in children’s tales, not in serious history books. It is a grievous misreading of my work to suggest that I “pin the blame for the army’s refusal to back down primarily on the Dreyfusards.” I refer repeatedly to the military’s unceasing refusal to admit that they had made a mistake and document fully its attempts—legal and illegal—to ensure that justice was not done. My remark about Zola’s tendency to demonize was expressed in the context of Scheurer-Kestner’s own doubts about the dangers of the novelist’s “revolutionary” and polarizing tactics. We cannot get away from the fact that Zola’s “J’accuse” was filled with errors, and that because of his reputation he was not always an easy man to have on your side. With this remark, I was merely suggesting that Zola’s support (no matter how eloquent) was a double-edged sword, swaying some to the Dreyfusards but alienating those who already despised him as a “pornographer.” I was not saying Zola was “wrong” but offering additional reasons why his intervention caused such a furor.

Throughout, my sympathy for the Dreyfusard struggle and its aims is obvious, but I do not believe that such sympathy means that we should never re-assess their vacillations and mixed motivations. While Caron sees no moral ambiguity, I would suggest that contemporaries experienced the Affair rather differently, especially in the early days. Almost no one who later joined the Dreyfusard camp questioned the original verdict, hence the heterogenous group of early supporters that ranged from an anarchist polemicist like Lazare to a Catholic conservative like Dreyfus’ lawyer, Edgar Demange. Deciding which camp to join was not always given in advance. Soury, the scientific *éminence grise* of right-wing nationalism, sent Picquart a copy of one of his works when Picquart was first imprisoned; Blum believed that even Barrès could well be a Dreyfusard. If even these two were not easily cateogrised, then others certainly were even more difficult to pin down in advance.

Caron further suggests that I argue that the Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards were the same, but this misreading is so extreme that I can only reiterate my own words to right this wrong impression. In the introduction of the book, I state, “the distinctions that [the Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards] drew ultimately *did* matter.” At this earliest juncture I lay out how the two camps diverged, arguing that the debate was “a struggle over the legacy of the Enlightenment. ‘Anti-intellectuals’ rejected the universalism of the Rights of Man in favour of a conception of French identity that was based on language and race” (p.8) which, they believed, was the surest means of preserving a unique national

community. On the other side, the Dreyfusards “retained a belief in a universal moral code and trusted in rationality as a guide to ethical conduct” and often contended that “that Catholicism and anti-Semitism were roads back to a pre-Enlightenment obscurantism”(pp.8-9).

In arguing thus, I align myself with the historical orthodoxy of the Affair. But then my interpretation diverges when I insist that the “ideologies of [both sides] were fraught with contradiction” (p.8). Many right-wing ideologues delighted in the fin-de-siècle cult of the self and in artistic decadence, but were “nevertheless attracted to Catholicism and its claims to ethical certainty and spiritual authority” (p.8). On the left, Dreyfusards were not always convinced that human rationality “could channel the dangerous urgings of instinct and irrational prejudice”(p.9). It is for this reason, that sometimes the “more radical [Dreyfusards] abandoned much of their liberal humanitarianism, and cemented their victory” (p.9) through an assault on the Church and in campaigns against Catholic believers in the military. The common ground between the antagonists lay in their mutual preoccupation with racial theories, myth, instinct, and the power of unconscious impulses. These distinctively fin-de-siècle concerns, and protagonists’ changing relationship to them, often contributed crucially to what positions they took up during the Affair. The whole second part of the book is a detailed exposition of this complicated process.

My argument thus took pains to excavate the cultural and intellectual history of the 1890s, without which the Affair cannot be fully grasped. The ideas of individuals were in constant evolution, hence the interest of studying the trajectory of particular participants, such as Lazare and Zola, to see how they came to become Dreyfusard champions. It is true that the exposition of the evidence by men such as Jaurès (who came to the campaign rather late) did have some effect on those willing to be convinced. This was especially within the socialist arena, which was undergoing a profound political re-orientation as it jettisoned its reflexive anti-Semitism in the midst of the Affair.

But for many of the era who could not, or would not, follow the ins and outs of the evidence, the Dreyfusard campaign seemed like nothing more than an assault on the army and everything they held dear. Indeed, their patriotic identity made them unwilling, perhaps unable, to reflect on the evidence. Unless we accuse all those on the anti-Dreyfusard side of bad faith—and that is a very large number of people—then we must try to comprehend why it was that the growing, even irrefutable, evidence did not disturb them. Why did they believe so completely in the conspiratorial logic of the Jewish syndicate or the stainless nature of the army that they swatted away any doubts? I wished to explore the sources of this behavior, not excuse the behavior itself. Albert de Mun is a perfect example. Here was a man who was deeply uncomfortable with populist anti-Semitism and saw it as fundamentally un-Christian. None the less, he was unwilling to examine the evidence and insisted on Dreyfus’ guilt. Although I do not think I fully answered this question, I did try to explore why he preferred to risk being tainted by association with someone like Drumont, whom he detested, rather than change his opinions of Dreyfus.

I was astonished that Caron thought that I sought to minimize the importance of anti-Semitism, as I did everything in my power to explore its dark permutations. In fact, I believe that I have added to the historiography in demonstrating the way that “traditional” anti-Judaism and racialist anti-Semitism went hand in hand. I emphasize the ubiquity and poisonous nature of anti-Semitism throughout the work, but also suggest that it was difficult to channel these hatreds into durable political movements and groups.

In this effort I follow in the path of Bertrand Joly’s excellent recent work on the right, which examines at length the interrelations between these factions and ideologies.[5] It is surprising that Caron cites Stephen Wilson’s work of 1989 but overlooks the beautifully, painstakingly researched studies that Joly has published since then. Steven Englund, in a short, comparative *tour de force*, has shown that in the 1890s, French anti-Semitism, relative to its German and Austrian counterparts, was rhetorically virulent but otherwise poorly organized, weak in numbers, and no threat to the Republic at all.[6]

Caron ignores Joly and Englund's evidence when she suggests that the leagues were powerful because they worked in coalition. Déroulède's botched *coup d'état* in early 1899 demonstrates how incapable the leagues were of collaboration and how their personal rivalries and organizational deficiencies hampered them at every turn.

Caron is correct to say that I did not look sufficiently at the Abbé Garnier's Union Nationale, although her work on this was only published while my own book was in press. There is no doubt that the Catholic right, as my work on the Assumptionists amply displayed, were inveterately opposed to the revision of the verdict against Dreyfus and the hierarchy resistant to the pleas of men like Abbé Brugette and the sprinkling of other liberal Catholics who sought to point the Church in a different direction. I say as much and am not kind to them. But I wonder if Caron takes too much at face value the anti-clerical rhetoric which sometimes exaggerated the power of the Church. The Church in this period suffered reversal after reversal as the Third Republic consolidated itself. Indeed, the response from the Vatican proves that Rome was deeply worried by Assumptionist activism precisely because the re-polarization of politics that the Affair encouraged had foiled its efforts to strengthen the *ralliement* and stabilize the Church's position within France. The Vatican's fears proved correct: the post-Dreyfusard political climate was disastrous for the Church.

Caron's criticism disturbs me because of the way it seeks to cut my work in two. On the one hand she applauds my study of the "personal"—the private correspondence, the lives of the protagonists, etc.—but then recoils from the idea that such an investigation should have any impact on the orthodoxy she defends or on the larger historiography of the Affair. As this was precisely my aim, we shall never agree.

Notes

[1] See Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890-1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); *ibid.*, "After the Affair: the congrès de la jeunesse and intellectual reconciliation in 1900," *French History* 23: 4 (2009): 491-517; Roger Soltan, *French Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1931); John Edward Courtenay Bodley, *France*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1998); and the last pages of Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le modèle politique français: la société civile contre le jacobinisme de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004).

[2] Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle. Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); *ibid.*, "Between the Psyche and the Social: masculinity, subjectivity and the First World War Veteran," *Journal of Men's Studies* 15:3 (2007): pp.251-270; Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004); and Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: children's lives under the Nazis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).

[3] Vincent Duclert, "L'usage des savoirs: l'engagement des savants dans l'affaire Dreyfus (1894-1906)," 2 vols. (Ph.d. dissertation, Université de Paris I—Panthéon Sorbonne, 2009).

[4] Aron Rodrigue, "Rearticulations of French Jewish Identities after the Dreyfus Affair," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture and Society*, 2 (1996): 1-26.

[5] Bertrand Joly, *Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885-1902* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2008); and his earlier *Dictionnaire biographique et géographique du nationalisme française (1880-1900)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998).

[6] Steven England, "Antisemitism, Judeophobia, and the Republic," in Edward Berenson, Vincent Duclert, and Christophe Prochasson, eds., *The French Republic, History, Values, Debates* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011).

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