BOOK REVIEW

Niza Yanay's *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse* [New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013. 168 pp. $22.00]

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Niza Yanay, a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Ben Gurion University, has written a book that is both a serious contribution to the discussion of nationalist discourses on hate since September 11, 2001 and a demonstration of the kind of theoretical complexity required to help shape the emerging, evolving field of Hate Studies. The stated purpose of this work is "to provide a critique of hatred that focuses on the relations between the unconscious and state politics, between imaginary fears and technologies of control" (p. ix). To do this, Yanay develops a reading of these discourses through what she describes as the "political unconscious" in extended engagement with the works of Slavoj Žižek, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler. This term is, however, primarily her extrapolation of Freudian language about the unconscious taken into the realm of the social. In this way, she hopes to "study how a national discourse institutes a politics of desire manifested as the symptom of hatred" (p. 52).

This work is important to those concerned with nationalist discourses of hatred and exclusion, as well as for those interested in thinking about how to heuristically define "hate" in a given project. But Yanay does not merely diagnose the nationalist symptom. She also attempts to theorize, especially in the final chapter, what she sees as "the possibility of transforming hatred to friendship," the "raison *d'être* of this book" (p. 19). In this final chapter, titled "From Justice to Political Friendship," she argues for the "potential for peace in spite of hatred, without veiling or hiding ambivalence and difficulties" (p. 104). Yanay addresses this through a deep reading of Derrida's *Poltiques de l'amitié* (1994/ *The Politics of Friendship* trans. 1997). She concludes that "addressing the enemy as a friend can transform language into closeness" and that this "opens a transitional space for peace" in which "dependency and anxiety can be psychically and socially acknowledged" and "where hatred (which is not erased) can sustain the love of the other within the self in newly imagined forms other than hatred—political responsibility for the other, for example" (p. 124).

This work may then be seen as an attempt to contribute to an understanding of hatred that is politically interested and one that seeks to intervene in specific debates—in particular, the dialogues for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Therefore, Yanay's text cannot be understood as general theorization of hatred as a feeling or a response but as a work that seeks to define hate post-September 11 as a discourse that functions in the subconscious set within a field of power relations that cannot be flattened out by simply noticing anger or rage at a given circumstance or subject. This points to the most important contextualization in the book and, I argue, an important contribution to the conversation about what constitutes the study of hate: *How we understand hate must not be regarded as the same across subjects differentially established in stratified social contexts.*

Yanay discusses this point thoroughly in her first chapter, in which she posits a difference between what she calls "objective hatred," as a response to oppression and "ideological hatred," which she defines as "a response to fear" (p. 24). This distinction is important for the project in this book because this is how Yanay identifies the *ideology* of hatred that she seeks to explicate. Also, she argues that if we diverge from this identification of hate within fields of power, we will mistakenly offer "state power a neutral meaning of truth" by leveling all reactions to oppression as "hate" (p. 24-25). I will return to this foundational distinction in a moment, but to understand the heuristics of this distinction we must further understand how the author contextualizes her work.

In the introduction of the book, Yanay describes her first engagement with theorizing hatred in 1989. While conducting research, she found several letters of what she describes as hate mail sent to the Knesset by "Jewish Fundamentalists" (p. 1). This compelled her to begin thinking about "hatred as a political force," especially in Israeli/Palestinian relations (p. 1). In these inquiries, she initially saw hatred as an "ambivalent mode of knowledge" that requires the "need" for contact and dependency, as well as separation and exclusion, but after September 11 she says that her thinking about hatred changed (p. 1). At that point, she shifted from thinking about hate as "a mere by-product of nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, prejudice, or other evils" as she came to recognize that "questions of meaning will not lead [her] far enough in understanding how hatred operates ambivalently or what makes hatred so repulsive and pleasurable" (p. 1-2). For this reason, Yanay does not describe her book as a study on hatred in its meaning or effects *per se* but one that aims at showing "how invisible mechanisms of power operate when the word 'hatred' is used as a defense strategy in a national and political strategy" and how hatred "became" after September 11, 2001, particularly in the Bush Administration, "a political concept to signify danger, insecurity, and the need for control" (p. 2).

There is also at least one other major contextualizing factor for this study: Yanay's subject position. She is an Israeli and the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. Her father's experiences and his reactions to his treatment by Germans inform not only her diagnosis of the ideology of hatred but also her turn to theorizing love and hate in the fourth chapter and her approach to Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship* in the last one. This is relevant for understanding how Yanay's arguments are located and their applicability for the study of hate in general. Understandably, Yanay's arguments, even when discussing the Bush Administration's deployment of hate discourse, are developed around her experiences as an Israeli scholar who is interested in peace as a prospect and a process without eclipsing the complex psychoanalytic dynamics of what she describes as "hate in love/ love in hate" in which dependency and revulsion are linked (p. 84).

Very soon into Chapter Four, Yanay begins to explore the workings of dependency in the "social field" and the ways in which "the language of hatred" comes to "signify that dependency" by her father's reactions to his experiences as a survivor, as related to her in stories (p. 71-72). This personal note comprises the starting point and the conclusion for the discussion in this chapter where she engages her father's refusal to "enjoy" hating his tormentors, as well as his "distance from hatred," which she also finds in the work of Primo Levi and the testimony of other survivors. This refusal reveals for her a possible "Derridean truth about hate by refusing to hate"—that the "phantasmal idea of hatred as a separation maintains dependency and attachment as fears, imprisoning the subject in a knotted relation of revenge 'whitening' (blinding) all other possible affects and memories of love and life that constitute that surplus of subjection, the democratic subject" (pp. 101, 102). This then directs us to her discussion of the "relation" between "hatred and friendship" in the final chapter, which as I said, brings her to conclude that a turn to Derrida's notion of friendship can open those spaces of possibility for peace (p. 103).

The Ideology of Hatred is a significant contribution to the study of hate in nationalist contexts in general, and in particular with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and America's "Global War on Terror." The heuristics of her distinction drawn between "objective hatred" and "ideological hatred" is at once important for the focus of the book and demonstrative of the kind of exercise that perhaps ought to be involved in describing our object in Hate Studies. I contend that we do well to be careful not to presume that the signifier "hate" carries the same meaning in all cases with the same consequences. To borrow from my own field of Religious Studies, the word *hate* may constitute a horizon of inquiry for Hate Studies in the same way that *religion* does for Religious Studies, *society* does for Sociology, or *culture* does for Anthropology (Smith, 2004, p. 194). Yanay therefore demon-

strates the kind of writing that could advance the study of hate by being precise and purposeful in defining hate as it particularly matters in her study.

I however have some questions that perhaps trouble Yanay's distinction between what she calls "objective hatred" and "ideological hatred, as responses to oppression and fear, respectively. I wonder how we may see this distinction at play in other complex social circumstances—for example, in the current debates in the United States over gay marriage and discourses of homophobia. It seems here that discourses of fear and victimization are more diffuse across various subjects situated in the debate. People on both sides often appeal to fear of the consequences to the nation if the opposition wins the debate and offer competing historical narratives to claim victimization at the hands of the other. Though we may be able to say that one may have a more substantiated claim than the other, both nevertheless use discourses of fear and victimization that Yanay situates as mutually exclusive in her two kinds of hatred. Further, in the context of post-September 11 discourses of hatred, if we consider Bruce Lincoln's (2002) comparison of the rhetoric of the Bush Administration and the non-state actors Osama bin Laden and the September 11 hijackers, we can see perhaps again the diffusion of fear and victimization discourses. In other words, where can we see "objective hatred" as "a response to oppression" adopt the characteristics of "ideological hatred" as "a response of fear" (Yanay, p. 24)? Conversely, where can we see "ideological hatred" understand and position itself as "objective hatred"?

The questions mentioned above are not meant to diminish the contributions of Yanay's book. Rather, that these questions developed from reading her text further demonstrate the potential value of her work for the emerging field of Hate Studies. This text also stands on its own as a valuable discussion not only of hatred but of ways to think about peace with hatred, as well.

References

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