

Kabbalah a massive resurgence of feminine and mythological archetypes.

Freud's notion of instinctual renunciation has a similar air of plausibility, but it ignores the ecstatic, hedonistic, even sensualist currents both in biblical Israel and in later Jewish history, from the ancient bands of professional enthusiasts (*nevi'im*) and the erotic verse of the Song of Songs to the Hebrew literary culture of medieval Spain and Renaissance Italy and—at least in regard to the ecstatic—the hasidic movement of Eastern Europe. (Freud's own forebears were Hasidim, a fact he sought to erase in claiming he came from an "unbroken line of infidel Jews.") Most curious is Freud's idea of a timeless Jewish commitment to "intellectual work" and a process of abstraction that he identifies with a higher spirituality. Such a characterization works well enough for Maimonides and Spinoza and Sigmund Freud, but hardly for the prophet Ezekiel or Rabbi Akiba or even Judah Halevi, and it offers no explanation for the unabashedly

anthropomorphic imagination of God in the Bible. In fact, abstract, systematic thought is a legacy of the Greeks, not the Hebrews. It is Plato and Aristotle who develop the tools of abstraction Freud uses in his own intellectual enterprise, and not, as the urging of his ideology of Jewish continuity led him to imagine, Moses.

THE peculiarity of Freud's last work, which I have stressed, reflects how it is riven by the fierce tension of a fundamental paradox. The truth, it assumes, must be sought in origins. One hardly needs to say that this is the governing assumption of psychoanalysis both as explanatory theory and as therapy. It is also an idea that has entranced the European imagination ever since Romanticism: if the layered veils of history could be parted, if what lies behind what meets the eye could at last be made out, if the *Ursprung*, the ultimate origins, could be uncovered, we would understand the essential character of the thing itself, perhaps touch the secret of its power.

It is just such an uncovering of the *Ursprung* of the Jewish people and its monotheistic idea that Freud tries to carry out in *Moses and Monotheism*. The problem is that origins are always more or less inaccessible because collectively and individually we cover our tracks, leaving—whether through repression in Freud's sense or biased selection or the carelessness of neglect or scrambling through the sheer mechanics of transmission—only teasing traces, distorted fragments, of long forgotten beginnings. Freud himself is acutely aware of this difficulty in *Moses and Monotheism* and repeatedly confesses the need to conjecture from scanty evidence. He peers deep into the well of the past because he believes that only there will he find the truth he needs. But given his location in time, given the sustaining programmatic nature of the truth he wants to find, he is doomed to see in the well, however convinced he is of the validity of the image he rescues from the depths, no more than the shadowy reflection of his own face.

The Senator They Love to Hate

Charles Horner

FROM time to time, American political figures become convenient symbols of the evil against which all enlightened people are automatically ranged. In this rogue's gallery, the late Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin is still the greatest villain—his name has even entered into the language—but he is being challenged for pride of place in our own day by another U.S. Senator, Jesse Helms.

CHARLES HORNER is executive vice president of the Madison Center in Washington, D.C. From 1982 to 1990 he served in the State Department and the United States Information Agency.

A Republican from North Carolina, first elected in 1972 and in November 1990 reelected to a fourth term, Helms enjoys a long-standing popularity in his own state which is seldom if ever reflected in the accounts of him that appear in the press. There he is invariably seen as an ogre, a man with a "dark view of the world," "the Grand Old Man of the Far Right," or sometimes just "an angry old man." He is "irrational," an "extremist"; he appeals to the "darker side of the national character." Were Richard Hofstadter writing his canonical work on the "paranoid style in American pol-

itics" today, one suspects that Helms would rate at least a page, and perhaps even a chapter.

Although, as the example of McCarthy shows, it is not necessary to be a Southerner to qualify for the pantheon of evil, Helms has certainly been helped along by conforming so well, in his accent and general demeanor, to the stereotype of the powerful and inherently reactionary Southern Senator. Yet the Southern Senate barons of the past on whom the stereotype is based were quite a different breed. They were, first of all, Democrats and, through the workings of the seniority system, they controlled the main

committees and, thereby, the writing and passage of legislation. Such men had real institutional power. It was the kind of power that translated into construction projects and military contracts and economic development.

Jesse Helms today holds no such position. He is in the minority, a Republican, not exactly an endangered species in the Senate but not exactly a thriving one, either. There are now ten fewer Republicans in the Senate than there were only ten years ago and, even among those who remain, there has been a shift away from the New Right or "movement conservative" of the sort Helms is said to be.

In addition, however much of this sentiment remains among congressional Republicans, it must coexist with a Bush, not a Reagan, White House. The current President's relationship to the New Right may be seemingly deferential, but he is not its leader, nor can one presume that he feels particularly indebted to it for his own rise in the political world. A decade ago, in fact, he was among the objects of its suspicions and resentments. Thus, while the commentators of the Left like to see in Helms's tough Senate positions on various issues some sub-rosa and sinister connection to the White House, the lines of influence and communication, if they exist at all, must be circuitous indeed.

THE fact that Helms differs in these important respects from the archetypical Southern Senators of the past has not prevented him from being portrayed as today's principal heir to their racist attitudes. Yet the "racism" of which Helms is accused turns out on inspection to consist of nothing more than an opposition to quotas and other forms of racial preferences.

Helms may be somewhat disingenuous in defending himself against the charge of racism by invoking the traditional liberal opposition to racial preferences, but he does so very effectively. For example, he likes to cite the late Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, the great civil-rights advocate who swore that the congressional statutes of the 1960's should never, would never, could never lead to racial quotas and preferences. The

late William O. Douglas, the Supreme Court Justice most worshipped by liberals in his time, is another of those who insisted that the civil-rights laws neither would nor should lead to state-sponsored racial preferences; he is another of Helms's impeccable authorities. And, of course, there is a tradition among black advocates, reaching back to Frederick Douglass who, Helms is fond of reminding his colleagues, was opposed to what we now call affirmative action.

Be that as it may, the effort to link Helms to old-line Southern racism is of declining political value. On this particular issue, the national press has found a more interesting villain in David Duke. Moreover, the issue itself, volatile throughout the country, has been neutralized "inside the Beltway" by the Bush administration's endorsement of *de-facto* quotas in administrative practices,* and its claim that there is no difference between the civil-rights bill it has now accepted and the legislation insisted upon by the same groups which orchestrated the near-destruction of Justice Clarence Thomas.

IN TRUTH, however, race has never been the main concern of those most interested in demonizing Jesse Helms. The real energy in this effort has been provoked by his attentions to the management of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the containment of the AIDS epidemic.

Back in the 1960's, it occurred to the authors of the new civil-rights statutes that questions of interpretation might arise in the future, and thus they established a "legislative history." This history has been ignored, but at least it exists, and people in the 1990's (including Helms) can cite it, even if only plaintively. But when the National Endowment for the Arts was established in 1965, there was no one like Hubert Humphrey who spoke to any concern that, somehow, federal funds could or would go to pay for the depiction of homosexuals abusing one another, or to performances by naked women who cover themselves with chocolate or invite spectators to scrutinize their genitals, or to men who urinate on stage to comment on homelessness. Such things were probably not even

imaginable, and were certainly unutterable. But they have all now come to pass, and Jesse Helms has almost single-handedly taken it upon himself to do something about them.

Under Senate rules, Helms has been able to call up amendments to place restrictions on the NEA that would render it unable to fund obscenity. His case gets perfunctory praise from conservatives, mostly silence but sometimes ridicule from liberals, and total silence from moderates. When put to a roll call, the Helms amendments pass the Senate by votes of 70-30 or so. They are then attached to the Senate version of a particular piece of legislation under consideration, but disappear in the House-Senate conferences which produce the final versions of the bills.

Sometimes the contortions are farcical. A *New York Times* account of the congressional go-round in October deserves quotation at length:

Congressional negotiators rejected a measure to prohibit government financing of "patently offensive" sexual exhibits, even though more than two-thirds of the House and Senate had voted for it.

Twenty-seven negotiators from the two houses removed the provision, sponsored by Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, from an appropriations bill on Wednesday. . . .

The provision was stripped from the \$12.7 billion spending bill for the Interior Department and the National Endowment for the Arts as part of a deal with Western Senators to preserve low grazing fees on federal land in 16 states. . . .

Representative William E. Dannemeyer, Republican of California, . . . called the deal a "swap of corn for porn" and an example of the "imperial arrogance of liberals in Congress."

There is an undeniably comic aspect to this debate, and the small federal contribution to the trade in pornography already worth many billions may be significant only because it further legitimized a well-established business and introduced Senators to some of the

* See Chester E. Finn, Jr.'s "Quotas and the Bush Administration," COMMENTARY, November 1991.

terms which became famous in the Clarence Thomas hearings.

THE discussion of AIDS, however, is a different matter. Here the constitutional and the medical and the political get mixed up in various ways, but Helms, at least, is willing to make his premises explicit and open to examination and refutation. He says that in combating the AIDS epidemic, customary public-health measures are not applied to their fullest effect because of unprecedented political pressures. He maintains that AIDS is treated uniquely, altogether unlike even other sexually-transmitted or contagious diseases, because it has been bound up with the issue of homosexual rights, the issue which hovers over and informs the debate, without anyone quite saying so. In Helms's view, in short,

our efforts to treat AIDS as a public-health concern have been thwarted by a vocal, militant minority which has used the AIDS issue to promote a political agenda it has failed to achieve in its own right. Members of this militant movement, the homosexual lobby, have masterfully manipu-

lated the American public. By feeding America's compassion, they have turned the AIDS epidemic to their political advantage by using it to promote something they have never achieved before—homosexual rights.

Subjected to incessant abuse—and ridicule*—for such outspokenness, Helms has nevertheless introduced measures to expand the scope of required testing for AIDS, to keep AIDS-infected visitors from entering the country, to enlarge the federal role in regulating the nation's blood supply, and so on. But the fate of these proposals mirrors the fate of his proposals about the arts endowment—obligatory, sometimes overwhelming, support, followed by parliamentary maneuvering which vitiates their effects.

THESE initiatives have earned for Helms an enmity unique in the ongoing political debate. And it is obvious that the vilification is working. It partly explains why Helms has been left virtually alone in a battle that everyone who seeks a reversal in the drift toward domestic decadence would be expect-

ed to help him fight. Of course, "enlightened" people were late converts to other causes identified with the Right; one thinks of its foreign-policy crusades to "roll back" Communism in Eastern Europe, free the Baltics, recover Russia for civilization, and ostracize the regime in Beijing. But for all that the Reagan revolution managed to do all these things, our cultural and moral order here at home is scarcely Reaganesque. Indeed, the decade which began with fretful breastbeating that Khomeinism was coming to America in the guise of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority ended with Robert Mapplethorpe's becoming the most famous "artist" in the land—and Jesse Helms his only consequential political nemesis. No wonder that he has been demonized by the liberal culture.

* For example, a group of people calling themselves the Treatment Action Guerrillas spent \$3,500 to secure a giant replica of a condom which they then managed to place on the chimney atop the roof of Helms's Arlington, Virginia, home. They inflated the contraption and attached a placard to it explaining that the device was meant to prevent the spread of "unsafe politics."

How to Be Politically Correct

Daniel Seligman

IN *The Sunshine Boys*, which is about two retired comedians loosely modeled on Smith and Dale, Neil Simon has one of them explaining that some things are funny and always get a laugh, while other things are invincibly unfunny. For example, Cleveland is funny but Maryland is not. Cupcakes are funny. Pickles are funny. Roast beef is not funny. Great comedians know this instinctively.

Applying this model to current

controversies over what is and isn't politically correct, anyone who wishes to gain a teaching fellowship at Dartmouth or even to circulate with honor in the beau monde needs to know at least the following:

Wolves are politically correct.

Urinating onstage with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts is politically correct.

The SAT's are not politically correct. IQ tests are not politically correct. It is politically correct to say that IQ tests measure nothing except your ability to pass an IQ test.

The Mercedes is politically incorrect.

Bats are politically correct. Here I refer not to baseball implements but to Count Dracula's furry little friends. For those not up to speed on bats, their quintessential correctness was resoundingly certified recently in the *New York Times*, which laid it down in the "Science" section that bats are great but "are succumbing worldwide . . . to human ignorance, greed, and destruction."

Aztecs are politically correct, although less so than Seminoles or the Sioux.

DANIEL SELIGMAN, a long-time *Fortune* editor, writes the "Keeping Up" column for that magazine.