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Elaine Margolin

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Reviewed by Elaine Margolin, Hewlett, NY

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Ronnie A. Grinberg tries her very best to tell us a mostly unknown and engaging story about a group of New York Jewish intellectuals who erupted onto Manhattan's literary scene after WWII in "Write Like a Man: Jewish Masculinity and the New York Intellectuals." Most of these men had not directly witnessed the carnage of war or the devastating annihilation of their Jewish brethren throughout Europe. But one senses they weren't thinking too much about it. Like most young, ambitious, smart, and creative people, they were focused on their own ascendency. Many had already published their stories and criticism in "Commentary," "The New Yorker," and the "New York Review of Books." It seems whatever religious sentiment they may have harbored as little boys was already long forgotten. The new holy grail was all about literature, art, politics, current events, and a few were seduced by aspects of Freudian psychology. All of them dared to think 1950s Manhattan might really be the promised land. Grinberg focuses her narrative lens on the way they conducted themselves using a brash masculinity, both in their prose and conversational speech, perhaps as an antidote to feelings of emasculation they were struggling with. Many of them recall being bullied in school for their Jewish nerdiness and lack of interest in sports.

Masculinity in America was seen by elite Protestants as the province of physical strength and athleticism. This wasn't a smart Jewish boy's natural habitat. Grinberg claims this group found a way to express their masculinity through intellectually combative debates with one another on the pressing issues of the day. They gathered in the school cafeteria at CCNY where friendships were forged that lasted a lifetime. CCNY was tuition-free at the time, and brought men like Sidney Hook, Harold Rosenberg, Bernard Malamud, and Alfred Kazin, who embraced "a masculinity that was neither assimilationist nor bound by Jewish tradition. Rather, it centered on a new construct: the combative thinker who argued for a living and a pastime." These intellectuals were tired as being cast aside as losers, and wanted to be seen and appreciated by everyone, Jew, and *goyim* alike.

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Some of them still felt smitten with Marxism despite the frightening stories coming out about Stalin's blood-stained landscape. A few of them would abandon the liberalism they now embraced and go on to play a crucial role in forming the neoconservative movement that was aligned with the Republican Party's platform. All of them wanted to impress their beleaguered immigrant parents, who had done so much to give them opportunities they themselves never had, but ironically their success often made them feel more estranged from their parents and their unsophisticated ways.

Irving Kristol recalls: "We were poor, but then everyone was poor, more or less." Kristol's father was in the clothing trade. Irving Howe's father owned a grocery store that went bankrupt in 1930. Howe recalls being ashamed of his father's lack of education, and the way he spoke English with a Yiddish inflection. Alfred Kazin's father could not find work during the Depression and Kazin recalls thinking: "It was not for myself alone that I was expected to shine, but for them—to redeem the constant anxiety of their existence. I was their first American child, their offering to a strange new God: I was to be the monument of their liberation from the same of being—what they were."

Grinberg writes effusively about Diana and Lionel Trilling who were married for almost half a century. Lionel became the first Jewish tenured professor at Columbia University. But it was only after he put up a fight after being fired for being a "Marxist, a liberal, and a Jew." He returned the next day and insisted he be given his rightful place. His colleagues were shocked at his enraged bravado for he was known as a man who was very genteel and never spoke above a whisper. His wife, Diana Trilling, wrote book reviews for "The Nation" and "Partisan Review." Lionel was a rising superstar. Many commented on how he knew how to strike the right balance between being "not too combative or aggressive—not too Jewish." He emanated civility, refinement, and an aloofness that allowed him to appear to be above the fray of politics. His best-known work, "The Liberal Imagination," published in 1949, called for a "mature liberalism *bereft* of childish illusions that socialist—or any political movement –could remake the world, by revolution or politics." The Trilling's were close friends with the Podhoretz's until Podhoretz broke from the pack to become one of the nation's leading neoconservatives.

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Things were good for these Jewish men but being Jewish in America was always a complicated negotiation with what was going on around you. Irving Howe wrote, "It is difficult to be a Jew and just as difficult not to be one. He is caught in the tension resulting from conflicts between his society and his tradition, his status, and his desires; he suffers as a man, intellectual, and Jew." Thirty years later, Howe would channel this angst into his masterwork, "World of Our Fathers." Howe never felt at ease in America and was unable to embrace capitalism wholeheartedly. He felt intellectuals like himself should remain on the periphery of society where they would feel more comfortable criticizing what they saw as inequitable. In 1954, Howe created "Dissent" which he described as a democratic socialist magazine.

Around the same time, Partisan Review began to reorient its mission encouraging readers to embrace mainstream culture. This was a shift from the radical politics they had preached during the 1930's. Commentary magazine began in 1945, started by Eliot E. Cohen, and by 1960 it was in the hands of Norman Podhoretz who was still wedded at the times to liberal values but went out of his way to print articles demonstrating how communists were not primarily Jews as was the common perception. A schism was forming between those intellectuals still wedded to liberal values, and those like Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz who were critical of the New Left and the radical movements of the 1960s that were soon to come that embraced feminism, gay rights, and affirmative action.

Grinberg's portrait of Norman Podhoretz startles and unsettles us. He was editor of Commentary from 1960-1995 and grew increasingly dismayed by the violent militancy of the New Left and drifted into the Republican Party taking some of his contemporaries with him. He had no stomach for women's rights, or the gay revolution, or affirmative action. The Beats bored him senseless. Podhoretz's father was a milkman and Podhoretz was ashamed of him and the defeat that seemed to engulf him. Podhoretz recalls being the whiz kid in school but remembers being brutally assaulted by his black classmates after school for being such a "sissy."

When Podhoretz first took over Commentary he was still against the war in Vietnam and in love with Kennedy, but something changed radically inside of him after the 1967 Israeli war. He was enthralled by the virility of the Israeli fighters who defied stereotypes told about Jewish men for ages. He attacked the audacity of Hannah Arendt for daring to criticize Jewish passivity, and

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started to write the first of three memoirs that would cause most of his old friends to shun him. They were mortified at his revelations that behind their intellectual personas, they were just like everyone else, infatuated with money and status despite their heady denials. Podhoretz became interested in militarism in foreign affairs. He began drinking heavily for a time, and finally recognizing he needed to return to the Judaism of his youth. He stopped drinking. He continued to bring Commentary rightward hiring writers like Joseph Epstein, Michael Ledeen, and William Bennett. He voted for Nixon in 1972, and later, Reagan. He began to attack liberalism voraciously as being spiritually shallow and morally self-defeating.

Podhoretz's angry transformation intrigued me. There seemed to be something downright unkosher about it. Book critic Albert S. Lindemann, who reviewed his third memoir, "Ex-Friends: Falling Out with Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Hannah Arendt and Norman Mailer (1999)," felt similarly troubled by Podhoretz's irritations writing "Is there something specifically Jewish about this American left that Podhoretz considers so cancerous? Do Jews have a special responsibility for the ravages, moral and otherwise, of the sixties and seventies?"

And it was then that I realized what it was that I found missing from Ronnie A. Grinberg's finely researched and engaging work. She stands too adrift from the heart of darkness that has shadowed Jewish life for centuries clinging to an optimism that feels forced and limiting. She keeps her assertions almost exclusively focused on how this group of outstanding Jewish men found their own unique way to reclaim a masculinity they felt had been stolen from them. And she rejoices in how they accomplished this. They did it in their own way; using words, thoughts, ideas, and the ability to express themselves with a unique eloquence.

But Grinberg loses sight of the shame, guilt, ambivalence, fear, and sorrow that was surely nestling beneath these Jewish men's polished exteriors, despite their new masculine personas. Some might think I am making a wild leap here, but I believe Norman Podhoretz's lurch to the right is laced with a personal desperation of a particularly Jewish sort. It feels as if Podhoretz was prompted by fear and a desire for safety in a strange new world that still had plenty of sand traps laid out for the Jews. He was looking for some sort of magical yellow brick road. Still going strong at ninety-four as antisemitism explodes once again into a combustible fire, I find myself wondering if Podhoretz has any second thoughts about his political travels.

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