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ONE OF THE GOALS of this journal is to stimulate debate on questions that cut across disciplines, generations, and established conventions. Arguably, no question has had as consequential *and* provocative effect on the field of Jewish studies in recent years as the place of the body in the long annals of Jewish history. Eminent scholars such as Sander Gilman and Daniel Boyarin have labored to demonstrate that Jews rarely thought of themselves or were thought of by others at a remove from their bodies. They, and many other fellow travelers, have sought to revise received assumptions about the relative disinterest of Jews in their bodies, their sexuality, and their gender identities. In the process, they have impelled a rethinking of traditional assumptions about the primacy of the text—indeed, about what we might call the pervasive culture of the text—in Jewish history.

Already in 1994, a newly revived journal in the field, *Jewish Social Studies*, recognized the importance of the emerging discourse of the body by printing an article by Naomi Seidman that engaged the theme of “Sex and the Body in Jewish Studies.” A decade later, another newly revived journal has seen fit to assemble a distinguished group of scholars to consider yet again the impact of the “corporeal turn” in Jewish studies. The recurrence of the theme attests not merely to its staying power, but to the fact that it has had a leavening effect on scholarship in every period of Jewish history and every subfield within Jewish studies, from folklore to theology. Indeed, we now possess a large corpus (if you will) of research produced by scholars who are at once empirically grounded and theoretically sophisticated in the ways of the Jewish body.

But the question that still arises is this: has the “corporeal turn” shifted the pendulum too far away from the textual moorings of Jewish literature and history? It is this query that animates Leon Wieseltier’s frontal attack on what he sees as the “anti-idealist” and “cultural materialist” orientation of recent Jewish studies. In response, Daniel Boyarin, who is the object of much of Wieseltier’s wrath, disputes the notion of “autonomous productions of the mind” that he sees Wieseltier defending. The polemic between them serves as an occasion, we feel, to revisit the state of body discourse in Jewish studies. Those whom we asked to join Wieseltier and Boyarin in our Forum are all noteworthy not only for their fluency in gender theory, but for their substantive and innovative use of the body in their research.

To guide participants in the Forum, we posed the following questions:

NOTES: “OVERCOMING MATTER?”

1. What effect has attention to the Jewish body had on the field?
2. Has this emphasis consciously and/or productively moved away from a "textualist" orientation in Jewish studies?
3. How has the discourse of the body in Jewish studies changed over time?
4. Is there a mind/body problem in Jewish studies?

As the reader will see, not all our contributors chose to engage these questions directly. Most do take issue with the notion of an "anti-idealist" *Tendenz* in Jewish studies (per Wieseltier) and seek to dissolve any meaningful distinction between text (or mind) and body. Some (Fonrobert, Gillerman, and Hasan-Rokem) do so in the form of fast-moving and succinct synthetic essays. Others (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett and Wolfson) offer up a more detailed brief or a richly footnoted case study. The net effect of these various pieces is to lay out more clearly the stakes, as well as the potential, of the "corporeal turn" in Jewish studies. We trust that the range of perspectives offered here will, if not forge a new consensus, at least provide an instructive report on the state of the body discourse in diverse domains of Jewish studies. In the process, we hope to bring to the foreground a core tension in Jewish studies between self-consciously traditionalist and more avowedly iconoclastic approaches that we constantly encounter—and often embrace—here at the *Jewish Quarterly Review*.

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