BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Nazi and the Schoolgirl

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HANNAH ARENDT/MARTIN HEIDEGGER. *By Elzbieta Ettinger. Yale. 139 pp. $16.*

Hannah Arendt (1906-75) once told an interviewer that as a Jewish schoolgirl in Konigsberg, the Prussian hometown she shared with no less a rationalist precursor than Kant, she operated under strict instructions from her mother. If a teacher uttered an anti-Semitic remark, she was to stand up immediately, leave class and go home. Her mother, Arendt explained, "always insisted that I not humble myself."

Some sixty years later, as a world-renowned political theorist living in an apartment on Manhattan's Riverside Drive, Hannah remained under the eye of Martha Arendt. Mother peered out from one of three photos on her desk. The others were of her husband, Heinrich Blucher, and her first philosophy professor, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

It's the Heidegger portrait that might have nettled Arendt's mother. After more than a decade of courageous scholarship by Hugo Ott and Víctor Farías in Europe, and related work from American scholars Thomas Sheehan, Richard Wolin, Hans Sluga and Tom Rockmore, no sensible observer can doubt that Heidegger, the most celebrated and influential figure in twentieth-century German philosophy, lied his inauthentic head off about his relation to the Nazis. Far from being a reluctant sympathizer for a brief period in the early 1930s, as he sought to convince his de-Nazification committee after World War II, Heidegger remained an enthusiastic believer in National Socialism's "inner truth and greatness." He hoped to become Fuhrer of the German university system, to play philosopher-king to Hitler's *Fuhrersstaat*, aiming, in the words of philosopher Otto Pöggeler, *den Führer führen*, "to lead the leader."

The explosion of research on Heidegger's Nazi activities has undermined even a second, fallback position for Heidegger's many acolytes—that Heidegger may have been enthusiastic about Nazism, but those politics have little to do with his most profound philosophical beliefs about "Being," "authenticity," "technological culture" and other characteristic concerns. On the contrary, it's increasingly clear why Theodor Adorno described Heidegger's anti-public, anti-democratic, anti-pluralistic philosophy as "fascist down to its most intimate components," why Karl Jaspers denounced it as "unfree, dictatorial and incapable of communication," and why Heidegger himself, in a 1936 conversation with his former student Karl Lowith, agreed "without reservation" that "his partisanship for National Socialism lay in the essence of his philosophy."

As for Arendt's all-too-human condition of eternal loyalty, it's simply the banality of romantic obsession.

All that bad archival news makes it more awkward than ever for admirers of Arendt—including those scheduled to gather October 5-7 for a twentieth-anniversary memorial conference at the New School for Social Research—that Heidegger remained the dominant influence on her life and thought. It only complicates matters further that, as some associates of Arendt knew, she and the charismatic young Heidegger engaged in a passionate four-year love affair. It began when she was an 18-year-old first-year student of his at Marburg. He, a 35-year-old junior professor, married with kids, made clear through a couple of notes that he had *Daseins* on her.

Arendt cared about no intellectual process so much as "understanding"; but understanding her lifelong relationship with Heidegger, which lasted—after a seventeen-year break between 1933 and 1950—until her death in 1975, is not easy. How could a brilliant, imperious, self-aware Jewish intellectual, who worked for both the German Zionist Organization and the Paris branch of Youth Aliyah, who fled Germany with her mother in 1933, who wrote forcefully about the need for anti-totalitarian political action and took as a fundamental credo that "when one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew," remain powerfully devoted to a mentor who betrayed Jewish colleagues (including *his* teacher, Edmund Husserl), promoted approval of the Nazi agenda for Germany when he became rector of Freiburg University in 1933, remained with a viciously anti-Semitic wife for decades and never repented?

Answers have been frustrated by the unavailability to scholars of the Heidegger-Arendt correspondence. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, whose fine, groundbreaking 1982 biography, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, reported the romance, noted more than once that she could not obtain access. Neither could Hugo Ott, the German economic historian whose 1988 probe, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, supplied the strongest documentation yet for the fervor and tawdriness of Heidegger's cooperation with National Socialism.

Yet somehow Elzbieta Ettinger, professor of humanities at M.I.T. and author of a Rosa Luxemburg biography, managed to read the letters. That will frustrate not just past researchers but one Dana Villa, an Amherst political theorist and Heidegger fan who announces in the preface to his forthcoming, highly abstract and often impenetrable study, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political*, that "the Arendt/Heidegger correspondence remains, as a general rule, off limits to scholars at the present time."

Neither Ettinger nor her publisher will say how she got permission, apart from confiding that she asked for it. No matter. She's come up with startling excerpts, but it's how she shapes her interpretation that's certain to prove explosive, and to anger Arendt's many friends and admirers. If, in reading Ettinger's book, a variant of old school doggerel comes to mind—"Hannah and Martin sitting in the *Schnee*, K-I-S-S-I-N-G . . ."—the fault is wholly Ettinger's. In her somewhat *Cosmo*-ish view, Heidegger may not have been able to put his finger on Being, but he could always make Time for Hannah. As for Arendt's all-too-human condition of eternal loyalty, it's simply the banality of romantic obsession.

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Ettinger's crucial claim, stripped of academic diction, is that Arendt never overcame her schoolgirl crush on Heidegger, even after World War II. As a result, Ettinger asserts, Arendt agreed to serve as Heidegger's "goodwill ambassador to the world at large," supervising his translations, refurbishing his reputation, exonerating him before the world philosophical community. In short, she was Heidegger's dupe.

That, Ettinger suggests, was reprehensible. Arendt, she writes, "went to extraordinary pains to minimize and justify Heidegger's contribution to and support of the Third Reich," blaming everything on his rabidly anti-Semitic wife, Elfride. Like other apologists for Heidegger, contends Ettinger, Arendt "endeavoured to portray him as a helpless victim of [Elfride's] sinister obsession." But Heidegger, Ettinger insists, "was never a tool in the hands of his wife or anyone else." Arendt blamed Elfride because "the women were jealous of each other" and because "Arendt never ceased to believe that she was *the* woman in Heidegger's life." Arendt strove to protect "the special role that she believed she played in his life, the spiritual kinship that she believed he shared with no one else." Arendt "was convinced that she alone could understand the depth of his soul . . . that she was his muse and his healer."

All that intensity, Ettinger argues, grew out of old-fashioned romantic loopiness. In an unsent note to Heidegger that she wrote at age 54, Arendt declared that he was the man "to whom I remained faithful and unfaithful, and both in love." In their earlier years, when, according to Ettinger, Arendt "idealized Heidegger beyond measure," Arendt wrote to him, "I would have lost my right to live had I lost my love for you." Elsewhere, she promised, "I will love you more after death." And for those who find it hard to think of Arendt and Heidegger doing more than rubbing foreheads, Ettinger quotes Arendt's announcement of a more sensuous maneuver: "I kiss your brow and your eyes."

Ettinger asserts that Arendt's husband, Heinrich Blucher, "never fully understood, as their postwar letters make clear, the depth of her bond with the philosopher. He erroneously considered her affair with Heidegger as ended." Heidegger, for his part, is shown by Ettinger to have been passionately in love with Arendt in their prewar days, so much so that the world-champion obscurantist wrote her intelligible prose (love letters

notable, Ettinger sniffs, for their Hallmarkish platitudes). Ettinger describes his sixteen letters to her in 1950, after their mature reconciliation, as "warm, elegant, romantic, even seductive" (Ettinger apparently did not win permission to quote *Heidegger's* letters). In Ettinger's recap, Heidegger wondered "what was more beautiful: Hannah's letter or her picture." He wrote that "he dreamed about her living nearby and of running his fingers through her hair." By 1952, Arendt was expressing the conviction that "nothing has changed between us."

At the same time, Ettinger reports, Heidegger continued until the last years of their relationship to treat Arendt as a student rather than a fellow intellectual and author. He couldn't stand her growing world prominence after the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), a reaction Arendt at first accommodated. She wrote to Blücher in the fifties, "As you know, I am quite ready to behave toward Heidegger as though I have never written a word and will never write one. And this is the unspoken *conditio sine qua non* of the whole affair. . . ."

Ettinger argues that Arendt's correspondence with Karl Jaspers, the other major German philosopher with whom she maintained a lifelong relationship—in their case, of mutual friendship and respect rather than romance—shows that Arendt knew she was functioning as Heidegger's apologist in the West. In a 1951 letter, Arendt admits to having "a bad conscience." In the later part of her book, the author details how both Jaspers (whose Jewish wife received shabby treatment from Heidegger before the war) and Arendt struggled over what their relations to Heidegger should be in later life. Jaspers finally urged Arendt to break with Heidegger. Arendt refused. After Arendt smoothed rough patches in the 1950s and '60s by a visit to Heidegger in 1967, she visited Heidegger and his wife once a year, even trying to help him peddle the manuscript of *Being and Time* when he needed money. Heidegger wrote that he would have preferred for her to visit him *twice* a year. Arendt died in December 1975, four months after her last visit to him. Heidegger died five months later.

Sizing up the drama, Ettinger is contemptuous of Heidegger and dismissive of both Arendt and Jaspers. Heidegger "reinforced the 'slavish' streak" in Arendt. Arendt and Jaspers "were seriously involved in questions of ethics and morality, but their theories failed them when it came to Martin Heidegger." After her 1950 meeting with Heidegger, Ettinger asserts, Arendt simply "did what she could to whitewash his Nazi past."

Ettinger's version both reflects and clashes with the standard Arendt/Heidegger story, the one sketched by Young-Bruehl in *Hannah Arendt*. According to that book, Arendt and Heidegger conducted a student/teacher affair, an "illicit and impossible love," with Arendt continuing to rush to him whenever he summoned her even after she left Marburg for Heidelberg (and Jaspers) to do her dissertation on St. Augustine (finally to be published in English this December by the University of Chicago Press). After Arendt fled Germany for Paris in 1933, the seventeen-year break ensued.

In 1946, Young-Bruehl points out, in an article for *Partisan Review*, Arendt described Heidegger as a philosopher of "absolute egoism," compared him unfavorably to Jaspers and faulted Heidegger so much for his betrayal of Husserl that she labeled him "a potential murderer" of his mentor. In 1950, however, when she and Heidegger had their first postwar meeting (Ettinger notes that Elfride was not present), Heidegger convinced Arendt that claims about his enthusiastic Nazism were slander. Their friendship resumed and Arendt thereafter undertook her role in promoting Heidegger's work. As Richard Wolin characterizes matters, Arendt saw Heidegger's Nazism as more "a character flaw" than a manifestation of inner evil. In the *Partisan Review* article, she ascribed his "complete irresponsibility . . . partly to the delusion of genius, partly to desperation."

In her 1969 address, "Martin Heidegger at 80," Arendt also blamed Heidegger for thinking, like Plato and too many philosophers, that philosophy could take place in a separate realm from politics, leading to "what the French call a *deformation professionelle*." On the standard view, their relationship continued (without ardor) despite Arendt's sharp criticism of Heidegger's activities, her condescension toward his judgment and even her contempt for his character. (Young-Bruehl noted way back, as does Ettinger now, that Arendt once described Heidegger as

THE RED

It was summer a bright day in summer and the path kept
narrowing as it led in under the oaks
which grew larger than those I was used to in that country
darker and mossed like keepers it seemed to me
of an age earlier than anything I could know
underfoot the ground became damp and water appeared
in long scarves on the trail between overhanging
ferns and bushes and reflected the sky through the leaves
the birds were silent at that hour and I went on
through the cool air listening and came to a corner
of ruined wall where the way emerged into
a bare place in the woods with paths coming together
the remains of walls going on under trees and the roofless
shoulders of stone buildings standing hunched among heavy
boughs all in shade the mud tracks of animals led
past a tall stone in the center darker than the stone
of that country and with polished faces and red
lines across them which when I came close I saw
were names cut deep into the stone and beside each one
a birth date with each letter and numeral painted
that fresh crimson I read without counting to the foot
of one side and the date of death and the account
of how it had come to them one day in summer when they
were brought out of those buildings where they had lived
old people most of them as the dates indicated
men and women and with them children they had been
ordered in German to that spot where they were
shot then the Germans set fire to the buildings
with the animals inside and when they had finished
they went off down the lane and the fires burned on
and the smoke filled the summer twilight and then the warm night

W.S. Merwin

a man who "lies notoriously always and everywhere, and whenever he can.")

The achievement of Ettinger's book lies in its documentation of Arendt's emotional bond to Heidegger. Its weakness rests in its de-emphasis of all factors in Arendt's loyalty more intellectually complicated than romantic bondage, and in its condescension toward Arendt herself, a woman who struck no one who knew her as shy, deferential, lovesick or easily manipulable. There is something too automatic, too *Hard Copy* about Ettinger's diagnosis, as if the Heidegger-Arendt affair began as run-of-the-mill sexual harassment (the new-style "consensual" variety), with Arendt playing out the part of damaged abusee. But while we know from Young-Bruehl that Arendt developed a crush on Senator Sam Ervin during the Watergate hearings, it's a stretch to see Heidegger as the Bob Packwood of the Black Forest. Something is off here.

To be sure, Heidegger, whatever his sins, represented a kind of cultural home to Arendt. "If I can be said to 'have come from anywhere,' " she wrote in a 1964 letter to the great Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem, who'd rebuked her for her allegedly unsympathetic attitude toward the Jewish people in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), "it is from the tradition of German philosophy." To walk out on Heidegger, as she was once supposed to walk out on anti-Semitic remarks, would have been to leave her own intellectual temple—it's no surprise she kept his photo near. Moreover, Heidegger's own intense, virtually religious sense of philosophical mission and seriousness, especially the deeply subjective, self-reflective demands he placed on himself, plainly struck a chord in Arendt and influenced her own view of what marked philosophical thinking. She too always placed philosophy on a lofty plane and didn't like, in principle, to mix matters of the flesh and thought. For Arendt, Ettinger acknowledges, "there was no place in the life of the spirit for matters of the flesh."

It's also possible to accept Ettinger's innuendo throughout the book that Arendt vigorously exploited her American status as agent for high European philosophical culture, the imprimatur she got from her pedigree, most concretely from her personal association with Heidegger and Jaspers. In his memoir *The Truants*, William Barrett, who translated Arendt's first *Partisan Review* article, recalled that "she was always conscious of coming from elsewhere—of speaking for something older and deeper that she understood as European culture, something she guarded at her center." Her pride in the status of German Jews before the Nazis, the "almost complete" assimilation of Jewish and non-Jewish German intellectuals at the time, particularly struck him: "She harbored a nostalgia for that condition and that period." Some scholars say Arendt made "quiet appropriations" from Heidegger in her work—fair or not, Arendt surely profited, and legitimately, from prestige by association.

But where Ettinger's interpretation most falls short is in the area she mines: the purely human. Despite manifold evidence that Arendt viewed Heidegger as a deeply flawed man, even a fool when it came to politics, Ettinger insists that Heidegger was simply evil, calculating and unscrupulous, a dangerous political climber, and therefore that Arendt's charity toward him was inexcusable. In that regard, it's Ettinger's hubris that stands out. She shows no deference to the fact that Arendt, an immensely savvy, down-to-earth, cosmopolitan judge of people, knew Heidegger the man for decades, whereas Ettinger knows him only as a writer.

The view of Heidegger as a weak and foolish personality in fundamental ways—regarding his wife, regarding *Realpolitik*, regarding how others saw him—surfaces repeatedly throughout Arendt's writings. Ettinger herself quotes Jaspers's telling remark to Arendt on her first visit to Jaspers after the war in 1949: "Poor Heidegger. Here we are sitting, the two best friends he has, and we see right through him."

In fact, it's plain from evidence with which Ettinger is familiar that Arendt thought of Heidegger as a dupe when it came to the Nazis: a judgment she'd probably have kept to even if she'd seen the new evidence of his activities that has emerged in the past ten years. We know from her last work, *The Life of the Mind*, that she considered both Heidegger and his philosophy exceedingly *unworldly*. In her 1953 notebook entry later published as "Heidegger the Fox," she wrote directly about Heidegger as "so lacking in slyness" that he got caught in one trap after another. That entry makes plain that it was also Heidegger, among others, she was thinking of in her famous 1964 interview on German TV, when asked about her first postwar visit to Germany. Speaking of prewar intellectual friends who had proved disloyal, she said:

> They were not all murderers There were people who fell into their own trap, as I

would say today. Nor did they desire what came later. Thus it seemed to me that there should be a basis of communication precisely in the abyss of Auschwitz. And that was true in many personal relations. . . . Somehow things were set straight again with a lot of people.

Given that she famously detested self-protecting intellectuals as a class by the time she fled Germany for Paris, Arendt, if she was to forgive Heidegger after the war, must have seen him as different from the street-smart intellectual careerists she loathed. It is certainly possible, as Ettinger believes, that love blinded Arendt to decency when it came to Heidegger. In light of everything we know about Arendt and her work—her "genius for friendship," her concrete acts of kindness over the years, her refugee shrewdness about people's characters, her no-nonsense recognition of man's weakness before temptation, her belief that one must act politically and communicate with others to solve social problems—it's far more likely that decency, and a unique understanding of Heidegger's flaws as a man, made it possible for her to continue to love a part of him while regretting the rest.

Ettinger's book implies that, knowing what we know now, we should respect Arendt less. This reader, for one, respects Arendt more. □

Who Killed Libby Zion?

WILLARD GAYLIN, M.D.

THE GIRL WHO DIED TWICE: Every Patient's Nightmare: The Libby Zion Case and the Hidden Hazards of Hospitals. *By Natalie Robins. Delacorte. 350 pp. $22.95.*

On March 4, 1984, Libby Zion, an 18-year-old college freshman, "entered an emergency room [of New York Hospital] with 'a virus that has been going around' and . . . left the hospital eight hours later in a body bag." What went wrong? This is the question Natalie Robins asks in her carefully researched and finely crafted book. The fact that we don't have a satisfying answer to the question after more than 300 pages is not an indictment of the author but an indication of the complexity of modern medicine and the stubborn refusal of life to conform to the black and white of color television. The inevitable docudrama will correct all that.

Libby Zion's avoidable death in the wards of one of the country's most prestigious teaching hospitals is not unique. It happens to a thousand lesser-known patients admitted daily to the myriad hospitals of every major and minor city in the country. What made Libby Zion different was her father. Sidney Zion—"newspaper columnist, free-lance writer and novelist, legal adviser, deal-maker, Broadway character, and man-about-town"—wouldn't let the world forget how Libby had died. For ten years he pursued a hard-edged, shrill media campaign against the hospital and doctors who had "killed" his daughter.

Death is rarely accepted as life's natural and inevitable closing chapter. Of all the world's wonders, which is most wonderful? the Bhagavad-Gita asks, and answers: that each man, though he sees others dying all around him, never believes he himself will die. Perhaps with age and illness one's own death becomes an imaginable event, but the death of a child is another matter. "The death of a child is a catastrophe, pure and simple," says Robins. "How does a parent come to terms with such a tragedy?" One does not. If the death of a loved one is a wound, the death of a child is the wound of Philoctetes—the wound that never heals.

Libby Zion had a complicated history that was to plague her treatment and the malpractice case that followed. The specific medical events leading up to her hospitalization involved agitation and fever, a sense that she was "burning up" and a "jumpy" and shaky manner that was frightening to family members who observed her and brought her to New York Hospital. But she was admitted with no sense of urgency on the part of anyone but her parents.

Her complications included her physical state, her guarded personality and her need to be evasive in order to protect what was apparently a longstanding history of drug abuse, including Valium, marijuana and cocaine. In addition, Libby was taking an antibiotic, the painkiller Percodan and—of particular im-

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