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Anita Burdman Feferman, *Politics, Logic, Love: The Life of Jean van Heijenoort*. Boston/London, Jones and Barlett Publishers, and Wellesley, Mass., A.K. Peters, Ltd., 1993.* xvi + 415 pp.

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This is a biography of Jean van Heijenoort — the well-known logician and historian of modern logic but also a full-time, professional revolutionary — written by Anita Burdman Feferman. The author is a freelance writer who has written short stories, articles and profiles. The book under review is her first full-length biography.

The book grew out of, as the author says, “what I had thought would be an interview or two with van Heijenoort. That was like thinking I could eat two peanuts; once I got started it was almost impossible to stop.” She met van Heijenoort for the first time in Paris in 1970. Then in 1982, when he came to Stanford to begin work on the *Collected Works of Kurt Gödel* with the author’s husband Professor Solomon Feferman and others, the meetings and contacts were more frequent.

The book is based on a series of interview with Jean van Heijenoort taken from 1983. This is the main source. But the author also has inter-

* Editor’s note: Anita Feferman’s biography of van Heijenoort was originally published by Jones and Bartlett, but only in a very small edition before the title was acquired by the new publishing company A.K. Peters.

viewed many other persons: family, colleagues, friends, collaborators of van Heijenoort — the list of them given in the book is really very long. She also has used many additional sources such as papers, books, archival material, etc.

A result of that immense work is the present biography. It consists of four main parts corresponding to the main periods in van Heijenoort's life; an Appendix written by Solomon Feferman and devoted to van Heijenoort's scholarly work, and sections of sources and notes, a bibliography and a name index.

Part one consisting of three chapters covers the period 1912–1932 and is devoted to the childhood and school years of Jean van Heijenoort until his leave in 1932 to join Leon Trotsky. Jean Louis Maxime van Heijenoort was born on July 23, 1912 in Creil, a small town fifty kilometers north of Paris, a son of Charlotte H el ene Balagny and a Dutch immigrant Th eodore Didier van Heijenoort. His childhood was difficult and marked by the war and the death of his father and their consequences. In those years one finds the origins of the feeling Jean van Heijenoort had of not belonging, a feeling which will be present during almost all his life. School and his successes there helped a bit to overcome that feeling. He was really an excellent student and, thanks to his achievements, was granted scholarships which made it possible to enter the *coll ege* in Clermont de l'Oise and then the Lyc ee Saint-Louis in Paris. In the latter his contacts with political movements began. He was attracted by the local *Ligue Communiste*, the Trotskyite organization (it is worth noting that the author uses the term "Trotskyite" rather than "Trotskyist" in which she follows Jean van Heijenoort's lead. Although some consider the '-ite' suffix pejorative in this connection, neither the author nor van Heijenoort did so). The attraction was so strong that he abandoned the possibility of being granted a *bourse* for the *l' cole Normale* and without reflecting or hesitating, made a leap into unknown territory — and went to Turkey, to become Trotsky's secretary and body-guard.

In this way the second important period in van Heijenoort's life began. During the seven years (1932 – 1939) his life was strongly connected with (and subordinated to) the life of "the Old Man" as Trotsky used to be called. Those years are described in six chapters of the second part of the book. We can follow here the political activity of Trotsky and the group around him in Turkey, France, Norway and in Mexico (where they tried to find a safe place living in exile and wandering the globe) as well as the personal life and fate of Jean van Heijenoort (which was, in fact, totally subordinated to the political movement — in difficult moments of conflict the latter always had

priority). He was convinced that he was on the proper side actively doing something good for the people. During those seven years he had "lived, breathed, and taken sustenance with his leader, following his every thought and making allowances for every misstep" (p. 185).

In November 1939 Jean van Heijenoort "divorced" himself from Trotsky, not ideologically or politically, but physically and geographically and went to New York. So began the next period in his life. It is described in the third and fourth parts of the book. Still active at the beginning in the political movement (as the secretary of the Fourth International), he returned to science. He began to study mathematics at New York University and in the course of his studies he was accepted as a doctoral student by Professor James Stoker. At the end of four years he wrote a thesis *On Locally Convex Surfaces* and in 1949 was awarded the Ph.D. degree. He became a professor at New York University where he stayed until 1965 (with the exception of 1962–64 when he was a visiting professor of philosophy at Columbia University). In this year he was appointed as a professor of philosophy at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. His interests in logic begin in the late 50s under the influence of Georg Kreisel (van Heijenoort will cite him later as "the man who influenced him most ... after Trotsky," p. 262) and of the 1957 Summer Institute of the Association for Symbolic Logic held at Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York. He was active mainly as a historian of modern logic and is best known for his book, *From Frege to Gödel: A Source Book in Mathematical Logic, 1879–1931* published by Harvard University Press in 1967 as part of its History of Science Series. This book, a result of seven years of labor, became a standard work.

Though still active in the political movement at the very beginning of his days in the United States, Jean van Heijenoort rejected Marxism after the Second World War. The most significant factor in his decision was the postwar revelation of what had occurred in the Soviet detention camps. He came to the conclusion that "it was not Stalin alone but the Marxist system as a whole that had created the potential for the tragedy" (p. 215). But he came again into contact with the Trotskyite movement in the mid 1950s when he agreed to help with the acquisition of documents for the Trotsky Archive at the Harvard University Library.

Politics and logic were not the only "topics" of Jean van Heijenoort's life. There was also a third element already mentioned in the title of the book, namely love and his affairs with women. As he put it: "For me, falling in love is easy. It's leaving that's hard" (p. 185). It was true with respect to Trotsky as well as with his emotional entanglements with women. Though rather shy, he was married four or five times ("depending on how you count" as he said — p. xiii) and his personal

and emotional life was rather tragic, ending disastrously — he was murdered by his last wife in March 1986 when he was sleeping.

The book is written in a really attractive way. It gives not only facts about the rich and adventurous life of Jean van Heijenoort but the author has tried to help us to understand him better in his decisions and reactions by also giving us a psychological portrait of the hero. Beside the big events having historical meaning, we find in the book small details of the character and everyday life of Heijenoort. (We learn, for example, that he was very meticulous in acknowledging the receipt of any paper — something I have experienced personally.) The language of the book is precise but at the same time it is far from academic in style. We find here even “detective” elements — for example in the history of the discovery of the Trotsky — Liova Sedov (Trotsky’s son) correspondence.

The book is published in a really nice way from a typographical point of view. It is supplemented with many interesting photographs, has a name index which makes it easy to find the needed places, something that is necessary in a long, historical book like this one.

I am sure the book will find many readers among logicians who knew Jean van Heijenoort or read his *Source Book* (who has not read it?) as well as among people interested in the Trotskyite movement. One should congratulate Anita Burdman Feferman for her achievement and we should be grateful that she has enabled us through her book to better know Jean van Heijenoort.