The Body Issue

FALL 2019

AJS PERSPECTIVES

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES

The Body Issue

FALL 2019

Artist: Rachel Rafael Neis

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Rachel Rafael Neis. *Marginalia in the Middle I*, 2018. Watercolor and ink on paper. 6 in. x 6 in. Courtesy of the artist.

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Rachel Rafael Neis. *Makeover (or, All That is in the Settlement is in the Wild)*, 2019. Watercolor and ink on paper. 16 in. x 12 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Back Cover: Rachel Rafael Neis. *Bestial Beach Party,* 2015. Brush and ink, clayboard. 5 in. x 7 in. Courtesy of the artist.

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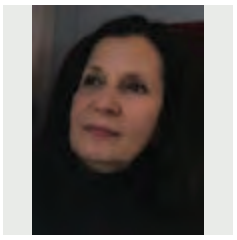
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From the Editors

In this issue we knew we wanted to explore physicality. But it wasn't easy settling on a title. The phrase "the body" circulates in academia as part of a theoretical orientation to the materiality of what we study, particularly the physicality of our human selves. But we also sensed something uncanny in calling it "The Body Issue." Our minds wandered first to the dead and then to the bronzed and rippling. But rather than pick something more oblique (The Embodiment Issue? The Corporeality Issue?), we decided to embrace everything "The Body" calls to mind, from invigorating physicality to vanity and performance to disease, death, and decay. Within Jewish Studies there is much to say about this entire range of experience.

Nevertheless, a scholarly "corporeal turn" several decades ago was not universally embraced in Jewish Studies.[i] It faced resistance, as some in the field insisted that what makes Jewish Studies worthy of attention is its intellectual achievements rather than its more base, bodily realities. These critics were in turn responding to age-old antisemitic accusations of excessive Jewish carnality: Jews are too materialistic, too sexually driven, too *embodied*. Today, the significance of the Jewish body appears to be widely accepted within Jewish Studies scholarship. Its abilities and limitations; the place of the body in self- and other-identification; the force of affect and emotion; the dynamics of gender, sexuality, reproduction, and physicality; and the ritual importance of bodies—all are now, it seems, comfortably settled within Jewish Studies curricula.

This issue of *AJS Perspectives* is devoted to examining the body in a variety of forms and contexts—as a vehicle for artistic expression; as a means of recreation; as a site of violence, power, and control; as a repository for identity roles and performance; and as a brute fact of life and death. We open the issue with two essays on Ottoman Jewish history that serendipitously complement each other: Jewish "marginals" considered deviant and filthy (Bolel) and Jews as a part of a muscular "civic sports culture" (Yıldız). Turning to film, bodies are highlighted in a contemporary Israeli golem allegory (Gershenson) and in taboo-breaking performances by Jewish actresses in Bollywood in the early twentieth century (Greenberg). Early Jewish approaches to affect and the body are then explored (Abate), followed by an analysis of the role of body and biology in halakhic discussions of medically assisted reproduction (Bedzow and Kagedan). How bodies integrate or fail to integrate into ritual and worship spaces is the topic of the next two essays (Milligan, Raucher). The body's vulnerability to violence and its deterioration into waste and filth bring the issue full circle with essays on domestic violence in the Zohar (Brown), the vile sights and smells of excrement and death in the concentration camps (Levitsky), and resistance and reclamation of the body by survivors (Keller). In some of this work, bodies are being used by the research subjects in purposive ways—for performance, competition, or recreation, for example; in other cases, researchers look to the body to uncover surprising insights into topics once thought purely "of the mind."

Mira Sucharov & Chaya Halberstam

We are pleased to feature a special section on a theme that emerged organically from our call for papers: dance. Choreographed or spontaneous, dance can shape or express Jewishness in a variety of ways. In this issue, authors take on the topic of dance in relation to the immigrant experience, Palestine solidarity, Israeli masculinity, *tikkun ʿolam* (repairing the world), the search for Jewish roots, and secular Jewish courtship. As always, we are also enthusiastic about offering pieces on pedagogy and the profession. What happens when we invite students to use their bodies—in real or imagined ways—when studying religion and history, or to focus more on the embodied experiences of our subjects of study? How do our bodies skew, for good or for ill, the experiences we have in professional settings?

Finally, we are thrilled to feature the artwork of Rachel Rafael Neis—a historian, Talmudist, and artist—throughout the issue. Often inspired by early rabbinic literature, Rachel Rafael Neis's artwork calls attention to the fleshy and material both in form and content, tending to feature bodies, creaturely hybrids, and interconnected worlds of material life.

We invite readers of "The Body Issue" to consider the Jewish body, and Jews and bodies, throughout history and in current urgent debates in Jewish Studies. We also hope "The Body Issue" will prompt readers to consider their own bodies and how they can help ease the way toward, or hold us back from, full participation in these debates.

Chaya Halberstam
King's University College

Mira Sucharov
Carleton University

i See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Corporeal Turn," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95, no. 3 (2005): 447–61, for a full discussion of this pivotal turn in Jewish Studies.

Rachel Rafael Neis. Detail from Flight of the Duckfish, 2019. Oil on canvas. 60 in. x 84 in. Courtesy of the artist.

From the President

Christine Hayes

Bodies of Knowledge

It is a simple fact that our bodies are the inescapable medium of our existence. And yet, this simple fact is one that we, as a species, have not always accepted with equanimity. Indeed, over vast expanses of time and space, dramatically diverse and disparate cultures have wrestled with the simple fact of our embodied existence, seeking to transcend, escape, overcome, or otherwise deny the obvious—that we are, in a basic sense, embodied beings.

In Western culture, the life of the student or scholar has traditionally been depicted as another version of the denial of the body, achieved by a singular focus on the life of the mind in dualistic opposition to the concerns of the body.

Despite this cerebral image, students and scholars are themselves deeply embodied, as are the objects of their study, whether the latter are human groups, human individuals, or the ideas, arguments, texts, and cultural and material artifacts produced by those humans. The essays and articles in this issue of the *AJS Perspectives* train attention on these two "bodies of knowledge"—the body of the interpreting student and the bodies subjected to interpretation and study. The authors assembled here consider the complex ways these "bodies of knowledge" interact in the generation of knowledge. They show how the boundary between subject and object, between knower and known is continually blurred and renegotiated in the course of producing a new "body of knowledge."

Bodies are sites of knowledge. They are encoded with information about choices and coercions, trends and rebellions, oppressions and freedoms, ideologies and iconoclasms, penury and luxury, labor and leisure, love and death. They are sites of identity, individual and collective, fluid and fixed, singular and manifold. Enduring the vicissitudes of time and space, they are essentially dynamic. For this reason, the knowledge they embody and convey is also dynamic.

The emergence of the body as a category of inquiry in Jewish Studies attunes us to intersecting discourses of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, religious practice, and socioeconomic status. I hope you enjoy exploring these intersections through the essays and articles assembled in this issue of *AJS Perspectives,* and that they inspire you to wrestle in productive ways with the embodied character of your own teaching and research.

Christine Hayes
Yale University

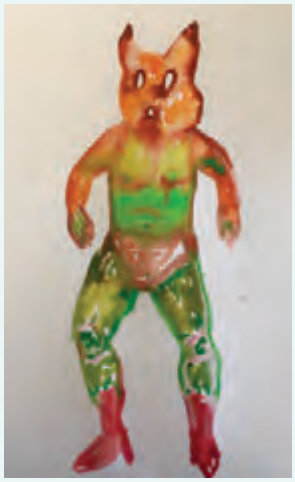
Featured Artist

Rachel Rafael Neis

In my work I investigate and respond to the sensory and the material, and to the convergences between the human and the nonhuman. I do so via abstract and figurative paintings and drawings, zine-making, and small-scale sculpture and installation. My interest in the bodily extends to the materiality inherent in making work. In larger and smaller scale paintings I experiment with gesture, exuberant color, and the viscerally limpid and textural qualities of paint. These interests, along with the constraints and potential of monochromatic work, also find their way into my drawings and zine-making.

In painting and drawing, as in prose, I seek to open other (im)possible worlds to the present through a combination of conjuring and conjecture. My explorations of abstraction and figuration, and their boundaries and overlaps, decenter the focus on particular sorts of bodies that haunt the tradition of European painting. Further displacing narrow ideas of the body as object, are the human, nonhuman, and hybrid bodies that populate my work, which find companionship with vibrant archaic objects such as rotary telephones, spectacles, and books. Some of this imagery invokes medieval Jewish manuscript marginalia whose reconfigured centrality puts to bed notions of an iconophobic, iconoclastic, or disembodied Jewish visuality. Related to such imagery, are my investigations in the past decade of non/human reproductive materials, bodily variation, and zoology, that reference rabbinic tracates, religious manuals, natural history pocket guides, and museology. Some of these motifs figure in the works selected for *AJS Perspectives* "The Body Issue." For more on my work, as it relates to "the body" and Jewish Studies, including my Niddah-zine (an installment from the 63 volume *Talmud-Zine Project*), see the expanded online issue of the magazine on the AJS website (www.associationforjewishstudies.org). Find more work on Instagram @postrafelite.

RACHEL RAFAEL NEIS, *artist and scholar, is associate professor of History and Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. Neis studied art at the Working Men's College London and Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem, as well as at Harvard University and Princeton University art programs. Neis's book,* The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity *(Cambridge University Press, 2013) won the AAJR Salo Baron Prize and an honorable mention for the Jordan Schnitzer Book Awards. Neis is completing a second book,* When a Woman Gives Birth to a Raven: Rabbis and the Reproduction of Species in Antiquity.



Rachel Rafael Neis. Marginalia in the Middle II, 2019. Watercolor on paper. 13 in. x 9 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Rachel Rafael Neis. Detail from Birds Born of Humans, 2019. Clay, Talmudic Tractate Niddah. Courtesy of the artist.

From the Executive Director

I'll admit it, I'm not the world's most athletic person. I'd much rather go to the theater or read a book than climb on the StairMaster or lift weights. Yet I try to go to the gym on a fairly regular basis so I can to keep my body in healthy shape and ward off any variety of age-related maladies (how they seem to be piling up as of late) that might be heading my way. The interesting thing is, while I often find it difficult to get to the gym (New York's never-ending cornucopia of wonderful entertainment distractions are quite alluring), once I'm there I typically enjoy my time and often feel better physically and have a clearer head when I leave. Exercise, in short, does do the body and mind good.

On that note, I'd like to talk about another body, a collective body, namely the AJS. As bodies go, we're in pretty good shape. Our membership and conference numbers have stayed stable over the last few years, while some learned societies have struggled in these areas. Our board also regularly exercises the AJS body at its annual board meetings. They stretch the organization's muscles in new ways, most recently with the announcement of a new three-year strategic plan that outlines what body parts we want to focus on in the future. And while we do stretch new muscles, we are careful not to overstretch and pull a muscle, by working hard to run a balanced budget to maintain stable fiscal health.

We also realize that sometimes we need to listen to other parts of the body we might have inadvertently ignored. Not infrequently, I will come home from the gym and feel sore in areas I didn't even know I had! In the case of the AJS, one area we're paying more attention to right now is contingent faculty. They're continuing to make up an increasingly larger portion of the AJS body as more and more schools look to adjunct faculty to teach courses, rather than hire new tenure-track faculty. While the AJS doesn't have any quick fixes or easy answers to address the contingent faculty issue, it is putting significant financial resources towards new professional development initiatives to help such individuals, as well as early-career scholars, navigate a diverse job market, including opportunities outside academia.

We're also trying to exercise the AJS body so that we maintain symmetry of the body. No one likes "leg day," but you still have to do it, otherwise you're all arms and chest. In this vein, while the annual AJS conference is the largest program we run, it is far from the only thing we do. In fact, many members don't know what the organization does on daily basis. The hardworking staff of six individuals administer and oversee a grant program for dissertation completion fellowships, produce an increasingly successful public-facing podcast series, book speakers at venues through our nationwide lectureship program, and offer new arts and culture grants to Jewish Studies programs in the United States. The organization aims to be the "heart" of Jewish Studies, to track and announce major events in the field, as well as tout the accomplishments and successes of our members. We provide webinars, mentorships, and other trainings (like our new partnership with the Op-Ed Project) to help our members stretch *their* profes-

Warren Hoffman

sional muscles in new ways by learning new skills. We do all this while continually looking for new funding sources and donors to support this ever-increasing portfolio of services, because, as personal trainers like to say, you need to eat, if you want to grow. In the end, we're not exercising just three days of the year at the conference, we're always at the gym.

We look forward to rolling out a number of new initiatives in the coming weeks and months as part of our strategic plan, and hope that those of you who have the means to support this work beyond your membership dues will consider making a donation to the organization so we can further fund these programs and support our members. By working together and exercising the body in these ways, we'll continue to be strong and healthy, and even grow in the coming years, and be in good shape to tackle any new challenges that may come our way.

Warren Hoffman
Association for Jewish Studies

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AMY K. MILLIGAN is Batten endowed assistant professor of Jewish studies and women's studies at Old Dominion University.

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Me, Myself, and I (and Marginal Bodies of Ottoman Jews)

Canan Bolel

I would like to introduce you to the Ottoman Jews: not the ones you've heard about; the ones who have been forgotten, the remnants of whom I have been reading about for the last two years in the archives.

Two young men who stocked animal bones, nails, and horns in a store. A man who killed and dismembered his friend while gambling. Yako the arsonist. Orphans left in front of synagogues. "Mazalto the Insane" who was kept in the basement of a prison. A convert to Christianity who was beaten up by the locals. Avram who sold erotic photos in public. The head of a Jewish community who sold fake official certificates. Cholera-stricken Jews who were sent to live in tents on a mountain.

"Deviance and marginality are powerfully indicative of political authority and of norms," writes historian Arlette Farge.[i] In the late Ottoman Empire, the public realm was the locus for defining and monitoring the appropriate central type and the socially abnormal and deviant bodies. As the public awareness of marginals intensified, the body became the site both for the expression of alternative social identities and of intervention on which power relations were carved. In my research, I focus on the Jewish marginals of nineteenth-century Izmir from a corporeal perspective.

Over the last two years, I have been conducting archival research in Turkey and Israel to rescue marginal but ordinary, invisible yet noticeable historical bodies from their isolation by linking them to spaces of everyday life. I focus on the sewage running down the streets of Izmir and the lives formed around it. I concentrate on unruly bodies, the vilest trades, and filthiest portions of the city, which were continually remade and refined along modernizing agendas. I am after different realities. In the archives, different realities unfold.

Russian words from my childhood, *spasibas* and *kharashos,* popped up every time I started speaking Hebrew.

I spend months reading police reports, court records, communal registers, newspapers, and letters in Turkish, Ottoman Turkish, Ladino, Hebrew, English, and French. Six languages, four different scripts. *Kafs* started to look like swans and *dalets* as sevens. Russian words from my childhood, *spasibas* and *kharashos*, popped up every time I started speaking Hebrew. When I spoke Turkish, my sentences were formed according to the word order in French. Just like the archive, my brain was a microcosm of past lived experiences, a mysterious place born out of a moderately coordinated chaos.

My days at the Ottoman State Archives in Istanbul were fueled by cups of Turkish coffee followed by sleepless nights wondering what can be gleaned from 150-year-old documents about the lives and deaths of marginal Jews. While tracing the irregular in Istanbul, people told me that I do not look Turkish. They told me that I look like a German, or an American. Men asked if I can "really" read Ottoman Turkish. People complimented my perfect command of Turkish. People commented on my *Izmirli* accent. People made jokes about the horrible yet popular stereotype of "beautiful *Izmirli* women."

In Jerusalem, I spent my days at the National Library, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, and

Hand-written letters of bacteriologist Waldemar Haffkine concerning his research on cholera in India during the late nineteenth century. Photo taken by the author at the Haffkine Archive, National Library of Israel.

the Ben-Zvi Institute. I ate hummus for all my meals. I got bitten by a bug seventeen times while reading a charity register. I found a lock of hair inside an old book written by Christian missionaries. Strangers asked if I can find their *Izmirli* grandparents' houses in Izmir. People asked if I was Jewish. People asked if my family is from eastern Europe. People asked me to comment on Turkey-Israel relations. They commented on my "funny" word choices when I spoke Hebrew and strong *ings* when I spoke English.

In Istanbul and Jerusalem, in one way or another, people asked me, "Who are you?" Just like the marginals from the archives, I was something of a curiosity that required definition.

I could have told them about myself and my great-grandparents' past lives in Algiers, Corinth, and Damascus, and how their paths crossed in Izmir. I could have told them the languages they spoke and dreamed in, things they celebrated and mourned, their eclectic food and weird sense of humor. Perhaps a detailed examination of my personal history would help strangers to understand and also justify my interest in the abnormal. Probably, marginals of my hometown had to explain themselves to strangers, too. Maybe they decided it is futile to explain, just like I did.

In the last two years, my research question changed many times. I talked about my research in eight different cities, shared the stories of marginal Jews of Izmir in Jewish Studies and Ottoman Studies circles. I carried their stories with me during my visits to my family home in Izmir, coming full circle.

My experience of meeting with new people means saying my name a couple of times and explaining its pronunciation. Some try, some do not care, and a few decide to call me Joanne. It is hard to have a name that starts with a sound that does not have an equivalent in most languages. How does one explain a sound that does not exist in a language? How does one tell stories of marginal bodies that no longer exist in the world?

I still find it quite interesting that it took me five years to realize that my research was also a quest for my identity and placelessness that I embody and carry wherever I go.

In Turkish, the letter *c* is pronounced like the *j* in jam.

CANAN BOLEL *is a doctoral candidate at the Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Washington. Her dissertation project, "Constructions of Jewish Modernity and Marginality in Izmir, 1860–1907," focuses on embodied marginalities and questions how Ottoman Jews constituted their identities within imperial and communal settings by focusing on the Jewish poor, diseased, criminal, and convert to Christianity of Izmir. She is currently a doctoral fellow at the Posen Society of Fellows and Stroum Center for Jewish Studies of the University of Washington.*

i Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* (Yale University Press, 2013), 27.

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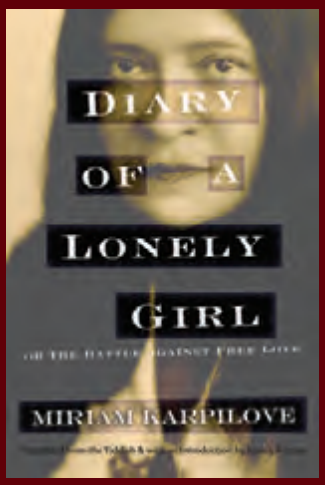

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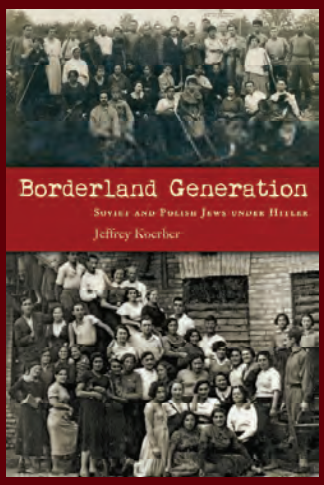

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Muscular Judaism *Alla Turca?*

Murat C. Yıldız

In 1909, the Maccabi Jewish Gymnastics Society of Istanbul (Société Juive de Gymnastique, "Maccabi") organized a gymnastics exhibition at the Teutonia Club, a popular social club in Istanbul. Members of the club performed athletic feats, twisting and contorting their nimble bodies, in front of a religiously diverse audience of Jews and Muslims. Maccabi's president, Maurice Abramowitz, delivered an impassioned speech at the event, stressing the significance of physical exercise. Sports and gymnastics, he argued, were the most effective means through which Ottoman Jews cultivated strong, healthy bodies and built a modern Ottoman Jewish community.

Did the event and its discursive framing constitute an iteration of "Muscular Judaism"? If the event had taken place in any city in central Europe during the early twentieth century few scholars would hesitate to answer in the affirmative; however, its setting in the Ottoman Empire seems to give pause. Jewish Studies scholarship treats Muscular Judaism and the obsession with the Jewish body as an exclusively central European phenomenon. It identifies Max Nordau, cofounder of the World Zionist Organization, as the creator of the concept of the "muscular Jew." Nordau's idea of Muscular Judaism established connections between this new type of Jew, the muscular Jew, who was physically and morally strong, and a prosperous Jewish nation.

While Nordau may have coined the term, he did not monopolize it. Moreover, Jewish physical cultural enthusiasts were not confined to writing, organizing, and exercising in central Europe. Jews living in the heart of the Ottoman Empire and at its very edges constructed an inseparable link between strong Jewish bodies and national regeneration. Therefore, I am calling for a more expansive geographical reading of Muscular Judaism.

Members of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople, 1907. Left to right: J. Kornfeld, L. Shoenmass, A. Ziffer. Private archive of Daniel Ziffer.

The activities of Maccabi in Istanbul make abundantly clear that Ottoman Jews focused on the Jewish body as a central site of regeneration. In fact, early twentieth-century German Jewish publications acknowledged this, referring to Maccabi in Istanbul as the oldest Jewish association in the world. Does this mean that Muscular Judaism was not an exclusively European project? What, then, did it look like in the Ottoman Empire and beyond? Can we speak of a Muscular Judaism *alla turca*?

Muscular Judaism *alla turca*, or Turkish-style, shares a number of characteristics with Nordau's reading of Muscular Judaism, which I will refer to as Muscular Judaism *alla franga*, or European-style. Ottoman and European Jewish educators and intellectuals working both inside and outside of the discourses of Zionism often described Jews as physically weak and degenerate. There were differences, however, in their reading of degeneracy. Contributors to Muscular Judaism *alla franga* foregrounded the insalubrious state of Jewish streets and yeshiva culture, while Ottoman Jewish educators embraced a more capacious, less clearly defined understanding of Jewish degeneracy. What united them was their belief that Jewish degeneracy was not insurmountable. Self-care and discipline, namely the

regular performance of gymnastics and physical exercise, enabled Jews to strengthen their bodies. Once physically and morally strong, these Jewish (male) bodies would serve as the building blocks of a new Jewish community.

There are two significant differences, however. The first difference is the context in which Muscular Judaism *alla franga* and *alla turca* emerged. Muscular Judaism *alla franga* emerged in a context in which there was a "Jewish question." Ottoman society did not produce a wide-ranging set of debates and discussions exclusively focusing on the status and treatment of Jews, since they were not the empire's most important or most vexing Other. The second difference relates to Zionism. Practitioners of both iterations of Muscular Judaism were Zionists. However, their Zionism differed. Prior to the First World War, Zionism was polyvalent and geographically diverse. Generally speaking, European Zionism differed from Ottoman Zionism. The political contours of European Zionism were stronger than Ottoman Zionism's: European Zionists called for Jewish political autonomy, while Ottoman Zionists did not.

Notwithstanding these important differences, the lines separating Muscular Judaism *alla franga* and *alla turca* were often fluid. This fluidity was connected to space. Istanbul served as a regional hub, attracting foreign-passport holders from Europe as well as Ottomans from all parts of the empire. Therefore, members of the Maccabi Jewish Gymnastics Society of Istanbul encountered the ideas, practices, and institutions that undergirded Muscular Judaism *alla franga* by reading about them in foreign publications and hearing about them at formal and informal events organized at the club and beyond.

Members of the Maccabi Jewish Gymnastics Society constructed Muscular Judaism *alla turca* during a time when Istanbul was experiencing a "sports awakening." This sports awakening consisted of a bustling multilingual sports press, trendy sports clubs, and popular soccer matches and gymnastics exhibitions. Muscular Judaism *alla turca* was an important contributor to this sports awakening and was also shaped by it. My current book project maps these developments, arguing that Muslims, Jews, Armenians, and Greeks collectively shaped the defining contours of this civic sports culture in Istanbul's expanding public sphere. It further demonstrates that there were also striking similarities between the ways in which Muslims, Jews, Armenians, and Greeks engaged in sports. Intellectuals, educators, journalists, government officials, and sports enthusiasts fervently asserted that these activities enabled Ottomans from all backgrounds to cultivate robust bodies, modern ethnoreligious communities, and a civilized empire.

Jewish Studies scholarship treats Muscular Judaism and the obsession with the Jewish body as an exclusively central European phenomenon.

While I continue to tease out the contours of Muscular Judaism *alla turca* in my work, it is not premature to reflect on the possibilities it offers. Muscular Judaism *alla turca* serves as a unique lens through which to explore an interconnected history of the Jewish body and physical culture that includes, but is not confined to, central Europe. I focused on Ottoman Istanbul in this article, but it is important to point out that Jewish physical-culture enthusiasts established and joined sports clubs and discussed the necessity of corporeal development in cities across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) during the transition from empire to nation-states. An investigation of the interstices of the Jewish body across the region reveals a layered history that is equally relevant to a number of scholarly fields, namely Jewish, Middle Eastern, and Gender Studies.

This investigation and framing promises to enrich scholarship as well as the courses that we teach. For example, how would lectures on Muscular Judaism in Jewish Studies classes differ if they included an analysis of debates and discussions about the Jewish body and sporting spaces in Baghdad, Berlin, Cairo, and Istanbul, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? What are the implications of including discussions about Muscular Judaism *alla franga* in courses on gender and the body in the Middle East? In both instances, a more interconnected and multilayered history emerges. Hopefully Jewish, Middle Eastern, and Gender Studies scholars will reflect on these and other questions as they teach the history of Muscular Judaism and the Jewish body.

MURAT C. YILDIZ *is assistant professor of History at Skidmore College and an assistant editor for the* Arab Studies Journal *(ASJ), a peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary research publication in the field of Arab and Middle East Studies. He is currently working on a book manuscript that focuses on the making of a shared physical culture among Muslims, Jews, and Christians of late Ottoman Istanbul.*

Mixed-Sex Dancing and Jewish Modernity

Sonia Gollance

For centuries, rabbis have forbidden Jewish men and women from dancing together, often in colorful terms. The fact that these prohibitions had to be frequently repeated suggests that Jews defied communal laws. They also found ways around them, such as by dancing with a separating handkerchief. Prior to the era of Emancipation, Jewish authorities were primarily concerned with the potential for sexual transgression within the Jewish community. In sixteenth-century Greece, Rabbi Binyamin Ze'ev ben Matityahu recommended excommunication for married couples who switched partners while dancing, expressing concern that men might fondle married women. Yet by the late eighteenth century in western Europe (and later further east), mixed-sex dancing was frequently identified with values from outside the Jewish community, and, in short, with the changes wrought by modernity. Rabbis used the language of citizenship when they sought out the help of governmental authorities to prevent Jews from engaging in mixed-sex dancing with Christians, claiming that the kind of person who violated religious precepts would also be inclined to break secular laws. Indeed, Hungarian Reform rabbi and historian Leopold Löw (1811–1875) claimed that the first real opposition to Jewish communal authorities in Germany did not occur in the synagogue, but instead in the dance hall.

German Orthodox rabbi Marcus Lehmann (1831–1890) depicts these issues in his serialized 1868 novella *Elvire*. Set against the backdrop of the 1848 revolutions, *Elvire* provides a strong moral message—and enough transgressive dancing to keep readers interested. Lehmann even stages a debate about dancing between the rabbi narrator and his friend, Adolph Metz, a Jewish banker. Adolph has received an invitation to a noble ball, which he views as an opportunity to successfully integrate into German society. Although he points out that dancing is a sign of joy in Jewish culture, his rabbi warns him that the

Rachel Rafael Neis. Mixed Species Dancing, 2014. Pen and ink on paper. 5.5 in. x 7.5 in. Courtesy of the artist.

book of Esther shows the dangers of Jews attending non-Jewish court functions. Against his rabbi's advice, Adolph brings his daughter Elvire to the ball. The results are disastrous, since she becomes reacquainted with a morally dubious Christian suitor.

Dancing was an important social accomplishment for upwardly mobile and politically radical Jews alike during the long nineteenth century, including salonnière Fanny von Arnstein, writer Arthur Schnitzler, journalist Abraham Cahan, and anarchist Emma Goldman. Like military service and athletics, dancing demonstrated that Jews could properly discipline their bodies—yet in a way that challenged the traditional separation of the sexes. Social dance was a courtship activity that invited dancers to evaluate the stamina, grace, and physical connection they felt with their dancing partners. Young people could dance and flirt with individuals whom their parents might deem inappropriate marriage partners--and form relationships based on attraction or mutual interests, instead of shared communal values. As a result, writers of literary fiction and religious authorities treated mixed-sex dancing as a symbol of the social changes that transformed European Jewry in the modern era. Mixed-sex dancing was a way for writers to discuss the different challenges acculturation presented for Jewish men and women, while simultaneously entertaining their readers.

SONIA GOLLANCE *is a visiting assistant professor in Germanic Languages and Literatures at The Ohio State University, where she directs the Yiddish and Ashkenazic Studies Program. She is writing a book about the taboo of Jewish mixed-sex dancing.*

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Dancing on the Edge of a Rainbow: Margot Mink Colbert's ballet, TRANSIT(ION): *Emigration Transformation*

Roberta Sabbath

Performed most recently in Jerusalem's Beit Shmuel Auditorium on July 4–5, 2014, Margot Mink Colbert's ballet, TRANSIT(ION): *Emigration Transformation*, was scheduled for a third night. Margot cancelled. On July 6, 2014, explosions from Gaza tunnels triggered Israel's Operation Protective Edge, beginning days of Gaza rocket launches interrupted by Israel's Iron Dome Missile Defense System. In Tel Aviv, Margot heard the pop of successful interceptions. The experience could not have been more emblematic of Jewish survival. Margot dubs her decision to cancel the performance beforehand a miracle.

The ballet dances the epic story of twentieth-century Eastern Eureopean Jews from the Pale of Settlement who, as immigrants and artists, faced the trials and gifts of everyday assimilation and artistic creativity—the exodus that refused slavery, desired liberation, struggled with freedom. Her work embraces the drive to survive in the New Country and a critical view of capitalism and materialist culture. She has choreographed what Hans Blumenberg calls the impulse to resist utopic vision for realistic solution. We hear the human story of the laughter through the tears. As one father mused, "America's a free country. You're perfectly free to keep your opinions to yourself. You can't even tell your own daughter what to do."

The multimedia ballet incorporates a montage of archival projections, klezmer music by Danish composer Heinrich Goldschmidt, a narrative voice for historical and literary references, and an eclectic choreography. Trained in traditional balletic style, dancers perform a Eastern European village hora, the Lower East Side sidewalk game of potsy, the Charleston dance and ballroom pieces of 1920s, the unemployment line of the 1930s, the power of Rosie the Riveter that emerged in the wartime 1940s, and the Philippe Petit tightrope walk of 1974, a feat that Margot sees as a metaphor for the miracle of Jewish survival.

At the heart of the ballet is Polish immigrant Anzia Yezierska (1880–1970), author of *Hungry Hearts*, the 1920 novel about the struggles, alienation, and hopes of immigrant Jews. She explains soul-crushing work in the shirtwaist factory: "I felt a strangling in my throat as I neared the sweatshop prison; all my nerves screwed together into iron hardness to endure the day's torture." We see her stomping, writhing in frustration and exhaustion, finally screaming aloud, reminiscent of Munch's *The Scream*. To express her elation when Samuel Goldwyn produces the movie *Hungry Hearts*, choreography takes us to the Roaring Twenties and Hollywood glitz. Then, Anzia declines a $100,000 contract offer. "Writing is everything I am. … It's my search for a meaning. I can't sign it away." She rejects the materialism, frantic competition, and the "machinery of success."

Through choreography, we see the narrative trajectory that includes devastation and elation. We hear the lyrics of Gerald Stern "Dear Waves": "Lucky you can be purified over and over again." Through music, we hear Yiddish refrains and American jazz. For Margot, the dancing body is emblematic of our humanity, its strength, its creativity, its grace, and its spirit. In her words, Jewish life from the Old Country to the New was like dancing on the brink of a miracle, a dream, a rainbow.

As assistant visiting professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, ROBERTA SABBATH *teaches Jewish Studies and English literature classes and serves as Religious Studies Coordinator for Campus and Community Partnerships. Sabbath's* Sacred Body: Profane Illuminations in Jewish Polemics, *a monograph-in-progress, addresses Mink Colbert's ballet as one of several exemplary works.*

From Margot Mink Colbert's ballet, TRANSIT(ION): Emigration Transformation. Photos by Per Morten Abrahamsen.

The Golem: Old Monster, New Horrors

Olga Gershenson

Stories of the golem, a magically crafted human-shaped creature, originated in medieval Jewish sources. Since then, the legend, like the golem itself, has transformed. It has been told in different ways, with different agendas: with the golem's body made from clay, wood, earth—or in contemporary media-tions—metal and plastic (Gershom Scholem named the first Israeli computer Golem Aleph); in some stories it was human-size, in others, the golem grew enormously or was giant from the start. Some golems appeared mute and zombie-like, others were more sentient, endowed with a gift of speech and even self-reflection. Some golems were created as a metaphysical exercise with no practical purpose, others as servants or protectors. In its distinctly modern incarnations, the golem story was used as a symbol of antisemitic persecution or of Jewish self-defense; it was a metaphor for the relationship between artist and creation, and a cautionary tale of artificial intelligence. Whatever the version, the question arises, can this engineered body have a soul or agency? Every golem story forces us to confront the issues of body, autonomy, and violence.

An Israeli horror film *The Golem* (Yoav and Doron Paz, 2018) is the most recent adaptation of the legend. It keeps the trappings of the best-known version—a golem is created to protect the Jewish community, but later becomes too violent and needs to be destroyed. But in a departure from tradition, the 2018 film reimagines both the golem's creator and destroyer as women. The film opens with a scene set in the synagogue in Prague, where an enormous golem murders the old Maharal. A little girl steps out of the shadows and kills the monster, succeeding where the distinguished rabbi failed.

Fast-forward a few decades to a Lithuanian shtetl, where a tightly knit Jewish community is threatened by menacing outsiders in plague-doctor masks. They accuse the Jews of causing an epidemic and promise violence. In the face of existential danger and the lack

Courtesy of Yoav and Doron Paz.

of leadership from the rabbi, Hannah, who has been secretly studying sacred books, decides to create a golem. Hannah and her husband have been grieving the loss of their child, and so, when she molds the body out of soil and inserts into it a scroll with sacred letters, the result is not a hulk, but a young boy—the spitting image of her late son. In the logic of the film, the golem reflects the desires of its creator; the Maharal of Prague wanted a mighty protector, but Hannah wants her child back. Her golem, like her son, is a part of her, and a fierce connection develops between the two, as she looks into unblinking black eyes of a silent child, gives him a bath, and sews him clothes. Despite his appearance, the golem possesses superhuman strength, easily destroying anyone who threatens Hannah.

This new, artificial motherhood emboldens Hannah: whereas before she hid in the synagogue's cellar to eavesdrop on the rabbi's teaching, now she stands up to the patriarchy. Whereas before she applied potions to prevent pregnancy from lackluster coition, she now makes passionate love to her husband. She even prepares sumptuous meals, as if the creation of the golem has awakened her sensuality and strengthened her connection to her own flesh.

The golem is fine-tuned to her emotions, but beyond his fierce devotion to Hannah, he has no subjectivity, no mind or soul of his own. He is pure body. Without his own judgement or morality, the golem becomes her id, an externalized embodiment of her fears and desires, out of her control or even awareness.

When Hannah becomes jealous of her husband, the golem kills the rival woman. From there, things unravel, and the wise woman of the shtetl (whom we recognize as the grown-up girl from the opening scene) intervenes. She has seen it before—the golem needs to be destroyed. But Hannah can't let go of her surrogate son; their connection is too strong. As the men attempt to exorcise the golem, Hannah reels in pain. Ultimately, she realizes that at the time of attack, the little golem is more destructive to the community than the pogromists. He must go. But even the scene of the golem's destruction is tender and loving. Hannah embraces the golem and kisses him, pulling out of his mouth the tiny scroll that animates him. The golem turns to dust in Hannah's embrace, but the story is not over. In the final scene, a girl, whose mother was killed by the golem, picks up the scroll from the dirt. This ending signals that the cycle of violence is ongoing. Significantly, it is the little girl, a victim, who holds in her hand the promise of future retribution.

What does *The Golem* tell us? Even though the narrative centers on women, this is not necessarily a feminist rereading of the legend. Neither is it just a meditation on a mother's loss. Rather, in the current moment, I read this adaptation as a commentary on the Israeli condition: like the golem, the country was created out of the sense of necessity in the shadow of the Holocaust. It came into existence out of trauma and loss, to serve as a protector, tasked to ensure that Jews will not be victimized again. And yet, this original vulnerability is not a guarantee of justice. As in the traditional legend, the protective powers of the golem in the 2018 adaptation lose proportion, and the violence spreads from the enemy to the very people it deemed to protect. *The Golem* is not alone in illustrating the theme of violence turned inwards. In other current Israeli horror films, monsters, be they zombies, serial killers, or demons, come from within the body of the Israeli nation and attack it from the inside. As long as the little traumatized girl picks up the scroll, the violence will continue.

OLGA GERSHENSON *is professor of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies and professor of Film Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She has published widely on the Holocaust representation, and on Israeli cinema and theater. She is currently writing a book about Israeli horror films.*

Breaking Taboos: Jewish Women Performing the Vamp on the Indian Screen

Yudit Kornberg Greenberg

Sulochana (Ruby Myers), c. 1920s, via Wikimedia Commons.

In this brief essay, I offer glimpses into the ways Baghdadi Jewish *sitaras* (Hindi: starlets) modernized their bodies on the screen by performing the vamp and other daring roles, thus initiating the liberation of the Indian woman's body from the strictures of religion and the prevailing culture. Breaking from previous normative practices of male-only actors, these women legitimized acting as a woman's profession, reconstructing their identities as women, as Jews, as Indians, and as actors. Their pioneering and groundbreaking roles as actors in the burgeoning film industry, despite Indian heteropatriarchal taboos against exposing women's bodies and women's social power, can be explained in terms of their liberal Jewish upbringing, their education and exposure to European culture, but also in light of their distinctive ethnic body, their light skin color, and their self-confidence in accepting and performing diverse roles. By exercising their agency as cosmopolitan women with a talent for acting equal to their male counterparts, they demonstrated female empowerment, with consequences for women on and off the Indian screen. As some of the first actors of Bollywood, these Jewish women challenged existing social taboos and contributed to the redefinition of gender roles in modern India.

Traditional gender roles and rules of modest behavior in Hindu and Muslim communities in early twentieth-century India entailed the absence of women from the public sphere, let alone the performing arts, including dance and theatre. Once the film industry became a major channel for entertainment, the cultural taboo against female actors on stage was extended to include this medium.

In patriarchal religions such as Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, women's dress codes and behavior have been strictly regulated. A primary example are mandates surrounding covering and configuration of women's hair. Women's hair in Judaism is considered ʿervah, or erotic stimulus, which must therefore be covered. In Islam the veil—the physical marker of female modesty—continues to be regulated in conservative communities and countries. Likewise, hair in Hinduism must also be carefully maintained, and women are expected to keep their hair tied back or covered.

Such social and religious rules aimed at regulating women's bodies and discouraging women's presence in public resulted in their absence from the performing arts in India. Thus, in classical Indian theatre and dance, such as Kathakali, female roles were always played by men. These views and practices were beginning to be challenged by women since the early years of the twentieth century. In the film industry, an urban phenomenon that rapidly replaced vernacular regional theatre, Jewish women took center stage.

The Jews of the Baghdadi community were proud of their Jewish identity, while at the same time aspired to integrate

Pramila (Esther Victoria Abraham) in a still from Pramila's home production Silver Film's Bade Nawab Saheb, 1944, via Wikimedia Commons.

into Indian society and gain acceptance into the ruling British class. Many maintained observances of the Sabbath, holidays, and dietary laws, gave to Jewish charities, and decorated their homes with Jewish art. Despite their efforts to assimilate, the Baghdadis remained the *other* in British eyes, regardless of their appreciation of their loyalty. At the same time, they were also the *other* in the eyes of the local Indian population, who did not consider them as "pure" or authentic Indians.

One distinctive characteristic of their group identity was their liberal view towards female education and professional life. Baghdadi Jewish girls received Western education as well as Jewish education, and many proceeded to pursue college education. They were among the first women in India to enter the professions, including law, medicine, and education. By 1947, perhaps a quarter of Jewish women were active in urban economic and professional life.

Jewish actors lived lives that were far more independent than those of many Indian women, both on and off the screen. As part of a highly cosmopolitan Jewish community, women actors were able to develop their professional careers with little resistance. Although there were many Baghdadi women who did not approve of the Jewish actors' public display of sexuality and eroticism, their

Jewish actors lived lives that were far more independent than those of many Indian women, both on and off the screen.

overwhelming success and popularity resulted in both a muting of public criticism from the Jewish community, and even pride in their achievements.

This liberal stance towards educated and professional women in the Jewish community should be appreciated in contrast with the conservative views of the "procreative" and spiritual roles of women in early twentieth-century Indian society. To elite Indians, these were the ideal roles for women; in their view, women's acting was indistinguishable from prostitution.

In this social environment, Jewish actors proved that respectable women could become professional actors, musicians, and dancers. Not only did they push gender and social boundaries by acting and appearing on the Indian screen, far more radically, they performed the roles of the "Modern Girl" and the "Bad Girl." In sharp contrast to the image of the ideal wife and mother, their roles included rebellious wives who rejected traditional authority figures such as husbands and mothers-in-law. They starred in modern "racy" films that represented a new genre in cinema called "socials," which replaced classic Indian mythological films.

It was during the silent-movie era that Jewish actors rose to stardom; among the first stars was Ruby Myers (1907–83) whose stage name was Sulochana, who was known as the "Queen of the Screen." Other Jewish women in early Indian cinema included Susan Solomon, known as Firoza Begum, and Esther Victoria Abraham, whose stage name was Pramila, who was also a major film producer and won the first Miss India award in 1947. Pramila and another Jewish actress, Florence Ezekiel, whose screen name was Nadira, were known for setting the benchmark for the role of "the vamp," flirting with men and kissing in sexy love scenes.

A key factor in the cinematic and feminist contributions of Jewish *sitaras* to Indian culture was their social, ethnic, and religious "in-betweenness." They were neither white nor brown, neither British nor Indian, neither European nor Asian, neither Hindu nor Muslim. In these spaces of in-betweenness, they were able to define themselves and construct their identity as modern women, while continuing to affirm and identify with their Jewish and Indian traditions.

Another significant factor in the cinematic success of Jewish actors in the early years of Bollywood was their ambiguous ethnic look, with dark eyes and light skin, which they juxtaposed with their Western fashion style. Their hair was short, bobbed; their eyebrows plucked, their lips painted; they wore European suits and hats, but often donned the bindi as well as saris. The lightness of their skin combined with their European and Indian dress marked their belonging as well as their Otherness.

The looks and the roles in which the Jewish starlets were cast disrupted iconic images of the Indian woman as a spiritual exemplar, as a symbol of self-sacrifice for her family, as well as an Indian nationalist. As some of the first women actors of Bollywood, these Jewish women challenged existing social taboos and modes of heteropatriarchy and contributed to the redefinition of gender roles in modern India. Their significant impact should be acknowledged in the history of the Indian cinema and in the history of the Jewish community in India.

YUDIT KORNBERG GREENBERG *is the George D and Harriet W. Cornell Endowed Chair of Religion and founding director of the Jewish Studies Program at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. Her recent books include* The Body in Religion: Crosscultural Perspectives *(Bloomsbury Academic, 2017) and* Dharma and Halacha: Comparative Studies in Hindu-Jewish Philosophy and Religion*, coedited with Ithamar Theodor (Lexington Books, 2018).*

I wish to thank Danny Ben-Moshe, producer and director, for his well-made documentary, *Shalom Bollywood: The Untold Story of Indian Cinema* (2013), and for sharing it with me. I also wish to thank Nandini Mandara and Haidar Ali, daughter and son of Esther Abraham (Pramila) for sharing stories and photos of their mother during my Fulbright-Nehru Award period in Mumbai, Spring 2019.

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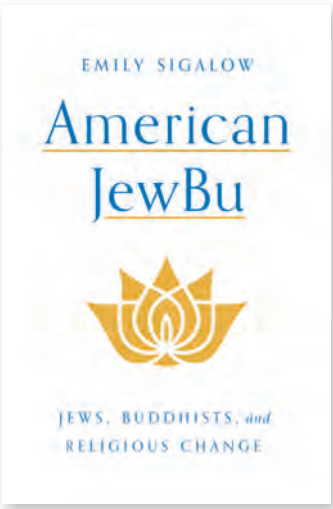

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Embodying Palestine Solidarity: A Jewish Dance Artist Grapples with Identity and Accountability

Nicole Bindler

I was raised in a non-Zionist, secular, leftist Jewish household without ties to Israel, so when Bonnie, my college roommate, returned from a semester studying in Ramallah, I had nothing but curiosity about her Palestinian host family living under occupation. I did not know at the time that the photos and stories she shared with me would catalyze almost two decades of activism and wrestling with hard questions about how to practice solidarity with Palestinians with integrity.

Both finding ourselves living in Boston after graduation, Bonnie invited me to join a Palestinian folk dance (Dabke) group called Zaitoun, composed mostly of Arab Massachusetts Institute of Technology students from various countries. We performed at an antiwar protest in 2003 for an audience of 30,000 people on the Boston Common, which exhilarated me. However, earlier that day, a few passersby spouted anti-Arab racist slurs at us as we danced in the march. I realized viscerally through that experience how much I had taken my white privilege for granted as an assimilated, white-presenting, Ashkenazic Jew. While nothing like the daily assault that people of color face in the United States, this incident gave me a glimpse of what it feels like to be subject to racism and continues to propel me in my work.

I have since worked with a number of Palestine solidarity groups, both Jewish-led and Palestinian-led. I remain committed to this work because of the ongoing, worsening conditions that Palestinians face––on both sides of the Green Line and/or as exiles who are unable to return to their historic homes––and the reality that resisting the occupation is still taboo among many self-identified leftists who are committed to justice and equity regarding every social issue except for Palestine. This tendency prevents true intersectionality in many leftist movements, and often perpetuates the conflation of Jewish identity with Israeli nationalism, which is reductive and problematic.

I have focused my Palestine solidarity organizing primarily within the field of dance in order to address the omission of Palestinian dance artists in our field, and because I believe that it is most effective to do social change work within the communities that we are already embedded. Additionally, looking at the ways that the occupation has played out in the field of dance can give useful insight into how cultural erasure is one way that the occupation is perpetuated.

There is disproportionate support for Israeli dance-makers through Israel's positive image-building program, Brand Israel,[i] yet there is no comparable support for Palestinian dance-makers, owing to the ways that the occupation prevents a viable Palestinian economy. This financial reality––plus the fact that the State of Israel restricts freedom of movement for many Palestinians––amplifies the voices of Israeli artists, and eclipses the work of Palestinian artists to such an extent that many international dance presenters are not aware of the dance work currently being made by Palestinians. For example, according to events listed on their Facebook page, the American Dance Festival has featured at least one Israeli choreographer or company in their summer festival––the largest in the United States––for the past four years, whereas they have presented no Palestinian choreographers.[ii]

In 2015 I traveled to Bethlehem to cocreate an evening-length choreography with three dancers from Diyar Theatre: Dima Awad, Christy Daboub, and Hala Issa (whose role was later performed by Ghadeer Odeh). The dance, called "WOMEN," contains images and ideas about women living under occupation in Palestine: uprooted olive trees; rocks thrown and used to represent destroyed Palestinian villages; bowls of water

Left: Christy Daboub in WOMEN, created by Nicole Bindler with Diyar Theatre. Photo by Mohamed Radwan. Right: Photo of Zaitoun by Rami Musa Alayan.

as metaphors for water scarcity and the sea they cannot visit; and Dabke danced to the sound of bulldozers.

When I left the region, my Palestinian colleagues and my Jewish Israeli hosts in Tel Aviv gave me nearly identical wallets as goodbye gifts, both presented to me as authentic objects from their cultural traditions. I was reminded of Lawrence Davidson's term, "cultural genocide": "The endgame here is that the conquered land will no longer be popularly identified with the culture and traditions of those who were once native to it. Instead, their culture will be replaced by that of the colonizer … sometimes the colonizers will appropriate elements of the native culture as their own."[iii]

This instance of cultural appropriation with the two wallets was one of several complications in my collaboration with the Diyar dancers. In 2017 I raised money to bring them to the United States to perform the piece in five different cities. The Philadelphia Dance Journal review of our performance solely credited me for work we explicitly billed as a collaboration.[iv] It was too easy for the author of that review to read the dance through the eyes of a white US citizen, in spite of the fact that she attended a rehearsal to witness our collaborative process.

I was honored to have the opportunity to collaborate with these dancers, but troubled by the power dynamics inherent in the process, as a US citizen with access to financial resources, audiences, and performance opportunities. I have refocused my advocacy toward disseminating ideas from Palestinian choreographers' work in my writing and talks in artistic and academic settings, and away from artistic collaborations, as I grapple with questions about how I can be in solidarity with Palestinian dance artists without perpetuating the colonialist tendencies of some dance critics, historians, and curators to present the white Westerner as the center of all stories.

NICOLE BINDLER'S *performance work and teaching have been presented at festivals and intensives throughout the U.S. and internationally, and she has been a faculty member and guest lecturer at universities throughout the U.S. She has written extensively on dance and somatics and currently serves on the Earthdance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.*

i Nathaniel Popper, "Israel Aims to Improve Its Public Image," *The Forward*, October 14, 2005, https://forward.com/news/2070/israel-aims-to-improve-its-public-image/

ii American Dance Festival, "Events," January 15, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/pg/AmerDanceFest/events/

iii L. Davidson, "Food Appropriation as a Form of Cultural Genocide," August 6, 2008, https://tothepointanalyses.com/food-appropriation-as-a-form-of-cultural-genocide/

iv E. Whelan, "Bindler's WOMEN: Humanizing Palestine," July 17, 2017, https://philadelphiadance.org/dancejournal/2017/07/17/bindlers-women-humanizing-palestine/

Choreographer Daniel Nagrin's "Man of Action": A Photo Essay

Diane Wawrejko

Modern dance choreographer and soloist Daniel Nagrin (1917–2008), my former teacher and mentor, created a series of dramatic dance portraits that focused on ordinary characters from real life. Born and raised in New York City, the son of Jewish parents who fled the pogroms in Russia, his dances reflected a social consciousness and keen awareness of the world around him. His humanistic themes centered on conflicted, believable, and relatable characters in action. Below are photos of Nagrin in his *Man of Action* (1948), hailed by critics as a portrait of an urban executive's stresses, strains, hurriedness, and frustrations of life.

Marcus Blechman / Museum of the City of New York. 76.20.250. Digital scan provided by the Library of Congress, Music Division, Box 16 folder 1, Daniel Nagrin Collection. "Man of Action"

Photo captions are mine. A special thank you to Lauren Robinson of the Museum of the City of New York and Libby Smigel of the Library of Congress.

1. The busy businessman in a hurry, trench coat flailing as he furtively hails a taxi on a congested New York City street.

Nagrin's portraits of everyday people in everyday activities became his hallmark. Always concerned about the Other and their plight, he focused on the messier, complicated web of human interactions and relevant issues from the world around him. Everything Nagrin produced through movement was the result of the character's personality, found through improvisational exploration. Based in his X, which is the specific character, its core was found from doing specific tasks or functions such as *Man of Action's* busy businessman who finally collapses from stress. To get into character while waiting in the wings to perform it, Nagrin fumbled with his coat buttons to conjure a frazzled, stressed-out demeanor.

2. Forever rushing and impatiently waiting, the businessman checks his watch.

Nagrin's characters always *did* something. The specific, deliberate actions, such as hailing a taxi or checking one's watch, defined the character's personality. These actions differed from pantomime and gesture, as they were based in an in-depth character analysis. In an informal telephone interview with Nagrin before his death, he stressed the "doing approach … based in acting techniques." As an actor-cum-dancer, Nagrin appropriated and adapted into his dances the six-step acting theory of Moscow Art Theatre director Constantin Stanislavski. He choreographed in the way that was inherent and natural to both his professional aesthetic and his larger Jewish cultural ethos, grounded in thorough questioning. Nagrin's six-step

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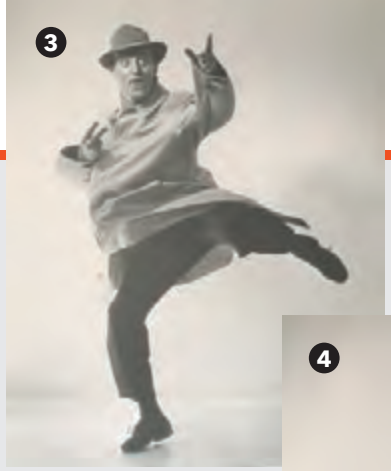

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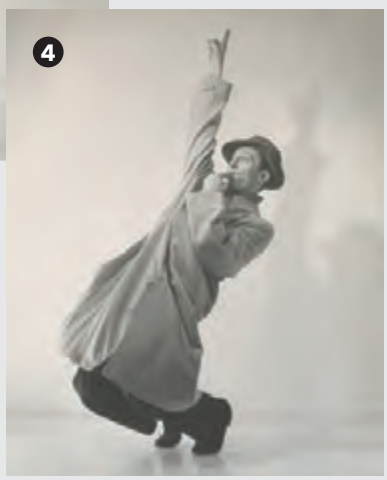

Marcus Blechman / Museum of the City of New York. 76.20.253. Digital scan provided by the Library of Congress, Music Division, Box 16 folder 1, Daniel Nagrin Collection. "Man of Action"

doing-acting questions are: who, is doing what, to whom, where and when, why, and what's the obstacle or tension? I affectionately call it The Nagrin Method.

3. The man of action takes a dramatic, action-filled leap in a frantic scramble to catch a taxi.

Nagrin's aerial acrobatics and outrageously daring leaps, one leg extended and the other folding under and kicking out, defied the limits and restraints of the human body. Nagrin was a master of noncodified, virtuosic, economically terse movement that came from an impulse for honesty and clarity. In 1954–55, he won the coveted Donaldson Award, today's Tony, as Broadway's best male dancer (Concert Program, July 31–August 5, 1956). A key feature of his work is stringing together a series of virtuosic actions that privileged content. His belief that content determined form is akin to modernist architect Louis Sullivan's credo of "Form Follows Function."

4. Desperately hailing another taxi, he pleads for it to stop.

Nagrin's dances contain exaggerated gestures as movement metaphors or symbols mixed with satire and humor to reveal the character. Louis Arnaud Reid's (1969) notion of metaphor as abstracted representations or essences that contain specific ideas and feelings about the character is applicable here. In this regard, it is possible to view Nagrin's movements to define character as the essence or feeling projected through abstracted metaphors rather than simply literal gesturing. The result is a series of movement metaphors from which the form emerges and functions as a contextually relevant window to peer into the heart of his characters. Nagrin believed emotion and form (that is, the manipulation of steps, floor pattern, and space to create structure) were not primary but happen and follow because of the Stanislavskian focus on content through actions. It is content that provides meaningful reflection to the viewer.

5. Taking frantic, large steps forward, his body reverberates with the urgency of the moment.

Thematic inspiration for Nagrin's dances came from his observations of and interaction with people in the immediacy of his time and place, that is, New York City and America in general. For instance, the idea for *Man of Action* came from watching a man in Grand Central Station during evening rush hour. Nagrin's eye was caught by the frantic movement of

Marcus Blechman / Museum of the City of New York. 76.20.254. Digital scan provided by the Library of Congress, Music Division, Box 16 folder 1, Daniel Nagrin Collection. "Man of Action"

Marcus Blechman / Museum of the City of New York. 76.20.255. Digital scan provided by the Library of Congress, Music Division, Box 16 folder 1, Daniel Nagrin Collection. "Man of Action"

a hurried, stressed-out executive who was moving faster than anyone else, who suddenly and abruptly changed directions, and then finally headed in another direction.

By grappling with the human condition in ways that we all can relate to, Nagrin challenged audiences to think about their lives and values in order to bring about both reflexivity and constructive change in their thinking and personal lives. For example, in *Man of Action*, a hectic lifestyle is unproductive as it is stressful, disrupts clear thinking, and takes more time to complete tasks. His dances reflect his driving concern for the world around him that can be seen as a sort of social activism, which anthropologists call agency. The agentic actions of his characters metaphorically transform and remit powerful statements into aesthetic, meaningful social gestures. Akin to the Jewish value of *tikkun ʿolam*, or making the world a better place, it is my observation that the aim of Nagrin's dances was to repair the world and make it better one person at a time through the agency of confrontation, questioning, and reflection. In addition, the notion of honoring ordinary, daily actions by transforming them into something holy is at the center of *tikkun ʿolam*.

6. Pulled in two directions, the conflicted businessman struggles with which way to go but gets nowhere.

A concert program note from March 2, 1958, indicates, "The Urban Man, in order to survive, must solve the problem of being in two or more places at the same time." The wide, second-position lunges, frantic changing of focus, and frenetic awareness create a tension that literally and metaphorically attests to being pulled in two directions. Through *Man of Action's* busy businessman, Nagrin exposes the futileness of a stressful lifestyle that still resonates in today's fast-paced world. The hurried executive actually gets nowhere. His dance is an agentic, embodied expression of contemporary social and political actions that have the ability to move and motivate audiences. Thus, *Man of Action* is a collective portrait of us.

DIANE WAWREJKO *is an adjunct dance and humanities faculty member at College of DuPage. Her research focuses on the agency and analysis of Daniel Nagrin's choreography which is published in the* Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement *and Israel's* Dance Voices.

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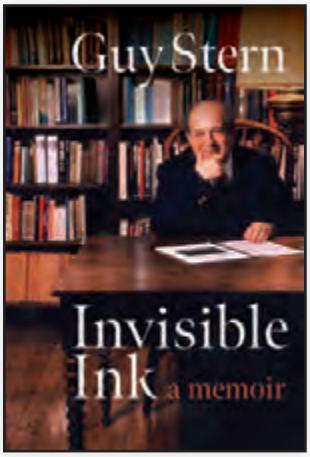

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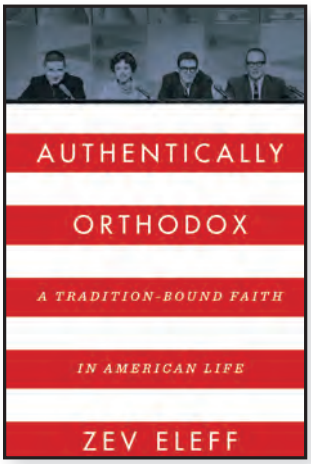

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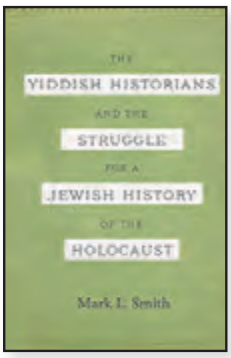

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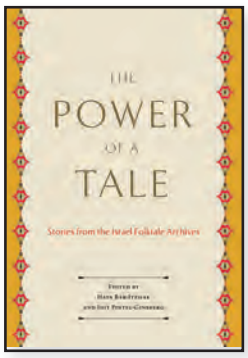

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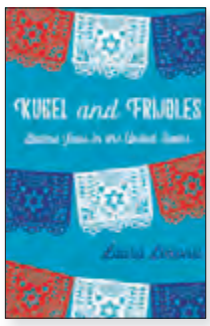

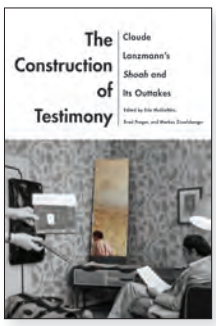

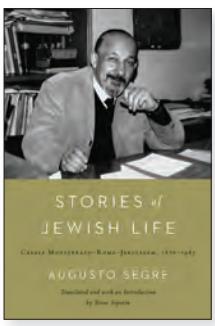

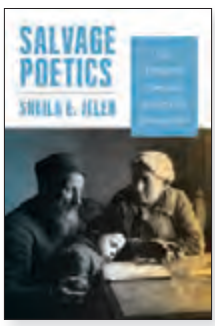

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Embodied Emotion in the Bible and Early Midrashic Expansions

Elisabetta Abate

Artwork by Anna Zakai. Courtesy of the artist.

The Hebrew Bible represents emotion and affect as embodied phenomena in a wealth of passages. A verse from Deuteronomy 20, the most extensive collection of laws about warfare, is a case in point:

וְיָסְפוּ הַשֹּׁטְרִים לְדַבֵּר אֶל־הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ מִי־הָאִישׁ הַיָּרֵא וְרַךְ הַלֵּבָב יֵלֵךְ
וְיָשֹׁב לְבֵיתוֹ וְלֹא יִמַּס אֶת־לְבַב אֶחָיו כִּלְבָבוֹ

And the overseers shall speak further to the troops and say, "Whatever man is afraid and faint of heart, let him go and return to his house, that he not shake the heart of his brothers like his own heart." (Deut 20:8, Alter translation)

Which phenomena, among those variously addressed by the Bible and rabbinic literature, were considered emotions within their respective cultures is a complicated question, inter alia because of a lack of related definitions and overarching categories in the sources. Nonetheless, our passage is a pertinent object of inquiry: its context evokes dread through its imagery, names fear through five emotional terms, and aims at dispelling warriors' apprehension by means of a military oration (vv. 1:3–4). Furthermore—argued from an outside perspective and with the foundational idea of cognitive and emotional embodiment theories (found, for example, in the 2015 edition of the *Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology*)—Deuteronomy 20 represents fear as embodied, because it addresses the emotional and somatosensory experience of the Israelites before battle. It does so by situating it in their immediate physical and social environment.

Let us look at how our verse constructs the relationship between the emotion of fear, *this* male self (i.e., body-and-mind), and the battlefield. A fruitful insight can be drawn from historical emotion research, which broadly tends to view emotions either as going on *in* the body, as if the latter were bounded and autonomous, or *between* bodies, as if the latter were porous, merging with their environment. Qua body-and-mind, the addressee of our military oration is inhabited by fear of the enemy. Although his apprehension is elicited by the external threat, he is described as bounded, with an emphasis on his being *afraid and faint of heart* (an emotional tendency? a character trait?). However, his fearfulness might be contagious, his comrades are potentially permeable, and fear might become a transpersonal emotion.

Let us now consider how early rabbis refigured this emotional body-and-mind inherited from the Torah. A midrashic unit in the Mishnah tractate Sotah expands on Deuteronomy 20:8 thus:

ויספו השטרים לדבר אל העם ואמרו: מי האי׳ הירא ורך הלבב ילך וישב לביתו. ר׳ עקיבא או׳ הירא ורך הלבב כשמועו שאינו יכול לעמוד בקשרי המלחמה לראות חרב שלופה. ר׳ יוסה הגלילי או׳ הירא ורך הלבב שהוא מתיירא מן העבירות שביד.

And the overseers shall speak further to the troops and say, "Whatever man is afraid and faint of heart, let him go and return to his house" [Deut 20:8a]. R. Akiva says, *"Whatever man is afraid and faint of heart:* just as it sounds. He cannot stand in the battle-ranks or see a drawn sword." R. Yose the Galilean says, *"The man who is afraid and faint of heart:* that is one who is afraid [of dying] on account of the transgressions he has committed." (M. Sotah 8:5, abridged)

The literal interpretation, attributed to R. Akiva, represents the environment as impinging on the body through spatial perception and vision. Both the biblical and Akivan Israelites are constructed, thus, as permeable and changed by the environment. The Akivan emotional body-and-mind seems to invoke the representation of the battlefield crafted by the Mishnah a few pericopes before the one above:

אל ירך לבבכם אל תיראו ואל תחפזו ואל תערצו מפניהם. אל ירך לבבכם מפני צהלת ס()[ו]סים וציחצוח חרבות. אל תיראו מפני הגפת תריסים ושיפ()[עת] הק(ו)לגסים. אל תחפזו מפני קול הקרנות. ואל תערצו מפני קול הצווחה.

Let your heart be not faint. Do not fear and do not quake and do not dread them [Deut 20:3b]. "Let your heart be not faint"—at the neighing of horses and the shining of swords; *"do not fear"*—at the clashing of the shields and the trampling of the *caligae; "do not quake"*—at the sound of the horns; *"do not dread them"*—at the sound of the shouting. (M. Sotah 8:1)[i]

How dreadfully loud become the biblical enemies in this rabbinic expansion! By placing the emphasis on perception, mostly on audition, the latter passage grounds the Israelite's experience even more intensely in the outer world than the Torah and R. Akiva's dictum in the midrashic dispute do. The emphasis on hearing, I'll venture to suggest, can even succeed in grounding the experience of the text's audience, ancient and modern, in the soundscape of a (Roman?) battlefield. The bluster of the enemies resonates not only through the literary

The literal interpretation, attributed to R. Akiva, represents the environment as impinging on the body through spatial perception and vision.

images, but also through the auditive body of the text (its rhythm, alliteration, and assonance), up to the audience's mind (have you read the text out loud?).

The emphasis on the environmental and perceptual elements is starkly countered, in the dispute, by the figurative interpretation, attributed to R. Yose the Galilean, which constructs the male self as bounded and withdrawn from the world into his consciousness. Here, the embodied fear of the biblical and Akivan Israelite becomes a matter of piety, related to the Israelite-God relationship and the self-conscious emotion of guilt, without reference to any bodily underpinnings. This male self is absorbed by judgment of his own conduct. He is not disembodied, but uninterested in or unaware of his embodiment, to the extent that the very concrete biblical enemy turns, in this midrashic expansion, into an internal one. Perhaps not less noisy an enemy than that clashing and trampling and shouting on the battlefield.

Using the conceptual lens of embodied emotion, we can see that this midrash does not only present two different interpretations of a biblical verse, but two distinct anthropological attitudes towards the emotional self. As we continue to read these sources in this way, what other ways of constructing the emotional body-and-mind (also nonmale and non-Jewish) will we be able to detect?

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i You can read this pericope (M. Sotah 8:3) in the best Mishnah manuscript at: http://kaufmann.mtak.hu/en/ms50/ms50-121v.htm

Embodying Herself: A Jewish Feminist Approach to Body Liberation

Amy K. Milligan

Once, when I presented my research on Jewish feminist haircutting rituals for young girls, an audience member scoffed at my presentation, laughing aloud. He asked why women would reimagine a ritual that already was invented for boys; why it mattered if only a few women took part; and why feminists even cared about "traditional" motherhood. His questions pointed to the very heart of my argument—in order to navigate Judaism as a feminist, and to do feminism Jewishly, it is imperative to develop new approaches to how we both theoretically and literally treat the bodies of Jewish women.

This work begins first with the acknowledgement that female bodies include all of those who identify as women, as well as recognizing the oppression faced by those who identify outside of the culturally created binary of gender. As a feminist scholar who studies the folklore of the body, I have witnessed the ways in which the body has been used to both devalue and humiliate women, as well as how the reclamation of corporeal agency recenters women's voices. Within Judaism, feminist reembodiment manifests in three primary ways: challenge, adaptation, and invention.

When women's bodies challenge the status quo (e.g., including women in a minyan), responses have been largely reactionary. The discussion focuses on whether or not inclusion is halakhic, rather than addressing the underlying need for Jewish women to have their bodies recognized as fully Jewish, fully female, and fully participatory. At these reactionary junctures, we see the ways in which women's bodies challenge religious tradition, forcing us to ask and answer the question: Do women's bodies and their corporeal actions deserve the same rights within Judaism that are given, without dispute, to men?

In asking this question, women have challenged the symbolic inventory of Jewish bodies, which has historically been imbued with maleness (e.g., *peʾot, tallitot, tefillin, yarmulkes, ẓiẓit,* and *kittel*). As women have adopted these symbols and garments, their adaptation has led to change: the stylization of *kippot* and *tallitot*, changes in spatial

Contemporary Jewish feminists must build upon previous work and continue to challenge the oppression of bodies within Judaism, advocating for the intentional integration of diverse Jewish bodies.

agency through the removal of the *meḥiẓah,* having women on the *bimah,* and having women serve as *magbihah* and *golelet*. These are all examples of an egalitarian shift in Jewish practice, through which Jewish women have adapted rituals and religious embodiment, taking practices that had previously prohibited female participation and adapting them to be inclusive of women. Yet, it is worth noting that although women have taken on many of the body practices of men, few Jewish men have adapted symbols or rituals traditionally ascribed to Jewish women's bodies.

But Judaism is not one-size-fits-all. When rituals and symbols do not resonate with women or celebrate their bodies in affirming ways, Jewish feminists have invented new practices, including the celebration of Rosh Ḥodesh, creative use of the mikveh, and new rituals around childbirth, breastfeeding, the loss of a mother figure, menopause, and gender affirmation and/or transition. Similarly, Jewish women have also advocated for incorporating other forms of experiential embodiment during worship—integrating dance, yoga, and breath meditation, as well as the recognition of craft and folk art as forms of Jewish learning. In doing so, these unique corporeal expressions of Jewishness are revalued and centered in the narrative.

Contemporary Jewish feminists must build upon previous work and continue to challenge the oppression of bodies within Judaism, advocating for the intentional integration of diverse Jewish bodies. Three places for further development include: eschewing binaries, building bridges across orthodoxies, and addressing physical space.

First, the bodies of Jewish women have historically been marginalized and this marginalization has been compounded by any form of "minority" designation.

Rachel Rafael Neis. Gesture, 2009. Pen and ink on paper. 3.5 in. x 5.5 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Jewish feminist embodiment practices must recognize the intersections of oppression that manifest on the body, eschewing binary constructs of gender, centering the voices and experiences of Jews of Color, and working in tandem with other body liberation groups to adequately recognize differently abled bodies, bodies of all ages, trans and nonbinary bodies, fat bodies, and bodies of all races and ethnicities. There is not one way to be embodied as a Jew, and a Jewish feminist body ethic must give voice to the multitude of corporeal intersections. This can only be done when we recognize the fallacies of binary gender systems, assumptions that someone can "look Jewish," and begin to interrogate the cultural and religious messages we have internalized about bodies.

Second, just as there is not one normative physical expression of the Jewish body, there is also not one encompassing religious experience of gender. The reformation of patriarchal Jewish practices has, at times, marginalized the voices of Orthodox women. True equality of bodies cannot be achieved at the expense of others. Rather, radical body liberation is achieved when Jewish feminists allow for a wide range of consensual, informed engagement with their bodies—recognizing that there can be disagreement without devaluing one's personal corporeality. The focus should be on building bridges between practices, interrogating difference thoughtfully, and understanding the multitude of ways in which Jewish women can embrace and experience their bodies. These practices will look different for each individual, but an inclusive feminist approach cannot dismiss the religious choices women consensually make about their bodies.

Finally, just as people exist in bodies, bodies exist in physical spaces. Accessibility should not be an afterthought as Jewish feminists prepare synagogues, meetings, classrooms, and other Jewish spaces. When we are reactive to the needs of bodies, we communicate disinterest and marginalization. That is to say, when we react rather than include, we accommodate rather than integrate. Whether it is installing ramps, establishing gender-neutral restrooms, offering a variety of sitting or standing options, or creating comfortable spaces to breastfeed, Jewish feminists must call for the proactive development of body-friendly spaces as they work toward radical hospitality, inclusion, and integration. In doing so, they demonstrate that all bodies are, indeed, welcome, even if they have not yet arrived in the space.

As we imagine the future of Judaism, we must recognize the great potential of both the collective body, as well as how it is constructed by individual bodies. As Jewish feminists work to dismantle systems of power, oppression, and privilege, the physical body plays a significant role in navigating both public and personal experiences of Jewishness. To build a better future collectively for Jews and for the next generations of girls, Jewish feminists must continue to evolve and find new ways to celebrate women as fully embodied and fully Jewish.

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Fully Embodied Jewish Existence

Leon Wiener Dow

Zionism is a movement of Jewish return: to the Land of Israel—but also to the Jewish body. Whether it was Max Nordau's advocacy of "Muscle Judaism"; Y. H. Brenner's contempt for the *Luftmenschen;* Micah Berdichevsky's appeal that "Jews must come first, before Judaism"; Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook's fusion of the physical and the spiritual; or A. D. Gordon's call for the Jewish people to bind themselves to its soil and culture through physical labor—Zionism viewed the body as the new locus for Jewish being.

Critical Jewish scholarship has often questioned the sincerity of the Zionist call to return the Jew to her body. The claim—articulated most eloquently and often by Daniel Boyarin—goes something like this: since talmudic times, the Diaspora has offered the Jew a fully embodied Judaism, albeit of a pudgy, sissy kind (when it comes to males). Thus, the Jews didn't need Zionism then—and don't need now—to *return* to their bodies, as they never left them.[i]

Contra this claim, I want to suggest that Zionism does, in fact, return the Jew as a *Jew* to her body in a deeper, more thoroughgoing way than the Diaspora does—or ever can. But first we must ask, What does it mean to inhabit one's body as a *Jew*? Doesn't every Jew, by definition, do that? The short answer is: no. A Jew may be fully embodied as a person without being embodied *as a Jew,* fusing her corporeality with her Jewish consciousness, with her identity as a Jew. So perhaps this embodiment qua Jew transpires during the observance of any and every mitzvah that is geared towards, or involves, the body, such as immersion in a mikveh, dwelling in the sukkah, observing the laws of *niddah*, eating, relieving oneself, and so forth? To be sure, these mitzvot offer opportunities for Jewish embodiment. But each of these acts is circumscribed in some way. Some of them involve the whole body but are limited in duration. Others may be consistent over time, yet their scope is limited: they involve only *part* of the body. In the Diaspora, the Jew becomes full-fledged, boundless corporeality qua Jew when she endures physical oppression because of her Jewish identity. In the words of Jean Amery, describing his experience of being hit by a foreman in Auschwitz—and hitting him back: "I was my body and nothing else." He continues, "My body, when it tensed to strike, was my physical and metaphysical dignity."[ii] Zionism, too, offers variations on this theme: being physically attacked as an Israeli Jew offers me a full-bodied Jewish experience, and I can even don an IDF uniform and preempt attack, asserting my own ability to confront a non-Jew via the body. Yet Zionism can offer a much richer sense of full-fledged Jewish physicality, one that gets at the deepest recesses of Jewish existence. I have experienced this bodily—not through physical labor, as classical Zionism would have liked, but through dance at the Between Heaven and Earth dance center in Jerusalem. In the words that follow, I will examine embodiment in two brief pieces of the Between Heaven and Earth's professional Ka'et Ensemble's[iii] 2018 performance, *Bli Neder* (Without taking a vow).

Reduced to Pure Physicality[iv]

Immediately after expressing his desire to speak about "self-fulfillment," Yair Barbash lies down, and Yuval Azoulay kicks him in the abdomen. At once, Barbash and the other two dancers all react as if they have been kicked in the same spots, evoking the rabbinic adage that all of Israel is responsible for one another.[v] Eyal Ogen slowly rises and begins chanting Exodus 21:2–6, a passage about the Israelite who sells himself into slavery because of debt, while Ogen's physical movements offer a stunning visual interpretation of—and response to—the *trop* (cantillation) that he chants. His dangling smile not only evokes the spectator's laughter, it brings us into the hollow inner world of the person who has foregone his freedom because of financial obligations: his being has been reduced entirely to his potential for physical

Left: Yair Barbash performing in Ka'et Ensemble's Bli Neder. Right: Eyal Ogen performing in Ka'et Ensemble's Bli Neder. Screenshots by the author.

production, and his simple, empty smile reveals that he lacks the requisite spiritual depth to experience his reduction to pure physicality as an afront to his being. Barbash, in the meantime, fades to the background and returns again to the fore, occasionally interrupted by spastic moves, convulsing as if his body has endured shock. Suddenly, he interrupts Ogen, correcting his pronunciation of the word "and she shall go out" (Exodus 21:3). What follows—familiar to anyone who has been in a synagogue when the Torah reader has been corrected and tries, unsuccessfully, to correct his misstep and reread the passage—is an exchange of blunted aggression as Barbash, with voice and hand movement, precipitates a combination of defensiveness and desperation on Ogen's part.

From Word to Grunt[vi]

With all four dancers on stage, bouncing gently up and down, Barbash begins a monologue, quickly changing subjects. Each of the other three dancers commences a monologue simultaneously, with Ogen again chanting the passage from Exodus 21. Suddenly, Barbash interrupts his own monologue to correct Ogen's pronunciation once more, issuing forth a voice that sounds more like an animal than a person. All players pause, only to resume their monologues. But within seconds, Azoulay interrupts Ogen with his own "meeh," silencing everyone. As all four resume their monologues, Ogen counters with his own "meeh." As they all begin to "meeh," what ensues is men making a parody of themselves—of their insistence on correcting their fellow and, in so doing, competing to see who can offer a more faithful, punctilious rendering of the written word. The synagogue is thus transformed into a barn in which animals vie for superiority. For over forty seconds, each player "meeh"s, using hand signals to entice the audience's participation, until suddenly Hananya Schwartz bellows forth a "meeh" that draws his body down and his arms up, silencing the crowd and the other three dancers. As he glares at each of the dancers and walks threateningly towards each of them, it is clear that he has outpowered them. They stare meekly as he stomps up and down, child-like in demeanor but unmistakably adult in force. Chanted words of Torah have been transformed into raw vocal power and bodily energy.

Bli Neder captures the full ripening of Jewish embodiment that Zionism enables, with the dancers giving bodily expression to a complicated nexus of issues: the words of Torah as they play out between individuals and in the context of community; the spoken word, with its rough edges and its relationship to a pure physicality that borders on animality; and broader human issues such as freedom, physical labor, loneliness, companionship, and parent-child relationships, as each receives expression in the particular context of Jewish culture and identity. The involvement of the audience and the rawness of the voices of the dancers' parents in voice-overs reveal that the bodily

expression of the dancers is inextricably linked to the embodied reality that Zionism offers—and perhaps also imposes on—the Jews who take part in it.

What is at stake in these competing iterations of Jewish embodiment is a deeper disagreement about the very possibility of a holistic Jewish identity. It is hardly coincidental that the model that portrays authentic Jewish embodiment as diasporic views Jewish identity itself as a matter of hybridity, for personal identity as such is fractured and intersectional in nature.[vii] But Zionism's promise to allow the Jew to return fully to her body qua Jew is predicated on the possibility of an immersive Jewish identity, even as it accepts the composite nature of that identity. *Bli Neder* shows how Zionism, with all of its flaws and shortcomings, fulfills this promise.

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i See, for example, Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (University of California Press, 1997); Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (University of California Press, 1995), especially chapter 7; Boyarin, *A Traveling Homeland: The Babylonian Talmud as Diaspora* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), and the essays by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, Boyarin, and David Biale in Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, ed., *The People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (State University of New York Press, 1992).

ii Jean Amery, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (Schocken, 1986), 91.

iii https://docdance.com/kaet-ensemble-repertoire

iv https://vimeo.com/342599610

v *Sifra Be-hukotai* 7:8.

vi https://vimeo.com/342603428

vii Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, *The Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

Orthodox Female Clergy Embodying Religious Authority

Michal Raucher

As I prepared for my first ethnographic site visit for a new project on female rabbis at Orthodox synagogues in North America, I agonized over my clothing choices. I packed a modest skirt and a top, items I wear to attend my Conservative synagogue. This made me feel like I was blurring the lines between participant and observer. I added a blazer to demonstrate my professionalism, and I packed pants for all of my non-Shabbat research, wanting to distinguish myself from an Orthodox insider. I paused, staring at a box of head scarves deep in the back of my closet that I used to wear to cover my hair when I was newly married and attending an Orthodox synagogue. I did not want to wear those again, so I called the rabba to ask whether *kisuy rosh* (head covering) was the norm in her synagogue. She responded, "I wish that were the norm! Nope. I'm usually the only one."

Norms regarding hair covering differ at Orthodox synagogues, and I was relieved that in this synagogue I would not have to cover my hair in order to demonstrate familiarity and respect. In addition to not wanting to cover my hair for personal reasons, I feared that doing so would mark me as too much of an insider who did not have sufficient critical distance. As my research progressed, I became more aware of how my interlocutors are also, in Judith Butler's terms, performing a certain identity. When a rabba gets dressed she is navigating Orthodox norms of masculinity and femininity and the tensions inherent in her rabbinic identity.[i] Rabbas joke about the unwritten "rabba uniform": a blazer, a knee-length skirt, and heels. They explain that they project Orthodox femininity through their skirt and heels, and don a blazer, the paradigmatic article of clothing of the male professional, in order to demonstrate that they, too, are members of the clergy. Male rabbinic bodies are the

Background image adapted from a detail of Rachel Rafael Neis's artwork. Courtesy of the artist.

Courtesy of Yeshivat Maharat.

unmarked norm, but sustained attention to embodiment would demonstrate that men's bodies have traditionally been perceived as conveying authority, and they are the benchmark against which women's rabbinic authority is measured.

After a long struggle for women to be ordained within Orthodoxy, they are finally credentialed by Yeshivat Maharat in New York, but their ordination is not necessarily what helps them to be accepted as rabbis within their Orthodox community. Instead, the process of becoming a rabbi is the result of what Orit Avishai refers to as "doing religion," or embodied daily performative actions and negotiations. This finding demonstrates that religious leadership is not just the result of textual knowledge. The focus within the field of Jewish Studies on book learning as the source of authority has overlooked centuries of women's informal religious authority.[ii] More recent scholarly attention to women rabbis has surrounded the history of women's entrance to rabbinical schools, again reinforcing the idea that authority comes from book-learning and the credentialing that results from it. But after the fight to ordain Orthodox women was won, Modern Orthodox synagogues were still not used to having a woman embody rabbinic identity, even though they came to accept women's advanced educational credentials. As a result, rabbas are cultivating a form of religious authority that is largely unconnected to their time spent immersed in Jewish texts but shaped significantly by their female bodies.

Women, notably, recognize a woman as a rabbi when her body is present in a religiously significant way for her congregants.

In the Orthodox community, where gender identity determines access to religious spaces and physical contact with congregants, rabbas negotiate their performance of a male rabbinic identity while inhabiting female bodies. Rabbas have told me that despite their credentials, in their Orthodox sanctuaries their bodies prevent their full access to rabbinic identity. Unlike a male rabbi, a rabba cannot walk onto the *bimah* (stage) freely, she cannot be called to the Torah, nor lead any part of the service. These restrictions exist because she has a female body in an Orthodox synagogue. As a result, many rabbas use their bodies in other ways to project male rabbinic authority. A rabba shows up early to Shabbat morning services, and she intently prays, often *shuckling* (swaying) back and forth, embodying a traditional male style of prayer. Although she is on the women's side of the *meḥiẓah* (partition dividing men and women), she usually stands close to the ʿamud (podium). A rabba will greet people when they approach her but return quickly to prayer. Her focus mirrors that of the male rabbi in her synagogue, who is also intently praying. This bodily performance demonstrates her attempt to create a rabbinic identity as a woman in an Orthodox space. In order to be recognized as an Orthodox rabbi, she must jettison traditionally female activities in the sanctuary, like quiet, meditative prayer.

However, the ways a rabba embraces her female body help her congregants see what a female rabbi adds to their ideas of religious leadership. Most rabbas deliver a sermon from the *bimah* a couple of times a month. When she speaks from the podium, surrounded by male clergy, her congregants see a rabbi whose female identity is an asset. A rabba often holds the hand of a female mourner, or stands next to a new mother during a *bris*, actions that their male colleagues avoid. When I ask congregants what makes their rabba a rabbi, many women respond that she is most rabbinic when she is standing near them on the women's side of the *meḥiẓah*, a privilege afforded to her because of her female body. In other words, her rabbinic authority does not come from where she studied, who ordained her, or whether she can make legal rulings. Women, notably, recognize a woman as a

rabbi when her body is present in a religiously significant way for her congregants.

Focused attention on the embodiment of religious authority as a conceptual lens offers an important corrective to the study of Jews and Judaism. Tomes on religious leaders, focusing on their family background, the schools they attended, the rabbis they studied with, and the rulings they handed down, generally overlook they ways they embodied their religious authority. Bodies are often portrayed as subservient to the texts, in need of control by the laws in the books. Scholarship has reinforced the myth that to embody religious authority is to neglect or restrict one's body entirely, focusing instead on one's intellectual qualities. However, meeting embodied expectations is as much of a requirement for rabbinic identity as gaining discursive knowledge. Every bit of book knowledge they gained required traditional religious leaders to have a particular body (usually male, unathletic, Ashkenazic), and to present it in a specific way (the length of their overcoat, or the size of their kippah). Women rabbis have had to renegotiate some of these expectations about the embodied presentation of religious authorities. We should continue to turn our attention to the variety of bodies—not just cis men and women, but also trans, gender nonconforming, disabled, young, old, racial minority, fat and thin bodies—to learn about how religious authority is embodied in different ways and spaces.

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i Women who have been ordained at an Orthodox seminary or with an Orthodox rabbi have chosen to use a variety of titles. Some additional examples are: maharat (a Hebrew acronym meaning "Halahic, spiritual, and Torah leader"), rabbanit, darshanit, and rabbi. I am only using "rabba" in this article, but the title is not universal.

ii Shuly Schwartz's *The Rabbi's Wife* (New York University Press, 2006) is a notable exception to this trend.

Must Jewish Medical Ethics regarding Infertility Be Viewed Solely through a Gendered (Halakhic) Lens?

Ira Bedzow and Lila Kagedan

Jewish medical ethics lectures and literature regarding infertility presented in Orthodox communities focus primarily on the halakhic status of infertility as an illness and the consequent permissibility of engaging in artificial reproductive technology as a means for people to have biological children. As the bulk of ethical and halakhic considerations of new reproductive technologies discuss only the permissibility of these procedures, Jewish medical ethicists should also confront how these discussions orient our understanding of infertility as an illness, as well as how they narrow conceptions of the family around gendered, halakhic status imbalances surrounding procreation.

Most halakhic decisors only classify infertility as an illness for the purpose of legal categorization, rather than seeing it as an actual biological illness or a population-defining disability. They consider how the individual's inability to have a child affects either their fulfillment of divine commands or their overall psychological or social well-being; how medical intervention may ameliorate these particular circumstances; and how any intervention affects other halakhic obligations the person has.

When considering the permissibility of using assisted reproduction technologies (ART) as a result of the categorization of infertility as an illness, (Orthodox) halakhic decisors use different grounding premises, depending on whether the technologies will be used to assist men or women. For men, the halakhic discourse frames the question in terms of empowering religious commitment, and when infertility is

Rachel Rafael Neis. Embryotics for Beginners, 2015. Mixed media on paper. 12 in. x 18 in. Courtesy of the artist.

conceived as an illness in the male context, it is based on the presumption that halakhic "ought" implies "can." In other words, because the Torah commands a person to procreate, there is a presumption that a healthy person should be able to do so. If he cannot, by definition, there exists an "illness" hindering that ability. Therefore, the halakhic decisions that permit the use of ART with respect to men are for the purpose of directly facilitating the fulfillment of a commandment (i.e., to procreate) by removing the obstacles that hinder it.

Because women do not have a halakhic obligation to procreate, halakhic discourse frames the question in terms of religious cooperation in fulfilling the husband's halakhic obligation. When infertility is deemed an illness in the female context, decisors cannot rely on the presumption that "ought" implies "can" in the same way that they can for men, as women are not charged with the "ought." Therefore, the use of ART is for the therapeutic purpose of ameliorating the *real* psychological or social pains of women who want, but do not have, children. In other words, the social pressure on women to have children is considered to be so strong that an inability to have children affects the psychological, and sometimes even physical, well-being of an infertile woman. For men, then, the "illness" of infertility is largely a legal fiction constructed to support the fulfillment of a commandment; for women, it is posed as a psychological consequence, given social expectations.

While legal reasoning in halakhic discourse is constrained by the juridical canon and its normative methods of interpretation, if Orthodox couples seeking guidance and information regarding the use of artificial reproductive technology are familiar only with halakhic analysis on the topic, they may form a conception of the family that prioritizes the father and subordinates the role of the mother.

Halakhic decisors purposefully answer halakhic questions; they do not—and should not—provide a complete Jewish ethical view of the family within their halakhic decisions. Yet, there are many sources within the Jewish canon that Jewish medical ethicists can discuss that conceive of the partnership between spouses as equal and complementary. Therefore, scholars who present Jewish medical ethics lectures in Orthodox communities and who write for Orthodox audiences should focus on more than simply the halakhic status of infertility as an illness and the consequent permissibility of engaging in artificial reproductive

For Sforno, union of body ("one flesh") entails an ongoing union of spirit, mind, and purpose.

technology as a means for people to have children. Presentations should also include other sources in the Jewish tradition that can speak to the egalitarian values of family and child-rearing, especially when responsibilities both in and out of the house are being divided differently than traditional gender roles have previously dictated. There is more in the Jewish tradition that speaks to the personal, communal, and historical factors that relate to the creation of family than whether one may halakhically utilize medical interventions to facilitate biological reproduction.

This essay is a request for Jewish medical ethicists to go beyond gendered halakhic discussions of procreation, to begin to incorporate and examine a broader range of sources within the Jewish canon that can speak to the values of child-rearing and the family. To demonstrate the kind of expanded discussion that may be possible, we have chosen a few sources that mitigate the seeming prioritization of the father over the mother, as might be perceived through the different halakhic obligations to procreate, as they emphasize the mutual importance of both parents. While there are others that we cannot include because of space limitations, we hope that other Jewish ethicists will engage in debating how canonical sources can speak to contemporary issues of childbearing and rearing.

Though only man was given the command to procreate (Genesis 1:28, 9:7), when Adam's wife, Eve, gives birth to her first son, she exclaims, "I have created a male child with the Lord!" (Genesis 4:1). Classical rabbinic sources see Eve's exclamation not as an emotional outburst, but an observation of a new reality. Rabbi Akiva interprets the expression "with the Lord" to mean that even though Adam was created from the ground (ʾadamah) and Eve from Adam, from this point onward, "in our image as our likeness" will people be created, that is, not man without woman and not woman without man, and not both of them without Shekhinah (God's presence) (Bereshit Rabbah 22:2). Rabbi Akiva emphasizes the theological point that both man and woman are equal—with God's presence—in (pro)creation. This interpretation becomes the general position of the sages: "Our rabbis taught: There are three partners in man, the Holy One, blessed be He, his father and his mother" (B. Niddah 31a, Kiddushin 30a).

The complementarity of man and woman in procreation is also found prescriptively in the interpretation of the verse, "Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). While many of the rabbinic commentators note that the unification of man and woman come about in the birth of their child, Ovadiah ben Jacob Sforno (c. 1475–1550) notes explicitly that it is the shared role that both man and woman have in raising children that makes them "as one flesh." He writes,

> The Torah teaches here also that the expression, 'cleaving,' being in a state of true union, is not possible between two people who are not alike in their common purpose in life. Parents and children do not have the same tasks and challenges. Man and his wife do have to master the same challenges, hence the word 'union' can be applied to their union. … By living together, they will become of one mind on how to deal with their lives' challenges. They are to work together in such close union as if there were in fact only one of them.

Sforno's comment does not reflect a notion that a woman's role in the family is simply helping her husband fulfill a mitzvah. It emphasizes the aspirational value of sharing a common purpose and mission, where father and mother equally join together. For Sforno, union of body ("one flesh") entails an ongoing union of spirit, mind, and purpose.

While it is important to understand the halakhic reasons that justify use of reproductive technologies, Jewish medical ethicists who speak to Orthodox audiences seeking information and guidance regarding family planning should broaden their scope. They should consider how discussions of ART's permissibility affects our conceptions of the family and include sources from the greater Jewish canon that can give guidance, not only to how children are created, but to how families are created as well.

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The Body of the Shekhinah at the Threshold of Domestic Violence

Jeremy P. Brown

Poster from Save Our Sisters Abused Goddesses campaign, India, 2013. Courtesy of Taproot Dentsu.

In 2013, Save the Children India's Save Our Sisters (SOS) project stirred controversy with an iconographic campaign against gender-based violence in India. The "Abused Goddesses" campaign circulated images of Hindu goddesses based on traditional Hindu iconography—with one caveat. The goddesses appeared as the victims of abuse—with open cuts, bruises around their eyes, and tears streaking their makeup. A caption at the foot of each icon read, "Pray that we never see this day. Today, more than 68% of women in India are victims of domestic violence. Tomorrow, it seems like no woman shall be spared. Not even the ones we pray to." Consider, for a moment, the operational assumptions of this campaign. It assumes that the images will provoke precisely because viewers will regard the violation of goddesses as out of step with the norms of a religious culture that divinizes and ostensibly empowers women. In other words, viewers should recognize the iconography of female victimhood to be foreign to Hinduism, and henceforth resolve that such images remain so.

Like any religion, Judaism is not impervious to the threat of gender-based violence perpetrated by and against its adherents. What would it look like if contemporary Jews sought to launch a campaign similar to that of Save Our Sisters? One place to start would be with the descriptions enshrined in medieval kabbalistic texts of the Shekhinah, the closest rabbinic Judaism has come to affirming the existence of a goddess. According to Rabbi Moses Cordovero (sixteenth century), she is a vestige of Asherah, the fertility goddess of the ancient Canaanite pantheon. In the Zohar, the companions of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai describe her as the wife of the Blessed Holy One (i.e., Tifeʾret), and the mother of Israel. But if one engages in an unapologetic study of traditional descriptions of the Shekhinah throughout the textual archive of medieval Kabbalah, one is confronted with the problem that, in account after account, she is exposed to violence. In the mythology about her exile, which parallels the historical displacement of Israel, the divine female is exposed to violence in a manner that is disproportionate to the injury inflicted upon the male elements of the divine. So, in contrast to the operating assumptions about Hinduism presupposed by the "Abused Goddesses" campaign, historians of religion will recognize that images of female divine victimhood are not foreign to Judaism in the least.

Kabbalah embraces a boldly anthropomorphic conception of God's body. And a basic characteristic of bodies is their susceptibility to injury. Scholars have lavished much attention on the eroticism and sexuality of God's body, but few have explored how the anthropomorphism of Kabbalah renders the divine body vulnerable to forms of violence. With respect to the matter of domestic violence, in particular, one less familiar tradition (*Zohar ḥadash* 91a) actually glorifies the suffering of the divine female within the sanctuary of her own home. It chooses that approach, rather than the more familiar one of lamenting the travails of the Shekhinah in exile. Notwithstanding its exceptionality, this particular tradition is based on a common leitmotif in the Zohar of intrafamily drama: the nostalgic image of Israel's pre-exilic security is, notably, a scenario of domestic

violence, where father inflicts lashes upon mother, who, in turn, protects her children from their father's punishment. Before the family home—the Jerusalem Temple—had fallen to ruin, Shekhinah's domestic victimhood is romanticized as having guaranteed not only Israel's protection, but also Israel's salvation.

This is Joel Hecker's faithful rendering:

> Now, our eyes dart in every direction. The site of our Mother's dwelling is in upheaval—destroyed. O, let us bang our heads against the walls of Her house and Her dwelling. Who will comfort us? Who will speak to our hearts and protect us before the King? When we used to sin before our Father and the lash would shoot up to strike us, She would stand in front of us and receive the flogging from the King, protecting us. (*Zohar ḥadash* 91a)[i]

In this passage, the Shekhinah's domestic—rather than exilic—injuries do not merely protect Israel, they have the passional function of producing Israel's vicarious atonement; the text even cites the embattled proof text of Second Isaiah's suffering servant: "But he was crushed for our sins, wounded for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). Though it describes the vicarious salvation acquired through the suffering of a male hero, the Zohar applies this verse to the divine female. Christians, of course, read this proof text as a prophecy about Christ's passion. But here, the divine body that suffers redemptive injury is female rather than male, whereas the male is cast as inflictor of punitive wounds.

How can the theology expressed by this thirteenth-century text help historians of Judaism to nuance their accounts of gender, of family, of violence, of Israel's national mythology? Is this theology in some way informed by disciplinary patterns of violence within medieval Jewish households? Or did it, on the other hand, give sanction to such patterns? The dangers of appropriating this particular passion narrative for contemporary Jewish theology will hopefully be obvious. In an anthology titled *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence* (edited by John McClure and Nancy Ramsay [Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998], 103), Barbara Patterson has voiced the disquieting perspective that women who find themselves in situations of spousal abuse somehow participate in the passion of Christ: "Preaching that discerns continuities of incarnate life with Christ increases our capacities to communicate how Christ's woundedness touches the wounds of violated women and our own wounds—all of which are different and yet share in the mystery of the incarnation." In contrast to this perspective, which threatens to assimilate the particular experiences of female bodies into the body of the suffering male, Jewish theologians find themselves confronting a passion narrative in which injuries are visited upon the body of the divine female. But both of these paradigms situate gender-based violence within a sacrificial economy of atonement in such a way that belies the concrete realities of women who have experienced such violence to be neither redeeming nor redeemable.

Given the traditional limitations of female literacy with respect to the Zohar, it is hard to recover a historical narrative of women's reactions to the situation of the Shekhinah at the threshold of domestic violence. However, since the Zohar has found a tentative home in the academy, female scholars have begun to break the gendered monopoly of expertise in the field of Kabbalah Studies, particularly in Israel. In fact, one prominent female scholar recently published a scholarly article exploring the Zoharic composition in which this tradition appears. When transcribing the relevant text, the article omits the provocative language of abuse altogether, perhaps signaling a certain anxiety about domestic violence even among the Zohar's most erudite analysts. Is excision an effective means for removing the social threat posed by this text (a laudatory outcome to be sure)? Or a strategy that flies in the face of academic standards of testimony? As readers of the Zohar's affirmation of domestic violence who are committed to both the values of gender justice and scholarly fidelity, we may, at least, set the record straight.

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i *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition,* vol. 11, trans. Joel Hecker (Stanford University Press, 2016), 301.

I wish to thank Roy Shukrun sharing for his rich insights about the text discussed here.

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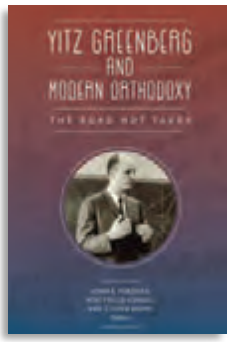

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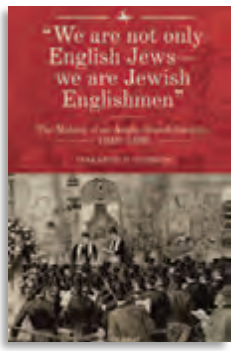

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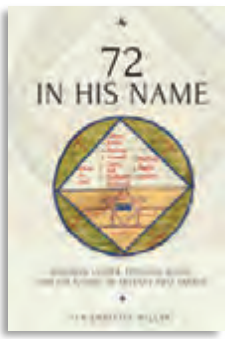

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Charlotte Delbo's Drama of Elimination

Holli Levitsky

French writer and Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo's 1983 minimalist play, *Who Will Carry the Word*? is fashioned around the need for eroding bodies to continue to bear witness in a universe that is itself in a state of disintegration. The playwright's predominant focus on bodily deterioration over other problems reveals a world in which there is an inability to even minimally care for the body (in general and for the particular needs of the female body).

In the drama, as in the concentration camp, physical deterioration occurs as the result of a number of forces acting on the body: the lack of basic food, hydration, and general nutrition; actions performed against the body, such as sleeplessness and torture; the inability to wash or cleanse one's body, and the related inability to regulate bodily waste production. Reading Delbo's lines against themselves, the images of excrement and other forms of human waste that occur with such regularity in the play become the link between the literal and the symbolic. Since the fundamentally symbolic nature of the consciousness of the self makes us unable to live with our own excrement, Delbo "embodies" those images in her powerful lines. While the language of the play (re)creates a world populated with dying and emaciated women, the play itself unfolds as the disintegration of that very world, even as the women seek one voice among them to "carry the word" back to the unknowing world.

In *The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust*, Simone Gigliotti coins the term "sensory witnessing" to describe the "condition of literal defilement" felt by the prisoners living inside the smell of excrement. In consideration of Terrence des Pres, the excremental assault resulted in the unmaking of bodies, exposing a profound crisis of witnessing. Gigliotti's notion of "sensory witnessing" reminds us that no aspect of the Holocaust should be ignored; that even such socially taboo topics as excrement, urine, human waste, and their accompanying stench should be accounted for.

A man at Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp hangs himself in a latrine of the camp, his hand resting in the toilet bowl. This image testifies to the inhumane conditions of the camps that led some prisoners to take their own lives rather than continue to suffer. Courtesy of the Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team (H.E.A.R.T.).

In reality, human waste overflowed in the camps. Prisoners climbed up out of the waste and entered it again in the morning after the bucket slopped over. At night, prisoners necessarily repurposed their soup bowls as toilets. Outside, the human material spewing forth from the crematoria night and day—a combination of gases, ashes, and mineral fragments—constituted human waste of a different kind. Falling over the camp grounds, dusting the heads, bodies, and entering the orifices of the prisoners, it was an assault of the kind that poet Paul Celan imagined every morning as the "black milk of daybreak … [which] we drink and we drink."

Images of excrement and human waste have become as iconic as they are ubiquitous. In this case, art moves us closer to reality. In consideration of the camps, as one example, Delbo's prose submerges us in the muddy grounds so grueling for prisoners to traverse, the now-expected references to diarrhea and its gruesome and painful effects, turning the grounds themselves into toilets, and in the smeared remains—relics even—of the prisoners in their final moments. They remind us, as does Daniel Goldhagen, of the physicality of the Holocaust, gradually

Jerzy Potrzebowski. Lavatory in Auschwitz, Poland, 1950. Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. This painting depicts the reality of the experience of using the toilet in the concentration camps. Prisoners had no privacy and were frequently harassed and beaten while on the toilet. Toilets with running water were rare and therefore usually smelled putrid.

reducing the body to excrement, or eliminating it completely. Robert Jay Lifton, too, reminds us that the term for Auschwitz, *Anus Mundi*— "accurately reflects the Nazi vision of the necessity to sweep clean the world" of undesirables, which for the Nazis were biomedical waste material.

Within these pathological afterimages of human waste lay the remnants not seen.

A discussion of the unseen sensory element nonetheless present in the scene furthers an understanding of the limits of representation, underlining the need to return again and again to the imagery of the not-seen alongside the seen. The absent presence—a phantasm of history —emerges from the massive archive of survivor testimonies. Here, I want to cite Giorgio Agamben, who writes that "testimony contained at its core an essential lacuna … commenting on survivors' testimony necessarily meant interrogating this lacuna." In consideration of this narrative hole, it may be useful to interrogate ongoing moments of contact between people and shit. In the imagery, the forced contact reveals a variation of copraphagia, the ingestion of excrement.

The reality of excrement as an "absent presence" in the visual imagery has become, to an extent, a metaphor.

That excrement could enter our mouths is an idea routed through the brain that records itself in and on our bodies as revulsion, abjection, impurity, and taboo. Under this investigation, even the lacunae are seen as abject.

Pursuing the relationship between shit as metaphor and the "reality" of human waste underscores the "impossibility of metaphor" as an axiom of Holocaust representation. As with other affective images and tropes, the representation of human waste is a powerful metaphor, revealing real olfactory consequences of an ongoing excremental assault in the camps, ghettos, and in hiding. The imagery suggests the "unbearable stench" evoked by poet Edmond Jabés, in as much as they suggest a metonymic connection between the seen and the unseen, the smelled and the unsmelled. Olfactory information is sensory, mostly unfacilitated knowledge that reaches deep into our sciences and our mythologies, just as the words "witness" and "testify" originate in the fragments of the biological humanity that we excrete. The reality of excrement as an "absent presence" in the visual imagery has become, to an extent, a metaphor. The exposure of its presence in the frame highlights the "uncontained" nature of shit as fragmentary, remnantal, piecemeal, but also fluid and without borders. Exposing the reality of the pathological "afterstench" even more forcefully sears the scene (and not seen) into the imagination of the nonwitness, as this essay seeks to do.

HOLLI LEVITSKY *is founding director of the Jewish Studies program and professor of English at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. She is the author of* Summer Haven: The Catskills, the Holocaust and the Literary Imagination *(Academic Studies Press, 2015).*

The Yoga Journey of Elisabeth G., Nazi Prisoner #67123

(an essay between two photographs)

Cathryn Keller

I began to practice yoga as a child with my great-aunt Elizabeth, a Hungarian Jewish survivor of Auschwitz and the Gross-Rosen slave labor factories. She taught me *āsanas* (postures) and *prānāyāma* (breath control) in her kitchen, yogic swimming in her pool, and meditation on a deck in the woods above a steel mill town in the middle of America in the middle of the twentieth century.

Yoga saved her life, she said. Elizabeth told stories like a rabbi, healing stories, stories with lessons: "We are so strong when we have to" and "We are not here to be happy, we are here to learn." "Auschwitz" was shorthand for suffering, for stories she would not tell, for her missing finger joints and lost hearing—evidence of an embodied history of war that I absorbed as I learned to count my breaths alongside her. "The first step towards yoga," she said, was the first time she risked her life to stay with her two sisters. Starving, freezing, near collapse, working an industrial loom during the last winter of the war, she had mystical experiences that sustained her. Returning to Budapest, she consulted the Indian author Selvarajan Yesudian (1916–1998), who taught her meditation, created a painting of her transformative experience, and wrote about her—as "Elisabeth G."—in his memoir. Stories she told near the end of her life hinted at a hidden history, one that stretched from the last train to Auschwitz to the first yoga studio in Europe.

Elizabeth is front and center in two postwar images that frame a missing chapter at the unlikely intersection of the histories of modern yoga and World War II. In a copy of a black-and-white photograph, she is in the first row (third from right) of a group of twenty-four women, pushing up on her long arms into *bhujaṅgāsana*, "Cobra Posture." Behind her, a dark-skinned man in a white coat—perhaps a laboratory coat or an Indian kurta—bends to adjust another student's position. Photographed in a rebuilt sculpture studio in Budapest between 1946 and 1948, the image is not quite like any other. We have seen postwar Europeans in gritty black and white before, and films and still images of women's gymnastics teams, but this subject—a large group of women practicing hatha-yoga together—is new in photography and in the 2,500-year history of yoga. Similarly, a family picture shot twenty years later near Pittsburgh may be unique among the suburban American photography of the 1960s and 1970s. It shows Elizabeth in faded Polaroid color in a kitchen, a spacious, wood-paneled, carpeted room that signals affluence. She sits erect on the floor, arms stretching up and legs stretched out, demonstrating

"Elisabeth G." teaching yoga at home, near Pittsburgh, PA. n.d. (c. 1970). Private collection © Cathryn Keller 2019.

Selvarajan Yesudian teaching a women's yoga class, Budapest, n.d. (c. 1946–1948). Private collection © Cathryn Keller 2019.

Elizabeth is front and center in two postwar images that frame a missing chapter at the unlikely intersection of the histories of modern yoga and World War II.

yogic breathing to her nieces and nephew. Both images are blurred, but their subjects, teachers and students, share an intense focus. They are not creating art in this studio; they do not cook in this kitchen.

A few years after my aunt died, I began to search for Yesudian's painting. I found, instead, this story, a story of displacement and resilience that shows the power of yoga as a source of strength, healing, meaning, and hope in precarious times.

CATHRYN KELLER *began studying yoga as a child with her great aunt, a Hungarian American survivor of Auschwitz and slave labor factories who studied with Selvarajan Yesudian in Budapest. A Washington, DC–based writer, former filmmaker, and museum and university communications executive, Keller served as senior advisor for external affairs for the Smithsonian Institution's groundbreaking exhibition* Yoga: The Art of Transformation.

The Shluva Project—My Grandmother's Grandmother: The Embodiment of a New Work of Choreographic Research

Miriam Phillips

Left: Shluva (author's grandmother's grandmother), circa 1907. Right: Miriam, the author, circa 100 years later. Courtesy of the author.

Growing up, a lingering tinge of shame cast a pall over my family's household. I often felt I was carrying something not my own but that came from some part of me. Shame, that "painful feeling … of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging—something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection."[i]

My paternal grandmother spoke of her mother drinking vinegar to make her pink cheeks white in order to fit in. Along with other family lore that spun through my childhood years, I wondered if any of it were true or even possible. Father's tales of having to sit in another section of the bus bewildered me. Grandmother's description of her great-grandfather walking from Poland to England were spellbinding. Thus Meyer Fivel (I don't even know how to spell it) became Maxwell Phillips (how I got my very Anglo surname juxtaposed with my very Hebraic first name). Then there were the crying episodes when she tried to tell us children about the Holocaust during our family lox-and-bagel brunches but claimed we did not have family members lost there. "But how could we not?" My adult voice echoed decades later. As a scholar I knew that it's not always as important to know if a story is really true as much as it is to know the meaning the stories carry in a culture's, family's, or individual's life. But questions nagged me.

After a series of significant family loses in a short period of time, I began to wonder who my family really was. Where did I come from? Who were "my people"? I've spent so many years studying other artists' lineages and their cultural histories through my work as a dance ethnologist (some that even could trace back nine generations), but I knew nothing of my own lineage or history. I've guided dance students to connect with their own heritage and transform that research into choreographic form, yet I had nothing of my own research-artistic creation to account for.

Spring 2018, while dredging through my late father's art studio, I came across a box of elegantly framed monochrome photos I had seen in my grandmother's home. Gazing over the faces and bodies of my lineage as I peeled the layers of stacked photos, I came across a photo I had never seen before. I was struck by her stark body stance, fearful look, and high-collared black dress. What was her story? Where did she come from? Why did I not hear stories of her? This was Shluva—my grandmother's grandmother. She did not look a thing like me. "But somewhere," I thought, "I have this woman's DNA in me. I have her story embedded in my body architecture; her melancholy etched on my heart." As reality collided with personal and artistic longing by mere happenstance, standing in my deceased father's art studio garage, thus began a new

work of research creation. This is the very short story of its bud becoming.

It is odd to be writing an article about a project in its nascent phase—one not yet researched, not yet performed. Yet I often guide my students to research and develop a written proposal for a future project. This represents one strand of that investigation.

My Grandmother's Grandmother (a.k.a. The Shluva Project), is a Practice as Research (PaR) PhD project that searches and researches my erased Jewish family lineage through the creation of a new choreographic work. The project explores themes of displaced and re-placed immigrants, excluded races, desires to be "other," and family lore that perpetuates a sense of loss and lost identity through the generations. The background research interweaves ethnography, autoethnography, and narrative inquiry, along with ethnohistorical heritage and genealogical investigation. The artistic inquiry explores aspects of the qualitative research through dance improvisation, movement invention, dance-ethnography mapping of the choreographic event, poetic writing, drawing, and collaging. While there is a lot of fact-finding and genealogical charting in such an exploration that could lead me to fall down a rabbit hole, such as discerning birth names; plotting timelines of where and when my ancestors left or arrived in various locations; and interviewing distant family relatives for their stories and memories, I am more interested in what I will learn in traversing this process rather than in figuring out what is fact or fiction. (Although facts would be nice to discover.)

I appreciate the depth and interrogation that goes into scholarly research; at the same time, I value how creative process, with its techniques of abstraction, juxtaposing, metaphor-making, and intuition, can unearth meanings and discover connections between seemingly disparate elements. "Tangential thinking leads to new ideas."[ii] Visual artist Kathleen Vaughan describes "art as a mode of knowing" and sees "the role of art as research and research as art *less* as creating new knowledge and more as calling forth, pulling together and arranging the multiplicities of knowledges embedded within."[iii] I resonate with her statement, "embedded and embodied within a work of art, almost holographically, is a reservoir of knowledge and understanding, the 'research' of the work as conducted by the artist."[iv]

It is through the research and art-making process that I hope to learn more about my family lineage, my own identity, and what life might have been like for my great-great-grandmother Shluva. How do I have some continuity of her within my personal makeup? I hope this project can shed light on how family histories and emotional palettes of our ancestors can be passed on and stored in the body. Then, how this embodied memory can be metamorphosed into kinetic choreographic form, thus leading to a renewed sense of identity and integration, if not healing genealogical pain.

Ode to Shluva

White lace wrapped around your neck – I thought you were afraid,

Gold chain dangling and draped – I got it wrong, perhaps.

The more I gaze at you, now I see light,

Beaming from your eyes as if behind a shield of night.

Black ruffley pleated bodice – You seem stoic, strong,

Dark eyes, sleekly pulled back hair, big flat ears, long.

Round, you hold a half smile on your face, like some secret you crave to share through your lace.

A torn and tattered photo. A name, a date, a city, in my grandmother's handwriting.

That is all I have of you.

You, who are a part of me.

What do I carry of you in what I do?

So many questions I have for you Shluva:

When did you leave?

When did you arrive?

How did it feel leaving and arriving?

What was your favorite recipe?

Did you husband treat you well?

Did you have a favorite color?

What was it like being a Jewish woman in unwanted places?
Did you have a special way to braid your challah?
How did you celebrate Shabbos?
What did you hope for your children?
What did you dream?
What did you desire?
How did you bake a cake?
What was your favorite song?
Did you know how to read?
To sing?
What brought you joy?
May I dance with you? May I dance for you?
May I dance into your past to know my present?

MIRIAM PHILLIPS *is a U.S.-based dance arts practitioner, scholar, educator, and certified Laban/Bartenieff movement analyst. She specializes in Arts Practice, Dance Ethnology, Performance Autoethnography, and Flamenco. She is currently a PhD researcher and guest lecturer at the University of Limerick's Irish World Academy of Music and Dance. Her chapter, "Hopeful Futures and Nostalgic Pasts: Explorations into Kathak and Flamenco Dance Collaborations" appeared in* Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives, *(McFarland Press, 2015). Her interdisciplinary choreographic work,* Soleá de Edad, *performed at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center in 2014, explored, through the flamenco idiom, how embodied memory reiterates and readapts through repetitive gestures, rhythms, and states of mind that weave through human life.*

i Brené Brown, January 14, 2013, https://brenebrown.com/articles/2013/01/14/shame-v-guilt/.

ii Alys Longley, personal communication in Arts Practice workshop, University of Limerick, Ireland, April 15, 2019.

iii Kathleen Vaughan, *"Mariposa:* The Story of New Work of Research/Creation, Taking Shape, Taking Flight" in *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 171–170.

iv Ibid., 169.

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BARUCH AGADATI, OMAN HA-RIKUD HA-IVRI
Barash, Asher; Yitzhak Katz; Menashe Rabinovitz; Avraham Soskin
Tel-Aviv: Hedim, 1925.
50A/100 copies. The principal work on Baruch Agadati, legendary Russian-born dancer and choreographer who pioneered "constructivist" dance in Palestine and is known for interpreting Jewish folk dance in a uniquely expressionist style. A painter, early filmmaker and enthusiastic organizer of Purim festivals, he studied at the Bezalel Academy, with The Odessa Opera Ballet Theater and is considered the central figure in the development of Israeli dance. He introduced the Hora—a folk dance from the Balkans related to Dionysus' khoros kyklikos—into Palestine. Illustrated with 32 tipped-in prints of elaborately overpainted photographs, drawings, paintings, illustrated posters advertising solo dance performances (one with constructivist graphics) and includes Agadati's sketch of men and women dancing the Hora. Photographs by Tel Aviv's Avraham Soskin. Artwork presumably by Agadati. Text in Hebrew.
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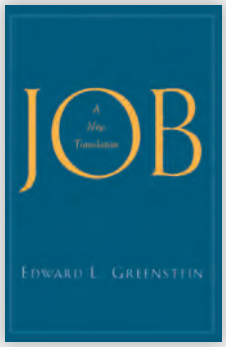

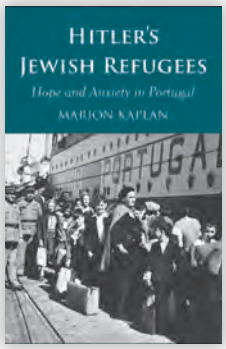

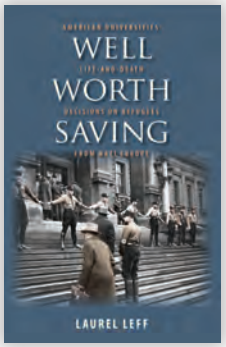

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The Profession

Background image adapted from a detail of Rachel Rafael Neis's At the Gym. Courtesy of the artist.

Bound: Isaac, Immortality, and Ageism in the Academy

David N. Gottlieb

Every year for a decade, I trod the campus like a shade, haunting lectures and seminars, waiting invisibly during office hours, sipping stale coffee in college cafes, while my younger colleagues gabbled all around me, oblivious to my presence. My thinning hair and gray beard marked me as a man settled in his power, already bound to his position and his fate. My body, resplendent in the plumage of midlife, was often sheathed in the uniform of the workplace, shuttling as I was between my day job and my classes. I was a being between dimensions: a middle-aged graduate student.

I became accustomed to being mistaken for the professor on the first day of class. After a couple of academic terms, I observed, with amusement rather than shame, the unspoken questions flash across the face of my fellow students as we introduced ourselves: "But … you're so old. Why are you a student?" "Will I be competing with you for a job?" "Don't you already *have* a job?"

The academy is at once allergic to and helplessly dependent on its own peculiar conceptions of caste; in its constructions of power, it is, like its monastic forebears, utterly masculine, and masculinist. The university's roots in the monastery go back beyond the early Christian conventicles to, among other fraternal orders, the cult of sacrifice—and thus, in Jewish tradition, to the taproot of sacred violence: the Akedah, the Binding of Isaac (Gen 22:1–20). In this brief, brutal narrative, Isaac's self and selfhood are bound, destroyed, and reconstituted by his father, whose conception of and relationship with God is, in the same instant, also destroyed and made new.

The son's role as the instrument of the father's striving after immortality lives, in the West, in what Ernest Becker called our *"causa sui"* projects. Our unique capacities of thought and memory leave us terrified at the prospect of our own passing, so we are lashed—both with and without our consent—to altars of immortality: not just family, but lineage; not just work, but career. The urgency of career is especially acute in the academy, where we begin as

Like Isaac, we were both sacrificed and somehow spared, whereupon we committed ourselves to redigging the wells of those same academic fathers.

Isaac, trusting those who bind us, and all too often end as Abraham, willing to subject our intellectual offspring to the knife for the sake of a whiff of everlasting legacy.

As Sarah Coakley has pointed out in her essay, "In Defense of Sacrifice," the sacrifice of Isaac on one level represents the killing of the feminine. (The exclusion of Sarah from the proceedings, and her death immediately afterwards, emphasize this theme.) In Coakley's view, Isaac is a gender-labile figure who must be sacrificed so that Abraham can purify and intensify his devotion to God. The masculine, seeking to transcend mortality by rehearsing death, seeks a victim to substitute for the self—one that represents natality, ritual impurity, and most of all, love.

As Shalom Spiegel suggests in *The Last Trial,* the earliest versions of the Akedah may have concluded with Isaac slaughtered, his ashes buried under the altar on Mt. Moriah. The rabbis, however, see Isaac spirited off to heaven and resurrected. He is both alive and dead—the Schrödinger's cat of Judaism, the patron saint of the masculine immortality project.

I suppose a midlife PhD must in some way have been my own, modest immortality project. Sporting my business-casual attire and black briefcase, but possessed of a student ID, I looked to other students like an academic Abraham, but turned out to be a fellow Isaac. I bore the marks of middle age but let myself be bound to the same altars as they. I had a job, a mortgage, a family, a life beyond campus, but I also had papers to submit, exams to prepare for, courses to TA.

I was, of course, lucky. Students of color, LGBTQIA, gender-nonconforming students, and women struggle constantly against implicit and explicit bias. All were subject to the masculinist sacrificial ethos in action: the gray sages leading us up the mountain; the devotion with which we flung ourselves down upon their hastily erected altars; their knives flashing over our futures. Like Isaac, we were both sacrificed and somehow spared, whereupon we committed ourselves to redigging the wells of those same academic fathers.

Alan Falk. The Binding of Isaac (The Akedah), 2002. Oil on canvas. 69 in. x 48 in. © 2019. Courtesy of the artist.

And even though I, too, submitted myself to the knife, in the eyes of my fellow students, because of how I looked, I must all along have been wielding a blade of my own.

DAVID N. GOTTLIEB *teaches at Spertus Institute in Chicago. He received his PhD in the History of Judaism from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 2018. He is the author of the forthcoming* Second Slayings: The Binding of Isaac and the Formation of Jewish Memory *(Gorgias Press).*

Who May Come to America? Integrating Disability into Jewish Studies

Hannah Greene

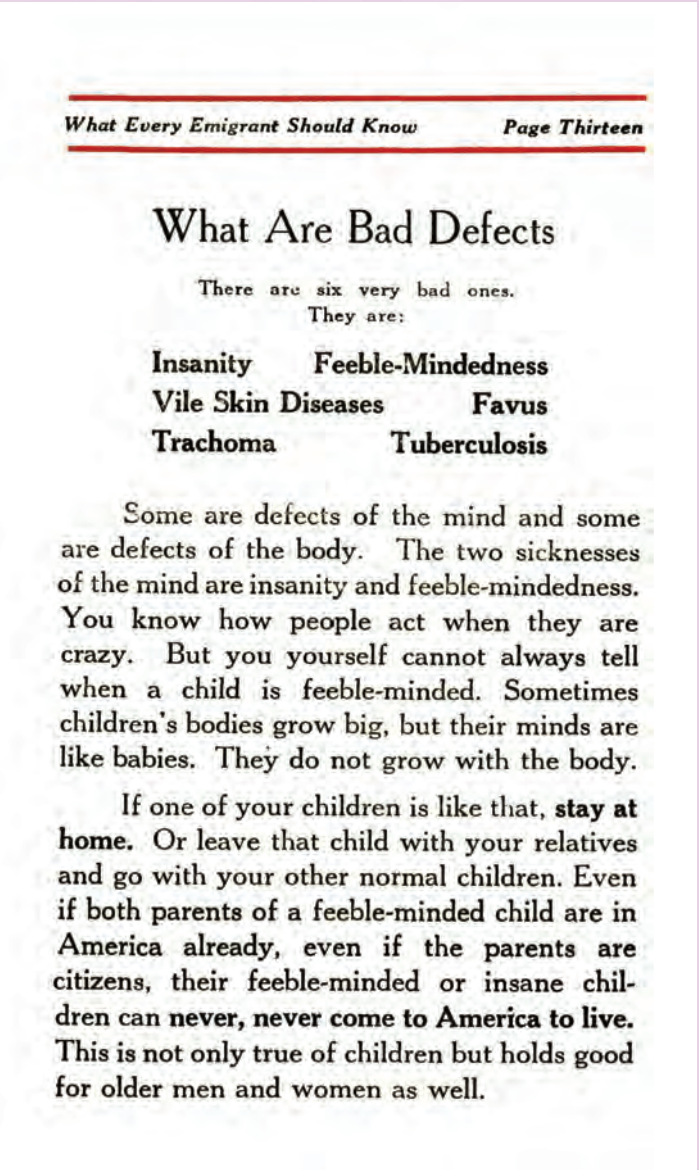
Ada Lieb's physical and mental disabilities almost forced her to leave the United States. Her family migrated from Russia to Nashville in 1922, where Ada found employment as a milliner thanks to her talent for needlework. Upon developing anxiety, numbness in one leg, and tremors in one hand resulting from childhood trauma, she transitioned to retail—until her employer fired her because of her shyness and limited English. Joblessness triggered "a sort of melancholia," in which Ada stopped speaking and refused food. After a doctor insisted that Ada's "physical disability was only a child of her mind," she nearly found herself an inmate of a public mental institution. Fortuitously, a caseworker from the National Council of Jewish Women intervened. Emphasizing that admitting Ada to this asylum would classify her as a "public charge" and instigate her deportation,[i] this caseworker pressed for Ada's return to her former position and access to a swimming pool to manage her disabilities. Through providing Ada with the necessary accommodations, this caseworker enabled her to remain and thrive in the United States.[ii]

Ada's story ended more happily than many others. The 1917 Immigration Act expanded the categories of "undesirable" immigrants to include "idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics, insane, persons of psychopathic constitutional inferiority, persons afflicted with a loathsome or dangerous contagious disease, including venereal disease, trachoma and certain chronic conditions." Stemming from the 1882 public charge provision, the 1917 law targeted "mental and physical defectives" for debarment and broadened the terms mandating their deportation.

Immigration and deportation policy expose overarching attitudes towards disabled and ill bodies, revealing "what kind of people may come to America, and what kind of people must stay at home."[iii] Wide-ranging conditions could provoke debarment. In 1909 and 1910, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society documented that heart disease, "lack of physical development," and hernias recurred as grounds warranting exclusion and deportation. Public charge remains in force today, deploying health and disability to prohibit immigrants from entering the United States. Last fall, the Trump administration issued a proposed rule to permit the deportation of "foreign-born noncitizens" as public charges, based on their use of public benefits such as Medicaid and Medicare.

Acknowledging ingrained assumptions about people with disabilities and illnesses illuminates their marginalization, both in terms of physical exclusion and narrative omission. Implicit expectations of "normative" health and ability shape our research and construction of academic spaces. Having lived with chronic illnesses since childhood, I am inclined to notice systems and structures designed in ways that overlook "aberrant" bodies and minds.

The centrality of academic conferences to career advancement constitutes a salient example. Traveling to conferences poses a challenge for our colleagues with illnesses and disabilities, who frequently struggle to meet fundamental health needs in their own environments, let alone new ones in which they must present at their best under unfamiliar conditions. Allocated funding to defray expenses for critical medical and dietary accommoda-



What Every Emigrant Should Know **Page Thirteen**

What Are Bad Defects

There are six very bad ones.
They are:

Insanity **Feeble-Mindedness**
Vile Skin Diseases **Favus**
Trachoma **Tuberculosis**

Some are defects of the mind and some are defects of the body. The two sicknesses of the mind are insanity and feeble-mindedness. You know how people act when they are crazy. But you yourself cannot always tell when a child is feeble-minded. Sometimes children's bodies grow big, but their minds are like babies. They do not grow with the body.

If one of your children is like that, **stay at home.** Or leave that child with your relatives and go with your other normal children. Even if both parents of a feeble-minded child are in America already, even if the parents are citizens, their feeble-minded or insane children can **never, never come to America to live.** This is not only true of children but holds good for older men and women as well.

"What Are Bad Defects" from Cecilia Razovsky's pamphlet, What Every Emigrant Should Know (Council of Jewish Women, 1922), 13.

tions, and embracing technology enabling remote participation (like Virtually Connecting, Zoom, and Skype), would allow those with health conditions to attend conferences on an equal level with their nondisabled peers.

Fostering inclusive conferences and classrooms requires that we utilize disability as a standard analytical lens alongside gender, race, ethnicity, and class. To start, we can treat disability as worthy of study by encouraging projects explicitly addressing its presence or absence as foundational to interaction with and perception of the world. As such, we can cultivate a sociointellectual environment that values the contributions and experiences of people with illnesses and disabilities as scholars and historical subjects. The AJS could signify a commitment to physical and mental diversity in our discipline by adding a Disability Studies division to its annual conference, promoting inclusive scholarship that will offer invaluable dimensions to the field.

Feminist scholars reminded us in the 1970s that representation matters. We today can take their advocacy for Women's and Gender Studies as a model for incorporating disability—which similarly informs everyday existence—into academic inquiry. Considering health and disability proffers an invaluable opportunity for Jewish Studies scholars to push the boundaries of the field, reevaluating whose voices we center, approaching archives anew, and reexamining conventional language and narratives. Restoring stories like Ada's to the historical record provides an excellent place to begin.

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i Mrs. J. Weinstein to Cecilia Razovsky, Box 1, Folder 1, Cecilia Razovsky Papers, 1913–1971, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History.

ii Cecilia Razovsky, *What Every Emigrant Should Know* (Council of Jewish Women, 1922).

iii HIAS records of deportation, 1909–1910, Box 11, Folder 12, Max James Kohler papers, 1765–1963, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History.

Background image adapted from a detail of Rachel Rafael Neis's artwork. Courtesy of the artist.

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In October of this year, the UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies begins a year-long celebration of its 25th anniversary, marking a quarter century as a hub and catalyst for research, conversation, and learning in Jewish Studies.

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The Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan seeks scholars for a residential fellowship in 2021-2022 to explore the challenges of diversity in Second Temple Judaism. Diversity of ethnicity, religion, social status, gender, age, and ability was as much a feature of the ancient Mediterranean world as it is in the present. We aim to explore the diversity of religious, cultural, and political life during the period of the Second Temple, from after the Babylonian Exile up to and including the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

The modern notion of Second Temple Judaism was originally shaped by Christian scholars who imagined it as the "intertestamental" period between the Old and the New Testaments, or as the "age of Jesus." On the other hand, Jewish scholars were uncomfortable with the periodization, only gradually accepting the notion that a significant transition also occurred between "Biblical" and "Rabbinic" Judaism, or "from the Bible to the Mishnah." Second Temple Judaism, however, is much more than just a combination of "proto-Rabbinic" and "proto-Christian" traditions. It was the seedbed for multiple, distinctive worldviews, as recorded by Josephus and attested by the Dead Sea Scrolls, the so-called OT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament, and the rich literature of Hellenistic Judaism.

The Frankel Institute aims to develop fruitful conversation about ancient Jewish diversity. We invite fellows to question the separation of the "canonical" from the "non-canonical," and the "Christian" from the "Jewish." We particularly welcome proposals that integrate the "traditional" tools of philology, intellectual and social history, and archaeology with "newer" methods of analysis (gender studies, post-colonial studies, etc.). By bringing together a group of international scholars who approach the material from different perspectives in an interdisciplinary and inclusive fashion, the Frankel Institute seeks to contribute to our understanding of the vibrant diversity of Second Temple Judaism and redefine its place within Jewish Studies.

Applications due October 12, 2020

For more information, and complete application materials go to
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Pedagogy

Background image adapted from a detail of Rachel Rafael Neis's artwork. Courtesy of the artist.

Rosenstrasse: Embodied Learning through Role Play

Jessica Hammer and Moyra Turkington

The analog role-playing game *Rosenstrasse* asks players to take on the roles of characters struggling to survive under the Third Reich. Over the course of four hours, players explore marriages between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans in Berlin between 1933 and 1943, and play out the pressures that both partners experienced. The game culminates in the women-led 1943 protest, known as *Rosenstrasse* after the square in which the women demonstrated, that resulted in the release of nearly 1,500 Jewish men.

As a role-playing game, the core activity of *Rosenstrasse* is players speaking and acting as their characters. Eight pregenerated characters come with the game: male and female, Jewish and non-Jewish, relatively secure and entirely vulnerable. At the beginning of the game, each player is assigned two characters that they are to portray for the rest of the session. It is through these characters that players investigate the historical events of the period.

As an analog game, *Rosenstrasse* asks players to gather in person around a table. Four players and one facilitator spend four hours together, speaking and listening and looking at one another. Because players are gathered in person to play, they can see what other players do, which lets them compare and contrast the experiences of different characters. By embodying their own characters while others watch, they also develop a deep connection to the characters that they themselves portray.

As a transformational game, *Rosenstrasse* seeks to change players through the experience of play. The game has three goals: to educate players about a lesser-known historical moment; to inspire them to resist oppression in their daily lives; and to help them start conversations about activism. Our research on the game to date suggests that the game is indeed powerfully transformational. After playing *Rosenstrasse*, players report attending protests, starting conversations with family members about the Holocaust, and even traveling to Berlin to visit the *Rosenstrasse* memorial. In other words, the game helps players translate abstract knowledge into embodied action.

Many role-playing games are open-ended. *Rosenstrasse*, however, uses card-based scenarios to structure the scenes that players encounter. Each card contains a brief description of a situation, then ends with a prompt for players to respond to. This design decision is thematically appropriate; players should not be able to change the behavior of the Reich. Giving players the power to affect the core narrative arc of the game would not just be inaccurate, but disrespectful to the victims and survivors of the Nazi regime.

Each card has a number on the back, indicating the order in which they are to be drawn from the deck. While some cards are discarded based on players' choices, most cards remain the same from game to game. Players are offered the same scenarios in the same order. Their creative contribution to the game is in how they react to the prompts for each scenario.

Consider a scenario in which Klara and Josef, one of the couples in the game, must decide whether to baptize their children. Some aspects of the situation are constant. Josef is always Jewish, and Klara is always non-Jewish; both are committed secular humanists. They are always married and have two children. Klara always realizes that baptizing their children may make them all safer, and always sits Josef down to have a conversation about it—but other things are different every time. For example, across games, players take different positions on the issue. Some Klaras are looking to be reassured that a baptism isn't really necessary; others are willing to fight their corner to the bitter end. Some Josefs discover that the notion of a

Players should not be able to change the behavior of the Reich. Giving players the power to affect the core narrative arc of the game would not just be inaccurate, but disrespectful to the victims and survivors of the Nazi regime.

baptism revolts their Jewish soul, while others object on humanist grounds, and still others find that they don't mind as long as they don't have to attend. These positions are played out in the dialogue the players speak as their characters; in the internal experiences they have, which they typically share after the game; and, of course, in the ways they use their bodies.

The woman in the blue shirt slams her hand down on the table. "Klara," she says, adopting the voice she's been using for Josef, "I can't bear this. To baptize our children—just to make them safe! I won't do it. I won't."

Unlike most role-playing games, in which each player has a single character, in *Rosenstrasse* players are assigned two characters: one male, one female. Each scenario card is directed to specific characters, who are listed on the back of the card. In a given scenario, a player might be taking on the role of either their male character or their female character. In other words, regardless of the player's gender, they are playing a character of a different gender at least part of the time. The game contains no directives for how players should distinguish their two characters, or how players should portray their character's gender. These decisions are left for players to explore.

During play, players find spontaneous solutions to distinguish their two characters. For example, some players change their voices, some stand differently, and some move around the table depending on who they are portraying. The game provides character cards for each *character,* which means each player has two character cards in front of them; some players stack them so that only the character they are currently portraying is visible. Finally, some players use objects that happen to be nearby in their gender performance. For example, a scarf pulled from someone's bag might be wrapped around the head to indicate that the female character is being portrayed, while wrapping it like a cravat indicates masculinity.

The gray-haired man's shoulders slump. "Klara," he says, "How can we do this to our children? With everything we believe? With—with everything I believe?" He isn't a Jew, but right now his body is a Jewish one.

The facilitator passing a postcard to one of the players. Some players have the opportunity to write a postcard, in character as their male character, to their loved ones at the end of the game. Photo courtesy of the authors.

In modern society, the Jewish body is not only gendered, but stereotyped in gendered ways. For example, Jewish men are stereotypically weak, while Jewish women's bodies are often portrayed as untamable. As with gender, *Rosenstrasse* resists these stereotypes by asking all players to embody Jewish characters. Every player receives at least one Jewish character during play—even if the character doesn't know it when they begin the game.

To avoid stereotypes, the characters' relationships with Jewishness vary. For siblings Ruth and Izak, and for newlywed musician Max, Judaism is joyfully tied to family, heritage, and tradition. For Josef, it is an outdated tradition to be challenged by a commitment to pure reason. For Kurt and Klara, it's a dangerous secret that could get them killed. For Inge and Annaliese, Jewishness is central to their relationship with childbearing and child-rearing, which focuses it on the body. In other words, whether players are Jewish or not, the game asks them to speak with a Jewish mouth, gesture with Jewish hands, and see the world with Jewish eyes.

The blue-haired person and the short woman stand together, looking each other in the eyes. As Klara and Josef, they have just gone through a stormy argument. Now they breathe together, calming. "Do you trust me?" the woman murmurs. "I do," says her partner, and takes her hand.

Some scenes are directed to just one character. In these scenes, the player describes their character's interaction with the game world, or with nonplayer characters portrayed by the facilitator. However, most scenes in the deck are directed to two characters: a husband and wife, or two siblings. Each character is portrayed by a different player, so that the two players connect just as their two characters do.

The facilitator is offered two techniques to build the embodied connection between the players. If the players are primarily seated during play, then the facilitator can hand them the card from the deck without reading it. Because the text on the card is relatively small, but both players need to reference it, they lean their bodies together to see more clearly. This small, typically unconscious gesture builds a sense of connection between the players, which gives weight to the marital or familial relationship of the characters. Alternately, if players have shown a willingness to stand and move while portraying their characters, the facilitator can ask them to first stand, then to listen while reading the card. As the facilitator reads, the players can decide how far apart their characters should stand, and begin expressing their attitudes about the scene through body language.

Rosenstrasse is an intense emotional experience. It is not "fun" in the traditional sense of the word. However, in playtests with over two hundred players, and a qualitative research study with eighteen subjects, we have found that players find it deeply meaningful. From Holocaust educators and from people who had previously believed the Holocaust was a hoax, from expert role-players and from novice gamers, from the descendants of survivors and the descendants of perpetrators, we have heard over and over again that players are moved, shaken, inspired.

This is deliberate. *Rosenstrasse* is an explicitly transformational game, one that seeks to change players through the play experience. Part of how *Rosenstrasse* accomplishes its goals is through the body. It is deliberate that the game is played at a table, not in front of a screen; that players must pick up cards and read them aloud; that players must speak and act as their characters, not type text describing what they do.

Theories of embodied cognition inform the physical materials of the game. By offloading historical knowledge into the cards that players handle, they can focus their cognitive resources on portraying how their characters would react to the history being described. The physical materials also track the state of the game. Players do not have to remember that the game is moving toward horror and death. As the card deck becomes depleted, players have an immediate visual reminder of how much time is left before the end of the game—and before they must discover their characters' fates. The deck becomes the ticking clock, and the players' hands are the tick tick tick of time moving it forward.

Our findings show that *Rosenstrasse* is a transformational and highly effective experience. For example, after playing, many players say they now understand why Jews did not simply "just leave" Germany. Other players cite the game as a spur to activism on behalf of the oppressed, even months after play. Almost every group conducted spontaneous historical research after the game ended, and multiple players reported visiting the *Rosenstrasse* memorial in Berlin because of their experience in the game. We believe that part of what makes this transformation possible is the physicality of the game—that players never have to transfer knowledge from their mind to their bodies, because they are learning it with their bodies as well as their minds in the first place.

What other Jewish stories might be told through these types of role-playing experiences? We hope to find out.

Rosenstrasse was created by Jessica Hammer and Moyra Turkington as part of the War Birds project, which are games that center the experiences of women in wartime. Rosenstrasse successfully Kickstarted in spring 2019 and will be released later this year. More information about Rosenstrasse and other games in the War Birds series is available on the Unruly Designs website.

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MOYRA TURKINGTON *is the founder of the indie studio Unruly Designs and the leader of the War Birds collective—an international team of designers writing chamber games about women fighting on the front lines of history. She is interested in personal, political, transformative games that challenge how we understand the world and each other. A systems analyst with a joint background in Theatre and Cultural Studies, she is always working to develop multiplicity and access in media, design, representation, and play.*

Just Like Everyone Else: Jewish College Sororities and Acculturation in Mid-Twentieth-Century America

Shira Kohn

Overview:
As American Jews found inroads into the country's economic, political, and cultural systems, questions remained about Jews' ability to reflect notions of American citizenship and white, Christian, middle-class standards for behavior and conduct. To help students understand the ways in which Jews often found greater access into 1940s–1960s American society alongside new challenges to overcome, an unusual, yet readily available resource is available to most teachers in college or secondary-school environments—the yearbook. I use the space below to outline how a guided activity of analyzing yearbook images of Jewish bodies—in this case, Jewish sorority women—helps to literally illustrate issues of gender and acculturation in modern America.

Context:
Founded in the first two decades of the twentieth century as American Jews began attending college in significant numbers, sororities provided young female Jews with several tangible and intangible benefits for those deemed "suitable" for membership. Offering housing, meals, and camaraderie, Jewish sororities afforded these women a chance to observe and absorb behaviors of their non-Jewish counterparts in the larger and more established white sorority system, which itself represented white Christian elites. Finding the doors of these non-Jewish clubs closed to them owing to social antisemitism, Jewish women across the country, particularly in the South and Midwest, sought out membership in Jewish sororities to enjoy experiences similar to those denied them in the Christian houses. Joining also facilitated these female collegians' movements within what were seen as elite Jewish institutions, which primed

"Alpha Epsilon Phi." 1950. Makio, courtesy of The Ohio State University Archives.

their members for postcollege success through leadership training, social networking, and, often, marriage to men from the Jewish fraternity system.

Jewish sorority women used their membership within the Greek system to promote their "good Americanism," primarily through trying to demonstrate through their self-representation and philanthropic acts that they could embody the best of American youth culture and behaviors. Yearbooks were one of the most significant ways Jewish sorority women could showcase their members' beauty and good taste to a broader non-Jewish audience. Since their entries appeared alongside those of the broader white Greek system in almost all college yearbooks across the country, they knew that their submissions to the publication would be an important place where viewers would observe, and possibly judge, the Jewish women's looks and the extent to which they appeared equal to their Christian counterparts. With the reality of social exclusion present in their lives, the Jewish women were aware of their chance to visually make a strong first impression. While scholars and students often peruse sources to identify points of Jewish distinctiveness, historical yearbook photos of Jewish sorority women offer an instructive exercise on how "looking like

everyone else" can in fact tell us important data about the aspirations and daily lives of a minority group.

Classroom Activity:

As a group or in small groups, students can analyze images like the ones here and consider the following:

- If you know nothing about sororities, what would you infer about these women based on what you see here? What specific elements of these images are you using to draw your conclusions?
- To what extent are these images focusing on the individual group members? The sorority as a whole? Why do you think that is?
- If you were to construct a stereotypical image of a woman from the 1950s, to what extent does what you see here conform to your imagining? How, if at all, does what you see here differ?
- How, explicitly and implicitly, do these images engage with ideas of beauty?
- What, if anything, is "Jewish" about these yearbook pages, in both text and image?

Takeaways to Consider:

- Jewish sorority women often aimed to present their members with no obvious "Jewish" context, both in imagery and text. For example, they might reference that various members went to, or held leadership positions within the Hillel Foundation, but would rarely use the word "Jewish" to describe their membership or activities. Looking at the members' last names is often the easiest way to decipher whether the group was a Jewish one. Most sororities—even more than fraternities—did not have members of different religious backgrounds or ethnic communities in the same group until at least the late 1960s.
- Jewish sorority composite photos of each member often tried to appear uniform in approach, such as in the 1950s pearl necklaces you see in the image included here. These were meant to highlight the members' awareness of tasteful trends and/or their socioeconomic status through consumption.
- Whenever an individual sorority member gained recognition for her looks, such as Dotty Kahn from The Ohio State University's Alpha Epsilon Phi chapter, the sorority would ensure her image and description would be featured prominently in its yearbook submission, a practice similar to non-Jewish groups.
- In The Ohio State University's 1950 submission, the sorority details its philanthropic endeavors, which were considered a foundational activity alongside the social aspects of Greek life. Note that the Alpha Epsilon Phi text discusses the group's Christmas party for children and that "the Sammies," a Jewish fraternity, provided a Santa Claus, with the assumption that these students were available to participate in the activity since they had no familial or religious obligations on that day.

Jewish sorority women used yearbook spaces to showcase Jewish standards of personal appearance and conduct as identical to those of non-Jewish houses.

Concluding Thoughts:

Jewish sorority women used yearbook spaces to showcase Jewish standards of personal appearance and conduct as identical to those of non-Jewish houses. Jewish practices and social relations, such as those between Jewish sororities and fraternities, were coded in that only those "inside" the system would understand the subtle distinctiveness found in these pages. These yearbook photos reflect issues of class, acculturation, and continued social antisemitism that Jewish women encountered in their daily lives and attempted to combat through strong social networks, communal engagement, and, of course, the attempted demonstration of Jewish compatibility in look and act with elite white Christian women's norms of the period in question.

Further Reading:

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Marianne Sanua. *Going Greek: Jewish College Fraternities in the United States*, 1895–1945. Wayne State University Press, 2003.

SHIRA KOHN *is a member of the Upper School History Department at The Dalton School. She, along with Hasia Diner and Rachel Kranson, co-edited* A Jewish Feminine Mystique? Jewish Women in Postwar America *(Rutgers University Press, 2010) and in 2018, had an article focusing on Jewish student refugees in the United States during the 1930s published in* American Jewish History. *She is currently working on a monograph about Jewish college sororities and their encounters with civil rights and Cold War anticommunist movements.*

The Spanish Docks in 1492

Patricio Boyer

One of the challenges of teaching courses on Spanish imperialism and the conquest of the Americas is the extent to which they can seem so familiar and simultaneously alien to early twenty-first-century students. This is a time when many students are sensitized to the complexities of race and various ways it might intersect with religion, geography, capitalism: it is almost a grab bag of buzzwords that in the best cases generates fruitful debate and analysis. It can be hard for students to see how those threads come together over time, and how the remote origins of our current world order might help us understand the imbrication of race, religion, and nationality. This can be particularly true in helping students bridge the gap between the late medieval world of fifteenth-century Spain and the purportedly modern world of the sixteenth-century Americas, where, for students, "race thinking" seems to be a novel kind of social discourse. The relationship between medieval antisemitism and early modern racism get lost in that geographic divide. The Alhambra Decree that led to the expulsion of tens of thousands of Spanish Jews is thus reduced to a coincidence: what a curious accident of history, the story goes, that on the day Columbus set out for the New World he was forced to leave not from the port of Cádiz, the obvious choice for an Atlantic journey, but rather the less advantageous Palos de la Frontera.

Sephardic Museum (Museo Sefardí) in Toledo, Spain. It is a fourteenth-century building, originally the Sinagoga del Tránsito or Sinagoga de Samuel ha-Levi. Courtesy of the author.

The details of this historical convergence matter, not only for what they might suggest to us about the cultural realities of 1492, but also for the material realities that narrative elides.[i] If the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María* could find no berth in the ancient port, it was a product of the fact that the docks of the ancient city were packed with boats meeting the deadline of expulsion. The port was brimming with the literal bodies of Sephardim being pushed into the ocean and on the various trajectories that

Martínez connects purity of blood to the casta system, a later, New-World conceptualization of race in Mexico.

would carry them away from the only home they had ever known. These bodies matter, of course, if we hope to understand the role antisemitism played in this most crucial of years for the Western imagination. They also matter if we ever hope to understand the central role that antisemitism would play in the development of European "race thinking." Columbus's famous caravels were as much a part of the Jewish expulsion as those boats carrying mourning passengers to the furthest reaches of Europe and the Ottoman Empire. They carried to the New World a sense of difference deeply rooted in a kind of embodiment that seems distant, less legible to modern readers than we might imagine.

In her influential study of the relationship between inquisitorial politics and the emergence of modern ideas about race, the late María Elena Martínez reminded us of the way antisemitism has been, since time immemorial, imbricated with ideas about faith and the body and how those bodies might imply a kind of inheritability of certain traits.[ii] Most clearly exemplified in the way Spaniards allegorized the importance of "blood" and purity, Martínez's account beautifully peels back the layers of how the body was seen to contain the fluids in which flowed belief, from blood to the mother's milk that fed heresy intergenerationally. The relationship between biology and belief, between what the body contains and what lies in the spirit, is a language of bigotry that might seem familiar in its broad brushstrokes but more difficult to parse in the details. Indeed, students perceive the bigotry of biological theorizations of ethnicity, but do not grasp readily the way that religion, ethnicity, and incipient notions of race converge on the site of the body. Martínez connects purity of blood to the casta system, a later, New-World conceptualization of race in Mexico. Suggestive as that is, it seems to me that not enough attention has been given to the way transmissibility might be reimagined as a question not of biology per se, but rather intimacy, proximity, and familiarity. The strangeness of early modern notions of race lies, for me, precisely in the way bodily proximity itself was understood to be racialized.

Spaniards transformed religious belief into a question of bodies, but they did so in complex ways. *Conversos* proved threatening to the antisemitic imagination not only because of allegorical ideas about blood, but also because of the way bodies were defined by practices and rituals, the way they literally moved through space. Performance Studies has given us a language to talk about the way that recursive, quotidian behaviors make meaning and generate subjectivity precisely through a practice, via externalized, observable behaviors. Bodies moving through space do not *mean* anything or hint at a hidden meaning; instead, they generate that very thing we assume they signal. In other words, the performance goes beyond phenomenology and, on some basic level, produces a kind of being. This lens helps us re-view(?) embodiment as a more complex and layered phenomenon than the concept of ethnic or "raced" bodies would suggest. Most startling about this kind of performative, bodily understanding of religion for early modern Spaniards is the way that it sits at the intersection of a version of embodiment that is biologically racialized and the intimacy of familial and quotidian practice. For the Spanish antisemite, the vicissitudes of his prejudice turn on that axis where faith moves toward practice and away from belief, where bodily proximity becomes the groundwork for a familial intimacy that so frightens the nascent imperial imagination that it packs it onto boats to carry it away.

As a metonym for modernity, those overflowing ships will go from carrying people across the Mediterranean and away from the heart of empire to packing them in and ferrying them to lives of servitude across the Atlantic. Rather than the capstone to medieval antisemitism and another in a long line of Jewish expulsions, I want students to understand the Sephardic Diaspora as part of the birth of modernity, as part and parcel of the racist legacies that would subtend the establishment of early capitalism and Western imperialism. Understanding the extent to which early modern antisemitism was rooted not only in questions of faith but also in mutable forms of embodiment like racialization and the physical practice of ritual has helped my students engage more dynamically with how racism, religious bigotry, and imperialism intertwine.

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i María Rosa Menocal describes the port of Cadiz on the eve of expulsion in her book, *Shards of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Duke University Press, 1993).

ii María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2008).

Ezekiel the prophet-priest whips his words into his own back. Matt Gillard. Ezekiel Blames the Victim, 2019. Water mixable oil on canvas. 44 in. x 71 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Whipping the Words of Ezekiel into His Own Back: A Conversation on Portraying Biblical Violence

T. M. Lemos

Every other year, I teach a course called "Angry God: The Bible and War," in which students engage with the ugliest texts from ancient Israel and surrounding regions. The class focuses on questions of human nature, social inequality, and conceptions of personhood, the body, and gender. Students are asked to produce a creative project in the medium of their choice, examining how ancient and contemporary phenomena of violence intersect with each other.

While the creative projects I receive are often very interesting, this year an MDiv student named Matthew Gillard, who received a BFA before starting his training for the Anglican priesthood, submitted a project that really impressed me. Matthew's creative project consisted of two paintings representing the traumatized violence of the book of Ezekiel. The first painting depicts the whorish wife Jerusalem from Ezekiel 16 and 23. In the painting, Jerusalem is a woman surrounded by animal-human hybrids representing different empires. Her legs are open wide and her vagina is an open and bloodied city gate. Scrawled across the canvas are verses from the book. In the second painting, Ezekiel is portrayed naked, his hair partly torn out. He is whipping the rage-filled words of the book into his own back—an evocative portrait of how Ezekiel's condemnation of Jerusalem is actually a traumatized condemnation of himself. In the background, the people of Jerusalem are marched into exile, suffering all manner of violence and abuse as they go. King Nebuchadnezzar looks on, his face ghastly.

I spoke with Matthew Gillard about his paintings. Here are excerpts from our conversation.

Lemos: I'd like to talk to you about the process of doing a creative project and how it worked for this material on violence in particular, as well as some more personal aspects of the creative project for you.

Gillard: When I started to plan for the project, I thought of artists who had worked on violence and looked at the material that they had come up with to see if it inspired ideas, while I was reading the material you had assigned

our class to read. So, I looked at Ralph Steadman, a contemporary British cartoonist who did a lot of antiwar art during the Vietnam War, whose work both analyzed and critiqued aspects of society he found troubling, but did it in a very humorous way. I also thought about Leon Golub, another antiwar artist during the Vietnam War, and Francisco Goya, who did the *Disasters of War* series. A lot of his work for that series deals with transgressions against the body. Another artist I thought of was J. M. W. Turner, the British romanticist of the early 1800s; his work deals with the power that exists in nature.

Lemos: Of all of the different topics that we dealt with in the class, why did you choose the book of Ezekiel?

Gillard: One of the ideas that you discussed in class was the concept of victim-blaming; when there is some sort of trauma that is suffered in a group, the victim will be blamed or they will blame themselves. There will be a certain amount of shame applied to that and the shame jumped out as I read Ezekiel. There was also some very negative imagery of women and I wanted to explore why that was and critique it, and hopefully make fun of that in a way that does critique it and acknowledges that this is something troubling that we have to deal with. I think we can use victim-blaming to show where this very misogynistic imagery is coming from.

Lemos: Part of what was so effective for me about the paintings was how they brought together multiple themes from the class. You have the dehumanization theme, the torture and body manipulation theme, gender, masculinity, status, trauma, and responses to trauma. There is also the textual engagement. That is what made this project very effective and gratifying for me as a professor.

Gillard: I thought the course was a very positive experience.

Lemos: Another thing I wanted to discuss with you was disability issues and how you think they relate to the course and Ezekiel. Personally, I feel a connection with the book of Ezekiel. It's a very physical book, a very carnal book in different ways. I think that having a neurological disorder has brought home for me the frailties of the body, the vulnerabilities of the body through my grappling with this disorder. You also have a neurological disability. Do you feel that you have thought through or addressed your disability as you have done this assignment or otherwise in your MDiv education?

Gillard: My disability has kept me aware of human frailty. There are ideas that I want to communicate but I will be limited by my own abilities as to how effectively that can happen. And I think it is good to be aware of those limitations and the fact that all humans have limitations.

Lemos: The book of Ezekiel certainly offers striking images of human weakness and how this prophet attempted to transcend his own weaknesses and the limits of his own life.

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Rachel Rafael Neis. At the Gym, 2018. Watercolor on paper. 6.5 in. x 7 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Active Sitting in the Round: How the Body Can Learn Sacred Texts through Circus Arts

Ora Horn Prouser and Ayal C. Prouser

The study of sacred texts has been almost exclusively an intellectual and cognitive practice. A Jewish religious institution of deep study is called a *yeshiva:* the gerund of the verb "sit" –sitting. A gerund looks like a verb, but acts as a noun. Seeing this false verb in the noun form emphasizes the very literal immobility of traditional forms of study. We have sought to problematize this exclusive approach to text study, turning the study of sacred arts into a bodily activity.

Studying sacred texts through a variety of art forms, ranging from the literary to the physical, guides students to important insights, analyses, and new appreciation of text. Our focus for this article, however, will be on circus arts and how they enable students to process biblical text through the body. This method is not simply referencing text in art, nor experiential learning. This is rigorous text study, using the body as much as the mind and heart. This method is part of a growing movement in arts education and creation that eschews a rigid separation

between mind and body. One is able to study with their body, an appreciatively different mode of research with its own discourses and findings, though equally academic and authentic. One factor that differentiates our method from other artistic approaches is our focus on *peshat*, contextual meaning (as opposed to *derash*, interpretive meaning). We do not aim to make art inspired by homiletic or pedagogic interpretations, but rather to use the arts as a vehicle for processing a deeper understanding of the text.

Equilibristics, such as a tightwire or a rolla-bolla (a plank of wood placed on a rolling cylinder forcing one to move side to side to maintain balance), provided excellent opportunities to embody texts about vulnerability. We asked students to consider the Akedah (Genesis 22) while navigating these destabilizing apparatuses. One student who had previously felt very jaded about the Akedah found himself in tears as he physically processed, and internalized, Abraham's vulnerability and insecurity. One of us, a feminist biblicist for over three decades, who had always condemned Abraham in the first wife-sister story (Genesis 12), suddenly sympathized with Abraham's predicament while reading the text on the rolla-bolla. The physical instability triggered a deep feeling of empathy for Abraham's insecure position.

In contrast to the individuality of experiencing text through tightwire or rolla-bolla, we have adapted the Jewish model of *ḥevruta* study in partner acrobatics. When processing through partner acrobatics, we, as a group, study the text and learn several tricks. The students are tasked with attempting to embody a specific aspect of the text using the tricks, a bodily *ḥevruta*. They need to think in terms of tension, balance, support, dependence, and partnership. The unexpected forces experienced practicing these tricks often lead to students changing their analyses, occasionally midtrick. The bodily thinking led to different conclusions than what they had anticipated through their minds and hearts.

Teaching a full course on this approach enabled us to use an assortment of circus apparatuses to embody biblical text. For example, we used a variety of partner juggling styles to experience nuances of partnership in the Bible among Moses, Aaron, and Joshua. Double trapeze (two

Courtesy of the authors.

people, one bar) allowed students to explore the active nature and relative strength among the women in the book of Ruth. We explored questions about the biblical characters, while also navigating and analyzing trust. Again, the rhetoric of thinking with one's body was enlightening to students as their physical experiences impacted their reading of the text.

This approach has worked with audiences ranging from youth through individuals in their late seventies, with a great variety of ability and fitness levels. Each participant's embodied experience led to individual insights and new relationships with the text. One point that must be emphasized is that this should not be done without a trained circus professional to ensure the safety of all involved.

As most Jewish educational institutions follow the "sitting" model of the yeshiva, it is important to pay attention to our kinesthetic learners, our artsy students, and anyone for whom getting up and moving is an essential part of their academic success. The beauty of

this model, however, is that it is similarly enlightening for traditional learners. It allows everyone the opportunity to enhance their individual relationship with the biblical text, expressing that relationship through heart, soul, and body.

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