BRANDEIS JUDAIC STUDIES JOURNAL

VOLUME 2
SPRING 2021

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISSN: 2769-1462

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Spring 2021

CONTENTS

Dear reader,

We are delighted to present the second volume of the *Brandeis Judaic Studies Journal*. This volume reflects two years of work; the pandemic interrupted the publication process for what would have been the spring 2020 volume. For this reason, we have included some pieces written by students who graduated last spring. Despite a difficult year, however, Brandeis students have continued to write thought-provoking pieces related to Jewish studies.

The authors of these articles grapple with timely issues in scholarship and society from a Judaic studies perspective.

Two works confront the intergenerational impact of personal and national trauma. Mendel Weintraub and Leora Nevins both consider the legacy of the Holocaust—he in European film and she in Israeli literature.

Another two pieces consider radically different approaches to addressing the concerns of marginalized groups. Abigael Good proposes a rereading of Jewish texts to promote inclusion of gender-nonconforming people; Lindsay Biebelberg examines a movement that rewrites Jewish texts for a purported reclamation of an ancient women's religious tradition.

Jessica Daniel analyzes how particular legal categories resulted in systemic American antisemitism in the nineteenth century.

Finally, Talia Goodman examines a method for managing intersectionality in activism by providing a model of a multifaceted Jewish woman who navigated the struggle.

We hope you find this journal engaging, challenging, and enlightening. If you would like to help create the next volume, please contact our faculty advisor, Sylvia Fuks Fried (fuks@brandeis.edu). To submit an article for consideration, please visit our website: journals.library.brandeis.edu/index.php/bjsj.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Cahn, *Editor-in-Chief*
Benji Schwartz, *Founder and Treasurer*
Violet Fearon, *Managing Editor*

Yet again, we find ourselves indebted to many people and institutions.

Sylvia Fuks Fried, editorial director of Brandeis University Press and executive director of the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry, has been a steady rock of support for this journal since its conception and is always ready and willing to offer her time, guidance, and confidence.

We are indebted to the Brandeis Library, which hosts the journal, especially University Librarian Matthew Sheehy; Brian Meuse, who helped us navigate our OJS website, some technical issues, and the ISSN process; Mark Paris; and Annie Harrison.

We thank our sponsors who have made it possible to print the journal: the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry; Combined Jewish Philanthropies IACT Campus Initiative; the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education; the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute; the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies; the Office of the President; and the Brandeis Humanities Fellowship.

We extend our thanks to President Ron Liebowitz, Bill O'Reilly, Stewart Uretsky, Sam Solomon, Angelito Santos, Steve Monti, Beth Fong, and many others, who have all made this journal possible.

While this journal is not officially affiliated with the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department, we are so grateful for the continued support of its faculty, including Professor Eugene Sheppard, and, of course, Administrator Joanne Arnish.

We thank all the professors who nominated student papers for publication, especially Professors Jonathan Sarna and Sharon Rivo. And, of course, we thank all the other professors at Brandeis who have encouraged and enabled their students to write outstanding works, especially Professors David Katz, Ilana Szobel, Alexander Kaye, and Bernadette Brooten. We are also grateful to Professor Daniel Breen for his time and expertise.

A special thanks goes to our staff for their hard work and dedication this semester—Editors Abigael Good, Josh Hopen, Yael Perlman, and Abby Turner and Website Manager Jesse Rips. Thanks again to Natalia Wiater for designing the beautiful original cover.

And, last but not least, we thank you, the reader, for setting aside your phone for a little while and pursuing the truth even unto its innermost parts.

Happy reading,

Madeleine Cahn, *Editor in Chief*
Benji Schwartz, *Founder and Treasurer*
Violet Fearon, *Managing Editor*

Jessica Daniel

CLASS AND CLASSIFICATIONS:

HOW ANTISEMITISM BECAME NORMALIZED THROUGH NINETEENTH-CENTURY LAW

When Austin Corbin, the President of the Manhattan Beach Company, banned Jews from coming to his resort in 1879, Adolph Sanger, the Vice President of the Union of Hebrew Congregations, was one of many indignant individuals to publicly respond. He claimed that Corbin's overtly antisemitic ban was illegal, stating: "the first attempt [Corbin] makes to turn one of our co-religionists away from his public place he will not only be arrested, but imprisoned," a prediction that proved incorrect.[1] While there were laws in place during this time that many thought would protect against social discrimination, the fact that Corbin could legally bar a group of individuals he labeled as "detestable and vulgar"[2] from frequenting his establishment proves otherwise. Using the legal system as a lens reveals how antisemitism was shaped by late-nineteenth-century American culture. By examining federal legislation, such as the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment, and the Civil Rights Act of 1875 in depth, I will demonstrate how these laws, designed to counter social discrimination for all citizens, failed to protect Jews from blatant acts of antisemitism. Ultimately, I argue that the failure of the legal system to account for the ambiguous status of Jews relative to the law caused instances of antisemitism to become increasingly normalized in late-nineteenth-century American culture.

[1] "Coney Island and the Jews." (New York: G.W. Carleston & Co.), 1879, 24.
[2] Ibid., 21.

Following the Civil War, laws such as the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1875 were created and seemed to represent great strides toward equality for marginalized or stigmatized American groups. Yet, despite the existence of these new laws, Jews' rights and societal treatment regressed significantly during this era. Historian John Higham notes that, throughout the antebellum period, Jews enjoyed "almost complete social acceptance and freedom,"[3] writing that "there was no pattern of discrimination in the sense of exclusion from social and economic opportunities which qualified Jews sought."[4] This changed dramatically after the Civil War, however, due to stereotypes that villainized Jews and portrayed them as "shoddy,"[5] greedy, and disloyal in the media. These stereotypes became integral to the American perception of the Jews during this time. Especially after General Grant labelled the Jews a class and reinforced these stigmatizations in his General Order No. 11, many assumed that all Jews possessed these negative characteristics, resulting in much of the public viewing and treating Jews as a collective class rather than as individuals.[6] Furthermore, during this era, Jews began to integrate socially into secular society in a way they had never done before. As Jews began to intermarry more frequently and become more "Americanized," many nativists felt threatened by their ascent in status and responded by imposing restrictions to keep the Jews ostracized.[7] One famous example of this ostracizing took place when prominent Jewish banker Joseph Seligman was prohibited from staying at Judge Hilton's hotel in Saratoga in 1877. Some hotels even advertised that Jews were

[3] John Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews In America, 1830-1930," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 47, no. 1 (1957): 3. www.jstor.org/stable/43059004.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Gary L. Bunker and John Appel. "'Shoddy,' Anti-Semitism and the Civil War." *American Jewish History* 82, no. 1/4, (1994): 45, www.jstor.org/stable/23885656.
[6] Jonathan Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*. (New York: Schocken Books), 2012.
[7] Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2006, 13-14, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvs32sd7.6.

unwelcome to stay.[8] It was in this historical context that Corbin's ban was established.

It was legal for Corbin to refuse service to Jews, although many assumed that constitutional protections would prevent this from occurring. Throughout this period of history, Jews were inconsistently referred to as a "class,"[9] a "race,"[10] and a "religious group,"[11] making it difficult for them to fit a specific classification of laws that would protect them. American religions scholar Shari Rabin provides clarity on this matter, writing that although the Jews are technically a religious group, there is an "imperfect fit between Judaism and the Protestant-inflected category of 'religion.'"[12] This claim indicates that the First Amendment did not cover this sort of discrimination against Jews. In Corbin's case, because Jews were not banned because of their religious traditions and practices, but rather for "the offensiveness which they possess as a sect or nationality,'"[13] this ban could not be classified as religious discrimination in the way the law was intended. Thus, the First Amendment could not have been used to legally counter Corbin's antisemitic actions.

In this era, federal legislation designed to achieve equality was significantly limited due to the categories that shaped which groups could be protected. In *Coney Island and the Jews*, the same publication in which Corbin's statements are recorded, Jews are referred to as "a race" by many persons and media sources and as "a class" by others.[9] Race and class are two separate categories characterized differently by the law, and referring to Jews as both creates significant ambiguity. To determine the proper legal classification for Jews in this period, American Jewish history

[8] Higham, "Social Discrimination" 11.
[9] Sarna, *General Grant.*
[10] Goldstein, 11.
[11] Ibid., 12.
[12] Shari Rabin, "Judges and Jews: Congregational Conflict and the Protestant Secular in 19th-Century America," *Religion* 48, no. 4, (2018): 60, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0048721X.2018.1520751
[13] "Coney Island and the Jews," 21.

professor Eric Goldstein notes that by the 1870s, the term "race, then, fit the needs of Jews to define themselves in a changing social landscape."[14] He writes that the term "race" was used positively among American Jews. They believed it would help them be "better accepted in the non-Jewish world [and] allow them to express their desire to maintain a distinct identity without the unwanted political connotations."[15] Because the Jews in this era self-identified as a race, one would think that under the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1875, the discrimination against Jews in public accommodations would be illegal. However, the way the Fourteenth Amendment is written makes it clear that the amendment is designed to regulate only state behavior and the laws that states make. At this point in history, the Constitution offered no protection against social discrimination on a federal level.[16]

Before it was ruled unconstitutional in 1883, the Civil Rights Act of 1875 also seemed applicable to Corbin's antisemitic actions. Sanger even cited the "Civil Rights bill"[17] as grounds for challenging Corbin's ban. Closely examining the law and the perception of Jews at the time, however, demonstrates how the act was inapplicable in this context. The act affirmed "the equality of all men before the law"[18] and prohibited racial discrimination in public places, but Corbin and others described Jews as "a class."[19] This classification essentially stripped the Jews of the legal protections that they would have received if they were discriminated against explicitly as a race. This distinction is crucial, and its implications are significant, as it exposes the failure of the legal system to protect the rights of American citizens from

[14] "'Different Blood Flows In Our Veins,'" 12.
[15] Ibid., 37.
[16] "14th Amendment," Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute, www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv.
[17] "Coney Island and the Jews," 24.
[18] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Civil Rights Act of 1875," Melvin I. Urofsky, accessed February 23, 2020, www.britannica.com/topic/Civil-Rights-Act-United-States-1875.
[19] "Coney Island and the Jews," 21.

being violated solely because they did not fit exactly into a specific, limited, protected category. This demonstrates that federal laws at this time were not as all-encompassing as they should have been, allowing acts of antisemitism to occur without legal ramifications.

Since discrimination laws during this time were implemented by states, the degree to which they were able to design their laws varied significantly. In New York State, "the presumption [that derived from common law at the time was] that businesses, as property owners, have the right to exclude non-owners unless that right is limited by statute."[20] This attitude toward law is especially problematic because it prioritizes the rights of property owners at the expense of the individual's rights. It essentially validates Corbin's actions and argument, which, in turn, justifies the exclusion of any minority from public spaces. The fact that Jews, who were citizens, had their rights infringed upon and had no legal protections to counter the discrimination illustrates how nativist hatred of those perceived as different or threatening dominated American culture. The language and application of laws that were designed to create a more fair and equitable society reveal the hypocrisy of the legal system, as it only granted protections and justice to non-minorities, the opposite effect as intended. Given that citizens were clearly not all treated fairly by the system of law, it makes sense that antisemitism and other forms of discrimination thrived during this time with little consequence, essentially normalizing prejudice and further engraining it within American life.

While there has been significant legal progress over the course of the past century to limit and protect against instances of social

[20] Joseph William Singer, . "No Right to Exclude: Public Accommodations And Private Property." *Northwestern University Law Review* 90, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 1289. advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=analytical-materials&id=urn:contentItem:3S3T-VVY0-00CW-008G-00000-01&context=1516831.

discrimination, Corbin's ban of the Jews serves as an important lesson. It demonstrates the consequential and problematic nature of narrow legal classifications. The lack of protections for Jews, as well as other minorities, enabled acts of prejudice and hatred to become precedent and normalized in American culture. The lack of legal measures countering Corbin and other antisemites' actions legitimized social discrimination and allowed harmful stereotypes to taint the American perception of Jews to this day.

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Abigael Good

NONBINARY BODIES AND NONBINARY GENDERS IN JUDAISM

The Talmudic categories of the *androgynos*, the *tumtum*, the *aylonit* and the *saris* have for about the last twenty years stood as examples of gender-nonconformity to transgender[1] Jews who search for representations of themselves in Jewish tradition.[2] But as some writers reference these figures recognize, they do not necessarily reflect a rabbinic understanding of nonbinary gender, or even specifically refer to gender at all. The *androgynos, tumtum, aylonit* and *saris* are described in terms of their physical characteristics, which their prescribed actions and places in Jewish society are based upon. This body-based approach is at odds with the approach of contemporary activists and scholars, such as Noach Dzmura, who argues for the acceptance of self-determined gender identity, regardless of physical appearance. Because of this rabbinic focus on nonconforming bodies, the *androgynos, tumtum, aylonit* and *saris* can be seen as representations of intersex[3] people rather than nonbinary people. Representations of transgenderism and intersexuality overlap significantly, but they are not identical categories. Viewing the *androgynos, tumtum, aylonit* and *saris* as equivalent to modern-day gender identities—such as genderqueer, agender, and genderfluid, nonbinary identities included in the label

[1] I use transgender to refer to anyone who identifies as a gender other than the one assigned at birth. This can include a woman who was assigned male at birth or a man assigned female at birth, regardless of whether or not they have physically transitioned through surgery or hormone therapy. It can also include genders in between or outside of the categories of men and women, or genders that vary with time, referred to as nonbinary genders. Throughout the paper I refer generally to transgender people, or specifically to trans men and trans women or nonbinary people. This definition draws on Noach Dzmura's definition in *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010).

[2] "Resources," TransTorah, accessed May 11, 2021, https://www.transtorah.org/resources.html.

[3] Noach Dzmura defines intersex people as "those whose bodies contain both male and female genetic material, as well as those whose bodies do not normatively express secondary sex characteristics." Cf. Dzmura, *Balancing on the Mechitza*, xv.

transgender) glosses over parts of the definitions of these categories that do not conform to the nonbinary person's gender and body. In this paper I will explore the ways in which representations of the *androgynos, tumtum, aylonit* and *saris* enable transgender Jews to see themselves in tradition. Additionally, I will argue that these categories have limited applicability to parts of transgender identity, and that other specific characters in Jewish tradition may serve as a helpful model to explore representations of gender-nonconformity in the Jewish canon.

In the first part of this paper, I will discuss the *androgynos*, a person who has both a penis and a vagina, and then the *tumtum*, whose genitals, though thought to be only one or the other, are unclassifiable due to being concealed.[4] Both of these figures are widely discussed in the Talmud as well as medieval law codes.[5]

Mishnah Bikkurim, compiled in the third century,[6] presents two opinions on the gender role of the *androgynos*, as does its parallel text in the *Tosefta*. The first is that the *androgynos* is in some ways equivalent to men, in some ways to women, in some ways to both and in yet other ways to neither (Tosefta 4:1). This opinion goes on to give concrete examples of how the *androgynos* functions in each category. For example, like a man the *androgynos* becomes impure by ejaculating semen (Tosefta 4:2). Like a woman, the *androgynos* becomes impure by menstruating (Tosefta 4:3). Like both men and women, the *androgynos*'s birth must be marked by an offering at the temple (Tosefta 4:4). But unlike both men and women, the *androgynos* cannot be sold as a slave (Tosefta 4:5). Max Strassfeld argues that this approach to defining the *androgynos*'s role "essentially assimilates the

[4] Reuben Zellman, "Inyanei Ha-Mitzvot: The Tumtum and Androgynos in the Shulchan Aruch and the Mishneh Torah." PhD diss., Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 2010, 28-29.
[5] Ibid., 4-5.
[6] Max Strassfeld, "Translating the Human: The *Androginos* in Tosefta Bikurim," *TSQ* 1 (November 2016) 3 (3-4): 588, doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-3545263

androgynos into rabbinic Judaism."[7] By combining certain actions taken by men, actions taken by women, ways the community treats men and women, and actions from which the *androgynos* is exempt, the rabbis created a role for the *androgynos* within the Jewish community; otherwise such a person would not know how to act and the community would not know how to treat them.

Some contemporary Jewish communities utilize this approach within the *halakhah* today. For example, in a 2017 *teshuvah*, Rabbi Leonard Sharzer, turns to chapter four of Mishnah Bikkurim as a model for the acceptance of transgender people into Jewish communities, using it as a basis for the opinion that *halakhah* can be applied based solely on anatomy.[8] This is an approach that separates body from gender, an approach that declares that whether one must be circumcised does not depend on whether this person is male. It depends on whether this person has a penis, and this person may in fact be a woman or a person without fixed gender.[9] It acknowledges that physical appearance and gender identity have a sometimes-correlation rather than a direct causation, and some laws which are usually applied based on gender may best be applied based on anatomy instead.

Though Rabbi Sharzer roots his ideas for transgender acceptance in the reasoning of Mishnah Bikkurim, he clearly states that Mishnah Bikkurim was not originally meant to portray individuals of nonbinary gender.[10] Rather, the *androgynos* is what we would call today an intersex person. Reuben Zellman and Elliot Kukla, among others, concur.[11] The rabbis probably did not

[7] Strassfeld, "Translating the Human," 596.
[8] Leonard A. Sharzer, "Transgender Jews and Halakhah," (EH 5:11.2017b), Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards, June 7, 2017, 4, https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/jewish-law/committee-jewish-law-and-standards/bn-hzr-even-haezer.
[9] Ibid., 14-15.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Reuben Zellman and Elliot Kukla, "Created by the Hand of Heaven: Making Space for Intersex People," in *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community*, ed. Noach Dzmura, 184; Zellman, "Inyanei ha-mitzvot," 26.

conceive of a person who was neither male nor female.[12] Rabbinic descriptions of a person outside these rigid categories were couched in doubt: the *androgynos* practices this personal mix of *halakhah* because it is doubtful what gender the *androgynos* "truly" is, not because the *androgynos* decidedly inhabits a third gender option, as nonbinary people do. The conclusion I draw is that the *androgynos* does not portray a nonbinary gender, but rather portrays ways in which a nonbinary gender might be acted out.

Discussions of intersexuality often open paths for discussions of transgenderism as well. As research has revealed the prevalence of uncommon chromosomal patterns and hormonal irregularities, biologists have claimed that there are six different factors that influence a person's sex, and "for many people these six factors do not line up in any consistent "male" or "female" pattern."[13] The more complicated sex is revealed to be, the more it is shown that we have for all of history been labeling people as men or women whose sex is indeterminate according to biology. Biology, then, must not necessarily determine gender.

Given the common ground intersexuality and transgenderism share in looking up to the *androgynos* as an ancestor, my separation of nonbinary body from nonbinary gender might seem overly strict. But I find it necessary for two key reasons. An intersex person may identify in binary terms as a man or a woman. A nonbinary person may identify as neither or both a man or a woman, despite having been confidently assigned one of those genders at birth. The conflation of nonbinary body with nonbinary gender misrepresents what it is that makes a person nonbinary. It is not having ambiguous genitalia, hormones, or chromosomes. It is

[12] Dzmura, "Intersex Bodies in Mishnah: A Translation and an Activist's Reading of Mishnah Androgynos," in *Balancing on the Mechitza*, 158.
[13] Christine E. Gudorf, "The Erosion of Sexual Dimorphism: Challenges to Religion and Religious Ethics." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69, no. 4 (2001): 875, accessed May 11, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1466344.

self-identification with a gender other than strictly male or female, and such identification is not dependent on having a body that also defies classification.

The second opinion recorded in the Mishnah Bikkurim, attributed to Rabbi Yose, is that the *androgynos* could not be classified by the rabbis and has no category. For Max Strassfeld, this "is tantamount to saying that the *androginos* cannot participate in rabbinic Judaism… Rabbi Yose's position seems to question the very premise that hybridity is functional."[14] After all, Judaism has been established as a system in which gender defines the most important actions in a person's life, from how one's birth is commemorated, to how one is educated, to when that person may engage in sex and who that person may marry. If Rabbi Yose denies that the *androgynos* can be assigned a single gender *and* rejects the approach of combining the expectations of different genders into a single role, he leaves no clear way for the *androgynos* to participate in Jewish life. Rabbi Yose's opinion is echoed in the two most important medieval Jewish law codes, the Maimonides' twelfth century compendium of law and philosophy *Mishneh Torah*[15] and Joseph Karo's authoritative compendium *Shulchan Aruch,* published in 1565.[16] Maimonides in particular tends to treat the *androgynos* as a single separate category.[17] There is a tension here between the troubling implications such an opinion entails for a person of indeterminate sex or gender, such as not knowing how to practice one's faith, being excluded on the basis of being too odd to integrate into the system, and the alluring idea of existing outside the gender binary. For a nonbinary person who identifies as neither man nor woman, perhaps as agender, the fact that prominent rabbis classified a set of people outside the

[14] Strassfeld, "Translating the Human," 597.
[15] *Britannica Academic*, s.v, "Mishne Torah," accessed December 6, 2018, https://academic-eb-com.resources.library.brandeis.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Mishne-Torah/52964.
[16] Zellman, "Inyanei ha-mitzvot," 8-9.
[17] Ibid., 32.

binary of man and woman may be of significance, yet still, the rabbis applied this label only to an intersex person.

Mishnah Bikkurim 4:5, when putting forth Rabbi Yose's opinion on the *androgynos*, states that it is not true of the *tumtum*. The *tumtum* is definitely either a man or a woman, but the rabbis of the Talmud cannot say which. Unless or until the mass that conceals the *tumtum*'s genitals is torn, revealing what is underneath, the tumtum is treated as if "he might turn out to be a man."[18] For example, in Mishnah Zavim 2:1, in a discussion of how a *tumtum* and an *androgynos* become unclean by genital discharge, the Mishnah pronounces that they must follow the requirements for both men and women: they are considered unclean if they menstruate *and* if they ejaculate. This is parallel to Mishnah Bikkurim's laws for the *androgynos*, such as when it says that like women, the *androgynos* cannot be alone with men, and like men, the *androgynos* cannot be alone with women (Mishnah Bikkurim 4:3). In both cases, the rabbis negotiate laws so that no matter if the *tumtum* is really a man or a woman, all the correct laws have been followed. But negotiating sets of laws for two genders in such a way is not always so simple. For example, when the authors of medieval law codes face this problem, they must carefully consider commandments which can be fulfilled by a man on behalf of women, but not by a woman on behalf of men, and finally exclude a *tumtum* from fulfilling such a commandment on behalf of other people (Maimonides in *Orach Chaim* 199:9 and 589:3, Karo in *Hilchot Brachot* 5:7).[19] For the *tumtum* might be a woman, and if the truly-female *tumtum* fulfills the commandment on behalf of others, those people will not have fulfilled the requirement at all. In these negotiations of gender-specific rules,

[18] Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "Regulating the Human Body: Rabbinic Legal Discourse and the Making of Jewish Gender," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte Fonrobert and Martin Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 290.
[19] Zellman, "Inyanei ha-mitzvot," 111-112.

the *Mishneh Torah* and *Shulchan Aruch* do not always agree on how the *tumtum* (or for that matter, the *androgynos*) should act. But they demonstrate this concern with the *tumtum*'s "true" gender, which is fundamentally connected to their genitals.[20]

Though the *tumtum*'s position as "doubtfully" a man or a woman or otherwise unclassifiable may resonate with nonbinary Jews, once again the rabbinic understanding of the relationship between gender and body is incompatible with the activist stance. The rabbis tend to see gender as binary even when sex is ambiguous, while contemporary activists and scholars accept that gender can also be unclassifiable. The rabbis did not treat a person like an *androgynos* or a *tumtum* if they could assign a person a gender based on their genitals, contrary to the modern position that a person's innate physical characteristics are unrelated to their gender identity. Nonbinary Jews who are inspired by the *tumtum*, then, are learning from the *tumtum* a way of portraying gender ambiguity, rather than following in the footsteps of a person understood to be agender.

The *saris* and the *aylonit*—often defined as the eunuch and the masculine woman—are not referenced in writings on Jewish transgenderism as often as the *androgynos* or even the *tumtum*, but they are sometimes categorized with them by modern activists as recognized "genders" outside of binary man and woman.[21] Given this classification, it is important to attempt to understand, as we have sought to do with the *tumtum* and *androgynos*, what the descriptions of the *saris* and *aylonit* aim to portray. Given that the *saris* and *aylonit* tend to receive less focus during discussion of transgender identity, I also want to explore which aspects of their

[20] Ibid., 53-103.
[21] Dzmura, "Intersex Bodies in Mishnah," in *Balancing on the Mechitza*, 158; Fonrobert, *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, 280.
Sharzer, "Transgender Jews and Halakhah," 4.

descriptions may be useful for connecting the identity of modern transgender Jews to Jewish history and tradition.

The rabbis describe two different kinds of *sarisim*, the *saris adam*, who was made into a *saris* by men, and the *saris hammah*, who was born a *saris*.[22] These two categories are sometimes treated differently by the law.[23] I will focus on the *saris hammah*, who, according to Tosefta Yevamot 10:6, is a person who has not produced two pubic hairs by the age of twenty.[24] This description adds the opinions of several rabbis on how the *saris* may be recognized, such as having smooth skin and no beard, urinating differently from other men in various ways, and having a thin voice like a woman.[25] The description of the *saris*'s voice is grammatically ambiguous. Sarra Lev explains, "it is equally possible to read it as comparing the *saris hammah* himself to a woman."[26] Lev goes on to demonstrate that choosing to invoke comparisons to women in the description of the *saris* points to the rabbis viewing the saris as something other than male.[27] This fits with the rabbis' historical context, as writers in the Roman world saw the eunuch as an effeminate gender-crosser, looked down upon for indulging in womanly things like dancing and makeup.[28] Yet Lev also shows that regardless of how the rabbis described him, they understood him "as entirely male."[29] Throughout the Tosefta, the rabbis do not separate him from the category of men as they do the *tumtum* and *androgynos*[30] and they hold that he has the same responsibilities as other men[31] in all cases except those

[22] Sarra L. Lev, "Genital trouble: On the innovations of tannaitic thought regarding damaged genitals and eunuchs." PhD diss., New York University, 2004, 13.
[23] Ibid., 14.
[24] Sarra L. Lev, "They Treat Him As a Man and See Him As a Woman: The Tannaitic Understanding of the Congenital Eunuch." Jewish Studies Quarterly 17, no. 3 (2010), 214.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 215.
[27] Ibid., 218.
[28] Lev, "Genital trouble," 23, 30.
[29] Lev, "They Treat Him As a Man and See Him As a Woman," 219.
[30] Ibid., 222.
[31] Ibid., 219.

that require procreation because the *saris* is infertile.[32] He is a man who may not be seen as fully a man, but is legally treated as one.

The *saris* is a more compatible model to transgender identities than either the *androgynos* or the tumtum. Because people tend to associate men and women with differing heights, builds, voices, facial structures, and beyond, transgender people encounter an obstacle in that their external physical traits cause people to view and treat them as a particular gender, especially if they have not undergone a physical transition. So, too, in the rabbinic treatment of the *saris*, however feminine the *saris* appears, like a transgender man he is a full man despite not being able to grow a beard, or having a voice like a woman. That is not to say the parallel is perfect; the rabbis probably did not think that a person they could identify as female by his genitals should be treated as a man if he so wished. After all, the *saris* can be identified as male at birth—he simply fails to demonstrate the usual effects of puberty as he ages. Once again, the description of the *saris* better fits an intersex person than a transgender person. But if the *androgynos* and the *tumtum* can demonstrate ways of acting nonbinary in line with Jewish tradition, then the *saris* can demonstrate a method of accepting transgender men as their self-identified gender, regardless of whether they appear outwardly feminine to others.

We are learning not that the rabbis recognized transgender and nonbinary people among them, but that we have always had the tools to include transgender and nonbinary people in Jewish communities and to treat them with respect (at least with some modification of overly-onerous expectations to follow twice the rules other people do). They are the tools used by the rabbis who wrote of the androgynos, the tumtum, the saris and the aylonit. We just require a shift in thinking. We have laws applying to nonbinary bodies; we are missing laws applying to nonbinary

[32] Ibid., 223.

genders. There is a difference between a person's body and a person's gender blurring boundaries, and it is important to state that, but they are connected in this way: if we can negotiate the former, we know we can negotiate the latter. The laws of nonbinary bodies are proof of concept for newer laws of nonbinary gender.

The *saris*'s counterpart is the *aylonit*, a woman who has not produced two pubic hairs by the age of twenty, according to Tosefta Yavamot 10:7.[33] The various signs by which she may be recognized include having thin hair, no breasts, and a thick voice.[34] Sarra Lev argues that the description of the *aylonit* parallels that of the *saris* in alluding to gender-crossing, even as the law treats her like other women except where her infertility is concerned.[35] Like the *saris*, the *aylonit* is seen as a representation of an intersex person by some scholars (Sarra Lev disagrees).[36] Unlike the *saris*, the *aylonit* is not present in the rabbis' surrounding culture and literature,[37] so the rabbis do not stand in sharp contrast to any other view by treating her as an unambiguous woman. But given the links between the *saris* and the *aylonit*, I believe my reading of the rabbi's treatment of the *saris* is applicable to both.

The *aylonit, saris, adrogynos* and *tumtum* are all general categories the rabbis considered, perhaps only in hypotheticals.[38] Yet another category of people in Jewish tradition may portray gender nonconformity: specific characters in the Torah, among them a matriarch, a patriarch's son, and a queen of Israel. These readings come from a range of sources, from the Talmud to modern interpretations, in the vein of midrashic interpretation

[33] Sarra L. Lev, "How the "'Aylonit" Got Her Sex," *AJS Review* 31, no. 2 (2007): 297, doi:10.1017/S0364009407000542.
[34] Ibid., 297-298.
[35] Ibid., 298-299, 303-304.
[36] Hillel Gray, "Not Judging by Appearances: The Role of Genotype in Jewish Law on Intersex Conditions," Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies 30 (2012)," 137-140.
[37] Lev, "How the "'Aylonit" Got Her Sex," 300.
[38] Dzmura, "Intersex Bodies in Mishnah," in *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community*, 159.

rather than my historical readings of the texts on the *aylonit, saris, adrogynos* and *tumtum*. In contrast to the models discussed above, the following sources do not link biology to gender. After summarizing them, I will explain the links between these characters and the categories explored above and the value they might have for Jewish communities today as they face the increased visibility of gender diversity.

Rachel Brodie presents a reading of the matriarch Rebekah as genderqueer based on the Torah referring to her as a *naʿar*, a young man, five times (Gen. 24:14, 16, 29, 56, 58).[39] For Brodie, this "mistake," which is corrected by a marginal note instructing the reader to read *naʿar* as *naʿarah* (young woman), gives greater weight to the masculine attributes Rebekah demonstrates through her independence, forwardness, and physical strength.[40] Brodie then suggests that "Rebekah may have been physiologically and emotionally more of a *naʿar*, while presenting to the world the image of (making people "read" her as) a *naʿarah*."[41] In this reading, Rebekah is almost an opposite of the *aylonit*. The *aylonit* appears to cross the boundaries of gender, but she is a woman only. Rebekah appears to be a woman on the outside, but internally and functionally she crosses the boundaries of gender. If the *aylonit* is similar to a trans woman, appearing masculine but truly being female, perhaps Rebekah is similar to a trans man or a nonbinary person assigned female at birth, appearing female but truly being male or nonbinary. In Genesis's treatment of Rebekah as a woman despite referring to her as a *naʿar*, the Bible does not offer itself to my reading of the rabbis' treatment of the *saris* and *aylonit* as models for transgender acceptance. But it does offer trans and

[39] Rachel Brodie, "When Gender Varies: A Curious Case of Kere and Ketiv," in *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Gregg Drinkwater, Joshua Lesser, and David Shneer, (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 35.
[40] Ibid., 34-35.
[41] Ibid., 37.

nonbinary Jews an ancestor they can relate to, whose portrayal does not conflate intersexuality with gender identity.

The label *naʿar* is also the basis of Gregg Drinkwater's reading of Joseph as a feminine man. In Joseph's case, being labeled a young man at age seventeen, an adult by biblical reckoning, led to a midrash suggesting that Joseph wore makeup and curled his hair "like a boy" (Genesis Rabbah 84:7)—which is also like a woman.[42] This is a less convincing reading because the label is applied to Joseph in an unusual way only once, with other possible explanations,[43] but it provides another interesting possible representation of gender nonconformity. Joseph is a man who does not perform masculinity, who perhaps performs what is by our standards femininity. Presumably unlike the *saris*, who is seen as a gender-crosser for physical reasons outside his control, Joseph is in control of his unusual gender presentation. Standing in contrast to *halahkah* that forbids a man from wearing a woman's accoutrements, Joseph stands as a model of a biblical figure who experiments with gender presentation or does not meet societal expectations of gender performance.

Michal, sister of Jonathan and a wife of King David, similarly has been interpreted as a woman who appropriates the gendered signs of men. Michal in midrash is thought to wear phylacteries, usually only worn by men, of whom it is traditionally required (Deut. 4:8).[44] Furthermore, Yaron Peleg sees Michal as the masculine foil to her feminine-coded brother.[45] The association of Michal's piousness and aggressiveness with a masculine aspect to her womanhood connects to Ri J. Turner's contemporary

[42] Gregg Drinkwater, "Joseph's Fabulous Technicolor Dreamcoat: Parashat Vayeshev (Genesis 37:1–40:23," in *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Gregg Drinkwater, Joshua Lesser, and David Shneer, (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 53-54.
[43] Ibid., 54.
[44] Louis Ginzberg, "The Family of David," in *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation*, ed. David J.A. Clines and Tamara C. Eskenazi, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1991), 202.
[45] Yaron Peleg, "Love at First Sight? David, Jonathan, and the Biblical Politics of Gender," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30, no. 2 (2005), 187.

experience of Jewish womanhood as inherently genderqueer: "not only are Jewish women 'not quite' women (that is, genderqueer)," Turner writes of society's view of Jewish women compared to non-Jewish women, "—they are in fact 'almost men' (transgender)."[46] Turner writes about masculine womanhood on a systematic and societal level, genderqueerness without effort or choice. In contrast, Michal represents masculine womanhood on an individual level. She chooses to engage in masculinity, and is not villainized for it. Whether a gender-nonconforming Jew experiences gender as inherently queer due to the gaze of non-Jewish society or simply is most comfortable ignoring the expected performance of gender, the acceptance of Michal's nonconformance may provide a precedent for non-conforming gender performance into Judaism.

The *androgynos, tumtum, saris* and *aylonit* may represent the rabbis' understanding of what we today call intersexuality. But, analysis of the treatment of them in rabbinic thought and law can guide transgender and nonbinary Jews in engaging with their religion, and their communities in accepting them as they are. This does not, however, erase the rabbis' link between body and gender, and association inapplicable to transgender identity. Understanding transgender, nonbinary and intersex Jews requires understanding that a person can identify as any gender, regardless how they may have been identified or unable to be identified by others at birth. Furthermore, the *androgynos, tumtum, saris* and *aylonit* are not the only figures in Jewish tradition who invite exploration of gender and the acceptance of gender nonconformity. Further analysis of characters who do not meet the expectations of binary gender helps contemporary society to understand nonbinary gender and gives nonbinary Jews a storied place in our communities.

[46] Ri J. Turner, "Queering the Jew and Jewing the Queer," in *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community*, ed. Noach Dzmura, (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010), 50.

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"A ROOTED COSMOPOLITAN" OR "SPLIT AT THE ROOT"?

LETTY COTTIN POGREBIN'S FEMINISM, JUDAISM, AND ZIONISM

In the 1960s, as progressive politics swept the United States, a new wave of the feminist movement was born. Feminist discourse and activism came to the cultural fore in America with a variety of liberal and radical streams. In this "second wave" of feminism, many activists and thought leaders adopted a more openly critical view of the patriarchal power structures present in the Abrahamic religions. Judaism occupied a particularly complicated position: it was rarely addressed, but when they mentioned it, feminists "deride[d] traditional Judaism as one more egregious examples of patriarchal power."[1] Of course, the lived experiences of Jewish communities and their members were and have continued to be far more complex. For years, many individuals and communities have advocated for gender equality in Judaism, seeking some synthesis of these values. Still, many Jews identify feminism as antithetical to Jewish thought and life because, in their view, Jewish beliefs and practices constitute a patriarchal system. Thus, conservative thinkers have painted Jewish feminists as self-hating, prioritizing a universalist political movement over their Jewish values. Despite this depiction, many Jewish women, feeling committed simultaneously to their Jewish identities and feminist ethics, have struggled continuously to reconcile the two.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin exemplifies this conflict, struggling publicly with her feminist convictions, Jewish beliefs, and cultural heritage. Pogrebin is a journalist, a founding editor of *Ms.* magazine, and an author of a number of books related to women's

[1] Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community,* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 2.

issues and child-rearing, who has served two terms as chair of the board of Americans for Peace Now.[2] On Pogrebin's personal website she notes that her "devotion to advancing inter-group harmony inspired her participation in a longstanding Black-Jewish dialogue group, as well as in a number of Jewish-Palestinian dialogue groups, one of which is still ongoing after nine years."[3] Pogrebin describes herself as "the feminist who wasn't afraid to say she 'adored' her husband… the working mother who voiced the worries of her ideological sister over raising children."[4] Due to this complicated identity, Jewish and feminist circles alike have excluded and ignored Pogrebin; ironically, she has simultaneously been lauded for her activism and heralded as a pioneer and leading voice in both groups. Pogrebin is an influential figure in the studies of Jewish and feminist histories alike because she adds a unique voice to the public debate about feminist ideas and the changing global political landscape. As a result, a critical analysis of Pogrebin's thought and writings studied within her social and historical contexts not only provides meaningful insight into her personal experiences but also can function as a case study to explore the tensions between identity and politics.

Pogrebin's Relationship with Traditional Judaism

Letty Cottin was born on June 9, 1939, to Jacob Cottin and Cyral (Halpern) Cottin. In 1955, when Pogrebin was fifteen years old, her mother died. In her memoir *Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America,* Pogrebin recounts this experience and recalls that while sitting *shiva*[5] she was callously ejected from the room and excluded from praying with the *minyan*[6] that had come to recite the mourner's *kaddish*[7] for her late mother.[8] Pogrebin highlights this event in her written works as a critical

[2] "About Letty," accessed May 3, 2021, www.lettycottinpogrebin.com/bio.htm.
[3] Ibid.
[4] *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* s.v. "Letty Cottin Pogrebin," by Susan Weidman Schneider, last modified March 20, 2009, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/pogrebin-letty-cottin.
[5] The seven day mourning period after a Jewish burial.
[6] A quorum, traditionally of ten men, required for Jewish communal prayer.
[7] The traditional Jewish mourner's prayer.
[8] Fishman, *A Breath of Life*, 140.

moment that made her come to resent and eventually abandon traditional Jewish practice for many years. Following this incident, Pogrebin's vision of Judaism was that of "a male-run religion personified by my Daddy," a Judaism that "excises women from the healing of Jewish mourning rituals and prevents closure."[9]

For the next fifteen years she turned her back on communal Jewish observance. Estranged from male-dominated Judaism, Pogrebin opted to celebrate the domestic, private Judaism of her mother to honor her mother's memory.[10] Pogrebin would later return to public Jewish observance through an unexpected communal experience when she "was enlisted to be the *hazzanit*[11] at the community Rosh Hashanah service on Fire Island."[12] Sylvia Barack Fishman notes, Pogrebin

> left Judaism because of what she now realizes were feminist considerations, and she returned to Judaism because changing mores and the impact of feminism made it possible for her to take a leadership role as the cantor of a prayer group.[13]

Pogrebin notes that this opportunity empowered her from a Jewish feminist perspective and healed her personally and spiritually as well.

Later, in 1975, Pogrebin and several other influential Jewish feminists instituted the Feminist Seder, an adaptation of the traditional Passover Seder that celebrates Jewish womanhood and Jewish women's liberation.[14] The feminists established this Seder on the third night of Passover out of an unwillingness to forgo the special intimacy and spiritual significance of a more traditional family Seder on the first two nights of the holiday. Fishman writes of Pogrebin's hopes that "'when [her] daughters have their own homes…a feminist Seder will be a time-honored part of their childhood tradition It will be a familiar aspect of their Jewish

[9] Ibid., 205.
[10] Letty Cottin Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 44.
[11] A female Jewish prayer leader.
[12] Fishman, *A Breath of Life*, 140.
[13] Ibid., 205.
[14] Schneider, "Letty Cottin Pogrebin."

roots.'"[15] By creating uniquely feminist Jewish traditions, Pogrebin attempted to synthesize traditional Judaism with a modern feminist ethic. Additionally, Pogrebin's work on the feminist Seder shows a shift in her attitude as she not only returned to Jewish practice but staked a claim in it by creating a new tradition.

While Pogrebin's feminist ideals once led her away from Jewish practice, ultimately, she has spent much her adult life incorporating Jewishness, and eventually Zionism, into an already strong feminist worldview. Indeed, this hiatus likely strengthened her Jewish identity; she chose to return to Jewish practice on her own terms. This stronger Jewish identity helped Pogrebin further her thought and developed with her throughout her activist career.

Antisemitism in the Women's Movement

While Pogrebin holds deep religious convictions and has made a lasting impact within the Jewish community, "she gained national recognition first in the general women's movement [and] after that as a Jewish activist."[16] Indeed, she has been a highly visible, outspoken feminist organizer as a co-founder and editor of *Ms.* magazine, with her name on its masthead since 1971. In this capacity, however, Pogrebin has been both a leader and an outsider. Pogrebin has often felt unwelcome among her fellow feminist activists as she has seen Zionism and the State of Israel condemned repeatedly and her own Jewish identity defined out of the conversation on intersectional feminism.

While the feminist movement encouraged women of a variety of cultures, ethnicities, and religions to embrace their distinctiveness, Pogrebin felt that if a Jewish woman wanted to involve herself, she was expected to check her distinctive Jewish experience at the door. As Pogrebin says, the movement "endors[ed] every brand of identity politics…except the one that labels itself Jewish and Zionist."[17] Brandeis professor Joyce Antler recalled that at a conference on women's issues the conference

[15] Fishman, *A Breath of Life*, 173
[16] Schneider, "Letty Cottin Pogrebin."
[17] Pogrebin, Letty Cottin, "Zionism, Meet Feminism," *The Daily Beast*, March 16, 2012, www.thedailybeast.com/zionism-meet-feminism.

organizers insisted, "Jewish women are just white middleclass women. There is nothing that differentiates them from the ruling majority. There is no reason to devote any of our time to their particular experience."[18] Indeed, this sentiment ultimately spurred the passing of the "Zionism is racism"[19] resolutions at the first and second UN World Conferences on Women in 1975 and 1980. Feeling their Jewishness glossed over and marginalized, this experience prompted the Jewish women within the women's movement to question their place within feminism's ranks. Indeed, this made Pogrebin wonder, "why am I working to liberate women if they're going to turn around and attack Jews?"[20]

In light of this dilemma, Pogrebin grew curious about the experiences of other Jewish feminists within the women's movement in America. Garnering her pain and exclusion, Pogrebin penned her 1982 investigative piece "Antisemitism in the Women's Movement: A Jewish Feminist's Disturbing Account," published in *Ms.* magazine. In this article, she chronicles the first indications of the women's movement's antisemitic bent, as Jewish women recall witnessing repeated condemnation of Zionists and Zionism. Women's movement members' political criticism of Israel devolved into attacks on "Israel and other Jewish women as being responsible for 'the worst moral outrages of the twentieth century.'"[21] In another work, Pogrebin quotes Sonia Johnson, an ERA activist, who recalls her experience,

> in Copenhagen, I heard people say that Gloria Steinem, Betty Freidan, and Bella Abzug all being Jewish gives the American Women's Movement a bad name … I heard, 'The only way to rid the world of Zionism is to kill all the Jews.'[22]

Pogrebin notes that this exposé of the underbelly of the women's movement "inspired considerable soul-searching within the feminist community."[23] This antisemitic episode made Pogrebin more questioning of the prospects of the universal vision of gender

[18] Fishman, *A Breath of Life*, 11-12.
[19] Pogrebin, "Zionism, Meet Feminism."
[20] Ibid.
[21] Fishman, *A Breath of Life*, 9.
[22] Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me*, 156.
[23] Pogrebin, "Zionism, Meet Feminism."

equality. Indeed, Pogrebin has said that while she still has universalist dreams, she will "dream them only when fully awake."[24]

In response to what she saw as the failings of universalist liberal politics, Pogrebin began to urge Jewish feminists to deepen their Jewish experiences. Pogrebin remembers, "I saw the importance of being a public, affirmative Jew—even when ethnicity or religion 'didn't matter.'"[25] In Pogrebin's time,

> many Jewish feminists were propelled into a feminist exploration of Judaism not only because of their own personal interests but also because of the overt expressions of anti-Semitism that had emerged within feminist ranks.[26]

Ultimately, these experiences led Pogrebin to take on a modified vision of gender equality that acknowledged liberal universalism's failings and synthesized her Jewish identity and feminist ideals. Scholar Ellen Umansky notes that in the women's movement of the early 1970s, women like Pogrebin "were embraced as women but scorned as Jews,"[27] so "in order to understand this hatred and combat it, many Jewish feminists, especially secular feminists, began to assert their Jewishness, vigorously, forcefully, and with pride."[28] Pogrebin, who attributes her return to more traditional Jewish life in part to the shock she and her sister feminists experienced, began to assert "why be a Jew for them if I am not a Jew for myself?"[29]

Analysis

In historical context, Pogrebin's experience and subsequent response to antisemitism in the women's movement are both typical and unique. As a result, and as an experiment in intellectual history, it is worth analyzing Pogrebin's thought and considering

[24] Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me*, 163.
[25] Gil Troy, *The Zionist Ideas: Visions for the Jewish Homeland—Then, Now, Tomorrow*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 284-287, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt21c4vgn.16.
[26] Fishman, *A Breath of Life*, 9.
[27] Ellen M. Umansky, "Females, Feminist, and Feminism: A Review of Recent Literature on Jewish Feminism and a Creation of a Feminist Judaism," *Feminist Studies* 14 (Summer 1988): 351.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Troy, *The Zionist Ideas*, 284-287.

the degree to which her historical circumstances shaped her thought and activism. Pogrebin came of age as the global Jewish community grappled with the trauma of the Holocaust and the birth of the State of Israel. Internationally, the 1960s and 1970s brought blossoming interest in popular protest movements and global justice causes.[30] In the Jewish world, however, these years were marked by anxiety as world Jewry watched the fledgling Jewish state war with its neighbors and work to establish itself on an increasingly antagonistic world stage.

As scholar James Loeffler describes, "the decade after 1967 witnessed two parallel dramas: the rapid rise of human rights into global consciousness and the growing demonization of Israel in that new human rights culture."[31] In this account, Loeffler describes the Jewish roots of rights-based activism and the dramatic departure Jews and Jewish human rights organizations took from this sphere of activism as it grew, globalized, and Christianized its brand of universal human rights. Loeffler explains that Jewish activism declined because

> the quest for the universal always begins with the rejection of the particular, …[and] in the post-1960s human rights imagination, the pole of stubborn particularism increasingly came to be symbolized by Zionism.[32]

As a result, Jewish human rights advocates were accused of having dual loyalties to a "parochial entity, incompatible with the universalist imperative of human rights and global justice."[33] The international human rights community saw Israel and Jews in general as tribal and clannish and hyper-focused on Israel and explicitly ignored the suffering of Soviet and Arab Jewry. Ultimately, the perceived failings of the international human rights community on behalf of the Jewish community proved to many Jews that "only nationhood, in the form of repatriation to Israel, could truly protect the Jews."[34]

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[30] James Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 262-263.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 264.
[33] Ibid., 260.
[34] Ibid., 289.

In retelling their story, Loeffler argues in favor of this Jewish version of universal human rights. Loeffler's term "Rooted Cosmopolitans" asserts the primacy of the liberal Jewish activists of the 1970s who maintained their distinctive Jewishness instead of secularizing or taking on anti-Zionist views. Outside of the specifically Jewish context, a Rooted Cosmopolitan is a citizen of the world who has a meaningful understanding of their cultural, ethnic, and even national heritage and utilizes it for a more effective activism that affirms their identity as well.

In this historical framework, Pogrebin counts among the Rooted Cosmopolitans of her time. Pogrebin responded to antisemitism and anti-Zionism in the women's movement by asserting her cultural distinctiveness through a repatriation of Jewish peoplehood by advocating deeper religious experiences and asserting her Zionism openly. Pogrebin gave up on the dream of feminism and human rights based on idealistic terms, turning to a more realistic version that acknowledges the realities of nationalism and antisemitism. Pogrebin recalls this change of thought, noting that though she "might wish for a world of universalist values and deemphasized differences,"[35] she chooses instead to take her inspiration "from a pluralist feminism founded on a mutual respect for each other's 'identity politics,' which include the particularities of culture, peoplehood, and history."[36]

Critics of Pogrebin and the second wave feminist movement decry its motivation as largely by and for White, straight, cisgender women. While Pogrebin's experiences as an outsider in the feminist movement led her to a more pluralistic feminism, her focus on women demonstrates that she is still a second wave feminist. In a 2016 article, "All Feminists Should Embrace the Women-Centered Agenda," Pogrebin bemoans young feminists who, she feels, do not fully appreciate the path second wave feminism paved for them. She notes that "the [feminist] movement of the 1970s and 80s was fully cognizant of what was termed

[35] "Anti-Semitism in The Women's Movement by Letty Cottin Pogrebin Transcript," Jewish Women's Archive, accessed May 5, 2021, https://jwa.org/media/anti-semitism-in-womens-movement-by-letty-cottin-pogrebin-transcript.
[36] Ibid.

'multiple identities' of race, class, and ethnicity,"[37] and states that she and her sister feminists "were also proudly 'woman-identified' because we had to be to achieve change."[38] In her response to the criticism of second wave feminism from a younger generation that deemphasizes gender difference, Pogrebin utilizes a framework of rootedness. Pogrebin celebrates her womanhood and warns young feminists "not to commit matricide"[39] or "shy away from a 'women-centered agenda,'"[40] and, rather, encourages them to "embrace it."[41] In this case, Pogrebin's rootedness shows a resistance to change and a measure of defensiveness.

Finally, in her most overtly intersectional Jewish-feminist piece, "Zionism, Meet Feminism," Pogrebin asserts that "Zionism is to Jews what feminism is to women – an ongoing struggle for self-determination, dignity, and justice."[42] In this statement, Pogrebin shows how her feminism and Zionism inform each other. Pogrebin also notes, "a woman like me, who answers to both worlds, finds it increasingly difficult to be a feminist among Zionists and a Zionist among feminists."[43] Despite this obstacle, she maintains, "I carry the agendas of both movements with me as I move between them with the objective of raising each constituency's consciousness of the needs of the other."[44] Pogrebin has highlighted Jewish otherness and marginalization to create change in the American Jewish community. In an article titled "Why Can't We Show Empathy for the Palestinians?" Pogrebin urges American Jews to consider times they have felt powerless or hopeless. She encourages them to empathize with Palestinians by telling them to "imagine what it must be like to be a decent person who is routinely debased," [45] likely calling on her

[37] Ibid.
[38] Letty Cottin Pogrebin, "All Feminists Should Embrace the Women-Centered Agenda," *The New York Times*, July 27, 2016.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Pogrebin, "Zionism, Meet Feminism."
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Letty Cottin Pogrebin, "Why Can't We Show Empathy for the Palestinians?" *Moment Magazine*, December 31, 2012.

own experiences as woman and as a Jew. Thus, Pogrebin uses her rooted and marginalized identities as a woman and a Jew to promote the aims of each community to the other.

Pogrebin is a Rooted Cosmopolitan because she is committed to her feminist, Jewish, and Zionist ideals. As she moves between these communities, Pogrebin continues to promote her vision of a realistic, pluralistic feminism and identity-politics – a vision shaped by years of both exclusion and leadership. Indeed, Pogrebin remains dedicated to the Jewish communities that try to police her thought and exclude her on the basis of feminist values and her gender. While her divided loyalties often make her feel "split at the root,"[46] Pogrebin has continuously marshaled that tension, dug her feet in, and asserted herself and her identity in feminist, Zionist, and Jewish communities. As Loeffler writes, the professional human rights community

> sees injustice, crisis, and atrocity, and favors networks and crowds instead of nations and states…The historical legacy of the Jewish human rights activism offers a sober reminder that idealism and power must always be considered in the same frame, or else we risk hollow gestures and futile advocacy.[47]

Consequently, Pogrebin serves as a helpful model for future activists because she has effectively molded the Zionist and feminist movements, both in spite and because of her deeply rooted Jewish feminism.

[46] Pogrebin, "Zionism, Meet Feminism."
[47] Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans,* 300.

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Leora Nevins

EFFORTS FOR NORMALCY IN TRAUMA'S WAKE: LEAH AINI'S "UNTIL THE ENTIRE GUARD HAS PASSED"

The silence of first-generation Holocaust survivors has prompted a process of recovery and reconstruction by the consequent generations' need to uncover its history. Through literature, the second generation has set about unmasking the silence of their parents who were unable to express what they had gone through in Europe while simultaneously establishing a life in Israel.[1] Literature enables descendants of the Holocaust to express hidden aspects of their identities and gives a wider audience the ability to connect to this history. For example, second-generation author Leah Aini's short story "Until the Entire Guard Has Passed" illustrates how trauma seeps through to the surface despite efforts to conceal the past with a seemingly normal life in Israel.[2] The story centers around a young couple, Levi and Sophie, who have immigrated to Israel after surviving the war in Europe.[3] Throughout their attempts to perform a routine life in Israel, the characters exhibit various compulsive expressions of personal and collective trauma that show the violence and, ultimately, impossibility of repressing trauma.

Efraim Sicher, a professor of literature at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, writes of how second-generation Israeli descendants of Holocaust survivors use literature to "to patch the holes in personal memory and resurrect the repressed European

[1] Efraim Sicher, "The Return of the Past: The Intergenerational Transmission of Holocaust Memory in Israeli Fiction," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 19, no. 2 (Jan. 31, 2001): 26–52, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/return-past-intergenerational-transmission/docview/275119478/se-2?accountid=9703.

[2] Leah Aini, "Until the Entire Guard Has Passed," in *New Women's Writing from Israel*, ed. Risa Domb (Portland, Oregon: Valentine Mitchell, 1996), 11–20.

[3] Ibid., 11.

past in Israeli collective memory."[4] Sicher describes the nature of Holocaust as taboo in the collective consciousness of Israel in the 1950s. Holocaust survivors were misunderstood because of the glorification of strong *sabras* and heroic fighters in ghetto uprisings. Traumatized European immigrants in Israel who were not fighters were stigmatized and seen as contaminants of Israeli society due to the need for collective strength in the establishment process, adding to the barriers to processing and expressing the horrors European immigrants had survived.[5] By the 1990s, the Israeli collective had begun to process what happened to European Jews during the war, making more room for the national consciousness to accept these experiences as part of its identity.[6] This development enabled authors like Leah Aini to write of their parents' experiences in the Holocaust throughout the 1990s. Because of this legacy of repression, Aini had to recreate an imagination of the previous generations' experiences in place of firsthand accounts by the first generation.

Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger discuss third-generation Holocaust literature in contrast to the conditions of the second generation in their book chapter, "On the Periphery: The 'Tangled Roots' of Holocaust Remembrance for the Third Generation."[7] They cite Thane Rosenbaum, who writes that second-generation writers grew up as "witnesses to an uncompromising trauma that held the parents hostage."[8] Their task is to make sense of the information that they subliminally absorbed from the culture and families they were immersed in. Henri Raczymow writes that the second generation is caught "in the abyss between [the] imperious need to speak and the prohibition on speaking."[9] Leah Aini masters

[4] Sicher, "Return of the Past," 27.
[5] Ibid., 28.
[6] Ibid., 28.
[7] Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger, *Third-Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History, and Memory* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 3–40.
[8] Ibid., 6.
[9] Ibid.

that space by illustrating the silence of the first generation of post-Holocaust European immigrants to Israel. Through "Until the Entire Guard Has Passed," she illuminates the reasoning for the first generation's silence about their experiences and gives voice to the repercussions of repression for the generations to come. She shows how physical and emotional enactments of trauma attempt to work through trauma and perpetuate it simultaneously.

Levi and Sophie attempt to establish stability in Israel through material objects. In the opening scenes of the story, as they prepare their home to receive guests, they fidget with their belongings.[10] They take turns fixing and repositioning the tablecloth, an action that represents their concern with concealing their trauma, just as a tablecloth covers and protects what is underneath. By adjusting it, Sophie and Levi are attempting to hide their trauma. Aini also highlights their imitation crystal lamp. Sophie and Levi want to appear as though they have a genuine crystal lamp, just as they want to appear to have an emotionally stable life. But both are fake. Finally, Levi places the finishing touch on the display: a polished glass ashtray. Polishing glass is an effort to achieve ultimate perfection. It represents their lives, also shined and buffed to perfection. Levi and Sophie concern themselves with physical objects as a superficial way of broadcasting that they are comfortable in a new society. Through the characters' efforts to ground themselves in material objects, Leah Aini symbolizes the way survivors concealed memories of the Holocaust in the home.

Sophie and Levi also attempt to conceal their trauma through community norms and rituals. Levi realizes that there is a tradition of card playing groups in their neighborhood and becomes determined to join one of them. He takes the place of someone in a card group who had recently died of a heart attack.[11] The way he

[10] Ibid., 11.
[11] Ibid., 12.

claims the spot so eagerly exhibits his need to proceed in the wake of death without acknowledging it. This is one example of the collective need to pursue regular life as an Israeli society, to ignore death in favor of survival. This is seen on a personal level with Levi's desire to join the card group, on a communal level in the group's ability to promptly accept a new member, and on a national level in the collective's disregard of its European immigrants' close encounter with annihilation. Aini describes the neighborhood on Friday night dressed in festive white attire, but also exhibiting "lavish signs of dying."[12] This observation refers to the summer heat, but also alludes to the suppression of death that the whole community takes part in. In contrast to the ritual walk to synagogue clad in white spiritual garb, Sophie, Levi, and their new group of friends gather to play cards each Friday night. They await the arrival of their card group just as some of their neighbors await the arrival of the Sabbath. Their differing Friday night traditions distance Sophie and Levi from the collective norm of observing the Sabbath. Though they attempt to conceal their trauma through social engagement, their choice of engagement isolates rather than connects. This highlights the repression of the variety of experiences and lifestyles contributing to the Israeli collective. Through community attempts to establish post-Holocaust normalcy through Jewish ritual life, death and trauma seep through to the surface.

Sophie's pregnancy also represents an attempt to establish normalcy through the most natural form of social belonging: bringing a new life into the community. On the surface, Sophie and Levi are physically and financially able to reproduce, but they are panicked about their emotional ability to carry out the pregnancy and support their child. Sophie acts out her trauma through clapping her hands for half an hour, three times a day, as she did as

[12] Ibid., 11.

a child in hiding while waiting for Nazi guards to pass. She fears what will happen once the baby is born, since she cannot conceal her trauma effectively. She worries, from a practical perspective, that her clapping will wake the baby while trying to sleep. This concern is backed by a deeper fear about her own ability to function as a mother. She exclaims that she is "a mad woman, a mad mother"[13] and would be better off dead. She does not see a way to reconcile her trauma with motherhood. There is no understanding of an ability to work through trauma and accept it as part of their lives and their family. In hindsight, the maturation of post-Holocaust narratives show the irony in this. Her attempt to conceal her trauma from her child will not succeed. The attempt to protect the next generation from the horrors experienced backfires, and a secretive, mysterious trauma is passed on. Sophie does not realize fully that she has already transmitted much trauma to her child. Three times a day, the fetus in utero hears the physical expression of her mother's trauma, her weeping, and her parents' fighting. While Sophie and Levi's effort to reproduce can be read as an expression of hope for healing and joy, it is arguably more of an expression of their eager need to establish new roots to displace the trauma that they have experienced, without first working to confront their trauma. Leah Aini illustrates the necessity to reimagine this silenced past through Sophie's pregnancy.

The men in the story exhibit compulsive behaviors, a pattern that represents how communal trauma permeates daily life yet is repressed, shown only through nervous movements and behavior. The very first sentence of the story describes Levi as "unable to resist leaning over the balcony."[14] He is not entirely in control of his actions. Next, the text describes Dr. Mashiach appearing early and crumpling his hat between his hands erratically. As all the

[13] Ibid., 19.
[14] Ibid., 11.

guests are leaving, the text again focuses on Dr. Mashiach's grip on his blue hat, as if it is a security item, grounding him in reality. Levi's behavior is jittery and anxious throughout and ends up turning violent when he and Sophie talk. He slaps her across the face after she admits her fear of motherhood because voicing this fear threatens their veneer of normalcy. He wishes not only to conceal his own trauma, but also to conceal hers. His physical act of violence is an expression of the emotional violence of repression. Kate Schick writes of the violent manifestation of trauma in her article "Acting Out and Working Through: Trauma and (in)Security."[15] She refers to trauma as "the silenced aftermath of violence,"[16] which therefore contributes to the perpetuation of violence if not "worked through." Schick's explanation of the process of "working through" trauma includes "a process of mourning, in which past atrocities are acknowledged, reflected on, and more fully understood in all their historically situated complexity."[17] Due to their need to conform to a regular collective standard of routine and normalcy, Sophie and Levi are not able to work through their trauma in this way. Instead, he acts out his trauma in the form of emotional abrasion and guilty physical violence, and she anticipates acting out her trauma in a way that will be emotionally consequential for her child.

It is not clear if Sophie has sustained a more severe trauma than her husband or than the other men in the story, as Levi's experience in the war is not specified, but she physically and emotionally enacts it in a way that is more apparent. In *Women, Genocide, and Memory: The Ethics of Feminist Ethnography in Holocaust Research*, Janet Liebman Jacobs discusses the understanding of women's experiences in the field of Holocaust

[15] Kate Schick, "Acting out and Working through: Trauma and (in)Security," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 1837–1855. doi:10.1017/S0260210510001130.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 223.

studies.[18] Her work addresses a gap in Holocaust studies, which does not address gender differences. She recalls growing "uncomfortably aware of the moral implications of interrogating gender and genocide for the purposes of research and scholarly productivity."[19] This discomfort comes from deconstructing a collective understanding of genocide against Jewish people in Europe during the Holocaust. There is a complex scholarly argument about whether or not Jewish women should be studied separately from men in the context of Holocaust studies. For example, Ruth Bondy qualifies her research on women in Theresienstadt by saying that the Nazis did not differentiate their killing of Jews with Zyklon B based on gender. Nazi murder applied to all Jews regardless of gender. She states that contemporary gender studies belongs to an era of academic thought that did not exist at the time of the Holocaust, and it is therefore anachronistic and offensive to differentiate.[20] Although Bondy's academic qualms are justified, a second-generation literary author such as Leah Aini has room to expound on gender's role in post-Holocaust trauma. It is possible to infer that the ripple effects of post-Holocaust trauma depicted in "Until the Entire Guard Has Passed" did affect women in more violent ways than men, even if the Nazis' violence did not differentiate, because the story is situated within a patriarchally structured society where the patriarchal need for control is intensified by the need to stabilize the social structure.

With Sophie and Levi's characters at the center of "Until the Entire Guard Has Passed," personal, communal, and collective trauma exhibits itself despite extensive efforts to conceal it. The suppression of memory that Sophie and Levi engage in and

[18] Janet Liebman Jacobs, "Women, Genocide, and Memory: The Ethics of Feminist Ethnography in Holocaust Research," *Gender and Society* 18, no. 2 (April 2004): 223–238. doi: 10.1177/0891243203261572.
[19] Ibid., 226.
[20] Ibid., 229.

represent is a precursor to the restoration of memory that the second generation of post-Holocaust authors seeks to recreate. Leah Aini explores this unnamed history in her story, making sense of the previous generation's silence. She shows that the enactment of compulsive ritual and behavior is a manifestation of the collective inability to access mourning and emotional processing. This is due to the cultural need in Israel to establish strong roots and distance from the powerlessness experienced in Europe. The trauma of the Holocaust is therefore repressed and internalized within the individual, within interpersonal relationships, and in the collective identity. This story also exhibits the disparity between female experiences of post-Holocaust trauma and how men experience and dictate what appropriate expressions of trauma can look like. Authors of the second generation of Holocaust survivors, like Leah Aini, contribute to the collective ability to process a repressed trauma as part of personal, communal, and collective identity.

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Mendel Weintraub

RECOVERY V. REGRESSION:

EXAMINING IDENTITY AND IMPACT IN THE POST-HOLOCAUST NARRATIVES OF PAWLIKOWSKI'S IDA AND PETZOLD'S PHOENIX

Since the fall of the Nazi regime and the Allied victory in World War II, several film directors have tried their hand at presenting the events of the period—especially those tied to the Holocaust—with respect and authenticity. Many such films focus on the aesthetic of the Holocaust, depending on graphic imagery to relay the horrors of deportations, mass murder, and concentration camps. However, in the past decade, two European directors, Paweł Pawlikowski and Christian Petzold, have graduated from their predecessors' approach of aesthetic reenactment to an entirely new mode of cinematic exploration: examining the effect of the Holocaust on individual and national identity in its aftermath. This phenomenon is exemplified in the film *Ida* (2013), the story of a novice Polish nun who learns of her Jewish identity on the brink of taking her vows. Pawlikowski, of Polish descent, crafts a compelling character study to ponder his home country's past and current relationship to the Holocaust. In the film *Phoenix* (2014), Petzold tells the story of Nelly Lenz, a concentration camp survivor who has recently undergone facial reconstruction surgery, in order to explore religious and national identity in his homeland of Germany following Hitler's fall. Crucial to both directors' respective efforts are the central female pairings in each film: Ida's juxtaposition with her Aunt Wanda and Nelly's complicated relationship with her friend and caretaker, Lene Winter. With skilled cinematography and powerful storytelling—culminating in the suicides of Ida and Nelly's respective companions—Pawlikowski and Petzold incriminate the citizens of their home

countries in the Holocaust and, in the closing frames of their films, make distinctive statements about the lasting effect of such collective inaction on the Jewish citizens of Germany and Poland. While *Ida* ends on an ominous note, *Phoenix* offers a decidedly more optimistic perspective regarding recovery in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

The near-complete absence of Holocaust imagery in both *Ida* and *Phoenix* is critical to Pawlikowski and Petzold's atmospheric achievements. Such directorial choices are not to the detriment of each film's treatment of the subject. While their conservative use of images from the past risks seeming like a blatant disregard of history, it is precisely this absence around which Pawlikowski and Petzold characterize Ida and Nelly. For *Ida*, the relative lack of images from the past evokes the titular character's unfamiliarity with her background. Our only glimpse into Ida's heritage is a brief moment toward the end of the film, when Wanda looks at several pictures of perished family members. Ida is not present in the scene, reinforcing how far removed she is from the truth of her past.[1] Łukasz Żal's black and white cinematography evokes the aesthetic of films from the Holocaust period without centering the film around the past. However, Żal's use of negative space is an even more effective technique. Loosely framed character shots convey the sense of something missing—the ghosts of Ida's past. In *Phoenix*, the rare appearance of Holocaust imagery functions solely as a reminder of death, exposing the naïveté that informs Nelly's desperation to return to her pre-war life. Petzold's only use of extant Holocaust imagery appears early in the film, when Lene, a Jewish agency emissary, peers through a magnifying glass at a blurry black and white photograph of dead bodies.[2] She is searching for numbers on their arms, in an attempt to identify Holocaust victims. That Lene has to peer through a filter to accomplish her task emphasizes a degree of removal from the historical incident, even in its immediate aftermath. It is therefore fitting that in contrast to the black and white past of the

[1] *Ida*, directed by Paweł Pawlikowski, (Chicago: Music Box Films, 2013), 01:03:35.
[2] *Phoenix*, directed by Christian Petzold, (New York: Sundance Selects, 2014), 00:09:10 - 00:09:18.

photograph, Petzold lenses *Phoenix* in striking color, making the narrative of the film very much one of the present, evolving mind. The only other instance of Holocaust imagery in the movie is in color, a dream sequence that appears as Nelly is put down for her facial reconstruction surgery. The viewer sees Nelly in her striped concentration camp uniform, her back to the camera, walking in a field.[3] The sequence's exclusion of Nelly's facial features emphasizes her folly in identifying reality with the past and anticipates that her only escape will be to leave it behind.

Additionally, the restrained approach of *Ida* and *Phoenix*'s directors in utilizing Holocaust imagery brings to light their attitudes surrounding the responses of the German and Polish governments and citizens to Nazi atrocities—both in the aftermath of the World War II and today. Both films advance an agenda that implicates these groups in the massacre of their Jewish neighbors. Just as Pawlikowski's native Poland refuses to assume responsibility for the atrocities of the Holocaust,[4] so too his film emulates that ignorance by excluding imagery from that period. It is unsurprising that the right-wing ruling party of the country has rallied against Pawlikowski's film, even banning it from airing on state television. This is ironic, considering that half the film's budget was provided by the state-funded Polish Film Institute.[5] Petzold's *Phoenix* also received state funding for its production from Germany.[6] Though German citizens during World War II were complicit in the Nazi persecution of the Jews, the German government's willingness to acknowledge its responsibility sets it apart from Poland. Germany's national attitude is apparent in *Phoenix*, whose German director makes no effort to mask his passing a guilty verdict on his own people.

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[3] Ibid., 00:07:04 - 00:07:37.

[4] Christian Davies, "Poland Makes Partial U-turn on Controversial Holocaust Law after Israel Row," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/27/poland-partial-u-turn-controversial-holocaust-law. Even today, while a decriminalized offense, it is illegal in Poland to attribute any degree of fault for the Holocaust to Poles or their government.

[5] Paweł Pawlikowski, "How We Made *Ida*: Paweł Pawlikowski on the Journey from Script to Film," *The Guardian*, November 21, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/nov/21/pawel-pawlikowski-making-of-ida-polish-film.

[6] Scott Foundas, "Film Review: 'Phoenix,'" *Variety*, January 12, 2015, https://variety.com/2015/film/reviews/film-review-phoenix-1201403174/.

While the exploration of the Holocaust's effect on collective national identity in these films is similar, the experiences of their leading female characters in relationship to it are diametrically opposed. While our first impression of Nelly is one of a concentration camp survivor who saw and experienced the atrocities of the Nazis, when Ida is first introduced to us she is a nun with no knowledge of her Jewish background or personal connection to the Holocaust. Known in her convent as Anna, she does not even go by her birth name.[7] What distinguishes these women from each other is that Nelly is traumatized from the beginning of the film, whereas Ida's trauma is introduced to her; furthermore, they process trauma differently. Ida, who is prepared to dedicate herself in service of Christ, is understandably averse to her past when it comes back to haunt her and threatens her life's stability. When the abbess of Ida's convent tells her that she can meet her Aunt Wanda, Ida's first response is "Do I have to, Mother?"[8] In contrast, Nelly is obsessed with her past. Unlike Ida, who sees it as a threat to her identity, Nelly believes that the only way to rebuild herself after her experience in the Holocaust is to reconstruct herself into the woman she was before the war. While consulting with her plastic surgeon regarding her "new look," her face is wrapped in white gauze like a mummy, more a preservation of her old body than a breathing human being. Nelly says, "I want to look like I used to."[9] The doctor, insisting that he cannot fully replicate Nelly's old face, tells her "a new face is an advantage"[10] because it allows you to be "a new and different person."[11] However, Nelly resists starting anew. Nelly's resistance is further reinforced in the aforementioned dream sequence that comes shortly after this conversation. Beyond hiding Nelly's face, the dream obstructs the figure of Johnny, Nelly's ex-husband, whose shadowy presence welcomes her shrouded face when she enters the boathouse where she once took refuge. Johnny is also a

[7] Pawlikowski, *Ida*, 00:03:20.
[8] Ibid., 00:03:17.
[9] Petzold, *Phoenix*, 00:05:55 - 00:06:12.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

faceless person, lost in the past. Nelly is obsessed with the idea of reuniting with him, believing a reunion to be the key to her healing, despite the fact that, unbeknownst to her, Johnny gave her up to the Nazis during the war. In *Ida*, however, the main character is apathetic to her past and meets with Wanda only at the insistence of the abbess.

Both Nelly and Ida's developmental arcs are ushered in by partnerships with women associated with their past identities—though they differ in their relationships with them. Lene and Wanda act as quasi-maternal figures to Nelly and Ida over the course of *Ida* and *Phoenix*'s respective narratives and are both established as characters committed to justice. This greatly informs their motivations in each film. Lene, who survived the war in her native Switzerland, works for an agency that aids Holocaust survivors. During the war, Wanda fought in the resistance. In 1960s Soviet-occupied Poland, where the plot of *Ida* unfolds, Wanda is a judge who issues corrupt rulings, a characterization that foregrounds the state of justice in crisis after the events of the Holocaust.[12] Lene and Wanda's varying relationships with justice inform their opposition to the men to whom Nelly and Ida demonstrate dedication. Their opposition rests on the grounds that those with whom these men are associated have betrayed the Jewish people. Wanda is confounded by Ida's dedication to Jesus Christ and affiliation with his Polish followers, who sat idly by while the Nazis murdered Jews. After Ida learns of the death of their family, Ida tells Wanda that she will find where they are buried. Wanda responds, "What if you go there and discover there is no God?"[13] In *Phoenix*, Lene is appalled by Nelly's obsession with Johnny after uncovering documents indicating that he divorced Nelly before her capture. "Johnny doesn't interest me,"[14] Lene tells Nelly. Johnny is a stand-in for all Germans, and Lene's disinterest indicates a broader disdain for the German people in the wake of the Holocaust. Lene's opposition to Johnny also exposes

[12] Pawlikowski, *Ida*, 00:09:47.
[13] Ibid., 00:12:05 - 00:12:28.
[14] Petzold, *Phoenix*, 00:16:23.

her frustration over Nelly's obsession with the Holocaust. Wanda, on the other hand, is bothered by Ida's disinterest in it.

Lene and Wanda's identities are defined by their relationships toward the countries that betrayed their people. Lene does not comprehend Nelly's loyalty to Germany. Similarly, Wanda does not understand Ida's loyalty to Poland and takes her on a tour of the country to change her mind. Though both Lene and Wanda are ideologically opposed to the homelands of Ida and Nelly, they express their dissent in opposite manners: Wanda is active, while Lene is passive. Wanda is similar to Nelly of *Phoenix*; she is confrontational toward the past. When Wanda takes Ida to her parents' old property, which is now occupied by the Polish family that hid them during the war, she tells the man who opens the door, "our family used to live in this house."[15] He responds, "no Jews ever lived here."[16] Wanda throws his words back at him: "I didn't say they were Jews."[17] He tells her, "it's my house and my land."[18] Wanda lets herself in. She asks him how Ida's parents died and threatens, "I know when someone is lying. I can destroy you."[19] Wanda purposely makes this scene so that Ida can see the ugly truth behind her people. After the confrontation, she concludes to Ida, "here they are: good Christians…your neighbors."[20]

Conversely, Lene responds more like Ida does to national betrayal: by distancing herself. Toward the end of the film, when Nelly informs Lene of her decision to remain in Germany with Johnny, rather than travel with her to Palestine as they had originally planned, Lene rebukes Nelly.

> You know what disgusts me? We Jews wrote, sang, and slaved…went to war for Germany, yet were gassed one and all. And now the survivors return and forgive. The gassing ceases and we forgive all counts of cowardice and treachery. I won't go along with it, Nelly.[21]

[15] Pawlikowski, *Ida*, 00:17:55 - 00:20:23.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Petzold, *Phoenix*, 01:09:47 - 01:10:42.

Lene believes that the only rational response to the Holocaust—and specifically Germany's involvement—is to leave it all behind. Nelly's decision to maintain her association with Germany and not to emigrate to Palestine is therefore unacceptable to her. Wanda's view of Poland and Lene's view of Germany reveal Pawlikowski and Petzold's attitudes toward how Jewish survivors of Nazi Germany should relate to their home countries and in turn how Poland and Germany should relate to survivors. *Ida* advances the idea that Poland needs to acknowledge its complicity in Nazi crimes, while *Phoenix* encourages survivors to renounce their ties with Germany.

Despite Lene and Wanda's impassioned efforts to open their respective companions' eyes to their countries' betrayal of them, it is not enough to deter Ida or Nelly from making deals with the devil. Nelly's attraction to the past drives her to conspire with Johnny, who thinks she is his dead wife's doppelganger, in a plot to pose as herself in order to procure an inheritance from her dead relatives.[22] Similarly, Ida's pursuit to uncover her parents' burial site—and by extension, her past—leads her to forfeit her claim to her ancestral home to the man who occupies it. She does so in exchange for the location of her parents' bodies. Upon closing the deal, the man tells her, "nobody can prove anything anyway. What happened happened."[23] It is important to note that while both films make these displays of concession to the perpetrator, neither does so in an endorsing manner. Rather, they use the desperate circumstances of Ida and Nelly to expose the willingness of their enemies to take advantage of them.

Pawlikowski and Petzold present these circumstances as a means to further incriminate Poles and Germans in the atrocities of the Holocaust. When Nelly and Johnny stage their reunion, Nelly is greeted by her old German friends, who embrace her as if they had nothing to do with Johnny's betrayal; one of the women was even married to a Nazi. One friend hugs her and says "I don't believe it,"[24] but in that moment, she is performing just as much as

[22] Ibid., 00:45:00 - 00:46:17.
[23] Pawlikowski, *Ida*, 00:44:38 - 00:45:30.
[24] Petzold, *Phoenix*, 01:26:25 - 01:27:42.

Nelly. This moment also emphasizes Petzold's strong criticism of performance itself and how it is used to lie. He turns the tables on the Germans when he has Nelly reveal her true identity through performance in the final scene of the film. There is no question that Petzold agrees with Lene regarding how Germans ought to be perceived after World War II. Pawlikowski similarly advances Wanda's narrative on this front, with the scene that depicts the Polish man who killed Ida's parents exhuming their bodies. When he finishes digging in the middle of the woods, the viewer sees the striking shot of his exhausted body crouching in the empty grave, as he sits in the pit of his past.[25] It is a damning shot, one that shows history as it should have been: with the perpetrator in the grave instead of the victim. Ultimately, Ida and Nelly's experiences in these scenes provoke an evolution in the development of their characters, as they finally come to terms with the dissonance between their identities as Jews and their loyalty to their countries.

Unfortunately, Ida's progress is not enough to quell Wanda's dread, and Nelly's is not enough to satisfy Lene; both women are overwhelmed after witnessing their younger companions grapple with the unhealable wounds of the Holocaust. After parting ways with Ida, who is intent on taking her vows even after learning of her heritage, Wanda is overcome by sadness and retreats to a local watering hole to drink her troubles away. There, she laments to a stranger, "[Ida] has such beautiful hair but she hides it away."[26] There is a sense of loss in her voice, as she mourns Ida's decision to forsake her Jewish identity.

Lene's final exchange with Nelly is fraught. After Nelly reveals her desire to remain in Germany with Johnny, she tells Lene, "I know he loves her. "[27] Nelly speaks of herself as somebody else, distinguishing and retroactively acknowledging her past and present selves. The cloudiness of Nelly's judgment drives Lene over the edge. She tells Nelly, "When you were sitting in the dark, I thought you'd shot him and needed my help. And honestly,

[25] Pawlikowski, *Ida*, 00:51:16.
[26] Ibid., 01:04:00 - 01:04:48.
[27] Petzold, *Phoenix*, 01:09:47 - 01:10:39.

I'd have preferred that."[28] Lene is out for blood, but has nobody to exact her revenge on. With nowhere to channel her vengeful energy, Lene turns it on herself; when Nelly returns to Lene's apartment a day later, the housekeeper, Mrs. Schwartz, hands her a suicide note and informs Nelly that Lene has taken her own life.[29] In voiceover, the audience hears Lene read the suicide note, in which she reveals Johnny's divorce to Nelly and tells her, "I told you there is no way back for us. But for me, there is no way forward either. I feel more drawn to our dead than to our living."[30] Lene, despite constantly pushing Nelly to let go of her past, ultimately suffers the fate she foresaw for her. With Lene's suicide, Petzold makes his final proclamation about the nature of the Holocaust: that grasping for it only leads to death.

Like Lene, Wanda also finds herself more drawn to her dead after parting ways with her niece. In the events leading up to her suicide, Wanda looks at a tableful of photographs of her murdered relatives, having now lost her last surviving family member: Ida.[31] Though Ida does not physically die, her return to the convent represents a spiritual death, as she forsakes her Jewish past. After fighting in the resistance and losing her entire family in spite of her efforts and upon seeing the futility in a broken system of justice similar to the one over which she presided after the war, Wanda is defeated. She throws herself from the window of her apartment.[32]

Pawlikowski and Petzold take opposite approaches in their depictions of Lene and Wanda's suicides. While Pawlikowski shows Wanda's suicide on-screen, Lene's suicide happens off-screen. Considering the climate of discourse on the Holocaust in Petzold's native Germany, such a decision is quite sensible in comparison to the approach of the Polish Pawlikowski. Citizens of Germany, a country that accepts its responsibility for the Holocaust, do not need to have its post-factum toll exposed to them. On the other hand, with *Ida*, Pawlikowski imposes the effect

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 01:21:14.
[30] Ibid., 01:21:48 - 01:22:15.
[31] Pawlikowski, *Ida*, 1:03:35.
[32] Ibid., 01:06:00 - 01:06:45.

of Holocaust trauma on an audience of citizens who continually refuse to accept responsibility for their involvement in Nazi war crimes. Wanda's suicide represents a visual incrimination for the consequences of Polish ignorance, shown in full detail.

After the deaths of their companions, Ida and Nelly formally assume the identities of dead women. Nelly performs a reunion with Johnny as her lost self, and Ida returns to Wanda's apartment, sheds her habit, and begins to behave like her late aunt. A striking detail that Pawlikowski includes in the film is that Ida is almost a carbon copy of her mother.[33] This uncanny resemblance raises the question: how possible is it to escape the past? Ida can choose to conform to her physical identity—which is unmistakably tied to her Jewish mother—or she can reject her heritage by covering herself in the garb of a nun. It is, therefore, in the brief time that Ida is not donning her habit when we might expect to discover Ida's independent identity. What makes those scenes so engaging is that, rather than act as an individual, Ida assumes the identity of her recently deceased aunt. Like Wanda, Ida goes out to drink and dance in a bar and sleeps with a man she barely knows.[34]

Nelly's "reunion" with Johnny and subsequent afternoon luncheon with their German friends from before the war represents her final attempt to hold onto her past identity.[35] This scene occurs after Lene's suicide, and Nelly is fully aware of Johnny's betrayal. Nevertheless, she proceeds to pursue him. Nelly's motivation is tied to how the thought of Johnny kept her uplifted in the concentration camps. She is trapped in the belief that the only way to access herself fully is through fixation with her ex-husband. As she tells Lene before her suicide,

> I'd not have survived the camp if not for Johnny. I only thought about how I'd come back to him…and when I finally found him, he didn't recognize me…and I was dead again…Since being back with him, I'm myself again.[36]

[33] Ibid., 00:08:55.
[34] Ibid., 01:10:00 - 01:13:47.
[35] Petzold, *Phoenix*, 01:28:49 - 01:30:26.
[36] Ibid., 01:07:44 - 01:08:52.

Both Ida and Nelly's behavior following Wanda and Lene's suicides represents attempts to resurrect the past. Their experiences convince Ida and Nelly to leave behind the past for good. And while both *Ida* and *Phoenix* end with both protagonists abandoning the past, Nelly's decision represents a triumph and recovery of the human spirit, while Ida's is one of abandonment and regression. Pawlikowski and Petzold visually advance these messages with closing frames that feature the protagonists of their films walking. Their blockings of these moments expose the conclusions each director makes about the relationship between religious and national identity with regard to the Holocaust.

After spending a day living like her departed aunt, Ida puts her nun's garb back on and leaves her lover from that night in Wanda's apartment.[37] She effectively re-adopts her old identity, that of Anna, from the beginning of the film. In *Ida*'s final minute, we watch as Ida walks toward the screen, the full length of the road visible behind her.[38] She leaves behind the darker side of Poland and the pain of her Jewish heritage, choosing to return to the convent. The conclusion of the film is by no means happy, but it is certainly honest; it symbolizes the erasure of Jewish history from Poland after the Holocaust and the ubiquity of the Christian perspective on the period. The idea that the Christian perspective has buried the Jewish one in Poland is alluded to quite literally earlier in the film, when Ida and Wanda reinter their family's remains in a Jewish cemetery and Ida crosses her heart with her dirt-covered hand.[39] After spending a day living in Wanda's shoes—and in doing so, adopting her misery—Ida comes to terms with how demoralizing it is to live as a Jew among the people who betrayed her. Upon internalizing this misery and survivor's guilt, Ida sees no future for herself in Poland should she acknowledge her Jewish identity. Wanda's hope to absorb Ida into the fold of her Jewish identity fails; it is too heavy a burden. Ida's return to the convent represents not only a forsaking of her Jewishness, but also the end of Ida's bloodline; she is the last surviving member of

[37] Pawlikowski, *Ida*, 01:15:54 - 01:16:39.
[38] Ibid., 01:17:05 - 01:18:14.
[39] Ibid., 00:56:40 - 00:57:05.

her family and takes a vow of chastity. The ending of *Ida* is unmistakably hopeless.

In contrast, the finale of *Phoenix* presents a hopeful road forward for Nelly. After Johnny and his German friends toast Nelly at the luncheon, she finally comes to terms with their betrayal and accepts that to forge into the future she needs to leave the old Nelly behind. She invites Johnny to accompany her on the piano and sings "Speak Low" using the same arrangement the two of them performed in cabarets before the war. This reveals that she is in fact Nelly, not a doppelganger. Johnny plays along in horror, as Nelly sings, "tomorrow is near, tomorrow is here, and always too soon."[40] Johnny gazes at Nelly and sees the numbers tattooed on her forearm for the first time. He stops playing, but Nelly continues to sing. She no longer needs his accompaniment, in music or in life. Nelly has let go of her past and embraced tomorrow. Nelly finishes singing, grabs her coat, and walks out the door of the villa, leaving the camera behind.[41] Petzold explains that this is a deliberate choice, because "'if we follow [Nelly], we are also leaving Germany, with her together.' But we have to stay. This is the metaphor of the end. We have to stay with the others, and she is leaving."[42] Essentially, *Phoenix* ends with Nelly embracing her Jewish identity over her German one and claiming personal victory over Johnny, just as Lene had hoped from the start of the film. The film's insistence that Nelly let go of her past does not imply that we, the audience, should collectively forget it. Rather, the ending makes it clear that Nelly bears no responsibility for what happened to her. Instead, it should be up to the Germans to come to terms with the terrible history she leaves behind.

In opposite ways, both *Ida* and *Phoenix* examine the Holocaust using narratives that center the Jewish victims. Petzold shows Nelly come to terms with her trauma, triumphing over both Johnny and Germany. Pawlikowski incriminates the Polish people through

[40] Petzold, *Phoenix*, 01:33:00 - 01:34:30.
[41] Ibid., 01:33:00 - 01:34:30.
[42] Ryan Lattanzio, "Why 'Phoenix' Finally Makes Christian Petzold a New Arthouse Auteur," *IndieWire*, July 29, 2015, https://www.indiewire.com/2015/07/why-phoenix-finally-makes-christian-petzold-a-new-arthouse-auteur-185739/.

telling the story of Wanda and Ida, which exposes Poland's complicity in Nazi war crimes. While both narratives focus on Jewish Holocaust trauma, *Ida*'s conclusion has a more defeatist message. Unlike Nelly, Ida opts to neglect the reality of her past when she returns to the convent. The ending of *Ida* is hardly Pawlikowski's statement that Judaism has no place in Polish history or culture. Rather, he is presenting the harsh reality of Poland's sociopolitical climate, which, like Ida, rejects the reality of its historical roots.

Impactful as they are in advancing their directors' attitudes surrounding religious and national identity tied to the Holocaust, the closing shots of *Ida* and *Phoenix* seem almost secondary in effect when one considers Pawlikowski and Petzold's titles for their films. Ida's retreat to the convent at the end of Pawlikowski's picture, which cements her choice to identify as Anna, stands in contradiction to the first thing we see after the film cuts to black: "IDA."[43] While in the diegesis of the film Ida may choose to abandon her Jewish identity, in this way Pawlikowski makes clear that her past should nevertheless be acknowledged and take precedence over her chosen identity. This final message makes the film's bleak ending even more devastating. Pawlikowski's decision to shoot his film in black and white makes all the more sense, as it evokes the death of Ida's Jewish heritage.

Phoenix's title is a more subtle reference. On the surface, it is simply the name of the club where Nelly first reunites with Johnny. However, over the course of the film the viewer realizes that Nelly herself is a kind of phoenix. Like the mythical bird, she rises out of the ashes of the Holocaust, reborn. This title implies an optimistic future for Nelly; by the end of the narrative she is fully resurrected, with a clean slate, and we cut to black. Petzold also communicates this message by choosing to shoot *Phoenix* in color. It is a film about life.

It should come as no surprise that of the two films discussed in this essay, *Ida* has drawn the most controversy. Any record of *Phoenix* eliciting outcry is practically nonexistent; meanwhile,

[43] Pawlikowski, *Ida*.

Pawlikowski believes that the Polish right-wing's rally against his film likely boosted their profile and helped them win the country's 2015 election.[44] If anything, the controversy surrounding *Ida* is a testament to the strength of Pawlikowski's direction. And even without controversy to bolster its profile, Petzold's *Phoenix* is an equally effective exploration of national and religious identity in crisis after World War II. Both films offer answers on how to confront those subjects through the character arcs of their protagonists and their companions—through the despair of Wanda and Ida's journey in *Ida*, and the tragic, but ultimately uplifting, shared narrative of Nelly and Lene in *Phoenix*. With those endings in mind, only one question remains: whose message will prevail?

[44] Jake Coyle, "Cannes: *Ida* Director Plunges Deeper into Polish History," *Associated Press News*, May 13, 2018, https://apnews.com/c720773eafc54520bdcc6a2aaa990a8c/Cannes:-'Ida'-director-plunges-deeper-into-Polish-history

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Lindsay Biebelberg

OH MY GODDESS:

AN EXAMINATION OF THE OCCULT BELIEFS OF THE KOHENET MOVEMENT

Mainstream society has a tendency to dismiss groups and sects on the fringe. Although small relative to the size of the mainstream, fringe groups often gain significant followings, comprised of those who reject the social norm. Judaism, though a minority group itself, is not exempt from the occasional fringe-group disruption. The Kohenet movement, which works to reclaim earth-based feminist Judaism, is one such fringe group that has upset the neat denominational structure of American Jewish society. Founded in 2005, the Kohenet Hebrew Priestess Institute trains women to become Hebrew priestesses, i.e., spiritual leaders in their communities. Though a relatively small sect of Judaism, it has gained a significant following over the past fifteen years.[1] Much of mainstream Judaism has mocked or even scorned these women, but their growing constituency shows that they have hit upon a weakness in the existing structure. Despite the efforts of some denominations to create gender-egalitarian communities and norms, some women continue to feel disenfranchised. The very idea that men have needed to give women the permission to engage equally—and the patriarchal origins of the structure itself—disillusion these women with even liberal Jewish communities. The Kohenet movement has a radical solution to this problem: the creation of a matriarchal Judaism—that is, a Judaism created by women, for women. They accomplish this goal through the rejection of mainstream Judaism—which is patriarchal—and

[1] As of 2020, more than one hundred kohanot have been ordained and are serving as educators, chaplains, community leaders, etc.

through what they believe is a reclamation of women's leadership roles and worship practices of old.

There are, indeed, opportunities for leadership within the mainstream American Jewish denominational structure. In 1972, the Reform movement became the first to ordain women as rabbis. In fact, the issue was originally raised in 1922, just two years after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, though ordaining women was decided against at the time lest it disrupt the integrity of family structure.[2] Fifty years later, in 1972, the Reform movement ordained Sally Priesand, who became the first American female rabbi. Twelve years after that, the Conservative movement followed suit, approving the ordination of women in a responsum entitled "On the Ordination of Women as Rabbis." Rabbi Joel Roth, the author of the responsum, insisted that if women do indeed consider themselves equal to men and are willing to take on all of the Jewish obligations traditionally reserved for men, there is no reason why women cannot be rabbis, too.[3] The Hadar Institute, a traditional-egalitarian yeshiva founded in 2006, began to ordain rabbis (of all genders) only in 2019, but has supported egalitarianism of men and women since its inception. Rabbi Ethan Tucker, the *Rosh Yeshiva* ("Head of the Yeshiva"), and his colleague Rabbi Micha'el Rosenberg, a professor at Hebrew College, another rabbinic seminary that ordains people of all genders as rabbis, wrote a book entitled *Gender Equality and Prayer in Jewish Law*. They explain the Jewish legal logic behind the full inclusion of women both as lay-participants and leaders in Jewish communities:

> One would need to argue that the term 'אשה/woman' in classical literature is sometimes used as a placeholder for a sociological status that women shared with slaves and minors in most times and places in human history. Under that reading, contemporary changes in the status of women have resulted in corollary shifts in their religious obligations

[2] "ARR 24-43-2: Ordination of Women," *CCAR Responsa* 32 (1922), 156-177, https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-responsa/arr-24-43-2/.

[3] Rabbi Joel Roth, "HM 7:4.1984b: On the Ordination of Women as Rabbis," Rabbinical Assembly CJLS, (November 7, 1984), https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/assets/public/halakhah/teshuvot/19861990/ordinationofwomen2.pdf.

> such that they now are, through proper application of halakhah, maximally obligated Jews and thus self-evidently included in a minyan just like men.[4]

Because modern women occupy a different role than did women of antiquity, Tucker and Rosenberg argue, women are considered to be equal to men. There have also been strides in Modern Orthodoxy to expand leadership opportunities for women. Yeshivat Maharat was founded in 2009 to provide women with an opportunity to serve as part of an Orthodox clergy. Its mission states,

> By providing a credentialed pathway for women to serve as clergy, we increase the community's ability to attract the best and brightest into the ranks of its rabbinic leadership. In addition, by expanding the leadership to include women, we seek to enliven the community at large with a wider array of voices, thoughts and perspectives.[5]

In each of these cases, women's leadership opportunities came to fruition only through the approval of the men in power. Each of these denominational communities has made strides towards both the inclusion and appreciation of women; still, this model of rising to prominence only through male approval is not satisfactory for some women. Rabbi Rav Kohenet Jill Hammer, one of the founders of the Kohenet movement, was previously ordained as a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary of the Conservative movement. The rabbinic ordination did not fulfill her sufficiently, writes Sam Kestenbaum:

> Hammer, a graduate of the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary, said she always felt like something was missing from her Jewish education. The students spoke regularly about the great patriarchs in synagogue, and they always addressed God as Lord, as a father. But where were the women?[6]

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[4] Rabbi Ethan Tucker and Rabbi Micha'el Rosenberg, *Gender Equality and Prayer in Jewish Law* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 2017), 151.

[5] "History," Yeshivat Maharat, accessed June 1, 2021, https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/mission-and-p2.

[6] Sam Kestenbaum, "Finding God—Who's a She—At the Kohenet Institute," *The Forward*, November 6, 2016, https://forward.com/news/352905/finding-god-whos-a-she-at-the-kohenet-institute/.

Rabbi Sarah Bracha Gershuny, another rabbinic ordinee, also felt that a Hebrew Priestess education would be an important supplement to her rabbinic ordination. She explains, "It helps encourage me to be in my woman-ness and in my feminine power, as opposed to trying to do things in a traditional male way but to lead as a woman."[7]

The Kohanot[8] believe, however, that their movement is not totally novel; rather, it is a reclamation of a model of women's leadership from times of old. They believe in an occult breed of ancient Judaism in which women occupied distinguished and respected leadership positions. Kohenet Deborah Grenn explains in her essay "Lilith's Fire: Examining Original Sources of Power Re-defining Sacred Texts as Transformative Theological Practice" that the accepted Jewish canon is intensely patriarchal. She quotes feminist scholar Max Dashu who explains, "'Modern and ancient rabbis are textbound. [By following only their texts] you agree to play with a deck that's loaded against you. You're wedded to a male god.'"[9] Therefore, the Kohenet Hebrew Priestess Institute refrains from bestowing the title "rabbi" on its spiritual leaders; that is a role and a title originally carved out for men. Rather, when a woman becomes a Kohenet, she is not only called "Kohenet," but also chooses a more specific title for herself, drawing from the roles that the Kohanot believe women occupied in biblical times. In a video of the Kohenet ordination ceremony in 2013, the titles of the new ordinees are displayed across the screen. Titles include "*Shomeret Eish Levanah*" ("Keeper of White Fire"), "*Oreget Ohevet*" ("Weaver, Lover"), and "*Ma'yan Ahavat Shechinah*" ("Spring of Love for the Divine Feminine").[10] Kohanot explain that the variant focus of the Kohenet movement is what has allowed them to connect to their Judaism and to once again feel

[7] Aimee Heckel, "Boulder's New Hebrew Priestess," *Daily Camera*, August 7, 2015, https://www.dailycamera.com/2015/08/07/boulders-new-hebrew-priestess/.

[8] Plural of Kohenet.

[9] Kohenet Deborah J. Grenn, "Lilith's Fire: Examining Original Sources of Power Re-defining Sacred Texts as Transformative Theological Practice," *Feminist Theology* 16, no. 1 (2007): 44, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0966735007082514. Explanation in brackets is Grenn's.

[10] "2013 Kohenet Smicha," video, 11:24, posted by Kohenet Hebrew Priestess Training Institute, August 6, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nP6ev1j8TQ.

enfranchised. Grenn argues, "After all, if we are made in God's image, what are we to think if there is no 'She' there? How are we to feel but invisible?"[11] She laments her own Jewish upbringing, which lacked what she believes is a rich history excluded from the mainstream canon:

> How much richer the tradition of my birth would have been had it included such explanations of sacred female imagery. How much fuller the picture could be if there was recognition and celebration, not denigration of our pagan roots...How life-changing it would have been to have studied Raphael Patai's "The Hebrew Goddess" as a teenager, at the same time I was confirmed—and to have learned that Asherah's[12] statue was present in the temple for no less than 236 years, two-thirds of the time the temple stood.[13]

Grenn touches on an idea foundational to the Kohenet movement: that there was a parallel structure of women's leadership and literature that has been largely excluded from the Jewish canon. This is an important revelation for the Kohanot, because the existing structure of Jewish communal life is intensely patriarchal, to the point of being unconducive to female liberation. Grenn insists,

> we must ask ourselves again and again: Whose worldviews shape our values and belief systems; what historical and social lens did the biblical writers and 'sages' see through, and whose voice is it that we really hear in the Bible and subsequent texts held as canon.[14]

Hammer, in the introduction to her essay "The Prophetess as Priestess: Women, Revelation, and the Sacred," compares the lost women's history to the lost Hebrew letter *ghayin*:

> For me, the ghayin is a symbol of what is missing from the spiritual traditions we have received. Its twisted cord shape is the umbilicus, the missing truths of our mothers — and it is the connection to the sacred,

[11] Deborah Grenn, "Claiming the Title Kohenet: Examining Goddess Judaism and the Role of the Priestess Through Conversations with Contemporary Spiritual Leaders," *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 8, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/claiming-title-kohenet-examining-goddess-judaism/docview/200820938/se-2?accountid=9703.

[12] Asherah is a mother goddess who appears in ancient Semitic religion.

[13] Grenn, "Claiming the Title," 6.

[14] Grenn, "Lilith's Fire," 45.

> which must be rediscovered in every time and place. It reminds me of the voices of prophetesses, often hidden under the surface of history.[15]

The *ghayin*, both in form and in plight, is reminiscent of the lost tradition. Hammer brings in several texts that point to the existence and repression of the women's roles she says have been lost. She quotes a section from the Talmud that makes a pun on the names of Deborah and Huldah, two prophetesses, to make the point that they are arrogant.[16] She posits that the rabbis take issue with these women because their status as prophetesses, women who actually conversed with God, may serve to undermine their own status as rabbinic figures who have not.[17] She also points out that there are records of female spiritual leaders in Safed, Israel. She explains that, because the kabbalists often invoked the *Shechinah*, the Divine Feminine, they were likely more comfortable with female leadership than the sages were.[18] Grenn concludes her paper "Claiming the Title Kohenet" with a poignant line about the *Shechinah*:

> Shekhinah, the female divine presence, like Lilith, is said to live in exile. Rita Gross writes of the Kabbalistic notion of exile, galut – the idea that the fundamental reality and pain of our existence is a result of alienation of the masculine from the feminine in God.[19]

The Kohanot seek to rectify this problem—to reunite the feminine and masculine aspects of God by bringing the hidden feminine traditions to light.

The Kohanot draw much of their inspiration from the positions women occupy in the Bible. One example is Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. Miriam is directly related to the priestly clan, the *Kohanim*. The Kohanot do not claim to be descended from the priestly clan, nor do they claim that their reclamation is exclusive to, or even mainly based in, priestly traditions; still, they find the language connection significant and posit that perhaps Miriam is a

[15] Jill Hammer, "The Prophetess as Priestess: Women, Revelation, and the Sacred," *Kerem* 14 (2014), 90, http://kerem.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Hammer-Shere-Final-PDF.pdf. The letter *ghayin*: ע

[16] Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 14b.

[17] Hammer, "The Prophetess," 106.

[18] Ibid., 107-108.

[19] Grenn, "Claiming the Title," 9.

Mosaic stand-in for the priestessly figures in Israel.[20] Further, Hammer asserts that the story of Miriam is microcosmic of the female struggle in Judaism. She brings in a text from Numbers 12:

> and [God] said, 'Hear these My words: When a prophet of the LORD arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the LORD…'[21]

Hammer argues,

> this passage speaks not only to Moses' privileged place above Miriam and Aaron, but to the privileging of Mosaic prophecy (associated with Torah and the later textual tradition) above dreams and visions such as the ones Miriam and Aaron claim to have.[22]

The Kohanot also draw from Chuldah, another prophetess. She is the wife of "Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, who is called *shomer ha-begadim*"[23] ("keeper of the clothes"). Likely, Hammer suggests, he is the caretaker of the priestly garments. This connects both Shallum and Chuldah, by extension, to the priestly clan, the *kohanim*. Again there is a linguistic connection between *kohanim* and Kohanot. Part of Chuldah's role is to approve a Torah scroll to make sure everything written inside is correct. This is not, Hammer argues, a system in which leadership roles are naturally carved out for women; rather, this represents "a co-opting of [the] prophetesses,"[24] who likely held some beliefs considered deviant by the Torah, in order to encourage other women to buy into the system set by the Mosaic tradition. In honor of Miriam, Chuldah, and the five other female prophetesses in the Bible, the Kohenet Hebrew Priestess Institute's core curriculum includes the role and functions of the prophetess.[25]

Deborah, another recognized prophetess, is lauded by many for her trailblazing role as the only known female judge in the Bible.

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[20] Hammer, "The Prophetess," 101.
[21] Num. 12:6-8 JPS 1985
[22] Hammer, "The Prophetess," 101-2.
[23] Ibid., 104.
[24] Ibid., 104-5.
[25] "Kohenet Training Program: Curriculum," Kohenet Hebrew Priestess Institute, accessed June 1, 2021, https://www.kohenet.com/training.

The Kohanot claim that in addition to being a judge, a role shaped by men, she is also an oracle. Hammer explains both symbolic and linguistic connections that lead her to this conclusion:

> In Deborah's time, there is no one central shrine but a variety of sacred places. Since the location of her tree is so carefully given, Deborah is probably a shrine priestess who gives oracles to those who come to her. The name Deborah may be related to Greek words for priestess that mean 'bee;' the Delphic oracle was called 'bee.' The Hebrew word for 'bee' is related to 'shrine' (*devir*) and 'word' (*davar*) — which strengthens the theory that Deborah is a shrine oracle. She would have presided over shrine inquiries and requests for prophecy. While there is no mention of goddesses in the story, it should be noted that the palm tree was sacred to Asherah.[26]

This passage contains a much more involved play on words, a motif common to many occult groups, than the prior two examples. There is, Hammer argues, a hidden truth within Deborah's name. Hammer adds that the tree is a symbol of the pagan goddess Asherah. According to Hammer's argument, this symbol shows that, although Deborah is entrenched in the system considered today to have been the mainstream, i.e., the system of judges, she also engages in women's cultic worship of other goddesses, including Asherah. There is a lesser-known Deborah in the Bible, as well; she appears in Genesis and is Rebekah's wet nurse. Hammer brings this Deborah in, too, to cement her argument:

> Interestingly, the matriarch Rebekah probably visits a similar oracle when she goes to "seek God" in Genesis to determine why her pregnancy has become so difficult. Rebekah's nurse, who travels with Rebekah to Canaan when Rebekah marries, is also named Deborah, and that Deborah is also associated with a sacred tree: Allon-Bakhut. This connection is too faint to fully interpret, but it could be that Deborah was a title for oracles in ancient Israel and that oracle-shrines centered on sacred trees.[27]

Hammer connects one verse in the story, in which Rebekah seeks answers from God about her pregnancy troubles, to another later on, in which her wet nurse Deborah, whose name linguistically

[26] Hammer, "The Prophetess," 103.
[27] Ibid.

suggests that she may be an oracle, is buried. Based on these examples, Hammer argues, women named Deborah tend to be associated with trees, often used as sacred shrines in the ancient Near East and usually associated with Asherah. These practices appear in modern Kohenet practice, with learning about the "shrinekeeper" being a part of the Institute's core curriculum,[28] and in the movement's emphasis on earth-based worship.

In addition to the homages to biblical women, the Kohanot incorporate a radical feminism into their practice that largely differs from the feminism found within mainstream Jewish denominations, even among liberal circles. The Kohanot believe not in sameness as a measure of equality, but rather in the growth of a woman-centered world parallel to the male-centered one that is equal in terms of distinction and respect, but not characteristically similar. This, however, can be tricky; it is important to the Kohanot that the role and attributes of females not be essentialized. While they do believe that the womanness of women makes them fundamentally different from men—and therefore better suited for this gender-specific leadership role—they do not believe that all women are the same. In her piece, "Wedding the Dragon,"[29] Hammer laments the fact that the feminist project has not yet been able to express the multiplicity of women's experiences. She extends her desires for the feminist project onto descriptions of the *Shechinah*:

> If we speak about Goddess as mother, we should also speak about Goddess as activist, scholar, hermit, crone, or little girl—and we should speak about male and other faces of God in similarly diverse ways. God-language, and Goddess-language, should challenge, surprise, and mystify us, not box us in.[30]

The Kohenet movement's theology draws on queer theory to simultaneously sharpen and expand the understanding of both the Divine and the role of Kohanot. Hammer quotes Gregg

[28] "Kohenet Training Program: Curriculum."

[29] Rabbi Jill Hammer, "Wedding the Dragon: The Powerful Feminine as Seen in Jewish Women's Dreams," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 23, no. 1 (2019): 107, https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2018.1499312.

[30] Ibid.

Drinkwater, co-editor of the book *Torah Queeries*, who defines queer theory in the following way: "queer theory ... challenges norms, upends hierarchies, and trains people to read against the grain."[31] While queer theory certainly addresses identity and sexuality, it is not exclusively concerned with those issues. Queer theory, according to Drinkwater, is a way of subverting the norms of society, whether heterosexuality and cisnormativity or other existing power structures, including the religious patriarchy that leads to an understanding of God as male.

It is in light of both radical feminism and queer theory that the Kohanot work to establish their own interpretation of the traditional canon to create their own body of literature. Grenn writes,

> As women increasingly take on the challenges of exegesis, hermeneutics and literary analysis, and write liturgy and midrashim, new interpretations of traditional canon and patriarchal tales, we redefine the term 'sacred text'.[32]

If the Kohanot relied solely on the limited number of female-centered texts, or even texts that include female leaders, in the existing Jewish canon, they might not be able to produce enough material to create a new literature.

But they have another avenue: dreams. Dreams have long been used by the Jewish people as a sort of prophecy; Kabbalist Hayyim Vital recorded the prophetic dreams of women in his diary, and, more recently, Freud, the father of modern psychology, himself a Jewish person, believed in the revelatory power of dreams.[33] The Talmud, too, acknowledges that dreams are one-sixtieth prophecy.[34] This, for the Kohanot, is not only a validation of their position; it is a challenge to established power structures. Hammer argues that the rabbis of the Talmud, upheld by a particular patriarchal hierarchy, recognized the power in dreams, but did not wish to publicize the prophetic weight that dreams hold. Had they done so, the authority they claimed to possess might be

[31] Ibid.
[32] Grenn, "Lilith's Fire," 37.
[33] Hammer, "Wedding the Dragon," 109.
[34] Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 57b

undermined; everybody dreams, not just rabbis! This text, Hammer posits, is evidence of the rabbinic repression of other forms of spiritual leadership and ways to worship and connect with God. Ascribing prophetic significance to dreams, then, is a queering of the norm, as Hammer asserts,

> we can queer this ambivalent view of dreams—challenging the ambivalent view as the norm—by allowing dreams to overflow into sacred practice rather than making them subservient to religious doctrine.[35]

Dreams range from those with ordinary themes and settings to those with more fantastical imagery. One Kohenet named Elisheva dreamed a seemingly ordinary dream, although its interpretation lent itself to a more intense symbolism underneath the surface. She explained,

> Traveling in Turkey, I had a powerful dream about a bearded father busying himself in the house, and I went down to the basement, in the rocks, underground to find my mother writing and working next to a goddess shrine. The symbols speak for themselves.[36]

Hammer interprets Elisheva's dream in the following way:

> This dream reflects a task of the priestess: recovering the face of the feminine buried in our tradition and in human history. The mother in this dream is not one mother but all of our mothers. The basement is the underworld, the world of the earth and the sacred feminine, and the basement is also the repressed image of the mother at the core of civilization.[37]

Hammer herself had a dream that has also helped to affirm and add to Kohenet theology and liturgy. She explains,

> When I was twenty-five years old, I had one such [prophetic, elucidating] dream. In it, I waited at a cocktail party for a guest of honor who turned out to be God. When God appeared at the door, she was an immense, glowing, pregnant woman...The next morning, I applied to rabbinical school.[38]

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[35] Hammer, "Wedding the Dragon," 108.
[36] Ibid., 109.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 108.

This is certainly not a typical understanding of God; nor is a cocktail party a typical location for a divine encounter. The encounter of a pregnant, feminine Divine at a cocktail party (which is not a very pregnancy-friendly locale), then, lends itself to a significant queering of both religious and societal norms.

There is another recurring motif in the dreams of Kohanot: the dragon. Often, the dragon dreams lend themselves to a more direct queering because they center on sexuality. Hammer had another dream in which she was engaged in a holy union, much like the mystical notion of a holy union between the Divine Feminine and the Divine Masculine; but in her dream, the holy union took place between her and a female dragon. She explains,

> A dragon lifts me up into the air and holds me in a dazzling, sparkling cloud. I cannot exactly see the dragon but I know she is there, and I know that what we are doing is making love. The union between us is happening on the inside of my body rather than the outside. I am amazed, in awe, delighted.[39]

Concerning the union between two female beings, Hammer further explains:

> This by itself queers the dream in a rather direct way—it is a union between two feminine beings. We are human female and dragon female—another unexpected and perhaps queer coupling, which gives me a new relationship to Goddess as other and alike at the same time.[40]

This also queers the notion of "'*Adam veChava chutz Lilit*'/Adam and Eve, out Lilith!'"[41]—the idea that the lover/mother is inside, and the demon must remain outside, for dragons are much more similar to depictions of demons than of lovers.

Another Kohenet named Phoebe had a dream that, at the crux, contains the same theme of holy union with a dragon (which, in her dream, is more of a sea monster), although hers contains more explicitly erotic imagery.

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[39] Ibid., 110.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 109-110.

> Phoebe knows she must become one with the sea monster. She inserts it into her vagina—implying sexual congress, or perhaps a kind of reverse birth in which the sea monster becomes part of her body.[42]

There is phallic imagery here; the sea monster's tail is reminiscent of a penis. Yet Phoebe, too, has a strong feeling that the sea monster is female. The phallic imagery lends itself to a further queering of the notions of what makes a person—or a being—female. The queer imagery surrounding the dragon represents the queering of the traditional Jewish canon and of the mainstream Jewish infrastructure that the Kohanot hope to accomplish.

Because of its symbolic importance in the Kohenet movement, the dragon has found its way into Kohenet liturgy. The poem "Tehomot Rolls," was incorporated to honor the dragon of the *tehomot* ("deeps"):

> tehomot rolls
> all day
> all night
> bringing it in
> bringing it out
> bringing it up
> bringing it down ...
> deep on the void
> void in the steep
> curve of the wave
> lift me awake
> rock me to sleep…[43]

This is but one example from an emerging liturgical canon filled with references to a new repertoire of imagery important to the Hebrew Priestesshood.

Most, if not all, Kohenet liturgy uses female pronouns for the Divine. This reflects the sense of alienation that much of the movement's constituency has felt in mainstream Jewish spaces,

[42] Ibid., 113.
[43] Ibid., 114-115.

which rely on masculine depictions of God.[44] Some incantations include lines such as "My body is the body of the Shechina,"[45] reflecting both the worship of the Divine Feminine and the traditional idea that human beings are made in the image of the Divine. Additionally, the Kohanot often change the gendered language in blessings, while keeping the traditional structure. Whereas a traditional blessing begins: "Blessed are You, LORD Our God, King of the Universe," the Kohenet blessing reads: "Blessed are You, *Shechinah*, Our God, Spirit of the Universe."[46] In the video of the 2013 Kohenet ordination, the camera pans to a table set up for ritual handwashing. A placard on the table displays the traditional blessing for handwashing, but in this version, all pronouns, verbs, and references to God have been changed to the feminine form.[47]

In the same video, an ordinee, Rinah Rachel Galper, prepares an altar and recites a line traditionally said at the end of the *Amidah*, the central prayer in Jewish prayer services: "May He who makes peace in His universe grant peace to us and all of Israel…"[48] In this video, the pronouns and verbs are changed so that it comes to mean: "May She who makes peace in Her universe grant peace to us and all of Israel…"

Other prayers incorporate themes from traditional Jewish prayers, but look completely different in form. In Kohenet Taya Shere's "Priestess Blessing," a riff on the traditional Priestly Blessing, she sings,

> shekhinah / el shaddai[49]
>
> ...
>
> summoning embodying sacred she who dwells within
>
> we celebrate we co-create me and the goddess we are kin.[50]

[44] Yonat Shimron, "Jewish Priestess Movement Seeks to Reclaim the Divine Feminine," *Religion News Service*, October 11, 2016, https://religionnews.com/2016/10/11/jewish-priestess-movement-seeks-to-reclaim-the-divine-feminine/.

[45] Rae Abileah, Bekah Starr, and Chaplain Elizabeth Berger, "Priestesses at the Parliament of the World's Religions 2018," Kohenet Hebrew Priestess Institute, last modified November 19, 2018, https://www.kohenet.com/articles-podcasts-blog/parliament2018.

[46] "2013 Kohenet," video, 0:40.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 4:22-32.

[49] "El Shaddai" is a name for God.

The song has little similarity in form or style to the original Priestly Blessing; regardless, it serves to replace a piece of the male-centric liturgy with a female-centered prayer that reminds those who sing it that they are made in the image of the Divine—who is feminine.

Another theme that appears both in the liturgy and the literature of the Kohanot is the idea of the psychic unity of womankind. They believe that feminism is a unifying force that transcends cultural barriers. In this spirit, they are comfortable with worship of pagan gods, despite the fact that all mainstream Jewish denominations agree that worship of other gods directly violates the fundamental monotheistic tenet of Judaism, as recorded in the Ten Commandments.[51] However, since the Kohanot believe that the prioritizing of the Mosaic tradition is synonymous with the repression of women's cultic participation, they do not put so much stock in strict monotheistic practice. One ritualist named Anya Silverman, who combines Jewish and pagan worship in her own practice, explained her worship to Grenn in the following way:

> I pray to the Goddess but it's not like prayers that one says in synagogue. I do invoke the Goddess; I do ritual about or with the Goddess." When I [Grenn] asked her how she reconciles those beliefs with her Judaism, she said: "I don't. It's part of my cellular memory and who I am. Holding the contradiction is something I learn to do as I get older...I can live as one drawn to Goddess spirituality and simultaneously be culturally Jewish.[52]

Grenn tells an anecdote from her own family's Passover celebration, to which she brought a statue of the pagan goddess Asherah:

> Several years ago, when I brought a figure of Asherah to the family Seder table on Passover, she was relegated to a sideboard, lest anyone get the idea we were worshiping her. At that time, when I taught a class in a Jewish setting, I did not feel comfortable building an altar when I taught because it would not have been welcomed as a means of

[50] Taya Mâ Shere, "Priestess Blessing," https://tayama.bandcamp.com/track/priestess-blessing
[51] Exod. 20:3
[52] Grenn, "Claiming the Title," 2-3.

> connecting with divinity; nor was it recognized as sacred or something Jews did! This discomfort was part of my upbringing, as we were taught, both as girls and as daughters of a survivor and refugee to 'not make waves.' Today, I not only build altars, I lead menarche rites in synagogue space and wherever else I am called upon to do them.[53]

Grenn is not suggesting that the Mosaic tradition allows for worship of Asherah, but that Asherah is, in fact, worshipped by Israelite women in the Bible, and to claim that she is not, regardless of the taboo-status of worshipping her, is ahistorical.

Because the Kohanot do not see a contradiction between pagan goddess worship and Jewish Goddess worship, Kohanot are able to engage in cross-cultural worship and ritual activities that mainstream Jewish groups consider to be *avodah zarah*.[54] This is more than recognition of and respect for differences; the Kohenet movement welcomes ideas from other cultures into Kohenet communities and works to incorporate both ancient Israelite goddess worship and goddess worship from other pagan cultures:

> The Jewish priestess movement...embraces those ancient Israelite women who worshipped fertility goddesses condemned by the prophets, as well as modern teachings from various Earth-based religions with their healers and ritualists. Many of the women who have undergone priestess training say they've been able to reclaim their Judaism after years spent dabbling in other spiritual practices such as Buddhism, or various Earth-based religions.[55]

In fact, at the Parliament of the World's Religions, the Kohanot broke ritual bread with the pagan group engaging in earth-based worship next door to where they prayed:

> Toward the end of the service we were pouring grape juice and preparing the challah and realizing that we did not have enough to offer everyone some after kiddush and motzi.[56] At that very moment, in walked a priestess of the Pagan tradition — her group had been also leading morning prayers in the room next door, and she had come to offer us a large platter of honey-soaked gluten-free bread and a goblet

[53] Ibid., 6.
[54] *Avodah zarah*, literally "strange worship," refers to idolatry.
[55] Shimron, "Jewish Priestess."
[56] *Motzi* is the blessing said over bread.

> of fresh apple juice! This is the kind of synchronicity/synergy that was happening at the Parliament regularly![57]

The incorporation of outside pagan culture has also found its way into Kohenet liturgy. Kohenet Batya Diamond produced a video entitled, "Pathways of A Hebrew Priestess," in which song can be heard in the background with the words, "*Eretz, Ruach, Mayim, Eish*"[58] ("Earth, Air, Water, Fire"), the four earthly elements, which are usually connected to ancient Greek philosophy. The inclusion of the four earthly elements into their liturgy signifies the Kohanot's commitment both to earth-based Jewish worship and to the universal oneness of womanhood.

The divergence of the Kohenet movement from the mainstream Jewish societal infrastructure makes it attractive to a significant number of people. Kohenet beliefs and practices often come into direct conflict with what are understood to be fundamental tenets of Jewish belief, causing the Kohanot to often be relegated to the fringe of both Jewish communal life and Jewish communal consciousness. Perhaps, though, mainstream Jewish denominational groups should listen to the concerns of the Kohanot, for the advent of the Kohenet movement is a result of discontentment with the patriarchal origins and tendencies of normative Jewish communal leadership and canonical and liturgical structure. It is therefore irrelevant whether or not the occult breed of Judaism they aim to reclaim actually existed; both their lore and their willingness to enact drastic change to traditional Jewish practice represent a desire for a voice, both in Jewish history and in modern Jewish life.

[57] Abileah, Starr, and Berger, "Priestesses at the Parliament."

[58] "Batya Diamond: Pathways of a Hebrew Priestess," video, posted by Batya Diamond Music, January 21, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DobpTfPkvK0.

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