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# "The King's Daughter is All Glorious Within": Female Modesty in Judaic-Themed Israeli Cinema

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In the latter months of 2011, the issue of female marginalization within Judaism became the focus of a heated debate in Israeli public discourse. During this period, the national press reported on a variety of incidents involving Judaic[1] exclusionary practices: for example, male Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers purposely leaving an official ceremony because it involved a female singing performance; ultra-Orthodox men spitting on a thirteen-year-old girl who was dressed "indecently"; and women being harassed on buses for not observing gender separation by moving to the back. These and other similar occurrences were denounced by secular politicians and media, and even prominent figures within the observant community spoke against the spread of segregation. Concurrently, Israeli citizens took to the streets on more than one occasion in support of the victims of Judaic discrimination.

The social uproar around these events signals a growing awareness within Israeli society of the patriarchal facets of Judaic practice and their control and oppression of women. This understanding recognizes that the Bible, as a text written by and for men, situates women as the quintessential Other, and thus acts as the condition for an institutional marginalization of womanhood that covers all spheres of Jewish religious life. With reference to this state of affairs, the Judaic demand for sexually-based *tzniut* (modesty), visible in the aforementioned incidents, has become particularly important for Israeli feminist critique. As Shira Wolosky explains, Judaism's modesty discourse has defined the danger of women as "that of *'ervah*, a nakedness that contains an erotic element and requires covering."[2] In protection of a supposed male vulnerability, the Judaic world sought to contain this danger by imposing "detailed disciplines [on] women, regulating their seating in the synagogue, eating at feasts, and positioning in recreational and education settings, alongside myriad and multiplying regulations of dress, hair covering, greetings, deportment and, in the ultra-Orthodox world, also work spaces and public travel."[3] These measures, which may be collected under the general heading of *mechitzah* (separation), engender Foucauldian "analytic spaces" that "provide fixed positions… and establish operational links"[4] as means of social regulation. As such, they

become obvious targets for the feminist appreciation of female subjectivity under Judaism.

Cognizant of the oppressive implications of the *mechitzah*, religious feminist discourse does not call for its abolishment but rather attempts to reinterpret it; for example, by looking at modesty-regulated spaces as offering opportunities for women to "express and strengthen a self-conscious identity,"[5] or by expanding the purview of modesty to all members of the community so as to help them "view themselves [not] according to the images of each other that have been generated through generations of cagey anxiety and misguided notions, but in the far more forgiving gaze of the divine."[6] In contrast, Israeli secular feminist discourse, as reflected through the 2011 public debate on female marginalization, has been largely uninterested in such reasoning. Instead, it has defined feminism and Judaism as fundamentally incompatible, and therefore offered the breaking of *mechitzah* as the only proper solution for the religious woman's plight.

This position did not emerge *ex nihilo*. Rather, we find it mirrored in the proliferation of contemporary Israeli films that aim, so it seems, to stage scenes where religious Jewish (or "Judaic") women transgress modesty norms in sexual and romantic contexts. As a genre, these filmic texts imagine observant women to be not only the principal victims of Israeli-Judaic reality, but also its primary challengers. Their challenge is seen as originating from a desire for sexual exploration—a desire that is deemed natural and thus inherently in conflict with Judaism's artificial laws of sexual management. Accordingly, these works place their characters on a collision course with Judaism's power structures, a process that ultimately necessitates they abandon their religiosity or live in painful tension with it.

The goal of the following pages is to evaluate this corpus of media texts as manifesting the current Israeli secular critique of Judaic androcentrism.[7] Through looking at several exemplary works—*Kadosh* (Gitai, 1999), *Oneg Shabbat* (*Sabbath Entertainment*, Brezis & Binnun, 2003), *Medurat Hashevet* (*Campfire*, Cedar, 2004), *Chametz* (Levi, 2010), and *Lemale et Hachalal* (*Fill the Void*, Burshtein, 2012)—this essay shows what it means for Israeli cinema to focus on the terms of modesty and reduce the spectrum of possible challenges against Judaism's patriarchal rule to the transgression of taboos within sexual/romantic settings. In this context, it argues that these films' commitment to expose the conventionally unexposed woman sets limits to their feminist agenda, and that as a result, their efficacy—and the efficacy of the discourse they represent—in confronting Judaic gender exclusion should be put into question.

## Gazing at the Image of an "Immodest" Jewish Woman

As the foundational Jewish text, the Bible pays relatively little attention to Jewish women. Its aforementioned androcentric nature leads it to establish narratives almost exclusively around male figures, placing female characters on the margins. These characters, in turn, function mainly as masculine con-

structs, reduced to various stereotypes of the Eternal Feminine: the dutiful mother, daughter, and slave, or the shrewish mistress and harlot.[8] Within this conceptual framework, the Bible tends to foreground scenes of an "immodest" sexual nature, which play into male fantasies about seduction, intercourse, and rape. Following Laura Mulvey, biblical scholar J. Cheryl Exum argued that this perspective places the Jewish woman at the mercy of a penetrating scopophilic gaze. Exemplary of this ocular economy is the famous scene where David watches the bathing Bathsheba. In this scene, Bathsheba is reduced to her physical features—to the fact that she is "very beautiful"[9]—and becomes an object of "to-be-looked-at-ness." Concurrently, viewing here emerges as "one-sided, giving [David] the advantage and the position of power; he sees her but she does not see him."[10] The (male) reader, in turn, is more than "invited to take David's symbolic position as the focalizer of the gaze: he can look through David's eyes; he can fantasize himself in David's place. The woman is naked for his pleasure."[11] Such is the compromised position, Exum argues, of many other women in Judaism's most sacred text.

For all its voyeurism, the Bible's descriptions of immodest Jewish women are often relatively tame. Yet even in an unembellished state, these depictions succeeded in igniting the non-Jewish imagination with regard to the sexual potency of "the Jewess." Of particular significance in this context was the cultural trope of *la belle Juive*. In modern occidental literature, the "beautiful Jewess" was "ubiquitously conflated with the Oriental woman, and recognized by her stylized sensual beauty: her large dark eyes, abundant hair, and languid expression."[12] Her attractiveness served as a marker of her purity and nobility, creating the image of an idealized Jew worthy of inclusion into civilized Western culture (e.g., Rebecca in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*; 1820.) Yet, as Sander Gilman asserts, it also functioned as "a visible sign of her danger to all human beings,"[13] aligning her with the seductive femme fatale archetype (e.g., Salomé in Oscar Wilde's eponymous play; 1893.)

The hyper-eroticization of the Jewess within non-Jewish culture is especially evident in Western pictorial tradition, which has augmented the Bible's voyeuristic gaze. The story of Bathsheba and David provided, according to Exum, "both theme and pretext for artistic representations of a naked woman."[14] In these paintings, Bathsheba was placed on display in a manner that asserts her supposed exhibitionism and denies her subjectivity. Consequently, the spectators "are invited to identify with David's perspective by means of the woman's body, which signifies his sexual arousal."[15] This visual strategy, which offered a way of controlling the threat of the Jewess to a susceptible patriarchy, was applied to the pictorial representation of not only biblical, but also modern Jewish, women and thus came to be the overarching model for visualizing Semitic femininity within the Western-Gentile imaginary.

As opposed to this ideology of voyeuristic display, Judaic culture mobilized the Bible's tales of immodest women so as to support the *mechitzah*'s particular order of (in)visibility. Within Judaic thought, Melissa Raphael argues, a clear dichotomy was established along gender lines: man is considered spiritual, while woman is "essentially physical and sexual."[16] In being more phys-

ical, the woman is also inherently more visible than the man. This visibility, in turn, marks her as a threat to Judaic masculinity, since it is liable to "draw men's attention away from God's presence, especially in worship, towards the finitude of nature."[17] Accordingly, the real problem with women seems less to do with "female sexuality as such, but [with] the public *spectacle* of female sexuality,"[18] which brings the feminine closer to the category of idol. In an effort to prevent the operation of idolatry, separation is therefore introduced so as to hide the Jewish woman from sight.

This rule of separation functions not only in the realm of everyday Judaic life, but also in artistic representation. In contrast to the aforementioned Western paintings, Jewish art, especially before the apex of Jewish emancipation, often denied women visibility. Consequently, according to Raphael, within Jewish art the frame has been dominated by devout men, who function much like Christian icons, "defining the Jewish posture in relation to God and properly hypostasizing or summarizing the appearance of Jewish worship."[19] On the rare occasions that devout women were displayed during this period of relative paucity, their representation seemed detached from the Judaic world. In the absence of a clear iconographic tradition, the Jewish woman assumed a blank expression and "an air of vacancy,"[20] appearing "ordinary in relation to the specialness of the holy."[21] Even when visible in Jewish art, Raphael asserts, women remained a "visual lack."[22]

The exclusion of women by means of *mechitzah* seems to subvert the voyeuristic gaze, and indeed, religious apologetics have argued for the value of this invisibility as a protective measure against the harmful effects of female objectification. While this reasoning is not entirely false, it nevertheless disavows the oppressive function of female invisibility within Judaism's patriarchal rule: namely, that by keeping them as "an image of an absence,"[23] women are denied agency, which is otherwise reserved only for men. Furthermore, while the actual-ocular voyeuristic gaze is denied in Judaism, its textual equivalent, which may be traced back to the Bible's description of immodest women, continues to prevail. Thus, as Tova Hartman explains, the passionate and elaborate discussion of modesty within rabbinical literature "dismembers" women, constituting them solely "by the potential effects of their parts upon the spiritual lives of men."[24] Such methods not only allow religious men to reduce women to objects, but also to release libidinal energy under the protective guise of "modesty lawmaking."

It is in relation to this religious regime of invisibility and objectification that the operation of contemporary Israeli films on Judaic women may be best understood. Thus, as will be shown, these texts seem geared toward providing observant women with visibility after being deprived of it during the long history of Jewish art. This strategy, however, raises more questions than it provides answers. Through carefully inspecting its workings then, we may ask: what can be made of the filmmakers' choice to *expose* their observant heroines almost exclusively in romantic, sexual, and/or erotic contexts? Does this approach not draw Israeli cinema closer to non-Jewish pictorial tradition, which capitalized on the thrill of unveiling the traditionally hidden, presum-

ably desexualized Jewish women, in the process of breaking sacred taboos? Is this not fundamentally a matter of moving from a "religious" to a "western male gaze,"[25] with the major difference being that the former denies agency by forcing women to be "modest," while the latter does so by forcing them to be "immodest"?

**Judaic Women on the Israeli Screen**

Israeli cinema has generally attempted to avoid a representation of the Judaic woman as *belle Juive*, and has seldom aligned itself explicitly with the matrix of desire and anxiety that this trope represents. Rather than reducing her to a misogynist symbol, these filmic texts purport to provide a more nuanced, and affirmative, account of this woman as she challenges the norms of traditional Judaism, particularly in the context of sexual behavior. Yet, as previously insinuated, such depictions also often tacitly implicate their viewers in the basic perspective that underlies the *belle Juive* stereotype. As a result, the image of Judaic immodesty becomes key to understanding these texts' broader commitments to patriarchy.

The topic of modest sexual behavior is raised in Michal Brezis and Oded Binnun's award-winning short *Sabbath Entertainment* through the depiction of a "sinful" act, taking place on God's holy day of rest. Rachel, the film's protagonist, is an adolescent girl who is unsatisfied with the sexual constraints of her religious surroundings. On a Friday night, she breaks the taboos of the Sabbath by secretly joining her two girlfriends for a night on the town. On the way to their destination, the car skids off the road, jettisoning its occupants into a nearby cotton field. Terrified of being discovered, Rachel abandons her two friends and hitches a ride back home. There, rather than report the accident to her parents and siblings, she joins them for kiddush as if nothing had happened. Soon enough, however, the police arrive at the family's doorstep and notify Rachel that the accident claimed her friend's life. Reduced to tears, she is taken away in a squad car that passes through the streets of her religious neighborhood.

As figured in this film, the Judaic world is a space of strict corporeal regulation. Its constraints are evident in Rachel's attire—shapeless clothing meant to cover all body parts—as well as in her need to hide in fear that someone would spot her driving on the Sabbath. In the face of such limitations, Rachel displaces her desires onto the secular world, where romantic interactions can be conducted in full visibility. The transition into this realm of visibility is marked by Rachel's change of clothes, which she presumably performs in the car after departing her neighborhood. The filmmakers foreground this shift by shooting Rachel from close range in an upward scanning motion that begins with her (bare) thighs and ends with her face. This visual strategy forcefully highlights Rachel's attractive physique and stands the risk of her objectification. Yet the scene's objectifying impulse is subsequently mitigated by an unexpected gesture on Rachel's part when, after noticing the absence of her

makeup kit, she reaches down, draws her menstrual blood and applies it on her mouth as a form of lipstick. The use of blood here is undoubtedly meant to reference Judaism's definition of the menstruating woman (*niddah*) as a site of extreme and harmful impurity. In drawing her own menstrual blood, Rachel thus positions herself against a tradition which forces upon women a regime of obsessive cleanliness "in order to make [their bodies] kosher." Rather than treating menstruation as "some essential female weakness,"[26] Rachel "wears" her blood as a proud symbol of "immodest" womanhood.

At the same time, this gesture can be understood through Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. Like feces, vomit, and other "bodily wastes," blood belongs for Kristeva to the "abject," the place where the separations that constitute the symbolic order are fundamentally blurred. Menstrual blood, because of its obvious tie to female reproduction, poses a particular threat to "the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference."[27] In dissolving sexual differences, the menstrual blood conjures the presence of a boundless womb that is not determined solely in relation to the phallus, and which is the origin for "the phantasmatic power of the mother, that archaic Mother Goddess who actually haunted the imagination of a [Hebrew] nation at war with surrounding polytheism."[28] By foregrounding her blood, Rachel taps into this "phantasmatic power" that Judaic patriarchy has sought to regulate. This liminal position, in turn, leads to a further dissolution of sexual boundaries, when Rachel, with lips tinted blood red, kisses her friend on the mouth. The quasi-lesbian moment—shot in soft-focus so as to emphasize its boundary-blurring nature—thus asserts the existence of a female bond over against patriarchal partitions.

This bond, however, is severed by the car crash, which may literally be seen, in the language of the film, as *deus ex machine*. Here "divine intervention" serves as retribution for the celebration of the profane, and accordingly, the menstrual blood that previously functioned as a marker of defiance is now replaced with the blood of Rachel's wounded friends, a "mark of Cain" that she subsequently carries on her person. This accident also presents itself as another test, which Rachel ultimately fails—she abandons her friends and lies about it afterward—and then gets penalized for with her friend's death and her subsequent arrest. In this respect, the film seems to support a crime-and-punishment paradigm that establishes the legitimacy of Judaic discourses of sin and sacredness. This pattern, in turn, resonates with the basic religious function of the abject. Since the abject disturbs the clean and proper body, it is habitually pushed out. Similarly, when religions such as Judaism faced disturbances to the "identity, system, order"[29] of the social body, they symbolically contained them through "rites of defilement" that "take on the form of the *exclusion* of a substance (nutritive or linked to sexuality.)"[30] By ejecting the abject bodies of Rachel and her friends out of the car, *Sabbath Entertainment* likewise operates as a "rite of defilement." Hence, it is possible to draw parallels between it and modern horror films, which work, in Barbara Creed's words, "to separate the symbolic order from all that threatens its stability, particularly the mother and all that her universe signifies."[31]

This complex relationship between the proper and the abject is articulated evocatively in the film through the interplay between the colors white and red. At first, the red of Rachel's revealing blouse is restricted by her white sweater, in a manner that bespeaks the suppression of sin by religious government. The adding of the menstrual blood ups the ante in terms of redness, leading to the accident, which, not coincidentally, takes place in a field of white cotton. The result of this conflict is the appearance of blood on Rachel's white sweater, indicating that the proper and the abject, for all their differences, are inseparable. The reality of this coexistence is eliminated when Rachel cleans herself up, but reappears during the Sabbath kiddush scene, when, in the white living room, the father pours a glass of red wine. Turning blood into holy wine is a way to contain sin within sacredness, transforming it into something that it is not; yet the conjunction of the appearance of wine with Rachel's entrance in white attire into the white room seems to draw the power of sinful red out into the open. In this way, the film visually indicates the "objective frailty"[32] of the symbolic order, and asserts the need to redraw constantly its borders by suppressing the feminine abject.

Alon Levi's short film *Chametz* also takes up the issue of adolescent challenges to modesty rules, though situating it within the framework of a mother-daughter relationship. The film's young heroine Ayala leaves her all-girl religious boarding school to spend Passover break with her widowed mother Gila and younger sister Tutti. At home, she discovers that her mother has begun dating Eitan, a congenial divorced man. The unexpected masculine presence in the all-female household creates friction between daughter and mother: Gila's anxiety as to Ayala's potential promiscuity is heightened and Ayala reacts by sexualizing her seemingly innocuous relationship with Eitan. Tensions rise when, after leaving the Passover dinner table in a storm, Ayala lays her hand on Eitan's thigh as he attempts to console her, causing him to recoil. This subsequently leads Gila to break down in tears, and Ayala to reassure her of Eitan's love, in spite of the false impression she has attempted to create. In the end, they reconcile, with Ayala calling Gila "mother" in a tenderly loving voice.

As may be gleaned from the above, *Chametz* evocatively dramatizes Judaism's understanding of the female as caught between two polar opposites: the saint and the whore. The film argues that every transgression of Judaic modesty mores is placed under the rubric of prostitution, regardless of its actual sexual manifestation. It also reveals that this perspective, made to serve masculine desires and fears, is internalized by religious women, who, rather than give credence to the multivalent experience of womanhood, reduce each other and themselves into the saint-whore dichotomy. This becomes clear in the film's first scene, in the bathroom of Ayala's school, where, during a conversation with other classmates, she demonstratively applies lipstick to her lips. The measure seems a deliberate transgression of modesty laws, wherein Ayala owns up to the role of the prostitute rather than have it be thrust upon her; and appropriately, her classmates' response is chastisement, an indication of the extent to which the modesty discourse has been assimilated by these young women. Ayala does not respond to this criticism by withdrawal, but

rather, as in *Sabbath Entertainment*, ups the ante by kissing one of her friends on the mouth. The call for a female bond, however, fails to garner support, partly because of the power of institutional regulation (as manifested in the subsequent scene through a teacher's request that Ayala button up her shirt), and partly because, in over-inhabiting the role of prostitute, the protagonist cannot imagine a way out of the whore-saint paradigm.

In the family, this paradigm is repeated. Unable to recognize variation in female experience, Gila automatically perceives her daughter as a sexual threat. The mother's first response to seeing her child at home is to replicate the teacher's regulatory gesture of buttoning up her blouse. Following that, she explains that Eitan's presence has "changed the circumstances" in their household, thereby revealing how the entry of a male gaze automatically positions all the adult members of the female home in relation to the modesty discourse. Afterward, when Ayala asks to be transferred to a more liberal school, Gila refuses on the grounds that she would be "less protected" there. This argument, in turn, is indicative of an internalized paternalistic perspective wherein "men are seen as sexually driven compulsives requiring utmost and constant vigilance to keep them in any kind of bounds, while women are seen as provokers of sin."[33] This underlying concept becomes evident later when, during a scene that resonates with the film's opening, Gila demands that Ayala take off the lipstick she applied upon herself and Tutti; and after finding herself again overburdened with suspicion as to Ayala's "loose" ways, she calls her daughter a "whore."

Where *Sabbath Entertainment* explored the volatile nature of religious modesty through a celebration of the abject, *Chametz* performs a similar procedure by foregrounding acts of purification. The film begins with Ayala cleaning the bathroom, an activity that ceases once she decides to fashion herself a lipstick-clad symbol of impurity; and then, in a later scene, she is asked to wash away her lipstick so as to restore her "modesty." The impulse to clean reaches its apex in the various Passover-related ceremonies of disposing *chametz* (unleavened bread). These acts, supervised by Eitan, epitomize the Judaic desire, clearly established in Mary Douglas's formative discussion of Leviticus, of preserving "the unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind,"[34] and by implication, of protecting the masculine social order. The film undermines this desire by pitting the rituals of cleaning against the growing sexual tension between Eitan and Ayala. In a scene that shows them washing utensils together, the linking of the sacred and the profane is made especially evident, since it allows for physical intimacy between the two characters in the context of purification. This exposes the interdependency between the aforementioned polar opposites, and serves as proof for Douglas's claim that situations which have "to be handled with washing and avoidances" often provoke "norms of behavior [that] are contradictory." Most of all in sexual matters, such norms exemplify "a case of wanting to have your cake and eat it too."[35]

The film does raise, however, the possibility of a utopian space beyond this dialectic. In one telling scene, Ayala is seen running after Tutti with a garden hose, playfully splashing her with water. The resulting atmosphere of

jest allows us to understand water as a vessel for female bonding rather than purification. This subversive potential is nevertheless curtailed when Eitan intervenes in Ayala and Tutti's play. Upon seeing Eitan, Ayala showers him with her hose, and he, in return, throws a bucket of water at her. The image of the drenched Ayala instantly causes Eitan to be alarmed, and leads Gila to order her daughter to remove herself from their presence. It is through Eitan's worried expression—and more fundamentally, through his intervention into an all-female setting—that the masculine gaze is powerfully reinscribed, and water is restored to its symbolic function within a system of purity.

This scene seems to highlight *Chametz*'s ambivalent stance toward the issue of sexuality and modesty. The film does expose the ritual of purification as restricting women to the position of prostitutes, yet at the same time, it portrays Ayala as conforming to this position, and in a way, justifying it. She is the one who initiates the "improper" intimacy, as when she hoses Eitan down in the abovementioned scene; it is her advances that determine the course of their interactions. And in this respect, Eitan, the representative of the Judaic male order, emerges as the victim of Ayala's sexual fantasies, while his contribution to her behavior is downplayed. Thus envisaged, the film's ending may be understood not as allowing for a radical space of mother-daughter intimacy but a recapitulation of the patriarchal order. Here, mother and daughter unite through the recognition of their ascribed social roles: Ayala admits that Gila's fears of her being a "whore" were somewhat justified; and Gila is reinstated in her matriarchal role when Ayala finally calls her "mother." Thus, if Eitan is absent from this scene, it is only because his physical presence is unnecessary, as the symbolic order that he represents is already embedded in Ayala and Gila's words.

Also discussing modesty in a familial setting is Joseph Cedar's sophomore feature *Campfire*. Set in Jerusalem in 1981, the film focuses on three members of a Religious-Zionist (Tsiyoni Dati) family: mother Rachel and her teenage daughters, Estie and Tammy. The recently widowed Rachel strives to strengthen her standing in the community by applying for residency in a settlement within occupied Samaria. To improve her chances, she seeks out a worthy candidate for remarriage. The search leads her to Yossi, an amiable virgin in his forties, and to Moshe Weinstock, a respected but unappealing cantor. While struggling to choose between the two suitors, Rachel enforces a strict regime of propriety upon her daughters. They, in turn, resist the mother's constraints: Estie through interactions with her soldier boyfriend, and Tammy through a budding romance with her classmate Raffi. In Tammy's case, this attraction leads her to attend Raffi's bonfire during the religious festivity of Lag B'omer, an encounter that results in a sexual attack by Raffi and his juvenile delinquent friends.[36] When news of the attack becomes public, Tammy is immediately singled out as a "whore." After Rachel understands that this perspective is also espoused by Motke, the chairman of the settlement association, she decides to withdraw her application. Subsequently, she returns to her "old life"—with Estie, who decided not to "go all the way" with her boyfriend, and Tammy, who decided to forgive Raffi and put the attack behind her—while adding Yossi as her new husband and father of the family.

As a portrait of 1980s Religious-Zionist society, Cedar's film is mainly focused on stressing this community's concern with the integrity of its collective center, its "tribal campfire." Unlike the more secular precincts of Israel, where greater social variation may be foregrounded, the impulse in this society has been to assert uniformity. At the heart of this uniform communal vision—judging by the dominant discourse of Religious-Zionism (Tsiyonut Datit), as espoused by its representative Motke—is an avowed adherence to heteronormative sexuality. Transgression of this norm, in turn, results in negative sanctions, which are distributed unequally. Thus, in terms of the attack, Motke does single out Raffi and his friends as immoral deviants who "should be taken care of"—a distinction that relates not only to their behavior, but also to their identity as Jews of Middle-Eastern descent (Mizrahi), the ethnic Others to the predominantly European-Ashkenazi, Religious-Zionist hegemony. Ultimately, however, it is Tammy who is defined by both Motke *and* her assailants as the true cause of the rape, proving that patriarchy crosses ethnic lines, and that in this community, women carry the lion's share of victimization and culpability.

Though repressive, the community's modesty discourse does not eradicate sexual desire. Quite the contrary: the film shows that the very suppression of sexuality encourages a flirtation with it. In one notable moment that exemplifies this understanding, Tammy is seen dancing around her empty apartment in pajamas, provocatively gesticulating in full view of a nearby mirror. The scene seems to divulge an innocent attempt at playing with erotic behavior—an impression that receives support from the lyrics of "Chashmal Zorem Bekapot Yadeich" (Electricity Runs through Your Hands),[37] a popular love song, playing in the background. Another notable moment in this context takes place in the morning after Lag B'omer, when we see Tammy's male classmates urinating on the bonfire while her female classmates are nearby, with their backs turned. Here Cedar reveals how the separation between the sexes creates a shared space in which the naked and sexual body is always courted, right on the verge of being made visible. Though both scenes share a mutual flirtation with eroticism, they are dissimilar in one crucial way: the former takes place in the private sphere, with this distinction—enhanced also by Tammy's choice to close the apartment's curtains—allowing for more elaborate erotic play; the latter, however, occurs in plain view, and therefore permits little leeway in eroticism. This division reveals how it is the *public* nature of illicit acts, more than the acts per se, that stands as the major origin of religious anxiety. This insight is made explicit when Estie, in reference to her "shameful activity," threatens on two occasions to undress in public, rather than, say, to have intercourse in private. These threats in part prompt Rachel to transpose the communal scrutinizing gaze onto the domestic sphere, as when she breaks part of the door to Estie's room in order to enable easier surveillance, or when she observes through a basement window as Estie and her boyfriend become intimate. Like *Chametz*, then, the film also shows how religious women internalize an oppressive perspective as means of defending themselves against open patriarchal condemnation.

Raising the stakes of corporeal regulation in Rachel's home is the death of her husband/the father and the subsequent destabilization of the family unit. The father's demise encourages fluidity in gender definitions: Rachel masculinizes, claiming at one point that she is equal to any man in defending the new settlement from Palestinian incursions; and her two daughters experiment sexually—Estie with her boyfriend, Tammy with Raffi, and both with the stigma of "whore" in general. These breaches of decorum eventually empower the all-female household, and lead to Rachel's refusals to marry Moshe Weinstock and to join the settlement group. Yet this empowerment is ultimately circumscribed in various ways. Thus, since Tammy's rape is shown as the result of an oppressive modesty discourse that necessitates cycles of repression and eruption, *Campfire* opens up the possibility of disavowing the attackers' culpability—an attitude which Tammy herself adopts when deciding to forgive Raffi and resume their romance. Furthermore, that the film depicts Tammy as courting the attention of her soon-to-be attackers may lead viewers to support Motke's reading of the rape as being somehow justified by her transgressions. Such an interpretation, consequently, aligns the film with the Bible's archetypal depictions of rape, which legitimized attacks by highlighting the victims' supposed promiscuity, and mitigated the victimizers' responsibility by arguing that the acts were out of love.[38] Similarly problematic is Estie's decision not to consummate the relationship with her boyfriend, which in this context reveals her to be a "good girl," whose threats of sexual transgression were merely mischievous. Rachel's ultimate decision to partially relinquish her role as head of household also supports a conservative outlook in that it relegitimizes heteronormativity at the expense of the explosive potentialities of the all-female bond. Granted, as an elderly virgin, Yossi is relatively unthreatening to Rachel's "masculine" dominance; but the fact remains that when given a choice, Rachel attempts to build a home according to the terms of the community she previously sought to denounce.

Another site of particular interest in Israeli cinema's depiction of Judaic female (im)modesty is that of matchmaking and marriage. This concern is evident in Amos Gitai's critically acclaimed *Kadosh*, which recounts the tragic tale of two ultra-Orthodox sisters struggling against religious oppression. After ten years of marriage, Rivka has yet to give birth, and the husband Meir, in spite of his better judgment, succumbs to his rabbi father's wishes and divorces her. Though pained, Rivka takes this decision in stride. Meir, however, cannot detach himself from his former wife, and makes her aware of his continued affections. Rivka does not respond to Meir's advances at first, but eventually she arrives at their former home and makes love to him in a concluding gesture, as she has poisoned herself in advance of the tryst. While Rivka follows this fateful trajectory, her sister also encounters difficult challenges. Malka is in love with former yeshiva student Yaakov, but since he is no longer part of religious society, the match is deemed unacceptable. She then acquiesces to the wish of her rabbi, Meir's father, to marry his prized disciple Yossef. After the wedding, Malka discovers Yossef's violent side, manifested in their first sexual intercourse, which seems more like rape than lovemaking. Further disillusioned, she makes love with Yaakov. When Yossef suspects this

infidelity, he violently beats Malka, which prompts her to leave the community for the secular world.

As Shai Ginsburg has rightfully commented, ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) society in *Kadosh* "is perceived as nothing but oppressive and repressive,"[39] especially in the sphere of gender relations. With his "militant brand of misogyny,"[40] the rabbi articulates the Judaic justification for gender inequality: while men are destined for a higher calling and therefore must study, women, as lesser beings, are meant to facilitate this study by earning wages, keeping house, and raising children. Rather than create a state of "different but equal," this separation denotes patriarchal supremacy. As the film shows, religious women are at the mercy of men: they can be matched to whomever, they can be beaten (Malka) and/or disposed of (Rivka), and they are seen as vessels of procreation and as property, which is made clear in the discussion between the rabbi and Meir, when the latter gives the former the *ketubah* (the traditional marriage contract that establishes the husband's duties and privileges vis-à-vis his bride, his possession) after it is established that Rivka's supposed barrenness makes her an unfit spouse. No woman is exempt from this victimization: even Rivka's elderly mother, upon the rabbi's command, is forced to tend to her daughter's replacement during a pre-wedding ritual bathing ceremony. Ultra-Orthodox men may take different positions on this gender inequality—some, such as the rabbi and Yossef, faithfully follow Judaism's patriarchal rules, while others, i.e., Meir, are more reluctant to conform. But all ultimately submit to the demands of Haredi society, thereby suggesting that "the only possibility open to characters who wish to be true to themselves and realize their aspirations is to shed its yoke altogether."[41]

Within this context of oppression, *Kadosh* foregrounds the Judaic definition of the female body "as impure, profane, and sexual."[42] Impurity is emphasized by several scenes of ritual purification that highlight the religious woman's collusion in a discourse that sets her apart as profane. The sinful nature of the female body is further conveyed through the choice to keep Malka and Rivka fully clothed even in domestic spaces. Within this mode of covering, as Jyoti Sarah Daniels argues, "the female hair takes on an erotic function," as is clear in the few scenes where Rivka has her head exposed, and in which "there is always a stress laid on [her] beautiful hair." The burden of its symbolic function also makes it a target for social oppression, as becomes evident when Malka performs the Haredi custom of cutting the hair in advance of marriage: here, her oscillation between laughter and tears clearly indicates a painful recognition of "the potential independence and life she has just lost"[43] in becoming her husband's property. The repression of the female sexual body, which is marked in this and other scenes, leads also to the repression of sexual knowledge, as is clear from Malka's questions to Rivka on the details of the latter's wedding night. Sexual exploration, concurrently, can end with an abhorrent lack of intimacy, as is clear from Yossef's formality and violence on his wedding night with Malka. This need not always happen, as Rivka and Meir's case clearly proves. Yet to enjoy the sexual body in Haredi society, the film asserts, one has to have at least the guise of procreation, which is absent from their union.

The female protagonists deal with their marginalization differently. Malka is clearly defiant from the start: she verbally critiques such religious truisms as women having lesser intellectual prowess, and such regulations as the prohibition on women handling the Torah; she reluctantly weds Yossef, and then transgresses traditional mores by engaging in an extramarital affair. Her path ultimately leads her away from the religious community, and she ends up renouncing God's existence, or at least delegitimizing the Haredi interpretation of His will. Rivka, on the other hand, seems less defiant of religious law, as signaled by her silent acceptance of the divorce. Close to the end, however, she confronts the impossibility of her status as a sinful woman, subsequently choosing to break away from God's law by sleeping with her ex-husband and taking her own life. The film analogizes this death to Malka's physical departure from Jerusalem's religious sector, yet it is different in that it still carries the marker of shame: the need to be punished for performing an illicit act.

Through Malka's and Rivka's trials, *Kadosh* thus stages a critique of, in Ginsburg's words, "the seeming irreconcilability of piety and interpersonal love"[44] that turns religious women into perpetual victims. The potency of this feminist critique, however, is undermined by Gitai's definition of "interpersonal love." By positing that the constraints of Jewish Law cause alienation, Gitai seems to implicitly celebrate an image of a "freer," secular mode of gender interaction. Yet in assuming that secular freedom offers a suitable solution for the Judaic oppression of love, the filmmaker seems to deny the continued presence of gender inequality within the modern concept of romantic love. Such inequality is particularly evident in the persistent model of *le grand amour*, which seems more at home in Hollywood melodramas such as *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Ophüls, 1948) than in Judaism's utilitarian vision of interpersonal relations. This model is sustained in *Kadosh*, particularly through Rivka, who, like Ophüls's heroine Lisa, literally cannot live without her lover. Gitai's film does indicate that this self-annihilation is the result of religion's intervention, as Lisa's fatal trajectory is an inevitable reaction to bourgeois mores. Yet, for Rivka and Lisa alike, the filmic text never questions the very nature of *le grand amour* as woman's primary project in life.[45] While Gitai rejects religion as something that sidetracks women from love toward destruction, he nevertheless affirms a love in which a woman should sacrifice all for her man, even if he would (reluctantly) sacrifice her to serve more "important" interests. For the filmmaker, then, Rivka's love is an ideal form; if Judaism is an obstacle, it is only because for the traditionally defined "enamored woman," as Simone de Beauvoir once suggested, love must become a religion.[46]

This choice to shape Rivka, and to a lesser extent Malka, in the patriarchal image of "the woman in love" seems symptomatic of a broader strategy aimed at reducing the ultra-Orthodox world to exotic spectacle. Thus the film's stoic, poised, theatrical mise-en-scène may speak to the stringent formalization of Haredi body language, but also portrays it as more "otherworldly" than it actually is. Additionally, the slow pace of the film, which contradicts the typical animation of Haredi movement, seems geared toward marking Haredim as strange, and toward giving more space for the display of their oddness. This display seems to tap into a voyeuristic impulse most forcefully in those

few scenes where the female protagonists are shown partially unclothed; for example, when Malka undresses before and during her sexual encounter with Yaakov, or when Rivka undresses in her last evening with Meir. These moments may serve the purpose of releasing that which has been repressed by Haredi society, but they also simultaneously cater to a desire to lay bare previously hidden Judaic bodies.

Like *Kadosh*, Rama Burshtein's award-winning directorial debut *Fill the Void* discusses the challenges of matchmaking, although the filmmaker's standing as a born-again ultra-Orthodox filmmaker renders her perspective distinctly different from Gitai's secular outlook. At the film's center is a Hasidic family in a period of personal tragedy. Esther, the eldest daughter, has suddenly died from post-delivery complications and in her absence, the husband Yochai is pressed into quickly remarrying. Esther's mother Rivka fears this will cause Yochai to leave the country with her newborn grandchild, so she attempts to marry him to Esther's younger sister Shira. The adolescent girl, who was already promised to a yeshiva student her own age, is at first reluctant. In contrast, Yochai finds himself welcoming the idea, and tries to persuade Shira that a wedding would be mutually beneficial. Finally, the decision is made to pursue the nuptials, in no small measure because of Shira's growing attraction to Yochai. Yet their story ends on an ambivalent note, as Shira, with a confused expression, watches her husband undress on their wedding night.

As Burshtein imagines it, Hasidic society displays a complex power structure of gender relations. Again, this ultra-Orthodox community is shown to be male-dominated; in the various scenes of ritual, men are the foci of action, while women are relegated to the role of bystanders. This is clearly evident in relation to the film's prominent theme: the *shidduch* (match.) As in *Kadosh*, matchmaking emerges as an "arrangement" initiated and coordinated by men for the benefit of sustaining their community's patriarchal form. This understanding is rendered visible during an early scene that features a *Purim* celebration around Shira's family table. While the women are in the next room, detached from the center of activity, the rabbi father is discussing a match of an orphan with the local matchmaker. This short exchange reveals the *shidduch* as a male-centered procedure—a fact that is further highlighted by the positioning of the two interlocutors in the foreground, while the women stand in the background and out of focus. Furthermore, the fact that during this conversation the rabbi offers the matchmaker some money to help with the wedding expenses also exposes the business-like nature of matchmaking, and reveals the proprietary nature of Jewish marriage in general.

Yet at the same time, and in stark contrast to *Kadosh*, *Fill the Void* does not only show how women are victimized by the patriarchal system of matchmaking, but reveals how they can use it to acquire some agency. Though men rule the public sphere in this film, women control domestic spaces—a fact made visible when, before the *Purim* ritual, Rivka gives her rabbi husband the keys to the family safe and asks how much money he intends to take out. From this understanding, it becomes clear that since matchmaking exists on the borderline between private and public, women have an active role in shaping it. For the mother this means that, though Shira's entrance into the matchmaking

world is a fait accompli, she can still exert some influence in determining to whom her daughter will be betrothed. This position of power, in turn, is used to realize Rivka's desire to keep Yochai and Esther's offspring close at hand—a plan to which Shira's father initially objects. Since the film ultimately fulfills the mother's wish, it also simultaneously affirms women's capacity to revise the patriarchal agenda of matchmaking for their own purposes.

In coming to terms with the matchmaking process, *Fill the Void* also acknowledges the place of women's desire within it. This becomes apparent in the first match offered to Shira, the previously noted young yeshiva scholar. Though the male object of this match has been chosen for her, she seems excited by the prospect of this marriage, *as if she had made the choice herself*. The film explicitly accounts for Shira's attraction to a man she had never met as being based on a (romantic) notion of growing in marriage with an equally inexperienced partner. Yet the underlying reason for this attraction seems to be elsewhere, in the fact that this matchmaking form in particular makes room for Shira to exercise her desires in a relatively independent fashion. Accordingly, in the film's opening scene, she and her mother search for the groom-to-be in a neighborhood supermarket in order to assess his looks from afar. Rather than the object of a voyeuristic gaze, however, as in the dominant model of narrative filmmaking, Shira now occupies the place of voyeur: she is the one who looks at an unaware body, turning it into an object for *her* desire without fear of sanction. Religious women may reframe their forced invisibility, the film thus seems to say, by using it as an ideal position from which to watch others without being seen, and to incorporate the images of men into their personal realms of erotic fantasy through the power of eye and mind.

While this form of ocular-based desire provides a way of challenging the *shidduch*'s patriarchal vein, the film does not affirm its value. Rather, its support is ultimately given to a different form of desiring (and matchmaking): that which is exercised between Shira and Yochai. The interaction between the two seems decidedly different than Shira's interactions with her male peers. With the latter, the distance that allows Shira to desire as voyeur also undermines intimacy during a face-to-face meeting: thus the men in Shira's age group are particularly ill-equipped in delivering warmth during their interactions with women, having been told to always keep them removed from sight and mind. Yochai makes room for a different sort of interaction: he is seasoned in the ways of marriage, and his demeanor allows for far greater intimacy than Shira has experienced in other interactions with men. Significantly, this also entails clandestine encounters of an immodest nature (in religious terms), wherein Yochai and Shira stand closer and speak more freely than is traditionally permitted. In these meetings, a desire structured upon distance is replaced by a desire founded on proximity. This shift would not necessarily entail a loss of agency on the part of Shira if it were not for the fact that it is always Yochai who traverses the distance between them and demands that his desires be met. It is at this position, where she becomes an immodest object of voyeurism for both Yochai and the film's spectators, that Shira forsakes her freedom to desire. Though she rebels against the match at first, in the end she avails herself of Yochai's perspective and makes it her own—a point rendered evident

when, near the end of the film, she confesses to being a "bad person" and then silently accepts Yochai's definition of her as being essentially "good." This acquiescence is not figured as defeat because the economy of desire to which Shira enters is one with which secular audiences are familiar. Yochai seems like the "real thing." He is handsome, somewhat risqué in his advances, but also very open about his feelings; he is the binary opposite of the introverted boys of Shira's age. The possibility that these feelings may only be his, and not Shira's, is ultimately disavowed since the (secular) viewer is accustomed to accepting romance that is founded on proximity rather than distance, on touching rather than gazing, as the only appropriate mode for expressing desire. For the non-religious eye, then, they are simply "made for each other."

This ambivalence surrounding the place of desire in matchmaking reaches its climax at the film's dénouement. The wedding scene seems to validate the process by which Shira willingly conforms to—and confirms—a desire that has been forced upon her by a dominant male authority. Yet her quasi-hysterical behavior during the ceremony—and particularly her bewildered expression at its end—may be interpreted as signs of something more than mere over-excitement, perhaps even the realization of a loss of agency as she becomes her husband's possession. The potency of this moment, highlighted by deliberate handheld camerawork, seems to open a potential site for criticism, but then the scene ends all too quickly, preventing viewers from pursuing this line of inquiry further. It therefore seems that the intent was not necessarily to destabilize Judaic reality as much as to legitimize it by drawing it closer to secular definitions of "proper reality." Rather than emphasizing the places where, within the patriarchal regime of modesty, women can desire, *Fill the Void* shapes Judaic reality in the image of an "immodest" secular one, thereby proving it worthy of the audience's support. This move is anticipated from the beginning by the film's particular style: unlike Gitai's alienating aesthetic, Burshtein pictures Israel's Hasidic world in soft, low-key lighting and deep, soothing colors that imbue it with a romantic aura and make it palatable for secular Israeli tastes—much in the same way as, for example, painter Maurycy Gottlieb's (1856–1879) renditions of Polish-Jewish life used the aesthetic language of romantic art to bridge the gap between Europe's Jewish and non-Jewish constituencies without reducing Jewishness to the category of exotic Other.[47] As a "born-again" ultra-Orthodox filmmaker, Burshtein thus attempted to fashion her world as one in which desire can operate in an immodest fashion, as long as it surrenders to male interests. If this regime of desire is perceived as desirable by secular audiences, it is only because the film ultimately disavows the shared ground of patriarchy that ties the religious and non-religious worlds together.

## Conclusion: Looking Beyond (Im)modesty

In a recent discussion of Israeli "modesty" policies, law professor Zvi Triger argued that religious gender-based segregation presents a case of "sex-

ual harassment," since it "is clearly 'an insulting or debasing reference' to [women] in connection with their gender or sexuality."[48] Yet for Triger, these acts of segregation are not only morally flawed but also self-defeating, because in its plea "to 'clean' the public sphere from any manifestation, real or perceived, of female sexuality," the religious community "in fact puts [this] sexuality at the center of attention."[49] Though justified, this argument fails, however, to acknowledge the contribution of Israeli secular discourse to the libidinal economy of Judaic segregation. While focusing on the marginalization of secular women as a result of religious edicts, the public outcry surrounding the aforementioned 2011 events also expressed a not-so-secret hope that observant women would also be released from patriarchal bondage. Without disputing the legitimacy of this hope, the extreme fervor that typified the critical discourse of the non-religious community during this time seems to point to a more complex emotional response than mere indignation. In this respect, it may be argued that these events helped the secular community (or at the very least, a large part of its male population) to perform two corollary movements: on the one hand, to realize a desire to expose "hidden" religious women and make them sexual objects; and on the other hand, to disavow its own androcentrism by focusing on the androcentric tendencies of a religious Other. As such, the forced hiddenness of the devout woman becomes the condition through which the secular mind can naturalize an impulse to see her immodest.

As examples of a broader trend,[50] the films discussed in this context seem to operate in a similar way. In exploring Judaism's patriarchal ideology and the price it exacts on observant women, these texts occupy a progressive feminist position. Yet, as the above analysis has shown, this feminist agenda is often undercut through a broader affirmation of patriarchy. The root of the problem seems to be the filmmakers' choice to reduce the range of Judaic feminist challenges to the transgression of modesty's taboos of sexual and romantic behavior, which inevitably plays into a desire to exoticize the religious woman. This desire, in turn, is paradoxically augmented by the fact that these texts rarely expose the female body to full view. As Mary Ann Doane contends in relation to Rita Hayworth's famous striptease act in *Gilda* (Vidor, 1946), the basic impulse here is not to see complete nudity, since that will reveal "the female body as the site of negativity, of lack and hence, of the possibility of castration." Rather, it is the "very process of peeling away accretions of layers" without arriving at the expected climax that ultimately sustains interest, because it does not entirely undermine a woman's assigned role as fetish.[51] Similarly it could be argued that the religious woman, perhaps the last magical fetish in a society where female bodies are increasingly exposed and demystified, stands at the center of these films' attempt to enact a "logic of striptease."

This is not to say, however, that these works produce meaning monolithically. As opposed to the classic explanatory model of film spectatorship ("Apparatus Theory"), contemporary studies emphasize that spectators are not constructed passively by films, but rather play an active role in shaping filmic meanings through their movement between different viewing positions.

This insight has been particularly useful for feminist film theory, which has attempted to detach female spectatorial pleasure from a (masochistic) identification with patriarchal signification and locate it instead in the "negotiation"[52] or "mediation"[53] of a film's messages. Such pleasure is not denied to the spectators of the films discussed in this essay; certainly, in terms of a feminist critique, these texts are "open" and "ambivalent" enough to provoke a range of interpretations, including ones that read against the grain of patriarchy. Rather than ignore these readings, the argument presented here simply states that they are not aligned with the "dominant or preferred meanings"[54] of the films in question.

Ultimately, if Judaic-themed Israeli cinema is to present a feminist message as its preferred meaning, it must undergo a radical transformation. Such a change may include the interrogation of other sites of Judaic feminist challenge beyond sexual modesty, or at least a more complex and self-reflexive representation of modesty issues that also comments on the patriarchal nature of *both* Israeli religious and secular discourses on sexuality. Additionally, it may operate beyond the thematic sphere, exploring experimental stylistic alternatives to this cinema's dominant mode of naturalistic (and naturalizing) drama in an effort to further expose the regimes of patriarchy. Such shifts will undoubtedly lead to new challenges in reconciling the demands of feminism and popular visual media. Yet without them, Israeli film may still find difficulty in showing—to paraphrase the Book of Psalms—that a Jewish "king's daughter" is not only "glorious from within," but also from without.

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## Notes

1 Since "Jewish" refers to a wide array of phenomena, I use the term "Judaic" in designation of that which is specifically "religious Jewish." This use also serves to highlight a distinction with non-religious Jewish culture, which has become prevalent especially since emancipation, and which underlies Israel's modern-secular national ethos.

2 Shira Wolosky, "Foucault and Jewish Feminism: The *Mehitzah* as Dividing Practice," *Nashim* 17 (2009): 18.

3 Ibid., 20.

4 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1975]), 143.

5 Wolosky, "Foucault and Jewish Feminism," 23.

6 Tova Hartman, *Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism: Resistance and Accommodation* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 61.

7 The films discussed in this essay are not all made by avowedly secular filmmakers, but they are produced for consumption in predominantly secular markets and thus operate, to a lesser or greater degree, within the context of Israeli secular expectations.

8 See for example Aliza Shenhar, *Ahuvot Vesnu'ot: Nashim Bamikra, Bamidrash Vebasafrut Ha'ivrit Hachadasha* (Haifa: Pardes, 2011.)

9 2 Sam. 11.2
10 J. Cheryl Exum, *Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 26.
11 Ibid., 29.
12 Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4.
13 Sander L. Gilman, "Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the 'Modern Jewess,'" *The German Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 201.
14 Exum, *Plotted, Shot, and Painted*, 30.
15 Ibid., 33.
16 Melissa Raphael, *Judaism and the Visual Image: A Jewish Theology of Art* (London: Continuum, 2009), 71.
17 Ibid., 72.
18 Ibid., 70 (italics in original).
19 Ibid., 81
20 Ibid., 86.
21 Ibid., 87.
22 Ibid., 90.
23 Ibid., 80.
24 Hartman, *Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism*, 54.
25 Ibid., 51–59.
26 Susan Sered, "The Ritualized Body: Brides, Purity, and the Mikveh," in *Israeli Women's Studies: A Reader*, ed. Esther Fuchs (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 152.
27 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 71.
28 Ibid., 100.
29 Ibid., 4.
30 Ibid., 17 (italics in original).
31 Barbara Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1999 [1993]), 257–258.
32 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 70.
33 Wolosky, "Foucault and Jewish Feminism," 20.
34 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, classics ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1966]), 67.
35 Ibid., 194.
36 As the attack is not depicted in full, its exact nature and participants remain unclear, though it is evident that Raffi is a reluctant accomplice.
37 Ruti Navon, *Ruti Navon*, Hed Artzi, 1974, vinyl record.
38 This understanding of biblical depictions of rape is taken from Shenhar, *Ahuvot Vesnu'ot*, 91–128.
39 Shai Ginsburg, "Love in Search of Belief, Belief in Search of Love," in *The Modern Jewish Experience in World Cinema*, ed. Lawrence Baron (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 371.
40 Ibid., 373.
41 Ibid., 371.
42 Jyoti Sarah Daniels, "Scripting the Jewish Body: The Sexualized Female Jewish Body in Amos Gitai's *Kadosh*," in *Jews and Sex*, ed. Nathan Abrams (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2008), 84.
43 Ibid., 82.
44 Ginsburg, "Love in Search of Belief," 376.
45 For a helpful discussion of the role of romantic love in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, see Lucy Fischer, *Shot/Countershot: Film Tradition and Women's Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 90–110.
46 "Through her flesh, her feelings, her behavior, she will enthrone him as supreme value and reality; she will humble herself to nothingness before him. Love becomes for her a religion." Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989 [1949]), 643.

47 See Ezra Mendelsohn, *Painting a People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2002.)
48 Zvi Triger, "The Self-defeating Nature of 'Modesty'-Based Gender Segregation," *Israel Studies* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 24.
49 Ibid., 19.
50 Other films that belong to this trend—for example, *Hahesder* (*Time of Favor*, Cedar, 2000), *Hasodot* (*The Secrets*, Nesher, 2007), *Bruriah* (Kushnir, 2008), and *Tapuchim min Hamidbar* (*Apples from the Desert*, Lubetzky & Harari, 2014)—were not included here for reasons of space, but are discussed in my forthcoming book project on Judaic identity in contemporary Israeli cinema.
51 Mary Anne Doane, "*Gilda*: Striptease as Epistemology," *Camera Obscura* 11 (Fall 1983): 13.
52 See for example Christine Gledhill, "Pleasurable Negotiations," in *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*, ed. E. Deidre Pribram (New York: Verso, 1988), 64–89.
53 See for example Caroline Bainbridge, *A Feminine Cinematics: Luce Irigaray, Women and Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 32–60.
54 Stewart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001 [1980]), 169.