



Editorial: Open Access Economics

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Like most humanists I spend my free time browsing the pages of economic journals, and it was with particular interest that I read a recent issue of *Economic Analysis & Policy* which featured articles focusing on the economics of open access (OA) publishing. JMMS is happy to have been publishing on an OA basis for three years now, so I am always on the lookout for further developments. I firmly believe in the ideal of OA: of making scholarly communication as widely accessible as possible and bypassing the rapacious profiteering of some of the large commercial journal publishers. That said, I have an unusual insight into this debate because while I am an advocate for OA (as JMMS attests), I also spend a good deal of my working week managing other academic journals which operate on a subscriber or toll access (TA) model. As a result, I've come to see the weaknesses that sometimes occur in the OA position. Reading the recent issue of *Economic Analysis & Policy* highlighted some of these weaknesses.

John P. Conley and Myrna Wooders' (2009) article, *But what have you done for me lately? Commercial Publishing, Scholarly Communication, and Open-Access* is a classic example of the ideal of OA being somewhat at odds with the reality of journal publishing. The article describes the authors' experiences establishing *Journal of Public Economic Theory* with a commercial publisher and, later, *Economics Bulletin* on an OA basis, from which they conclude that commercial publishers provide little of value and that OA is the obvious choice: "we have come to the view that commercial publishers as they currently operate, whether papyrocentric or electronic, do more to hinder than facilitate the process of scholarly communication" (p. 74). I agree with some of their arguments about predatory pricing, but they, along with a number of OA advocates, underplay the key value of the publishing process: editorial.

Conley and Wooders suggest that the publishers' value-add of typesetting is essentially redundant, that "almost all economists are able to produce their own very high quality manuscripts" and that "there may be a minor advantage in having all papers formatted similarly but this is largely an aesthetic one" (p. 74). Coupling editing with typesetting as another publishers' service that can be bypassed, they note "moreover, there are on-line professional editing services" (p. 74) if, presumably, needs be. Maybe economists are special cases, but hardly ever does a paper cross my desk that is publishable without a thorough copyedit of the text and/or referencing. I am left assuming one of two possibilities from their statement: either I am very unlucky with the manuscripts that are submitted to me or, more likely, we are reading of a lack of understanding and devaluing of the editorial process. I believe most academics would soon get tired of reading journal articles

with a hodge-podge of typographical errors, inconsistent formatting and incomplete citation and referencing. Some academics are capable of good copyediting (of their own and others' work), but most are not. It is one of the key problems with OA journals (specifically those which run on no/low revenue business models): being able to publish your own material is one thing, but the editorial standard of that material is quite another. An OA journal is going to struggle with editorial standards unless it has a budget to pay for a copyeditor, or is lucky enough to have an academic onboard who has both editorial skills and the willingness to volunteer them. And here is the second significant problem with OA journals: the economics of volunteering.

Conley and Wooders state, "the basic idea is that it is somehow very expensive to publish a journal. We argue this is a misconception" (p. 82). Certainly it is true that it is not as expensive to publish a journal as some of the commercial journal pricing strategies suggest. However, the volunteer labor on which many OA journals (such as JMMS) are based hides the true cost of doing business. One would expect an economist to make more of this analysis, but the fact that \$0 is spent on editing an OA journal does not result in zero cost. Costs come in many shapes and forms: that hour of volunteer copyediting from our editorially skilled and willing academic comes at the cost of their employer, or family, or an hour of leisure activity. Those hours and in-kind costs soon build up, and if you were to map them over to a copyeditor who has bills and a mortgage to pay (think \$50 per hour for every 1000 words), and then the typesetter, the editorial management, the technical upkeep... Soon the actual dollar costs of publishing a journal are quite sizable. Also, running an OA journal largely with volunteer labor leaves a journal's future rather uncertain. This point is made well in the same issue of *Economic Analysis & Policy* by Cavaleri, Keren, Ramello and Valli (2009) who write of their experience running a journal on a shoestring budget. Cavaleri et al. conclude that because of their lack of funds and organizational backing, their journal "depends on the labor of four individuals" and "the long-term existence of the journal cannot be assured" (p. 100). Certainly, the long-term existence of any journal cannot be assured, but having the funds not to have to rely on volunteer labor and having organizational support beyond the main editors (whether an association or a publisher) is certainly beneficial.

Furthermore, there's something about all this volunteer labor that strikes me as slightly questionable. As an old Leftist I tend to view things with a healthy dose of paranoia. And as a neo-Deleuzian (i.e. someone who has only read a little bit of Deleuze) I can't help but think of the debate in terms of smooth and striated space, where OA is smooth and TA striated. Deleuze tells us that "one of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communication in the service of striated space" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 385). What does this mean? Many OA advocates (myself included), will often frame OA as an almost Socialist ideal: free information for the masses, or at least for those free thinkers who wish to consume it. But we cannot forget that we operate within an academy that has an unnerving habit of co-opting labor in a rather unsavory fashion, as seen in Mark Bousquet's (2008) blistering *How the University Works*. There is a danger that the ideals of OA can be utilized by a corporate ideology which seeks to further co-opt unpaid academic labor, as well as

making professional editing redundant (in much the same way as teaching by tenured PhDs is replaced by the contingent labor of graduate students). Mandated requirements for OA by universities and government agencies certainly have the potential to unbind scholarly communication from the economically privileged. However, when such mandates rely on unpaid labor, they also have the potential to erase the skills of academics and publishing professionals who may otherwise reasonably demand an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. With this in mind, it is rather dishonest to frame publishers' TA arguments about the real costs of production as simply a corporate apologetic: indeed, the glossing over of economic realities does no service to OA's moral high-ground, rather it echoes a certain bourgeois embarrassment in the face of real labor and the privilege of those who can afford the time to volunteer.

Of course, I say this as provocateur, but it is always prudent to examine the economic motivation behind all modes of production and to acknowledge that in the OA debate, like all things, there is no black and white, rather many shades of grey.

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Haredi Male Bodies in the Public Sphere: Negotiating with the Religious Text and Secular Israeli Men

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As a fundamentalist religious group, the Israeli Haredi¹ community claims to adhere to stable fundamentals of belief which also shape the male body as different from the secular Israeli male body and as opposed to it. In this article I will question such claims by focusing on how young Israeli Haredi men construct their bodies in relation to the secular Israeli body, which is considered their principal 'Other'. I will show that due to the processes the Haredi community is undergoing, and especially the transition of many men from the protected Haredi space to wider Israeli society, the secular body's influence on the Haredi body is increasing in some respects. Other aspects of the Haredi body remain constant and form a challenging alternative to the secular male body. I will also reveal the organizing logic for this process.²

In 1999–2000, the Israeli Haredi community was alarmed at the establishment of a new Haredi Brigade (Hanachal Hacharedi) within the Israeli Defense Forces. Until then, young Haredi men did not serve in the army.³ The formation of the new unit was received with very vocal protests from all parts of the Haredi community and especially from the more conservative sectors. The common perception of Haredi rabbis of military culture and weapons can be learned from the pamphlet "In the Campaign: Journal of the Torah World", (No. 1 August 1999). This edition is devoted entirely to the "horrors of recruitment" and its terrible implications. The back page of the pamphlet bears a picture of a Haredi child looking admiringly at a Haredi soldier and stretching out his hand to touch the gun he is holding. The picture is captioned: "a pure Haredi child, attending the ceremony at the end of basic military training of the Haredi Nachal unit" [the newly formed unit, Y.H.]. He looks admiringly at the weapons held by the Haredi soldiers. One of the soldiers lowers it and the child strokes the gun longingly, like children who reach out to the Torah scroll when it is removed from the Ark in the synagogue.⁴ The faces (of the child and the soldier in the photograph) are blurred for obvious reasons (ostensibly to preserve their anonymity), and thus readers are saved the expression on this pure child's face when first seeing this 'new world', so opposed to the inner atmosphere of the Torah world. What does the child growing up in an atmosphere of holiness think of this encounter?"

This short quote illustrates the difficulties that many religious and fundamentalist groups face in attempting to maintain strict adherence to religious positions on all issues, while living in the midst of big, modern and rapidly changing Western cities, surrounded by non-religious majority communities. The Haredi community perceives itself as an alternative to Western culture. Sociologists have described it as a counter-culture (Friedman, 1991) and as an enclave (Sivan, 1991). As part of its attempt to protect itself from outside influences, the community members' bodies are under close surveillance. These bodies are disciplined and controlled according to what is perceived as unchanging religious principles of belief. Every small change in the body's appearance or behavior is perceived as an indication of other, less explicit transgressions, and as a major threat to the community's survival. Since it is also a textual society that lives 'by the book', one would assume that Haredi bodies will indeed reflect these tendencies. In this article I will question such assumptions by focusing on the Haredi male body. I will observe how the Haredi male body is constructed, stressing the points where it conforms to religious dictates and where it transgresses them. This nuanced examination can teach us much about the religious body in other cases where it is constructed in relation to surrounding non-religious bodies.

Current theoretical literature dealing with bodies assumes that they are not innate or essentialist, but the result of social structuring. It further assumes that they are constantly shaped and changed in the course of the interaction between the discourse and the social institutions in which individuals and their bodies function (Ferree, Lorber & Hess, 1999, p. xvii). The individual and his body adapt themselves to accepted social perceptions, but in parallel they influence them, change them, and are active partners in the process of affirming the identity and the body (Connell, 1995; Frank, 1991).

This literature also indicates that social change at the macro level often leads to change in the body and in male identities at the micro level. One such social change can be the transition of groups of people from one social context to another or the rapid exposure to another competing model of the male body. As I will show, the special social and historical context in which Haredi society finds itself provides such a case. Following Connell (1995), I understand the construction of the male body and identity as occurring in relation to other male bodies and identities. Creating these comparisons is a key means in the struggle for hegemony between the diverse models of the body and of masculinity. On this backdrop, I am interested in the comparisons conducted by Haredi males with other males, and primarily with the secular Israeli males who are their principal 'Other'.

My focus on the relationships between men is in no way intended to marginalize women. It is as much a result of the fact that Haredi men, like men from many other fundamentalist groups, are separated institutionally from women in many aspects of their lives. Therefore, constructing their masculinity is even more dependent on the comparisons they make with other men. Also, as Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (1994) point out, the ways in which men distinguish themselves and are distinguished from other men must be an important aspect of any study of masculinity.

We should also note that the Haredi body is not essentialized, and that differences with respect to it exist amongst the sub-groups that comprise this

society, and even between males from the same sub-group, but of different age groups. Yet due to the hegemonic status of the Lithuanian yeshivas and their major influence on yeshivas in other sectors, the similarity between the different sectors, especially regarding the chosen attributes of the male body, is very high. I will only touch on this issue, as it has relatively little impact on the subject under discussion. A similar remark should be made regarding the secular body as perceived by Haredi young men. There is not only one secular male body, and we need to acknowledge its variants. But, in this case, the aspects of the male body which will be discussed here have very similar manifestations and meanings across the secular variations and therefore I will discuss them very briefly. In addition, the Israeli Jewish community is comprised of other groups, such as the modern orthodox (known also as religious Zionism) and traditionalists (Mesorati), which are both religious and modern. These groups, which complicate the dichotomy between Ultra Orthodox and seculars, preferred by Ultra Orthodox, also have a role in the construction of Haredi masculinities. But, due to limitations of space I will not be able to discuss it here.

Although encounters between secular and Haredi males occurred as early as the beginning of the Zionist movement, and increased in intensity after the establishment of the State of Israel, the diverse factors were of limited impact until the last decade. Particularly notable was the Haredi trend to retreat and segregate within the confines of the Yeshiva and the Kollel,⁵ and the protected Haredi space that typified Haredi society in the years following the establishment of the State.

One of the changes that the Haredi sector in Israel has experienced over the last decade is the growing movement from the closed, protected Haredi space to a broad variety of settings in wider Israeli society. Diverse factors contribute to this process, some connected to forces internal to Haredi society and some to external forces originating in wider Israeli society and in Haredi communities abroad. The inner forces include demographic growth and the political strengthening of Haredi society. These trends increase the self-confidence of Haredim and reduce the need to withdraw and segregate as a means of guaranteeing the continuity of the community. To these internal forces should be added the depletion of internal economic resources and the intensification of economic deprivation within Haredi society (Friedman, 1991; Horowitz, 2002; Lupo, 2003). The hardship of Haredi youngsters who are spiritually dissatisfied in the religious seminaries and seek more earthly channels of activity and expression is also a factor (Hakak, 2005). Amongst the external forces is the significant reduction of financial support for large families, Torah students and Torah institutions by the Israeli authorities in recent years. In parallel, the financial support from Haredi communities outside Israel has also diminished. These cutbacks have forced many more male and female Haredim to go out into the labor market. Furthermore, previously the Israeli public sphere was controlled by the great modern secular ideologies, primarily Nationalism/Zionism and Socialism, which posed a threat to Haredi society. The weakening of these ideologies also facilitates the departure of Haredim for the wider Israeli public sphere. This departure does not happen at any specific age, but with regard to males it is more likely to happen after the age of 17 when they move to a high yeshiva where supervision is less strict.

I will examine the complex interactions between religious dictates on the one hand and the pressures of present circumstances on the other, which result from the

recent increased entry of Haredim into the Israeli public sphere. I will show how the social structuring of the Haredi male body *vis-à-vis* the secular male body both leads to change and triggers further social change. The encounters between Haredi and secular males also affect non-Haredi males, but these will be discussed elsewhere (Hakak, in progress).

The findings presented here are based on extensive fieldwork that included participatory observations, in-depth interviews and textual analysis and examined the construction of masculine identities and bodies in several key arenas of activity of young Haredi males.⁶ The first was a small Lithuanian⁷ Yeshiva, where the religious authorities attempted to construct the ideal model of the Haredi male body and masculinity. Furthermore, in recent years, significant numbers of young Haredi males entered for the first time many of the other arenas examined here: basic military training, frameworks for professional technological training, and the Haredi headquarters of the Likud party.⁸ These three arenas were all shaped by modern values and perceptions which in many cases contradict those the young Haredi men have internalized through prolonged religious education. Those active in these three 'new' arenas, in contrast to the first arena, the Yeshiva, are mainly young people on the fringes of Haredi society. I will focus here on four main attributes of the Haredi body that appeared repeatedly in these various arenas. These attributes are the control of desires and bodily needs, dress, sport/exercise, and passivity/non-violence. In each case, I will question how the Haredi body is structured in relation to the secular body, and examine if/what changes were generated by such structuring. I will clarify why some attributes of the Haredi body have remained more stable while others have undergone considerable change. Prior to presenting the findings, I will briefly review research on the subject.

Religious Male Bodies and their Surrounding Societies

Following the work of Michel Foucault (1977, 1978), interest in the research of the body has gained momentum. Amongst those exploring practices and discourses that serve to discipline and control the body in diverse contexts, there are also several which focus on the religious institutional contexts (Coakley, 1997; Mellor & Shilling, 1997). Discipline and control are examined in these studies with respect to issues such as clothing, the attitude towards corporeal needs and bodily movement (Arthur, 1999; Welland, 2001). This literature is growing continuously and includes a growing range of case studies. Most relate to Christian groups, many of them in the US, and a few to Muslim groups (Ouzgane, 2006) as well as Jewish. There are also many historical analyses, both on Christian as well as on Jewish groups (Boyarin, 1997; Brod, 1988; Cantor, 1995; Gilman, 1991; Satlow, 1996).

A major part of the literature that deals with current fundamentalist groups focuses on their violent characteristics. These are usually interpreted as a response to the encroaching influences of modernity (Aran, Stadler & Ben-Ari, 2008; Brink & Mencher, 1996; Krondorfer, 2007; Sered, 1999). In a recent article, Aran, Stadler and Ben-Arie (2008) suggest a different interpretation for expressions of militancy among fundamentalist groups through focusing on male bodies. They interpret physical expressions of militancy as a solution to intra-fundamentalist problems which emerge in advanced stages of the movement's lives. They refer especially to process of institutionalization and routinization that change the inner social relations. While

focusing on Israeli Ultra Orthodox men they also interpret their militancy as a 'solution' to the 'bodily frustrations and dissatisfactions... rooted as they are in the ascetic lifestyle and stringent rules governing their lives' (p. 26).

Another related issue, seemingly contradictory, that arises from the research literature is that in many contexts, religious men and their bodies are perceived as 'feminine' by the surrounding society. Other parts of the research literature documents the perceptions of religious men themselves describing their religious institutions as too feminine or feminizing (Kirkley, 1996; Krondorfer, 1996; Muesse; 1996; Soucy, 1999). There also appears to be a common tension between the ideal male models held by different religious groups and those held by their surrounding societies. Two main sources for this tension are the commandment to restrain sexuality and restrict it to the marital framework, and the image of subjugation and submission—identified as feminine—expected of the male, relative to the masculine image of God. These tensions are responsible in some cases for men's defection from religious communities (Kirkley, 1996) or for attempts to change their religious communities, rituals or liturgy (Torevell, 1997), and create new and different systems of belief and practice which allow the expression of more muscular masculinities and bodies, such as in the cases of the Promise Keepers and GodMen. According to Krondorfer (2007) these tensions became stronger in modernity:

In modernity... traditional-religious models went out of fashion, among other reasons because respect, power and authority were increasingly found in the secular realm rather than in ecclesiastic contexts. Religious matters were assigned to the private sphere. With the awakening of the idea of nation states, with colonial expansionism and a seemingly unstoppable technical progress, more "manly" (i.e. more belligerent, national and heroic) ideals of masculinity were needed. Religious sentimentality was considered to be something private, soft or even neurotic (as reflected in the thoughts of people ranging from Friedrich Nietzsche to the American pragmatic Williams James). In modernity, repeated attempts were made to re-masculinize church life. "Where are the men in church?" is, therefore, a modern question. (Krondorfer, 2007)

Zionist activists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century have expressed similar opinions about traditional Judaism, describing its males and their bodies as highly feminine (Boyarin, 1997; Gluzman, 1997; Nordau, 1902). They declared that in order to make the Jewish people a 'nation like all nations' there is also a need to create a New Jewish male which will cast away all the exilic remains and will acquire a new manly and heroic masculinity. The Ultra Orthodox community did not take that path and continued to adhere to the traditional religious models. Shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel, yeshiva studies became the only normative path for every Ultra Orthodox young man. Under the shelter of these total institutions was constructed an ideal male model, with many of its attributes identified in western culture as feminine. He is expected to be gentle in his body; his skin, pale from not being exposed to the sun due to his intense religious studies; his back hunched from leaning over his books. He is expected to avoid violent confrontations with other men, to limit his sexuality to marital relations and subdue himself to the will of God. Still, these yeshivas grew and spread at a very fast rate as

well as the number of men within them. This tremendous growth was happening while totally different and even contradictory masculine ideals were dominant in the surrounding Israeli society.

Jewish, Israeli and Haredi Bodies

Before commencing, I will review briefly some of the findings in the literature on the Jewish body, which historically received remarkably little attention. Eilberg-Schwartz (1990, 1992) shows how, in response to the Eurocentric western research on religions which identified certain religions as wild and primitive, Jewish researchers made an effort to downplay most corporeal aspects of Judaism that might be interpreted in this manner. At the same time, great effort was invested in describing the Jewish religion as rational. He maintains that this is one of the reasons for many Jews' adoption of the moniker attached to the Jewish nation—The People of the Book. For the same reasons, and since anthropology formerly focused traditionally on 'primitive' societies and dealt quite considerably with the body, few interpreters of Judaism deigned to address this discipline when in search of a theoretical framework or real insights. These also had far-reaching implications for the questions researchers tended to ask, the comparisons they tried to make and the research tools they typically used. All these contributed to distancing researchers of Judaism from the subject of the Jewish body.

Most of the existing studies on the Jewish body are based on textual analysis, focusing on the connection between changes in historical circumstances and the attributes of the Jewish male body (Boyarin, 1997, 1999; Cantor, 1995; Eilberg-Schwartz, 1992; Gilman, 1991; Jacob, 1997). Some of the general trends described by these studies are presented below. The reality clearly also embraces out-of-the-ordinary situations.

The Jewish attitude towards the body has apparently always been ambivalent, and almost from the outset, has shown considerable concern regarding its supervision and restraint (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1992). Judaism prohibits monasticism, in contrast to the main streams in Christianity and in several other religions, and the body remains an essential factor on the path to God. The complex objective is sanctifying the body, reducing its earthliness and making it spiritual, mainly through meticulous discipline of the body, harnessing to spiritual goals and self-transcendence. The individual is committed to commandments such as "be fruitful and multiply", which can only be carried out through the body. But at the same time, the dominant perception is that man is created in God's "image and likeness", motivating him to rid himself of his earthliness and emulate the Lord's spirituality.

The attitude of Judaism towards the body changed significantly after the destruction of the Second Temple (in 70 CE) and the exile that accompanied it. Due to circumstances in the Diaspora and the lack of feasibility of working the land and carrying weapons, definitions pertaining to the body, heroism and masculinity changed. Previously, Judaism emphasized bodily control and discipline and did not hold military might in particular esteem.⁹ Thereafter, we witness an intensification of the tendency to see those who control their urges and earthly lusts and subordinate them to the heavenly logic embodied in God's commandments as heroes and ideal men (Boyarin, 1997; More & Anderson, 1998; Satlow, 1996). The hero is not the

conqueror of fortresses and vanquisher of enemies, but "he who conquers his passions", particularly as expressed through the study of Torah. Thus, we find expressions such as "a Torah hero", the "Torah's battle" and the student as one who "kills himself in the tent of the Torah".¹⁰

Bodily restraint is perceived as a condition for the flourishing of spiritual life, an objective that can best be achieved through the study of the Torah and, mainly, the Talmud. These tendencies gained further strength in the Middle Ages under the influence of Hellenistic trends that identified femininity with the body and with earthliness (Boyarin, 1993), and intensified further with the appearance of Hassidism and the Mussar movement in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. In this framework, the belief that the body is the domicile of the evil inclination and the potential dwelling of impurity strengthened (Etkes, 1982; Katz, 1970, 1996). The Mussar movement, sectors of which brought physical self-mortification to new heights, admittedly disappeared as an independent factor, but did leave a clear stamp on the world of the Lithuanian Yeshivas. The Volozhin Yeshiva, for example, was an exemplary case of the modeling of the yeshiva as a total institution (Goffman, 1961). With the arrival of this model in Israel and its adaptation to become the main instrument of separating between Haredi youth and their non-Haredi environment, these approaches were reinforced.¹¹

Haredi society tries to preserve these tendencies and perceptions in the reality of life within broader Israeli society, in which totally different and sometimes contradictory attitudes regarding the body are common. These attempts require a great investment of energy. They have created a whole new, modern reality, compared to the years during which these perceptions were passed relatively effortlessly by tradition from father to son (Brown, 2006). Under the influence of European nationalist movements that adopted and revived the Hellenistic body culture (Leoussi & Aberbach, 2002), the heads of the Zionist movement expressed similar fears to those mentioned above as to the femininity of the traditional Jewish male body. They aspired to shape a new generation of Jewish men who would be modern and secular, with athletic and muscular physiques. These men would be different from the Diaspora Jew, characterized by his traditional and religious Jewish awareness and weak 'female' body (Boyarin, 1997; Gluzman, 1997; Nordau, 1902; Shorek, 2002). Assertive behavior, manifested in diverse ways, including the national and military levels, accompanied the new Jewish body. Haredi rabbis saw the establishment of the State of Israel as a manifestation of this masculine anti-traditional assertiveness, some deeming it to be a great sin.¹²

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the "Tzabar generation" (Almog, 1997) adopted the attributes of the Zionist body. The body of the new Jewish male was supposed to be tall, muscular through exercise and tanned from physical labor under the hot sun; the Jewish male was supposed to be assertive and self-confident. This ideal male model is still a symbol and paradigm for most Jewish Israeli males, particularly in view of the centrality of military service in Israeli society (Ben-Ari & Dardashti, 2001; Kaplan, 1999; Lomsky-Feder & Rapaport, 2003; Sasson-Levi, 2006; Sion, 1997; Weiss, 2002).

Modern Israeli society is also exposed to the Western discourse of later permissive capitalism that encourages consumption. In this secular discourse, physical needs and passions are not only condoned, but encouraged. The body in

this discourse is highly controlled and disciplined, but this time in an attempt to make it an object of greater passion (Turner, 1996, p. 23). The Ultra Orthodox community resisted these varied influences and continued its attempts to adhere to the traditional religious models.

Several studies have explored the Haredi body, focusing mainly on the female Haredi body, whether in Israel (Finkelstein, 1997; Oryan, 1994) or in the USA (Goldman, 1999). Much of this research is focused on the educational attempt to discipline and control women's bodies and sexuality, starting from the kindergarten (Yaffe, 2004) through school years (Oryan, 1994) and the preparation towards marriage (Finkelstein, 1997). Other research examines dress as reflecting intra-community status (Goldman, 1999).

Studies on the Haredi male body in current times are fewer and they rarely discuss the construction of the Haredi body in relation to the secular body. Blumen (2007) focused on the bodily performance of going to (unpaid religious) work in an Ultra Orthodox neighborhood bordering a major secular town. She described both ultra Orthodox men and women as challenging the capitalist bodily performance of going to work and the decree to participate in the labor market and have a paid job. Bilu (2000) explores the psycho-cultural meaning of corporal ceremonies such as circumcision, the first haircut at age three and the first entry to the cheder—a traditional training in basic religious literacy. The first two ceremonies share the removal of parts of the body identified as female (the foreskin in circumcision and long hair in the first hair cut), *en route* to creating the desired body and male identity. This study seems to stem from the assumption (not shared in this article) that beyond all cultural aspects there is a deep male identity structure, preserved throughout history and in diverse cultures.¹³ Examining the Haredi body through analysis of the meaning and effect of the ceremonies contributes to understanding the construction of the hegemonic body and masculinity in this society. It also affords a basis for understanding the subversion and resistance to the hegemonic model discussed in this article. Aran (2003, p. 121), in mapping the diverse aspects of the Haredi body, highlights its attempt to avoid extreme physical situations, such as absolute relaxation or the maximum strengthening of the physique, typical of the secular body. These two contradictory situations are perceived as devotion to the body and hence, he maintains, are rejected by the Haredi world.

In this article, I intend to show how, through the encounter with the secular body, Haredi reservations with respect to these physical situations are shaken. At least two of the four attributes of the Haredi body on which I have chosen to focus are connected to those extreme physical situations to which the Haredi body is traditionally averse. Needless to say, of course, the four attributes do not purport to encompass all aspects of the Haredi body and were chosen for a variety of reasons: their centrality to the ideal model of the Jewish male body, their distinctiveness and difference from the male models in relation to which they are constructed, their contribution to the claim that I attempt to develop here, and the ease of my access to relevant findings.

Freedom from Bodily Demands or Submission to them

A central aspect of the body in Haredi thinking is the attitude towards bodily needs, urges, desires and wishes. While western culture, under the influence of

psychological and consumer discourse, encourages the expression and satisfaction of various physical needs, and emphasizes their legitimacy and even their essentiality for the individual's mental health, the attitude of Haredi society to corporeal needs and urges is totally different. The topic arose in many interviews I conducted with Haredi youth. As Avraham,¹⁴ one of the Yeshiva students I interviewed, states:

"I often find it hard to get up for prayers, but eventually I manage ...and get up...Because that's what I'm supposed to do. People say the Haredim are poor sods—they are closed, and forced to do this and that. I think it's the exact opposite. The Haredim are the only people who are free of everything. Why? Because no one can force me now to go and steal. Why? Because I will overcome my urge, I won't do it. I hear that they call secular people free; I don't understand why... because...if the evil inclination obliges you to go now and watch football—you'll go; you are like in a prison ...and that's what the Talmud actually says: There are no free men apart from those who are involved in learning Torah".

Such claims were repeated in diverse contexts. Secular Israeli males from different ethnic backgrounds were perceived as over legitimizing their bodily urges. Here, Avraham repeats the Haredi criticism of modern freedom,¹⁵ i.e., the freedom of the secular person who is not committed to Halacha (religious Jewish law) enslaves him to his proclivities. Real freedom—from the rule of the inclinations and passions—is only facilitated by a Haredi lifestyle. This lifestyle forces the individual to do two things: first, to 'overcome'¹⁶ his appetites; second, to observe the commandments—and for men primarily, the command to be immersed in the study of the Torah.¹⁷

The ability to control and restrain the body is described as a key resource by many interviewees. However, it seems that recent years have seen some attrition in the degree of restraint and control applied to bodily needs. Two main sources for this are the psychological and consumer discourses that infiltrate Haredi society and grant greater legitimacy to individual needs, including bodily needs. At the same time, this attribute, more than any other of the Haredi body, seems to have undergone relatively few changes. It may be possible to explain the endurance of this attribute by its continued usefulness in helping these youngsters adapt to the demands of the wider Israeli society that they encounter. Evidence for this is provided by the comments of Rabbi Meir Tessler, one of the heads of the Haredi Center for Technological Studies, to one of the Center's graduates: "Rest is for the world to come. Here we work" (quoted in Hakak, 2004, p. 83). Rabbi Tessler refers to the Jewish vision of the Garden of Eden in the World to Come, as a place where the hardships and difficulties of survival in this world do not exist; yet one should work and exert oneself in this world in order to reach it. In this case, however, the effort demanded by Rabbi Tessler is not the performance of God's work, as is customary in Jewish perception, but work in the world of hi-technology.

The restrained and carefully controlled body was most typical in the early stages of capitalism, as it helped increase production (Turner, 1996). Turner shows how the need to increase consumption at home was first created as a result of the shrinking of America's external markets. Consequently, the dominant ascetic discourse changed gradually to one granting greater legitimacy to diverse needs. The

world of work, however, continued to demand the ability to delay gratification and to discipline and control the body. Emphasizing the control of bodily needs fulfills a similar role for the Haredi sector that encounters Israeli society and seeks, amongst other things, to integrate into a competitive and achievement-oriented labor market that demands delaying gratification and a high level of discipline. In view of the considerable gaps in secular studies with which most Haredi males arrive at the labor market (Hakak, 2004), the ability to control corporeal needs and delay satisfaction is of double importance. Many of the interviewees also expressed the view that the Haredi way of life and its many religious demands preclude laziness and make Haredi people more disciplined and hard-working than people from other sectors.

The Body as a Site of Individual or Collective Expression

Another central aspect of Haredi involvement with the body focuses on presenting the body in public and, particularly, through the mode of dress. While Western culture, influenced by consumer culture, stresses dress and personal presentation in public as a central site for self-expression and self-realization, in Haredi society, dress manifests the commitment of the individual to God and the community.¹⁸ The distinctive and uniform dress, alongside other external attributes such as side-locks and a beard, are designed to distinguish the Haredi male from his non-Haredi surroundings and prevent him from perhaps being swallowed up and affected by them.

Torah students are reminded that they are perceived by others as representing G-d and his word, and are thus obliged to be careful in their behavior and appearance, especially in the public sphere. Many quoted the passage of the Talmud, stating that "a sage with a stain on his clothes merits death" (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabat, 114: 71) for me. While all Yeshiva students strive to maintain respectability, yeshivas can be classified according to the degree of restraint, control and self-denial required of their students. This will also determine, amongst other things, the degree of openness to the changing styles of dress.¹⁹ In discussions with yeshiva students and Haredi young activists at the Likud Party, the mode of dress of their secular cohorts was described as having two main attributes. The first is its accentuated material and earthly character. This is contrasted with the Haredi attempt to restrict these aspects, for example, by wearing delicate shoes rather than high boots with a heavy sole, as habitually worn by secular youth, especially those nearing recruitment age or following discharge. The second is that while the mode of secular dress is intended to emphasize difference, uniqueness and deviation from the norm,²⁰ this is seen by Haredi young men as eccentric and bizarre, and arouses distance and contempt. Especially contemptible were the Punks. On the other hand, the interviewees with whom I spoke also described the criticism levied at them by secular youth regarding their black and impersonal dress. Most did not try to refute this description, but replied with the counter-criticism, that while secular youth is occupied with creating impressions and is prepared to dress in a strange and surprising manner in order to be special, we, the Haredi youth, dress in a respectable manner. In order to illustrate this respectability, the high costs of the items of Haredi dress were described to me, compared to the low cost, they believed, of the secular items of dress. Apparently, in light of the frequent ventures of Haredi youth into the wider Israeli space and their many encounters with non-

Haredi youth, and given their need to counter the secular criticism of their uniform dress, Haredi youth today insist on their greater respectability and prestige; this provides some compensation for the drawbacks of its impersonal character.

The call to preserve the uniform but respectable appearance is well exploited by advertisers working in the Haredi sector. There, the male clothing market has become very active, especially over the last decade, where it has been exposed to the impact of changing fashion. While Haredi dress is supposed to reflect respectability, simplicity and modesty, the pressures described here and the close encounters with secularity and with the consumer culture have considerably eroded the value of simplicity and its manifestation in dress.²¹ The simple suits worn by Yeshiva students until a decade ago are now modern and almost completely identical to the suits worn by businessmen or managers in the modern labor market.

Another factor that reinforces the impact of current western dress is the recent growth in the number of Haredi men who go to work. Under cover of this process, another consensus was created, according to which many Haredi men who go out into the labor market exchange the yeshiva-style white buttoned shirt, identified as the 'uniform' of Torah students and Haredi men in general, for a colorful buttoned shirt, thus increasing their resemblance to the modern businessmen. The legitimization of the colored buttoned shirt sketches, in fact, an alternative physical model that is fairly similar to the yeshiva model. Like the 'yeshiva body', a body enclosed in a business suit and buttoned shirt is restrained, meticulous and under control. The buttoned shirt is, in fact, part of 'power dressing', the male dress common amongst businessmen or managers, which serves as armor against penetrating the body and as a barrier to the flight of diverse bodily materials. Such dress makes it difficult to identify the outline of the body, and in this sense, it obscures the gaze. The straight and sharp lines of both the buttoned shirt and of the suit disguise the body's curves as well as its physical and sensual essence, and are intended to reflect control, power, rationality and masculinity (Longhurst, 2001). The change made by many Haredi youth in their dress enables them, on the one hand, greater access to the non-Haredi Israeli space, while preserving most of the attributes of uniform Haredi dress and stressing conformity to community values. Furthermore, in my interviews, Haredi youngsters in all arenas, but especially in the Likud Party and the occupational training program, described the sense of belonging to a community, as symbolized by uniform and impersonal dress, as the key advantage over their non-Haredi cohorts, since that community provides a network of aid, support and useful connections. Consequently, few forego the uniform dress. In this respect, they did not conform but challenged and created an alternative to the male bodies in the surrounding Israeli society. This alternative, of being part of a close and committed community, as symbolized by the uniform dress, is portrayed in wider Israeli media in recent years in very positive terms and with some envy due to its economic and political benefits.²²

The Culture of the Body or the Culture of the Spirit

Another key attribute of the Haredi body is connected to practices and involvements considered appropriate. Since the body supports the soul and is the tool through which the Creator's work is performed, it must be maintained and nurtured as well as possible. At the same time, the hierarchy between the body and the soul is clear,

the final purpose being the wholeness and functioning of the soul and its imposition on the bestial and earthly body. Given the approach that sees the body as only a vessel for the soul, there is no reason to develop it for its own sake through what is known as the 'body culture'. Hence, there is no sports equipment in Israeli yeshivas; there are no sports lessons, and no time is allocated to physical activity.²³ The Haredi newspapers also ignore the subject, except for reports of a mass scuffle on the football field as evidence of the secular bestiality of Hellenism.²⁴

Limited physical activity is likely to enjoy partial legitimacy as long as it is perceived as helping to increase learning ability. Several rabbis²⁵ have already expressed support for physical activity for yeshiva students as an outlet for their excess energy and as an aid towards overcoming their inclinations. But this is usually an area that belongs to 'gentile customs' and, more specifically, to Greek culture,²⁶ and the attitude towards it, whether on the part of the Rabbis or on the part of the community is still hesitant and suspicious. Involvement with sports arouses great resistance, especially when its purpose is to become more professional, more sophisticated and achievement-oriented, and facilitate participation in competitions. Passive involvement in sports culture, i.e. admiring sports stars and watching competitions, also arouses great reservations. Instead of sports, the youth are expected to expend their energy by dancing at weddings; consequently, attending weddings has become particularly frequent.

The social conventions described here also have a tremendous impact on how young Haredi men perceive their bodies in comparison with the secular body they encounter. This topic was mentioned in many interviews carried out. The discussion of the physical skills of the Haredi body became central, particularly in basic military training, where I conducted fieldwork. In this setting, as well as in the other research settings, the Haredi body was described repeatedly as far weaker and even shorter (!) compared to the bodies of young secular men. This was usually explained by the lack of Haredi involvement in sports. Just as involvement in the Torah was described as shaping the body, intelligence and behavior of the student of the Torah, participating in sports was described as shaping the bodies of secular people. These descriptions were accompanied by some expressions of envy.

In spite of the determined misgivings of the rabbis, various branches of sports have gradually become more popular and the number of Haredim and Yeshiva students actually practicing sports, as well as the number of those interested in them as spectators or as supporters, has increased over the years. In this case too, the growing frequency of encounters with secular males plays a key role, but to these are added the increasing influences of the medical discourse and the mounting concern over the 'quality of life' in Haredi society. Evidence of escalating involvement in sports are many, starting from the growing number of gyms opening in Haredi areas²⁷ to the increase in the number of Haredi football supporters²⁸ and of those learning martial arts of various types. As in other areas, some of the main agents of change responsible for this trend are Haredim from abroad²⁹ and the newly religious. They bring with them from the 'outside' world physical skills and traditions that are hard to change; furthermore, there is a demand for them within the Haredi community. The medical discourse often affords legitimacy to increased involvement in sports, and the common use of the terms 'health exercise' and 'health center' in the Haredi sector in recent years is evidence of this. I will quote

here comments made by a yeshiva student in explaining his participation in Taekwondo (martial art) lessons, in spite of the displeasure of the rabbis of the Yeshiva in which he studied:

"Personally, I simply need it to relieve tension. There are many hyperactive guys like myself, who must find relief when they sit and learn, and simply can't manage without it".

Haredi rabbis who oppose drafting yeshiva youth to the Israeli army maintain there is a division of labor between Haredi society and the other Jews in Israel. Haredi society guarantees the spiritual existence of the nation via the study of the Torah, while the other Jews in Israel are responsible for the material aspects. But this division of labor is questioned the moment yeshiva students, who are responsible for spiritual aspects according to Haredi belief, also wish to take a greater part in material life. The Haredi rabbis voice their objections, but to no avail.

Passivity as an Ideal that is Passé

The last attribute which I will refer to is connected to the attitude of the Haredi body to other bodies. Boyarin (1997) claims that the Talmud encouraged creating a 'female' man who does not fear weakness as a key component of his personality, and that this approach greatly influenced Jewish life throughout history since the finalization of the text of the Babylonian Talmud in 500 CE. Refraining from violence and belligerence, especially in the physical sense, is still typical of Haredi society.³⁰

The changes with respect to this attribute of the body and of Haredi male behavior are even greater if compared to the other attributes mentioned here. Processes of change and the introduction of assertive male models into male Haredi society were particularly prominent during basic military training, where some of the fieldwork for this research was conducted. As a rule, Ultra Orthodox men are not drafted to the Israeli Defense Force. They comprise a legal category of those for whom 'Torah studies is their sole craft' (in Hebrew: *Toratam omanutam*). Those who do get drafted, like the cadets I have researched, are very few. Usually they are among the less successful yeshiva students. The cadets I observed were going through a very basic and short training of four weeks and were not meant to be part of the fighting forces. After this training they were positioned as teacher-soldiers within Ultra Orthodox schools and as part of the Education Corps.

At the beginning of the basic training, and in reaction to the rigid disciplinary efforts of the base staff, the recruits employed traditional Jewish practices to attain power, primarily unity against adversity (Biale, 1980), with remarkable speed, especially given their lack of previous familiarity with each other. A few days after starting basic training, the recruits reacted to the disciplinary efforts and the staff's demands with passive oppositional practices customary in the yeshiva world, such as fasting or refusing to perform certain tasks. These types of action changed rapidly in the course of military training.

If military service is seen as a transition ceremony to masculinity, strewn with a series of tests (Ben-Ari & Dardashti, 2001), the ultimate test will be, one may assume, participation in battle. But since in every army, including the Israel Defense Forces, only few soldiers actually participate in the battle (including those in combat

units), the military system provides mock battles as an alternative, with shooting practice as a main activity. A soldier who successfully handles these simulations under the critical eye of his friends and officers, also becomes a 'man'.

Participation in shooting practice began with much concern and excitement prior to the event, and concluded with tremendous, almost ecstatic joy, especially amongst those who felt they successfully passed the test. In interviews I held after the conclusion of the basic training, many recruits mentioned shooting range practice as one of the peak moments. At least some of them felt that this experience would alter them for the rest of their lives. Ya'acov, one of the recruits, described it thus:

"I believe that the moment you know how to hold a weapon and can react to those attacking you, something changes. You aren't helpless. For example, already in the first week, after one shooting practice, they told us to guard the base. Although we didn't really know how to shoot or to hold a gun, we guarded the base; even if we hadn't quite scored a hit they knew we would react... And this is important for life afterwards, even when you walk along the road without a weapon—you already feel different".

At least for some of the Haredi recruits, the successful completion of the shooting range increased their self-confidence and the feeling they can 'react', even outside the framework of basic training. Several of the cadets, for whom the experience was especially positive, expressed envy towards other non Haredi units which were going through much longer and strenuous basic training in the same base. 'We too should have been Rambo for a while', said Elimelech.

The successful passing of the shooting range may also contribute to the increased tensions in their relations with the base staff, as the basic training drew to an end. These tensions reached the point of frontal confrontation in the final days. During the summary session with the base commander, the recruits made levied accusations, especially with respect to their officers. Later, they even adopted some of the language and practices used by the staff, including talking about 'opening a distance'³¹ from their officers, for which they employed accessories such as peaked cloth caps and dark sunglasses. These two accessories are meant to block the gaze from the outside and are used usually only by the staff as a means of distinguishing themselves from their trainees.

While Haredi rabbis and educators following traditional Judaism prefer avoiding conflictual situations when they might possibly result in desecration of God's name, the Haredi recruits are not prepared to exercise self-restraint and prefer to retaliate and insist on their honor. This demand for honor and for 'opening distance' undoubtedly reflects the adoption of patterns of their officers' assertive male behavior, while adapting its terminology to their needs. Tuvia, one of the recruits, tried to explain his friends' behavior:

"We were once a small group which sought to protect itself ...we are now a society that does not need to protect itself any more because we have...political...financial, communal power... We help people to become religious, the Haredi political parties are growing...We no longer go to the

(Polish) landowner to ask for money.... Now we decide when and if to give money [to others]..."³²

Tuvia links his friends' behavior and self-confidence to the demographic and political growth of Haredi society. This is no longer a Jewish community at the mercy of the non-Jewish landowner, but a Jewish community in the Jewish state that enjoys a preferred status compared to other non-Jewish communities. Furthermore, due to its political strength, it has not only petitioner status, but already enjoys the status of benefactor. All these also filter into the feelings of individuals and are manifested in their behavior and body. The community's political influence and its tensed relations with the army are some of the reasons for the staff's extreme tolerance towards the cadets' rebelliousness. Further evidence of increasing self-confidence surfaces from the description of another yeshiva student, Eliyahu, regarding the meeting between one of his acquaintances, described as the neighborhood thug, with secular youngsters at a Jerusalem shopping mall:

"Some guy with a leather shirt came up...trying to prove he's some sort of toughie and he laughed at religious people, and cursed them saying [that]...all the religious girls are whores... And that Shlomo... He's no sucker....And when someone offends him, he gets hurt...They began to argue...it came to blows and Shlomo bashed him up, simply ripped him to pieces...yeshiva students react more nowadays 'cos we feel we are hated. We aren't afraid either...the silence is over... The Haredi public already feels...(that) being a sucker is in the past...(now) if someone starts with us we'll show him. There are no more suckers."

Eliyahu displays his great anger, his lack of desire to restrain himself and his self-confidence that enables him to do this more often than in the past. Eliyahu and Shlomo live in a Jewish state where Haredi members of the Knesset (Parliament) and Haredi government ministers hold many powerful positions and the attitude of the authorities toward them is totally different. Young Haredi people have fewer reasons to fear forbearance when they are attacked or when they feel they are 'suckers'.

Eliyahu says, in fact, that he and his friends do not intend to restrain themselves if others display arrogance towards them, belittle them or insult them. They feel strong enough to stop waiving their honor, and convert the insult into a motivating force for action. The use made by Eliyahu of vernacular, secular Hebrew, and the many expressions that describe macho and assertive masculinity, is also prominent. Under present social circumstances and despite the rabbis' ongoing doubts,³³ the manifestations of this new assertive-active male model are increasing. The encounter with the modern, competitive world in which assertiveness and determination are values, is likely to amplify these tendencies. It is possible to assume that these manifestations of masculinity are adjusted to specific situations. In some cases, especially when entering the Israeli public sphere, they might have a strategic value, but on other occasions within the Haredi community, they might be less useful or even unacceptable.

Dangerous Encounters: Summary and Comments

Like many other fundamentalist groups, the Ultra Orthodox community maintains a sharp tension between its rhetoric, which states strict adherence to religious fundamentals, and the changing reality. If one accepts this religious rhetoric uncritically one would expect male identities to be unchanging through time and totally complying with the unchanging religious text. But as I show here, such an expectation would ignore the influence that social forces have, in addition to the religious text, in molding religious masculinities at a specific time and place.

As described in the literature review, in many contexts, religious men and their bodies are perceived as 'feminine' by the surrounding society or by describing themselves and their religious institutions as too feminine or feminizing (Soucy, 1999; Kirkley, 1996; Krondorfer, 1996; Muesse, 1996). Most research is on Christian men, but also on Jewish and other men. The research material brought here only partially repeats this pattern. The descriptions of secular males by young Haredi males, as presented here, are rather critical. The latter were largely described as servile and controlled by their urges, as libidinous, self-interested, lacking in values, materialistic, loud, extrovert, arrogant, empty, superficial and aggressive. To link with these perceptions, when moving into wider Israeli space, some aspects of the Haredi men's bodies form a challenging alternative to other Israeli male bodies. They stress, in particular, the restraint of the body and of inner urges in the spirit of "who is a hero—he who conquers his passions", in contrast to the considerable legitimacy afforded to satisfying needs and desires, as is commonly accepted in secular Western society. They also stress their notable commitment to the community—again, in contrast to the secular Western ethos which places the individual at the center. These attributes of the body and of Haredi masculinity would also seem to provide a resource in the exodus towards integration within the wider Israeli society; hence, they are retained. The fact that in Israel, state and church are not separated by law, and religion is not limited to the private sphere, might be part of the explanation for the difference in comparison with other modern Christian groups and for the ability of Ultra Orthodox men's bodies to form such a challenging viable alternative.

But along with these aspects and the accompanying criticism, ridicule and contempt toward the secular bodies, one can also sense a not-insignificant element of envy, appreciation and amazement, even if their presence is more covert. A large part of that amazement and even envy is focused on the secular male body that is perceived as far more developed, taller and stronger than the Haredi physique. The non-Haredi Israeli male is perceived as capable of defending himself, his honor and his family with his body; he is familiar with his wider surroundings, does not fear nature, and has the ability to influence and mold them to his wishes.

In contrast, when entering the wider Israeli space, Haredi masculinity and bodies are seen as 'defective' and many of its characteristics are perceived as 'female'. Its forbearance, passivity and undeveloped 'female' corporeality, are harder to maintain as an alternative. In Israeli society following Jewish exilic experience and the horrors of the Holocaust, these attributes are bearing a considerable negative charge. Furthermore, the continued Arab-Israeli military struggle reinforces assertive-masculine attributes, while the competitive capitalist economy only furthers this tendency. Hence the encounter of Haredi men with other Israeli males arouses fear, especially during the formative period of adolescence, when male

physical identity is molded through heightened exploration. It would seem that in the struggle for hegemony between male models (Connell, 1995) and in order to claim their place relative to direct, assertive Israeli masculinity, Haredi males are forced to adopt attributes of a more assertive body and masculinity.

As presented earlier, similar interpretation served several scholars describing mainly Christian groups but also Jewish ones (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1996). The departure for the material arenas described here and the experience of a corporeality and masculinity more closely connected to the earthly world, the world of action, enable young Haredi males to experience new dimensions of the body and masculinity and reduce their fears. This would also explain the attempts to undermine the ideal Haredi model, still held by the religious authorities, make it more flexible, expand it and remold it. It also explains the tremendous enthusiasm expressed by Haredi military recruits upon firing a gun in shooting practice, and what sometimes seems to be exaggerated Haredi excitement after 'action' when volunteering for organizations such as the Israeli emergency medical services. The prevalent image of fundamentalist men in many cultures as feminine could also explain fundamentalist violence and militancy as a form of reaction or compensation related to this image.

Following this research it would be interesting to learn how religious male bodies are constructed in other social contexts, and what are the conditions that allow them to create an alternative to secular and other male bodies and what, on the other hand, are the conditions that minimize and limit such a possibility.

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Notes

¹ Haredi is the singular for Haredim – the Haredi Jews. The word “hared” in Hebrew means tremble and comes from the book of Isaiah (66:5): “Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word”. I use the Hebrew term “Haredi” (and not Ultra Orthodox) because members of the community use it to characterize themselves, and because it is a broader classification which encompasses not only the Eastern European groups. See, for example, Friedman (1991).

² The author would like to thank the reviewers of *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* for their useful comments.

³ As a rule, yeshiva students receive a deferral from army service for as long as they continue to study in the yeshiva. A similar Haredi army unit was active during the 1960s. It was an initiative of the Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael Youth Movement and was meant to absorb Haredi young men who could not or did not want to continue to study Torah. Following strong internal Haredi criticism the number of new recruits was reduced drastically and the unit was disbanded.

⁴ This happens every time the Torah is read, usually once a week but also in other special religious events.

⁵ A Yeshiva is a Jewish religious seminary for unmarried young men. A Kollel is for married men.

⁶ I would like to thank participants in the research for their trust in me, and for their openness and readiness to involve me in their world.

⁷ Lithuanian Jews (known in Yiddish and Haredi English as Litvish (adjective) or Litvaks (noun)) are Ashkenazi Jews with roots in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (present-day Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia and the northeastern Suwałki region of Poland). The characteristically “Lithuanian” approach to Judaism was marked by a concentration on highly intellectual Talmud study and it still characterizes ‘Lithuanian yeshivas’ today, even if they are located in Israel.

⁸ The Likud is a secular party, even if committed to Jewish tradition.

⁹ For a discussion of the concept of bravery in Judaism, see Leibovitz (1993).

¹⁰ For a comprehensive anthology of sources on this subject see Breuer (2004, p. 544, n.182).

¹¹ Haredi rabbis totally reject this historical description. From their point of view, the attitude of Judaism towards the body is permanent and unalterable in its essence.

¹² For more on this issue see Ravitzky (1996, pp. 277–305).

¹³ See Gutmann (1997) on this issue.

¹⁴ In order to protect the privacy of my interviewees all names are fictitious.

¹⁵ For a more extensive discussion on this issue see Brown (1999).

¹⁶ Avraham refers to the commandment at the beginning of the Shulhan Aruch “He will arise as a lion in the morning to perform the work of his Creator” (Gantsfrid, 1989, p. 18).

¹⁷ And in the mood of the statement by Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi, “No man is free like one involved in Torah” (Avot 86)

¹⁸ For a review of the historical background of the development of accepted dress norms among Yeshiva students, see Hakak (2005, p. 69).

¹⁹ For more on this issue see Hakak (2005, pp. 69–78).

²⁰ Although this 'exceptional' dress also follows accepted social conventions of a particular social group.

²¹ On the lively internal, critical debate within Haredi society, regarding the diffusion of Western fashion in male dress, see Hakak (2005, p. 76).

²² See for example the article on Ynet by Jinji Friedman (25.10.04) "Seculars have what to learn from the Haredim".

²³ This is as opposed to other Israeli non-Haredi institutions as well as American yeshivas where sport and especially basketball is much more accepted. For a broad review of the 'body culture' as seen in the rabbinic literature of recent generations see Arend (2002).

²⁴ For more information on the attitude of Haredi society to involvement in sports, see Hakak (2005, 79-91).

²⁵ Rabbi Shlomo Volbe and Rabbi Yoel Schwartz are amongst them. For Rabbi Schwarz's attitude to the subject and his fear of community censure, see Schwartz (1997, pp. 15, 107, 127–128).

²⁶ For more on the historical background of the reservations regarding 'corporal culture' as part of Greek culture see Leoussi and Aberbach (2002).

²⁷ On this issue see Tamar Rotem, "Sport is their escape from the house, from the children, from the husband" (Haaretz Hebrew newspaper, 11.2.2003).

²⁸ On this issue, see the article by Avishay ben Chayim, "Living from Sabbath to Sabbath" (Maariv, weekend edition, 26.12.2003) and the article by Alon Hadar, "Black-yellow – the Haredi fans of the Beitar football team" (Kol Ha'ir, 15.12.2000, pp. 74-80).

²⁹ The Haredi communities, both in the USA and Europe, are much more open to various sports in comparison to the Israeli Haredi community. Many Haredi yeshivas both in the USA and Europe have basketball courts on their premises.

³⁰ On this issue, see for example, Rabbi Baharan (1990, p. 167), who quotes from the Sefer HaChinuch (Book of Education) regarding the prohibition of revenge and of bearing a grudge: "It is of the roots of the commandment, that a person should know that everything that happens to him has a reason determined by the Holy One, blessed be He... Therefore, when a person is saddened or hurt by someone, he will know in his heart that his transgressions caused it, and that the Holy One decreed this, and he will not let his thoughts stray to take revenge, for the other person is not the cause of the evil..." The proper attitude towards the issue of male assertiveness, especially in situations of conflict, arises anew each year, around the time of Chanukah and the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day when Haredi newspapers discuss the secular interpretation of bravery and clarify how Haredi Jewry relates to these issues. According to Haredi understanding, while the secular world glorifies physical bravery, Haredi Jewry exalts the bravery of the spirit; while secular nationalism aggrandizes the readiness to die for the homeland, Haredi Jewry sanctifies the name of G-d, dying for it when necessary.

³¹ The phrase 'open a distance' is part of the Israeli militaristic jargon and means treating someone in a superior, patronizing and detached and commanding manner.

³² Such descriptions were repeated by many interviewees. It seems that these feelings were mitigated following the establishment of the Likud-Shinui government and the 'Netanyahu edicts' imposed when Binyamin Netanyahu served as Minister of Finance in 2003.

³³ Selengut (1994) shows how, since the establishment of the State of Israel, the heads of Lithuanian Yeshivas constantly warned of the penetration of activist types of behavior and belief in the force of arms into the Haredi public. Such warnings were voiced after the Israeli army's victory in the Six Day War and on other occasions. He quotes (p. 245) Rabbi Zvi Elya, who, at an Agudat Yisrael conference in the USA in 1990, rebuked 5,000 people for what he identified as their sympathy for Rabbi Meir Kahane, who was murdered shortly before. Kahane, who coined the slogan, 'Never again', encouraged Jews to react violently to attacks against them. Rabbi Zvi Elya believes that Kahane thereby violated Jewish belief. "Never again", said Rabbi Elya, "Is an anti-Jewish and anti-religious slogan. If G-d wants to bring a Holocaust on us He will do so. 10,000 Kahanes will not stop him."

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Southern Gospel Sissies: Evangelical Music, Queer Spirituality, and the Plays of Del Shores

Douglas Harrison

This article explores the paradox of gay men involved in southern (white) gospel music, which might be fairly described as the soundtrack for fundamentalist Christianity in America. The intense antipathy among the majority of fundamentalist Protestant evangelicals in America toward homosexuality is often thought to leave little room for non-normative identities or experiences within evangelicalism. Yet surreptitious but persistent traces of queer experience within the southern gospel tradition suggest that the music and culture of white gospel are vitally connected to the spirituality and sexuality of some gay men who come of age within conservative evangelical Christian traditions. Using the works of Del Shores, particularly his play Southern Baptist Sissies (2001) (and providing the first sustained critical examination of Shores' writing), I argue that southern gospel music serves as a powerful idiom in which to sublimate a range of homosocial, homoerotic, and homosexual feelings or desires that build up within evangelicalism's psychosexually repressive culture.¹

The Gay-Gospel Paradox

The origin of this paper is twofold. In the first place, I have for some time now been alternately fascinated and perplexed by the number of gay men—myself included—who enjoy music in the southern, white gospel tradition, which perhaps more than any other could be fairly described as the soundtrack for fundamentalist, evangelical Protestantism in North America. The second catalyst was the appearance in 2006 of an article from *Inside Out Nashville*, a weekly periodical focused on the queer community in Music City. The piece was a vitriolic critique by a local gay writer unaffiliated with gospel music, aimed at a periodic social gathering of gay southern gospel professionals, whom the writer lambasted for the hypocrisy of being gay and working in conservative Christian entertainment. This gay-gospel social gathering, the writer concluded, was as “one of the most cynical and creepy statements of our society” (Derrick, 2006, p. 5). For several years now, I have attended this event, though my association with gospel music goes only so far as an academic interest

and a blog devoted to criticism and commentary on southern gospel music and culture, and the columnist's portrayal of the gathering bore virtually no relationship to what I have encountered there, which might best be described as part religious experience, part cabaret, part family reunion, and—perhaps most important for a group of people whose identity puts them at odds with their spiritual traditions (not to mention their livelihood, in many cases)—unconditional affirmation of both the redemptive promise of evangelical spirituality and gay male sexuality.

The paradox of gay men and gospel music has come to occupy more and more of my scholarly energy as I have undertaken a sustained study of southern gospel music and its cultural function. In addition to the formal analysis of gospel music—its lyrics, musical form, and performances—my scholarly approach to southern gospel situates the music within the broader contexts of contemporary Protestant evangelicalism, particularly evangelicals' struggle to balance their commitment to notionally absolute doctrines against the practical need for theological and cultural flexibility if religion is to remain relevant. In general, my research reveals that the interaction of lyrics, music, and religious experience in southern gospel comprises a heterodox discourse through which evangelicals sustain a surreptitious pluralism within an officially absolutist culture. Evangelicals use white gospel, as I have argued elsewhere, not to diminish experience in this world—the conventional scholarly wisdom about the music's cultural function—but to manage the vicissitudes of psychospiritual life in a way otherwise unavailable in evangelicalism (Harrison, 2008).

But what are the limits of this surreptitious heterodoxy? The answer, it seems increasingly apparent to me, is bound up in negotiations of (homo)sexuality and masculine spirituality (and their discontents) in southern gospel culture. After all, it doesn't get much more heterodox in fundamentalist evangelicalism than homosexuality, and for the many gay men I've met—both from my own experience with southern gospel music as an erstwhile Southern Baptist gospel pianist and from my scholarly research into white gospel music and its culture—fundamentalist evangelicalism's absolute prohibition on homosexuality means that gay males who wish to remain affiliated with evangelical popular culture have learned to be surreptitious about their involvement in white gospel, whether it be as a concert-going fan, a songwriter, producer, performer, promoter, or industry executive.

This surreptitiousness, however, poses a methodological problem. It's one thing to analyze the psychosocial dynamics of a live concert for what they suggest about evangelical culture or to close-read song lyrics for the way they imaginatively construct certain religious identities or make available certain spiritual experiences. It's quite another issue to inquire after a range of experience and feeling that is purposefully effaced and strategically silenced by the dominant cultural forces within southern gospel music. In some quarters of the industry, it's axiomatic that behind every gospel song, there's a gay man somewhere. And even among those who might find such a statement blasphemous, the fact that gay people are involved in almost every aspect of the music's creation, production, and performance constitutes a widely accepted open-secret. But, as one prominent record executive put it in an interview, "in our business, we deal with the market and the ministry. And those two issues have to mesh" (Glock, 2005, p. 168). What he means is that the business side of southern gospel effectively monetizes fundamentalist evangelical biblical

literalism. The southern gospel industry places a symbolic and economic premium on monogamous heterosexual marriage as the ideal expression of Christian identity among southern gospel professionals, while simultaneously and radically devaluing non-heterosexual ways of being. Thus there is a widespread aversion among queer individuals to speak openly about their experience or involvement in evangelical popular culture for fear of reprisals or alienation.² Moreover, very few textual or artifactual traces exist to document the extensive role that many gay men play in the industry, much less to support the kind of cultural study of gay men and gospel music that I wish to undertake here.³

Such silences and effacements are, as Hubbs (2004) has shown in her study of twentieth-century American composers and the role sexuality played in their artistic vision, powerful expressions of heterocentrism:

The denial and erasure of queer lives and contributions in historical accounts of twentieth-century U.S. culture reflect that culture's suffusion in homophobia. Homophobic culture provides ample incentive for nonqueer-identified commentators to uphold queer-effacing views, including the dominant myths that assert heterosexuals' exclusive place in cultural and social production and reproduction. (Hubbs, 2004, p. 5)

In southern gospel, this heterosexual exclusivity contributes to an environment in which no prominent southern gospel artists have ever openly identified themselves as gay or lesbian while maintaining a full-time career in the industry. There have been cases in which homosexuality has become an unavoidably prominent issue within the industry. Perhaps most famously, the gospel tenor Kirk Talley was outed in 2003 when the FBI arrested a man who tried to blackmail Talley with indiscrete photographs Talley had shared on a gay chat site (Gay Singer's, 2004). Around the same time, Bill Gaither, arguably the industry's most successful songwriter and performer, and the eponymous impresario of the Homecoming Friends concert tour and video series, was photographed embracing an openly lesbian songwriter (Linscot, 2006). Gaither had featured her music on one of his videos and spoken from the stage about a song she had written in terms that many fans construed to be a tacit endorsement of homosexuality. But even these are the kind of exceptional examples that prove the rule of carefully enforced silence and denial surrounding the discussion of homosexuality in southern gospel: Talley subsequently sought the counsel of a "Restoration Team" comprising conservative evangelical pastors and some prominent male figures from southern gospel (Talley, Testimony). This group supervised a purification rite and a version of "reparative" therapy that concluded with a public statement from the team certifying Talley's fitness to return to the stage, although he has nevertheless largely been shunned as a performer (Glock, 2006, pp. 171-172). In Gaither's case, the outcry over the photograph and his public comments ultimately required him to issue a statement emphatically denouncing the songwriter and lamenting her "sad" life as a lesbian (Bill Gaither, 2006).

In such a highly regulated culture that enforces what Warner first described as "heteronormativity" (1991, p. 9), how does one access the psychospiritual dynamics unique to gay evangelicals when their experience is at best deeply submerged beneath, at worst vigorously effaced by, Protestant fundamentalism's

aggressive antipathy toward homosexuality? Enter the plays of Del Shores. Shores is most well-known for the mainstream film adaptation of his tragicomic play *Sordid Lives* (1998)—a “black comedy,” as the film’s promotional material puts it, “about white trash” (imdb.com). But the play is only the most famous work from within a larger corpus of texts that explore the problem of nonconformity in the fundamentalist evangelical South in general, and the problematic intersection of homosexuality and conservative Christian culture in particular—dynamics that are largely hidden from view in the everyday life of Southern fundamentalist evangelicalism, or else surface in ways that misrepresent or distort the lived realities of queer identity. Taken together with the prominent role gospel music plays in most of Shores’ texts, his works provide one important entry point for an inquiry into the role of gospel music in shaping and maintaining of psychosexual identities at the margins of fundamentalist evangelical culture.⁴

Queer Quartets

My primary focus here will be on *Southern Baptist Sissies* (2001), Shores’ most formally sophisticated and aesthetically coherent play about four gay friends growing up and coming out (or not) in a tiny Southern Baptist community in rural Texas during the final decades of the twentieth century. My reading of the play will argue that the crisis of coming out in conservative Christian communities (especially those in the American South) creates seemingly insoluble knots of ideological and psychosexual conflict that dissolve only when Shores’ characters undergo affect-centric conversions to mutual tolerance, incipient pluralism, and sometimes even something approaching acceptance. Through ritual exchanges of sentiment in the singing of nostalgic religious songs, especially Baptist hymns in the gospel tradition,⁵ Shores’ gay characters consecrate imaginative reconciliations with one another and, in some cases, the straight and narrow religious world around them, in dramas that rely on habits of evangelical conversion and spirituality to—paradoxically—fantasize the liberalization of conservative evangelicalism.

One distinguishing feature of the play is its effort to explore fundamentalist evangelicalism’s “hate the sin, love the sinner” approach to homosexuality from the perspective of the “sinner.” Mark is the play’s resident thinker—introspective, defiant, and deeply vulnerable beneath his anger and polemics. He also functions as a cultural tour guide for an audience presumed to be unfamiliar with evangelical fundamentalism and is capable of stopping and starting scenes at will. In these moments, he breaks the fourth wall, steps outside the action and offers commentary on the play’s themes and characters. Much of the play’s thematic energy centers on Mark’s refusal to accept the “sinner” label while also acknowledging an abiding affection for important parts of evangelical culture and life. The closest thing to a primary plot line in the play is Mark’s fitful, confused, and doomed romance with TJ. TJ is butch and terrified by the possibility of losing his place within his family and community because of his sexuality; he retreats into orthodox fundamentalism and a straight marriage, projecting his fear and self-loathing on to others—especially Mark. Their friend Andrew is as scared as TJ, but not as successful in convincing himself that he can pray the gay away; he ultimately hangs himself with a noose he finds in a multipurpose room at his church. Benny is the play’s effeminate sissy who, as the cast notes put it, “escape[s] into the world of drag” (Shores, 2001, p. 6).⁶ The

growing network of conflicts between and among the boys (and with some of their families) becomes the driving force of the narrative, which is nonlinear and works by piecing together a set of psychospiritually emblematic scenes.

The play splits time primarily between two settings: a small Baptist church and a gay nightclub that bleeds into a piano/drag bar. Dramaturgically, this division helps structurally reinforce the play's emphasis on the oppositions and splits created by fundamentalism's response to homosexuality. As the "Do This in Remembrance of Me" communion table in the Baptist church setting is repositioned as the stripper's platform during the club scenes, or as the baptistery morphs into a boy's bedroom loft where Mark and TJ have their first, fumbling, post-pubescent sexual encounter, Shores' play suggests both that the sacred and the (homo)sexual are inextricably bound together for the queer evangelical, and that there is nevertheless no easily identifiable or functionally inhabitable middle ground between the two on which these misfits can build a life—at least not as things now stand. The four main characters regularly speak directly to the audience during meta-narrative moments that Shores may be using to imagine an alternative, out-of-time position for his gay characters to exist in, between the existential extremes represented by the church and the bar. From this in-between space, the sissies confront themselves and their desires, fears, and ambivalences about being gay and evangelical without worrying about being rejected by the church, or about losing connections to their rural families and Bible-Belt traditions in an escape to urbanized gay life. But in these soliloquies, the characters consistently struggle—and fail—to overcome self-embattlement on their own, and in their isolation they return to their place in the play's narrative, immobilized with grief, consumed by self-righteousness, paralyzed with rage, incapacitated by alienation.

Here is Mark near the middle of Act II, finally coming into half-sighted realizations about the relationship between his angry defiance as a gay adult and his fundamentalist childhood:

If someone asks me, "What is your type?" Well I just say—needy, fucked-up, sometimes unemployed, most of the time with no car or a place to live. But always really, really cute. A young combination of Elvis and Jesus. (*Pause, serious.*) What's that about? I mean, here I've spent my life working on myself. Defending to the world who I am after the Baptists fucked me up. Oops, correction. After I allowed the Baptists to fuck me up. See, I've had a little therapy. And sometimes ... sometimes I think Benny's right. (*A look to BENNY.*) Just live your life, and let them live theirs—and shut the fuck up. But I can't (*Chokes up, BROTHER CHAFFEY enters and starts softly playing "Pass Me Not, Oh Gentle Savior".*) (Shores, 2001, p. 60)

In this soliloquy, Mark considers embracing a live-and-let-live detachment from the world, except that such a pose would mean abandoning the affective structures and emotional logic of Protestant evangelicalism as the framework for understanding psychosexual identity. His reluctance to surrender this familiar idiom (even if in service of an incipient gay activism) coincides with Brother Chaffey's appearance on stage and the opening strains of the plaintive gospel hymn, "Pass Me Not, Oh Gentle Savior." For the first time, Mark begins to evince an awareness of the deeper

significance of his angry defiance, not as a rejection of all that is familiar, but as a desire for self-transcending integration of the dissonant parts of his identity. Mark's mention of Elvis and Jesus recalls the point Warner (1997) makes in his autobiographical essay about evangelicalism, sex, and gay male identity that "Jesus was my first boyfriend. He loved me, personally, and he told me I was his own. This was very thrilling, especially when he was portrayed by Jeffrey Hunter" (p. 228). What Warner seems to be aiming at here (besides some comic relief) is that habits of evangelical conversion and piety impress themselves deeply into the psychospiritual character of the adolescents whose formative years are spent under the shaping pressure of fundamentalist idioms and imagery.

For gay men who come of age within southern evangelical culture, certain experiential symmetries may emerge between the struggle to come to terms with sexuality and evangelical salvation experiences as a religious rite of passage. Each involves deep-set and even more deeply felt shifts in identity, accompanied by public statements of personal transformation (so-called professions of faith), suggesting that the phenomena might well serve similar psychosocial functions. And in both coming-out and salvation experiences, identity is (re)constructed simultaneously in the public renunciation of an earlier way of living and in the embrace of new narratives and norms that help disambiguate an individuality in flux and integrate it into a community of support and understanding. In effect, evangelical religion can supply for some gay men what Warner terms "a language of ecstasy, a horizon of significance within which transgressions against the normal order of the world and the boundaries of the self *can be seen as good things*" (1997, p. 229; author's emphasis).

Shores adds to this general dynamic the particularly powerful role music plays in activating the complex of feelings and spiritual intuitions that are key to transformative religious experiences. As Mark's soliloquy ends and "Pass Me Not" continues to build, the scene concludes:

BENNY [singing]. "Savior, Savior ..." (he rises and begins to exit.)

BENNY/ANDREW [both singing]. "Hear my humble cry ..."

(ANDREW rises and follows BENNY.)

BENNY/ANDREW/TJ. "While on others thou art calling ..."

BENNY/ANDREW/TJ/MARK [all singing]. "Do not pass me by." (Shores, 2001, pp. 60-61)

On the surface, this image of Shores' four sissies voicing their feelings of pain and isolation through the singing of a standard Baptist hymn in the gospel tradition would appear to critique evangelical fundamentalism through a quasi-Butlerian queering of hegemonic discourse. This camp-as-critique reading is reinforced by Shores' own activist vision of himself as a gay playwright. In a 2006 commentary published in *The Advocate* he declared, "I will not shut up until I breathe my last. I will not soften my position ... I will scream loudly and counter the religious right's hypocrisy by exposing it." The article's title poses the question, "Do We Hate?" Shores' answer: "yeah, maybe" (2006, p. 50). In this context, Mark's angry soliloquy sounds like a re-voicing of Shores' own outrage at the way anti-gay evangelicalism not only rejects the homosexual, but also dispossesses him of the intellectual and

emotional resources needed to redirect the evangelistic impulse into a more humane reform agenda. But the deeper significance of the scene seems to be Mark's realization of the objectlessness of his anguish. As each boy tentatively joins his voice with the others', they form a queer quartet that transforms the vicissitudes of individual suffering into a basis for belonging in community, but this community cannot emerge without the surrender of the individual's aggrieved self-righteousness. This scene is representative of the play's treatment of music as a spiritual stimulus that converts otherwise insoluble cultural conflicts into moments of reconciliation and unconditional acceptance—a kind of gay grace—created in the mingling of sentiment and song. Or, as one of the alcoholic, depressive, backslidden Baptist barflies puts it early on in the play, "Yeah! Those Baptists know how to sing, that's for dang sure. There was that feelin' that I got there ... Safe in the arms of Jesus, you know?" (2001, p. 20).

In Shores' plays, these sorts of incongruous lines—an alcohol-sodden, loud-mouthed tramp holding forth with her effeminate, homosexual drinking buddy about Jesus and church music in a gay bar—often get good laughs from the audience, but while Shores is well-known for a trademark brand of bawdy, white-trash Christian camp, there's no indication in the text that he intends these sorts of statements to be dismissed as only so much trailer-park theology or shrugged off as drunken philosophizing. In a note atop the text of his play *Daddy's Dyin', Who's Got the Will?* (1987), Shores provided directions that could be applied to all his works: "These people are real, not cartoons. It's easy to go for laughs, it's harder to strive for truth" (p. 7). Shores reinforced the tragicomic aims of his work in a later interview: "I choose a subject that is pretty serious and write a comedy about it ... The funniest characters are the most tragic" (2000, pp. 2-3). As the film adaption of *Sordid Lives* (1998) illustrated, Shores' notion of his plays as "seriocomedy" does not always translate well into mainstream entertainment (2000, p. 3). The mass-market demand for an easily digestible cinema product resulted in the tragic element in *Sordid Lives* being sheared away in the adaptation of the play to film, undercutting the more trenchant elements of the drama and leaving a series of Southernized comedic situations that tend to reinforce over-simple stereotypes of the American South and give (sub)urban audiences permission to laugh dismissively at lower-class, rural Christians in the Bible Belt. In *Daddy's Dyin'*, a dysfunctional family of siblings and in-laws warring over their dying father's farm and money rely on the power and pathos of singing gospel music together to discover a tolerance for one another's divergent lifestyles as adults. Harmonizing their voices in song metaphorizes a model of mutual respect that allows each voice to be both individual and part of the family ensemble simultaneously, without effacing genuine differences of worldview and life choices. This surreptitious heterodoxy is almost entirely absent from the 1990 film adaption, which treats the musical scenes as sentimental flashbacks of a dying and semi-lucid patriarch fantasizing in his dotage about a lost idyll of Southern, patriarchal pastoralism. Like the "pill-popping, chain-smoking, cement-haired" busybody who anchors the drama in *Sordid Lives* (Peiker, 2008), gospel music and Baptist hymnody function in the film adaption of *Daddy's Dyin'* as pretexts for punch lines or melodrama, rather than as a psychospiritually strategic way for Southern Christians to manage conflicts between private feelings and public expectations of orthodox culture.

As Shores' career as a playwright has progressed, this idea has increasingly come to focus on the twinned crises of sexuality and spirituality in explicitly gay male experience. The most radical nonconformist in *Daddy's Dyin'* (1987), one of Shores' earliest works, is a hippie named Harmony Rhodes and the slutty, foul-mouthed Evalita Turnover—entertaining but stock characters, both. Five years later, in *Daughters of the Lone Star State* (1992), Shores created an all-female cast of brassy, trashy, flawed, but fundamentally decent women whose commitment to the salvific effects of female community and the restorative power of (mostly) unconditional love reads in retrospect like a writer experimenting with his voice in new registers that, perhaps most innovatively, attempt to imagine a contemporary Southern Christian homosocial sphere. By the end of the decade in *Sordid Lives* (1998), Shores' work was ranging into transvestitism, coming out in conservative culture, and the Southern Christian propensity to pathologize homosexuality. If, as Shores himself has said, he keeps “getting closer to me” in all his plays, then *Sissies* (2001) represents the culmination not only of Shores' nearly two-decades long struggle to come out within a secular artistic and literary world as a gay playwright from a fundamentalist background, but also an authoritative statement on the role of gospel music in the emergence of a more fully self-possessed identity for many gay men from Southern, evangelical backgrounds who want and need some way to retain a sense of their native spirituality as they acknowledge their sexuality. “When I wrote *Sissies*,” Shores has said, “I really believed each of the four boys was an extension of me” (2000, p. 2).

In singing about the soul's plea for salvation, each character in *Sissies* projects into the lyrics and music the particular nature of his experience as a gay man who still longs to retain some affiliation with evangelical culture, but in a way that does not deny the full range of his adult identity. For him to voice the queer struggle for acceptance through a gospel hymn is not only—or even primarily—to critique or satirize evangelicalism, it seems to me, any more than Shores suggests in *Daddy's Dyin'* (1987) that the primary meaning of the family singing gospel music together is the kind nostalgic escape from reality that the film makes it out to be. Shores has spoken publicly about a desire to create work that “shakes people up” (Shores, 2000, p. 1), so it would not be wrong to identify elements of critique, satire, and escapism in his plays' use of music, religious or otherwise. But for Shores, gospel music seems to matter mainly for its ability to help reconcile the queer and spiritual selves, to consecrate the ordeal of coming out (or trying to) in the reassuringly familiar patterns of evangelical feeling and expression as idiomized in gospel music.

Shores seems to have had something similar in mind when speaking in an interview just before the debut of *Sissies* (2001):

When we were doing *Sordid [Lives]* in Fort Worth in 1997, I hung out a lot with Leslie Jordan [who later become nationally famous playing the flamboyant Beverly Leslie on the sitcom *Will & Grace*] in the gay bars in Dallas, and I was just coming out, having a great time. My friends and I would listen to this gospel group called the Rambos sing in a gay club, and we sang gospel songs all the way back and forth. I started thinking of this collision of sexuality and the music. That made me remember the church, which led to the inspiration for [*Sissies*], set in Dallas. (Shores, 2000, p. 3)⁷

As an attempt to describe the origins of his work, Shores' explanation elides as much as it elucidates. The most important insights and motivations seem to exist beyond language, in between the words describing those moments when "this collision of music and sexuality" catalyzes the discovery of a self in which the disparate components of identity are harmonized in the experience of southern gospel.

Between the Pulpit and the Piano

There is a longstanding link in the literature of conversion between musicality and transformative upwellings of psychospiritual energy going back at least as far as Augustine. In Book VIII of *Confessions* (1986), he describes his religious conversion experience beginning at the sound of a child singing in the garden. The singing voice seemed to be sign from God to turn to scripture as a guide to salvation (1986, p. 177). For Augustine, music collects a set of disaggregated spiritual aspirations into a coherent feeling of epiphany or insight: "take and read," the child's voice sings, "take and read." And "in an instant," Augustine concludes, "it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart" (1986, p. 178). For Shores and his characters, the literal meaning of the doctrine as expressed in lyrics seems to be less important than the feeling of salvation (which is to say, unconditional acceptance and belonging) that emerges in the close harmony of gospel music sung in the ensemble—whether coming home from the gay bars in Dallas, or, as Andrew puts it in *Sissies* (2001), that moment on Sunday morning when "everybody would start to sing, 'Just as I Am' or 'Softly and Tenderly' or 'Pass Me Not.'" And "I'd feel that tug ... [that] I didn't quite understand" until "a feeling of peace, of joy and happiness [would] flood through my entire being" (pp. 16-17).

In juxtaposing Augustine and Shores in this way, I wish to highlight both the persistent role music has played in affective religious identity formation and the way that role has evolved over time to serve as a contemporary idiomatic bridge between orthodox doctrine and unorthodox experience for gay people whose lives and identities put them in conflict with dominant culture of conservative Protestant Christianity in the Calvinist tradition. In the evangelical vernacular, the experience Andrew (and Augustine) describes is understood as the conviction of the holy spirit ("that tug") and the work of redemptive grace ("a feeling of peace, of joy and happiness") imparted to the soul that has come to be aware of the lapsarian state imputed to all humankind through original sin. Perhaps unsurprisingly, contemporary evangelicalism commonly locates this so-called age of accountability during the years of childhood leading up to and culminating in puberty. This emphasis on the conversion of adolescent and early teenage children inevitably blends and blurs religious experience and sexuality. For those pubescent religious strivers coming into comprehension of their incipient homosexuality, the crisis of religious awakening can easily also become a crisis of psychosexual identity.

Remembering his own baptism by full immersion—and the experience of seeing TJ naked as they both changed clothes afterward in a small room off to the side of the church baptistery—Mark confesses that "that blend of religion and sexuality was just almost too much for my almost teenage body to deal with. I was supposed to feel different. And I did! But now, in hindsight, on that day, the day of my baptism, my twelve-year-old ... body and soul ... (*Stares at TJ*) ... fell in love." This

memory is part of a flashback scene in which young Mark and TJ are both welcomed into the communion of Christian fellowship following their baptism. Standing at the front of the church, Mark “walks over and joins TJ, throwing his arm around him,” and they sing with the rest of the congregation the chorus to “Revive Us Again”: “Hallelujah, thine the glory, hallelujah, amen. Hallelujah, thine the glory, revive us again” (Shores, 2001, p. 43). As with so many of the play’s psychospiritually pivotal scenes, this one relies on the presence of some classic gospel hymn or other traditional white gospel song to catalyze an imaginative and emotional resolution of the dichotomies that beset the gay male evangelical caught between psychosexual desire and normative cultural values. The transgressive attraction that Mark feels when looking at TJ’s body in the baptismal dressing room is ceremonially sanctified in the experience of hymn singing. A touch that is forbidden in the naked intimacy of the changing room is permitted and encouraged in the public evangelical sphere, which sanctions homosocial bonding as expressions of Christian brotherhood. Mark throws his arm around TJ in a gesture that is not satirical or ironic or blasphemous, but suffused with vectors of identity originating in both religion and sexuality. Under the auspices of evangelical religious cultural practices like baptism and the ceremonial exchange of affection between Christian “brothers,” ordinarily conflicting impulses of gay evangelical identity are momentarily and wonderfully harmonized through the experience of the gospel music that texturizes these rituals.

From this point of view, the link between gay men and gospel music begins to make sense as an experiential context in which to feel the queer, evangelical equivalent of what James referred to in the *Varieties of Religious Experience* as “the high-water mark of his spiritual capacity” (1997, p. 191). That this experience should emerge within such an openly homophobic environment presents a paradox, to be sure, but one that is nevertheless consistent with the structure of feeling and desire found in strictly patriarchal societies. Indeed Kosofsky Sedgwick’s (1985) study of homosociality in “male-dominated kinship systems” has shown “the tendency toward important correspondences and similarities between the most sanctioned forms of male-homosocial bonding”—sports, politics—“and the most reprobated expressions of male homosexual sociality”—cabarets, drag shows, gay strip clubs (pp. 3, 89).

Take, for instance, the all-male quartets who spend long stretches of time on the road in the necessary intimacy of a custom coach bus (the preferred mode of travel in southern gospel). Unaware of the pious explanations of southern gospel music as a high calling and an evangelistic ministry, one might observe this dynamic as an outsider and easily draw far different conclusions from the sight of four comely (or at least highly coifed) men spending most days and nights together in a confined living space they share for the purposes of eating, sleeping, bathing, and passing most of their waking hours between concerts. For their part, many gospel singers speak of the bonds they form with other singers as akin to brotherhood, strongly suggesting that a great deal of intimacy inevitably builds up between men who not only live this closely together for (often) years at time, but also join their voices night after night in close harmony to sing of the soul’s striving after grace and salvation. “I count it an honor,” the manager of one of the most prominent southern gospel all-male quartets said in a statement referring to the group’s lead singer, “to stand beside this man night after night. He is not only the finest lead singer in Gospel

Music, but he has a passion for this music and the message it delivers. I love him like a brother and thank God for his friendship” (Jonathan Wilburn, 2006).

I do not mean to suggest that such dynamics are necessarily manifestations of repressed or hidden same-sex attractions. But these networks of religious camaraderie and spiritual intimacy can nevertheless combine with the rhetoric and experiential force of southern gospel to serve as a powerful idiom through which those involved at any stage of the music’s creation and consumption may sublimate a range of homosocial, homoerotic, and homosexual feelings or desires that build up within evangelicalism’s psychosexually repressive culture. A few years after being outed by the arrest of the man who tried to blackmail him, the gospel singer Kirk Talley wrote and recorded a song titled “Intimacy with Jesus” (Talley, 2005b). In the song, the singer describes his desire to touch Christ’s face daily and be near enough to feel the Savior’s heartbeat “as I completely lay upon your chest” (Talley, 2005b). It is not uncommon for southern gospel songs to rely on images and rhetoric of physical or romantic intimacy to dramatize evangelicalism’s ideal relationship with the divine (see, for instance, the recently popular song “Hold Me While I Cry” by Karen Peck and New River), but the New Testament’s prominent descriptions of Christians as the bride of Christ (*King James Bible*, Eph. 5. 25) and Jesus as a bridegroom (Matt. 25.10) provide a scriptural rationale for desexualized interpretations of such imagery as purely metaphorical. Read in light of Talley’s ordeal and the very public way he subsequently discussed having “wrestled and dealt with same-sex attraction” for many years (Talley, 2005a), “Intimacy with Jesus” is notable for collapsing the traditional distance between the tenor and the vehicle of the metaphor. The song’s explicitly homoerotic imagery transparently displaces homosexual desire onto evangelical religious experience. As a culturally authorized language in which to speak of deep feelings of the heart and intuitions of the soul, southern gospel negotiates between unorthodox identity and orthodox culture.

Talley himself has come very close to acknowledging as much. In the same interview in which he discussed his same-sex attractions, he said that while “people are just now finding out” about his sexuality because of the criminal case he was caught up in, “all my life I put myself and my personal struggles in my songs,” which are a “transparent look into my real life” (Talley, 2005a). If we take Talley’s words seriously (and I think we should), then one function of southern gospel music may indeed be to redirect culturally forbidden desires of the gay male—on either side of the footlights, whether out, repressed, closeted, or questioning—into pathways of expression that are both psychospiritually familiar and culturally acceptable.

In matters of the spirit, soul, and identities in transition, we deal in penumbras just beyond our focal distance; in evidences felt, not seen; in substances hoped for, but never fully grasped. When I have observed—and felt for myself—the self-authenticating force of gospel music at its best (what Don Cusic [1990] has so aptly called “the sound of light” in his history of Christian music), the experience has been as authoritative and affecting in the moment as it has proved difficult to explain or describe after the psychospiritual comedown.⁸

This indescribability is, I think, part of the reason such moments in Shores’ plays sometimes inadvertently teeter on the verge of farce or melodrama. In trying to render such experiences, he seems to be attempting not only to translate an unfamiliar subculture and set of spiritual customs to popular audiences beyond the

American South, but also to explain to himself reasons for his and his characters' continued attachment to a culture that rejects them so strongly. But these reasons remain partially comprehended at best. Gospel music raises the alluring possibility that the outcast might find a single psychospiritual language in which both the desires of the heart and habits of the soul can merge. The queer evangelical is drawn back by this prospect to the mysteries of Protestant grace and Christic redemption, even as the limits of contemporary evangelicalism's homophobia obstructs strivers' progress and turns them away. The play visualizes this tension in the opening scene, in which the four boys are first seen singing together while positioned between the pulpit (a dramaturgical symbol of evangelical orthodoxy) and the piano (the one object that endures most visibly from the cabaret and gay nightclub scenes). The existential implications represented by the characters' location between the pulpit and the piano visually metaphorizes the dilemma facing the Southern Baptist (and southern gospel) sissy and his struggle to hold the self in better psychospiritual balance, to inhabit the space between.

What, if anything, is to be done? The play's conclusion meditates on this question for some time. The final scene of *Sissies* (2001) stages an evangelical affirmation of queer identity underscored by gospel music. The scene opens at Andrews's funeral in the church, where Brother Chaffey is playing the Baptist funeral-favorite, "In the Garden" (Shores, 2001, p. 85). While the preacher's funeral sermon expounds on Andrew's suicide as the wages of sin, Mark—in his meta-narrative role—starts to annotate the preacher's remarks with increasing hostility until finally Mark's rage and frustration halt the funeral scene entirely.

MARK. (*Overlap [with PREACHER]*). Shut the fuck up!!!! (*Music has built and abruptly stops, a minory [sic] feel. Church lights transition to include the God light when music stops.*)

MARK. (*Manic*) Sometimes I close my eyes And I create a perfect world. A world of acceptance and understanding and love. A world where there's hope. Even if the hope is just whispered. I hear it.

BENNY. (*A capella.*) "Soft as a voice of any angel, Breathing a lesson unheard, Hope with a gentle persuasion, Whispers her comforting word." (Shores, 2001, pp. 86-87)

With Benny's introduction of the opening lines to the gospel classic "Whispering Hope," Andrew rises, Christ-like, from the dead, and describes heaven as waking up in the arms of a faithful lover, while Mark continues to annotate the scene in a manner that suggests he is literally calling into being the better, hopeful world that he has only longed for up to this point: In this world, the preacher suddenly speaks of love, not judgment; the play's two barflies, Odette and Peanut, unburden themselves of guilt and shame for their misspent lives; TJ and Mark profess love for one another and "turn towards the pulpit, holding hands, standing there for a moment like a groom and groom" (Shores, 2001, p. 89). Ultimately, Andrew's pious mother and the rest of the cast join in singing the final bars of the song: "Whispering hope, O how welcome they voice, Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice" (Shores, 2001, p. 90).

As the resolution to a work of dramatic literature, the scene remains firmly in the realm of prolonged wish fulfillment. But I understand the play's drift from psychosocial realism into queer fantasy as a residual effect of the cognitive and emotional dissonances the text attempts to overcome. As both a meditation on, and at one important level a product of, evangelicalism's monochromatic worldview, *Sissies* (2001) struggles to escape fundamentalism's oppositional way of thinking and responding, as well as evangelicalism's reliance on effusions of sentiment and nostalgia to mask the rejection of non-normative subjectivities. Neither Shores nor Mark seems able to decide if he wants to eradicate evangelical hatefulness or force evangelicalism to accept him. Indeed, Mark's have-it-both-ways relationship to evangelicalism is, in its own way, every bit as fundamentalist as the preacher or Andrew's ultra-conservative mother. Here is Mark in Act II, contemplating leaving the church: "I'm gonna miss it. The music. The hymns. The sweet old ladies. The covered dish fellowships. That feeling ... (*Pats his heart, emotional*) ... I get right here. ... But how do you embrace something that doesn't embrace you?" (Shores, 2001, p. 72). Without a rational language in which to translate "that feeling" into terms that do not circumscribe him within orthodox evangelicalism's punitive view of homosexuality, Mark assumes he has to surrender his spiritual identity in order to affirm his sexuality. But Mark's parenthetical, nonverbal gesture signifying the intensity of emotion he has in mind suggests whatever structure of feeling is being described here exists—like Shores' description of *Sissies'* origins—beyond the limits of language, between orthodox evangelicalism and secular gay culture, in a space where certain types of religious songs ("The music. The hymns") take on the underlying character of participants' psychospiritual desires for belonging ("the sweet old ladies") and the fellowship of community ("the covered dishes") and, by externalizing the feelings in song, legitimize them.

At its most affecting, then, white gospel music exceeds the limits of orthodox culture to control what it means or to put limits on the reach of the psychospiritual work it accomplishes. Throughout the play, gospel music that originates in church scenes is held over into, or reappears as part of, bar/club scenes (never the other way around). In Act I, when the two barflies, both lapsed evangelicals, begin talking about growing up in church, the bar's piano player begins an unsolicited rendition of the altar-call hymn "Softly and Tenderly" (Shores, 2001, p. 20). Late in Act II, one of the barflies—Peanut, a short, middle-aged gay man who pays for sex from hustlers ever since his self-image was destroyed in his twenties by "two evil queens" who very publicly humiliated him (Shores, 2001, p. 32)—approaches Andrew on the street to speak a word of cautionary encouragement to him, and "Pass Me Not" begins to filter out of the piano bar. Theater reviewer Les Spindle has written that Shores uses music in his plays "to comment on the story," and this is true so far as it goes (Shores, 2001, p. 13). But this assessment fails to comprehend the deeper function of gospel music implied by the play. Shores deploys gospel hymns in ways suggesting that certain affective styles of white Christian music, unlike other conventions of evangelical culture, have psychospiritual relevance far beyond the confines of the church.

To this transcultural aspect of gospel music, the final funeral scene adds the transformative power to integrate disparate components of the hybrid self's identity—in this case, evangelical spirituality and non-heterosexual sexuality. The

conclusion's force is somewhat scattered by the fantastical transformation of Mark into a herald of gay liberation theology, telegraphed most directly in the play's final words: "I always wake up," Mark says (as he "looks up, right hand outstretched to heavens, smiles," according to the stage directions), "but now ... with hope!" (Shores, 2001, p. 90). Nevertheless, the ending remains a significant achievement as a culmination of the play's persistent suggestion of a post-fundamentalist possibility for queer evangelical identity formation, one that frees the queer self from the false oppositions between religious affections and non-normative sexuality by staging the resolution of conflictual energy in the experience of gospel music. In this, southern gospel emerges as a psychodynamic varietal of the "strategies for integration" of gay and Christian identities that Walton (2006) has discussed in his study of evangelicals and homosexuality (p. 5).

One of southern gospel's most distinctive features is its emphasis on the ultimate return of harmonic symmetry in familiar and deeply satisfying triumphs of musical consonance and beauty over dissonance and incongruence. McManus (2004) has written that the centrality in southern gospel of this dissonance-to-consonance harmonic movement "forms a musical metaphorical parallel with the extreme 'rightness' and 'wrongness'" of evangelical theology (p. 73). Shores' play (especially the conclusion's prolonged fantasy of reconciliation) suggests, however, that the frisson of resolution—the thrilling, momentary fusion of typically opposing energies into a single experience of redemptive, liberating totality—can be at least as psychodynamically significant as the fixed poles of possibility (rightness/wrongness, saved/lost, sinner/saint, gay/straight) implied by musical dissonance and harmonic consonance.

Gospel Music's "Place for Us"

Finding effective language to describe ineffable moments of spiritual transcendence is difficult enough in the main. No less gifted an evangelical divine than Jonathan Edwards complained in his 1743 treatise on *Religious Affections* about "spiritual things being invisible, and not things that can be pointed forth with the finger," so that "we are forced to use figurative expressions in speaking of them, and to borrow names from external and sensible objects to signify them by" (1962, p. 243). This problem is especially acute for those hybridized strivers seeking affirmation of their spiritual experience *and* minority identities within the idioms of evangelical Protestantism. What little language does exist in the anti-modern environment of contemporary evangelicalism is aimed at forcing separations between spirituality and non-normative identities of all kinds. As a result, attempts to integrate the two create complicated constellations of emotion shot through with contradiction and elisions—not least of all, a nagging feeling that to be gay and to enjoy gospel music is to implicate oneself in Protestant fundamentalism's anti-gay attitudes and praxis.

To those (like the author of the *Inside Out Nashville* article) who are unfamiliar with, or unreceptive to, the many varieties of evangelical religious experience, Shores' imperfectly realized vision of gospel hymns as a meaningful language of psychospiritual transformation must look like just another kind of closet, with music. But such a dismissive view simply substitutes one set of moral dogmas for another and overlooks both the experiential richness of the gospel tradition and the polyvalence of queer individuality. The lyrical and stylistic tendencies of gospel

music have historically emphasized the felt human struggle of trying and failing to live up to impossible goals of official doctrine (Harrison 2008, pp. 34-35). At the same time, American literature that explores the gospel-music experience—most notably, Harry Crews's *The Gospel Singer* (1968), but also important parts of Harold Frederic's *Damnation of Theron Ware* (1896), Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* (1926), and Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1993)—variously demonstrates the inextricable link between singing about Jesus and living like the Devil. To ignore this persistent linkage is to close off entire quadrants of evangelical life.

In describing southern gospel music as a vehicle for implicitly expressing queer experience, I have attempted to demonstrate how queer subjectivity within the context of, and entangled with, evangelical Christianity makes a particular kind of complex sociopolitical statement that moves beyond exclusivity of sexuality and religious identities. However, even as I place emphasis on the diversity of psychospiritual experience that southern gospel music allows within fundamentalist evangelical culture, I am also mindful of the risks associated with any discourse of religious pluralism. As Hulsether (2008) has shown in his study of religion, culture, and politics, emphasizing a plurality of religious experiences can inadvertently mask concentrations of hegemony and the operations of dominant cultural power that shape contemporary religious life, especially marginal and minority identities (pp. 16-17). In speaking of southern gospel's surreptitious heterodoxy, one must emphasize the surreptitiousness—its invisibility and the burden of self-regulation that falls to the nonconforming individual who wishes to forge a religious identity beyond what orthodoxy strictly allows—as much as the heterodox nature of that experience.

Taken together, then, the evidence from beneath the pious surface of evangelical life—behind the gospel-music stage, from the back of the bus, beyond the reach of the footlights—tells an alternative story about southern gospel music and its cultural function that doesn't (yet) definitively disrupt orthodox power structures or discredit orthodox accounts of the music's purpose, but complicates them considerably in ways that call to mind Hubbs' observation about "music's function as a redeemer—or regulator—of twentieth-century homosexuals" (2004, p. 4). Indeed, rightly understood, the history of southern gospel might well be described as the record of misfits, outcasts, non-conformists, and strugglers searching for, hearing, finding, or longing after the right key in which the soul can sing.

Thus, perhaps the real paradox at the intersection of homosexuality and gospel music would be if gay men from the fundamentalist evangelical tradition *were*'t drawn to southern gospel and its tantalizing promise of accessing an alternative language in which to find (by imagining) something like what Miller (1998) calls in the title of his essay on Broadway and homosexuality a "place for us." For Miller, mid-century Broadway showtunes operate by suppressing the "Open Secret" of homosexuality, and so possess "a loquacity of prohibition that establishes, shapes, and sharpens the very desire lying beneath it" (1998, p. 94).⁹ For several generations of gay men who grew up in the rural evangelical American South, gospel music functions as what might be thought of as southern, Christian showtunes. The outsized, flamboyant sentimentality of southern gospel merges a network of desires—for transcendence, for affirmation, for the salvation of acceptance without

the surrender of self—that are only intensified by the difficulty of ever fully realizing them for more than a few fleeting moments of gospel music harmony.

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Notes

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² For this reason, the utility of human-subject studies of the sort Walton (2006) productively conducted within more progressive sectors of Protestant Christianity is severely limited.

³ This essay's focus on queer identity within southern, white gospel music reflects the socio-historically distinct trajectories along which white (southern) and black gospel developed in the twentieth century. However, there are enough stylistic and experiential overlaps in the two traditions to strongly suggest that some black gay men find implicit affirmation through black gospel in ways not wholly dissimilar from the white gospel dynamics I am interested in exploring here. In any event, further research is clearly needed into the extent to which race variously mediates the experience of gay men in gospel music among the black and white gospel traditions. For more on the history of black gospel, see Darden (2004). For more on the psychosocial differences between black and white gospel musical performance, see Harrison (2008). For a discussion of the black "gospel impulse" at work in the literature and music of afro-modernism, see Werner (1994).

⁴ Though fundamentalist evangelicalism is not exclusively anchored within Protestantism, the most familiar and powerful intersections of sexuality and religious fundamentalism in America occur within Protestant evangelical fundamentalist contexts. Indeed, a useful line of inquiry might compare the way Protestant and non-Protestant fundamentalisms respond to non-heterosexuality as a component of religious identity. However, my use of the term "evangelical" and its varieties hereafter in this essay should be understood to include the modifier "Protestant" when not explicitly deployed.

⁵ For more on the difference between hymns and gospel songs, see Harrison (2008, pp. 34-35). Though hymnody and white gospel are distinct traditions with discrete stylistic and cultural functions, they share many features, especially in fundamentalist Protestant religious communities. In referring to hymns in the gospel tradition here, I mean to designate the way the lyrics and musical style of certain classic hymns used in the play borrow more heavily from and rely primarily on conventions of white gospel than traditional hymnody.

⁶ This and all quotes from the works of Del Shores reprinted with permission by the author, to whom I am grateful for the support he has shown this study of his work.

⁷ In a more recent email exchange, Del Shores clarified to me that he and his friends were listening to the Rambos music being played on their way to the gay club, but that the Rambo family singers themselves were not present at the club.

⁸ In addition to the reasons for this phenomenon that I outline above, the difficulty I describe may also be related to a particular quandary facing the queer critic, what Shollock has described as the complicated "relation between one's sexual identity and one's scholarship" and the way that in academic discourse "homosexuality (as both subject of inquiry and as an identity claim) is [often] deemed *excessively personal* in a way that heterosexuality in its normativity is not" (Shollock, 2007, 134).

⁹ For more on the American musical and homosexuality, see also Cohan (2005).

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Instilling the “Manly” Faith: Protestant Masculinity and the German *Jünglingsvereine* at the *fin de siècle*

Tyler Carrington

*The “feminization of religion” during the nineteenth century has received a great deal of attention by historians of religion over the past two decades, but less work has been done to examine the Church’s response to this feminization. This article seeks to make a contribution to the historiography on gender and religion by examining the German *Jünglingsvereine*, or religious youth groups, at the end of the nineteenth century. Analyzing the practical and theoretical writings of the founders of these groups, as well as group newsletters and internal publications, this article suggests that the Church responded to the feminization of religion by creating young men’s clubs into which an older generation of Church leaders instilled its morals and beliefs. These groups, in their program of religious edification, continued education, and carefully fostered atmosphere of sociability, advanced a religiously defined notion of masculinity aimed at producing upright, strong, continent, and patriotic members of German society. Church leaders pinned their hopes for cultural relevance on German teenagers using patriotic and gendered discourse. An examination of this discourse offers a glimpse at the dynamics of masculinity, religion, and youth in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany.¹*

“Is Christianity unmanly?” This question appeared in February 1916 as the title of the front-page article of the *Monthly Newsletter* of the CVJM-Nuremberg, a branch of the German YMCA. Directed at the young men of the Protestant Church’s youth group movement, the article was a polemic against the prevalent notion that Christianity inherently lacked manliness. The author asked rhetorically if Reformation-hero Martin Luther was not manly when he “looked death in the eye” and declared, “Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me.” The author also recounted the valor of the Salzburger who, in the winter of 1732, gave up house and home and trudged through the snow for the sake of their Evangelical faith. In

setting up one manly hero after another—culminating with Christ as the ultimate man—the author made explicit the manly characteristics of true Christian men.²

The Church's response to this question—"Is Christianity unmanly?"—offers a glimpse into the masculine ideal of both these youth groups—called *Jünglingsvereine*—and, by extension, that of the late nineteenth-century German Protestant Church. In this essay, I locate the *Jünglingsvereine* in their historical context and examine both the structure of the groups and the discourse of their literature in order to access the masculine ideal that the leaders of these Protestant clubs advocated for their predominately working-class male members. I argue that the *Jünglingsvereine*, in their program of religious edification and continued education, and their carefully fostered atmosphere of sociability, advanced a religiously defined, middle-class notion of masculinity aimed at producing cultured, assertive, strong, chaste, and—above all—Christian men. Moreover, I suggest that when considered in the context of the "feminization of religion" of the nineteenth century, these groups are best understood as vehicles by which an older generation of beleaguered Church leaders defended themselves and the Church from increasing cultural irrelevance and sought to restore the Church's unraveling sense of manliness. Responses to the feminization of religion were not limited to the Catholic Church or to attacks on Catholicism's manliness by Protestants, though these are the major themes in much of the relevant historiography (Hastings, 2008; Gross, 2001, 2004). Rather, as this study suggests, Protestants also feared becoming "feminized" themselves and took action to combat the emasculation of their public image. As such, the *Jünglingsvereine* provide a unique glimpse into the internal and external (or inter-confessional) "masculinity dynamics" of the Protestant Church at the *fin de siècle*.

Jünglingsvereine, like the CVJM-Nuremburg, were formed in the 1850s alongside similar groups for young women and have generally been understood as a response to the perceived moral crisis of sex and alcohol afflicting youths in the industrial age.³ And while this is, indeed, accurate, a gender analysis of these all-male groups at the *fin de siècle*—when they acquired greater importance in the minds and discourse of their leaders—suggests a different reading: that they were a reaction to the "feminization of religion" of the nineteenth century.⁴ As historians of this trend have demonstrated, economic modernization separated men from the Church *physically*, while Enlightenment ideals (such as rationalism, liberalism) led them to reject religion *intellectually* (Blackbourn, 1997). For a variety of reasons, the religious participation of women remained strong, the result being what some historians have called the "feminization" of religion. Though, as Lucian Hölscher (1996) points out, the clergy and even the assumed gender of God remained fundamentally masculine, this dramatic shift in male and female religiosity was nonetheless significant, especially for the amount of concern it evoked from Church leaders. As Strasbourg Religious Inspector Gustav Ungerer remarked in 1877, "[i]f one were to count the number of Protestant men in Strasbourg and then compare that to the number of men attending services in all eight of Strasbourg's churches on any given Sunday, one would come to the truly shocking conclusion that only about one in one hundred showed up" (quoted in Steinhoff, 2005, pp. 224ff). Given this percentage for Strasbourg and similar figures for the rest of the German empire, it is,

indeed, accurate to characterize this shift, as does Anthony Steinhoff (2005, p. 246), as the “demasculinization” of the Church.

Connected to the “de-churchification” of German men was the fact that women, for their part, were using religion to find access to a realm of sociability, avenues to the public sphere, and even empowerment through their autonomous direction of outreach organizations. Moreover, while women’s right to vote in Church elections was not granted until 1918 (when political suffrage was extended to women in Germany), some churches had offered women the vote long before this. For example, Free Religious communities (those churches outside the official Evangelical or Catholic Church) aroused the ire of Evangelical Church leaders, who argued that in granting women the vote they were further weakening men’s control of the Church and endangering proper religious practice (Götz von Olenhusen, 1995, p. 17).

As an examination of the discourse of the Church leaders who created the *Jünglingsvereine* suggests, these changes in the composition and image of the Church threatened both the Church’s public image, as well as its own sense of masculinity (or that of its leaders), particularly in the context of the second half of the nineteenth century, where alternative expressions of manhood and womanhood created for many men a sense of masculine uncertainty (Schmale, 2003, pp. 149-201; Hagemann, 2002). These Protestant Church leaders responded in several ways, the best documented being a smear campaign against their Catholic counterparts. As historians of the period have noted, Protestant pastors and writers frequently impugned the manliness of Catholic men, arguing that they were emasculated by their unquestioning submission to papal authority (Hastings, 2008, p. 40; Gross, 2004). Yet Protestant Church leaders did more than just lash out at their Catholic counterparts; as this paper suggests, they also looked inward, establishing (new) enclaves of young men (and rejuvenating existing ones) who would both adopt the masculine ideals of their Church elders, as well as give the Church a masculine face for secular society. Through these groups, they would increase the number of virile, masculine young men in the Church and, in doing so, fortify the social presence and perceived masculinity of the Church.

In the minds of Church leaders, the industrial age and the dilemmas of modernity posed particular challenges to the proper Christian rearing of young men. Looking specifically at the *fin de siècle*, where this sense of masculine insecurity was most pronounced, two prominent Church figures and theorists provide excellent examples of the uncertainty this older generation of Evangelicals felt about the future of the Church. Ludwig Tiesmeyer (1835-1919), an evangelical pastor known for co-founding the German brand of Sunday school (Voigt, 1997), expressed the dire situation of male youth in the preface to his handbook on the *Jünglingsvereine* (1885), asking, “[i]s there anything more important than to wrest the masculine youth—who, hardly confirmed, is ensnared by the love of pleasure, gluttony, salaciousness, and a false sense of educational arrogance—from these powers and to win them for Christ and His kingdom?” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. vi). Tiesmeyer proceeded to enumerate the various developments responsible for the corruption of Germany’s youth, noting first the clergy’s tremendous task of pastoring “not 50-80 but rather several hundred” children. This problem was compounded by the lack of a “Christian atmosphere” in the home and the “stepmotherly” handling of religion in

schools (p. 5). Further causes included the decline of the apprenticeship system—a development best explained by the rise of the modern labor market of advanced industrialism (Mooser, 1986)—which, “earlier, stood under the most exact control and [by which] young people were held to proper religious development.” Tiesmeyer lamented that there was hardly a master who “still knows of [his] true fatherly duties towards the apprentice” and that Sunday morning labor was becoming the norm, keeping youths from a proper religious edification. Taverns and the press created even more temptations, and Tiesmeyer referred to them as “spiritual robbers” of Germany’s youths (p. 6).

The Evangelical clergy’s concern about the state of Germany’s youth, if perhaps exaggerated, was a direct result of the high value they placed on a man’s formative years. Karl Krummacher, both a club superintendent and a historian of the CVJM, began his 1895 history of the *Jünglingsvereine* with an ode to (male) youth: “The male age of youth is the beautiful May-time of life. It is here that the bud of youth opens itself to full blossom and spreads its fragrance.” More concretely, Krummacher wrote, “Freedom and fatherland, friendship and love, nature and art, the tapping into the well of knowledge, and the training of technical skills find understanding and nurture in the male age of youth” (Krummacher, 1895, p. 1). He also suggested that the severity of the crisis of youth was especially great, noting—like Tiesmeyer—the erosion of the old “patriarchal” apprenticeship system and its built-in checks on the private lives of apprentices (Krummacher, 1895, p. 2).

In their respective tracts on the *Jünglingsvereine*, both Tiesmeyer and Krummacher agreed that the direct result of this crisis of youth was the moral degeneration of those they saw as the very backbone of German society. Increasingly visible prostitution, venereal diseases, and illegitimate children were great sources of anxiety for the Church as the markers of increased sexual activity. Krummacher lamented that “[f]ornication is so widespread among the youth that there are entire classes of young men in which there is hardly a single one who preserves the *noble good of chastity* for his later years” (Krummacher, 1895, p. 7; my italics). Though Krummacher’s diagnosis may have verged on hyperbole, there was an undeniable increase in (male) sexual activity among teenagers around the turn of the century. One 1911 study found that 85 percent of university students had had sexual intercourse, with 70 percent of these having had their first sexual encounter during *Gymnasium* (age 10-19) (quoted in Taylor, 1992, p. 60). The doctor who administered this survey recounted the story of trying to warn a sixteen year-old male about the dangers of sexual intercourse. The youth interrupted, saying, “I know all about it. There are in my class already a few classmates who have contracted gonorrhea because of their frequenting of bordellos” (quoted in Taylor, 1992, p. 59). Statistics on the prevalence of venereal diseases across all classes support the claims of this young man: a 1900 study reported that 1 out of every 100 Berliners was being treated for venereal diseases. By 1919, these numbers had become representative of the nation as a whole (Sauerteig, 2001, p. 76).

Krummacher and Tiesmeyer also expressed great concern about the religious implications of the crisis of youth. Quoting from a lecture at a conference of the Inner Mission in Magdeburg, Krummacher asked, “Look in our churches on Sundays: where are the apprentices, the young merchants, students and technicians? And now look in the evening of the same day in the dance clubs, theaters, restaurants,

beer houses.” This, he concluded, was where young people congregated (Krummacher, 1895, p. 6). Instead of “following God’s path,” Tiesmeyer continued, in deep Biblical allusion, youths followed “paths which resemble that of the Jordan, which, like a fresh, happy boy, bursts forth on the foot of Mount Hermon, but then meets his end in the dull Dead Sea” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 3). Moreover, noting that fewer and fewer confirmands were likely to follow the godly path, Krummacher found troubling the trend of youths to join the Free Religious communities whose “atheistic teachings” of “authority-less morals” threatened to completely supplant the Christian morals of German youths (Krummacher, 1895, p. 12). As noted above, these churches supported emancipatory voting policies for women, which especially made them anathema to Krummacher and the Evangelical Church in their attempt to reassert the masculine identity of the Church.

It is clear that the rapid decrease in the numbers of confirmands who stayed in the Church endangered the Church’s viability and social reputation. Since the “usual means do not suffice,” Krummacher noted, these Church leaders at the *fin de siècle* needed to turn to (or rejuvenate) the *Jünglingsvereine* as the best way to stem the tide of the crisis: through these groups they would increase the number of virile, masculine young men in the Church and, in doing so, fortify the social presence and masculinity of the Church (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 7).

The gendered assumptions of the Evangelical Church are revealed in the structure of the *Jünglingsvereine*. Most obviously, *Jünglingsvereine* were exclusively male. Although the groups’ single-gendered aspect evoked little comment from group organizers, it is nonetheless of great significance, for *Jünglingsvereine* were not mixed spheres of male/female interaction. Instead, Church leaders conceived of *Jünglingsvereine* as male-only contexts in which a pure, masculine religion was to be instilled into youths, and contact with the groups’ more popular, more successful feminine counterparts (the *Jungfrauenvereine*) appears to have been prohibited or at least limited. “Of course,” read one article of the group’s monthly newsletter, “Christianity is also something for women and children or any person, for that matter, but first and foremost, it is something for men” (MAdCVJM, Feb. 1916, p. 1). Founded upon these gendered beliefs, the *Jünglingsvereine* were thus the means by which men would be brought back into the Church. Church leaders were clearly trying to masculinize their ranks by depicting Christianity as something just for men, and to have included women—at whom, they believed, Christianity was not primarily directed—would have undermined this process of masculinization. Moreover, as Petra Brinkmeier (2003) notes in her study of the *Jungfrauenvereine*, men’s and women’s groups, though similar in some ways, differed significantly in their social “orientation”: whereas women’s clubs were inwardly focused and emphasized chastity and preparation for motherhood, *Jünglingsvereine* were oriented outwardly; that is, toward the State and German society more generally (pp. 22ff).

Age was also an important consideration for the founders of the *Jünglingsvereine*. In his handbook on how to form and run the groups, Tiesmeyer admitted that there was no set age at which young men should become members, but wrote that most “more or less agree that admittance could take place after Confirmation—so at the end of the 14th or 15th year.” Confirmation was ostensibly chosen as the determiner of eligibility for admittance to the *Jünglingsvereine*

because it was at this age that a boy sought to “differentiate himself from those who are still in school” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 50). More importantly, though, in defining the time at which a boy became a man at his Confirmation, the Church equated manhood with the completion of a religious rite of passage. A man’s secular maturity (his manhood) was thus connected with his religious maturity (his Confirmation), and as such, the Church took further steps to reassert itself as a manly fixture in the lives of men.

As for the group activities themselves, the *Jünglingsvereine* offered their members a three-tiered program of religious edification, continued education, and sociability. Each of the three types of activities was meant to instill into the members a specific masculine trait deemed desirable by Church leaders. First and foremost, *Erbauung*, or religious edification, was led by the pastor and was aimed at eliminating the deficit of spiritual nourishment for youths in the modern age. Accordingly, it was with *Erbauung* that group meetings began. Several verses of a choral were sung, and the evening’s Bible passage was read. The pastor generally chose selections from the Gospels, the book of Acts, or the Old Testament, and gave a homiletic introduction to the context and meaning of the passage. Led by the pastor, the members then went through the passage verse by verse, discussing its meaning and significance. Tiesmeyer wrote that this was done so that each member might become “an independent Christian,” able to “think as a Christian and express [his] thoughts” to others. This is of great significance, for, as Tiesmeyer commented, Bible study gave men the tools to speak to others authoritatively on scripture, especially to women. Tiesmeyer wrote, “Through this, they [...] learn the duties of a *Christian patriarch [Hausvater]* and later feel themselves to be priests of the home” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 63; my italics). *Erbauung*, then, was meant to give men the hermeneutic skills necessary to convince others—particularly their future wives—of the validity of their interpretation of the Bible. As such, the Church reaffirmed the man as the family patriarch and priest (attempting to reverse the feminization of religion in the home) and taught him the ways to convince those under him (i.e., women) of their *biblically justified* subordinate status. This focus on a personal interpretation of the Bible stood, moreover, in stark contrast to their Catholic counterparts’ ultramontane adherence to the authority of papal scriptural interpretation, and the *Jünglingsvereine* thus represent the “constructive” efforts of Protestant Church leaders in establishing the manliness of Protestantism vis-à-vis Catholicism.⁵

The second aspect of the *Jünglingsvereine* was continuing education. Though the topics covered varied according to the needs of the individual members, instruction was usually aimed at improving the grammar and mathematical skills of the members, who suffered from insufficient instruction at school due to their obligations in the factories or the fields (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 83). Through both conventional teaching and the opportunity for the members to give individual *Referate*, or presentations, members were tutored primarily in grammar and math so that they were not “outperformed by those who attend the state-privileged schools of advanced education.” In doing so, Church leaders attempted to instill into working-class youths a requisite aspect of an ideal Christian man: culture. In addition to lessons and presentations, *Jünglingsvereine* also provided appropriate reading material for their members and “tirelessly [pointed] out the damage of such rubbish-

literature” being turned out by the modern press (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 88). Tiesmeyer’s suggestions for proper texts reveal that much of the reading material took the form of newsletters published every fourteen days by the bigger *Jünglingsvereine* (such as the CVJM), as well as other Christian literature. Titles such as “The High Road,” “Be a Man!” (MAdCVJM, April 1916, p. 9) and “Tranquility in the Lives of Believers” (MAdCVJM, Sept. 1916, p. 7) suggest the nature of acceptable books. By directing youths to its own literature, the Church was able to filter the messages transmitted to young Christian men through the written word.⁶

The third focus of the *Jünglingsvereine* was sociability, whereby the groups offered members a Christian environment in which they could be social with one another. Common activities included singing, letter writing, games such as chess, dominos or Bible trivia, reading aloud, and, weather permitting, walking and skiing. As Tiesmeyer wrote, the clubs were designed to “offer members a spiritual home in which they [could] feel secure from bad company and from the temptations of debauched peers” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 28). Indeed, Church leaders were very careful to promote only “pure” activities; consequently, bowling, dancing, gambling, the theater, and, above all, drinking, were strictly prohibited. Furthermore, while singing was encouraged, only spiritual songs (chorals, arias, motets) and patriotic *Vaterlandslieder* were permitted. Tiesmeyer made clear that love songs should not be sung, as “there are really very few chaste love songs” (Tiesmeyer, 1890, p. 100). By fostering a place of sociability while designating only certain activities as permissible, the Church thus sought to insulate young men from the temptations of modern urban life and substitute constructive, wholesome entertainment.⁷ Importantly, this insulated atmosphere of sociability was closed off to women, as these groups were about creating “pure” masculinity.

In addition to these three pillars of the *Jünglingsvereine*, certain clubs also offered gymnastics programs as well as other sporting activities by which youths could complement their spiritual and intellectual edification. Gymnastics were an obvious choice for those overseeing the *Jünglingsvereine*, for since the beginning the nineteenth century, gymnastics had been considered the perfect means of approaching the male ideal (Mosse, 1996, p. 43). Interestingly, though, gymnastics and other sports were slightly modified for inclusion in the activities of the *Jünglingsvereine*, where they were always connected with a spiritual lesson. Indeed, every week, in the list of weekly activities in the group newsletter, gymnastics was followed by a listing of the Bible passage to be discussed (MAdCVJM, Sept. 1916, p. 2). In this way, the Church was able to connect male physicality with Christianity and Bible study. Gymnastics and sports also served as a means of demonstrating publicly the Church’s manliness to the rest of German society, especially as it was competing with Social Democrats and other secular clubs for the attention of young men. One spring issue of the monthly newsletter of the CVJM-Nuremberg included a lengthy report on the group’s success in a recent track meet. “The purpose of our participation in this event,” wrote the author, “was not only to give our members the chance to test their strength on others, but also to show our cause [...] to the opposing populace: that we too know how to successfully awaken the physical strength of our members and that even in our groups, vivacious, happy people feel at ease” (MAdCVJM, Sept. 1916, p. 5). The defensive language of the report suggests that the Church was aware of its “un-masculine” public image, and these gymnastics

and sport groups within the *Jünglingsvereine* thus served as one means to prove Christianity's inherent masculinity in the public sphere.

Just as the structure of the clubs and their activities illuminate our understanding of the masculine ideals taught to members of the *Jünglingsvereine*, the discourse of the clubs is also revealing in this regard, as a short analysis of the group literature confirms. One reoccurring aspect of club discourse was an emphasis on moral purity and the call for youths to denounce the unwholesome penchants for drinking, entertainment, and sex so common among their peers. In fact, as has already been noted, it was against these vices that the *Jünglingsvereine* fought most vehemently. Accordingly, these topics appeared frequently in the discourse of the clubs. In an article in the September 1916 issue of the *Monatlicher Anzeiger*, the author warned that these modern temptations, while seemingly appealing, could be deadly. "Debauchery, intemperance, unrestricted sensual pleasure, fornication, boasting, and the squandering of money—these are not true joys! The consequences of these are disgust, tedium, hangover, bad conscience, and possibly even sickness and early death." "He who has true lust for living," continued the author, "has to keep himself pure and chaste, temperate, and under control. Not a single one who has done that has ever regretted it" ("Jünge Männer und das Christentum," MAdCVJM, Sept. 1916, p. 1). At heart, these were appeals to members of the *Jünglingsvereine* to emulate wholesome, Christian youths rather than their secular counterparts. In *Youths of the Bible* (1883), a small book dedicated to "pious youths in and outside of our Evangelical *Jünglingsvereine*," Berlin pastor E. M. Quandt traced the lives of select Old and New Testament youths worthy of emulation. After discussing a few ideal youths of the Old Testament, Quandt turned to "the youth without equal": Jesus Christ, whose hard work, honoring of his parents and frequent presence in the temple made him the paragon of a young man (1883, p. 30).

Yet perhaps more persuasive than suggesting that intemperance and sex could lead to early death (which, of course, was true to some extent) were the Church's claims that Christianity was inherently manly, and nowhere was this claim expounded upon so adamantly as in the article with which this essay began, "Is Christianity Unmanly?" It is here that we see most clearly the Church's attempts to equate Christianity and Church membership with manliness. The article opened with a quotation from the Apostle Paul—"Be manly and be strong!"—and the author went on to challenge notions of the Church's lack of masculinity: "Many young men say, 'No, Christianity, that's nothing for men, we leave that to women and children.' [...] Is that true?" he asked. The author, of course, answered his own question, pointing out that Luther, the apostles, and the early Christian martyrs were certainly manly in standing up for their faith. "Were those women and children who spoke like that? [...] True religion makes one brave, strong and manly; if it doesn't, it just isn't a religion." The author then turned to the "greatest, most awesome, most incomparable man in all of humanity": it was Christ, he wrote, who "fought the hardest battle of all, [...] who, with a troop of enthusiastic men, conquered the world." Driving the point home, the author continued, listing the qualities the Church deemed most essential: "Jesus wants upstanding, manly love of God and of all people. He wants justice, truth, and self-control. *He does not want weaklings but rather men.* [...] *His kingdom is an army of true men,* [...] *the Bible is a book of*

heroes" ("Ist das Christentum Unmännlich?" MAdCVJM, Feb. 1916, p. 1; my italics). In concluding, the author wrote,

Truly, you young men, when you think that Christianity is unmanly, you are not yet familiar with Christianity. [...] Yet now we know that Christianity is manly, through and through. Manly is the unshakable trust in God in need and death; manly is the mastering of sinful desires in one's heart; [...] manly is the courage not to let oneself be dissuaded from rightness [...]; manly is everything that Christianity demands and that it gives—o awesome, manly Christianity, if we only had more of you! ("Ist das Christentum Unmännlich?" MAdCVJM, Feb. 1916, p. 1)

It is in these rhetorical, rhythmic assertions about Christianity's inherent manliness that these Church leaders' most fundamental beliefs about gender and religion were articulated. The appeals to manliness and the contrasting of strong men with "weaklings," women, and children were clearly part of an effort by Church leaders to ground Protestantism in the values of the hegemonic masculinity of *fin de siècle* Germany and to reestablish both the Church in the lives of German men and men in the public face of the Church.

Conclusion

How successful, then, were *Jünglingsvereine* in achieving the goals set out by its leaders? The Church conceived of *Jünglingsvereine* as an effective means of combating the crisis of masculine morals in Germany in the industrial age, which, to clergymen, had created a sense of masculine uncertainty and nurtured an increase in sexual liberty among German men, especially teenagers. In this, the Church seems to have at least partially succeeded. Though it is difficult to say with certainty, it is reasonable to believe that those German youths who joined and stayed in the *Jünglingsvereine* most likely adopted the (middle-class) masculine ideals being propagated. As such, they would have served to the larger society as examples of men who were simultaneously religious and masculine—or at least in accordance with the hegemonic masculinity of the day. Contemporary novels and plays confirm this, portraying group members (albeit satirically) as dutiful, upright moralists.⁸ It stands to reason that this satire was based on a real perception of club members exhibiting these traits. Moreover, while they may not appear to have reached a statistically great number of youths (the 69,724 members counted by Krummacher in 1894 represented just over 0.1 percent of the total population of 49.5 million) (Krummacher, 1895, p. 425), it is no less true that they touched the lives of a significant number of young men and, indeed, were part of the association-life of the time.

As for the second purpose of *Jünglingsvereine*—used as a means by which Church leaders, in instilling members with qualities that gelled with hegemonic masculinity, sought to re-establish the Church's public masculine image and cultural relevance—one must conclude that the project was ultimately unsuccessful. Instead of evolving with the rest of society, the Church closed in on itself and created—with limited success—a remnant founded on negative values (for example, do not drink,

do not have sex); in short, it was an institution on the defensive. Instead of creating a space for “manly Christianity” in the public sphere, the *Jünglingsvereine* remained more or less fringe organizations that others viewed as places of questionable manliness and restricted enjoyment.⁹ It appears that the Church’s vehement insistence on the groups’ single gendered nature—intended to cultivate masculinity—sometimes backfired, causing outsiders to question members’ virility and masculinity. Ultimately, the Church seems to have only lost cultural relevance from the 1920s up to the present, as church attendance and religiosity in contemporary German society have reached an all-time low. Nevertheless, the fact remains that through the *Jünglingsvereine*, the Church impacted the lives of tens of thousands of young men with its religiously defined and religiously authorized masculine ideal, and these groups represent an often overlooked Protestant response to the feminization of religion at the *fin de siècle*.

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Notes

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² "Ist das Christentum unmännlich?" *Monatlicher Anzeiger des CVJM Nürnberg*, Feb. 1916. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Signatur: 4 Bavar. 3141 q-18, 1. This collection of newsletters will hereafter be referenced as *MAdCVJM*.

³ On the *Jungfrauenvereine*, see Petra Brinkmeier (2003), and for their role in stemming the moral crisis of youth, see Derek Linton (2002) and Jürgen Müller-Späth (1988).

⁴ Particularly interesting here is that while membership figures for the *Jünglingsvereine* and *Jungfrauenvereine* were more or less similar until the 1890s (each with around 1000 clubs nationwide), the *Jungfrauenvereine* grew more rapidly in the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s. This would appear to offer confirmation for the feminization of religion thesis, as religious groups for women appear to have been more popular than those for men (or at least had greater numbers; there were, of course, more secular clubs for men than for women). See Brinkmeier (2003, p. 159, and fn. 47). On the feminization of religion in Germany, see Ann Taylor Allen (2007), Lucian Hölscher (1990; 1996, pp. 46-62); Hugh McLeod (1988), 134-156; Rebekka Habermas (2000), Irmtraud Götz von Olenhusen (1995), John C. Fout (1992), Relinde Meiwes (2000), David Blackbourn (1994) and Anthony Steinhoff (2005).

⁵ For the "reformed" Catholic response to ultramontanism and its masculinity, see Hastings (2008, p. 41).

⁶ On Catholic reading, see Jeffrey Zalar (2001), where he asserts that Catholic promotion of books and reading took a similar form of, to quote Thomas Nipperdey, “nervous aggression against everything non-Catholic” (p. 126).

⁷ Interestingly, discussion/fear of creating environments conducive to homosexuality do not appear in this literature. For a discussion of homosocial themes in all-male, pseudo-religious groups, see Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman (2001).

⁸ Cf. the character Julius Weber in Otto Ernst (1895).

⁹ Cf. “Jünge Männer und das Christentum.” *MAdCVJM*, Sept. 1916, p. 1. See also Pamela J. Walker (1991) who argues that prohibitions against drinking and fighting in the British Salvation Army were viewed by outsiders as evidence of a lesser masculinity in the groups.

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Review of Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), xvii + 317 pp.

Björn Krondorfer

At the site of the human body, conflicting religious, cultural and theological values can clash. This is all the more true when questions of belonging and communal identity are permanently incised into the body, as in the case of circumcision. Performed on a Jewish boy on the eighth day after birth, circumcision is a sign for the covenant between the people of Israel and God and has become almost synonymous with Jewish identity. To be a Jewish man—or so it seems—means to be circumcised.

But what about Jewish women? Does their non-circumcision imply that they are not part of the covenant? Or, if they are part of the covenantal relationship, is circumcision theologically overrated as a bodily signifier? Does circumcision signify a privileged position of men or, to the contrary, does it indicate that men are lacking a quality that women already possess?

Shaye Cohen presents an in-depth analysis of the rabbinic discussion of such questions from post-biblical Judaism to the era of Jewish Enlightenment. While the bulk of the textual material covers late antiquity and the medieval era, Cohen keeps in mind the diversity of opinions as they span Jewish history from biblical times to modernity. In an introductory chapter, he summarizes the canonical views as expressed in Torah, Mishna and Talmud, and, toward the end of the book, occasionally refers to the contemporary (American) debate. By asking the question of why Jewish women are not circumcised, he foregrounds the issue of “gender” within a ritual activity that seems exclusively male. “This book is not a history of women in Judaism,” he states early on, but “is at best a small contribution to the history of women in men’s Judaism” (p. xiii).

The book is divided into two parts. In Part One, consisting of four chapters, Cohen contrasts the canonical views on circumcision in Jewish classical texts with the writings of early Christian detractors. Those writers dismissed circumcision within a larger framework of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition (Christian anti-Jewish writings).

In Chapter 1, Cohen does not only review the biblical take on circumcision (a *sign* of the covenant or *the* covenant itself; a tribal marker; an act of purification and sacrifice), but also describes pertinent questions raised by early Talmudic debates, including the issues of intentional versus involuntary circumcision, of conversion, and of the surgical procedures. The rabbis of the early medieval period, up until the eleventh century, expanded the range of meanings attached to circumcision: the biblical rationale of “purity” widened to one of “sanctity,” “protection” widened to “salvation,” and “covenant” to “sacrament.” No longer was the foreskin the exclusive center of attention; instead, the “blood” of circumcision gained

prominence. Such blood was interpreted as “powerful and salvific” because it “atones for sin, moves God to mercy, and protects against death” (p. 53).

Chapter 2 briefly asks whether Jewish women have ever been circumcised. The answer is a resounding “no” (with the exception, perhaps, of an Ethiopian custom in the first century BCE). Chapter 3 delineates the basic arguments of the Christian polemics against circumcision starting with Paul, for whom it was “unnecessary, even dangerous,” because it “divides humanity,” whereas “the blood of Christ unites it” (pp. 68, 71). Among the Greek church fathers, Cohen singles out Justin Martyr, for it is he who lays the ground for the tenacious Christian argument that the non-circumcision of women proves that “God does not demand the circumcision of men” (p. 76). Many medieval Christian writers relied on Justin’s argument. Among the Latin church fathers, another crucial anti-circumcision argument developed, namely that with the coming of Jesus Christ, circumcision in the flesh was replaced by spiritual circumcision. The blood of circumcision was exchanged with the waters of baptism, just as Christianity had superseded Judaism. Thus, circumcision became a “sign of Jewish obduracy and sinfulness”; even worse, for some it “became the mark of Cain, marking out Jews as murderers condemned to external exile” (p. 83). Though Augustine and Thomas Aquinas granted circumcision the possibility of bestowing grace on Jews during the times of the Old Testament, the guiding assumption remains in place: baptism has made circumcision obsolete, and the ongoing practice of circumcision among Jews can only be interpreted as divine punishment (as Peter Abelard argues in the eleventh century).

Chapter 4 asks how and why medieval rabbis responded to those Christian charges. While the rabbis of the Talmud (late antiquity) largely ignored both the Christian attack on circumcision as well as the question of why only men, and not women, are circumcised, medieval rabbis found themselves in a different environment. Surrounded by a dominant Christian culture, in which “circumcision became identified with Judaism itself” (p. 105), they felt compelled and coerced to respond. According to Cohen, “medieval rabbinic Judaism would never have been troubled by the non-circumcision of women” (p. 105) had the Christian discourse on Jews and Judaism not forced them to take a stance. It is “no accident,” Cohen states, “that all the medieval rabbinic texts that deal explicitly with [the non-circumcision of Jewish women] were written by [Jewish] authors who were actively involved in anti-Christian polemics and the defense of Judaism” (p. 105).

It is here that Part Two, seamlessly, continues and deepens the investigation of Cohen’s investigation. How did the rabbis, from the medieval period to the early Jewish Reform movements in Europe, respond to the Christian charge that the non-circumcision of Jewish women made the ritual cutting of the foreskin obsolete? Cohen presents four distinct Jewish responses: circumcision indicates that the normative way of being Jewish rests with Jewish men, thus relegating women to a lower status (Chapter 5); circumcision signals a moral (and ontological) defect in men, namely an excess of lust, for which the cutting of the foreskin is a cure (Chapter 6); faith, not circumcision, is the determining sign for Judaism—a position advanced by Maimonides—and hence women and men can be equally Jewish (Chapter 7); finally, Jewish women possess a bodily quality analogous to the male rite of circumcision: the blood of menstruation and of circumcision are both interpreted as covenantal blood (Chapter 8). These four explanations were not drawn directly from

canonical, legal Jewish texts but are the result of the religious imagination in response to external challenges. “The Jewish respondents,” Cohen states, “were left to their own devices and were free to invent any answer they could” (p. 108).

For each of these four Jewish responses, Cohen provides a plethora of textual evidence, which he carefully lays out for the reader so that even the non-specialist can follow the complexity (and internal referencing) of the Jewish medieval and pre-modern debates. It is especially intriguing to read Chapter 5 and 6 side-by-side, since the positions introduced here cannot be reconciled. Whereas the former demonstrates a Jewish view that declares only men to be “real” Jews, thus celebrating Jewish manhood, the latter argues the opposite, namely that circumcision remedies “some defect that inheres in Jewish men” (p. 143). Philo of Alexandria, the famous first-century Jewish philosopher, identified the male “defect” as an excess of lust and pride; circumcision, he reasoned, would decrease and suppress these impulses. In the twelfth century, Maimonides picked up on the same theme, and later commentators developed such thinking further into theories about sexual pleasure: Circumcised men, they argued, were less capable of sexually pleasuring women. Seemingly in a self-defeating gesture, they fantasized about the sexual prowess of “foreskinned” (i.e. Christian) men—and their anxiety as colonized men was replicated in analogous fashion by the colonizing fantasy of Christian men about “the beautiful Jewess” (p. 159). However, the thrust of such reasoning lay not in the intentional self-effeminizing of Jewish men but in claiming that true virility was not a function of “sexual prowess but of intellectual and spiritual capacity” (p. 156). Such nuance did not, of course, prevent Christian polemicists to exploit the theme of the effeminization of Jewish men. Circumcision (and the bleeding accompanying it) was put into proximity of castration and female menses, with the result that Jewish men, as some Christians have claimed, were suffering from menstruation (see also Irvn Resnick, “Medieval Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menses,” *Harvard Theological Review* 93/3 [2000]:241-63).

Chapter 7 presents Jewish viewpoints that deemphasize the significance of circumcision by placing it as one commandment among all the other 613 commandments. Because no single individual is expected to fulfill all commandments, and because some commandments are meant for specific groups only (e.g. women, children, converts), circumcision is merely one of the commandments for men, from which no further privileges are derived. Chapter 8, finally, offers a truly stunning idea already voiced in the twelfth century by R. Joseph Bekhor Shor. Menstrual blood, he wrote, is covenantal blood, and hence contains its own salvific quality. Women, therefore, are no less or no more part of the covenant than men. Cohen is quick to point out, however, that Bekhor Shor’s position should not be understood as a pre-modern feminist stance (he works, Cohen says, “within the decidedly anti-feminist period,” p. 205). But it still can function as a backdrop for grounding and inspiring modern, gender-conscious discourses on circumcision.

In Jewish history, the debate on the circumcision of Jewish men, and the non-circumcision of Jewish women, has been anything but monolithic and dull—Cohen’s work makes this absolutely clear. Importantly, and contrary to persistent misconceptions, no Jewish legal text claims that a Jewish man refusing to be circumcised ceases to be Jewish. “Such a Jew, of course, is a sinner, perhaps an apostate, but no authoritative legal text had excluded such a Jew from Judaism or

Jewishness” (p. 210). Hence, the debate about circumcision is far from being over. Any such debate—as Cohen’s work demonstrates convincingly—inevitably occurs within contested theological claims and within the politics of religious exchanges between hegemonial and marginal communities.

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Review of Martin Fischer, *Mannermächt und Männerleid. Kritische theologische Männerforschung im Kontext genderperspektivierter Theologie als Beitrag zu einer Gleichstellung der Geschlechter* [*Men's Power and Men's Pain: A Critical Theological Investigation of Men in the Context of a Gender Perspective Theology as a Contribution to Equality of the Sexes*] (Gottingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2008), 314 pp.

Adriaan S. van Klinken

In recent decades, theological women's studies have become an established discipline in theology. However, a theology that explicitly departs from a men's perspective in order to discuss issues of gender is less developed. Systematic theologian Martin Fischer has provided a significant contribution to open up this field of studies. With the defense of this dissertation, Fischer obtained his PhD degree from the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Vienna. The book offers a critical analysis and evaluation of traditional Christian teaching concerning men. According to Fischer, this teaching has ambiguous consequences: on one hand it gives rise to male privileges, and on the other to male victimization. In his opinion, these are two sides of the same problematic coin of an ontological gender essentialism that is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and gives rise to a dualism between men and women.

The book is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to theological men's studies and to the quest of the thesis. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical positioning in the field of gender, queer and men's studies. Chapter 3 examines the issue of men's power from a systematic theological perspective, while Chapter 4 deals with the issue of men's pain, or what Fischer calls the "unprivileged" in the life of men.

According to Fischer, theological men's studies engage, just like feminist theology, in a critical examination of patriarchy. The latter is understood as the hierarchical ordering of gender relations in which power is assigned primarily to men. However, differing from feminist theology, it is a self-critical examination because it departs from the perspective of men. As a theological discipline it goes beyond religious-historical or religious-sociological studies of men, because systematic-theological questions are raised about the way patriarchy is rooted in the Christian perceptions of human beings and, ultimately, God. These questions are central in Fischer's study, with the well-known twentieth century theologian Karl Barth as his primary conversation partner.

Exploring the theological roots of patriarchy, Fischer firstly discusses the biblical creation story of Genesis 2-3 and its feminist critique. Through its

wirkungsgeschichte (history of impact), this text has been foundational to a hierarchical understanding of gender relations as part of God's order in creation: that man was created before woman has been (and still is) used to grant authority and superiority to men. Secondly, Fischer discusses the theological anthropology of Karl Barth, deconstructing how patriarchy is rooted in Barth's perception of Jesus Christ and the Triune God. For Barth, anthropology is part of Christology (that is, the theological understanding of Christ). Hence, he understands the relationship between man and woman as analogous to the hierarchical relationship between Christ and the church. Further, according to Fischer, the hierarchy of man over woman is rooted in—or at least legitimated silently by—Barth's perception of the Trinity as the hierarchical immanent relationship between Father, Son and the Holy Spirit within God. Here, Fischer's argument becomes somewhat delicate, because he admits that Barth himself does not mention the relationship of man and woman to be analogous to the relationships in the Triune God. However, according to Fischer this is the logical conclusion from Barth's analogy of relationships between humanity and God. In order to equalize gender relations, Fischer therefore calls for a non-hierarchical understanding of the Trinity: When God the Father is no longer associated with power and authority but with love, this will challenge both the patriarchal idea of the *pater familias* and the current phenomenon of the deadbeat dad who does not take responsibility for his children.

Having explored the theological foundation of men's power, Fischer turns to the other side of the same theological framework: the victimization of men. He points out that a patriarchal system not only brings privileges to men, but that there is also an unprivileged dimension, which cannot be ignored in critical men's studies. Fischer argues that the classic idea of men's heroic sacrifice has been incorporated yet redefined in early Christianity. Therefore he points to the New Testament epistle of Ephesians where a husband is not only mentioned to be the head over his wife, but also is called to love his wife "just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (5.28). Here Fischer observes an indication of male victimization, where men because of being male are expected to sacrifice themselves. Significantly, again the argument is rooted in Christology, as the self-sacrifice of Christ is presented as exemplary for men. Fischer outlines that the idea of male victimization, when applied in a narrow sense, leads to a kind of love patriarchy in which a man is expected to take responsibility for his wife and family in an unselfish way. But when understood in a broader sense, self-sacrifice becomes a general imperative for men. Fischer mentions military service as a concrete manifestation of this, pointing out how the sacrifice of Christ has been used to motivate soldiers to give their lives for the nation.

In order to go beyond male victimization as well as men's power, Fischer argues that theologically the maleness of Christ is insignificant. Hence, the sacrifice of Christ is not exemplary for men only, and the relationship between Christ and the church cannot be an analogy for the relationship between men and women. The insignificance of the maleness of Christ is explained from a Trinitarian perspective: according to Fischer the Triune God transcends the human categories of gender, and therefore also the gender of Christ as the Son does not matter. With this argument, Fischer aims to deconstruct the theological framework in which patriarchy is rooted, and to create theological space for an understanding of gender relations in terms of

partnership. In his vision, when the ontological foundation for an essentialist and dualist understanding of gender is left behind, men and women can develop themselves as individuals with their respective talents and no longer have to live up to gendered expectations.

Although sympathizing with the project in which Fischer engages, I wonder whether his argument is convincing. Indeed he shows that patriarchy is deeply rooted in Christian theology, especially in the interconnection of anthropology with Christology. However, it is interesting to note that Fischer himself maintains a very patriarchal theological construct, being the perception of God as the *Father* and Jesus Christ as the *Son*. He does not criticize the image of God as a father, but only calls for a non-hierarchical understanding. Feminist theologians time and again denounce the androcentric nature of Christian God talk, and they argue that this in one way or another supports the position and identity of men. Fischer says that the Triune God does not fit in human gender categories, but he continues to talk about God in male language and images. Likewise, he says that the maleness of the risen Christ is insignificant: but why then is Christ mentioned as the Son? A more critical deconstruction of gendered Christian perceptions of God and Christ is needed in order to break down the theological framework of patriarchy. For such a project, a more queer conceptualization of gender would be helpful. This would offer further critical tools for a deconstruction of sex and gender than the concepts of Fischer, which balance between an essentialist and constructionist understanding.

Politically, it can be questioned whether the redefinition of doctrines about God or Christ will be an adequate strategy to transform patriarchal Christian masculinities. I can imagine that such a systematic theological enterprise might be helpful to this project. Yet one would expect Fischer to elaborate how doctrinal reformulation is to bring about change in the social construction of masculinities and is to impact upon the way men engage in gender relations.

In spite of the critical comments, Fischer's study is highly significant. In the Anglo-American world, and even more in the German world, theological men's studies is in its infancy. Indeed, there is an emerging field of men's studies in religion, but in this interdisciplinary field there is an absence of theological contributions. In view of this, the present book is recommendable to those interested in the study of gender and masculinity from the perspective of theology.

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Review of Josué Ramirez, *Against Machismo: Young Adult Voices in Mexico City* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2008), 154 pp.

Joanna R. Bartow

The word *macho* has unreflectively become a blanket designation for perceived Latin male characteristics of sexual aggression, violence, repression of women, and intransigence. US and European studies of the region center on the word more than do (even feminist) studies from Latin America. Thus, in practice it constitutes more of an outsider's concept than a term useful to describe the complexities of male identity from within Latin America, and this point comes across in Josué Ramirez's *Against Machismo*. The young adults he interviews are less concerned than US Latinos with the stigmatizing possibilities of the word, perhaps because in Mexico it is often a pejorative directed at others rather than a functional category. The author clearly identifies himself as Puerto Rican from New York and as a Latino whose encounter with the term *macho* within US society means more than it does to the Mexican students he interviews.

Ramirez interviewed 74 young adult students in 1998 at the enormous National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in order to examine how *macho* and *machismo* are used in coming-of-age narratives in Mexico City. He does not set out to define *machismo* and states his overall conclusion as: "the Mexican university students I interviewed . . . used the words *macho* and *machismo* to define things they reject in their families of origin and in the cultural past" (p. 2). Therefore, the students' life stories contain equally interesting information about their parents' generation who were students during the social changes of the 1970s, and Ramirez points out that both parents and students have lived in transitional periods for Mexican politics and for gender identities. The author focuses on the narrative structure of life stories and the semantics of *macho* as a term vacated of the positive attributes of provider or protector. Ultimately, the book indirectly reveals *macho* as a highly constructed and relative term that contains more information about the speaker's assumptions about social class and gendered self in a Mexican context than about any essentialized masculine identity in the men described by the term. While Ramirez does not state this, it is a valuable lesson contained in his study and reflects recent scholarship in Latin American masculinities.

After a description of UNAM and its role for the middle class and modernization, Ramirez's introduction points out the middle class's close relationship with the state in Mexico and the changes in generations of students. He also explains that the concept of *machismo* was constructed in the middle class imaginary during the modernizing decades of the mid-twentieth century, when segments of the middle class were also particularly open to US influence, though Ramirez contradicts himself in the conclusion when he describes *machismo* as an "aristocratic idiom" (p. 115). The push for modernization, the urban context versus

the countryside, generational conflicts, and social class are interlinked themes Ramirez signals as underlying the interviewed students' life stories. The term *macho* does not dominate the students' narratives, but rather appears more commonly when the author uses it in his questions, and when he analyzes the conversations.

The psychology students interviewed in Chapter 1 consistently reject *machismo* as identity or ideal, but rather perceive it as a consequence of underdevelopment from their perspective as members of the "aggressively modernizing" middle class. The word becomes intertwined with social class and urban versus rural contexts as they associate a higher educational level with less *machismo*. In their family narratives, the students saw migration to the city and generational shifts as indicative of change, and in the process reflected the way in which inhabitants of the capital often see *campesinos* as a hindrance to national progress. *Machismo* becomes a metaphor for underdevelopment within this outlook.

In Chapter 2, in the more male-dominated and traditional atmosphere of the prestigious engineering school, the interviews highlight adolescent awkwardness and pressures on first-year students as creators of hostility toward women. Here, students associate insecurity and possessiveness with *machismo*, and one female student asserts that *machismo* still exists at the university, though broader cultural changes, the influence of US pop culture, and migration between the US and Mexico have diminished it. Another student leads Ramirez to link political cynicism to the uncritical maintenance of gender and class privileges.

Chapter 3 uses interviews and science students' "life charts" of educational periods, learning, friendship, and family stress in order to highlight painful moments in their socialization and conflicts about gender norms. Ramirez articulates his main question as: how have gifted children in Mexico survived gender norms in sometimes repressive homes and communities? As in Chapter 1, the term *macho* evokes generational antagonism, whether with mothers or fathers. Here Ramirez seems to skirt around lesbian identity or experience in "Marie's" life history—including her confrontation with "heterosexist" society—without discussing homosexuality anywhere in the book. After an extended description of his experience with his upper-middle-class host family in the colonial Coyoacán neighborhood, the author discusses *marianismo*, the patriarchal construction of self-sacrificing motherhood emulating the Virgin Mary, in a section that would benefit from more updated sources focused more on Mexico.

In the divorce narratives related in Chapter 4, *machismo* represents "the authoritarian and the unacceptable" (p. 93). The two young men's stories that constitute most of this chapter include fathers who commit suicide, with one mother who progressed and set the rules as the father lagged behind, and another mother blamed by the father for the student's problems. Through the young men's descriptions of their families, tragedies, father-son relationships, and coping mechanisms, the complexities and variations in male and female identity clearly show. While one student did not consider his father a failure, the author terms the other father a "collapsed father figure" (p. 107), leading into a final section that discusses the idea of "ineffectual" men in David Gilmore's work.

Several characteristics of this book indicate it is a lightly revised dissertation and they can distract the reader. Some generalizations feel too facile, and discussion

of theoretical texts often resembles review of literature in the field rather than straightforward integration of ideas. Ramirez defines basic terms and his role as ethnographer more completely or insistently than necessary for a scholarly audience. This insistence creates a tone where the author seems pressed to prove himself and his methodology to a committee of readers, with constant self-references that create a book not just about the semantics of *machismo* among university students, but also about Ramirez's own cultural encounter with Mexico and his intense enjoyment of friendships and conversations with Mexican students. Apart from life charts, the illustrations seem to support this since they tend to capture endearing aspects of UNAM life, such as a student's old VW Beetle, rather than illuminate the study's focus.

Ramirez's study seems directed toward an audience outside Latin American Studies, since he carefully explains information with which Latin Americanists would be familiar. From the beginning Ramirez narrates as someone new to Mexico, which would allow an undergraduate reader to identify with his surprise at what he encounters, but the sometimes naïve or melodramatic tone is less effective for a scholarly reader. An example is the assertion that "I present a vivid picture of living, breathing Mexicans" (p. 4), which emphasizes Mexicans' mystification and distance from the reader, presumably the opposite of Ramirez's intentions. There are errors in some of the Spanish used, some mistranslations into English, and occasional misleading explanations of Spanish terms and Mexican history. These are details, but affect the text's authority in speaking about a Mexican context.

Ramirez asserts several times that he is breaking new ground and refers to "my style of ethnography," yet while his study of a particular middle-class demographic is a useful contribution, there is little evidence of new ground in his approach. In the conclusion he states that: "What I do well is combine an emotionally engaged style of fieldwork with a long acquaintance with intellectual history and social theory. That is my relative advantage as a scholar" (pp. 114–15). The thin bibliography and spotty theoretical coverage do not break new ground, nor does the combination of personal engagement with theory. He does not cite any sources written since the 1990s and does not address the symbolically significant 2000 presidential elections that ousted the long-time ruling PRI party, which would be relevant to his observation in the introduction that the "apparent waning of authoritarian rule" is linked to "increasing openness in everyday culture" (p. 4).

Although his book does not fully elaborate them, Ramirez correctly identifies productive research directions based on these stories of middle-class Mexican university students and their parents. Those directions come together in the changing role of the middle class in the post-revolutionary discourse of national modernization and the intersection of class, race, and gender with that context. In the process, *macho* and *machismo* assume shifting meanings based on the speaker as much as on the man described. Without articulating the point, Ramirez contributes to the study of masculinities by providing us interviews that reveal the terms *macho* and *machismo* as ineffective descriptors of Latin men, but rather as lenses through which to study social and cultural relationships between the speaker and the person signified.

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