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TRACE

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts
In Studio Art and Design

Department of Fine Arts
University of Louisville
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TRACE

By

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ABSTRACT

TRACE

KCJ Szwedzinski

April 1, 2019

Trace utilizes autoethnography to investigate aspects of Judaism to discover how one decides what to embrace, embody, or deny from inherited legacies. Autoethnography attempts to combine quantitative and qualitative data in order to systematically analyze and describe personal experience. The artist acting as Ba'alei Kushiah, or question bearer, uses Talmudic philosophy as a methodology and approach to art making. This research is self-referential; using Jewish thought to ask questions about Judaism. Judaism, often existing in an in-between place with outward characteristics that reflect regional influences, facilitates a dialogue about whether there are relative or absolute delineations within and between categories such as religion, culture, ethnicity, and nationality. The work calls into question whether there are hard and fast boundaries to our belief and classification systems. It asks what happens when beliefs and

traditions are examined; if it is things taught or lived experience that shape a person more.

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INTRODUCTION

Judaism probes categorical markers. It is a religion, an ethnicity, a language, an aesthetic, an ethical code, and a genetic marker. Owing to its diasporic nature, it takes on the attributes of the culture in which it resides, creating uniquely distinct versions of itself. It is a progenitor of identity politics. It's possible to be "Jewish" in any combination of the aforementioned categories. It can be argued that these distinctions are negligible, however there are significant ramifications in the socio-political, cultural and economic realizations of these categorizations. In this way, history and legacy become activated in the present. This body of work, being predominantly visual *midrash halakhah*, is an autoethnographic inquiry in which I enact secular dance rituals, investigate the enumeration of the 613 commandments and question a male dominant textual legacy to consider the relevancy of my inherited legacies in comparison to lived experience.

Judaism has a unique textual history, with documentation spanning thousands of years and a multitude of languages and places. Much of this research focuses on the relationship between Judaism's textual legacy and present day lived experience in an attempt to answer the question of whether

people define themselves and their belief systems through personal experience or whether they are defined by traditions indoctrinated from a young age.

It's necessary to look at how people document and remember their collective histories. What is often left to the seeker of the past are relics of holy life, whether object or text. Jewish texts (this research focusing predominantly on the Talmud) played a significant role in protecting legacy over the years as the Jews dispersed across the globe. These texts cover not only religious rites and practices, but also secular and civil aspects of daily life. In the following pages, Talmudic philosophy and hermeneutics are examined and positioned as a methodology for use in the art making process.

THE WRITTEN WORD

The word Bible, from its Greek expression *ta biblia*, means “the books.” It’s a collection of written works whose content differs according to various traditions. The Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant Bible, for example are each comprised of different books. The shortest is the Jewish Bible which was established, after some debate, somewhere around the second century CE. There are three main parts for the written component: The Pentateuch, the Prophets, and Writings. The Pentateuch consists of the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and, Deuteronomy. This is what is referred to as the Torah. The Hebrew name for the Prophets is *Neviim* and *Ketuvim* is the name for Writings. As there is no word for Bible in Hebrew, the word for the written law is *Tanakh*, made from the initials of the word’s Torah, *Neviim*, and *Ketuvim* (TaNaKh).

THE SPOKEN WORD

The oral component of the Torah was passed down, unwritten, from generation to generation until around 70 CE, following the destruction of the second temple. It was prohibited for centuries to write down the oral law, evidenced in such scripture as: “he who writes down Halakhot is as one who commits the Torah to flames”¹ and “he who transcribes the *Haggadah* loses his share in the world to come.”² The oral tradition is a cipher of sorts that helps to clarify ambiguous passages and to create meaning from the text. Doubly, it was a mechanism for ensuring a relationship between the written book and knowledge. In order to understand and create meaning from the written Torah, a rigorous practice towards memorization and study of the oral component was needed. The relationship between the two created discipleship and guaranteed the continuation of Jewish faith and jurisprudence.

In 66 CE in Jerusalem, there was a revolt against Rome. Thousands of Jews were killed and thousands more were taken into Roman captivity. The temple was at the seat of Jewish daily and spiritual life. With the temple’s destruction and the elimination of the symbolic center of Judaism, many Jews had to adjust their existence to the idea of an indefinite period of displacement.

¹ *Temurah* 14b.

² Jerusalem Talmud, *Shabbot* 16, 1.

The sages, as Rabbis were called, justified the transcription of the oral law by interpreting a verse from Psalms as, “there comes a time when you can abolish the Torah in order to found it.”³ Rabbi and philosopher, Marc-Alain Ouaknin suggests “It is better to repeal a part of the Law than to allow the whole of the Law to be forgotten.”⁴ With the fear that came from the loss of the temple and continued persecution, memory of the temple and its practices became a key to the survival of Judaism. Without the temple, nearly half of the laws of Judaism were not applicable. The act of memorizing the rituals and laws of the temple, even though they may not be practiced in any foreseeable version of the future, became an act of resistance and faith. It was during this time that the oral tradition was transcribed.⁵

³ Marc- Alain Ouaknin, *The Burnt Book: Reading the Talmud* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 24.

⁴ Ouaknin, *The Burnt Book*, 24.

⁵ Alac, Issaks, “Jerusalem 3000: Lecture 7- The Destruction of the Second Temple,” The Jewish Agency for Israel, 2005, <http://www.jewishagency.org/jerusalem/content/23693>.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITTEN AND ORAL TORAHS

The oral tradition ensured activated knowledge. It contains the methodology for interpreting the written Torah as well as the tools needed to discuss its semantics. Hebrew is a consonantal language, which means there are no separate letters for vowels in the written alphabet. Since ancient Hebrew contained no written vowels as distinct letters forms, the sounds were added by means of oral tradition and established usage. The written Torah hence, has no vowels and any word can end up having several different interpretations. Although there are no vowels in, there are certain letters that over time have come to signify vowels. These are called *matres lectionis*, which is Latin for “mothers of reading”. These signifying consonants may be present (“complete”) or absent (“defective”) which can create further possible interpretations of words. The oral Torah provides insight into filling in these gaps. The written Torah has no punctuation, there are no commas or periods. It’s unclear from the direct text where sentences end and begin. The oral Torah passes on the essential information needed to be able to start to decode the phonetics, spelling and syntax of the written Torah.

VERSIONS OF THE TALMUD

The body of Jewish texts does not stop with the written and oral Torahs. There are further tomes that document rabbinical arguments, debates, rulings, and conversations. The transcription of the Oral law and its commentaries constitute the Talmud. There are two parts, the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Talmud was developed in its present form from the second century BCE up to the middle of the sixth century. The Mishnah is the actual text and the Gemara is its commentary. The Mishnah is a collection of decisions and traditional laws concerning all aspects of civil and religious legislation. It was given its final form around the second century CE. The Gemara is the Rabbinical commentary of the Mishnah. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmud. The Jerusalem Talmud was a product of the schools established in Israel and was written down at Tiberias around the year 380. This version was neglected through the Middle Ages and has come down through the ages in bad condition and with pages missing. There is only one manuscript copy, which was used to make the first edition and was printed for the first time, without commentary, in Venice in 1523.⁶ The Babylonian Talmud comes from the

⁶ Ouaknin, 25.

schools of Babylonia and was completed around the year 500. Its commentary is much more complete and well recorded.

The body of knowledge passed on and revised across generations has undoubtedly experienced small changes again and again, presenting questions of how accurately they portray collective knowledge. My work seeks to place history in conversation with the present in order to find relevance and consider how people determine Self. Works such as *Mutualism*, *Rocking Pairs*, and *The Impossibility of Historical Resonance* manipulate historical objects to usurp or shift functionality in order to question the viewers trust in the object's history. Being uncertain of historical accuracy can affect how and what a person chooses to believe within a given institution by raising questions about what is true. The Jewish commentaries discuss in great detail aspects of everyday life, not just religious practices, and were meant to be utilized daily. By reinterpreting expected functionality and utility, I am creating a new context in which to consider these histories.

A SACRED BOOK OF ARGUMENTS

Judaism's foundational texts are filled with polemic debate and argumentation between masters. There is a need for clarification and specification within the written law due to the ambiguity of the text. Rather than insisting on a singular interpretation of a passage and enacting laws for Jewish life based solely there in, a conversation of questions ensues. The term midrash can be used to describe a collection of rabbinic literature that provides commentary and interpretation of biblical texts. It sometimes describes a specific collection of works, and other times it's used in a more general way to signify the way rabbis utilize hermeneutical approaches to expound on laws and passages.

The Talmud says that "both these and these are the words of the living god."⁷ This is often understood to mean that multiple interpretations can equally be true and it's unnecessary to always arrive at a unified, singular answer. Philosopher and contemporary scholar, Marc- Alain Ouaknin, insists on imagining a bidimensional world in contrast to a unidimensional world when considering the Talmud.⁸ Debates within the texts will often remain open ended, without placing emphasis on a specific answer. The circuitous and non-linear

⁷ *Eruvin*, 13b.

⁸ Ouaknin, 83.

arguments between rabbis will place scriptural passages, *halakhah*, *aggadah* and previous arguments in conversation with one another, suggesting alternative interpretive possibilities.

Within the Talmud you will find discussions and rulings covering both religious and civil aspects of law. There are two categories of texts, *halakhah* and *aggadah*, that regularly intertwine within the text. *Halakhah* is the legal portion of the Talmud, covering the commandments from the Torah and, equally binding, laws instituted by Rabbis. The term *halakhah* comes from the verb *halakh*: to walk, so a halakhic Talmudic passage will show the progression of the development of the discussions leading up to the founding of the laws. *Aggadah* is more difficult to define and is sometimes referred to as...everything else. It is filled with discussions, anecdotes, and real and legendary histories. There are also discussions about physics, astronomy, dream interpretations, medicine and natural history.⁹

At some point, no matter how many viewpoints you posit and volley, action for how to proceed will have to prevail. A strong tenant of Talmudic thinking is the power of each generation of thinkers to engage with the texts to implement practical and relevant practices. Maimonides, a twelfth century Jewish philosopher, often considered one of the most influential Talmudic scholars of the middle ages, insisted on this very important idea: “there has never been any moment of history from which thought and creation, innovation in meaning have been absent. The wise men of each era consider the words of their predecessors

⁹ Ouaknin, 37.

as fundamental principles, learning them and innovating from them.”¹⁰ In this way, practical implementation would generally lean towards a democratic approach. Historically, a majority view prevailed and would become the accepted practice within each community, with a Rabbi being the arbiter of Jewish law. This was generally true until the eighteenth century, especially in Western Europe, when Rabbis wanted to make reforms and there were more distinctions between religious and secular practices within Jewish communities.¹¹

¹⁰ Ouaknin, 18.

¹¹ “Halacha: The Laws of Jewish Life,” My Jewish Learning, Accessed on February 18, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/halakhah-the-laws-of-jewish-life/>.

HISTORICAL AND EXISTENTIAL APPROACHES TO ENGAGEMENT

Marc Alain Oauknin suggests an historical and existential approach as two ways for contemporaries to engage with these texts. The historical approach renders the past completely unto history. The past is mediated through a historian and bears no weight in the present. He operates as an archeologist of objects or ideas to try to shed light on customs, rituals, and lives. In this methodological approach, the historian, or the interpreter, keeps his distance and makes sure the past is the past and the present the present. This approach “consists in objectivizing tradition and methodically eliminating any influences that the present may exert on the understanding of the historian.”¹² The texts take on a mythological status, lacking significant contemporary relevance. It could be argued that this approach renders the text as idol. For if interpretation and understanding are rigid and anachronistic, meaning becomes fixed. The text takes on the status of a question that has been satisfied and no longer needs to be sought after. If the aim of this approach is a clear and unified explanation of the texts, it becomes antithetical to a true Talmudic mode of thought.

¹² Ouaknin, 57.

The existential approach insists on the text being understood by each era in its own way. This method of engaging with the text relies on the personal involvement of the interpreter to determine a true meaning for the text. From an epistemological standpoint, it's necessary to consider the relationship between understanding and interpreting. In order to understand something, there will always be a degree of subjective interpretation. Every person comes to a situation with embedded and prior knowledge that has shaped their experiences. Nietzsche writes, "there are all sorts of eyes...and consequently there are all sorts of truths, and consequently there is no truth."¹³ Talmudic thought recognizes the interpreter's temporal and situational biases, in fact, relies upon it. In this way, Talmudic thinking is always empowering the disciple to ask questions and be in a space of creating meaning rather than receiving stagnant dogma. French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas implores:

"There is no such thing as a passive receiving of tradition. He who receives, the disciple, is always-must always be- the scene of a creation. To receive is to create, to innovate. The petrification of acquired knowledge – the freezing of spiritual things- allowing itself to be placed like an inert content in the mind and to be handed on, frozen, from one generation to another, is not real transmission...handing on is resumption, life, invention and renewal, a mode without which revealed thinking, that is to say, thinking which is authentically thought is not possible."¹⁴

The student or seeker of the Talmud should always be in a state of uncertainty and questioning when considering these texts. The act of interpreting/

¹³ Ouaknin, 96.

¹⁴ Ouaknin, 15.

understanding should always begin with unknowing as a mindset in order to make room for the possibility of an opposing view.

Utilizing aspects of rabbinical methodology to position the artist as quasi-sage, this research resides in a realm somewhere between the two approaches. The artist embodies the exegetical attitude the rabbis take towards the nature of the question, multivocality, and the insistence on subjective interpretation which all lean toward the existential approach. However, the artist also examines the androcentric rabbinical literature from a feminist and modernist perspective which takes more of an historical approach.

ART AS VISUAL MIDRASH

Ben Schachter, Professor of Fine Arts at Saint Vincent College and Jewish scholar, introduces the term visual midrash into the contemporary Jewish art lexicon. He specifies two subcategories: visual midrash halakhah and visual midrash aggadah. The former being art that looks to the commandments, rituals, and jurisprudence as subject matter. The latter focusing mainly on biblical stories and myths. Artists making visual midrash halakhah depict laws, critique rabbinical writings and often comment on the difficulties of applying these laws and customs to lived experience. Schachter writes, “Jewish art focuses on religious laws but also points to the conflict between any legal system, which by necessity must be clear and unambiguous, and the messiness of lived experience. The conflict between law and society makes visual midrash halakhah particularly compelling.”¹⁵ This body of work operates as visual midrash halakhah; an autoethnographic inquiry that utilizes micronarrative as a mechanism to ask questions about different secular and religious aspects of Judaism.

¹⁵ Ben Schachter, *Image, Action, and Idea in Contemporary Art* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 121.

SUBJECTIVISM AND MAHLOKET

Mahloket is a dialogue between two masters with differing opinions on legal or civil interpretation. Ouaknin suggests that mahloket, the necessity of dialogue, is the “most striking expression of the refusal of closure.”¹⁶ Talmudic thought requires a newness of perception, a suspension of judgement, where the final answers remain in abeyance. The ability to suspend judgement creates an opening for other possible avenues of thought. This attitude is recurrent throughout Talmudic dialectic. The motives and reason for a questioning attitude are well summated, “through astonishment and questioning, man is able to free himself once and for all from domination (were it unconscious) of certain thinking habits, convictions, theories accepted without verification, opinions, prejudices, ready-made decisions, which decree what world, things, people, knowledge, etc., are.”¹⁷

Subjectivism is required for wholistic interpretation, as each generations social, political, and familial experiences will be greatly varied. German philosopher, Hans-George Gadamer, in *Vérité et Méthode* (60, Truth and Method) on subjective participation states, for “historical thinking always contains, from the start, a mediation between these principles and personal

¹⁶ Ouaknin, 82.

¹⁷ Ouaknin, 90.

thought. To try and avoid one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible but quite obviously absurd. To interpret is to bring one's own ideas into play."¹⁸ Viewing the text as a living document, this refusal of closure is observable in how generations that went before debated issues of their day; it also exemplifies for later interpreters how to interact with the texts while dealing with contemporary issues. It is action activated ad infinitum.

¹⁸ Ouaknin, 78.

TSIMTSUM AND MAHLOKET

“To think is to go beyond. The best thing about religion is that it creates heretics.”

-Ernst Bloch¹⁹

Having laid out a contextual history of the book and a brief introduction of Talmudic philosophy, the discussion must connect this textual past to the present and to the artist. The conversation opens with a revolutionary thinker named Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav who lived during the eighteenth century and comes from a family of Rabbis. His great-grandfather was the founder of Hasidism, Israel ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov. Rabbi Nahman is somewhat of a legendary figure, said to be the precursor of Kafka who is considered the founder of modern Hebrew literature.²⁰ Elie Wiesel paints a vivid portrait of him, saying:

“Too accessible as a Cabalist, and not sufficiently so as a rabbi; ascetic and an enemy of doubt, he frequents so-called emancipated intellectual circles whose vocation and pastime is to doubt, enjoy and dispute. An intolerant believer, he plays chess with freethinkers: their faith in nothingness stimulates him....customs and possessions repel him. They hinder freedom...His life, rich in exploits, whose dominant theme is paradox and fever, on the heights or in the abyss, in complete hallucinations, and never in security.”²¹

¹⁹ Ouaknin, 262.

²⁰ Ouaknin, 262.

²¹ Ouaknin, 261.

Rather than his mercurial personality, it was his revolutionary and political discourse which became a pivotal touchpoint between Talmudic thinking and the role of the artist during the course of this investigation.

Let us begin with the beginning. Rabbi Nahman takes up key concepts of the Cabbalistic thought of Rabbi Isaac Luria having to do with the origin of the universe. This is important as the Lurianic theory of *Tsimtsum*, or the “Withdrawal,” becomes foundational for understanding Nahman’s ideas on mahloket (disagreement). In the Lurianic universe, there are three main components: the *Tsimtsum* (Withdrawal), *Shevirah* (Breaking), and *Tikkun* (Reparation). Luria formulated a theory to explain the paradox of concurrently divine presence and absence from the world. According to the theory, the first act of the creator was not to reveal himself but, inversely, to retreat or make space for the world yet-to-come. “God can reveal himself only because, first of all, he withdrew.”²² Rabbi Nahman introduces the word, *Rahmanut*, in modern Hebrew, meaning compassion, mercy, or pity. An etymology more in line with the word *Rehem*, or womb. In relating to *Tsimtsum*, “it describes the uterine nature... that is to say, the capacity of the uterus to be what it is: to conceive the fetus, the space in the heart of fullness of the person and to make room for the embryo, for a being Other.”²³ A comparison is made between Gods withdrawal from the world and the way a womb creates space within the body, alterity made possible by separation. The theme of separation is notable, as the seeds for connecting mahloket with the creation myth originate here.

²² Ouaknin, 269.

²³ Ouaknin, 273.

It's unnecessary to go into great detail of the rest of the creation myth, contextually there are some key takeaways. The Shevirah (Breaking) explains how God set forth ten holy vessels filled with light. Had all the vessels arrived in tact, the world would have been perfect. The containers, being too fragile to contain such divine light, shattered and the sparks scattered across creation.²⁴ The third stage, Tikkun (Reparation) "is a matter of restoring, or repairing the breach, in a way, of finding and putting everything back in its place. It is the role of man; that is his story."²⁵

Ouaknin draws a connection between Tsimtsum (Withdrawal) and mahloket (disagreement), placing importance on the space between. In this mode of thought, non-unifying speech is integral and formulates the basis for Tikkun Olam, or, repair of the world. Ouaknin, on the function of mahloket:

"Mahloket research is not unifying; on the contrary, it seeks separation, a breach, the interval, which are the other's possibility of being...the speech of the interval as creative of my world has the function of giving birth to the subject as a differentiated individual. The speech of mahloket consists in introducing differentiation within the undifferentiated. by its plural speech, room is left for each person to create his own world..."²⁶

We begin here making the leap from the creation myth and mahloket to institutional critique and resistance.

Very simply put, to create a better world, one must ask questions and free themselves from institutional bondage. In Rabbi Nahman's view, the ability of

²⁴ Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 110.

²⁵ Scholem, 112.

²⁶ Ouaknin, 283.

man to question and debate is divine and the mechanism through which the world will be healed. Nahman strongly criticizes the institution, specifically the rabbinical authority, but moreover, any institution that renders pre-fabricated subjectivity. In greater detail, man is born into society and taught how to be and act; exemplified through rhetoric and text, which provide examples for how to embody a certain ideality. Rabbi Nahman wishes to call a halt to the capturing of subjectivity by society, insisting that “questioning speech represents a guarantee against all dogmatic speech. In the face of the totalitarian thought of texts that are already established in a system, the first task of questioning speech, which is the essence of man, will be designifying.”²⁷

To summate, Rabbi Nahman and Talmudic thinking in general believe that questioning can transform the world. Drawing from the creation myth, Nahman insists on the idea of mahloket as being foundational to the abolition of a “man who is born before his birth.”²⁸ Meaning, a questioning philosophy and debate frees an individual from a prescribed and automatic ideology.

²⁷ Ouaknin, 286.

²⁸ Ouaknin, 286.

THE BURNT BOOK

Rabbi Nahman burnt his life's achievements at the end of his life in 1810. He did it to resist the varying measures aimed at petrifying Jewish tradition. The Talmudic text is treated not as an original and sacrosanct monument but as a changing script which departs from its origin as it experiences ongoing interpretations. He did it as a gesture of moving beyond fixed interpretive tradition. This final act reinforced his refusal of closure and made clear his abhorrence towards the text as idol. The assertion of subjective interpretation, rejection of prefabricated ideology and the idea of the question bearer begin to situate the conversation within the realm of art making. Rabbi Nahman was a man deeply in love with his faith and its history yet equally critical of the rabbinical institution of which he was a part. *Trace* and its methodology developed in response to Rabbi Nahmans philosophical ideology. In this work, I am positioning myself as question bearer and providing a framework for revealing aspects of Judaism that I see as ranging from personally and historically valuable to problematic.

A SMALL MANIFESTO FOR THE RIGHT TO SUBJECTIVITY

“It is not the world which is the scene of the question, but the question which is the scene of the world.”²⁹

“It is the disciple who finishes the book of the Master. But who is the Master? And who the Disciple?”³⁰

Following Nahman’s critique of the institution as the scene of the death of the individual as free thinker, is the Master of the Answer (*Baal Teshuvah*) and the Asker of Questions (*Ba’alei Kushi’ah*). Rabbi Nahman criticizes the Sage that asserts his masterful knowledge. An assertion of knowledge from master towards disciple dispels the possibility of innovation from the disciple and doesn’t leave room for his interpretation. This domination of the answer reinforces the univocal language of the institution. A Rabbi who asserts his answer as THE answer is reflective of the institution that strips differentiation from its subjects. Returning to the creation myth, it’s the separation, the space between that is important. The

²⁹ Ouaknin, 15.

³⁰ Ouaknin, 13.

Master of the Answer destroys the space and distance created by the Tsimtsum by the insistence of his interpretation that leaves no room for the Other.

In comparison, the Ba'alei Kushiah (Asker of Questions) withstands textual domination. A hierarchical equivalency of master and disciple is created when the "I know not" attitude is engendered. This attitude becomes an act of resistance to the language of institutions and opens words up to their polysemic possibilities. Multiple interpretations become possible in the texts and this becomes the resistance in the face of an institution that seeks to strip an individual of their autonomy.

ARTIST AS BA'ALEI KUSHIAH (ASKER OF QUESTIONS)

This research seeks to synthesize seemingly disparate bodies of knowledge—historic Jewish tradition and the artists personal inherited legacies while simultaneously creating a dialogue that has contemporary relevance. Rabbi Nahman's discourse in which the Lurianic creation myth is the origin place of mahloket, which in turn, is the method of Reparation for the world felt like a bridge that linked historic research with the question of whether the artist voice matters. Specifically, the duality of his deep faith versus his subversive position on the institution of which he was deeply entrenched, was resonant to my inquiry. Artists have historically engaged with the social and political issues of their day and utilized the art making process as an avenue for critique and dialogue. Reflective of Rabbi Nahman, artists often critique systems and institutions of which they are a part of or utilize the language of those institutions to facilitate conversations. Historically, artists have critiqued the art world they participate in and the political systems they reside in. Amidst many functions of art, a key few stand out: art as resistance, as education, as dialogue, and as exchange of information. Situated as Ba'alei Kushiah, I can pose questions that begin a conversation with the viewer, and reflective of the Rabbi's thinking, can attempt to free the seeker of knowledge from a prefabricated subjectivity by creating work that provokes critical thought and dialogue. This body of work probes the

categorical boundaries of Judaism in order to question how and by what people define themselves. The viewer/interpreter can then apply those same questions to their subjective experience and question the way they define themselves and their belief systems. If categorical markers become more relative and less absolute, the dichotomy of us/them could shift and new narratives might be created in the way people of different places/ experiences relate to one another.

How to Remember What We Forget, When We Forget That We Don't

Remember considers the importance of the 613 commandments within Judaism. Recognizing that there are viewers who come to this work without knowledge of Jewish history, aspects of the works can still provoke the viewer to consider central themes. This piece employs the generally recognized maxim of tying a string around one's finger to remember something and applies it to the absurd task of trying to remember 613 things. An uninitiated observer can begin to ponder the sheer number and upon learning what the fingers represent can begin to imagine trying to adhere to that many commandments and maybe even begin to connect it their own methods of observance or lack thereof.

Rocking Pairs embodies the spirit of midrash. Regardless of

understanding the specifically Jewish idea of midrash, an observer can begin to imagine the needed cooperation and intimacy involved in the rocking experience.

This piece expresses the cooperative and productive nature of argumentation in Judaism.

By leaving only an artifact from the actual experience of learning traditional Jewish dances, *Havruta: Learning the Klezmer Step* leaves a question to the viewer: who had this experience and what were they doing? It's possible to glean repetition from the recorded movements but not certainty about sequencing. This piece asks questions regarding authority, specifically whether I am more Jewish by having learned these often-secular Jewish dances. By leaving only the remnant of the experience, the absence becomes the question. Whose identity is this?

Mutualism, The Impossibility of Historical Resonance II and *Learn a Letter, Take a Letter* each deal with androcentrism in rabbinical literature. *Mutualism* and *The Impossibility of Historical Resonance II* recontextualize the Talmudic Tractate Sotah to ask the viewer questions regarding the status of these books and their importance. *Learn a Letter, Take a Letter* solicits the viewers participation in learning the Hebrew alphabet and democratizes a tradition that was once the demarcation of the entrance to a male only world of study and intellect.

RITUAL AS RESISTANCE AND TRANSMISSION

A recurring question throughout this research has been: how are the past and future reconciled in the present moment? Time as experienced by the human body is linear, however, time as a psychological construct is not. The present moment is ever marching onwards and the actions taken and those recorded for posterity don't operate in a temporal vacuum. This question, expressed through the investigation of Jewish legacy and text, is well summated by historian Yosef Yerushalmi when he says of the Rabbis, they "seem to play with time as though with an accordion, expanding and collapsing it at will."³¹ Talmudic thought and Jewish tradition go beyond revisionist history, in effect, they efface history and treat the past as concurrent with the present. This can be seen not only in the way the Rabbis interact with text but also in holidays such as the Passover Seder.

The Seder is a ritual meal performed, ideally, by multiple generations of a family as they retell the story of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. There is a distinction on this holiday of remembering versus retelling the story of the liberation. Remembering recalls a recollection from the

³¹ Stefan C. Reif, *Jews, Bible and Prayer. Essays on Jewish Biblical Exegesis and Liturgical Notions* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 261.

past, separate and disconnected from the present. In contrast, the meal is highly symbolic, where the specific rituals recall elements of the liberation. Salt water symbolizes the tears of the slaves and eating while reclining shows that at leisure, men are free. Beyond simply remembering, retelling the story through ritual as though one was there and erasing the distance of time is a perpetual assurance that the Jewish people will remain free from bondage.

Recurrent throughout Jewish texts and tradition is the insistence on the importance of the past as relevant now. When the past is activated in the present and not forgotten, actions are taken based on that memory. Essentially, the past is affecting the present which informs future generations. Both the past and future are acknowledged in the present as being inextricably linked.

As mentioned when discussing the transcription of the Oral law, there were times in the history of the Jewish people when erasure was a significant threat, both to the people and the practices. During the 1st century, much of Jewish life and culture, and thus identity, was centered around the Temple. After its destruction, many of the commandments were not applicable because their observance was dependent on the physical structure of the Temple. Author and professor Dr. Alick Issacs argues that the groups of Jews that incorporated the memory of the Temple into religious life, even after its destruction, were the groups that maintained the survival of the Jewish faith.³² The act and actions of remembering carried the legacy; Jewish ritual, study, and prayer would become vehicles for keeping the memory of the temple alive. Both the Temple and the city of Jerusalem would be a focus of Jewish life even if not accessible. The act of remembering was critical for keeping the Jewish faith alive, it also became an act of resistance towards those who would see harm come to its people and practices. Even if Jews were killed or their Temple was destroyed, Judaism would live on in the rituals and practices that would be studied and passed on.

³² Issaks, "Destruction of the Second Temple", 2005.

The 613 commandments were a departure point for the piece, *How to Remember What We Forget, When We Forget That We Don't Remember*. The work places 613 plaster fingers on the wall with a string tied around each. The old adage of tying a string around the finger in order not to forget something signifies the importance of remembering. The choice to tie a string around every finger is an acknowledgement of the importance of not only the individual exegete's attempt at enumeration of the commandments but the entire record of those attempts and all the debates along the way. The artist, acting as Ba'alei Kushiah, and echoing the beliefs of Rabbi Nahman's anti-institutional ideology, confronts authority and the power of remembering. Nahman's insistence on a bidimensional world is embodied through the artist's allowance for a critique of rabbinical authority and simultaneous insistence on the importance of the historical record. When conducting initial research, the dichotomy of highly specific rituals compared with the practice of Rabbinical argumentation where contemporaneous answers and interpretations are possible, seemed at odds. It seemed to present a disconnect between theory and practice, presenting to the questioning practitioner a confusing dilemma. An inquiry into the commandments presented a micronarrative in which to investigate attribution and the semantics of belief.

The traditional enumeration of the 613 commandments stems from an aggadah (rabbinic homily) found in the Babylonian Talmud. Gematria, a homiletical technique which assigns a numerical value to Hebrew letters was used to connect the idea of the 613 commandments to the word Torah, by

assigning the positive mitzvot to the number of members of a man's body and the negative to the number of solar days in a year.³³ It's commonly difficult with aggadah to ascertain whether the tradition or the exegesis came first and also to be certain of attribution. The definition of what constitutes a mitzvah is debated over, which in turn affects the final count for each exegete. This piece considers where the authority lies in deciding which mitzvot should be observed while also asking the question of whether there are degrees to belief; ultimately recognizing the power of recording for posterity the journey of incongruous enumerations.

Within a framework that seeks to unite a personal investigation into legacy and how that is relevant within and towards a greater conversation, the Jewish Mitzvot are a fruitful vehicle for dialogue. Jewish families will adhere to Mitzvot in different ways and to lesser or greater extents depending on where they live or how observant they are. The artist connects this specifically Jewish question to a broader dialogue of what constitutes the truth, who decides, and how that affects people. I looked to the Jewish Mitzvot, as they track jurisprudence across time and they raise interesting epistemological and ethical questions. As the commandments are examined, considerations of whether they are relative or absolute become difficult to discern. For instance, "Thou shall not commit murder" seems fairly straight forward, however, when the finer points such as what constitutes murder are considered, it can become a matter of ethical and philosophical debate. Is killing in wartime murder? What about killing a fetus to

³³ Albert D. Friedburg, *Crafting the 613 Commandments: Maimonides on the Enumeration, Classification, and Formulation of the Scriptural Commandments* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 14.

save the mother? The sheer number of commandments and nuances of each exemplify the difficulties of defining our religious and spiritual boundaries.

VESSELS OF SONG

“Culture is the practice of everyday life” -David Biale³⁴

“The Jew not only asks questions: he has himself become a question” -Edmond Jabes³⁵

Dance and movement are important and long-standing traditions in both Jewish religious and secular life to celebrate events such as marriages and holidays and an aspect of culture that embodies legacy and memory. The word Klezmer means vessels of song and is a type of Jewish music and dance.

Havruta: Learning the Klezmer Step is a piece from an ongoing series where the artist is creating a visual artifact while learning traditional dance steps utilizing a rabbinical approach to Talmudic study called *havruta*, where learning and studying is done in pairs.

The Jewish Mitzvot are religious in nature, this body of work also examines rituals that can be religious *and/or* secular. The word ritual equally has a religious and non-religious definition. In either case, a series of actions or a type of behavior is performed according to a prescribed order. The importance of

³⁴ David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken, 2002).

³⁵ Ouaknin, 281.

emphasizing religious and non-religious rituals is to consider if there are degrees to categories like religion, culture, or ethnicity and where the authority lies in conversations regarding the former. Considering that Judaism can be thought of as a religion, a nationality, a culture- and episodically, as a race and ethnicity- the piece, *Vessels of Song* asks if performing secular Jewish rituals can further probe categorical markers. Simply put, can *doing* make someone more Jewish? There are many secular or cultural Jews who feel a deep connection to lifecycle ceremonies and customs but don't practice religious rites. Equally there are religious Jews who may closely adhere to the mitzvot but might have significant doubts regarding their faith. The question is whether one individual is more or less Jewish than another. The assertion that there are degrees to belief or culture invites a dialogue about identity politics. Judaism can reside in the areas where socio-political categorizations overlap and defy easy classification.

In the context of this work the question becomes one of authority, wherein, dependent on the micronarrative, Is the artist Jewish enough to have the authority to critique or participate in different aspects of Judaism? The *Vessels of Song* project is an insular and self-referential dialogue in that it examines the artist's Jewish authority. The artist, as Ba'alei Kushiah, uses *Vessels of Song* to create a dialogue that has lateral implications to questions of authority at a greater scale. Perhaps more importantly, provokes questions of what happens when authority leaves the realm of self-identification and turns towards the way others define ethnic/cultural/religious groups.

On July 20, 2018, The Washington Post wrote an article with the headline “Louisiana Judge says Jews **are a race** and protected by anti-racial discrimination laws.”³⁶ On August 2, NBC News released an article with this headline: “Judge rules that Judaism **is not a race** but Jewish people can be targeted for racism.”³⁷ a Louisiana judge ruled that Jews can be *viewed as a race* and are therefore protected by Federal law from being discriminated against in the workplace. The ruling stemming from a man not being hired due to his “Jewish blood.” Both articles proceed to tell the story of what happened followed by slightly differing descriptions of what constitutes a Jew, neither one exactly landing on a definitive answer. A concern that has stemmed from this ruling is that it may fuel white supremacist groups and support the claim, echoing Nazi sentimentality, that the Jews are an inferior race. Conversely, anti-Semitism is on the rise and protections in place could be beneficial.

³⁶ Hannah Natanson, “Louisiana Judge Says Jews are a Race and Protected by Anti-Racial-Discrimination Laws,” *Washington Post* online, July 20, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/07/20/louisiana-judge-says-jews-are-a-race-are-protected-by-anti-racial-discrimination-laws/?utm_term=.e9cec762119b.

³⁷ Noah Berlatsky, “Judge Rules That Judaism is not a race but Jewish People Can Be Targeted for Racism. Here’s Why That Matters,” *NBC news* online, August 2, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/judge-rules-judaism-not-race-jewish-people-can-be-targeted-ncna896806>.

WOMEN IN RABBINICAL LITERATURE

"I have discovered that scholarly investigation of the lives and experiences of Jewish women of previous eras can often shed light on modern dilemmas and concerns." -Judith Baskin³⁸

"How then, can we be confident that sacred teaching is, in fact, a reliable source of divine knowledge?" -Thomas Aquinas³⁹

The contents of the Talmudic tractate Sotah are challenging to engage with from a feminist or modernist perspective. Sotah is the term for a woman who has been suspected of adultery who must undergo a ritual to prove her guilt or innocence. The Ordeal of the Bitter Water, as described in Numbers 5:11-31, allows a husband who is suspicious of his wife to accuse her without fear of punishment. The Sotah ritual is distinct among biblical narratives for being the only trial by ordeal and the only occasion where someone is accused of a capital

³⁸ Judith Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature* (New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 2002), 7.

³⁹ Shawn, Floyd, "Aquinas: Philosophical Theology," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Accessed on March 1, 2019. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/aq-ph-th/>.

crime without two witnesses.⁴⁰ The ritual is emblematic of the way women are positioned in rabbinical literature, their fates generally determined by men. The ritual consists of the husband bringing the accused wife to the priest, whereupon the priest performs a series of ritual acts. After a meal offering, he unbinds the woman's hair, makes her swear an oath that she hasn't had sexual relations with another man and writes the oath down in a scroll. He then erases it by mixing it with water from the floor of the temple and makes her drink the potion. If the woman is guilty, she will become infertile. If she is innocent the potion will do no harm and possibly even make her fertile. The provenance and subsequent historical attribution of where and when the ritual was performed is uncertain or may be lost to history. There are no biblical accounts of the ritual being performed, however there are a few accounts in the Mishnah and pre-rabbinic accounts that all differ slightly, with Mishnaic accounts containing stages of abasement and humiliation of the woman in public which end with her death in the Temple.

The rabbis write that "women are a separate people."⁴¹ Repeatedly throughout the Talmud women are portrayed as inherently less than men and coming into the world lacking, as a consequence of how they were created. This conviction is played out repeatedly in conversations about women's actions and place within the social order and community; noting here that the conversations

⁴⁰ Alice Bach, "Good to the Last Drop: Viewing the Sotah (Numbers 5.11-31) as the Glass Half Empty and Wondering How to View it Half Full," In *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*, edited by Alice Bach, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 505.

⁴¹ Baskin, *Midrashic Women*, 12.

are mediated through male assumptions, always *about* and never *by* the female voice. Women are rarely able to legislate for themselves or have agency. It's difficult to retrieve in any notable way women's inner thoughts or experiences from reading these texts. In B. Niddah 31b, which discusses human conception and embryology, several examples of women's perceived innate inferiority are raised. It is written that males come into the world fully equipped with everything they need in order to further their progeny, whereas, women are empty wombs who come into the world with nothing and are dependent on male agency in order to procreate. The birth of a son is celebrated and a male child is circumcised on his eighth day to great celebration. On that day his parents are also able to resume sexual relations. Conversely, no celebratory rituals await the birth of a female child and the parents may only resume sexual relations fourteen days after her birth. A further distinction between man's superiority and women's subordinate status is discussed in a final segment about sexual intercourse positions. The passage suggests that man's preferred position is on top, from which he can look down towards earth, the material from which God made him. A woman, facing upwards, looks to the man from which she was created. It's advised that "woman, who is inherently inflexible due to her creation from the bone of a rib, must look to the more adaptable man from whose body she was created for guidance and security."⁴²

The belief that women's alterity began at conception and that is was divinely mandated was used to justify female subjugation to male control within

⁴² Baskin, 18.

domestic, social, and religious realms. Women were excluded from participating in any significant way in aspects of rabbinic Judaism's communal life of study and worship. For instance, it is suggested that due to "her confinement to the duties of the domestic sphere"⁴³ in which family obligations must occupy much of a woman's time, she would be unable to participate the same way as male counterparts in meaningful intellectual study. Rabbinic anxiety regarding women's unsuitability for serious intellectual pursuits is evident in the argument that women were created secondary to men, which resulted in physical and mental deficiencies.⁴⁴ There are many examples in rabbinical literature where women are well regarded, protected and honored. However, it's often when touting the good wife who ensures a happy domicile that will enable her husband to focus on his rigorous study and worship.

This body of work, so far, has utilized micronarrative to consider different religious and secular aspects of Judaism in order to question whether faith in a system can be acquired through an analytical and intellectual investigation. Is faith- religious, political, or social- relative or absolute? Issues of authority have been raised in *Vessels of Song* which asks questions about identity and who has the right to discuss certain aspects of a group of people. How Jewish does one have to be in order to have authority to participate in or critique certain parts of the faith/culture/tradition? *How to Remember What We Forget, When We Forget That We Don't Remember*, probes the definition of what constitutes the truth, who gets to decide, and how that affects later generations. Three pieces in *Trace*

⁴³ Baskin, 80.

⁴⁴ Baskin, 3.

deal with the representation of women in rabbinical literature in order to ask what happens when there are aspects of a system that may be problematic in the context of a contemporary worldview. Sacred teachings, as preserved by predecessors, are a predominant source of knowledge of collective history from which modern practices have evolved. It's possible to take the historical approach to these texts and relegate them to the past while saying that times have changed and they simply aren't relevant anymore, however, to cut them off from the present disregards their significance. Equally, that reasoning suggests life was, "just different was back then," without looking at causation and its subsequent effects. In recent years, feminist theologians have taken different approaches to these texts, ranging from apologetics to severe criticism. Many whom utilize a "hermeneutics of suspicion" that presume "Jewish traditional texts and their interpretations reinforce male hegemony and justify the traditional roles to which women have been assigned."⁴⁵ The past simply does not operate in a vacuum. This work engages with a history that is notoriously difficult for contemporary readers in order to reach a conclusion about how to interact with them from a feminist or modernist perspective.

The question of how to engage with problematic histories and a real-time example of why this issue matters is currently playing out in the American South. The issue of what to do with Confederate monuments is currently a highly debated conversation. A fifteen-foot-tall statue of John B. Castleman, a soldier in the Confederate army, which stands in Cherokee Triangle in Louisville, Kentucky

⁴⁵ Baskin, 8.

has been vandalized for the fourth time. This and a statue of George Prentice which stands outside the Louisville Public Library are meant to be removed by the end of the year. There are currently no solidified deadlines in place for removal, however, Mayor Fischer has mentioned being in conversation with Cave Hill Cemetery as a possible relocation site.⁴⁶ In 2016, a confederate monument that was on the University of Louisville campus was dismantled by the city and moved to Brandenburg, 45 miles southwest of the city. This regional example shows how a difficult history is being handled in the present and exemplifies why the conversation is relevant and timely.

Rabbi Lisa J Grushcow suggests three possibilities for confronting problematic, even painful, histories within Jewish texts. These approaches could also be applied to other difficult histories, such as the Confederate monuments. For monuments, rather than leaving them or destroying them, it might mean moving them to a more appropriate place *and* including didactic information. Rabbi Grushcow suggests it's possible to interpret these histories within the context of their own times, essentially using the historical approach. Secondly, she suggests trying to wrest new meaning from the texts, and third, acknowledging the pain they have caused.⁴⁷ The conclusion the artist draws for how to engage with these documents is acknowledging their problematic aspects and possible harm caused, followed by researching them in the context of their

⁴⁶ Thomas, Novelly, "Castleman Statue in Cherokee Triangle Vandalized for Fourth Time," *Louisville Courier-Journal* online, November 28, 2018.

⁴⁷ Lisa Grushcow, "Sotah: Understanding Change," *My Jewish Learning*, Accessed on February 21, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/sotah-understanding-change/>.

own time, and finally, putting that history in conversation with contemporary times. This work uses a “hermeneutics of suspicion⁴⁸” to consider the role of tractate Sotah, and more broadly, ancient Jewish texts, within a twenty-first century context by bringing the conversation of these histories into the gallery space. Ultimately, operating as visual exegesis that continues the long-standing practice of midrash and functioning as a methodology for confronting past and present knowledge.

The Impossibility of Historical Resonance II uses the transparent nature of glass to reference the layered and complicated nature of historical recollection and transmission as well as the difficulties of emotionally accessing history. The pages of a book from Tractate Sotah are recreated in glass and fused together, making it nearly impossible to read. The words quickly become visual noise and the layers obfuscate each other. The act of unbinding and recreating this book in a new image invokes Rabbi Nahman’s final act in which he burned his life’s achievement. This work too, is a gesture of moving beyond fixed interpretive tradition and like Rabbi Nahman, approaches the text not as an original and sacrosanct monument, but as a changing script which departs from its origins as it experiences ongoing interpretations. This work operates within a given framework, a philosophy which makes room for a multiplicity of voices and dissenting opinions, to have a self-referential dialogue that considers the formation of the feminine in androcentric rabbinical literature. The artist, as Ba’alei Kushiah, is continuing the long-standing practice of midrash but adding a

⁴⁸ Baskin, 8.

contemporary and feminist perspective by challenging a history of male hegemony in order to create a new dialogue.

Mutualism places a modified family heirloom chair in a dialogue with the rest of the books from Tractate Sotah in order to consider their interdependence. Merriam Webster defines Mutualism as “the doctrine that mutual dependence is necessary to social wellbeing.” One leg of the chair has been severed and the books act as a brace or support. The placement of the the books and the chair, directly and metaphorically, speaks to relatedness: the relationship between the artists matrilineal Jewish heritage and a history of androcentric texts, the relationship between the past and the present, and the way in which each generation relates to its inherited legacies. Physically, the books support a chair that has been rendered in need of external support which is reminiscent of the description of the way women come into the world needing to be reliant on the external support of their male counterpart. Metaphorically, these texts are foundational to Jewish faith and tradition and document for posterity the way rabbis throughout generations dealt with religious and communal aspects of life. In a way, the chair becomes whole with the addition of the books, able to be used, if in a way different from its original state. The books become activated by the chair to create structural support. The interdependence of these objects is visual mahloket, a physical tension that speaks to a metaphorical tension: these foundational texts are difficult to engage with from a contemporary perspective but equally valuable for their historical insight. As question bearer it is not the artists intention, neither in the work, or in the writing to dictate specific

interpretation. Rather, the goal is to create space for a conversation to take place, one which acknowledges the importance of these texts while simultaneously wrestling with contemporary relevance.

Aleph Bet reappropriates a Jewish tradition in which young boys at the start of their education lick honey off of Hebrew letters. Thought to have been introduced in the middle ages, a teacher or rabbi would write the Hebrew letters that the child was beginning to learn on a slate and cover them with honey, the little boy would then lick the honey from the letters. This tradition marks a third watershed moment in the life a young Jewish male: the first being a bris, or circumcision on their eighth day, the second being an *upsherin*, or a haircutting ceremony when they turn three years old. Rabbinic tradition suggests two passages that are of note as to the origin of this tradition that ties honey and study together. "Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste (*khech*). Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul."⁴⁹ Secondly, "how sweet are your words to my taste (*khech*), sweeter than honey to my mouth!"⁵⁰ The tradition creates at a young age an association between knowledge and sweetness. This tradition is reimagined in the gallery space, with sugar glass letters situated next to chalk writings of the aleph-bet on the wall. On a separate table are individually wrapped sugar glass letters which the viewer may remove and take with them. Removing this tradition from its original context and allowing the letters to be taken by anyone who wants one democratizes an act that was once only accessible to young male Jewish children. This work

⁴⁹ Prov. 24:13-14a

⁵⁰ Ps. 119:103

focuses on one landmark moment from a young boy's indoctrination into education as it exemplifies how the subordinate positioning of women in rabbinical literature was actualized in practice. From a very early age, young men were taught that only they had access to a highly intellectualized world of study. In contemporary times, women are increasingly studying Torah and the texts that were once only accessible to men, suggesting that *Aleph Bet* is both a protest and a nod to a shifting of equity.

CONCLUSION

This thesis utilizes autoethnography to engage with aspects of Judaism in an attempt to discover how one decides what to embrace, embody, or deny from their inherited legacies. Autoethnography specifically was chosen as an approach because it attempts to combine quantitative and qualitative data in order to systematically analyze and describe personal experience.⁵¹ This approach felt most natural since the artist is positioning herself as Ba'alei Kushiah, or question bearer, essentially utilizing Talmudic philosophy as a methodology and approach to art making. This research is a self-referential inquiry into Judaism; using Jewish thought to ask questions about Judaism. Talmudic methodology is utilized, where perspectives hold equal weight, to look at aspects of Judaism that can be viewed as progressive and forward thinking while also considering parts that can be problematic when put in conversation with contemporary perspectives.

Judaism is a unique vehicle for dialogue to consider whether there are relative or absolute delineations within and between categories such as religion, culture, ethnicity, and nationality. Judaism often exists in an in between place, with outward characteristics that reflect regional influences. The research and

⁵¹ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* Volume 12, No 1 (2011): i.

work call into question whether there are hard and fast boundaries to our belief and classification systems. It asks what happens when a critical examination of the beliefs and traditions indoctrinated in each person is undertaken, whether it is the things taught or lived experience that shape the person more.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF IMAGES FROM TRACE

IMAGE 1: *Rocking Pairs*, found wood, pine chairs, 8' x 24" x 38", 2018

IMAGE 2: *How to Remember What We Forget, When We Forget That We Don't Remember*

IMAGE 3: *Havruta: Learning the Klezmer Step*

IMAGE 4: *The Impossibility of Historical Resonance II*

IMAGE 5: *Mutualism*

IMAGE 6: *Aleph-Bet*

IMAGE 1: *Rocking Pairs*, found chairs, pine wood, 8' x 24" x 38", 2018

IMAGE 2: *How to Remember What We Forget, When We Forget That We Don't Remember*, plaster, string, nails. 9' x 48" x 2", 2019

IMAGE 3: *Havruta: Learning the Klezmer Step*, ink on Stonehenge paper, 50" x 30', 2019

IMAGE 4: *The Impossibility of Historical Resonance II*, glass, found object, wood, metal, dimensions variable, 2019

IMAGE 5: *Mutualism*, family heirloom chair, Tractate Sotah, dimensions variable, 2019

IMAGE 6: *Aleph Bet: Learn a Letter, Take a Letter*

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EXHIBITIONS:

- 2019** *Trace*, Rowan Gallery, Louisville, KY (M.F.A. thesis exhibition)
- 2019** *Louisville Link*, New Harmony Gallery of Contemporary Art, New Harmony IN (Invitational)
- 2019** *Glass Art Society Member Exhibition Online*
- 2019** *Sinks and Chairs*, Manifest Gallery, Cincinnati, OH (Juried)
- 2019** *Freeze State: Disassociating from the Here and Now*, print exchange and exhibition (co-curator), Swanson Contemporary Gallery, Louisville, KY
- 2018** *Welcome Home*, Galleries at Georgetown College, Georgetown, KY (Invitational)
- 2018** *10 x 10 x 10 Tieton*, Mighty Tieton Warehouse, Tieton, WA (Juried)
- 2018** *Transplanted*, MFA Exhibition Online, University of Montana (Juried)
- 2018** *Ontology of the Flesh*, The Hive, Louisville, KY (Solo Exhibition)

2018 *Planters Trade*, UrbanGlass Window Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (Invitational)

2018 *Doors: A Collaborative Book Project*, University of Louisville, KY

2018 *Blue Grass Biennial: A Juried Exhibition of Kentucky Artists*, Claypool-Young Art Gallery, Morehead, KY (Juried)

2018 *Glass Art Society International Online Student Exhibition*

2018 *Freeze State: Disassociating From the Here and Now*, print exchange and exhibition (co-curator), Louisville, KY

2018 *It's Your World: Art About the Future of Community*, 1619 Flux: Art + Activism, Louisville, KY (Juried)

2018 *What's the Theme?*, OPEN Community Arts Center, Louisville, KY

2018 *OH + 5: Ohio Border 10th Biennial*, Dairy Barn Arts Center, Athens, OH (Juried)

2017 *Descent: A Collaborative Book Project*, University of Louisville, KY

2017 *Artists in Our Midst*, Kaviar Forge Gallery, Louisville, KY (Juried)

2017 *Glass Show*, Gallery 104, La Grange, KY (Juried)

2017 *Relative Perspective*, Gallery K, Louisville, KY (two-person exhibition)

2017 *Terminus: Portfolio Exchange*, SGCI Archives, Zuckerman Museum of Art, Kennesaw, GA (Juried)

2017 *Student Exhibition*, Schneider Galleries, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY (Juried)

2017 *Apocalypse: A Collaborative Book Project*, University of Louisville, KY

2016 *Bestiary: A Collaborative Book Project*, University of Louisville, KY

2016 *Making Matters*, Hertz Gallery, Louisville, Kentucky (Juried)

2015 *15' X 9' Figurative Mural*, lululemon athletica, Jacksonville, FL (Commission)

2015 *Ceremony*, Tea Haus, Jacksonville, FL (Juried)

2011 *Uncle Monster's Minions*, One Spark: A Crowd Funding Festival, Jacksonville, FL

2009 *Wolfbat Wedding*, MOCA, Jacksonville, FL

2009 *Print Bodies*, Adelle Grage Center, Jacksonville, FL (Juried)

2008 *Ceramics Show*, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS:

Project Chance *Executive Director*
Southern Graphics Council International (SGCI) *Member*
University of Louisville Graduate Student Council *Hite Art
Institute representative (GSC)*
Glass Art Society *University of Louisville student liaison
(GAS)*
The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) *Member*
Semiotic Society of America (SSA) *Member*

INTERNSHIPS:

2018 Museum of Glass, hot shop intern, Tacoma, WA
2016 Hound Dog Press, Louisville, KY
2016 Mid America Print Council Conference, University of
Louisville, Louisville, KY

DEMONSTRATIONS:

2017 Oppositional Thumbs, Chrysler Museum of Art,
Norfolk, Va (assisted Che Rhodes with Third
Thursday performative demonstration.)
2016 Will in the Ville Festival, Louisville, KY (Letter Press
Demo and Workshop during the city-wide festival
celebrating the 400th birthday of William
Shakespeare)

CURATORIAL:

2019 *Freeze State: Disassociating from the Here and Now*,
print exchange and exhibition (co-curator), Swanson
Contemporary Gallery, Louisville, KY

TEACHING/ASSISTANSHIPS:

2019 Teaching assistant, Make Your Mark with Sarah
Gilbert, Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC
2018- Present Studio tech, sculpture studio, University of
Louisville, KY
2017-Present Graduate teaching experience, University of
Louisville, KY
Spring 2019 semester-3D Design Foundations

Fall 2018 semester- Studio Art and Visual Culture
Spring 2018 semester- Studio Art and Visual Culture
Fall 2017 semester- 2D Design Foundations
2016-Present Assistant letterpress instructor, University of
Louisville, KY
2016-2017 Sutherland Endowed Chair in Glass visiting artist
assistant, University of Louisville, KY
2016-2017 Studio tech, 3D foundations studio, University of
Louisville, KY

WORKSHOPS:

2018 Visiting artist, Georgetown University, Georgetown, KY
2018 Interwoven: paper weaving workshop, Creative
Catalyst Summer Workshop Series, Indigo Art
Therapy Studio, Jacksonville, FL (Instructor)
2017 Printmaking workshop, Creative Catalyst Summer
Workshop Series, Indigo Art Therapy Studio,
Jacksonville, FL (Instructor)
2017 Visiting artist, Pyramid Incorporated, Creative Center
for Adults with Developmental Barriers, Tallahassee,
FL