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Writing Canadian Judaism through Queer Migration

Abstract

This essay places the literary representations of Canadian queer Jews from the former Soviet Union, such as in David Bezmozgis's short story "Minyan," in a larger context of Canadian queer Jewish writing that addresses the themes of im-migration or migration, such as Brian Stein's short story "The Good Son" and K. David Brody's novel Mourning and Celebration. *This article thus discusses three works where immigration/migration reflects a recouping of traditional symbols of Jewish life in the contexts of Canadian Judaism, Jewish community, and gay male sexuality. The article pursues answers to the following questions: How does the experience of immigration to Canada or migration within Canada influence one's sense of cultural loss and strategies of reclamation? How are these representations of queer Jewish life shaped by and contribute to the diversity and multiculturalism of Canadian society?*

Résumé

Cet essai situe les représentations littéraires des personnes juives queer canadiennes originaires de l'ex-Union soviétique – comme dans la nouvelle « Minyan » de David Bezmozgis – dans un contexte plus large d'écriture juive queer canadienne abordant les thèmes de l'immigration ou de la migration – à l'instar de la nouvelle « The Good Son » de Brian Stein et du roman « Mourning and Celebration » de K. David Brody. Cet article analyse ainsi trois œuvres où l'immigration/migration re-flète une réappropriation des symboles traditionnels de la vie juive dans les contextes du judaïsme canadien, de la communauté juive et de l'homosexualité masculine. L'article cherche à répondre aux questions suivantes : Comment l'expérience de l'immigration au Canada ou de la migration à l'intérieur du Canada influence-t-elle un sentiment de perte culturelle et des stratégies de réappropriation ? Comment ces représentations de la vie juive queer sont-elles façonnées par la diversité et le multiculturalisme de la société canadienne et y contribuent-elles ?

Immigrant Fiction as Queer Midrash

This essay looks at three instances of contemporary queer Jewish fiction produced in Canada. These works explore the intersections of Jewish history, Jewish tradition, and same-sex sexuality from different perspectives and subject positions, yet in the same context of cultural reclamation associated with (im)migration. Brian Stein's and K. David Brody's works provide a larger cultural and literary context for my dis-cussion of the literature of Canadian Jews from the former Soviet Union that David Bezmozgis's work exemplifies.

The three works of fiction examined in this article share a common literary strategy: They represent queer immigrant experience by performing what we might call a queer midrash, a creative reinterpretation of Jewish textual, ritual, and liturgical tradition that reclaims these traditions for queer Jewish life in specific contexts. Stein's "The Good Son" (2000), Brody's *Mourning and Celebration* (2009), and Bezmozgis's "Minyan" (2005) differ in form, cultural context, and literary ambition. Read together, however, they exemplify an emerging subgenre of queer immigrant fiction that contributes to Jewish Canadian literature by representing intersections of religious, cultural, and sexual experiences through displacement and migration to Canada and within Canada.

This argument builds on Daniel Boyarin's foundational work, which demonstrates that the ideal Jewish male, the *yeshiva bochur* (student at a yeshiva), constitutes a countercultural masculinity at odds with the hegemonic virility of Western modernity.[1] Boyarin shows that traditional Jewish intellectual and spiritual life harbored an alternative model of manhood, a gentle scholar, that Western culture, which valued virile, physically dominant masculinity, perceived as effeminate, and that, he argues, constitutes a resource for queer self-understanding. Boyarin also shows that this normative appropriation of femininity for men in rabbinic culture participated, and originated, in the male domination of women, particularly in the exclusion of women from Jewish intellectual life and in mysogynistic views of female sexuality.[2] This article addresses a related connection between the feminized Jewish man as described by Boyarin and Jewish society's traditional heteronormativity or modern homophobia.[3] The prohibition of male-male anal penetration in biblical and rabbinic law was rooted in the anxiety and shame associated with the perceived feminization of men, stemming from misogynistic cultural meanings attached to gender roles in the ancient Mediterranean.[4] In this context, the prioritization of the feminized and (homo)eroticized Jewish man, which Boyarin discovers in Talmudic and Ashkenazic cultures (and which other scholars find in the Hebrew Bible) at once resists and reinforces the dominant heteromasculine norms.[5]

The works of fiction discussed in this article represent this tension between the potential queerness and the actual homophobia of Jewish society. In each text, the figure of the Jewish intellectual (Brody's Yankl, Stein's Noah, and Bezmozgis's Herschel) embodies Boyarin's alternative model of Jewish manhood. These narratives participate in a broader anti-homophobic cultural project by resisting modern homophobic discourses in Jewish culture. Their queer protagonists transform Jewish texts, prayers, and rituals into resources for a queer life in changing geographical and cultural contexts, often through mourning and reclaiming losses (relational, emotional, cultural, linguistic) that accompany queer and (im)migrant experiences.

Additionally, these works redefine Jewish family. As affect theorist Sara Ahmed points out, in the absence of a heteronormative family, queers become "affect aliens," alienated from the positive affects associated with the cultural idea of family as the source of happiness.[6] This bears additional significance in the contexts of the Canadian and American Jewish communities, in which marriage has become a signifier of heteronormativity and a structure central to the formation of North American Jewish identity since the late nineteenth century through most of the twentieth century. Jewishness and Judaism can be seen as gendered and relational categories, with the ideology of "familism" as the defining characteristic of North American and Israeli Jewishness.[7] In the works under discussion, the tension between the queer protagonists and their families of birth, along with their constructions of alternative families of their own, serves as a major factor that forces their migration and determines its trajectories.

"Foreskin with a Yarmulke": Moving between Cultures in Brian Stein's "The Good Son"

The short story "The Good Son," by Toronto-based author Brian Stein, was published in a 2000 collection of gay Jewish erotica, *Kosher Meat*, edited by Lawrence Schimel.[8] It follows a gay couple, Jewish doctor Noah and his Catholic partner Patrick, a librarian. Noah grew up in a kosher home in Toronto and moved to Montreal after coming out and being rejected by family, his homophobic father especially. In Montreal, Noah meets Patrick, who had left his native St. John's, Newfoundland, after being rejected by his Irish Catholic family. Montreal thus serves as a neutral, cosmopolitan and gay-friendly middle ground standing in opposition to both Toronto and St. John's, two very different yet shared versions of estranged home. The story revolves around Patrick's sex with his Jewish partner, and Patrick's conversations with his partner's Jewish mother, Mrs. Wolfson. The intersection of two cultures and two generations is therefore the very fulcrum of this story. Stein's narrative adopts recognizable cultural tropes: the conflicted gay Jewish man, the gentle non-Jewish partner, the Jewish mother mourning her unborn grandchildren, the conflict between a gay person and a religious community. Stein's story uses these clichés as the available cultural scripts for gay Jewish life in contemporary Canada. The story exposes their internal tensions and contradictions, their limits and possibilities. Moreover, Stein uses these conventional scripts as the medium for a queer midrash, for a transformation of Jewish tradition through a queer lens.

Noah's and Patrick's movement is not just their migration from Toronto or St. John's to Montreal. It is also an escape from their homophobic families and religious communities. Their shared experience of loss, the break with their families and religious traditions, brings them together. It is the loss of home that makes them a "perfect pair":

"Look, I no longer consider it her fault. I don't think it's anyone's fault. But you know, Jewish tradition condemns what we do. It's right there in the Torah."

"And you think us being lovers has my church's blessing?" I said.

"We're the perfect pair, aren't we? Except that it's easier to cross yourself than make a Star of David every time we sin."[9]

Patrick knows that Noah is "conflicted about being Jewish and being gay, a combination as damning as my being born a Catholic and living as an openly gay man."[10] The perceived conflict between gayness and religion, synagogue and church alike, adds to the alienation from family. Noah recalls: "My father didn't believe me that I was gay. As if I was making it up, for fuck's sake. And my mother asked my shrink if it was her fault."[11]

Love for Patrick further distances Noah from Judaism: "He hadn't been a practicing Jew since leaving Toronto, probably even before that, with the exception of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when, for some inexplicable reason I questioned only once, he still fasted.... Oddly enough, the Star of David on the chain around his neck disappeared soon after we had sex the first time."[12] Sex with a non-Jewish man inexplicably makes the Star of David disappear. This move of escape has a double meaning for Noah. It is an act of liberation from the homophobic and xenophobic attitudes of his Jewish community, from its heteronormative and ethnocentric restrictions. It is also a loss of his Jewish identity, a loss that is never complete or final. Noah keeps a mezuzah on his doorpost while insisting that it is a holdover from the previous owners ("He's never gotten around to removing it").[13] Noah's loss of Jewishness is a conscious choice, a choice of his lover over his family: "Listen to me, Patrick, you are not an embarrassment to me. There is no reason for me to hide you from my family. I love you and I'm proud of you. If they can't deal with my Catholic partner, that's not your problem, or mine."[14]

After the death of his father, Noah introduces Patrick to his family. Patrick is reluctant to meet them, especially Noah's mother: "She hasn't exactly welcomed us with open arms for chicken soup on Friday night. What makes you think she's going to warm to me when I show up for her husband's funeral?"[15] Patrick's concern is that he is both Noah's same-sex partner and a non-Jewish partner. An interfaith gay couple faces double rejection.

"Are you telling me your mother's so hip that she won't insist we sleep in separate rooms?"

"In the Jewish faith, mourners are expected to abstain from sex."

"Then wait till your family finds out I'm not even circumcised."

"I admit there are plenty of strange practices surrounding death in the Jewish religion, as you'll discover," he said. "But dropping your drawers to show your

> pedigree isn't one of them. We'll cover your foreskin with a yarmulke and no one will be any the wiser."[16]

Kinship and religion intersect in the story's thematic preoccupations with foreignness and familiarity, alienation and home. Patrick is a stranger in Noah's Jewish family, with its "strange practices." The Jewish practices of mourning, which include sexual abstinence, reinforce the motif of alienation, as a reminder of the perceived conflict between Noah's and Patrick's love and Jewish tradition that allegedly condemns sex between males. Patrick's foreskin is another reminder of this tension, this time from an interfaith perspective. Noah's joke reveals an underlying anxiety: is it possible to cover it up with a yarmulke, to bridge the divide between two conflicting religious cultures?

Noah and Partrick transgress Jewish mourning customs and make love, in a liberating and life-affirming move, which stands in contrast with the theme of mourning: "There is nothing life-affirming about a funeral."[17] The funeral of Noah's father represents the dead tradition of his family, a tradition that puts unnecessary limits on living a life of fulfilment and authenticity. Sex with Patrick helps Noah "to rid the presence of death from his old bedroom."[18] Noah and Partrick's lovemaking, their kisses and tears, allow each of them to feel free and human, to feel alive. Their lovemaking also redeems the loss associated with rejection: Noah's skin tastes like home, and Patrick's weight prompts Noah's "secure, protective feeling."[19] Both partners find a new home in each other.

The main obstacle to Noah's family accepting his relationship, however, is not forbidden sexual practices. Nor is it the exogamic character of this relationship. Rather, it is the impossibility of children: "[O]f all the things society could frown on regarding two men in a committed relationship, never having children was the most pressing shortfall."[20] Noah's mother mourns a double loss, her husband and her unborn grandchildren. A central dialogue between Patrick and Mrs. Wolfson reveals her fear of the existential loss of family continuity.

> "Look, *boychick*, my son tells me he's very happy with you. You're not a bad looking man, and you strike me as intelligent. I wish I could say the same about Harvey and Lev. They're good providers for my daughters and my grandchildren, but neither one of them looks like he walked off the dust jacket of a Danielle Steele novel. But I get *nachas* from them. I can't ask for more."
>
> "You'd like to say that Noah gives you *nachas*."
>
> "I would. I don't think it's an unreasonable request or assumption to expect pleasure and pride from a child."
>
> "Neither do I. What would it take to get this feeling from Noah?"
>
> "A grandchild to carry on the Wolfson name."

> It all came down to legacy, then. It was so simple, so traditional, except that Noah and I couldn't accommodate her wish. Her grandchildren were the keys to her immortality, and Noah had denied her that. At least in her mind.[21]

Stein's story captures the collision between two opposing stereotypes: the gay man as good looking and intelligent, and the Jewish man as a provider who continues family lineage through heterosexual procreation. "The Good Son" represents this opposition, one that operates on the basis of contemporary Jewish Canadian society's principal values and assumptions and consequently pits Judaism against homosexuality. Mrs. Wolfson defines Jewish *nachas* (pride) in terms of procreation and pleasure to be had from children and grandchildren. Patrick sums it up: "I think the hardest thing for her to accept is the failure for you to deliver an heir to carry on the Wolfson name."[22] Noah is aware that his supposed inability to produce grandchildren for his mother is the greatest challenge in their relationship. Moreover, Noah shares this sense of loss: "[T]hat was always my concern, too. I hated the idea that the line ended with me."[23] The significance of lineage is not merely a fantasy of personal immortality, as Patrick believes. The Jewish anxiety about reproduction is also associated with the memory of the Holocaust, "the terrible feelings of loss that come with being a survivor," as Mrs. Wolfson tells Patrick.[24] For Mrs. Wolfson, emphasizing collective survival in the wake of the Holocaust is a common response to its memory, an imperative of Jewish continuity that she views first and foremost as a demographic issue. To Mrs. Wolfson, her son's gay Christian partner, is "as painful a reminder as, well, the tattoos on your relatives' arms."[25]

Eventually, however, Patrick connects with Noah's mother better than her son. It turns out that Patrick is "the good son," the one who rectifies Mrs. Wolfson's disappointment with Noah. Patrick, the gay Christian, brings his Jewish partner Noah back to Judaism. In this way, he redeems the loss of Noah for the Jewish people. Ironically, gay sex with a Christian, the very thing that had alienated Noah from the Jewish community, helps him reconnect with his family and with Judaism. Patrick encourages Noah to say Kaddish for his father:

> "Noah, have you given any thought to all that Jewish ritual stuff expected of a son when a parent dies?"
>
> "You mean am I going to say Kaddish for the man who denied my very existence? I don't know."[26]

Patrick's persistence forces Noah's return to Jewish tradition.

> "Get up. It's after seven. Noah. Come on. Get up."
>
> "What's the matter?"
>
> "Aren't you going to services this morning? Don't you have to say *kiddush*?"

> "Oh Christ. I'm up, I'm up." …
>
> "I think you said I had to go to the synagogue for *kiddush*. That's the prayer over wine. I have to say *Kaddish*. That's the mourner's prayer. A slight difference."
>
> "Hey, what do I know? I'm a goy from The Rock."[27]

Patrick's confusion of kiddush and Kaddish points to the redemptive power of his apparent ignorance of Jewish customs: he replaces the negative meanings of loss, death, and mourning, associated with the Kaddish, a prayer recited in memory of the deceased, with a positive context of life and celebration implied in the kiddush, a blessing over wine recited on the Sabbath and festivals to mark the time of joy. This comic confusion thus creates a symbolic resonance: Patrick, the gay Christian outsider, inadvertently performs what Stein's story at large is doing, recasting Judaism in the direction of queer life-affirmation. The outsider's ignorance of Jewish custom becomes, through Stein's narrative, a kind of queer midrash: a creative misreading that opens up new possibilities within the tradition, transforming mourning into celebration. Patrick's efforts to help Noah reconnect to Judaism and his family reveal a struggle for acceptance:

> "In a way I was providing approbation, telling him that I thought it was a good thing he was doing, attending services, standing up before his congregation with the leather straps of his *tefillin* binding him closer to his Judaism. When you said *Kaddish* in front of the rest of the congregation you showed what a good son you were."[28]

Even so, one must not lose sight of the significance of showing "what a good son" one can be despite being gay. It remains an apologetic attempt to please a homophobic community in hope of being tolerated.

This assimilationist move, however, parallels an opposite one: Patrick's goal of turning Noah's mother into an ally by sharing in her son's gay experience and life more generally: "You'll never have her on your side if you hide it all from her."[29] Patrick's efforts at reconciliation represent the hope for another existential transformation—from Noah's father's denial of his son's very existence to Noah's mother's eventual participation in Montreal's Pride celebration.[30] These two trajectories, Noah's reconnection to Judaism and his mother's possible acceptance of his sexuality, are interdependent in Stein's story. With Patrick's help, the mother and the son begin their journey towards each other with a promise of meeting somewhere halfway.

"In My Grandfather's Shtetl": Leaving the Old World in K. David Brody's *Mourning and Celebration*

The historical novel, *Mourning and Celebration*, by K. David Brody, a Montreal-based writer, meditates on the author's immigration to Canada from the United Kingdom, and on his experience of being Orthodox Jewish and gay. The novel is organized as a dialogue between the author-narrator and his fictional gay ancestor Yankl, a Hasidic yeshiva student in a nineteenth-century Polish shtetl. The motif of loss in *Mourning and Celebration* includes the lost voices of queer Jews throughout history, as the author's dedication points out: "To the thousands of voiceless souls whose anguish could rise only to heaven." Hence, the book is intended to reclaim Jewish gay history and collective memory through imagination. The novel does so by projecting contemporary sexual categories and homophobic attitudes on an earlier era. It frames queer experience of the past using modern Western discourses, such as the category of homosexuality based on desires and personality types and its associations with moral panic or ideological conflict, rather than traditional Jewish categories related to same-sex sexual or erotic experience that showed concern with specific sexual practices understood in gendered terms. Therefore, although framed as historical fiction, the novel is presentist; the author conceptualizes his relation to the past through the lens of his own cultural context. In broader terms, it demonstrates common perceptions of the past in today's Canadian queer Jewish community.

The central theme of Brody's novel is moving away from "mourning" the queer desire, a loss of queer affective and sexual opportunities associated with the closeted existence in a homophobic society, toward "celebration" of openly gay Jewish life. Brody conceptualizes this movement as both temporal and spatial. It is "the social progress that has been made during my own lifetime" from the constraints of the repressive past toward the freedom of the present.[31] It is also a movement from the closeted life in Europe (nineteenth-century Poland or twentieth-century England), to the personal gay Judaism of the narrator in Canada of the new millennium.

The immigrant experience in Brody's novel includes his grandparents' immigration from Rypin, Poland, to London, England, early in the twentieth century, and his own immigration from the United Kingdom to 1960s Montreal: "Casting aside the memories, I realize that I managed to change my life. In 1968, by exchanging my place of birth for Montreal through emigration to Canada, I achieved liberation."[32] The image of linear temporality is embedded in the very structure of the novel, in the parallel narratives of the author's autobiography and that of his fictional protagonist Yankl's storyline. The author's narratives focus on his relocation from England to Canada, from the repressive family and childhood experiences of homophobia and antisemitism to the adult life of an openly gay Orthodox Jewish man. The fictional storyline depicts a movement from the shtetl to the big cities, from the constraints of Yankl's

family and community to the freedom of his chosen identity. The conflation of these two narratives thus establishes the starting point in nineteenth-century Europe, and Yankl's extremely oppressive home; it ends in twenty-first-century Canada, presented as a place of messianic freedom. The setting of the novel in traditional Jewish society is meant to indicate the relative failure of the protagonist's efforts at personal liberation: in contrast to the author's current-day experience, Yankl's journey consists of moving from one oppressive community to another.

Yankl, a yeshiva student, falls in love with his study partner, Velvel. Their relationship oscillates between the intimacy of shared Talmud study in the yeshiva and making "passionate love" in the forest.[33] The imagery of a Jewish home symbolically sanctifies Yankl and Velvel's sexual relations. In an episode that takes place immediately after the two boys have sex, Velvel shares with Yankl his mother's Sabbath cookies, as "if they were an intrinsic part of their relationship."[34] The traditional blessing over food, recited by the lovers, functions as a blessing over sex between men. Building on the rabbinic metaphor of food for both Torah and sex, the blessing moves gay sex into the realm of Judaism.[35] By bringing the cookies from his mother's home to the forest, where the boys make love, Velvel replaces the domesticity of the kosher home of Jewish tradition with the wild, open, free, and potentially dangerous gay sexual space.

The ideal same-sex relationship in *Mourning and Celebration* resembles a traditional Jewish family. Yankl and Velvel have sexual relations every Friday afternoon, when the students in the yeshiva are dismissed earlier and the town's entire Jewish community is busy with preparations for the Sabbath.[36] This arrangement of sex and time is symbolic: it alludes to the Jewish custom of linking marital relations to the Sabbath eve.[37] The two lovers also symbolically appropriate the so-called laws of family purity:

> They embraced, and remained holding each other. "How can I wait till next Friday?" said Velvel.
>
> "Married couples wait two weeks after the woman's menstruation. We can wait one. Waiting will make it even better next Friday."[38]

The laws of ritual purity contained in Leviticus prohibit sexual relations during menstruation.[39] Jewish legal tradition requires that husband and wife abstain from sexual relations for a period of approximately two weeks monthly. Although the menstruation laws are not applicable to sexual relations between males, Brody metaphorically applies them to Yankl and Velvel's relationship. In this manner, he appropriates major symbols of traditional Jewish marriage and femininity and subverts their historical gender-based meanings.

The love relationship between Yankl and Velvel is interrupted by their neighbors who report the teenage boys to the rabbi of the town, Rabbi Levy. The rabbi separates the lovers, sending Velvel to another yeshiva in Vilna, and attempts to force Yankl into a heterosexual marriage. The antagonism between Yankl and the Jewish community of his shtetl, personified by the figure of Rabbi Levy, leads to Yankl's escape and excommunication. When confronting Rabbi Levy, Yankl's mother communicates it as a loss for the Jewish community: "We lost him. You lost him.... And now you want to remove him from the Jewish world?"[40]

Rabbi Levy's response appeals to the Torah, yet interprets Yankl's departure in modern moralistic terms: "But, Leah, he has sinned, the rabbi said, more sympathetically. His sin is called an abomination."[41] The rabbi interprets the biblical term *to'evah*, commonly translated into English as "abomination," as moral judgement:

> "Two young men, from good families pursuing immorality ... what an example to set for the innocent young!"
>
> Mrs. Bradawka came out of her shock. "He's always been such a good boy. Immoral? I cannot imagine my Yankl being immoral."
>
> The rabbi bristled. "It is an abomination. The Torah states that it is an abomination!"[42]

The rabbi's language ("immorality," "an evil temptation, an abomination," a response to Yankl's non-normative desire rather than his transgressive behaviour) draws on modern Western psychological categories that had not yet emerged in traditional Jewish society in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe.[43] The rabbi speaks as if "the homosexual" as a distinct type of person already exists, whereas premodern Jewish law focused on specific sexual acts, not on sexual identities or orientations.[44] There are no known historical records of excommunication for same-sex activities in Jewish communities. These activities were traditionally treated just as other transgressions of Jewish law rather than an ideological or political threat that would require an extreme measure such as excommunication.[45] The trope of "abomination" associated with "immorality" suggests appropriation of modern homophobic discourses and the moral panic of the twentieth century.[46] Whereas the biblical prohibition and its traditional interpretation in Jewish law exclusively refer to specific sexual practices, Rabbi Levy understands it in modern psychological terms of sexual feelings. The rabbi decides to excommunicate Yankl because of Yankl's non-normative desire, "an evil temptation, an abomination."[47] Brody's rabbi, in other words, speaks the language of twentieth-century homophobia rather than the language of the nineteenth-century shtetl. This anachronism, however, is itself meaningful: it registers the contemporary Jewish author's own negotiation with homophobia, and the difficulty of imagining a pre-modern Jewish relationship to same-sex sexuality that does not already speak in the idiom of the present. The novel is, in this sense, less

a historical fiction than a meditation on the contemporary moment, using the past as a mirror. Rather than describing the shtetl's sexual categories, it reveals the author's own experience of rejection by a Jewish community that speaks the language of modern moral panic.

Following the rabbi's instructions, Yankl's parents pronounce their gay son dead and perform traditional mourning rituals—*keriyah* (tearing one's clothing), Kaddish, and shiva—which are symbolic acts of rejection. Yankl, too, performs a traditional ritual of Jewish mourning, but to him this ritual denotes a different kind of loss: it expresses his grief due to separation from his lover, Velvel.[48]

Yankl expresses his longing for his lost lover in a series of literary reworkings of traditional Jewish liturgy. Whereas traditional Jewish liturgical poetry uses love metaphors to describe spiritual experience, yearning for a union with the divine, Yankl uses these religious songs, which refer to the relationship between Israel and God, to express his feelings for Velvel. For instance, "Yedid Nefesh" ("Kindred Spirit," or literally "Beloved of the Soul"), a mystical poem of longing for union with the divine included in the traditional Jewish prayer book, in Yankl's mouth becomes a song about separation from his human male lover.[49] Significantly, when love is no longer a metaphor, a prayer becomes a queer space. The poets whose works shaped the Jewish prayer book imagined a same-sex love affair between Jewish male worshippers and a male God, a metaphor that runs in Jewish tradition from the Hebrew Bible through rabbinic Midrash and medieval Kabbalah.[50] The queer potential is already present in the traditional text of the prayer, a site where same-sex erotic longing, desire, and spiritual striving are intertwined. Yankl adopts this traditional homoeroticism, but instead of the metaphorical erotic relationship with God he speaks of his actual relationship with a physical male lover, thus turning the traditional homoerotic subtext of Jewish prayer into an explicitly queer ritual and creating a queer midrash on a traditional text.

Yankl's excommunication corresponds to his choice of a new life. Yankl leaves the yeshiva and his hometown and cuts all ties with his family and community. Pursuing an "even more radical break with his past identity," he changes his name to Jonathan, identifying with the biblical Jonathan who loved David.[51] Brody's queering of Jewish tradition in *Mourning and Celebration* serves to separate the protagonists from mainstream Jewish community, to chart their departure away from family and society, and to create a radically new form of Jewish religious experience rooted in Orthodox practices and values. In other words, Brody's interventions imagine the creation of a new kind of Jewish identity.

Yankl, now Jonathan, spends the rest of his life cherishing his love for Velvel and traveling across Poland and Lithuania. He is forced to leave each of his new towns to

escape yet another forced heterosexual marriage. Brody presents his protagonist's separation from the Jewish community with the symbolism of the Havdalah, the Jewish ritual of separation between the sacred and the profane, the Sabbath and the weekdays.[52] Just as the Havdalah ceremony takes place every week, at the end of the Sabbath, Yankl's separation from Jewish community recurs in every new place that he visits, as he moves from town to town.

During his travels, Yankl enters into a platonic romantic relationship with his new study partner, Herschel, who is heterosexual and married to a woman. After Herschel dies in an accident, Yankl has a brief love affair with a gay German army officer, Hermann. Despite Yankl's separation from the Jewish community, the Jewish religious context is definitive in his intimate relationships with men. The erotic power of shared spirituality is so crucial that it can turn friendship between a gay man and a straight man into a romantic relationship, a love affair. Yankl/Jonathan defines his friendship with his straight study partner Herschel as "almost a love affair without any physical element."[53] To him, the relationship with Herschel is "the best thing … since Velvel."[54] In contrast, Yankl defines his sexual relationship with Hermann, a Prussian officer, as merely friendship: "He unashamedly admitted to himself that what he had felt for Velvel was love; what he felt for Hermann was friendship."[55] Apparently, it was not love because it lacked the element of shared Torah study and shared Jewish religiosity. These two components are indicative of the queer Jewish world that Brody creates in his novel. This world can only take shape through migration, through a constant change, loss, reclamation, and transformation of identities.

"Not Tradition but History": Queering "Russian"-Canadian Judaism in David Bezmozgis's "Minyan"

The short story "Minyan" by David Bezmozgis was first published in the magazine *Prairie Fire* in 2002 and later included in the author's collection *Natasha and Other Stories* (2005). Bezmozgis, a Toronto-based writer who immigrated to Canada from Riga in 1980 at the age of six, depicts a small community of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union that meets in a one-room Orthodox synagogue in a B'nai Brith building for seniors in Toronto. The main characters, Herschel and Itzik, share an apartment, but they are more than roommates, or so everyone thinks (this ambiguity is essential to the story). Intersections between Jewish, immigrant, and queer experiences, particularly in the immigrant communities from the former Soviet Union, are underrepresented in literature and scholarship. Bezmozgis's story "Minyan" is an important step towards filling this gap in contemporary fiction. "Minyan" shows that the issues of belonging for former Soviet Jews in Canada can be complicated by queer difference—as intra-Jewish difference and intra-Soviet Jewish difference, in particular.

"Minyan" depicts a small Orthodox synagogue that, just as many others, struggles to get ten Jewish men for a minyan, the traditional quorum for communal prayer and services. Zalman, the synagogue's *gabbai*, a person in charge of the services, can use his connections with the building manager to make sure that minyan participants get apartments in the building when they become available (typically when a tenant dies). This interdependency of the minyan and the social housing waiting list constitutes the context in which the storyline develops. This plot line disrupts stereotypical images of Jewish life common in the other texts. It creates a literary situation in which Jewish religious practice and the most material concerns of immigrant life such as housing, aging, survival, are inextricably bound together. The minyan is not simply a spiritual community but an economy of survival, in which religious attendance functions as currency for a scarce and literal resource. This convergence of the sacred and the pragmatic gives Bezmozgis's story its distinctive moral texture and provides the context in which homophobia operates. As we shall see, the question of whether Herschel is allowed to stay in Itzik's apartment after Itzik's death is not only about the recognition of queer relationships but also a practical question about an old immigrant person's housing security. Bezmozgis situates queer Jewish identity not in abstraction but within the specific conditions of post-Soviet immigrant life in Toronto.

The story is narrated from the perspective of the youngest member of a Jewish immigrant family, Mark. Mark's grandfather "had no hobbies aside from the synagogue," and so the young man accompanies his grandfather to the synagogue in a nostalgic turn to his roots.[56] In Mark's view, the synagogue is a pastime for old Jews. Mark tells us: "Most of the old Jews came because they were drawn by the nostalgia for ancient cadences, I came because I was drawn by the nostalgia for old Jews. In each case, the motivation was not tradition but history."[57]

In the synagogue, Mark meets two elderly men: Herschel, a Holocaust survivor from a Lithuanian shtetl, and Itzik, a cab driver from Odessa. Mark soon finds out that Herschel and Itzik live together as a couple. Herschel and Itzik represent the intersections of English, Russian, and Yiddish languages and cultures: "Herschel spoke to me in English. Itzik, when he spoke, spoke to me in Russian. They spoke Yiddish to each other."[58] This essential linguistic and cultural mix defines the identity of Soviet-born Canadian Jews, who are variously integrated into Canadian society. Herschel and Itzik represent specific types of identity and experience. Yiddish is the old Jews' mother tongue, which Mark associates with a disappeared Jewish life. He can neither comprehend nor access it without the mediation of Russian or English cultures. However, for Mark, Itzik's Russian is also the language of the past; it is of little relevance for Mark, whose adult life takes shape in Canada. Herschel's communication in English thus represents a conscious embrace of the Canadian present as a place where Jewish history and traditions will live on.

"Minyan" illustrates post-Soviet Jewry's complicated relationship with Jewish religion. The story depicts the estrangement of older generations of Soviet-born Jews from their traditions—a function of life in an atheistic state that repressed Jewish religious practice. "I couldn't believe that, in a building whose entire population consisted of old Jews, they couldn't find ten men, but my grandfather insisted that it was true," says Mark.[59] Some of those old Jews, however, rediscovered Judaism on Canadian soil. This is true for Itzik who left the Soviet Union in 1979.[60] Itzik "came to Canada already an old man and had become successful [...]. In his last years he rediscovered his Jewish roots. For two years he never missed a Saturday service."[61] In a similar vein, Itzik discovers or rediscovers his queerness through his relationship with Herschel.

Herschel, however, stands in contrast to these trends. Herschel was born in a shtetl. He survived Auschwitz and moved to Canada in 1950. His Jewishness and gayness are essential parts of his life. He is a Jewish scholar without a title: "There was no rabbi and so the responsibilities for the service were divided between Zalman, my grandfather, and Herschel."[62] Mark's grandfather calls Herschel "a very intellectual man ... a professor."[63] In essence, Herschel is a queer Jewish intellectual who helps preserve traditional practices for the sake of his Jewish community. This community does not recognize him yet cannot survive without him.

Although Herschel is a Holocaust survivor, he is not a fighter. He is a traditional Jewish dreamer, a soft *yeshiva bochur* in love with books: "He was an intellectual, a man of ideas. Not a practical man."[64] Herschel is not successful in the conventional sense. His gift lies in his ability to see "a possibility of joy" in the world with "neither mission nor meaning," and to understand the humanity of every person.[65] "He could understand all of them. That was his problem, he said, he could understand everybody."[66] Herschel is the only neighbour who invites Mark's lonely and isolated grandfather "to come over for tea, to read some Yiddish poetry, to play cards, to go for a walk in the park."[67] Paradoxically, kindness can be a problem—the reader witnesses this as the story develops.

Herschel's capacity for care and love manifests in his relationship with Itzik. Sadly, this relationship alienates him from the rest of his post-Soviet Jewish community: "The following Saturday I noticed how, when Itzik coughed, Herschel placed a hand on his shoulder. I also noticed an undercurrent of disapproval emanating from the back of the room."[68] The signals of rejection are everywhere: men hesitate to shake Hershel's hand after his Torah reading; he and Itzik are the last to receive a cup of wine at the Kiddush; others in the synagogue barely acknowledge Herschel when he is speaking.[69] The subtle expressions of affection between the two men elicit homophobic reactions from their community. Bezmozgis registers homophobia through gesture, spacing, and omission rather than through explicit statement. The

men "hesitate" rather than refuse; Herschel and Itzik are considered "last" rather than excluded. The community's rejection is enacted through the choreography of synagogue ritual (the handshake after Torah reading or the distribution of wine at Kiddush) which makes the homophobia all the more telling: the very practices that are supposed to enact Jewish solidarity are the ones through which Herschel is marginalized. Community and exclusion are two sides of the same ritual coin.

Both Itzik and Herschel are widowers. Herschel moved in with Itzik after his wife's passing:

> So Herschel moved into Itzik's apartment. Maybe Itzik did it as a mitzvah, because everyone knew he didn't need the money. But then again, a man loses a wife, another man loses a wife—this is an unimaginable loneliness. Who knows who is helping who? … And by then they had been living together for two years. They move in here and people talk. Two men in a one-bedroom apartment.[70]

The two men face homophobic attitudes in their minyan ("people talk"). The nature of Herschel and Itzik's relationship is never defined in the story, however. It might be sexual or platonic, but because it escapes categorization, it is queer and normative at once. This ambiguity is a literary strategy operating through the story's complicated narratorial voice: we hear the voices of various older immigrant community members, sometimes named and sometimes unknown, integrated into the main narrator's voice of Mark, a young, secular, Canadian-born observer. This double outsider-insider's perspective creates a multivocality of the text. It also highlights the ambiguity in representation of a queer relationship. Mark is admitted to the minyan's world by virtue of his Jewish identity, but he does not fully comprehend what he observes. His reticence about naming or defining Herschel and Itzik's relationship mirrors his own partial understanding. He reports what he sees—the single bed, the hand on the shoulder, Herschel's shaking hands at the Torah—without drawing explicit conclusions, leaving the reader to perform the close reading that the narrator withholds. This indirection enacts, at the level of narrative form, the same ambiguity that the community enacts in its response to the two men.

Since both men had wives, neither Herschel nor Itzik are openly gay. Yet they do not hide their relationship. They are not ashamed of it. They share an apartment, and they share a bed (there is only one bed in the apartment, as Mark notices when he helps Herschel fix a lightbulb). They express their love and affection for each other openly. The story offers parallels between this relationship and a heterosexual marriage, such as in this instance: "A man loses a wife, another man loses a wife."[71] Herschel's and Itzik's relationship with one another has for them the same value and meaning as the relationships each of them had with their wives.

The main events of the story revolve around Itzik's illness and death. These events reveal the degree of closeness between Herschel and Itzik. This closeness manifests itself through Jewish rituals and customs, such as the public Torah reading in the synagogue: "When it was Herschel's turn to approach the Torah he asked Zalman to say a prayer for Itzik. He pledged eighteen dollars to the synagogue and stood solemnly, his hands shaking, as Zalman asked God to deliver Itzik from his illness and provide him with a full recovery."[72] As traditionally required, Herschel requests a prayer for Itzik's recovery through the person leading the services at the time Herschel is called to read from the Torah. As Zalman prays, Herschel's body language reveals his love for Itzik in the most profound way: "What could he say that could compare with the eulogy of his wretched back?"[73]

Bezmozgis's depiction of Hanukkah celebrations shows the estrangement of most of the community members from Judaism: "Most of the others sat in their coats, their lips gleaming with oil and specked with sugar, waiting for the opportunity to leave."[74] A celebration of a Jewish holiday reveals the participants' indifference to Jewish rituals or Jewish tradition as such. Their Jewishness is reduced to the desire for the free donuts brought by Zalman's wife. For Herschel, however, the Hanukkah donut acquires new meaning:

> Herschel asked if he could have a second donut to take upstairs to Itzik. Not that Itzik could eat it. It was hard to imagine, Herschel said, such a man. A real Odessa character, right out of the pages of Babel. He had even grown up on Babel's street. As a young boy Itzik had carried watermelons for Babel's uncle. What hadn't he done in his life? At thirteen he was working two shifts in a munitions factory. At seventeen he was at the front. He fought the Germans, he survived the Communists, he had an appetite for the world—and not, he didn't even have the strength to eat a donut.[75]

Herschel's request for a second donut is irrational by the logic of consumption but entirely legible by the logic of love: what matters is the offering, the act of carrying a symbol of communal Jewish celebration to a dying man who can no longer participate in community. The Hanukkah donut is a holiday food, and Herschel's act transforms the communal holiday ritual into a private, intimate gesture—a domestic version of the minyan itself. This is Bezmozgis's queer midrash: Jewish tradition is relocated, carried upstairs to a one-bedroom apartment where two men have built their own version of Jewish life. It also serves as a reminder of Itzik's past strength and passion for life, his "appetite for the world"—qualities that Hershel, who spent his own life in the world of ideas, appreciates in his partner.

Herschel openly expresses his love at Itzik's funeral. He is confident and proud about his relationship, even though he doesn't define or categorize it:

> Facing the room, Herschel composed himself and spoke clearly. Itzik was my last and dearest friend. Hitler killed my family and I never had children. When my wife died I thought I would be alone until God decides it was finally time to take me also. That Itzik was my dear friend these last years was the blessing of my old age. Without him I don't know what would have become of me. He was a wonderful man. He was an honest man. He was a strong man. He said not one word he didn't mean. I will miss him like I would miss my right arm.[76]

Herschel's words—"I will miss him like I would miss my right arm"—allude to the classical expression of Jewish mourning for Jerusalem, borrowed from the Psalms and carried over to Jewish liturgy and ritual: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither" (Psalms 137:5). This line has become an archetypical expression of Jewish mourning for the lost homeland, referring to the very first Jewish experience of displacement in the Babylonian exile. By invoking it for a lost partner rather than a city or country, Herschel retrieves the tradition's unfulfilled possibilities and redirects them toward queer love—the kind of personal intimacy that helped two Jewish men survive the displacement of immigrant life. Herschel's speech at Itzik's funeral also echoes David's lament for Jonathan in the Hebrew Bible: "I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan, you were most dear to me, your love was wonderful to me more than the love of women" (2 Samuel 1:26). Many works of modern critical biblical scholarship read this piece of biblical poetry, along with the narratives of David and Jonathan, as an example of same-sex love in the Hebrew Bible.[77] The relationship between Herschel and Itzik thus represents a queer midrash framed with traditional Jewish imagery and presented as one of Jewish tradition's most ancient forms.

Itzik's death sparks a fight for his apartment: "Everyone knew someone on the waiting list."[78] People wonder whether Herschel will be allowed to stay there? The fight for Itzik's apartment goes hand in hand with the homophobia Jews of Bezmozgis's story brought with them from the Soviet Union: "Just because this one shared a bed with another man he should be rewarded with an apartment? In Russia he would have been given ten years!"[79] The homophobic arguments against Herschel's right to stay in the apartment draw on the validity of a heterosexual marriage and the proscription of homosexual partnerships: "They had nothing against Herschel, but what right did he have to the apartment? Was he Itzik's wife? Is this the kind of world we were living in?"[80] Jewish tradition in this story functions as a means of securing an apartment by participating in the synagogue's minyan. It is a way of getting into Zalman's good graces:

> On Saturday morning more than twenty men appeared for the service. Almost as many women settled in behind the partition. Despite the air of sinister motivations, the room was transformed and Zalman walked through the aisles with a sense of purpose. He threw himself into the service with exceptional vigor. He sang out page numbers in Russian and Yiddish. He called the new attendees up

> to the Torah. Everyone made an effort at making an effort. Zalman. The new attendees. Voices battled each other for distinction. Herschel sat as usual beside my grandfather. He sang loud, his voice mingling with those of the others. The synagogue swelled with beautiful and conflicting prayer. God in His heaven was left to sort it out."[81]

Yet the prayer includes all the voices, loving and selfish, genuine and false, those of the victim and those of the perpetrators. The moral distinctions are left to "God in His heaven," to determine, whereas for Zalman the continuity of Jewish tradition takes priority.

The ending of the story gives voice to Zalman, the man who oversees the minyan. In this story, Zalman's perspective on Herschel and Itzik's relationship represents the position of Jewish tradition, and perhaps that of the whole of Jewish history. This position is ambivalent; it is at once condemnatory and compassionate. Zalman affirms Herschel and Itzik's love through non-action: "For the week Herschel sat shivah Zalman refused to make any decisions."[82] Herschel sits shivah for Itzik, performing a mourning ritual that is traditionally reserved for close family members of the diseased, such as a spouse. By respecting Herschel's shiva for Itzik, Zalman tacitly acknowledges the validity of their relationship. He assigns it the status of a Jewish marriage. Confiding in Mark, Zalman says:

> "I have my own opinions, but I am in charge of the synagogue. Do you think I liked the business with Itzik and Herschel? You shouldn't speak ill of the dead, but Itzik was a difficult man. And there are people who say they know very well why Herschel has no children. But for two years they came. I never said a word. Because my job is to have ten Jewish men.... And they say, With so many good Jews who need apartments, why should Herschel be allowed to stay? This is not my concern.... They should know I don't put a Jew who comes to synagogue in the street. Homosexuals, murderers, liars, and thieves—I take them all. Without them we would never have a minyan."[83]

On the one hand, Zalman disapproves of gay relationships. He places "homosexuals" in the same category with "murderers, liars, and thieves." On the other hand, Zalman recognizes that Herschel is essential for the very existence of the minyan, which can stand for Judaism at large. There is this too: Zalman is willing to err on the side of compassion, leaving the final determination to God.

Zalman's compassionate homophobia is close to the positions taken in many Orthodox Jewish communities. Additionally, the association of homosexuals with criminals stems from the long-established criminalization of homosexuality in the Soviet Union. In my own conversations with Soviet-born Jews, especially those from older generations, I have often witnessed a trope linking same-sex relations with criminal activities or imprisonment.

Herschel has no children, which proves to Zalman that he is homosexual. In "Minyan," the irony lies in the fact that it is childless Herschel who enables the continuity of Jewish tradition. It is Herschel who makes the minyan possible. Furthermore, Herschel, a gay man, is part of the "old Jewish life" that Mark was longing for and made a point of searching out.[84]

Bezmozgis's "Minyan" was turned into a film in 2021. The director, Eric Steel, relocates the story to New York's Brighton Beach. In the film version, the young protagonist, renamed David, turns out to be gay himself. The film thus offers two storylines. One follows David's platonic friendship with Herschel and Itzik, where he witnesses the love relationship between two older, closeted gay men. The other storyline depicts David's own sexual explorations and love affairs in the gay community. David has relationships with younger men who are openly gay—particularly with Bruno, a bartender in a gay bar. Significantly, whereas David's sexual encounters with other young gay men help him explore and navigate his sexuality, the love between two older and closeted gay men, Herschel and Itzik, teaches him the values of care and commitment. Both storylines, however, are concerned with their gay characters' struggles with homophobia and the macho masculinity ingrained in post-Soviet Jewish communities. The young man's efforts to negotiate his Jewish and gay identities—in conflict with his own father's homophobia, for instance—manifest in reading habits that move between the Torah and the gay literary canon, including the works of James Baldwin.

Conclusion

The works of fiction discussed in this essay represent different cultural trajectories associated with queer immigrant and migrant experience within the diverse Canadian Jewish community. Noah in Brian Stein's short story is a native Canadian. The immigrant roots of his Jewish family have been lost and forgotten; they are never mentioned. Nevertheless, Noah's migration within Canada, from Toronto to Montreal, acquires a significance that parallels K. David Brody's motives and experience of moving to Montreal from the United Kingdom, as well as his protagonist Yankl's migration across Poland. Additionally, whereas Brody's novel portrays an imagined Eastern Europe of the Jewish past, even if it more resembles modern Western society rather than the historical shtetl, David Bezmozgis's short story represents the Jews who left Eastern Europe (Lithuania, Ukraine, or Romania) to settle in Canada. The focus of Bezmozgis's "Minyan" are the first-generation Jewish immigrants who build lives in Toronto, grounded in their Soviet or post-Soviet cultural baggage/heritage. As with Herschel and Itzik's reliance on Yiddish or Russian, the Jewish past is immediate and alive. Of note, too, is that although the residents of the B'nai Brith building and the attendees of its small synagogue may differ from the mainstream Canadian Jewish community, they are no less representative of the Canadian Jewish community than the Wolfsons in "The Good Son." Remarkably, all the works

discussed in this essay present queer Jewish experience to the reader indirectly, not through eyes of the Jewish gay man but from the perspective of a third figure. This universal narrator's perspective represents this experience as part of the mainstream culture and in connection to other types of experience, whether it is a non-Jewish gay partner in Brian's story, a presumably heterosexual observer in Bezmozgis's story, or a distant descendant in Brody's novel. In each case, the queer experience tests the limits and the possibilities for acceptance by disrupting cultural assumptions, reinventing lives, and by relating to Jewish history and tradition in unique ways, including a queer midrashic reinterpretation of traditional Jewish texts, ritual, and liturgy.

Stein's short story "The Good Son" meditates on sexuality and multiculturalism in a distinctly Canadian context, depicting migration within Canada, between cities, provinces, cultures, and religions. Noah's relationship with his family and with Judaism is rendered through Patrick's non-Jewish perspective. The Jewish community depicted in Stein's fictional work is invested in reproduction and therefore heterosexuality. Queer relationships are seen as precluding Jewish continuity. The queer loss is redeemed through Noah's reconnection to Judaism because of his relationship with Patrick, his non-Jewish gay partner.

In K. David Brody's historical novel *Mourning and Celebration,* the relationship between the mainstream Jewish community of the nineteenth-century Polish town of Rypin, a projection of the author's personal experience of growing up in an Orthodox Jewish home in Britain, and the homosexual protagonist, Yankl (later Jonathan), an imagined gay ancestor of the author, is one of mutual rejection. Yankl's family, neighbours, friends, teachers, and rabbis cannot grant him acceptance. In Brody's novel, Jewish men with same-sex desires are doomed to suicide or to loveless, unhappy marriages. Yankl represents a different response to the heteronormativity and homophobia of this traditional Jewish society—active and conscious resistance that includes separation from mainstream Jewish community and creation of an alternative, gay Jewish culture through the queering of Jewish religious texts, rituals, and symbols. Yankl/Jonathan constructs a personal gay Judaism by queering biblical and rabbinic texts, as well as traditional Jewish liturgy and ritual, just like queer Jews in today's Canada. In this way, by reformulating his same-sex attractions as inherent in Jewish intellectual and religious life (albeit outside of his Jewish community), he counters the rejection that he experiences in mainstream traditionalist Jewish society.

In contrast to the works of fiction discussed above, the short story "Minyan" by David Bezmozgis mentions neither sexual activities nor desires, nor identities. Instead, it focuses on what Jonathan Boyarin calls "immigrant intimacy."[85] Like the other works discussed in this article, Bezmozgis's text explores complex intersections of same-sex relationships, queer love, Jewish tradition, and Canadian Jewish community through the immigrant/migrant experience. One of the story's underlying themes is the interrogation of notions of loss and return to the self and to the past through

an interplay of identities and lived experience. Bezmozgis's "Minyan" complicates the relationship between Jewish tradition and Jewish history by meditating on the intersections of religion, immigration, sexuality, and aging, as well as on English, Russian, and Yiddish cultural trajectories. Herschel and Itzik's relationship produces new meanings surrounding Jewish tradition, rituals, and community; these meanings are queer and normative at once.

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1
Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (University of California Press, 1997). Boyarin's work has helped to shape the growing field of Jewish queer studies, which includes, among others, works such as *Queer Jews*, edited by David Shneer and Caryn Aviv (Routledge, 2002); *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. Daniel Boyarin et al. (Columbia University Press, 2003); and Noam Sienna, *A Rainbow Thread: An Anthology of Queer Jewish Texts from the First Century to 1969* (Print-O-Craft, 2019).

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Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct,* 151–85.

3
As Foucault shows in his *History of Sexuality,* homophobia is a modern phenomenon related to the emergence of the category of sexuality at the turn of the twentieth century. Seidman effectively demonstrates that homophobia was generally absent in male homosociality of traditional Ashkenazic culture depicted in the works of Jewish writers and that, instead, Jewish masculinity was calibrated with "varieties of heteronormativity and shifting modes of patriarchy." Naomi Seidman, *The Marriage Plot: Or, How Jews Fell in Love with Love, and with Literature* (Stanford University Press, 2016), 16 and 312n22.

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Ibid., 113.

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Ibid.

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K. David Brody, *Mourning and Celebration: Jewish, Orthodox and Gay, Past & Present* (Transcréation, 2009), 6.

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Ibid., 4.

33
Ibid., 47.

34
Ibid., 49.

35
Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 62b and Yoma 18b.

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Brody, *Mourning and Celebration*, 49–50.

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