In recent years, Israeli cinema has witnessed the emergence of a religious wave. The new visibility given to religiousness in narrative films is striking given the fact that issues of Jewish religiosity had been largely absent from Israeli film (and television) production; in fact, only 20 out of over 420 Israeli films produced between 1960 and 1995 dealt with religious themes. I suggest that only after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 did Israeli cinema begin to represent the religious other, largely in response to a drastic turn to the political right among the population. Rabin’s assassination was a traumatic turning point in the heated divide between religious belief and secular worldview in a country haunted by religious extremism since 1948, when David Ben-Gurion made the conscious decision not to separate governance from religion and established the State of Israel as a "Jewish democracy." Since then, and increasingly apparent recently, it has transformed into a theocratic one (Ben-Yehuda 2011).

Israel’s slide to the right was exacerbated by the unlikely partnership between two fundamentalist movements: Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), which is Orthodox and ultra-Zionist and devoted to expanding settlement of the Occupied Territories; and Haredim (“those who fear and obey God”), who are ultra-Orthodox and anti- or a-Zionist and reject the State of Israel. Right-wing influence became even more apparent to the secular Left when massive support from the ultra-Orthodox helped right-wing Benjamin Netanyahu win the 1996 election for prime minister after the assassination. It should be noted that while formally the ultra-Orthodox, which in 2000 made up eight to twelve percent of the Jewish population (Ben-Yehuda 2011: 13), are ostensibly equal Israeli citizens, in reality they enjoy certain special privileges, including an autonomous educational system, exemption from compulsory military service, and ever-growing state-provided subsidies to great numbers of adult men with extremely large
families who study religion in lieu of taking part in the work force. This is often resentfully perceived as exploitation and lack of reciprocity, evoking harsh criticism from the general public.

The intensification that has emerged in Israel of what was once considered globally “a latent schism between religious and secular world views” (S. Mahmood 2008: 448), is due in some part to the global rise of religious politics in the post 9/11 era and the subsequent war on terror, though it precedes these events by some years. In Israel, this schism expanded tremendously. Its protracted "overt latency" exploded traumatically after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination in 1995 when the second Intifada broke out, making Israel a terror-ridden society radically divided in terms of Right-Left politics. It was especially felt in the escalation of the settlement movement's power over political, social, and cultural life; in the increasing power of feminist religious organizations; in the entrée of soldiers from the national-religious bloc to areas previously closed to them, such as the highest military ranks; in the rise of the relatively new and ever growing Hardali (ultra-Orthodox Zionist-nationalistic) movement that follows an extremist religious lifestyle while embodying what it defines as the "new Zionism"; and in the so-called modesty revolution, imposed by the Haredim on the public sphere through gender-segregated buses and streets, prohibition of advertising showing women, opposition to women singing at public ceremonies, and a series of other extreme, mostly gendered, sanctions. The growing influence of religious extremists in every sector of Israeli post-second Intifada life generates ongoing action and debate in regard to Israel's fragile status as a theocratic democracy.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was fueled for years by Israel's inability to effectively address the:
recognition of the ways in which Zionism, though understanding itself as an emancipatory movement for Jews, instituted a colonial project and the colonial subjugation of the Palestinian people… to tell two histories at once, and to show how they converge, and how the claim of freedom for one became the claim of dispossession for another (Butler interviewed in Schneider 2011).

It has reached a stage in which Haredi violence towards the inner other (be it women or Israeli-Arabs) and Hardali and settler violence towards the ethnic other (be it the Palestinian or the secular Jew, including non-religious IDF soldiers) have become an acute threat to democracy. The question of how the history of the oppressed might erupt within the continuous history of the oppressor, has, therefore, at least two implications – towards both inner and outer others. As Ben-Yehuda (2011: 9-10) suggests

The Israeli state–religion conflict has far-reaching consequences for finding a solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict…On the one hand, we have a symbolic–moral universe that emphasizes a nation state based on democracy, human rights, freedom, and a westernized liberal legal foundation—in short, a liberal democracy. On the other hand is a very different symbolic–moral universe with a foundation that is a religious belief, a Halakhic worldview, theologically fundamentalist, which feels threatened by modernity, wants to emphasize tradition, and is extremely conservative.

The rise of the new religious cinematic wave, causing inundation of religion in an industry for decades dominated by the secular left-wing, is related not only to historical, traumatic, and socio-political factors, as described above, but also to industrial ones. For example, a number of actors and directors became religious, or (more commonly) became
secular; two funds for Israeli cinema supporting only multicultural and Jewish projects were expanded; and the religious Jewish-oriented Ma'aleh School of Television, Film and Arts was established in 1989. The latter two especially attest to the dramatic change brought about by figures from the national-Zionist community joining the world of modern media production.  

Religious themes, figures, practices, symbols, myths, and beliefs have, in many respects, flooded the screens. In addition, this is not limited to the cinema: In theatre, ultra-Orthodox life has flourished and stage productions have won several prizes. Television series, devoted to representing mainstream national-Zionist religiousness and the religious family (including those torn between religious and non-religious members) became very popular. Israel's secular culture has become saturated with religious images.

In this post-traumatic and rapidly changing secular culture, and amid chronic, polarized, and increasingly violent intra-Jewish struggles, it is my contention that Israeli documentary cinema plays a major social role. It offers Israeli audiences a worldview that stands in sharp contrast to those structures and codes of mainstream cinema that became complicit with Israel as a theocratic state, governed by the "rule of God." The documentary new wave promotes Western liberal/democratic values as an alternative to fundamentalist representations that have captured the imagination of wide sectors of Israeli society. Creating an alternative to dominant politics and making “visible” of what is hidden provides secular spectators with a format for self-exploration through which they can reassess their identity. Insisting on a space for secular cinematic language, the second-Intifada's new systems of representation vis-à-vis religiosity are challenged. The question of what it means to be a documentarist in a society that is so harshly and dangerously involved in a cultural clash is answered by pointing to the complex role of


mapping out experiences as well as practices and discourses that oppose rabbinic-patriarchal-nationalist dominance of the public sphere and the entertainment forms that legitimate it.

Watching narrative films with religious themes made during the second Intifada, however, reveals that they are devoted exclusively to the representation of the minority figure of the ultra-Orthodox Jew. Only a few years after the heated debate between the Left and the national-Zionists, who encouraged the violent messianic worldview that led to Rabin's assassination, narrative cinema counter-intuitively regards the ultra-Orthodox as its ultimate other and celebrates this otherness as harmless entertainment. It neither deals with the extreme and highly influential figure of the religious national-Zionist settler nor with the Hardali settler. Although the anti- or a-Zionist ultra-Orthodox minority certainly gained political power with Benjamin Netanyahu's rise to power, the far more pressing and troubling influence is that of the ultra-nationalist Zionist factions, who have been the main force behind the expanded settlements in the occupied territories. Displacement from the settler to the anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox figure sets the latter as a benign substitute through which multiculturalist and multi-religious denominations conflicts and Left-Right clashes are negotiated. Moreover, the settlements and the Palestinian space they've so effectively and ruthlessly torn apart are almost never represented on the new wave's cinematic screen. Instead, narrative cinema turns to the ultra-Orthodox family as its preferred site of conflicts, though without encouraging an allegorical reading of the films. The fundamentalist figures are given a central space through processes of exoticization, mainstream-ization, and recuperation. Being forbidden, of course, to the separatist ultra-Orthodox population, these films (and their counterparts on television and the stage) serve both Israeli secular and national-religious Zionist audiences, who consume the internal other as yet another other-turned-I. This process of ingestion of the other is evident in the recent huge commercial
success of Rama Burshtein's film *Fill the Void* (2012), which encourages identification by portraying an upper-middle class Haredi family living in the secular center of Tel-Aviv rather than in an ultra-Orthodox enclave, and through a "romanticization" of oppressive religious practices regarding arranged marriages.\textsuperscript{10}

In order to deal with the various routes taken by the new religious wave, which propose alternatives to this major trend in narrative cinema, I will first briefly analyze Netalie Braun's *Gevald* (2008) as an example of a film that blurs the boundaries between narrative and documentary filmmaking; it was shot at the location where some of the events portrayed actually took place, using an abundance of archival footage of the event and members of local gay community rather than actors and actresses. Though this acclaimed short drama,\textsuperscript{11} written, directed and produced by Braun, does not deal with the figure of the settler, it is unique in narrative cinema's self-delusional strategy in that it subversively captures the clashes between the Jewish-Israeli Right and Left and both Jewish and Moslem fundamentalism. In its open refusal to rehabilitate the ultra-Orthodox other through re-imagery, *Gevald* also sheds light on the complex role the left-wing wave of documentary cinema, discussed below, takes upon itself in the current heated Israeli social climate of the *Intifada* age. Undoubtedly, and somehow paradoxically, it is the age in which current Israeli narrative cinema has been received extremely positively both inside and outside Israel.\textsuperscript{12} This has contributed to a contemporary revival of Israeli left-wing documentary cinema's investigative realism and the establishment of polemical, adversarial documentary as a genre increasing in importance during times of crises. Taking *Gevald* as a cinematic and ideological background for appraisal of the new left-wing documentary wave, I will then compare two documentaries — a left-wing secular one that attacks
the so-called modesty revolution, and a right-wing religious one that praises the settlement movement. Finally, I propose a reflection on the ways both right- and left-wing documentaries challenge the multiculturalist/multi-denominational (secular vs. religious, Jewish vs. Arab) conception as one that promotes democracy and tolerance and undermines otherizing.

*Gevald*

Made to be screened at the festival that usually ends the annual Jerusalem gay pride parade, *Gevald*, a nominally fictional film with an historically accurate premise and certain “documentary” elements, is set in a gay bar on the eve of the controversial 2006 parade. As the film's opening titles indicate, the previous year three participants had been stabbed by an ultra-Orthodox Jew and in 2006 the ultra-Orthodox community fought to cancel the parade. After being postponed, the event took place in a closed stadium.

The first scene of the film takes place in the gay bar with the drag-queen host addressing the immediate audience (and off-screen secular spectators), and apparently the ultra-Orthodox community as well. Mocking the cancellation of the parade, the host encourages the bar’s audience to loudly protest by crying "*Gevald,*" the same word used by the ultra-Orthodox in their protests. The parodic cry has various effects: First, it imaginarily counteracts the collective violence of the Haredi call by virtue of performative appropriation. Braun cuts from the Israeli and Palestinian gay bar guests gleefully shouting "*Gevald!*" (meaning disaster here, referring to the parade's cancellation and hateful Haredi oppression) to archival footage of thousands of ultra-Orthodox men demonstrating against the gay community by furiously shouting the same word (but, in this iteration, meaning danger). Second, through editing, the response to the host's demand to shout even louder replaces the ultra-Orthodox cry with the queer voice. Thus, this
imaginary performance, which stands in for the un-performed gay parade, takes over the Haredi demonstration. By using the same Yiddish word, the cross-cutting points to a shared Jewish background that the Haredim would want to deny, claiming as they do, the unique role of embodying “true” Jewishness. It expropriates Jewishness out of their hands. This move seems to upend the parodic relation as delineated by Linda Hutcheon whereby the present (in this case Israeli "New Jew"-ish secular and queer life) suffers “ironic contamination” (Hutcheon 1986-1987: 189) from the past ("Old Jew"-ish life as interpreted by the Haredim). Here, the exact structural echoing of the cry is made parodic through repetition at an ironic distance, projecting the secular queerness of the present over the archaic rules of ultra-Orthodoxy. This is evidenced again as the show continues and Braun cuts from footage of Haredim defining homosexuality as bestiality by holding sheep and imitating their cry to a performance in the bar of the Hebrew version of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," making the demonstration and the bar counter-reflections of each other. Dressed as a cow, the performer imitates the cows' voices ("everywhere a moo moo"), mimicking those of the Haredim, thus subverting their possession of the public space. In light of Butler's (1990a: 122) claim that parodic practices destabilize substantive identity and expose the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance, the readablility of the ultra-Orthodox performance as queer is part of an imaginary "colonizing" appropriation of ultra-Orthodoxy.

The third function of the parody points to the most subversive part of Gevald's queering act: through the sound bridge, the GLBT's repeated shouting coopts the Haredi demonstration as an imaginary part of the drag show viewed by the off-screen spectator. The cry gevald projects a drag-like quality on to the footage of the mass of black attired ultra-Orthodox men, a latent quality, apparently yet to be revealed. The Greek prefix para, as Hutcheon (1986-7, and, to a
lesser degree Seymour Chatman 2001) emphasizes, can mean counter as well as near. In Gevald, through both voice/image split and audial mimicry the parody raises possible contradictions, both "counter" and "near," which are apparently hiding inside this closed community: visibility/invisibility and difference/sameness. In other words, the mimicry turns the collective ritual of the Haredim upside down, and (queering the difference) points to coming out – either in terms of religious and/or sexual orientation. In this, the mimicry broadens the notion of parody by foregrounding it as an act of interpellation.

As Hutcheon (1986-7: 206) contends,

Parody has perhaps come to be a privileged mode of formal self-reflexivity because its paradoxical incorporation of the past into its very structures often points to these ideological contexts somewhat more obviously, more didactically, than other forms. Parody seems to offer a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak TO a discourse from WITHIN it, but without being totally recuperated by it. Parody appears to have become, for this reason, the mode of the marginalized, or of those who are fighting marginalization by a dominant ideology. (Emphases in the original)

Gevald's narrative is centered on a love story between an unnamed secular Jewish lesbian and her religious ex-lover, Na'ama, who comes to the club on the eve of the parade to warn her about dangerous violence planned by the Haredim. They watch a drag-king show performed by lesbian
Palestinians. The show begins with a semi-striptease that exposes what looks like an explosives belt tied to the naked back of the performer playing a suicidal bomber preparing for his mission. While his young lover sings a farewell love song in Arabic, the secular Israeli lesbian translates the words into Hebrew for Na’ama: "I swear my life is worthless without you. . . . You promised to share your love with me . . . Go, I will accept your absence." In the queer space of the bar, the heterosexual Saudi love song by Hussein Al Jamsi portends the multi-layering of the drag. Cross-cutting between the on-stage Palestinian performance and the off-stage translation of the song makes the latter, with its hidden overtones, a kind of performance as well – an interpretation of the Israeli couple’s own doomed love (and a reflection on Na’ama's forthcoming heterosexual arranged marriage).

Moreover, the names Youssuf and Jabbar taken by the performers parodies the popular Israeli gay film Yossi and Jagger (directed by Eytan Fox in 2002) that tells the love story between two male soldiers, Yossi (Ohad Knoller) and Lior (Yehuda Levi), nicknamed Jagger, who dies in battle during the first Lebanon War. The drag act recasts Yossi and Jagger’s well-known heteronormative (and implicitly patriotic and Zionist) gay love story into a queer Palestinian narrative of fundamentalism and resistance, embodied by the suicide bomber. Fully available for repetition, impersonation, and appropriation, Israeli masculinity is represented as unstable and fraudulent by Palestinian "kinging," as Judith Halberstam (1998) calls this sensibility. However, the parody refers to the concealed cinematic secret of Yossi and Jagger’s gay love, to the presumably hidden secret of the Palestinian couple, and that of Na’ama, the Orthodox-Jewish woman. Challenging the primacy, authenticity, and originality of dominant masculinities, staged and costumed masculinity channels ethnic and gendered secrets through the drag act. Throughout
the king show, Jewish and Moslem fundamentalisms are named as the cause of the real and imagined romantic separations on and off stage.

**Insert Photos 1 and 2 here**

These interconnections (the intertextuality and the equation between the gay and lesbian closet and ultra-Orthodoxy as a kind of closet) make Gevald's postmodern queering of the Haredi community even more powerful. With its triple secrets, the drag show emphasizes not only that there are tensions of visibility vs. invisibility and difference vs. sameness shared by these opposing groups, but also the tension of being/passing.

The film leaves the source of the explosion heard at its end unknown, though it tacitly suggests that in this climate of intensified repression it was a Haredi hate crime. But, blurring the boundaries between fiction and documentary, this explosion eerily recalls the suicide bomber in the show. Though the drag king show subverts the different conceptions of Israeli and Palestinian societies in regard to the suicide bomber's act, and simultaneously highlights the tension between a gay lifestyle and Israel's homophobic militaristic masculinity, the explosion questions the different concepts of masculinity it entails. The tragic end does not accept the Haredi hate crime, but does it accept the suicide bomber's? Does Gevald venture to suggest, during the aftermath of the second Intifada, a Jewish-gay fantasy of multi-ethnic self-annihilation? When Judith Halberstam (1993: 187-8) asks "What is the exact location of 'a place of rage,'" her answer is: "The relationship between imagined violence and 'real' violence is unclear, contested, negotiable, unstable, and radically unpredictable; and yet, imagined and real violence is not simply a binary formulation." The gay bar, however, becomes a fantastmatic site in which both real and imagined fundamentalist violence is negotiated, tested through their
theatricality, and comprehended as radically unpredictable. In this negotiation of imagined violence, as Judith Butler (1990b: 106) contends, the power of fantasy is not to represent, but to destabilize the real.

**Black Bus**

Israeli left-wing documentary cinema offers a different route from the one taken by the narrative new religious wave. It is no wonder, perhaps, that most of the documentaries on Jewish religious fundamentalism were made by women directors.\(^{14}\) Anat Zuria's three documentary films, *Purity* (2002), *Sentenced to Marriage* (2004), and *Black Bus* (2009), are exceptional in breaking almost two decades of benign and recuperated representations of ultra-Orthodox couplehood and community. Although none of these acclaimed films deal with the figure of the settler, their vision, commitment, and rhetoric pave the way for an unconventional cry for spectators' engagement, shaping negotiations of contradictory representations of sensuality vs. spirituality, holiness vs. sexuality, voyeurism vs. multiple looks, and the female voice vs. the patriarchal-halachik (religious)-male voice.

Zuria's *Black Bus* (the Hebrew title, *Soreret*, means rebellious woman), is unique in Israeli documentary cinema. Because of total lack of access to the ultra-Orthodox community, the film portrays two women, Shulamit and Sarah, who left the community, and traces their struggle during transition to secular society: from a life of violence and subservience to one of freedom; from an identity in which every detail is dictated in advance to a dynamic one that is re-formed every day anew; from life within a community and family to one that sentenced them to
loneliness. In contrast to exiles or immigrants, who maintain an ongoing connection with their distant families, for example, the severance is total.

As evidenced by scathing reactions to the film and its protagonists on ultra-Orthodox websites, the label "rebellious woman" does not specifically refer to leaving a life of faith, but to the autonomous activism of these women. Their voices are heard because Sarah writes a subversive blog and Shulamit takes still photos on the ultra-Orthodox street. In this sense, Zuria's film relates to another rebellious woman – the director herself, who left the Haredi world and whose cinematic voice is heard indirectly through the story of the two artists and mediates Sarah's words and Shulamit's visuals. Can these three women's creative and autonomous acts (writing a blog, still photography, filmmaking) stand up to the modesty revolution that has developed in the ultra-Orthodox community over the past decade, forcing women to board and sit only at the back of public buses, which have become segregated, and on certain streets to walk only on the side of the road designated for women? How should cinematic language describe the misogyny that rears its head, disguised as a mystical longing for repair of the world and norms of halakhic purity?

I contend that the body, which poses a major problem for religious men and plays a key role in their typical behavior, particularly in their violence, becomes the major means for women directors to portray fundamentalism. Discussing fundamentalism in terms of the body allows negotiation between the different facets and body-liness of the ultra-Orthodox male and female (and by implication, of the most hidden figure in Israeli culture – the Hardalim).

Insert Photos 3 and 4 here
Zuria's camera follows Shulamit during her endless wanderings through the streets of ultra-religious neighborhoods of Jerusalem and Bnei Brak. Day and night, obsessively, Shulamit's camera is directed mainly at her alter ego, the ultra-Orthodox woman, creating self-reflexive photography based on attraction-repulsion to her object. In one scene, she captures an ultra-Orthodox woman who, seeing the camera quickly bends and hides herself behind the stroller she is pushing. Shulamit's photograph captures the decisive moment in which the woman's body makes itself unseen. Embodying symbolic violence, the woman expresses through her contorted body, acceptance of the public space as exclusively male, patriarchal, and rabbinic. The segregation means she is not simply oppressed but produced as invisible again and again through the repressive mechanisms of the modesty revolution.

The women's compliance with bus and street segregation indicates, above all, the ways in which the ultra-Orthodox separatist movement has taken over the public space in Israel. As a number of incidents that almost ended in lynchings have demonstrated, even secular women getting on one of these public bus lines are required to submit to the Orthodox rule. As Sarah and Shulamit painfully describe, the modesty revolution has forced a complete separation between the genders, dominating every phase of life: home, family, street, bus.

In cutting moments of time and collecting pictures that document the frozen moment, Shulamit returns again and again to still photography's ability to stand in symbolically for death, in this case, of the ultra-Orthodox world. In his classic book, Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes bears witness to the relationship of photography to death most poignantly: "[T]he Photograph...represents that very subtle moment...a micro-version of death...I am truly becoming a specter. The photographer[']s gesture will embalm me...I have become Total
Image…Death in person" (1980; 1982: 14. Emphases in the original). Moreover, Zuria juxtaposes the frozen time of still photography and the rapid dissemination of Shulamit’s blog against the movement of segregated buses. In a displaced historical repetition—in this case, of racial discrimination in pre-Rosa Parks United States—Zuria incessantly shoots women boarding the buses from the rear and men boarding from the front. Exposing the repressive, usually invisible, rules of the Modesty Revolution, the segregated bus becomes a metaphor for the world through which it travels.

*Black Bus* juxtaposes the difference and sameness between the ultra-Orthodox and the un-Orthodox bodies. When Sarah, the second rebellious woman of the film, meets with a Hassidic man, the looks of both the camera and the Hassid focus on her self-mutilated arm. For the first time we see the deep cuts she has made, some still swollen. I contend that the skin, no less than the computer screen on which she writes her blog, becomes for her an ”expressive space,” as Merleau-Ponty (1962: 146-47) calls it, of the contradictions of past abuse still felt in the body. Paradoxically, like Shulamit's symbolic Barthesian act of killing the Haredi community through shooting stills, Sarah's self-mutilation connects her repeatedly to her violent past. Psychiatric and psychological critics (McLane 1996; Riley 2002) purport that the self-mutilator stabilizes a chaotic existence by establishing the difference between pain and pain-free (injury exists here and now, not everywhere and always), between existence and nonexistence of the self (she feels, therefore she is), and between self and others (the harm is not caused by others). To conform to the demands of "normality" in the ultra-Orthodox community, Sarah was forced to present herself as unwounded. In the present, providing a voice on the skin after her actual voice had been forbidden for years, this self-inflicted violence becomes a post-traumatic gestural communication. If all humans, as Merleau-Ponty (1962:198) claims, create unifying gestures
through which to live, then Sarah can be said to be paradoxically finding and creating such unity in her lived body, and therefore in her self.

Sarah's possession of the body is literally carved into her skin. This bodily voice is not language in itself, but a possible precondition for future language where violently enforced silence is the rule. The computer screen and the skin as expressions of emotional wounding become, as Elaine Scarry (1985) asserts in the title of her book, "the unmaking of the world."

*Black Bus* exposes only a tiny thread of a dark story. Given the radical policing of body and space in the ultra-Orthodox community, Zuria's casting of Sarah and Shulamit as the protagonists (chosen out of 100 young women Zuria interviewed during the first stages of production) makes their radiant physical presence more than a mere symbol of subversion. Both Shulamit and Sarah are young beauties. The camera's gaze on their female bodies could be considered voyeuristic and objectifying, but it above all serves as a means to expose the tension between religious fundamentalism and secularism, submission and opposition, fantasmatic messianism and reality, and invisibility and spectacle. Beyond that, however, as part and parcel of opposing the modesty revolution that de-feminizes women's appearances, Sarah and Shulamit's presence on the cinematic screen at the height of their beauty means a process of contestation. *Black Bus* offers them, and us, the option of a different look.

In both *Gevald* and *Black Bus* women fight against halachik rule to speak about their experiences to the degree that past abuse and repression are communicated in their physical style, gestures, and performances. In both, revisualizing the women's body-line becomes the major tool against past abuse and repression. Still, though the new left-wing documentaries represented here by *Black Bus* are critical of Jewish ultra-Orthodox fundamentalism, they do not relate to the more
acute problem of the dominance of the settler in Israeli secular life. In this regard, the representations of the ultra-Orthodox body and its symbolic spatial extensions (the bar, the bus) displace the settlements space, making the latter even more unsee-able, and thus, non-negotiable. Narrative cinema, stage and television productions, as hinted at above, exacerbate this displaced invisibility by foregrounding the Haredi community and national-Zionism as sources for ongoing highly popular entertainment at the expense of any representation of the even more perturbing extremists.

Paradoxically, it is the right-wing new wave film that depicts the settler and the settlement on screen, totally erasing any hint of acknowledgment of the settlements’ space as Palestinian, the settler as an embodiment of the occupation, and the indisputable fact of this wave’s zealotry.

The Rebellious Son

As a new right-wing religious documentary, The Rebellious Son (Shoshi Greenfield, 2009) stands in sharp contrast to Braun's Gevald, Zuria's Black Bus, and indeed, all new left-wing religious documentaries in that it endorses and praises the fundamentalism depicted rather than being critical of it. The film follows the journey of the director's cousin, Yaacov, who quits school to join an illegal settlement in the occupied territories and become a shepherd in the Hebron Mountains, and – frustrated over a failed romance – supports the Gaza settlers against the 2009 disengagement. In contrast to his previous attitude, though he could claim he is Haredi and be exempted from service, Yaacov decides to be drafted into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for his own reasons (as he states: in order to "learn...how to fight").
Michael Renov's (1993) formulation of four possible modes of the documentary (record, persuade, analyze, and express) emphasizes documentaries as products of historical, cultural, and technological contexts. I suggest that as a right-wing national-Zionist film The Rebellious Son uses various cinematic strategies to highlight persuasion at the expense of recording and analyzing: First, it blurs the boundaries between the voice-over of the director, who emphatically and humorously presents Yaacov's journey as what she terms "a docu-comedy with a hint of tragedy," and the blatant right-wing rhetoric that stands at the core of the film. Blurring humoristic commentary with harsh rhetoric means offering ideology disguised as entertainment. Moreover, though Yaacov is the film's main figure and apparently its central voice, it is the director's commentary, voice, and activism that, in fact, take over. Unlike Zuria, Greenfield hardly lets her hero speak, but rather speaks for him, her voice producing the voice-of-God subject position without ever problematizing the authority it arrogates. On the one hand, her ongoing commentary opens an interval between the image and the spoken, which might be used by the viewer to reflect on her intervention, but as the journey proceeds the viewer becoming better acquainted with the protagonist, the spoken finally becomes an interpellation. Greenfield claims her right through family ties and her mode of production (she is credited as writer, cinematographer, and editor); on the other hand, the gap between Yaacov's silence and Greenfield's ongoing interpretation of his actions, motives, and moods creates a "we" that transcends family ties. While the voice-over technique implies that the film endorses Yaacov's point of view, lack of clarity in regard to the ability of the omniscient authorial voice to accurately present what only appears to be another subject position busies the viewer with hermeneutics more than with epistemology. Thus the viewer is more inclined to be affected by
ideology. To put it simply, the narration effectively dominates the visuals. "The socially oriented filmmaker is thus the almighty voice-giver… whose position of authority in the production of meaning continues to go unchallenged, skillfully masked as it is by its righteous mission" (Trinh 1990: 83-4). The voice emerging from the narrative, far from being the expression of an autonomous individual, is a complex discursive phenomenon designed to make a very specific point. In this fashion the closing assertion about "just wars" completes a broader ideological shift toward the mobilization of national-religious new-Zionist sentiments.

The other sleight of hand this film performs is in the displacement of the political-spatial violence towards Palestinians onto family "feuds" (the film's secondary title is "A story of family feuds"). Thus, the universal themes of coming-of-age and the generation gap serve to promote the film's ideology, mostly hidden for the first part of the film. The voice-over denies the settlers' involvement in the violent occupation of Palestinian land in the southern Hebron Mountains. Moreover, the film stages a return to the spot where a settler was killed by a Palestinian in order to emphasize that Yaacov is an "anarchist" who ignores potential Palestinian danger and, wishing for the peaceful life of a farmer, refuses – at this stage of his life, pre his decision to join the IDF – to carry a gun. The camera and sound track are complicit with this one-sided depiction of the settlements' reality. In one of the scenes, Greenfield depicts Yaacov and his friends driving to their farm singing "The Zionist state is crumbling! It's all over, folks! Judea is reawakening!" The singing magnifies the unrealistic openness of the road: there are no roadblocks or military forces, and no Palestinians on the landscape. The framing stages these "dreamers," as the director calls them, as the sole occupants of the land.
The film effectively gets away with such an elision by attempting to portray its protagonist’s pursuits as apolitical. It transfers the highly conflictual political discussion regarding the settlements, and especially the establishment by "hilltop youth" (noar hagva'ot) of illegal outposts in the occupied territories \(^{18}\) to the realm of spirituality and "back to nature" ideology.\(^{19}\) Phrasing political, social, and cultural issues in terms of a transcendence-driven "ecological" desire to "co-exist with nature," as Greenfield’s commentary interprets it, is a strategy that aims to mobilize this green, organic, down-to-earth worldview to argue, first, that the hilltop youth are peaceful persons, motivated by love of nature and spirituality; and, second, that Yaacov’s decision to be a soldier after his first refusal is an outcome of the impossible political circumstances imposed on him.

The film nonetheless hitches itself to a foundational religious-Zionist ideology by using famous Zionist iconography from the beginning of Jewish settlement in Palestine during the 1880s (most notably the farmer with the wooden plough). Reproducing this iconography is part of establishing the hilltop youth as the New Zionists, repeating the original erasure of the presence of Palestinian farmers: the illegal outposts they build are engaged in organic farming and shun Palestinian labor in favor of Jewish, in line with the "old" Zionist principles.

The production of meaning in this film is, in these and other ways, disavowed. As Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1990: 85) contends,

> When, in a world of reification, truth is widely equated with fact, any explicit use of the magic, poetic, or irrational qualities specific to the film medium itself would have to be excluded a priori as nonfactual….All, however, depend on their degree of invisibility in producing meaning.
Greenfield does not disclose the particular ways in which the film produces and secures meaning. If, in Renov's (1993: 29) words, "the analytical documentary is likely to acknowledge that meditational structures are formative rather than mere embellishments," the persuasive documentary is the most unlikely to acknowledge its meditational structures and poetics. *The Rebellious Son* refuses to be aware of its own artifice, let alone to remain sensitive to the flow between preexisting ideological concepts and the real.

**Conclusion: From Fundamentalism to Monoculturalism**

The films analyzed here negotiate the multicultural/multi-religious denominational perspective. The Israeli new wave of religious cinema that depicts fundamentalist minority groups proposes a certain clash with the current multiculturalist approach, especially in regard to its conception of multi-religious denomination societies and the current Israeli context. Derived from the political, social, and economical situation of the second *Intifada*, in which settler and Haredi minority groups gained enormous power over Israeli society at large, it offers a new look at current impasses of multiculturalism both inside and outside Israel. The questions that need to be asked revolve around whether the revival of (cinematic) Jewish fundamentalism can provide a key to mobilizing a change in an Israeli conception of the reality of the situation, and does such a reality as revealed in these documentaries shed light on the limits of the connection between fundamentalist groups and multicultural/multi-denominational concepts beyond the Israeli context.
It is clear that new wave notions of purity and engagement with transcendence that mask political aggression in the service of right-wing nationalistic colonialism (The Rebellious Son) and patriarchal fundamentalist conceptions (the world criticized in Black Bus and Gevald) use cinema neither as a site for ethical consideration of moral issues nor as "catalysts for ethical reflection" (Lyden 2009: 9). The left-wing films, in their inability to deal directly with the fundamentalist settler, instead depict the intolerance and oppressive violence prevalent in ultra-Orthodox culture, suggest questions about the contested ethics of religious violence. By calling attention to the political dimension of fundamentalism largely hidden in narrative films, these films grasp the distinctiveness of Jewish fundamentalism in the socio-political sphere rather than in the realm of ideas. As Gevald and Black Bus show, each in its distinctive poetics, under particular conditions, multiculturalism/multi-denominational religiousness becomes a hegemonic doctrine. Both right- and left-wing films show that in Israeli culture, multiculturalism is no longer a multiple perspective, but has become a monoculturalist approach to imposing an apparent multiplicity. In Israel, the harsh left-right/secular-fundamentalist schism proves that "the concept of multiculturalism is polysemically open to various interpretations and subject to diverse political force fields; it has become a contested and in some ways empty signifier onto which diverse groups project their hopes and fears" (Shohat and Stam 2003:6). In the socio-political-ethnic-religious conditions of the second Intifada, crossing ethnic, religious, or gendered borders becomes a staged act, a fraud that leads to the next explosion.

**Reference List**


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3 "New Zionism" (known also as neo-Zionism) is a right-wing, nationalistic, and religious movement that appeared in Israel following the Six Day War and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It evolved parallel with, and in opposition to, post-Zionism. Neo-Zionists consider "secular Zionism," particularly the version practiced by the Labor Party at that time, too weak on nationalism and naïve in its belief that Arabs and Jews could live together in peace. New Zionists view the Land of Israel (the state plus the West Bank and Gaza Strip) as the natural and biblically mandated home of the Jewish people and assert that the goal of Jewish statehood is not only to create a safe refuge for Jews but also to fulfill the national-historic destiny of the people of Israel.

Ben-Yehuda (2011: esp. pp. 199-201, 209-211) contends that it is this imbalanced balance \(^4\) which keeps Israeli society from inner explosion.


6 See e.g., in theatre, Micha Levinson's *Mikve* (2003-2004) and Oded Kotler's *Apples from the Desert* (2008); in television series, Roni Ninyo's *Merchak Negia* (2007) and Lazy Shapira's
Srugim (2008-2011). During these years, Israeli documentary cinema also evinces the emergence of a new queer religious trend.

7 For example, Gidi Dar’s Ushpizin (2009) and Avi Nesher’s The Secrets (2007).

8 Rabin’s assassin, Yigal Amir, was heavily influenced by a rabbinical trend that considered Rabin a rodef (pursuer) who endangered Jewish lives by signing the Oslo Accords. The concept of din rodef (punishment of the pursuer), Amir’s justification for his action, was heavily debated after the assassination.

9 See, for example, Giddi Dar’s Ha-Ushpizin (2004), Avi Nesher’s The Secrets (2007), David Volach’s My Father My Lord (2007), and Avishai Sivan’s The Wanderer (2010).

10 This was the most watched film in Israel for the entire year despite the director’s decision not to screen it during the Sabbath, the most popular time for film attendance.

11 The film premiered at the 2009 Berlinale, took second place in the Goethe-Institute’s International Short Film Competition on human rights, and won first prize at TLVFEST.

12 For example, Shmuel Maoz’s Lebanon (2009), and Yosef Cedar’s Footnote (2011).

13 See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPQAOIG-Rk4

For example, Talya Finkel’s HaTikoun (2002) and Lina Chaplin’s Yoel Israel and the Pashkevills (2006).

14 For example, Talya Finkel's HaTikoun (2002) and Lina Chaplin's Yoel Israel and the

15 Each day over 2,000 such bus trips take place in twenty-eight cities. Ten years after the phenomena began, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled against segregated buses. See Worton (2011).
The author, a Jerusalem city council member representing of the leftist human rights political party Meretz, concluded that only 0.75% of the population favors such segregation.

16 See also Aran, Stadler, and Ben-Ari (2008). This paper, like mine, offers a post-Boyarin conceptualization of the Jewish male. Boyarin's analysis of the socio-psychic processes involved with the male Jewish body and its symbolizations vis-à-vis the gentile/Christian body, paves the way for later interpretations of Jewish-Zionist maleness figured through the body. See Boyarin (1997).

17 *The Rebellious Son* begins with a decidedly un-rebellious son – the director's brother, Yehuda – and with the director's call to save Nezarim (a Jewish settlement in Gaza that was part of the 2009 disengagement); it ends with Yehuda's military funeral and the director's call to distinguish between what she terms "lost wars" (in which her brother died) and "just wars" (in which "one should die").

18 Many are satellites of existing settlements occupying an adjoining field or hilltop; others are designed to obstruct continuity between Palestinian population centers.

19 In one scene, Yaacov's takes his grandmother to see his flock in the meadow. The camera shows him drawing water for her from what seems to be an old Palestinian well, treating it as his own property. The grandmother says: "I find it funny that you are the much maligned and dangerous hilltop youth."

20 Though the study of religion and film is still young, existing research has not yet delved into this issue. See e.g., Mitchell and Plate (2009) and Lyden (2009).
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