

Hebrew Studies Public Talks

Removing the Mask: Women-Only Haredi Arts as Spaces of Female Empowerment and Social Change in Israel

Because of increasingly stringent interpretations of modesty laws over the last fifty years, Haredi women have moved theatrical, vocal, and dance performances to all-women spaces of participation and consumption. Rather than curbing creativity, however, these artistic spaces have multiplied and expanded over the last several decades, and the by-women-for-women arts scenes in Israel, especially in and around Jerusalem, have become vital sites of women's empowerment. They have also provided both the opportunity and the medium for women's critiques of Haredi society, without receiving the backlash or exclusion that more activity which is accessible to both genders has attracted. The arts have become away for women to address social problems and enact change, in areas as varied as mental health, physical and sexual health, domestic violence, poverty, and issues surrounding infertility. Ultimately, the arts have become a place to ignite wider changes, most often and perhaps most significantly, in perceptions and modes of thought throughout Haredi society.

Heather Munro

graduated from Connecticut College in 2008 with a BA in Anthropology. Her undergraduate thesis, 'Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence: The Shortcomings of the Violence Against Women Act' received the Susan J. Rose '69 Prize for research in Women's and Gender Studies. She finished an MPhil with Distinction in Social Anthropology at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oxford in 2014. Her master's dissertation, *Chasidic Women in Jerusalem: The Feminine in the Holy and the Mundane*, received Distinction. She is currently a PhD candidate in Anthropology at Durham University, and is also a part of the Centre for the Study of Jewish Culture, Society, and Politics at Durham.



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Eastern Studies



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Room L1, FAMES, Cambridge, CB3
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