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TORAH, TRADITION, AND TRINA: ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF
TRINA IN WILLIAM FINN'S *FALSETTOS* FROM A FAITH-BASED
PERSPECTIVE

by

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BA, North Carolina State University, 2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
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ABSTRACT

When an actor approaches a character, s/he examines many facets of the play—the setting, the time period, the politics surrounding both of the former. S/he also looks into elements of the character—any noted physical attributes in the text, his/her financial and social status, what s/he wants and what obstacles are standing in his/her way. Often the last thing that the actor studies is the character’s spiritual and/or religious life.

When I was cast as Trina in UCF’s production of *Falsettos* in the winter of 2005, I knew I wanted to approach the character from an oft-neglected area: her faith. Judaism is a vital element of William Finn’s *Falsettos*, and in an attempt to be true to what I believed was Finn’s intentional, prominent inclusion of this religion, its practice, and the stigmas that come along with being a Jew, and especially a Jewish woman, I planned to focus on Trina’s Judaism.

An historical analysis of the changing role of Jewish women through time, complete with a focus on Jewish rituals, practices, and routines, will provide details of the generations of history that precede Trina and shape her opinions about the world, herself, and what she “should” be. An analysis of the plot and characters of *Falsettos* will describe the world in which Trina lives; my rehearsal journal from the production will chart my progress of developing my portrayal of Trina, and a comparison between Trina and Sarah in the Torah will indicate Sarah as a possible “role model” for Trina.

Dedicated to Reverend Thomas Brown, who taught me that God is bigger than any
box one could create for Her.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

All my life, my faith and religious background have been an important part of who I am. I grew up in a moderate to liberal Protestant household; my parents' views have become more liberal as everyone in my family has gotten older. Being a part of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America has always been something that defined me. The time I spent within the walls of First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro, North Carolina, and on mission trips and educational and recreational activities with the church's youth group were paramount to my development into adulthood. As soon as I was old enough to learn that different friends of mine practiced different religions, though, I wanted to learn about their faiths, too. Judaism emerged early as a favorite; I was fascinated by Rebecca Fox's singing in Hebrew at her *Bat Mitzvah*; I longed to attend Passover *seder* with Stephen Belenkey; and Ben Mezer's *midrash* speech at his *Bar Mitzvah* intrigued me beyond words. When we were in eighth grade, I was in the "confirmation class" at First Presbyterian. We studied the chapter of Luke in the New Testament, and we had a short group ceremony within the regular church service. That was our entrance into adulthood in the church, and it came and went without much celebration. We went to church on Sundays, attended church retreats and service projects, and we said grace before dinner at home. That was the extent of the practice of being one of "the frozen chosen," as Presbyterians are jokingly called. I was, in fact, jealous of the ritual, the daily practices, and the detailed observation of the Sabbath by my Jewish friends. Being a Presbyterian was something I did, but Jewish was something that they *were*.

As I grew older, religious studies, especially those in Judaism, became an academic interest for me. I took college courses in Political History of the Middle East, Analysis of the Old Testament, and Literature of the Holocaust. Even as I completed my major in Communications with Theatre and Mass Media concentrations, I continued to follow my curiosity in religious study, working for the church's youth ministry programs, reading books, and attending workshops and speeches around my university's town on various religions and the efforts toward tolerance between them. I even considered going to Presbyterian Seminary for a short time.

I was thrilled to learn in the Fall of my first year of graduate school at The University of Central Florida that we would be producing William Finn's *Falsettos*, which had been one of my favorite musicals. I was delighted to receive the role of Trina in the production, and I chose this immediately to be my thesis role. I knew I could combine my two favorite academic areas in this thesis: acting and religious study. The characters in *Falsettos* introduce themselves as simply "Four Jews in a Room Bitching." The audience learns from that moment that the characters' Jewishness is the primary thing one needs to know about them. It defines them. They do not deny it, they don't shy away from it, and they proclaim it as their introduction.

I wanted to study and develop the character of Trina from this aspect of her life—to start with her Judaism and work from there. A character's faith is often the last, or the least obvious element that actors consider when developing a character. I wanted to do the opposite in my creation of Trina in our production. In this thesis, I will document my journey of developing the character of Trina by focusing on her Jewish faith. I will provide an analysis of *Falsettos* and the character of Trina as she is written, as well as my study of Jewish women's role throughout history. I will report my

discoveries of how these two were linked and how my research on Jewish women taught me exactly who Trina was and how I could best tell her story. Additionally, I offer the matriarch Sarah from the Torah as a role model for the character of Trina, providing the similarities between them that influenced my character choices.

CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW—FINN AND LAPINE’S FALSETTOS

Falsettos, a musical in two acts, was written originally as two one-act pieces, “March of the Falsettos” and “Falsettoland,” by composer and librettist William Finn and book writer James Lapine. It was directed by Lapine, and opened on Broadway at the John Golden Theatre on April 29, 1992, with Michael Rupert, Stephen Bogardus, Chip Zein, and Barbara Walsh in the principal roles.

The plot of *Falsettos* follows the lives of a group of self-proclaimed “neurotic Jews (Finn and Lapine 13),” Marvin, his ex-wife Trina, their son Jason, Marvin's new (male) lover Whizzer, and their psychiatrist Mendel, from 1979 through 1981. In the first act, subtitled “March of the Falsettos,” Marvin has left Trina; Trina falls in love with her therapist, Mendel, who is also Marvin's therapist, and she marries Mendel; Marvin moves in with his lover, Whizzer; and Jason navigates adolescence in the midst of all the changes in his family.

Act Two, “Falsettoland,” presents growing pains for Marvin’s family. Two new characters are introduced: Charlotte, a physician, Marvin and Whizzer's next-door neighbor, and her live-in lover, Cordelia, a caterer. Trina, Marvin, and Mendel plan Jason's *Bar Mitzvah*. Trina is struggling with the family relationships. She is happy with Mendel but is still disturbed by Marvin's deserting her for someone else. Marvin and Whizzer's relationship ended between acts, but they reunite early in the second act. During Act II, it is revealed that Whizzer had what the audience understands to be HIV. Whizzer enters Charlotte's care in the hospital, and, at Jason's urging, his *Bar Mitzvah* is held at Whizzer's bedside. The play ends with Whizzer exiting the stage with Charlotte, which is symbolic of his death. After a dream sequence in which Marvin and Whizzer celebrate their everlasting love for one another, Marvin is left alone.

CHAPTER THREE: FALSETTOS—PLOT AND CHARACTER SUMMARY

The plot of *Falsettos* is not totally linear; several scenes occur simultaneously, in a “split stage” setup, but the audience can always assume each scene is taking place in the present—there are no flashbacks or “flash forward” scenes. The sequence of “March of the Falsettos” toward the end of Act One is Trina’s dream, occurring only in Trina’s mind; all other scenes actually occur in the characters’ lives.

The four men introduce themselves in the opening number, “Four Jews in a Room Bitching,” and the story begins. It is 1978, and it is revealed that Marvin left his wife Trina for Whizzer. Trina has started psychotherapy with Marvin’s therapist, Mendel, upon Marvin’s request. Marvin addresses the audience directly, explaining that he merely wants a “tight-knit family (15),” one in which his ex-wife, lover, and son can coexist and love him and each other.

Trina continues to see Mendel for therapy sessions, Marvin and Whizzer love and fight with “passion at all times (26),” and Marvin confesses to Mendel that though he is in love with Whizzer, life with Whizzer is not as perfect as he thought it might be when he left Trina. Mendel finds himself instantly drawn to Trina, and in a subsequent session with Marvin, Mendel questions Marvin closely about Trina, due primarily to Mendel’s own interest in pursuing her. Jason, more interested in playing chess than anything else in his life, addresses the audience just as his father did, explaining “My father's a homo, my mother's not thrilled at all (36).”

Trina and Marvin try without success to convince Jason to see a psychiatrist, telling him that Mendel “knows the answer to all your problems (38).” To the surprise of both of his parents, Jason finally agrees to see Mendel, but only upon Whizzer's suggestion that he do so.

Trina and Jason prepare for dinner, and Marvin and Whizzer fight at home. Trina and Jason eventually join Whizzer to confront Marvin about his childish, uncontrolled temper, warning him “this had better come to an end (46).” Trina addresses the audience via a comedic cooking demonstration of sorts. She chops phallic vegetables that include carrots, zucchinis, and bananas, and works through her rage against Marvin and the current state of her life, proclaiming, “I'm breaking down. I'm breaking down—my life is shitting and my kids seems like an idiot to me (50).”

Exasperated, Trina calls Mendel and invites him to dinner in order to get him to see Jason. It becomes clear by his nervous demeanor that Mendel is just as interested in gaining Trina's affection as he is in helping Jason through the issues with his family. Trina leaves the room, and Mendel ignores Jason's mature and specific questions about his own family, asking why he doesn't simply “feel all right for the rest of [his] life,” Jason responds, “...is this therapy? (56)”. Mendel continues to visit Trina and Jason in their home, and Jason confronts him about his intentions with his mother, suggesting that Mendel propose: “her hand is ready, it only needs a ring. I'll buy confetti and sing (57).” Mendel and Jason encourage one another to “feel all right for the rest of your life, (57)” and it seems the roles of therapist and patient have been temporarily reversed.

Mendel proposes to Trina and she tearfully accepts, kissing him passionately; Marvin is furious upon hearing the news, and he and Mendel square off, vowing “I'm sure we're gonna come through it, no

doubt the bastard prepares. We're needy and wanting, we're greedy as swine (63),” Marvin is as unsatisfied as ever, repeating “I want it all,” as Mendel proudly jeers “I got it all,” by the end of the song. Later, as she drifts off to sleep, Trina makes a vow of her own-- she will “wed (Mendel) and change [her] life (64).” She has a nightmare in which the four men prance about and sing in falsetto, echoing her fears about all of them: “it's a goddamn surety we're lacking in maturity (66),” and she wakes with newfound determination to “get the things [she] need[s] (69).”

The next scene is an example of the “split scene” convention in the play. Marvin and Whizzer play chess at home and have a fight that leads to Marvin's throwing Whizzer's suitcase at his feet.

Mendel, Trina, and Jason celebrate the Sabbath at home [a directorial choice for the University of Central Florida production], as Mendel has now moved into Trina's house. Whizzer packs to leave Marvin, and the four of them contemplate what love and “making a home (78)” really mean.

Whizzer returns to his and Marvin's living room, and Mendel, Jason, and Trina come over to Marvin's at Marvin's request after receiving their wedding invitation. Marvin confronts the whole group, especially Trina, and, as arguments and barbs at each other intensify, Marvin slaps Trina's face (82). Instead of reacting in anger, Trina turns calmly to Marvin, singing, “I never wanted to love you, I only wanted to love and not be blamed. Let me go, you should know I'm not ashamed to have loved you (82).” The others respond in kind to their respective partners (including Marvin to Jason), singing of how they didn't plan to love the other, but that they do now; then they all turn their words to God, singing together, “help us all (83).”

The first act ends as Jason plays chess alone again and declares that love cannot possibly be “the most beautiful thing in the world,” as Marvin had previously told him. Marvin enters, apologizing

for the way things have gone thus far and advises Jason that as he grows up, “you'll be, kid, a man, kid, if nothing goes wrong. Sing for yourself as you march along. A man kid, you'll be kid, whatever your song. Sing for us all as we march along (86).”

Act Two (“Falsettoland”) takes place in the 1980s and begins with a recapitulation of what has occurred with the characters in the last two years. Mendel and Trina are married, Whizzer and Marvin are no longer together, Jason is turning thirteen, and we are introduced to Marvin's lesbian neighbors from next door, Charlotte and Cordelia. The group laments, “What a world we live in! (90)” and Marvin admits he's finally starting to realize “it's about time, don't you think? It's about time to grow up, don't you think? (93)”

Marvin and Trina argue constantly about petty details of Jason's Bar Mitzvah, and Mendel always tries to mediate. Jason is starting to notice girls, and he plays a game of baseball with his team of “Jewish boys who cannot play baseball (101),” as his extended family watches the game. Whizzer comes to the game at Jason's request and coaches him through his swing until he finally hits the ball. Marvin realizes he still loves Whizzer and wants to pursue resuming the relationship. Mendel cries out “now the world is too pathetic, and I don't get it at all,” as he aloofly sits with one of his “yuppie pagan” patients (108). Trina obsesses over her mixed feelings about Marvin reuniting with Whizzer as she exercises at home and awaits Mendel's arrival from work. At the same time, Charlotte and Cordelia relax at their home, Charlotte reveling in her success as a doctor, while Cordelia whines about her unsuccessful venture into kosher cooking. Marvin and Whizzer play racquetball, and through their racquetball match and song, demonstrate they are still playing games which turn into arguments, but that it is just another example of their passion for one another. When Mendel gets

home, he and Trina take a jog together, and all three couples take comfort in each other that with their love for one another, “everything will be all right (116).”

Marvin and Trina continue to argue about the Bar Mitzvah, and Mendel intervenes, calming Jason with more of his ironic look at psychiatry--“everyone hates his parents, don't be ashamed, you'll grow up, you'll come through, you'll have kids, and they'll hate you too (119).”

The scene shifts to reveal Marvin and Whizzer at home in bed together. Marvin addresses the audience, contemplatively joyful about his love for Whizzer. He sings: “Can you tell I have been revised? It's so swell, damn it, even I'm surprised. We laugh, we fumble, we take it day by day—what more can I say (124)?”

Dr. Charlotte, reading a medical journal at home, tells Cordelia about the new unknown disease that is reported in research and manifesting in her clients. She explains “bachelors arrive sick and frightened, they leave weeks later unenlightened. We see a trend but the trend has no name (124).” Cordelia flits around Charlotte and begs her to try her new kosher cooking, but Charlotte is distracted. She discovers a virus has been found (the HIV virus), and the two of them agree that “something bad is spreading round (127).”

Whizzer and Marvin are playing racquetball again, but this time Whizzer is markedly inferior in his game. He becomes breathless and collapses in Marvin's arms. The other characters echo “everything will be all right” as a terrified Marvin holds Whizzer.

The next scene takes place in the hospital, where everyone has gathered to visit Whizzer. Trina turns to the audience and sings of her exasperation in her changing family and a life that did not turn out at all as she had always expected --"I hold to the ground as the ground keeps shifting, keeping my balance square, trying not to care about this man who Marvin loves. But that's my life, he shared my life, yes that's my life (131)!"

Each member of the group visiting Whizzer comments on how well he looks, smiling and saying "today you seem to be on the way to recovery, (135)" all the while petrified about the inevitable—he will die soon. Trina and Mendel ask Jason to decide whether or not he wants to have his Bar Mitzvah at all; Jason asks to wait until Whizzer gets better, and Mendel tells him what all the adults know-- Whizzer probably won't ever get better (137). He is dying, and no one can cure him or understand exactly what is killing him.

Marvin, Whizzer, Charlotte and Cordelia sit together with hands joined in Whizzer's room, and comment on the irony that they have all become "unlikely lovers (143)." Jason prays to God to "make [Whizzer] stop dying," (162) as Charlotte confides in Marvin on the seriousness of Whizzer's condition. She tells him he has "something that kills, something contagious, something that spreads from one man to another (144)," implying not only that Whizzer will not survive, but that Marvin may be infected as well.

Whizzer addresses the audience and, we assume, God as well, as he tries to be fearless about what is ahead, proclaiming "you gotta die sometime (145)."

The characters flood into Whizzer's hospital room, and announce they are going to have Jason's Bar Mitzvah right there. The celebration is joyful, as the group has finally united as one big family just like Marvin always wanted, but, as Trina points out, "everything's amiss (148)." Whizzer is exhausted by the end of the homemade ceremony, and everyone but Marvin leaves the room. (Dr. Charlotte escorts Whizzer out, too.)

Marvin is alone, and he sings to Whizzer, wondering "who would I be if I had not loved you? (152);" Whizzer re-appears, according to the script "dressed as we first saw him (152)," to indicate he is not truly present with Marvin, but they sing together, "No simple answers, but what would I do if you had not been my friend? (154)." The script indicates the rest of the cast re-enters the scene and gathers around Marvin, joining hands in a circle. The audience becomes aware, one way or another, that Whizzer is gone. Mendel closes the show, singing, "lovers come and lovers go, lovers live and die fortissimo. This is where we take a stand; welcome to Falsettoland (154)."

CHAPTER FOUR: WOMEN'S CHANGING ROLE IN JUDAISM THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Throughout *Falsettos*, Trina struggles constantly to find her way through the conflict between her Jewish upbringing--the image her parents have always told her she should keep--and the unpredictable changing world around her. In preparing to play Trina, I researched what Jewish scholars and the women of the faith themselves have said about "what it means to be a Jewish woman" at different points in history. Although the lives of Jewish women, defined by their respective rituals, practices, and routines, are as different as the cultures in which they live, some fundamental information can be gleaned from the Torah. The Torah presents some contradictions about a woman's position in society. Exodus 20:14 says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's." This would lead one to believe that a woman is considered her husband's possession, and she holds little value on her own. In contrast, some have claimed the story of Creation of Man, found in Genesis, would indicate that since woman was created after man, she is considered the highest form of Creation, a higher spiritual being than man (Greenberg 57).

An examination of the changing role of Jewish women at some key points in history may yield a clearer overall image. First, one can read the words of the Torah itself to get an idea of a woman's role in Biblical times. Genesis says a woman's purpose is to serve as a "fitting helpmate" for man (Genesis 2:18). Young single women are subject to the rule of their fathers (Numbers 30:4-6), and only their fathers can give their hand in marriage to another man (Genesis 29:16-28). When she marries, her husband gains the authority her father previously held. Blu Greenberg points out that

the Hebrew word “*ba'al*” means both “husband” and “master” (Greenberg 58). Beginning in Biblical times, a woman’s primary purpose comes from her role in procreation—being a mother, bringing future generations into the world, is her chief function. Women who were barren were ridiculed, pitied, and sometimes punished for their failure to procreate (Genesis 30:1). Mothers transmit Jewish identity—throughout history, a Jew is someone born to a Jewish mother, regardless of the religion of his/her father (Greenberg 60).

In Talmudic times (the First through the Seventh Centuries), rabbis began to give women more freedom of choice and protection than they had previously had under Biblical law. *Halacha*, the religious law, is made up of Biblical commands and the Talmud, created by rabbis during this period. The Talmud is further divided in two, into the *Mishnah*, the codification of the law during the second century CE, and the *Gemara*, rabbinic commentary on the *Mishnah* (Baker 45). Authorities on the *halacha* have always been exclusively male, and for many years, women were denied access to study of its origins and interpretations, though its creation did give them new rights. A woman could now not be given in marriage without her consent, she gained greater inheritance ability, and the rabbis created the *ketubah*, a marriage contract, in which the wife’s rights were articulated and protected. Marriage and divorce have never been considered holy sacraments; they are seen as contracts. Marriage is a contract settled with mutual consent between two parties, though divorce may be enacted only by the husband (Baker 55). The *ketubah* gave wives security, requiring husbands to care for them in life and provide them with a proper burial at death. Also under the *ketubah*, men were given more limited circumstances under which they could divorce their wives. However, life as a divorced woman in ancient times was very difficult. Husbands had to specify the grounds on which they wanted to divorce their wives. The complaints of their former husbands then followed the

wives after they divorced and began their newly single lives. As if these stigmas were not enough, it was considered disgraceful to marry a divorced woman (Greenberg 60). Along with the creation of more specific divorce laws came the concept of the *agunah*, which translates to “one who is anchored.” An *agunah* referred to a childless widow (also known as a *yevamah*, [Baker 56]), a wife of a husband who had been deemed legally incompetent to grant a divorce (usually insane), or a woman whose husband has deserted her or who is missing or presumed dead. Since only the husband could grant a divorce at this time, *agunahs* could not remarry. Rabbinic law began to permit wives to submit testimony about the deaths of their husbands in order to release them from being forever “anchored” to their absent husbands.

During rabbinic times, though women gained more rights, such as damages paid by an abusive husband, they were still denied participation in worship, like reading the Torah in prayer services and wearing the traditional garments like the prayer shawl knotted with *tzitzit* (Greenberg 62). They were not obliged to take part in synagogue services, they couldn't be counted toward a *minyan*, the required quorum present for certain religious obligations to take place, and when they did attend synagogue, they were separated from the men, usually sitting in an upper gallery. Orthodox women were even screened off by a curtain known as a *mehitzah*. Women and men were both required to observe all negative divine commands, yet women were given exemption from ‘time-bound’ (that for which there is a fixed time) *mitzvot*, as it was assumed that their duties as housewife and mother must take priority over praying at set, specific times (Baker 48). As this tradition has continued, however, these exemptions have sometimes been seen as exclusions, and debate on this issue continues even today among Jews of various levels of traditionalism.

As the rabbinic laws were created by an assortment of rabbis, statements about women came from a variety of opinions about them. Rabbinic commentary in the *midrash*, which expands on the Biblical text, compares woman to a tent, all encompassing and indispensable (Baker 124). On the other hand, one popular prayer men would recite each morning (and some still do today) leads men to say “thank you, God, for not making me a woman” (Baker 35). This prayer in particular has come under a debate especially by modern Jews. Orthodox Jew Walter Orenstein, in his book, *Letters to my Daughter*, was not surprised that his daughter felt disregarded by her faith when considering this prayer. He explained, though, that this morning benediction is just an example of *havdalah*, “separation or differentiation,” best explained as “Divinely designated function” (Orenstein 8). He points out that this refers to women’s exemption from the time-bound *mitzvot*. The *mitzvot* are commandments of God, specific obligations required for leading a good Jewish life. Men are responsible for observing *all* 613 of the *mitzvot*, which Orenstein says requires attentiveness, time, and effort, but this is not viewed as a burden by men. In fact, he says, “the more the Jew involves himself with *mitzvot*, the closer he feels to God, and drawing near to God is what Judaism is all about...he considers [this full responsibility] a privilege” (Orenstein 10). Many women still question, though, if this is a privilege, why wouldn’t they welcome the same responsibility and closeness to God? All generations of Jewish women have felt the effects of *havdalah*. In fact, many Talmudic statements judge women harshly. Shabbat 152a says, “A woman is a pitcher of filth, yet all run after her.” Nedarim 31b says, “Women are greedy, eavesdroppers, lazy, and envious.” Conversely, others praise and admire women. Yevamot 62b states, “He shall love her as himself and honor her even more than himself,” and Bava Metzia 59a says “if your wife is small, bend down and whisper in her ear.”

Most of all, the Talmud seems to anchor the idea that a woman's place is in the home. The Jewish culture esteems this role more than any other culture. The family, and the woman's pivotal place within it on which the practice of religion depends, is central to Judaism (Baker 123). The phrase "all glorious is the king's daughter within the palace," originally found in Psalm 45:14, is repeated throughout the Talmud to indicate "the honor of a woman is in her home." Modesty, forbearance, and submission to her husband are qualities praised in women in the Talmud, and the laws seem to most protect the women who aim for these virtues (Greenberg 63).

In the Middle Ages, women's position improved a bit more. Polygamy was banned upon threat of a writ of excommunication known as a *herem* (Baker 62), as was forcible divorce by husbands, and if a husband was planning to leave his wife, he was compelled to divorce her before doing so, in order to prevent her from becoming an *agunah*. Wives could now directly inherit from her husband's estate, and some elements of marriage contracts could be negotiated by wives. They could appeal to the *Beth Din* (the religious court) to request a divorce if their husband were afflicted by physical conditions or undertook an occupation deemed unendurable for the wife, if he had violated or neglected his marital obligations, or when there was sexual incompatibility or wife-beating had occurred (Baker 55). Their participation in rituals increased, as well. They were now allowed to wear the ritual garments previously assigned to men, and they could be counted in a *minyan*, the aforementioned quorum traditionally made up of ten men, for grace after meals (Greenberg 67).

Jewish women in contemporary times continue to enjoy greater freedom and protection; however, they also continue to be defined by motherhood. Jewish apologists have emphasized for years that Judaism is a religion and a way of life in which the home is central, and that in this sphere the

woman's role is respected an all-important," whereas areas like religious study and synagogue prayer are outside the female realm (Baker 36). Talmudic scholars believed that women's exclusion from Torah study was "good for the Jews" (Cantor 103). They rationalized that women were "light-headed" and adept at household duties, but "not qualified for the intellectually creative work of study that was the prerequisite for Jewish survival" (Cantor 104). The *Sefer Hadim* (Book of the Pious) stated that there was no need for girls to take part in intensive religious study, because women were "axiomatically excluded from positions of cultural or political leadership" (Baker 52). However, later in the 19th and early 20th Century, economic and social factors created a need for women's access to religious study. More and more Jewish men were leaving Orthodox Judaism, so it became mothers' responsibility to have the knowledge necessary to instill in their sons to keep them within the faith. As such, women's *halachic* study was advised not merely for its intrinsic worth, but "in order to stem the risks of assimilation" (Baker 52). In more recent generations, the role of wife and mother was described as "the optimal, singular essential role through which a woman fulfilled herself" (Greenberg 75). With dependent children, women could feel needed and useful. Prominent British Jewish writer Grace Aguilar claimed Jewish women's importance the world over during Victorian times: "every nation who [acknowledges] the Bible owe[s] the elevation...dignity... [and] holiness of woman" to Judaism. "God proclaimed [motherhood] sacred," so therefore all women were protected by divine law (Ashton 88). This divine protection seemed to be evidenced in the Holocaust, where women's survival skills in running households became crucial to sustaining life. Women's skills in cooking and nutrition were vital under ghetto conditions of hunger and starvation, and their housekeeping skills were important in some concentration camps because keeping the barracks clean lowered the epidemic death rate (Cantor 102).

Today, aided by the influence of feminism, women have greater opportunities for education, participation in services, and increased rights in marriage and divorce. Many Jewish women are taking their lives into their own hands, and refusing to be defined by the roles assigned to them by Jewish men in past generations. Judge Myrella Cohen emphasized that the word “*halachá*” has the same root as the verb “to move,” and that “Movement is possible given the rabbinic will to move” (Baker 63). Chani Smith, a Reform rabbi’s wife and student of Jewish philosophy and kabbala, stated in 1993, “Judaism historically has always evolved; it is only in our recent history that it seems to have ceased to do so. If we cannot evolve, it suggests that God is not speaking to us anymore” (Baker 61).

Orthodox Jews today remain bound by the long-held traditions, but do not feel that it is a detriment to them. Both Orthodox men and women argue that the woman’s role in the home is given equal esteem to that of the man in synagogue life, effectively raising the status of women in the home to a holy height (Baker 49). In the same letter to his daughter regarding women and *mitzvot*, Walter Orenstein pointed out his belief that women hold even *greater* status than men. He substantiates that “the Hebrew term for ‘womb’—that which is, biologically, the final uniqueness of womanhood—is *rehem*, from which the term *rahamim*, ‘mercy,’ is derived” (Orenstein 16). Even with seemingly unlimited rights today, it is still an expectation that the modern woman sees her family’s needs as her highest priority and arranges her life to fulfill them (Baker 36). And no matter whether a woman’s Jewishness is more defined by religious context or cultural tradition, she still sees her roles as wife and mother as the centerpiece of her life. An Orthodox Jewish woman in the early 1990s said, “I think if the women are not totally involved with the family, there is not much hope. All the important aspects of Judaism begin and are grounded in the home. A feminist woman of the same

period made a similar statement: “It’s this Jewish legacy of the family is all-important which was difficult to reconcile with my ideological commitment to feminism, [but I can] not have [my] whole identity subservient to serving the family. But the nurturant roles—you can’t shed them—plus all the guilt when you feel you haven’t fulfilled them adequately” (Baker 42).

The continued importance of motherhood over several generations has created a stereotypical image that Jewish women are over-protective martyrs. This began as a consequence of wealth; when men were able to take over the economic burden of the family, women had no need to contribute any economic support, so they stayed in the home. In the absence of other challenging uses for energy, many suggest that full-time homemakers sank into over-involvement and possessive control over their children’s lives. The giving and receiving of food is often unconsciously invested with emotional significance; symbolically it becomes intertwined with the giving of love. Responsibility for the full observance of the dietary laws in the home falls upon the mother, she keeps the home *kosher*. She must keep up with not only the everyday cooking, but the preparation of meals for Shabbat and festivals throughout the year, each with their own requirements and traditional foods. Adrienne Baker points out, “Probably in no other religious or ethnic tradition do the requirements relating to food occupy a more important place” (Baker 138). When her primary role was to feed and nurture, the homemaking Jewish mother eventually found herself an over-loving, self-effacing martyr, putting the needs of her family over any of her own. Estelle Roth wrote in 1998,

“Lacking real power in the outside world, the Jewish woman made sure that she ruled the roost. Thus was born the great Matriarch. And in the stereotype of the matriarch, the giving of food becomes synonymous with the giving of love, just as in the stereotype of the martyr, the giving of guilt becomes synonymous with the giving of self” (Baker 133).

It is also important to note here that the expectation of the idealized family life, also referred to as *shalom bayit* (“peace at home”), has taken its toll on women and made them reluctant to ever admit problems in their own homes. Jewish women aspire to maintain the perfect Jewish home, a *Yiddishe boyz*, and if they can keep a warm Jewish atmosphere and a harmonious family, they are considered *baleboostas*, the Yiddish term for “householder” (Cantor 101). Families in every society fall victim to difficult issues, but for many years, Jewish women have been disinclined to disclose breakdown in their own families, as they blame themselves for not being able to maintain their faith’s ideal. In Jewish family life, “emotional or physical violence remain taboo subjects and within Jewish society, myths are perpetuated powerfully enough to make a woman blame herself if violence erupts” (Baker 179). There is so much of a stigma attached to violating *shalom bayit* that these women rarely confess that they are victims, and even less will reach out for treatment. The same often unspoken emotional trauma occurs in divorced women who become single parents. In Jewish homes, the divorce rate is one in three, causing divorced women to become the largest group of lone parents, followed by widows (Baker 183). They suffer not only emotional trauma, but also usually find themselves instantly impoverished with the loss of their husband’s financial support. Without their husbands to take part in public prayer or even sit with them in synagogue, these women find their families not only broken at home, but in the public faith sector. They have gained deviant status in the faith community, and they gain a sense of exclusion from the community that is normatively so family-based (Baker 183).

Blu Greenberg states, “maybe unrest and rebellion against stereotypes must be considered the greatest merit, and lack of pride and obedience the greatest sin” (Greenberg 83). She reminds us that the fundamental principle of Judaism is that *every* human being is created in the image of God,

and as societies grow and change, that image changes too, now encompassing women as well as men.

Branches of Judaism

The manner in which populations practice Judaism has changed across cultures for hundreds of years, so it is difficult to make a general statement about all Jewish women, as the faith has split into several divisions through history. Categorized by levels of traditionalism and/or departure from it, the divisions of Judaism have been created and mutated along with the changes of world societies in which they live. Orthodox Judaism is the most traditional, following strict *halachic* traditions, and encouraging its members to hold firm to the ways their ancestors conducted their lives, as was the intent of the scriptures and rabbinic laws. As of the 1990s, only about nine per cent of the American Jewish population practiced Orthodoxy, even with its resurgence at that time, the implication being that due to so much intermarriage amongst the non-Orthodox population, Orthodoxy was crucial to Jewish stability and survival (Baker 68).

Introduced into America by German Jews arriving in the 1830s and 1840s, Reform Judaism was a radical departure from Orthodoxy. Rational and anti-fundamentalist, it rejected the view that the Bible was divinely inspired and rejected traditional practices including the dietary laws and the laws of *Shabbat*. It fit in more easily with modern life, and gave Jews a more humanistic approach to their faith. Since the 1960s, the Reform movement began admitting women as rabbis and cantors. Reform synagogues have mixed seating, they include women in a *minyan*, women can read from the Torah, give sermons, and recite *Kaddish* (sanctification) prayers and *havdalah*, the ceremony ending Shabbat. They established the *Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, by which girls are called to the Torah as a rite of passage into womanhood, and they welcome openly homosexual members.

In 1887, a growing group of Jews felt that the Reform movement was abandoning too many of the tenets of traditional Judaism. The Conservative synagogue group was formed, and it is now the largest in the United States (Baker 69). They retained a commitment to egalitarian worship, allowing elements seen in Reformism such as mixed seating, *Bat Mitzvah*, and mixed choirs. As time went on, they introduced even more liberal practices, like counting women in a *minyan*, allowing them to witness before Jewish law and initiate divorce, and eventually, to be ordained as rabbis and cantors.

In 1903, biblical scholar Claude Montefiore and several Orthodox rabbis expressed concern that Reformism wasn't preventing enough defection from the faith. As a result, Liberal Judaism was created, though it has been described as an even more heretical defiance of Orthodoxy. Liberal Judaism "questioned the value of...home-based ritual, seeing Judaism not as obedience to a set of rules but rather as an ethical imperative about how to act in the world" (Baker 84). It sees *halacha* as changeable, rejects the determination of Judaism solely on matrilineal descent. It allowed women to preach starting in 1918, allowed mixed seating in synagogue in 1928, and required divorced men to grant religious divorces to their wives so that the wives would be able to remarry in an Orthodox synagogue.

Finally, in the early 1930s, a new ideology appeared which came to be known as Reconstructionism. It attracted both Conservative and Reform followers and even some secular Jews.

Reconstructionism "views Jewish ritual not as law but a means to the spiritual growth of the individual Jew" (Baker 72). It encourages men and women alike to study the Kabbalah (the Hebrew mystical teachings, which were not traditionally accessible to women) in *chavurot*, small study groups.

Sexuality in Jewish Women—its Expression and Repression Through History

Today, scholars would agree nearly unanimously that a woman's sexuality is an undeniable element of her identity. For many years, a woman's sexuality was overlooked as a valuable element of her own life. The Talmud claimed that a woman's sexuality was seen primarily as the means of enabling her husband to fulfill his obligation to procreate (Baker 42). In other words, a woman should make herself sexually attractive in order to seduce her husband into the sexual act that would provide them with children. The power of a woman's sexuality was even seen as a threat; it was used to substantiate women's silence in public ritual. It was believed that women would distract men from spiritual activities, especially from learning, so they must be excluded from study (Cantor 105). Women's voices were considered "a sexual provocation...so that a woman may not read or recite before men" (Baker 49). The sexual desire, needs, and identity of the woman were often overlooked.

However, sex *within marriage* is regarded as an essential part of a complete life, it is even considered a holy act, and the denial of sexual relations by a husband is now a prime ground for divorce (Baker 147). Marriage itself is seen as a method of control against sexual impulse for men. For generations, rabbis have seen temptation as an ever-present force in men's lives, so again defining this contract in terms of male needs, they suggested that marriage should provide "a channeling of erotic desires and should also prevent the improper emission of seed" (*Shulchan Aruch*, vol. 4, ch. CLI, Baker 149). Many orthodox women even feel a responsibility for compensating for the losses of the Holocaust. Creating a family has always been important to Jewish continuity, but for these women, having intercourse with their husbands for the purpose of multiple childbearing became "a holy commitment that the Jewish people must continue" (Baker 159.)

Procreation was always paramount for women, but the attitude toward expression and discussion of their sexuality was rarely more than ambivalence. Infidelity has never been accepted in the faith; Biblical and post-Biblical generations have always known the danger that adultery poses to marriage and to social stability, though emphasis has always seemed to fall upon the purity and fidelity of the wife. An ideology of sexual repression among women has been present for hundreds of years. Men and women have always been subject to the understanding that respectability comes along with control over sexual impulses, but for middle-class Victorian women, self-control was presumed to be physically inherent. Even today, Orthodox Judaism “maintains that a bride’s virginity strengthens the marriage and establishes the mutual respect essential for family life” (Baker 163), yet it seems that very often the potential roots of infidelity in either sex are ignored. Discussion of all areas of sexuality seems to be limited to the *halachic* normative ideals, and all else seems to be labeled as “deviant” (Baker 164).

Contemporary Jewish scholars are calling for a different way to discuss sexuality itself, as it applies to all people. Adler says that for years and even today in most sexual education programs among Jewish schools and faith groups, teachers use a “language-about” sexuality (Adler 105), one that is full of cold medical terms, judgmental statements built to teach abstinence as the only pre-marital option, and deliberate silences in the areas of sensuality and carnality. A language like this one, she asserts, “distance[s] us from the intimacy of the experience, [and] it disables our efforts to reflect upon the meaning and ethics of what we feel and do as embodied creatures” (Adler 108). She suggests exploration in other areas of study, such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology of gender, to determine the sources of sexual choices and actions, so that one may discuss sexuality in an open and complete manner. Psychology in particular offers many accounts of sexual motivation that can

explain sexual behavior that is ethically problematic. Trina, Marvin, Mendel, and Whizzer, and even Jason perhaps in a simpler form of explanation, could all benefit from a psychological analysis of sexual motivation that leads to partners being “predatory, manipulative, self-degrading, or unfaithful” (Adler 109).

Adler further asserts that the Torah itself relays moments of pleasure and sensuality in sexual behavior: The Song of Songs and the Book of Ruth are “textual sources for a Jewish sexual ethic valuing both sensuous delight and recognition of the other’s subjectivity” (Adler 111). She admits, too, that the Torah shows evidence of punishment wrought for sexual pleasure. Following God’s judgment in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, “woman’s sexual desire dooms her to be subjugated by man and to painful childbirths” (Adler 123). It becomes clear that though the expression and open discussion of sexuality has not always been encouraged, it has always been present throughout all generation of Jews, and since it is so closely tied with what has always seemed to be the primary role of Jewish women, that of childbirth, it cannot be ignored when considering a Jewish woman’s role in the world.

CHAPTER FIVE: RITUALS, PRACTICES, AND ROUTINES

In engaging in a full study of the character of Trina and her faith, I realized that a full study of Jewish history would include events from the present day. Though *Falsettos* takes place in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I could gather information from my Jewish friends and people I've met throughout my travels the last few years to form a full picture of Jewish life in the modern day, and by talking to people of different ages, I could glean information from people who were growing up Jewish when Trina would have been doing the same. In my historical reference section, I reference rituals, practices, and routines. A 'ritual' is a set of actions prescribed by Jewish law and therefore often appears as instructions in the Torah. A 'practice' refers to a set of actions that is not necessarily required by Jewish law, but is still widespread within the faith, so that many Jews of varying levels of traditionalism take part in it. A 'routine' is the least formal, and therefore the most personal, of these three. It is a repeated set of actions, too, though it is more likely something that is specific to a family. It could be something that a family does every *Hanukkah*, something that they hold very dear, but they often don't remember how, when, or why it started. In this section, I will provide an overview of the most important Jewish holidays, their best known rituals and practices, and then report the stories of the holiday routines of several American Jewish families.

The most important holiday-like observance in the Jewish family is the weekly *Shabbat*. In the UCF production, director Earl Weaver chose to set the song "Making a Home" within Trina's *Shabbat* rituals with Jason and Mendel, now that they are all a family. The word *Shabbat* comes from the root *Shin-Beit-Tav*, meaning "to end," or "to rest," and that is exactly what families are asked to do on *Shabbat*, they are expected to rest. *Shabbat* is arguably the most important ritual observance in

Judaism because more *aliyot* (opportunities for congregants to be called up to the Torah) are given on *Shabbat* than on any other day (Judaism 101: Shabbat). Beginning at sunset on Friday evenings and continuing through sunset the next day, *Shabbat* observance prohibits work, travel, buying, selling, cooking, and use of electricity, and, by extension, automobiles. No later than eighteen minutes before sunset, the *Shabbat* candles are lit and a blessing is recited by the matriarch of the family. The woman of the house lights two candles, representing the two commandments that pertain to *Shabbat*: *zakhor*, “remember” and *shamor*, “observe” (Blech 128). The family may attend an evening service, and they have a leisurely meal at home when they return. The patriarch of the household recites *Kiddush*, a blessing over the wine, a blessing is said over the bread, usually *challah*, an egg-based braided bread, and after dinner, which is not specified in the ritual, the post-meal blessing, the *birchat ha-mazon* is recited. The family can spend time together after dinner in discussion or Torah study. The next day is spent similarly, in family mealtime, worship, Torah study, and prayer. *Shabbat* ends at nightfall, when three stars are visible, and the family performs a concluding ritual called *Havdalah*, meaning separation or division (Judaism 101: Shabbat), indicating the Jews’ separation from the rest of the world and the division between the sacred and the secular as the family prepares to re-enter the secular world of the rest of their week.

The holiest days in the Jewish calendar belong to the *Sholosh R’Golim*, the ‘three feet’ of Judaism, the Pilgrimage festivals celebrating the historical events that occurred at Judaism’s beginnings. In Biblical times, Jews were required to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the three holidays, but today, the holiday rituals are performed wherever Jews are in the world. The Pilgrimage Festivals are Passover, *Shavnot*, and *Sukkot*.

Passover is the festival of freedom. It is a Spring festival—it comes at the time when things begin to blossom, which is symbolic of its historical ties. As the book of Exodus in the Torah tells us, the Pharaoh had enslaved all Jewish people, but by the intervention of God and his messenger Moses, the people were freed and released from Egypt (Ariel 7). God ‘passed over’ the homes of the innocent to destroy only the wicked. Passover indicates that there will always come a time of reckoning; God always separates the good from bad (Blech 161).

The *seder* meal is probably the most prominent feature of the Passover holiday. Another example of Judaism’s daily practice belonging in the home and therefore falling under the responsibility of the wife and mother of the family, this meal always takes place in the homes of Jewish families. The *seder* is so important for every family, it is too important for even the synagogue. It occurs in the holiest sanctuary of all—the home.

The *seder* ritual calls for specific food and drink to symbolize the historical characters and virtues of Passover. First, the family is to have wine to drink. The table contains *matzot* (unleavened bread, and there must be at least three pieces, to symbolize Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), *karpas* (a green vegetable such as parsley, symbolizing spring and rebirth), *haroset* (chopped apples, nuts, wine and spices, symbolizing the mortar that slaves made for bricks in Egypt), *maror* (bitter herbs, symbolizing the bitterness of slavery), *beitzah* (a roasted egg, symbolizing the festival sacrifice brought in days of the Temple), *zeroah* (a roasted bone, symbolizing the sacrificial lamb also from Temple days), and salt water (symbolizing the tears of Jewish ancestors who cried for God’s help and were answered) (Blech 162). There must be a special cup at the table for Elijah, the messenger of God. Jewish families know that the Prophet Elijah will appear to announce ultimate redemption and the coming

of the Messiah (Organ 59). A copy of the *Haggadah of Pesach*, the religious text setting out the order of the *seder* meal must also be present on the table, so that everyone in family, especially children, can read, ask questions, and focus on the holiday together.

The other important element of Passover is the singing of songs by the family during the *seder* meal. They are laid out in the *Haggadah* as well, and they are to occur at specific times, most in the second half of the meal, but the "*Ma Nishtanah*" and "*Dayenu*" are sung during the main part of the *seder* before the meal, called the *Maggid*, of the *seder*, which is devoted to telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The "*Ma Nishtanah*," or the "Four Questions," is sung by the youngest member of the family (Organ 58). As for the "*Dayenu*," the title word itself (*day* meaning "enough," and *enu* meaning "our," basically means "It would have been enough for us.") The song recounts many gifts that God granted the Israelites (such as the Torah and *Shabbat*), thanking God for all these gifts, as even one of them would have been sufficient. After each divine gift is detailed in a verse, the chorus "it would have been enough for us" is sung. Several other songs are sung, ranging from the "*Adir Hu*," an alphabetic listing of God's virtues with the wish that He will quickly rebuild the temple, to the *Chad Gadya*, an Aramaic song that lists the food chain from a goat all the way to God. One Passover practice is including the "*Hatikva*," ("The Hope"), the Israeli national anthem, in the list of songs sung after the *seder* meal. Passover always concludes with "*L'Shana baba bi'Yerushalayim*," meaning "Next year, in Jerusalem!" which symbolizes the reunion of all Jewish families in the Holy Land, and has been a phrase of unity for Jewish immigrants all over the world for years (Abrams 125).

The second Pilgrimage festival is Shavuot. This is the festival of Revelation, and it occurs “when the first fruits of field ripen,” usually late in May or early in June. Called Pentecost by Christians, as it occurs 50 days after Passover, Shavuot is known to Jews as the *Z'man Matan Torotenu*—the time of giving of the Torah, the days the Jews received the Law of God. It took the chosen people, seven weeks after Passover, 49 days, to get from Egypt to Mount Sinai, so Shavuot occurs roughly 50 days after Passover. Shavuot is unlike other Jewish holidays in that it has no prescribed *mitzvot* (commandments from the Torah, therefore no rituals) other than the traditional festival observances of abstention from work, special prayer services and holiday meals. There are several practices that have become widespread through the years on Shavuot, however. They include staying up all night to study and read various portions of Torah and other biblical books, which brought about the *Tikun leyl Shavuot*—a service for the final evening of Shavuot (Organ 60), which presents a truncated version of the Torah, consisting of excerpts from the beginning and end of each of the 24 books (Blech 167). Other practices include the decorating homes and synagogues with greenery and flowers because Mount Sinai was supposedly covered with green vegetation and roses at the time of Revelation, confirmation ceremonies for tenth graders in Reform Synagogues, and the consumption of dairy products.

The final of the three Pilgrimage Festivals is *Sukkot*. Taking place in the Fall, the time of harvest, it is the festival of Divine Providence bringing miraculous survival. *Sukkot* is a Hebrew word meaning “huts.” The holiday commemorates Jewish survival in the face of impossible odds, the miracle of the chosen people making it through the desert with God’s care. God fed them *manna*, “bread from the sky,” and they lived in huts in desert during their travels.

During Sukkot, observant Jews build frail little huts made from natural vegetation, and they “live” in them during the eight days of holiday. Women are actually exempt from this, as it is one of the time-bound *mitzvot* (Ariel 164). Part of the reason for the spare construction is the requirement that they must be able to see through the roof to the heavens above, as their ancestors did in the desert. According to the ritual, families must at least eat meals there in the huts, and in warmer climates, people eat and sleep in them (Organ 55). Exchanging the security and comfort of a home for a frail structure reminds Jews that ultimate protection comes from God. Sukkot is also known as “*ז’מנן simchateinu*,” the time of our rejoicing.

Another ritual that involves vegetation during Sukkot is as follows: Jews must take four specific native Israeli plants into the *sukkot* and wave them in every direction. The species of plants represent different types of Jews, the idea being that all four must be brought together to be properly blessed, and none should be shunned. This supports the ideal that the Jewish mission is to be a light to all nations and bring together wisdom to all humankind. The first plant is *Lulan*, a branch of palm tree, which stands for the spine, as well as Jews who have learning, but do not do good deeds. The next is *Arovot*, a branch of a willow, which stands for the lips, and unlearned Jews who do no good deeds. Third is *Hadassim*, a branch of a myrtle bush, which stands for the eyes and Jews who do good deeds but have no learning. Finally, there is *Etrog*, a fruit that looks like a large lemon, which stands for the heart, and Jews who possess learning and good deeds (Blech 170).

The last day of Sukkot is known as *Simchat Torah*, the day of rejoicing with the Law. It is the day that completes the year-long reading of Torah, and it is celebrated by dancing with the Torah in circles around the synagogue.

Well known in North America because it occurs at about the same time as Christmas and is therefore erroneously equated by some non-Jews as the Jewish alternative, Hanukkah, meaning “dedication,” is also known as “The Festival of Lights.” Though only a minor Jewish holiday, Hanukkah has taken a place equal to Passover as a symbol of Jewish identity (Greenberg 28). Both the Israeli and North American versions of Hanukkah emphasize resistance, focusing on some combination of national liberation and religious freedom as the defining meaning of the holiday (Ariel 165, Tellushkin 114).

Hannukah celebrates the refusal of Jews to assimilate with the socially prevalent Greek (Hellenistic) culture in 2nd Century BCE. Jewish temples had been defiled by Hellenists. Jewish Priest Mattathias and his five sons ran a rebellion against these defilers, his family came to be known as the Maccabees, and they rededicated the temple to God (Blech 180). The menorah was a lamp in the temple whose light was a symbol of God’s presence and the holiness of sanctuary. It had to be lit by kosher oil, and when the Maccabees lit the menorah, there was only enough oil for one day of light. The light miraculously lasted eight days, so the celebration of Hanukkah lasts eight days. Also symbolic is the oil itself—oil does not mix with other liquids, so a miracle involving oil was appropriate—the Jews were separated from the Greeks, oil does not “assimilate,” and neither did the Jews (Blech 182).

The best known ritual for Hanukkah is the lighting of the menorah. Families light one candle each day until all eight are reached on last night. The menorah is required to face outside of the home and in view to proudly proclaim the family’s faith. An extra light called a *shamash*, which translates

to “*guard*” or “*servant*” is also lit each night, and is given a distinct location, usually higher or lower than the others. The extra light is used to adhere to the Talmudic prohibition against using the Hanukkah lights for anything other than publicizing and meditating on the Hanukkah story (Greenberg 30). Three blessings, or *brachot*, are recited over the candles, all three on the first night, and only the first two *brachot* on the remaining nights (Talmud Book 1, Chapter 2, trans. Rodkinson).

Each night after the lighting, *Ashkenazi* Jews (Eastern European in origin), and now in modern times many other Jews of varying geographic origin, sing the *Ma'oz Tzur*, a hymn that deals with Jewish persecution and divine salvation. Various other songs and prayers are sung and recited, but the selection of these is more of a practice or routine choice among individual families.

Another Hanukkah practice is *Dreidel*, a game of spinning a wooden top. The top has four sides, each carved or imprinted with one Hebrew letter, the sum of which forms an acronym for the phrase “*nes gadol haya shom*,” “a great miracle happened there.” *Latkes*, potato pancakes fried in oil, are a traditional food of Hanukkah, and they are often served with sour cream, applesauce, or both. Deep fried (again, in oil) jam-filled doughnuts, called *pontshkes*, are another favorite Hanukkah treat.

Even though the only holiday ritual in which the audience sees Trina engage is the *Shabbat*, and this was a directorial choice of Mr. Weaver, it is important to remember that Trina comes from a religious family and probably carries with her many family traditions that correspond with all the holidays of the year, all of the traditional life events (weddings, funerals, *Bar Mitzvah*, etc.), and even her mother’s preconceived notions that Trina would grow up “very Jewish,” as she sings in

“Holding to the Ground” (Finn 131). It is Trina’s Jewishness that first defines her, and what the audience sees of Trina, whether or not they always see it directly, is immediately influenced by her faith and the religious rituals, practices, and routines of her own family. As a possible source of exploration of the kinds of routines Trina might create in her own family (the one that the audience sees), I have included below various stories of actual Jewish families across our country, and even in Israel.

Modern Jews of Varying Faith Backgrounds Speak of their Holiday Routines

Rich Silverstein, 28, New York City, New York

Routines: the big Silverstein one would be going to a Chinese restaurant OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD so no one we know would catch us on the high holy days. (This while I was being told I had to marry a Jewish girl growing up. Mixed messages anyone?) Chinese and a movie is also big on Xmas. Oh -- you can use this too - we give each other presents on the night before an event. This is a given for things like Hanukkah, which as you know start the night before the actual day, but the Silversteins apply it to things like birthdays too. It's cute I guess.

Cal Adler, 44, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Hi, I got the email from Dave- and figured I'd add to the enormous number of people who will no doubt report going out for Dim Sum on Christmas, ideally with a large group of Jews and a few loose Christians.

Amanda Falick Ascher, 38, Cincinnati, Ohio

I have a few. My grandparents were German-Jewish Holocaust survivors, raised my mom in a near-Orthodox home, but I was raised in a "bacon-eating anything goes" but still basically Jewish home. When cleaning a chicken, my mom taught me to cut off the end of the chicken wing (you know that crunchy bit with almost no meat) and when I asked her why, her reply was "I don't know, Grandma always did it. I think it has something to do with being Kosher." Mind you, this woman (my mom) ate her first BLT at the counter of Woolworth's at the age of 15, DURING PASSOVER(!) but we had to cut off this "unkosher" bit of the wing. Meanwhile, I have married a kosher-keeping Jew and have learned all HIS family traditions, none of which involve cutting off that bit of wing. However, I still cut it off, and my kids will too. . . .

Hard to know what's a Jewish ritual, and what's a family ritual, but your family happens to be Jewish. For example, my mom makes all the traditional Jewish kugels: Potato kugel, noodle kugel--but in our family we call it noodle pudding. She also makes a corn pudding, which I always figured was Jewish, but turns out she got that recipe from my brother's black, southern baby nurse. (not so Jewish.)

Also, on the kosher thing, the bottom of any kitchen sink is "traif" because it touches meat and dairy, but my in-laws use just one sink drainer, and "up" is meat, "down" is dairy. Now that's what I do, even though I know it's not truly kosher.

My husband's family also always wears striped shirts on Passover (I'm not kidding!) so now we do too. (My non-Jewish friends are buying beautiful Easter dresses and I'm looking for striped shirts or

dresses!) And their Chanukah tradition involves having all the gifts for all the family wrapped and out on the dining room table weeks in advance, coded so no kid knows exactly what gift is theirs, and looking is fine, but NO TOUCHING ALLOWED! (When I was a kid the presents were well hidden until the night they were given--I still don't know my mom's hiding place.)

We've made some of our own traditions too, my husband and I put together our own egalitarian *Hagadah* for passover, we have an orange on the seder plate (you can google Susannah Heschel to find the meaning--the story about a woman on the *bimah* is wrong, it's about lesbians and inclusiveness) and throw mini marshmallow "hail" during the plagues, as well as stuffed animals when possible to represent some of the plagues. On Rosh Hashanah we do Sephardic food--chicken tagine, Indian carrot curry, couscous, just to mix it up--we're all Ashkenazi but I'm bored of brisket and turkey!

Elizabeth Helitzer, 25, New York City, New York

I am 100% Jewish, I believe, courtesy of my mother and father. I grew up Conservative and have fluctuated in terms of my levels of observation. I consider myself Jewish and am quite proud to be one of the "Chosen People".

Passover tends to be a holiday where we combine aspects of the Sephardic (Spanish) and Ashkenazi (Eastern European) traditions. This means we vary the melodies we sing to different songs and, in the tradition of Sephardic Jews, allow ourselves to eat rice. But, that's not the funny thing that we do.

There is this song called "*Dayenu*" which is sung during Passover and means "enough." For probably the past ten years, right before we sing this song, my mother exits into the kitchen and retrieves a large plate filled with scallions. The scallions are passed out amongst my family members. Then, every time we come up to the chorus portion of the song, we take the scallions and hit anyone within reach. We use the soft part of the scallion so as not to cause injury. However, my grandmother, who was sitting next to my rowdy cousin one year and got hit particularly hard, has chosen to abstain from participating in this tradition the last few years. She neither hits with nor is hit by any scallions. However, the rest of us enjoy smacking one another.

Arnie Schwartz, 72, Cincinnati, Ohio

We just have dinner on Fridays, we light the candles because our daughter married someone more religious than our family has ever been, but every Friday, the family is together for dinner.

Ken Nalaboff, 38, Israel (originally from New York)

When I moved to Israel, my wife's home, we were far more traditional, in keeping with the local culture. We celebrated the Sabbath every Friday night, but after we had a house fire that cost us \$10,000 in the end, we decided we'd be all right without lighting all the candles. At Hanukkah in Israel, everyone is much more religious, so the students get out of school for all of the holiday, we do actually give eight presents--one on each night, instead of one good present the first or last night and little ones the other nights like most Americans, and all eight days and nights are full of doughnuts, songs, latkes, etc. On Christmas Eve, and there was one of these when we lived in New York, too, there is a "Matzoh Ball," a big party that is sort of based on being a Jewish singles event, but dating and even married couples come too. We still do Chinese food and movies on Christmas

Day, and we don't really celebrate the Christian New Year here, so the students don't even get that day off from school.

David Levy, 40, Cincinnati, Ohio

My mother was raised a strict, Kosher Jew; her father was *very* traditional. I don't know if you'd really consider him Orthodox or Reform, but he was always extremely conservative. When she was accepted into a fully-paid college program in Engineering, her father disapproved and said that if she wanted to work, she could be a teacher. As a woman, that was the only appropriate option. When my conservatively-raised mother Beverly and my Atheist father Alvin started their new home after being married, my mom very carefully showed my dad the Kosher setup of the kitchen. "Look, Alvin," she said, "these are the meat plates, and these are the dairy plates." My dad pushed the plates all into one big stack, and said "Look, Beverly, these are the plates." Needless to say, my parents' children did not grow up in a Kosher home.

Steven R. Chicurel, DMA, 52, Orlando, Florida

The phrase, "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day," guides Jews to observe holy days from sunset to sunset. So it is that we have *erev* Yom Kippur, *erev* Rosh Hashana and such. In my family, we always celebrated (and continue to celebrate) *erev* birthdays. We "did" birthday dinner, cake, and presents on the evening before the birthday itself. When my siblings and I were children, my mother explained that in so doing, we would not have to go through an entire school day on a birthday and have to wait until the end of the day to be recognized and feted. It goes without saying that we then had *erev* birthday and the birthday itself! To this day, my parents, siblings, and I call each other on the evening before a birthday to wish each other a "happy *erev*."

For some reason, when we had the family Passover Seder every year, we had a variation on the “hiding the afikomen” routine...We combined the hand-washing with the hiding in this way: In traditional Jewish homes, it is common to ritually wash the hands before a meal. Often, at a Seder table, a pitcher of water and bowl is circulated among the participants, all of whom wash their hands. In our house, my father would leave the table, disappear to one of the bathrooms, and make a big (and noisy) production out of washing his hands. We four kids took advantage of his absence from the table to hide the *afikomen*. Later, at the appointed time in the Seder, Dad would start his search...accompanied by we kids’ outbursts of “Now you’re warm.....no, you’re getting cold...” From year to year, whether Dad actually found the *afikomen* or not, we all got a little prize.

Most of the time while I was growing up, my family belonged to a Reform congregation. My father, in particular, had come from a much more traditional and “rigid” background; my mother’s family in Germany had been part of the earliest Reform movements there, so it was determined that Reform was how it was going to be. As such, the boys/men in our family did not wear a *yarmulke* to services at the Temple or at any home observances. Every Friday, as we observed *Shabbat*, my father and we boys would stand for the *motzi* and the *Kiddush*, and use one hand to cover our heads. To this day, even though I now wear a *kipah*, at services and home rituals, without fail, that left hand automatically goes up to the top of my head!

CHAPTER SIX: “TRINA” IN WILLIAM FINN’S *FALSETTOS*

There are several things one can learn about Trina, the leading lady of William Finn's *Falsettos*, from the show's libretto. Subtextual elements notwithstanding, the lyrics of the songs themselves indicate that Trina is a fairly traditional wife and mother, a responsible adult who consistently cares for everyone around her and rarely falters in these roles. This outward focus, however, keeps her from fully experiencing life around her. She denies her emotions, represses herself sexually, and so seldom thinks of her own needs that she practically disappears in the shadows of the men around her. When we get to know Trina, she complains that “(her) life is shitty (48)” and she “wouldn’t know (37)” what ‘normal’ is, she could be satisfied with sex “maybe every other week,” and “(she’s) tired of all the happy men who rule the world (64).” Throughout her journey, however, she moves toward greater self-realization through therapy and her own decision to take her life into her own hands, she discovers a passionate, caring, and respectful relationship in her second marriage, and she “beats the odds (69)” and finds a home and family life with “everything in its place (150).” Maintaining family and faith traditions, and often sacrificing her own immediate desires for the needs of her family, Trina discovers that though “life is never what you planned (131),” an unexpected and complicated extended family can sometimes turn out to be exactly what you need.

Trina didn’t think twice about how her life would be when she married Marvin. She “stayed home from work” and “took good care of [her] men (Finn and Lapine 20).” Now that Jason is older, she frequents the Jewish Community Center with him (37), she cooks, cleans, and keeps a well-decorated house, and, as Jason nears thirteen, her entire existence begins to revolve around his Bar Mitzvah. Trina has become the martyred housewife of whom Estelle Roth spoke (as referenced

above, Baker 133), trying to show her men how much she loves them by feeding them and keeping a perfect home. She grew up molding herself to be the perfect wife, following the desires and advice of her parents. She gripes to Mendel in an early psychotherapy session that she "was supposed to make the dinner, make it pretty on [Marvin's] plate, every wife should pull her weight—have it ready, make it tasty and love him" (44). After being struck by Marvin in a confrontation following the announcement of her engagement to Mendel, she cries, "I was everything he wanted, it's time I put it all together, my hands were tied. My father cried 'You'll marry! I married (84).'" Her pivotal song in the show, "Holding to the Ground," is based upon the discovery that in direct opposition to all of the plans she had for her life, nothing has turned out the way she expected it to. She sings:

I was sure growing up, I would live the life my mother assumed I'd live:
Very Jewish, very middle class and very straight
Where healthy men stayed healthy men and marriages were long and great
I smile, I don't complain
I'm trying to keep sane as the rules keep changing.
Families aren't what they were.
Thank God there's a husband and a child whom I adore.
But then there's more--
so many more.
There's always more
Life is never what you planned.
Life is moments you can't understand.
And that is life (131).

This song, in addition to highlighting the way she tried to mold herself into what she felt she should be, shows she also has grown up suppressing her feelings, her desires, and her needs, in favor of living the way she feels is expected of her. She has most likely received the education of "language about" that Adler describes. She stayed at home, playing the traditional role of mother and wife, expecting to reap the rewards of a normal family and life, though the outcome was a far cry from normal. Trina had lost herself somewhere along the way, and at the point of her break from Marvin,

she is no longer willing to keep quiet about it. She gripes to Marvin, Jason, and Mendel alike, and through “I’m Breaking Down,” she *kevetches* (a very popular Yiddish slang term for “complaining and whining persistently”) to the entire audience, bringing them all along for the guilt trip. Just as Estelle Roth explains has happened to so many Jewish homemakers: “the giving of guilt [has become] synonymous with the giving of self” (Baker 133). Marvin, Trina, and Jason are *all* fully aware that their family life has fallen to pieces, as they state in “Everyone Tells Jason to See a Psychiatrist,” “What a mess this is, this family, experts can see this is so. Photographs can’t capture our magic; we’re simply tragic (39).”

Trina doesn’t suppress her emotions completely, though, and especially as she grows and matures in her relationships with the various men in her life, she expresses how she feels. She says, “oh yes it’s true I can cry on cue,” as well as, “You ask me is it fun to cry over nothing? It is! I’m breaking down (48).” Marvin tells Mendel he wasn’t prepared for the “crying and the screaming and the beating of the breast (33)” that apparently comes with marriage. Just like Trina’s parents, he had assumed that Trina would create *shalom bayit* in their home at all times, and he wouldn’t have to worry about a thing and at the very least, he wouldn’t have to take care of her feelings. Once Trina decides to move forward with her life and marry Mendel, she declares that she’ll “roar like [she’s] wired, [she’ll] explore what she’s feeling, (64)” and eventually, that she’ll cry and laugh, unafraid (69).

As she matures emotionally, Trina begins to discover herself sexually and learns to enjoy a new sensuality and sexual relationship with Mendel she obviously never shared with Marvin. In “I’m Breaking Down,” she refers to herself as “the almost virgin who sings this dirge,” (50) likely indicating she probably saved herself for marriage and has only been with Marvin a limited number

of times. She was most likely always living under the Victorian ideal of virginity until marriage that Baker explains is still followed by many today. Knowing this, and especially as her very first words of the show are Marvin's words to her (as she repeats them in a psychiatric session with Mendel), "Love isn't sex (17)," one can only imagine that her sexual experiences were limited at best.

Not only has this denial of sex by her husband been personally hurtful to Trina, (and as Adrienne Baker pointed out (Baker 147), it is now sometimes grounds for divorce, though Trina would never seek such a thing because she would be too ashamed to admit it) but as procreation is a *mitzvah*, and it is the greatest duty of a woman to bring forth further generations of the Jewish people, she feels as though Marvin has been keeping her from fulfilling the duties of their faith. He is, in essence, keeping her farther away from God and what the holy teachings and centuries of history tell her she is meant to do. This is an even bigger blow to her self-esteem because she takes responsibility for the failed marriage upon herself. In her therapy sessions after Marvin leaves, she speaks of all of the things she was supposed to do, and being sexually attractive is one of the expectations of marriage. As stated earlier, The Talmud speaks of the necessity of a woman to seduce her husband in order to encourage procreation, and Marvin's lack of desire for Trina can only have felt like a personal failure to her.

When Trina meets Mendel, a man who is passionately interested in the physical side of their relationship, she is in new territory. In "I'm Breaking Down," she reveals that she was made to feel like a freak for "[needing] [sex] maybe every other week," (50) but by the time she has accepted Mendel's proposal, she declares proudly to the world that she'll "beat the odds and have good sex (69)." When Mendel moves in to Trina's home, the two of them simultaneously state, "yes we love

the bed (77),” and when Trina and Marvin engage in the aforementioned confrontation over her new engagement, she barbs at Marvin, “Mendel plans to rub my back...and he’s sweet, and he’s warm, and he loves me so (81),” indicating that Mendel will be the tender, loving husband that Marvin never was. Even though Mendel never mentions wanting to have children of his own, so we don’t know whether they will actually try to have children or not, the script indicates that Trina and Mendel are sexually active on a regular basis, and sex itself is a holy act, a great practice of faith.

Even the new, sexually liberated version of Trina that she discovers in herself still battles with facing reality and admitting she is in a precarious emotional situation. Trina says twice (and Mendel echoes) that her new home with Mendel needs “people thinking out loud;(76-77)” though it would seem that Trina keeps mindful of the Talmudic statement that “the honor of a woman is in her home,” and once again pushes aside how she is feeling, favoring instead her role as a housewife and mother. She covers up the stress of her divorce and new marriage by obsessing over the food and decorations of Jason’s Bar Mitzvah (97) and making snide remarks about Whizzer’s presence at Jason’s baseball game (102); and she admits she is “calm and self-deluded (120)” in the midst of warlike negotiations with Marvin over the Bar Mitzvah. She and Mendel even develop a mantra through all of the endless pain in the second act—the arguments with Marvin, the imperfection of even a happy marriage, and the unforeseen and unexplained illness of Whizzer. The phrase, “everything will be all right,” begins as a bit of Mendel’s optimistic “why don’t you feel all right for the rest of your life (58)” psychology, and becomes a mantra in the second act for both of them, but especially for Trina. They sing the phrase in chorus, echoing one another, and individually, at least fifteen times. By the end of “Holding to the Ground,” Trina tries to calm herself by repeating the phrase, but the pressure of the world on her shoulders is too much, and for the first time, she can’t

finish the words. The lyrics end with “everything will be all...” and the stage directions indicate, “SHE can’t finish and walks out (132).”

Trina begins to come to terms with the gravity of Whizzer’s situation, and, with Mendel’s help, she explains to Jason that Whizzer may not ever get better. The fact that Mendel speaks the actual words of this realization is an important one to note. In the UCF production of *Falsettos*, Earl Weaver directed me to be turned away from Jason and Mendel while Mendel shared this news with Jason, and Jason responded with the added line, “what?,” and I turned back to the two of them and confirmed the news with a silent nod. Even though she doesn’t speak the words, the acquiescence to this tragic news is a big step for Trina. She has finally learned that a consistent sunny demeanor and optimistic attitude is not necessarily the best thing for her family. Putting up a false front for her loved ones at all costs is not actually the best way to care for them, and she realizes that just as her definition of family has changed, so has her role in life and family. Jason decides he wants to have his Bar Mitzvah at the hospital so Whizzer can be present and involved in the ceremony, and Trina laughs at her own knee-jerk impulse to decorate: “Lovely, flowers make things lovely, champagne makes things lovely too. Everything’s amiss (148).” A little later in the song, she repeats these lyrics, though in the UCF production, Earl Weaver directed me to sing my final lines triumphantly: “Lovely—I must make things lovely, put everything in its place ready for the band. Cheers! And aren’t things lovely? (150)” I agree with this interpretation—Trina has completed her task. She has guided her son to his manhood in the Faith—he has completed his Bar Mitzvah, surrounded by his family, and she has fulfilled her role as his mother. Her vision of family is nothing like she expected, but she has “[taken] good care of [her] men” all along, and she even found out how to take care of herself somewhere along the way.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MY *FALSETTOS* REHEARSAL JOURNAL

January 24, 2006, First Rehearsal

First rehearsal! We had a basic company meeting, going over lots of rules, housekeeping, and design and concept presentations from each of the production team. I was really excited to see a model of the set finally. Earl had wanted something “voyeuristic” so that it was as if the audience was truly looking at our (very real) lives. Gary did a GORGEOUS job with a three-doorway set with a floor that resembles the chess board and tops of the buildings in the shapes of chess pieces too. Light will be able to pass through the walls as far as I can tell; they looked like stained glass in the model—I hope that’s what they look like when we really get it built! It was beautiful and thrilling to see Earl and Gary’s concept finally in a (scaled down) structure.

Mark gave his dramaturgy introduction, and suggested the following books for us:

Unheroic Conduct, which focuses on Jewish culture and traditions, Deconstructing Harold Hill, this one especially for Marvin and Whizzer, as it references lots of the game playing in the show, and Jewish Family Celebrations, which I assume is fairly self-explanatory. I plan to definitely read the whole dramaturgy notebook that Earl has, but I may go ahead and read Unheroic and Family Celebrations.

Notes from Earl regarding the process and the show:

*Joseph Fletcher, the assistant director, will be working scenes outside in the trailer lobby once we get everything blocked while Earl is working individual scenes in the main room. This is exciting

because it will really give Joseph a lot to do, plus for me personally—I'll get the benefit of two pairs of directing eyes, well, keeping an eye on me! ☺

*We'll block the whole show in sequence due to the sung-through nature of it. Set changes will be rehearsed throughout the process as well, which will make tech a LOT easier. I also think that blocking in sequence will help us with finding our emotional arc throughout.

*These characters are “unique, different, unusual people living their normal lives and they just happen to be gay” —Mark Hardin, our Dramaturg. This is the groundbreaking thing about Falsettos. The homosexual characters aren't campy or stereotypes; they're just normal people who are also homosexual.

*The show is about family, love, loss, dating. The themes are universal.

*Why does Trina stick around? We'll be exploring that—and that's my biggest goal in studying all the Judaism....finding reasons from her faith that propel her to stay, to make this monumental life-changing, and in a way life-sacrificing, decision.

*Other characters will be staged in scenes they're not singing in. Sometimes when someone is singing about an event, the event will be acted out behind them.

Notes from Jim Brown, Vocal Director:

*The music is hard, some of it exceptionally hard. The expectation level will be extremely high throughout; we MUST do our homework; we MUST do our preparation before rehearsals; there's no time for slacking by anyone!

*We are an ENSEMBLE; we are a FAMILY. This will come with balance from all of us. We'll work towards this above all else.

*There is no more important time for this show than now. We will be making a big difference to the school, the community, etc., and the effects will ripple outward to the larger community around us!

*HEATH – VOCAL and all around are PARAMOUNT

*I will be in March of the Falsettos and Four Jews in a Room Bitching, mostly in just the staging for both, but I have a couple of singing lines in Four Jews. I need to get the music for these because I didn't know I was in them before...

January 25, 2006

I checked with Jim this morning; we will be working on Love is Blind, This Had Better Come to a Stop, Jason's Therapy, Marvin Hits Trina, and I Never Wanted to Love You tonight. We won't have any of our Marvins and Whizzers, so we'll be focusing on Trina, Mendel, and Jason tonight. I'm looking forward to getting to know Matt (and Mike, too) and both Jasons—Alex and Jeremy. I'm hoping we will be successful in these early stages of working together so we can build a family

that will be so necessary for all of us. I worked on the songs for this evening here at home this afternoon, so I feel pretty adequately prepared for working on the music tonight. I hope it goes OK.

January 27, 2006

Table Work today. Some notes on initial thoughts through the show:

Act One: “4 Jews”—it is our basic introduction. It’s a true “number” -- we will establish the relationship between all the men that will soon begin to fall apart, establish Trina as the tired woman who has to put up with all of them and clean up all the messes. There are 10 months between the day Marvin leaves me and my first visit to Mendel’s office.

We all have problems, but we won’t own up to any of them. Jason sees them all, calls us out on them, gains repercussions of all of our neuroses and therefore develops his own—he is a traditional “child of divorce.” The struggle at the beginning is solving the dilemma of what is going on with Jason. As I try to navigate through that, Marvin and Whizzer aren’t working out. Marvin is going back and forth on all decisions he’s faced with, and now Mendel is pursuing me seemingly out of nowhere. This all leads to “Breaking Down.”

The Jason/Whizzer father/son relationship will be a big one for me—a threat. When Jason says he wants to speak with Whizzer in “Everyone Tells Jason to See a Psychiatrist,” we believe we’ve lost Jason. In “This Had Better Come to a Stop,” Trina is playing the role of mother and nurturer to everyone, especially Marvin, but she’s had it. In “Breaking Down,” I sing about wanting to attain perfection and the impossibility thereof. I can’t take it anymore; everyone else has already ‘blown

up' and I finally do, too. In "Please Come to Our House," we address the issue of Trina's sexual awakening for the first time. Mendel comes over and is only interested in me; he isn't indifferent to Jason, but he's come over to impress me and have dinner with us, not solely for a house call. Earl wants me to ask myself the question, "How sexual am I?" What do the words "love, passion, and attention" mean to me and how will their definitions change throughout the play? When will all of that start to change with the entrance of Mendel into my life? He will awaken the passionate side of me I didn't know I had.

"Making a Home"—Mendel, Trina, and Jason have a Shabbat dinner, and Whizzer packs to leave. As one house is metaphorically built, another is destroyed. "I Never Wanted to Love You"—all the cards are on the table, everyone must own up to their responsibilities. I demand that Marvin will take care of Jason—he cannot leave this family until he patches things up with Jason.

Act Two:"Falsettoland" occurs two years after the end of Act One. We live in a new house, some distance from Marvin and Whizzer's home. In "Canceling the Bar Mitzvah," Jason has his big turning point in the show. Mendel says, "We can't be sure when he'll get better, when or if he'll ever get better," (137) and Jason re-vents his emotion into anger at all of his parents. We are trying to distract him from the weight of the moment by talking about the Bar Mitzvah, but Jason sees the true priority for all of them—Whizzer's life—and it's ending.

We will focus on the theme of "games" throughout the show. The set will reflect chess pieces and a chessboard pattern; all actors will go back and forth between embracing conflict and avoiding it. We

should use tactic words that would be used in a game. For me, mothering and nurturing are my focus, and the role of religion and tradition in my family's life are paramount.

February 17, 2006

We had our first blocking rehearsal last night. It was frustrating to deal with the “twin” setup for understudies as they're literally having them shadow us onstage. It made for a lot of clutter in terms of space and movement, and freedom of physical choice is limited when you're trying to fit four people into a tight space meant for two. It was difficult to focus, but once we split up into cast and understudies, we got to truly work the acting moments in our first few scenes and we were truly up on our feet discovering the characters and all of our relationships. I particularly loved “Love is Blind” with Matt. It is so nice to have a great partner to really communicate with and get so many great things from. I felt like we got a good start on our relationship, and Earl's staging us to turn around and run into each other face to face really helped to give us the impetus to work with nervous energy. There are so many options to play with—my nervousness/guilt/embarrassment of even being at a psychiatrist's office, let alone discussing my problems; Mendel's calming/soothing me; his nervousness/staring at me/flirting unconsciously; my anger actually reliving those experiences with Marvin; and, as is often the case throughout the whole show, my putting up a calm and collected face amidst the chaos in my life.

February 22, 2006, Meeting with “Rabbi Rick” from Orlando

The Bar Mitzvah: A puberty rite, celebrating the 13th birthday of the son, in which he accepts responsibility for active participation in the Jewish Community. He is now capable of providing leadership in worship and throughout the community. It builds self-esteem for Jewish children—it

tells them they are important in the eyes of God and the community; it is a time of passing on traditions and memories from parents to children, and the Jewish community is currently trying to build in more significance for kids today, as the Bar Mitzvah has become more of a big birthday party with lots of presents for most children.

Things are very different now than they were during Falsettos' time: the role of women is very different. Now equality has taken over—women are covering their heads in worship, wearing the prayer shawl, and taking much more leadership in worship; this was not the case in the 1980s.

Canceling a Bar Mitzvah does happen, but very rarely—usually due to the child feeling that the stress of learning all the Hebrew is too much, especially if the event itself seems meaningless to the child.

The mother is the anchor of the family—she is the first to break down at a point of extreme stress or emotional turmoil because she is so invested emotionally and psychologically in every aspect of the entire family's life.

Homosexuality: “every human being reflects the image of God.” One interpretation of the Creation story indicates that Adam was both male and female. Translating that homosexuality is an abomination is wrong—it is an orientation, not a choice; it cannot be wrong. Homosexuality is not a deterrent from respect reserved for human beings, though it cannot be an “excuse” to “play around” or avoid committed relationships. In 1980, “sexual preference” was spoken of, not orientation—there was a conflicted acceptance of homosexuality, but it probably wouldn't assist the

play to bring in this issue just for historical accuracy. Homosexual marriage is not banned by Jewish law. In the 1980s, there was no judgment against gays and lesbians, but there was definitely a separation between them and more traditional families—homosexuality was simply spoken of far less frequently than it is today.

Divorce : It has always been a part of Jewish history. [Author’s note: Scholars support this as well. In the chapter regarding Religious Law in her book, The Jewish Women in Contemporary Society, Adrienne Baker points out, “Contrary to popular belief, divorce has always been permitted in Judaism and regarded as an accepted part of human life” (Baker 54).] All marriages don’t work, this is very accepted in the community—there is certainly tension created around every divorced, but divorced persons are never looked down upon in the faith. There is a specific sanctification for divorces; a religious rite to perform a divorce in God’s eyes.

Premarital Sex: Sexuality is a sanctified act—it is the most intimate union possible between two people. Sex in marriage is preferred, but there is no specific judgment against premarital sex. [Adrienne Baker points out that “the (Orthodox) halachic ideal requires absolute abstinence from sex before marriage and total fidelity afterwards (Baker 164).] The faith discourages its members from having sex purely because of biological urges; rather, it encourages them to see sex as an expression of intimacy above all others that sets your partner apart from the rest of the world, and is therefore a holy act of respect and love.

The Scenario in Falsettos: Women who go through losing a husband to another man tend to be more devastated about the loss, but not simply about their husband’s sexuality—the husband is

acting on what those in the Faith believe is his true God-given orientation, an expression of who he really is. Trina, Mendel, and Marvin must try to understand the whole situation, all sides of it, and help Jason understand all that is going on. There is, of course, a disappointment, but we must try to reach understanding.

Religiosity is not measured by the number of rituals you perform, but by how seriously you take what you believe. Fundamentalism does not beget a “more religious” believer.

Marriage outside Judaism: Jews and Catholics have the most trouble. Jewish leaders believe it doesn’t bode well for Jewish strength when there is an interfaith marriage. Once the marriage takes place, the outsider can come into the synagogue, but it is difficult to actually find a rabbi who will perform an interfaith marriage—most won’t agree to do them.

Judaism has always tried to interface itself within the area where it exists—newer ideas grow and change when society dictates they should do so. The faith is designed to be flexible like a rubber band—it must always accommodate the society in which it is living.

Family Time Together on Sabbath: time to “stop and take a breath,” stop worrying about what you have to do—focus on relationships, not things—prioritize people above material things, stepping back to see the beauty in what is ‘really there,’ stop being caught in ‘the world,’ time is more important than space, etc. Shabbat is the perfect time to express intimacy; it becomes the ultimate statement of importance.

Death and Grief: Time is always wasted in all of our relationships; we don't realize it until it is almost too late. Death comes all the time—marriage and hopes break, there are all kinds of “death,” (like divorce), they all bring realization—if you let death win, you die. We must choose how we respond to the deaths, dictated by ourselves, not the ones around us. Important question for our show: what is our safety net when we are experiencing the various deaths in our characters' lives?

As far as grief goes, there is a formal process. For seven days, a person is expected and allowed to be completely immobile while dealing with the initial onset of grief. Then the person has a month to do what's necessary as far as practical arrangements, etc. The rest of the year, it is the person's choice to do what they want in expressing their grief. After a year, he/she must get back to life. When death comes, we want to hold on and let go at the same time—we must decide how we reconcile that.

Eating Kosher: Basic idea is “you are what you eat.”

You cannot eat a bird of prey or any big predatory carnivores, because you don't do what they do to others—rip people/living beings apart

Shellfish, crabs, etc. will eat anything—much like you shouldn't ingest anything you hear in life, you don't want to eat garbage, or eat animals who eat garbage.

Don't eat animals who are representative of the kind of person you don't want to be.

Milk = birth, Meat = death, each deserves its separate dignity, so they must always stay separated.

If you must slaughter an animal, it must be done with humanity—with the least amount of pain possible to the animal

Shabbat: Melodies of the songs change; some can be sung to any melody. Believers follow the Triennial Cycle of reading the Torah—interpretation is key, not the literal words or even the translation. Men wear the prayer shawl, the tallit, which is fringed on the corners following what used to be a tradition in all Jewish clothing. Tzit tzit are wrapped knots tied in specific numbers to be a visual reminder of the 613 mitvot. Before putting on the shawl, one must read the tallit prayer and kiss both ends of the prayer shawl.

Elements of the shabbat: 1) challah; 2) candles—lit 18 minutes before sunset, candlesticks not significant, candles must burn all the way out at the end of the night; and 3) wine

Challah—one person takes a piece of the bread before the others eat

Candles and prayer order are determined by your family tradition or your choices. Women in the family light candles, cover their eyes, make the traditional fanning motion over the flames three times, recite prayer and chant it.

Kiddush—wine—a short prayer is said (a long version is also possible), everyone drinks from the cup.

Closing ritual: Candles are still burning, there is another prayer over the wine, spice box is lifted, shaken, and sniffed, one more prayer, and the candles can be put out in the wine. “Blessed is the Lord our God who makes the distinction between the sacred and secular.

February 24, 2006

Backstory/relationship character development homework for Act One

“Four Jews...”: My very controlling parents, Sheila and Isaac Putterman, are coming for a visit. It’s Saturday: Mendel is watching baseball and the house has to be perfect. Jason is with Marvin and Whizzer; the grandparents want to see Jason, of course, and it’s the first time they’re picking him up at Marvin’s place, so Marvin and Whizzer have to clean up, too. No one is cooperating with me; everyone is complaining as usual. I went to services and came home to the house being a wreck. Mendel had made brunch to surprise me, but he didn’t even start cleaning the kitchen or make the bed. Since he has always lived alone, keeping the house clean is a common argument with Mendel.

“Tight Knit Family”—I am waiting on my parents, trying to calm down, remembering the visits when things were peaceful and happy with Marvin. I feel resentful that it’s always my job to clean everything. The phone rings in the kitchen when I’m looking over the living room; I assume it’s my parents calling to say they’re on their way, so I leave to answer the phone.

“Love is Blind”—I talked with (fought with, cried to, etc.) Marvin four days ago; he called Mendel’s office the next morning and made me an appointment for therapy, so I am coming in for my first meeting with Mendel. “Relax” is a big trigger for me. It always drives me crazy when Marvin says that; it means I’m overemotional, unstable, and can’t handle myself, so Mendel saying that word sets me off into an agitated place to being telling Mendel my story. I say, “you’ve seen him for years,” (17) because it seems like I’m not getting enough recognition from Mendel. I’ve come to Mendel’s office because I have to sort out all of my dysfunctions once and for all. I wasn’t always like this—my parents encouraged me my whole life to get married. Marvin and I married when I was 21, right out of college (I studied Art History and Anthropology), and we had Jason when we were 23. There was pressure for us to have children right away, and we experienced some trouble with getting

pregnant. We worried about fertilization issues, but we were finally successful with Jason. It was a difficult pregnancy and almost impossible labor, but I saw him as my miracle child. I thought he would never make it. I had already had two miscarriages, and eventually I had a hysterectomy at age 30. All of these horribly painful experiences developed into a near-phobia of hospitals.

Marvin came home 10 ½ months ago and told me about his sexually transmitted diseases (syphilis and possibly hepatitis), his homosexuality, and his plans to leave our family. He left two weeks later.

“They faked despair” (20) —Marvin pretended to be miserable and overworked at his job, though he was actually carrying on his affair with Whizzer all that time.

“They wet their bed” (20)—Jason had a bedwetting problem until he was eleven.

“They combed their hair” (20)—Jason is now coming into his adolescence.

“They acted dead” (20) —Marvin’s malaise later in the marriage

As I continue to work through my story, I wonder where things went wrong. Marvin seemed so in love with me when we were young. I can’t let him go, even though he’s been gone for several months now. I am angry about being left for a man, but Marvin’s sexuality is not the main issue for me. I blame myself—am I such a bad wife that he doesn’t even want to be with women anymore?

Repetition of the lyric “Love...”—I am trying to work through the roots of my issues. I’m trying to calm myself down. I’m getting strange “vibes” of attraction from Mendel, wondering if I’ve already said too much. I start to choose my words more carefully because now Mendel is making me nervous.

“His name is Mendel” (23)—I am admitting that Mendel interests me; he may be the one man who could actually understand what I’m going through.

“Everyone Tells Jason to See a Psychiatrist”—I find Jason alone in his room playing chess again by himself. [**Do I hear Jason’s words from “Homo”?**] He has been upstairs for two hours with his door closed after coming in from school. This is the same day as “Love is Blind.” Mendel has called me to talk about Jason before Marvin comes over. Marvin talks with Jason on a regular basis about how he’s feeling, but usually Jason doesn’t share his emotions with me. I know he needs more than Marvin can give him, and Mendel would be more objective and a better role model. Marvin and Whizzer are coming to pick up Jason; Marvin and I have previously discussed sending Jason to Mendel, too.

“Late for Dinner” section—Marvin won’t stay to talk as a family; Marvin and Jason have to leave as usual; I’m going to have dinner all alone again. I don’t want to blow up in front of Jason again, so I leave the room. I’m remembering that Mendel has told me if I remain calm, I won’t run the risk of setting off Marvin’s volatile temper.

“This Had Better Come to a Stop”—Another Friday session with Mendel. I come right into his office this time. I am more relaxed on the couch; perhaps even put my feet up. I’m remembering what my parents always told me about being the perfect wife—I’ve fallen short. Where did I go wrong? I take Mendel’s hand on “Who is responsible?”—it is spontaneous and accidental, but we both realize the chemistry between us. It is the first confirmation from Mendel I notice that he is at least interested.

When the song begins to involve the other characters, I am in the middle of another argument with Marvin. He’s telling me again how irrational I am; he doesn’t know how he dealt with me or who else could. I attack back by bragging about Mendel. Marvin doesn’t know yet to whom I’m referring.

“Which should I lust for, brains or money?” (40)—Marvin always accuses me of being frigid, loveless, devoid of any passion, so I bite back with “lusting” for things I accuse Marvin of lacking.

“It isn’t like he says...you probably hurt his pride,” (46)—I am calming myself, repeating Mendel’s words from my last session.

“He’s gotta have it all” (46)—this is my own realization, the first time I put it together

“He’s like a baby who’s denied” (46)—I’m agreeing with Mendel; this is my ‘aha’ moment about all of Marvin’s insecurities and immaturity. I realize he needs to grow up and deal with people instead of just falling into his own selfishness. He has a responsibility to Jason, and he’s off playing with

Whizzer and still fighting with his family. All the calm is GONE at this point. I've blown up again by the time Marvin whines, "This is incredibly boring." (46) I'd felt like I was making so much progress in therapy. I've helped myself and Marvin, too, but I'm falling right back into the same emotional traps and losing control when Marvin does.

"I'm Breaking Down"—The piece begins with introspection. I'm making dinner, trying to "put it all together," allowing myself to feel what I'm feeling instead of just denying the negative and staying serene like Mendel suggests. I'm remembering the key points in the destruction of my marriage. I caught Marvin and Whizzer in our den when I came home early from a workshop at synagogue. Jason is looking to Whizzer of all people for support, wisdom, and encouragement. Mendel has to help me get Jason under control. I saw signs of his father in the big fight we just had, and I can't handle him alone, and Marvin certainly doesn't seem to be helping. The whole song I'm unable to focus—my concentration shifts between thinking of how to help Jason, discerning my new feelings for Mendel, sorting through what I've learned in therapy, and reliving my fights with Marvin. I realize that Marvin was probably gay all along. I knew it somewhere deep down, but now it finally adds up.

"Please Come to Our House/Jason's Therapy"—Marvin was supposed to take care of making an appointment with Mendel for Jason, but he hasn't done it. I call Mendel to ask him to make a housecall; he agrees. "Jason's Therapy" is a celebration of Jason coming around and listening to Mendel. Mendel becomes the family hero.

“Marriage Proposal”—I think Mendel is joking around again as usual. He’s never even told me he loves me before. When he sings, “I want you by my side,” (61) I finally know he’s serious. This is the most open display of emotion I’ve ever seen from Mendel; this is the start of a big change in his life, and I know it now.

“Trina’s Song”—It is the end of the night that Mendel proposed. I know he and Marvin were fighting—this song is my commentary on immature men. “Happy, frightened men who rule the world” (64)—Marvin. “Stupid, charming men” (64)—Mendel. “Silly, childish jerks” (64)—Marvin again. I realize Marvin and Mendel, who seem to be so opposite to me, have insecurities and immaturities in common. But in this song, I realize I’m going to take a stand for the first time in my life. I’ll go after the things I want—happiness, a successful marriage, good sex, etc., in spite of whatever happens to come along with the men in my life.

March 3, 2006, Backstory/Relationship/Character Work in Act II

“Welcome to Falsettoland”—Our job in this number is to teach and inform. We are setting the current scene and time period and clarifying relationships and the world around us. We will take in the world around us, react to it—redefine our world in relation to the new frame of reference. It will be a commentary on the time period, political life, etc., and we will visually demonstrate our changing family portrait. We will show that we are still changing, not completely settled, but we are all forcing Marvin to deal with the changes.

“Year of the Child”—I am arguing with Marvin about the Bar Mitzvah, and now I’m bringing Mendel into the argument. “We’re more excited than we should be” (95) is a discovery. My

restatement of “our child” (95) to Marvin—Jason is our only child, the one we waited and prayed for; he was our gift from God; his Bar Mitzvah is the time when he will give back to God and accept responsibility of being an adult.

“The Baseball Game”—This is the first time we see the “full family” together. I am thrilled because now that Mendel is in our lives, Jason finally has a father who will encourage him in sports, teach him to be a man, and be affectionate with me in front of other people. The fact that Mendel will hold my hand at the game is a really big deal to me. We’re all growing up and coming into maturity. This is also the moment in which I must accept the new extended family (including Whizzer, Charlotte, and Cordelia). I must put on a brave face with the ever-changing situation around me.

“A Day in Falsettoland/Raquetball” -- I am “working it out,” literally and figuratively, on my own. I channel my frustration, take it out on Mendel, admit what’s really going on, and finally let Mendel calm me down again. He reminds me that he makes me happy, and we can get through anything as a team. This is (I think) the first repetition of “Everything will be all right” (110) between me and Mendel, which becomes our key phrase for the rest of the show. I am bolstered in my confidence and strength in all areas because I know Mendel and I have each other now. For the first time, I have an equal partner, who supports me and encourages me to be my best, but is there for me when I need help.

“Fight/Everyone Hates His Parents” – Marvin and I argue about Bar Mitzvah planning. Like the Mother of the Bride at a wedding, in these moments, I am far more concerned with how things will look at the synagogue than the faith elements of the actual ritual. I know our family’s image among

the congregation is already spotty at best; I think that somehow if the Bar Mitzvah can be perfect, then I won't look like a failure as a wife and mother. This is another example of my hearing my parents' voices in my ears—I must look perfect, I must be perfect. Jason's life has been complicated enough through his childhood; if he can start out right with his adulthood, then I will have done my job, and I will fulfill my obligations to Jason, God, our synagogue, my family, and myself.

“Something Bad is Happening/Racquetball II”—Charlotte and Cordelia call and tell me about Whizzer's collapse on the racquetball court. Charlotte explains that he's showing signs of a mysterious new illness she's been studying. We don't know the prognosis, but Marvin wanted them to call me because no one knows what to do, and I am always the anchor of the family -- I always know what to do. I am expected to hold everyone together, all alone. Mendel is not there to help me handle this moment, so when I put down the phone, I start cleaning the house until Mendel and Jason get home, because it's the only thing I know how to do to stay calm.

“Holding to the Ground”— “I'm plain, I don't astound.” (131) -- I am angry, lashing back at my mother. I'm not perfect; I can't be Donna Reed; I will never be the faultless, gorgeous image my parents held for me and I held for myself. I have to deal with what really is there. I can't keep up a façade of a perfect life.

I love Marvin and Whizzer for who they are. Mendel and Jason accept everything about our crazy family. I have to let myself off the hook, admit that I need help from others, and give up the responsibility and guilt I've been heaping on myself for things out of my control. By the end of the

song, I have completely let go and admit that life happens, no matter our plans or our wants. I am completely vulnerable to the uncontrollable situation surrounding our family.

Arc of the song: denial → raging against family and past → realization → accepting my traditional responsibility for the whole family but still claiming my life

I fight a conflict between trying to hold myself together and the loss of any ability to do so anymore. I can't make everything OK for everyone else; some things are simply out of my control, and that's the hardest thing for me to admit.

“Everything will be all right” (132)—the repetition of our ‘mantra’—I repeat it for myself, but I know how useless it is on its own, and when Jason and Mendel arrive home (**Earl allowed us to add in Jason saying, “Mom?” to let me know they're behind me since I'm facing away from their entrance and obviously caught up in my own world). I try to repeat it to show Mendel I'm staying calm, but I am unable to complete the phrase as my words dissolve into tears.

“Days Like This”—Mendel and Jason came home, found me in the den, learned about Whizzer, we got ready and came straight to the hospital. We are later than we wanted to be because Mendel was trying to find the closest and cheapest parking spot possible. I would normally be angry with Mendel about this, and I joke tersely about it, but it's such a pointless thing to care about at a time like this, we drop it immediately. I'm reaching out to Charlotte and Mendel for support. I want Charlotte to cure Whizzer and ease all our minds, and I hope we could all join in a prayer, but I don't want to push the issue.

“Canceling the Bar Mitzvah”—This song is the moment I realize I’m finally on equal standing with Mendel. We can’t do this alone, we both need each other, and Mendel needs his own wise words as much as anyone else. We have a true partnership; finally I’m experiencing what a marriage should be. Mendel is stepping up as the father in our family unit, Jason is reaching out for help and still raging, but no one has the answers this time.

“Jason’s Bar Mitzvah”—According to Earl, this is Trina’s moment of REDEMPTION. I have finally come full circle. I realize with Jason’s passage to manhood in the faith that I have accomplished my objective in life—Jason will be OK, we’ll all be OK. In this moment, I cannot focus on Whizzer’s illness, I must focus on the joy of the Bar Mitzvah. This way Trina’s story ends on a positive note, and the whole story focuses on the family, not illness or death. We do not know anything concrete about Whizzer’s illness, we do not know he will die. I truly believe that Dr. Charlotte will be able to cure him. The situation surrounding the Bar Mitzvah itself is obviously a strange one; we’re all emotionally and physically exhausted, but more than anything else, I feel joy. Our family is united at last, the final words I sing are “and godchild to the lesbians from next door” (151) —I am accepting Charlotte and Cordelia into our family, too, and we are all together to witness this miraculous moment in Jason’s life.

March 7, 2006, Notes on first full run-through

Very frustrating trying to work with Jeremy. He is not focused, he won’t look anyone in the eye, he isn’t singing, and he can’t remember blocking or set changes. It is scary how much my performance right now relies on the rest of the cast—Joe is not here, Jared didn’t know the Act II blocking...the

relationships and ensemble are what keep this show going, and when so many things that we've built together are gone, it's so much harder. I guess it just means I need to discipline my focus that much more. I should be responsible for myself and ready for anything—even though my partners make up so much of the show and therefore my journey. I can't blame anyone else for my not giving the same focused performance every time no matter what. I have “put the stones down in the raging river that is the show” as Earl says, and I have to trust they are there, and though other people who are thrown in may have “stones” of their own, they don't change mine.

I did find some nice new moments, though, even in all of the craziness. Matt and I found a much more playful sense in “Racquetball/Day in Falsettoland”—the back and forth on “Every night?” etc. is cute and more loving now instead of confrontational. We are calming each other down, knowing that we're OK because we're together and *love each other* -- that's the most important thing we need to remember.

One thing that was different with Jared that helped me was that he looked more nervous and not so angry at the top of “Year of the Child.” It calmed me down and helped me to play different levels, not just up/loud/angry.

Some notes to remember:

**PLAY THE WHOLE HOUSE

**make sure Jason is always in our periphery at all times

**Go back to the score to determine where *we* are in charge of the acting choice and where the music dictates the acting choice

**more worry in “Trina’s song”—I must *find* my strength through my decisions to become more independent

**”Help us all” (in “...Never Wanted...”) and “Should he love me?” (in “Making a Home”) are both questions to God.

March 8, 2006, Run-through w/ Dr. Steven Chicurel, Thesis Committee Chair, in attendance

I worked really hard to take the notes that I’d discussed with Earl:

- 1) Less strong/confident in all of Act I
- 2) Less comfortable with Mendel in Act I
- 3) Make the discovery of strength from Trina’s song through to the end of Trina’s Reprise
- 4) Start out more scattered/nervous—tense physically, find places to release tension and let myself relax

I was also still trying to find my journey through Act II. Dr. Chicurel came today, which made me hyper-aware of my vocal technique in addition to all of the changes I was making, so I was missing lines tonight I had never missed before. However, I felt like so much of my emotional arc was cleaner, and my relationships, point of view, and discoveries were clarified, so I’m not really worried about the lines. I know I’ll get them tomorrow, so there’s no reason to stress about it now.

Notes to keep in mind:

**We need to pull away from our closeness as *actors* in order to examine the characters’ journeys and develop the relationships through the course of the story

**Clarify the moment where I realize I must start taking care of myself in “Holding to the Ground”

I feel like I need to clarify my relationship/point of view on the girls, so I will diagram that here.

Dr. Charlotte: I am threatened somewhat by her strength and her solid state of mind. I am intimidated by her gruffness and constantly professional manner. She's almost always loud and seems obnoxious to me at times. She does not display many of the qualities I have always learned a woman "should" be. She behaves like a man, even more traditionally like a man than Marvin does. I think the fact that I'm so traditionally dependent on men, in combination with her medical knowledge and ability to calm us with her expertise and even minimal facts about the disease, makes me grow to need her too. I want her to save Whizzer for Marvin and all of us. I want her to assure me that Marvin will be OK. I want her to care for Marvin, since Mendel and I can't do it anymore. I want her to calm and soothe us in our grief. As I see her interact with Cordelia, I appreciate the softer, more loving side of her and know we can count on her bedside manner outside of the office, too. I see she can be tender and loving, and I know she will take good care of Whizzer and Marvin, too.

Cordelia: She's silly and flighty, though always warm. She fawns over Charlotte and wants to be the same happy homemaker I always wanted to be, though she finds herself failing at it. I can find common ground with her here. I realize she wants to care for everyone and take care of everyone through her food, because it's the one thing she's really good at. I feel deeply grateful to her by the end of our journey—she has spent an incredible amount of time learning about Kosher cooking just for our Bar Mitzvah—through doing so, she has made a huge commitment to our family.

More scoring for "Holding to the Ground"

At the top, I'm thinking of all that my mother would say to me right now. She would be full of "I told you so," saying I should have done things the way she always taught me, and if I had done so, I wouldn't be in this position now; I wouldn't have to worry about any of this. I reencounter the "perfect image" I've been struggling with my whole life. I can see it, even try to reach for it, but then scoff at how ridiculous it is, especially now.

"I smile, I don't complain" (131) —I finally *know* life is not how my mother pictured it would or should be (healthy men staying healthy, all marriages being happy and lasting forever). I'm trying to make the best of this new realization. I can find a new focus point here, referring back to the initial place but knowing I'm not "there" anymore. Conflicting images can enter here—my new happy life with Mendel and Jason, finding Marvin and Whizzer together, imagining the worst about Whizzer's collapse and impending illness.

New discovery—Live is *never* what you planned. *Life* is moments you can't understand (131) —these catastrophic events, the moments that are out of our control are what really define our character, our strength, our importance, and our relationships.

"I'm plain, I don't astound" (131) —I am raging back my mother and at that Donna Reed image that I am finally accepting I will *never* be.

March 9, 2006, More notes/character analysis with Be Boyd, Thesis Committee Member

“Four Jews”—what do I want the audience to know here? I’m trying to pull off the image of the perfect household, and all the boys are getting in the way. This is a major theme in my life, and here we see a literal representation of it. I need to tie in more specificity of cleaning, not just try to project general “anger.” I can show more relief when they do move out of my way. Also, how does their dancing and singing inform me? When we are moving the furniture in this piece, we can use each other more, be more specific, not just fall into general moving/pointing/anger—it will be easy to disconnect throughout the show if we set this early precedent of just singing, not engaging in moments bit by bit. We must always connect each moment to something specific.

“Tight Knit Family”—I need to respond to what Marvin is saying, even if it’s inner monologue. I must remember the backstory I’ve created here—I can’t make the house look perfect because the boys won’t help me clean, my parents are bound to say something awkward when they get here, Marvin won’t talk to me directly.

“Love is Blind”—Find the best first moment to look Mendel in the eye. I have been taught that I’m an ornament, not equal to men, and not most concerned with talking to them—this means Mendel has to pull things out of me. I can be more awkward with him, allow the audience to watch us getting to know each other, gradually make recognitions of common ground with one another, START the journey here. I need more specificity with how Mendel pulls details out of me, showing my recognition that someone is finally listening to me and cares enough to truly find out how I feel.

I need to find anger throughout my whole body. Currently it seems to be mostly in my jaw, and I can't worry so much about singing, I must put more energy in my whole body. I need to drop in my scoring specifically throughout the show; it will free up my body. I must have a fuller synopsis of the show including all of my backstory, not just a basic plot breakdown. If my specific synopsis is running at all times, my acting will be more specific and my arc will be clearer.

With Jason—I need to fix him more, touch him more, drop in Jeremy's discomfort when he is on as Jason. I can fairly (and without cruelty) drop in everything that's happening between Jeremy and Margaret-Ellen and Joe and Matt to inform the relationships between Jason, Trina, Marvin, and Mendel. I must go overboard with fixing everything—we can use the disappointment and embarrassment with the things he does wrong in our runs and use it to fuel our disappointment and embarrassment with Jason's awkwardness in dealing with his adolescence and relating to the family.

Breaking Down—who is the audience? My best friends? Strangers who will potentially judge me? Mendel? (If so, this is a moment of intimacy and I may be able to find great relief in being able to tell him all of this) How does my audience respond throughout the song, and how does this inform how I choose to proceed? The song must be immediate at every moment, the details fall out as I'm telling them, thus the discoveries can come naturally and not seem rehearsed.

Trina's Song—who is the audience? This whole song needs to be more three-dimensional, more Meisner-esque, more specific. In the list, why do I keep adding these descriptions? Have I already categorized the men by these descriptions in the past or am I just realizing now how much the men have in common?

Making a Home—Needs to be more reverent, more indicative of our satisfaction. We must HONOR the ceremony more; this is at last the fulfillment of my dreams of a perfect household.

In general...I need to score my journey more. I must make clear what's going on every single moment. What are points A, B,...Z, and how do I get there? It seems like we actually like Act II better as a cast, it's much clearer. We have to get Trina's story in Act I, it's not clear enough yet. What didn't I have with Marvin that I do have with Mendel? How should things fall into place, and how don't they? There is too much "general acting" going on with all of us. The audience can check out; they should want to watch each moment fully to get what's going on. We have to drop that it's a musical—there are lots of other elements of musical theatre (dancing, spectacular sets, glittery costumes, songs that simply indicate character and don't actually advance the plot, etc.) that aren't there to hold it up, so without the crucial acting moments, it feels like it falls flat.

For each of my relationships: Mendel--what does he specifically bring out of me that Marvin couldn't, and what does he see in me that is different from all of the other women he sees in his office? Jason—there need to be more tangible moments for the audience that display different elements of our relationship. Marvin---what was it that he let me down with?

March 9th, 2006, Notes After Run Through

Tonight I feel like I made a big leap in so many different places in the show, especially in Act I. All of the notes from Be and Dr. Chicurel helped tremendously, and having thought about the show all day REALLY helped, too. I look forward to doing more scoring over Spring Break, though I really

hate that we won't have rehearsal for a whole week. I feel like we all did a much better job with clarifying our journeys and the process of forming and changing our relationships throughout the show.

I could actually feel Mendel pulling things out of me while I actively resisted it, which was definitely new. I realized I really didn't fully fall in love with him until the proposal—he was saying things Marvin had never said, he knew and loved things about me that no one had ever even seemed to notice before. So, I couldn't deny *I* was changing, allowing myself to be proud of all of the little things about *me* he had fallen for, not just things I *did* that I was supposed to do.

I was more earnest in my pursuit of the relationship I wanted to have with Jason, and I realized I had more of it already than I thought I had. Of course our closeness as a cast makes all of this 400% better—now that we have our whole “team” back (the actual cast, not a mix of healthy and sick cast and understudies), the show can really move forward.

March 20, 2006, Rehearsal Notes

It was really exciting to know this was our last run-through in the trailer, but somewhat daunting, too. It has become such a safe place for all of us that it's a little scary to leave. We've set up our home here, our family lives here, but our home—and our family—are transferable, they have to be! I'm really excited about getting into the actual performance space, though. I hope the sound will be OK and the feeling of comfort we have with each other and the material will transcend into the studio, and the production team and directors will see the same level of comfort that we have at “home” in the trailer.

March 21, 2006, Notes after rehearsal

First night in the studio! The set looks great so far—they have a framework for the walls built, and the ottomans are ready, so we were able to move around freely and really use all of the doorways and platforms, which made a *big* difference. We went through a few songs individually, which was nice to hear in the space, but I was nervous vocally all over again because we were in a totally new place. I felt myself pushing and constricting in my throat, which is, of course, completely counterproductive to my singing. I just need to work more in the space, and I'll get used to it all over again.

March 22, 2006

I was getting so frustrated tonight with myself that I allowed myself to really lose my focus. I was opening doors the wrong way, not correcting blocking we had changed. I have to be very intentional to run through checklists of changes, new additions, and reminders so I am technically correct and can then just live in our world instead of hearing that “editor” in my head during the scene say, “Wait, where do you exit here?” I know that so much of the journey in the show is automatic for me now, but there are several things that aren't, and that's OK—we have a whole week of rehearsal left and I can't be so hard on myself and expect that I shouldn't have to think about so much. I think I'll actually type out a song by song track so I can run through it several times a day—not just in my head, but as JJ told us in class, we can fool ourselves. I can “run” things in my head, make mistakes, convince myself I'm right and then make the same mistake onstage. It seems like such a simple common sense thing, but I have to take better responsibility for the little things, or maybe

just more careful and detailed responsibility for the little things, because there are many more important things I should be worried about, or at least conscious of, during the actual run.

March 23, 2006, My Notes Post-Rehearsal

“Breaking Down” went really well tonight—I am finally concentrating on the thoughts and not worrying about the words anymore. The words are there, I have to trust that and really work through my conversation with the audience and all the discoveries I make throughout the piece. Adding the actual chopping of food made a *world* of difference, too. It’s practically out of a Stanislavski textbook—making dinner is my *activity*!! I have to complete my task, the activity of cutting up the food, and also go through my lament about my life and sort out the details. Then, just as JJ told us, the words influence the behavior, or the behavior influences the actions, which helps the actions to facilitate the words. I should have brought the example up in class because I finally understand how “the activity” works!

March 24, 2006, Notes from the Run

*In “I Never Wanted to Love You”--Let there be a full beat between “I love you more than I meant to” and “in my profession one’s love stays unexpressed” to allow our respective reactions to the first statement and make the necessary transition. ,

This is a better time than any to tell me now in the apex situation. I want to understand and clarify why he is saying this now, and I must allow myself to be pacified. I am pulled by opposing forces here, I am drawn to Marvin, and Mendel is fighting for my focus. I want to hear Mendel’s words

but I don't think it's an appropriate time because I can see how much Marvin is hurting. I need to soothe Jason; too...all through this I'm trying to hold myself together.

March 27, 2006 First Dress Rehearsal

I was sliding all over in my costume shoes; it was so hard to stay focused. I didn't miss any changes, though, our crew is AMAZING! I was missing beats all over the place because I was distracted by the costumes. I need to revisit the scoring of the opening verses of "Breaking Down" before we do the show again; it's unclear, and if I can't start it with a lot of specificity and define each moment, the rest will fall apart. If it starts the right way, the following verses will fall into place instead. Most of all, I've got to stick to my technique to keep me focused and make me feel safe in times of crisis like a first dress rehearsal. I'm *exhausted* at the end of the run, but my mentor in undergrad always said if you weren't absolutely spent by the end of a show, you weren't doing your job. All of the fast-paced chaos made it difficult to keep my energy level even—I need to find a way to stay focused no matter what is going on around me or how stressed I am. I can't let *my* stress become Trina's stress, in other words.

March 27, 2006, More Scoring for the top of "I'm Breaking Down"

I'd like to be a princess on a throne, to have a country I can call my own (47)

I'm telling a secret, daydreaming about my ideal life, complaining that I'm always responsible to everyone else

And a king, who's lusty and requires a thing with a female thing (47)

I'm revealing my passion, finding relief that I can talk about it, and the second half is a slight dig at Marvin's homosexuality. Here someone in "my audience" (as I discussed with Be, not our actual show audience, but Trina's imaginary "audience" in this moment) points out I'm only fantasizing and I can't have what I want just because I want it

Great, men will be men, let me turn on the gas (47)

Reaction to the "audience" comment, admitting that's the way life is, acceptance, I'm relenting

I saw them in the den with Marvin grabbing Whizzer's ass (47)

I'm starting to lose it a little here. I'm making excuses, crying out; my situation is different, it's worse than most. Marvin never liked for me to touch his behind, he was always funny about it with me in sexual situations, but I saw him letting Whizzer do it, and even in our own home. It was so offensive to me personally; it felt like a direct attack on me when I saw it.

Oh sure, I'm sure, he's sure he did his best, I mean he meant to be what he was not. The things he was are things which I've forgot (47)

Someone in the "audience" says, "Well, Marvin *tried* to make it work!" Marvin tried to "play straight." I try to remember when things were good, but I can't, and I'm so shaken that I can't even remember my point. Another "audience member" yells out, "He's GAY!" which leads into...

He's a queen, I'm a queen, where is our crown? (47)

I admit, though it is embarrassing to do so, that I've failed. I'm supposed to be perfect and keep everything together but I couldn't do it. "Where is our crown?" is a question to God—what kind of reward can I expect for having to deal with this?

March 28, 2006, Dress Rehearsal

All of the jewelry, especially my Star of David necklace, seemed to help me stay focused in my character tonight! I know it seems silly, but I've been waiting for that final element and now it's here. Maybe it's just everything coming together, but the necklace seems to be a good touchstone for me to always focus on the element of Trina's faith and connect it into my family and my past, which informs *so much* of the backstory we've layered in. "Breaking Down" went much better tonight. The scoring in the beginning is making a big difference, just taking things moment to moment like Be says; it's helping so much to separate my "head" from my singing and physicality. I can finally just "live" through each moment.

March 29, 2006, Final Dress Rehearsal

This was our best run yet—I felt very comfortable throughout, and we only received a few notes. We're all very excited for the audience to get here so that we can share this story of our "family" with them.

April 6, 2006, Several performances into the run

I am finally relaxing into Trina's voice much more now, and I noticed it during the course of the performance tonight. I'm taking Jim's advice and not pushing myself to belt when I don't need to, and I'm not as conscious of manipulating my vocal apparatus to produce specific sounds in songs.

I'm finding new actions to play that are in fact truer to the arc of the scene *and* that happen to lead me to different vocal qualities. I have found I'm much more relaxed in my singing when I simply sing higher, softer songs that I just enjoy while I'm preparing for the show in my dressing room. I've been listening to David Wilcox, a folk/acoustic singer/songwriter. His songs all tell stories, so they put me in the mindset of storytelling, and the quality of his voice and compositions relax me and calm down the urgency of my own voice when I'm nervous. I realize I just happen to be singing, and then Trina can just sing, too—I don't have to rip my throat out "belting my face off" just because I think people are going to expect that of me. It doesn't help me to communicate the story any better; in fact, allowing my voice to go to different places allows Trina to truly explore what she's feeling like I sing in "Trina's Song." I have greater emotional expression at my fingers, and as an added bonus, I'm not putting unnecessary strain on my voice.

We're all getting tired, though. The show is tough on everyone, physically and emotionally. It will be good to have a week to rest up before ACTF and the final performances.

April 8, 2006

Unfortunately, tonight was another often frustrating performance with Jeremy playing Jason. He was forgetting his blocking, laughing as usual at all of the most inappropriate times, and now he's started trying to ad-lib lines at full volume during other people's singing. I know he must have seen us doing some smaller version of that (perhaps the "nonverbal" communication Earl talked about, and there are a few places where we have tiny little things we're ad-libbing, or that we used to do during rehearsal sometimes joking around); maybe he thinks it's what's supposed to happen in performance development. We just tried our best to push him around where he was supposed to

be, quiet him in the moments he tried to speak and wasn't meant to, and in the moments where he "broke" and laughed, we tried to use those moments to react honestly, trying to convey the seriousness of the moment to *Jason*, as we as actors tried to do the same with *Jeremy*.

"Breaking Down" was well-received tonight. It got lots of applause tonight, which is fun, but the greatest success to me was that I felt like I was really striving for the perfection of the salad, letting myself get distracted, and coming back to it. I feel like I'm communicating with the audience and immersed in my activity much more often than before. Previously, I would lose my focus inside the scene and really feel myself audience-watching and playing for laughs.

Joe and I got our focus much better at the top of "Marvin Hits Trina" tonight, which helped me to stay in the moment even when Jeremy was laughing and trying to talk to me as I waited for my music cue. There's always something new to look forward to when you're working with kids, haha...

April 9, 2006, Performance Notes

Today went really well. We had a very responsive audience, especially for a Sunday. I was extremely nervous because my mom and cousin were in the audience, but especially because Alex was with us as Jason; once I got onstage, I was fine. Earl and Jim watched the show again for the first time this week, so I think we were all a little more aware of monitoring ourselves while we were out there and watching their reactions. Unfortunately, we had a number of line problems in "Baseball Game" tonight, which has never happened in performance before, so that threw us a good bit. It seemed that each of us had an issue somewhere with a lyric, and that's not good when there are only six of

us singing. It reminded me that I need to run through the score and libretto continually just like I do with my notes. I can't trust everything to just stay in my head and my body—the work has to continue through performances.

Today in “Breaking Down” I actually sliced through one of my (acrylic) fingernails, when I was intending to pretend to cut myself. That was a little scary, but I took Be's ever-present advice to “just drop it in” and I flicked it away from the rest of the nail, groaned about this one more thing keeping me from perfection, and I kept going. The unpredictability of the props (shapes and lengths of the veggies, etc.) certainly always keeps that song exciting!

April 22, 2006

Second to final performance, ACTF Adjudication, and my return to the show after winning the ACTF Irene Ryan Finals in Washington, DC as Michael Swickard's partner

I think tonight was my best performance of the whole run. It was our best show overall, really. I was thrilled to be back. I had missed the show and everyone in it so much, even though Michael and I had an amazing week in DC. I couldn't wait to get back to telling our story to an audience, and the fact that there were so many friends and the adjudicator out there really helped, too. I had been sick for most of the time I'd been out of the show, so I was a little nervous about my voice, but everything was fine. As soon as I could connect back into our world and our family, everything clicked back into place, and the show was virtually effortless for all of us. I found a couple of new moments in watching the pickup rehearsal last week for Nicole (my understudy, who went on as Trina for the week that I was gone) that I was able to add in for this performance. I hadn't really been listening to Jason or seeing his face when he sings “hating our lives” in “Making a Home,” and

I had been missing several of Alex's reactions and physical choices when I can't see him onstage, so knowing these things that are happening helped me to further inform my relationship with him. I can't believe the show is closing tomorrow. It will truly be an emotional day for all of us; I've never felt so closely connected to a show or a character before, I will truly grieve losing this show and this family we've created. I hope that our audiences will be able to look back and feel even a minute representation of the effect this show has had on me. I will never forget this experience, and I will always be honored to have been a part of it.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SARAH AS AN INSPIRATIONAL FIGURE FOR TRINA

Trina is consistently searching for her identity—trying to find out what she “should” be. Like the Biblical character Sarah, Trina is a woman often influenced by the men in her life and defined by motherhood, but also like Sarah, she holds fast to her faith and eventually finds her own direction.

Jewish women have looked for centuries to the original matriarchs of their religion for models on which to build their lives. Diane Ashton states that they have “used the biblical tales of the matriarchs as a blank slate on which to write and legitimize their own spiritual understandings” (Ashton 79). In the Sixteenth Century, Jewish women wrote prayers of supplication invoking the assistance of the matriarchs similar to Catholic prayers to the saints. They were called “Prayers of the Matriarchs” because they developed their requests for God’s protection by alluding to an event in the lives of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, or Leah (Ashton 83). Women would often ask a matriarch to intercede on her children’s behalf before God.

Later, in the middle of the Nineteenth Century, female Jewish writers “combined the Bible, folkloric traditions, and their own personal insights to create intricate psychological and spiritual experiences they imagined the matriarchs to have had” (Ashton 79). Victorian writer Grace Aguilar was the best known of these women, and her books dealt mostly with Judaism or women’s influence in the home, and convey a sense of Jewish women’s moral and spiritual power (Ashton 80). Aguilar hoped to show young Jewish women how admirable the matriarchs were, and show them that they could use the Bible to inspire their best potential selves. Consistent with Victorian values, Aguilar’s books

taught women that if they practiced sensual self-denial, they would gain greater pleasure in their feminine spirituality. Her “‘true women’ exemplified moral authority through spirituality and sacrifice,” and they learned that as they strengthened their families, they would strengthen their countries by extension (Ashton 80). Aguilar gave Jewish women a *new* purpose beyond simple motherhood: if they maintained faith in God, the messiah would come and the world would be redeemed. Additionally, she said “Woman[‘s] hol[y] mission...is...to influence man [so] that her more spiritual and unselfish nature shall gradually be infused into him,” and “no matter how weak, faulty, and abased a woman feels herself to be, nothing can throw a barrier between (her) yearning heart and the healing compassion of her God. (Ashton 82-83).”

Sarah was one of the most important women in Aguilar’s inspirational writings. Aguilar concentrated on the Jewish regard for *shalom bayit* to assert that Jewish women prefer domesticity to public life (Ashton 83). She portrayed Sarah as an affluent woman of society, to make her more tangible to Victorian women, but also claimed she had “quiet, retiring dignity (Ashton 83).” She gave Sarah more modern qualities, more rights, than she most likely ever had. She portrayed Sarah as equal to her husband Abraham, though she laid emphasis on her submissiveness and chastity. Even though rabbinic writings required husbands to sexually satisfy their wives, Aguilar never mentioned sexuality, and instead told women that domesticity should be the basis for their spiritual and psychological satisfactions. Again, by quelling their own desires and self-sacrificing, women would be closer to God and serve their true divine purpose. Aguilar also focused on Sarah’s unending devotion to God through all of her life, which she used to demonstrate that “one must not lose faith in god no matter how long it takes for God to fulfill divine promises.” She urged her

readers to “think of [Sarah]...and our minds will become ennobled and our hearts enlarged (Ashton 86).”

Grace Aguilar was not only influential to her readers; she inspired similar writers in later years. Rebekah Gumpert Hyneman wrote a few decades after Aguilar’s most productive years, first publishing in the 1840’s, and her 1855 poetry series “Female Scriptural Characters” continued Aguilar’s tradition of creating would-be details for the lives of the matriarchs, including her poem, “Sarah,” depicted her as a queen, with a royal robe and a crown (Ashton 88).”

As the centuries passed, Jewish women continued to look to the matriarchs to better understand themselves. In the late twentieth century, feminist writers saw themselves and their readers through far more modern eyes. Though they were far more in touch with their female physicality as a vessel through which to interpret their spirituality, like Aguilar and Hyneman before them, Jewish feminist writers like Ellen Umansky and Savina Teubal continued to expand on Sarah’s character. In their hands, she now serves as inspiration even for Jewish feminist theology. Teubal argues that Sarah was not merely a princess, but a Near Eastern Priestess (Ashton 90).

Dianne Ashton points out that today, as in the past, Jewish women claim legitimacy for their own spirituality by drawing on sacred literature. No matter the generation and society taking the founding mothers into consideration, it has been able to find commonalities between itself and the matriarchs. Ashton closes this discussion, “By blurring the distinction between the ancient and the contemporary, radical change is undercut, tradition is carried forward, and a sense of eternal truth is brought to women’s own original writings” (Ashton 90). I would like to suggest that Trina, like

hundreds of women of her faith before her, can hold up her matriarch Sarah as a mirror by which she can better define and understand her own spirituality, as well as her truest and most divine purpose in life.

It might not be immediately apparent, but something as small as a laugh is a very important element that Sarah and Trina share. In Sarah's story, one of the most commented upon passages is that when she hears the angel tell Abraham that she will bear him a son, she "laugh[s] to herself, saying, 'Now that I am withered, am I to have enjoyment [*ednah*]—with my husband so old?'" (Genesis 18:10-15). Rachel Adler, in her essay "Justice and Peace Shall Kiss: An Ethics of Sexuality and Relationship," points out that Sarah is not only laughing at the prospect of having a child after she has been through menopause, but she chooses carefully to use the word *ednah*. From the same root as Eden, it means "not simply pleasure, but physical pleasure, erotic pleasure" (Adler 105). Adler goes on to point out that *tz'chok*, the Hebrew word for laughter, comes from the Hebrew root *tz'abak*, which is sometimes associated with biblical sex. She explains, "Laughter is erotic, spontaneous, and anarchic, a powerful disturber of plans and no respecter of persons" (Adler 106). When Trina begins spending time with Mendel, she finds herself laughing again. He teaches her, through his feel-good psychology, that she can take herself less seriously and learn to laugh again. Here, too, laughter is connected with erotic pleasure, and Trina could not argue that the laughter and passion she finds with Mendel is spontaneous and powerfully disturbs her previous life. From Mendel's voracious sexual attraction to her, evidenced in his early questioning of Marvin in "Marvin at the Psychiatrist," where he asks, "did she sleep in the nude?...did she wear a negligee? Could you blow and it would blow away?" (Finn 33-34) to Trina's description of his emotional openness: "and he's sweet, and he's warm, and he loves me so" (Finn 81) in "Marvin Hits Trina," to her resolution

in “Trina’s Song (Reprise)” to “have good sex,” (Finn 69) as she’s just agreed to marry him, one thing becomes clear. Trina, like Sarah before her, will experience unexpected *ednah*.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

Just like the generations of women who came before her, Trina is defined by her faith. As other Jewish women for thousands of years have done, it is natural for Trina to look to the matriarchs of the Torah for inspiration on how to best live her life. As Sarah's life journey seems most similar to Trina's, Sarah provides an obvious role model for Trina, and, in turn, any actress portraying this role. With a deeper understanding of the history of women's role in the Jewish faith and the matriarchs who continue to inspire women to the present day, an actress unquestionably will be better-equipped to approach the world through Trina's eyes. I will expand upon this study of Jewish women in musical theatre, and gain more information on Jewish women's history by engaging in more character studies of Jewish women in musicals.. This document will serve as a catalyst for future research and analysis that will lead to a broader study of Jewish women in contemporary musical theatre, and possibly even to a course I will teach at the university level. I remember learning in my graduate class' Acting II course with JJ Ruscella that Stanislavski encouraged his students to get as well-rounded an education as possible. As actors, the more we can know about *everything*—history, politics, literature, science, religion, all the arts, etc.--the better equipped we are to approach the story we're telling and to tell it the best way possible. When I teach young performers, I will inspire the same hunger for learning within them that my professors inspired in me by providing information from various worlds of study. Combining religious study and character analysis is one way I might achieve this, and I look forward to the opportunities to explore it in the future.

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