

***THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL  
OF  
JEWISH STUDIES***

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**Volume XXXIV: 2021**

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## Introduction

Jan Lániček & Jennifer Creese

This was another challenging year for scholars worldwide, who had to cope with concerns about their health, the health of their loved ones, but also job security, and uncertainties about teaching their courses online to students who also faced numerous challenges. The disruption of international travel also impacted on their research and networking opportunities. The first half of the year in Australia was relatively stable, though the outbreak of the Delta variant of COVID in June 2021, which impacted on most of the Eastern states, plunged a majority of the population into a long lockdown. At least the annual conference, organized in Canberra in February 2021, could be delivered in a hybrid format to an overwhelming praise from all participants.

Despite all the difficulties that scholars have now faced for almost two years, we are really pleased that as journal editors we still keep receiving numerous submissions throughout the year. The quality of the submissions allows us to publish nine journal articles and five book reviews covering a whole range of topic, attesting to the strength of the field not only in Australia, but also in other countries. This is the third volume of the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* which we have published as an open access journal, and we are glad we have been able to contribute to this transition which allows our authors to disseminate their research across the scholarly community and offers free access to others interested in their research, who perhaps lack access to the repositories provided by academic institutions.

Opening the volume, Sarit Cofman-Simhon's 'Talmudic Animosity towards Roman Public Entertainment in Ancient Judea: Against Acculturation, Mimesis, and Catharsis' brings the insights of a theatre scholar into the discussions of rabbinic authorities' objections to Roman public entertainment. Cofman-Simhon offers a novel interpretation of the Talmudic opposition during the first centuries of the Common Era, shifting our attention away from theological justifications or rationalisation to pragmatic and sociocultural considerations, as well as nationalist aspirations.

The second article also explores the Mediterranean space. The young scholar, Gizem Magemizoğlu introduces readers to the long history of the Jewish population in Antioch, located at the border between contemporary Turkey and Syria. The Jews of Antioch In Modern Times offers a historical exploration, which is also supported with interviews Magemizoğlu collected with the last remaining Jews of this once flourishing community. The article outlines the history of the Jewish community, working with a variety of local sources, as well as reports compiled by travelers who visited the city throughout history, and left behind their observations about the Jewish community. In the final part Magemizoğlu considers the reasons that have led

to the slow decline of the Jewish community, which nowadays counts only several individuals.

The following article moves our attention to the literary world, focusing on one of the most famous literary pieces, S. An-sky's *Dybbuk*. Yaniv Goldberg, in his 'The Labyrinth of Worlds: An-sky's *Dybbuk* from a Legal, Cultural, and Psychological Perspective', offers a novel perspective on the literary masterpiece, using the concept of "Dissociative Identity Disorder" – or "Multiple Personality Disorder" – to analyse the main heroine of the story, Leah. The article places Goldberg's re-interpretation in the context of the traditional reading of the *Dybbuk* stories and An-sky's work.

In the next section we move to the fields of ideology and politics in connection with the history of the Zionist movement, and the State of Israel. Yitzhak Conforti's 'The Zionist Utopias: Between Building a Future and Shaping a Past' examines early Zionist and national Jewish thought in the 19th Century until the end of the First World War. The article analyses the early Zionist utopias, which relied heavily on religious myths, Jewish culture, and the Hebrew Bible. Conforti puts these early writings into their context, and efforts to debate the ideal solution to the Jewish "problem" in Europe, as well as their impact on the Jewish identity formation at that time. The article also offers a nuanced understanding of the modern Utopian writing and views.

Whilst the previous article offers a long-term perspective on ideological discussions, Eran Eldar's insightful article focuses on the personal rivalries between two main political leaders of the State of Israel in last decades of the twentieth century. 'The rivalry between Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin and its impact on the defeat of the Labor Party in the 1977 elections' analyses the situation in the key actor of the early Israeli politics. The core of the article analyses the reasons for the defeat of the Labor party in 1977, which for the first time led to the election of the right-wing Likud party to the Israeli government. Apart from the objective reasons for this defeat, such as the class and economic disparities in Israel, corruption in the ruling party, disconnection of leadership from the will of voters and the Yom Kippur War, Eldar argues, we should also consider personal rivalries and conflicts between the leading Labor politicians.

The next article, by a group of researchers from Monash University, Marcia Pinski, Philip Mendes & Samone McCurdy, shifts our attention to a difficult yet timely topic of the responses in the ultra-orthodox Jewish communities in Australia and Britain to child sexual abuse ("How do Ultra-orthodox Jewish leadership bodies respond to manifestations of institutional child sexual abuse (ICSA)? A critical reflection on the findings of two public inquiries in Australia and England"). The article centres on the findings of the Royal Commission in Australia and the Independent Inquiry in Britain, and discusses the main factors that have according to the reports contributed to the vulnerability of children in the communities. The article also identifies

areas for further research and offers possible recommendations to improve child safety.

In the next article we will travel up North in Australia, visiting Queensland, and its capital Brisbane (“The Architectural Provenance of the Margaret Street Synagogue, Brisbane”). Two scholars, Jennifer Creese and Joyce Arnold, take us to the Margaret Street Synagogue, discussing its architectural design and establishing its architectural provenance. The article challenges the often-held belief about Arthur Morry’s role in designing the beautiful building, and point to the design by another architect, Andrea Stombuco, as the original designer of the synagogue built in a Neo-Moorish style.

We will not move too far from the area of art in the following part of the journal. Peter Lanchidi’s ‘A Kabbalistic Lithograph in Australia: Rabbi A. B. Davis’s Lectures on the Origin of the Rites and Worship of the Hebrews’ offers an intriguing analysis of a series of lectures delivered by a prominent leader of the Sydney Jewish community. Lanchidi not only discusses the socio-cultural context in which Alexander Barnard Davis delivered the lectures and the situation in the Jewish community in the second half of the 19th Century, but also offers novel insights into Davis’ background and the influences and affiliations that shaped his worldview.

The final scholarly article in the volume takes us to the United States, analysing an important part of the American Jewish community. Gil Graff’s ‘Revisiting Aspects of Modern Orthodoxy in the United States, 1945-1985’, offers insights into the key themes that emerged among American Orthodox Jews in the second half of the twentieth century and that continue to shape even today’s community: a commitment to *klal yisrael*, interest in “synthesis” of Jewish tradition with the best of Western culture; and a focus on the process of halakhic development. Griff achieves this by focusing on the writing of several prominent leaders of American Jewish Orthodoxy.

No scholarly journal would be complete without book reviews. The editors really appreciate the service to the community by five scholars who have reviewed important academic monographs published in the last couple of years. Philip Mendes positively reviews the major political biography of the Australian-Jewish activist Isi Leibler, written by our distinguished colleague Suzanne D. Rutland. Shimon de Valencia then discusses the main contributions of David S. Koffman’s book on the encounters between Jews in the United States and the people and space during the American westward expansion. Jana Vytrhlik’s review moves us to the field of poetry. Her review introduces to the readers the collection of poems by the Romanian born, German-speaking Holocaust survivor Paul Celan. The penultimate review by Lynne Swarts discusses the main features of an edited volume on gender, family and religion in Italy and Germany during the Age of Emancipation in the long 19th century. Finally, Tom Frydel brings crucial insights into the

## *Introduction*

debates of post-war retribution trials in liberated Poland, as analysed in the award-winning book by Andrew Kornbluth.

We hope that our readers enjoy this volume's selection of papers and reviews, and that they also appreciate the ready availability of the Australian Journal of Jewish Studies on the internet free of charge. It is our deep belief that in this way we facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and allow scholars to find their readership all over the world. We also hope that 2022 will allow the world to finally overcome all the difficulties associated with the current pandemic and that we will be able to again welcome international scholars at our annual conference (2022 in Melbourne, hosted by the Deakin University). We encourage readers to consider submissions for the 2022 volume, either as a standard research paper, roundtable or book review on any topic of relevance to the broad academic Jewish Studies. The editors are also open to suggestion concerning other, more unusual formats of articles. The editors, the editorial board and peer-reviewers are committed to working collegially with you to ensure that your research dissemination can take a new form. Please see <http://www.aajs.org.au/journal/> for more details on submitting your work and for the contact details of the editorial team.