

Australian Association of Jewish Studies

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Australian Association of Jewish Studies

22nd Annual Conference

Judaism and the Other

14-15 February 2010

Mandelbaum House, University of Sydney

The forthcoming conference of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies, to be held in the pleasant precincts of Sydney University's Mandelbaum House, promises a veritable feast of topics ranging from our President Dr Dvir Abramovich's lecture on Don Pagis' poem 'Written in Pencil on a Sealed Railway Car' to Aristophanes, or representations of Judaism in British television. Forty two papers have been proposed with more than a dozen speakers from overseas coming from varied locations such as the Czech Republic, America and Tunisia, and including foundation member Professor Bill Rubinstein, now at Aberystwith, Professor Tony Kusher and Dr Aimee Bunting from the University of Southampton. Professor Suzanne Wijsman (University of Western Australia), will speak on 'In the Eye of the Beholder: Images of 'Self' and 'Other' in a 15th-Century User-Produced Hebrew Prayer Book' a topic that contrasts with that of Prof. Rina Lapidus, from Israel's Bar-Ilan University's 'The Attitude in Aggadic Literature Towards Gentiles who challenge Judaism'. Topics ranging from music, history, the Sho'ah, mystical texts and art promise a rich experience.

It is time NOW to register for the conference. The brochure with all the details can be accessed on our new website at <http://www.aajs.org.au>.

Marianne Dacy

Dr Ian Young (University of Sydney), promoted to Associate-Professor

Dr Ian Young, who has been teaching Classical Hebrew, Aramaic and Biblical Studies in the department since 1989, has just been promoted to Associate Professor. His teaching areas include the Hebrew Bible and related texts (e.g. Dead Sea Scrolls, inscriptions); Aramaic; other Northwest Semitic languages (e.g. Phoenician); and Biblical Studies. His efforts have ensured ongoing knowledge of the ancient Semitic languages which are taught through the department. He is also very active as a doctoral supervisor, focusing on the language and text of the Hebrew Bible. His research areas include: language of the Hebrew Bible, especially linguistic dating of biblical books; textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible; and canonization of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Currently, he is looking at the linguistic dating of Biblical Books, looking at approaches and problems, and *A Textual and Linguistic Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Dr Young has developed a world-wide reputation, based on these publications.



Some include:

* 'Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew', *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 5, JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen, 1993.

* (ed.), 'Biblical Hebrew: Chronology and Typology.' *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement*, 369, T and T Clark, London, 2003.

* 'Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence Parts I-II,' *Vetus Testamentum*, 46, 1998, pp.239-253; 408-422.

* 'The Stabilization of the Biblical Text in the Light of Qumran and Masada: A Challenge for Conventional Qumran Chronology?' *Dead Sea Discoveries* 9, 2002, p.364-390.

He also has presented widely at conferences, both in Australia and overseas. For example, in 2004, he presented papers at the Gilgamesh conference at the University of Sydney and at the Society of Biblical Literature conference in San Antonio, Texas, USA. In 2007 he presented papers at the National Association of Professors of Hebrew conference in Sydney, the Society for Old Testament Study conference in Sheffield, and at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Vienna.

Due to his expertise, the Society for Biblical Literature has invited him to chair sessions and create panels for their conferences. The department was strongly represented at by Dr Young at its most recent conference in November 2009 in New Orleans, USA.

News from Monash University

From the 'nerd' to the 'rebel': Postwar Jewish-American writing

Professor Leah Garrett, the Loti Smorgon Chair of Contemporary Jewish Life and Culture, outlines the scope of her new research.

Jewish American writing of the 1940s-'60s is the focus of my new research project. I have just completed an essay in which I compare three of the most important masterpieces of American literature: Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), JD Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* (1952). These works by Jewish authors all came out within three years of one another and I believe they should be examined together.

I am exploring how and why these authors decided to use Christian protagonists to level a critique on US culture and what it was about the postwar years that led them to use this type of subversive approach. In my mind, all three authors were, in a sense, rewriting popular boys' literature, and by doing so were trying to create a new paradigm of masculinity that was much more intellectual.

Part of my larger aim is to bring a focus to works that are traditionally neglected in Jewish American studies because they are not overtly Jewish, even though in 1999 Miller finally admitted the Lomans were in fact Jewish, and Salinger drops hints throughout *Catcher in the Rye* that Holden may be half Jewish. The aim of this project is to explore how the huge increase in anti-Semitism during the war years made many writers decide to hide the Jewishness of their characters.

The project also considers the stellar representation of Jewish writers during the 1950s and 1960s in terms of winning all the major American literary awards, and asks what it was about their work that was so appealing to the non-Jewish world. The book will look at how part of the success of Jewish literature was that it appropriated and transformed mainstream tropes to such a degree that the images become 'American' rather than 'Jewish' (as we see for instance with Superman and Batman – creations of eastern European Jewish immigrants).

I am asking how being Jewish allowed the writers on the one hand to be the liberal and tolerant voice of the 'subjugated minority' while at the same time made them often use conservative, hyper-masculine traditional gender constructs. Were these Jewish writers who were seen as emblems of tolerance by their ethnicity really so tolerant? If so, why do their writings have such an overwhelmingly masculine tone where men seem to occupy all the space and there is no or little room for women's voices?

I am also considering how being Jewish enabled these writers to consciously, or not, perpetuate many troubling aspects of the mainstream white, male word, such as racist imagery or writing about women using stock sexist clichés. These writers were immensely popular, not only because they were the rebellious other, but because they were adept at utilising the voice of the conservative centre.

This ability to be both an insider and an outsider gave Jews a unique means to navigate the broader world and to critique it from both within and from without. In the 1950s and 1960s as

Jewish writing broke out of old literary and cultural moulds, it became popular with young Americans who were seeking a language of rebellion against the old institutionalised discourses.

Although often categorised as the ‘nerd’, the Jew in the 1950s and 1960s became the ‘rebel’ and his writing transformed American letters, turning mainstream literature into an urban, multivoiced and multilingual expression of change and rebellion. My larger thesis is how Jewish men were able to change the construct of rebellion into one that had so many Jewish resonances.

Study tours to Auschwitz, and the Middle East

Next year ACJC director Mark Baker will lead two overseas courses for Monash students: ‘Final Journey’ will retrace the Holocaust and Memory by travelling from Berlin through Prague, Poland and Lithuania. In November, ‘Israelis and Palestinians between War and Peace’ will explore the Arab-Israel conflict and efforts to build peace.



ACJC creates Zohar history in Prato

AJJC Nathan Wolski at the head of the table with fellow Zohar scholars at the groundbreaking Zohar symposium at Prato in July.

The ACJC created history earlier this year by bringing the world’s leading Zohar scholars together for the first time at three-day Zohar symposium, the first of a series of bi-annual conferences in Jewish Studies held at the Monash campus in Prato, Italy.

Convened by Zohar scholars and teachers Nathan Wolski (from ACJC) and Merav Carmeli [13-15 July], participants included Israel Prize winner, Professor Moshe Idel; Professor Daniel Matt, the translator of *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*; and Professor Arthur Green. Papers were presented in both Hebrew and English and are currently being edited to appear as a special volume of the prestigious journal, *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*.

The thirteenth century medieval town centre provided an ideal setting for such an exploration as the *Zohar* itself – the major work of the Spanish Kabbalah – was composed in the latter part of the 13th century. Italy, it should be noted, enjoys a proud place in the history of the *Zohar*: the first printed editions were from Mantua and Cremona.

The ACJC has a deep interest in the *Zohar*. Nathan Wolski has translated the widely acclaimed study by Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden: On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar* (Stanford University Press, 2009) and his own book, *A Journey into the Zohar: An Introduction to the Book of Radiance*, is due for release by SUNY Press in April 2010. Merav Carmeli is the manuscript editor for the *Pritzker Zohar* and has been working with Daniel Matt for six years combing the handwritten manuscripts of the Kabbalistic classic.

The conference was a landmark for the ACJC and highlights its capacity to make a significant contribution to Jewish Studies at the highest international level.

Immigration conference inspires book

A conference which took place in May at the Monash Prato campus, Italy, comparing the immigrant experiences in Israel and Australia, will culminate in the publication of a book next year, co-authored by Professor Andrew Markus and Dr Alexander Semyonov.

The book will contain chapters on demography, government policy, immigration law, labour markets, civil society, public opinion and second generation.

Titled *Nations of Immigrants: Israel and Australia Meeting of Authors*, the conference brought together 17 leading scholars contributing to the study, including one of the world's leading demographers, Professor Sergio Della Pergola from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Professor Andrew Jakubowicz, Professor of Sociology from the University of Technology, Sydney.

The project received financial support from the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements and from the Pratt Foundation.

Limmud Oz 2010

Limmud Oz, an annual festival celebrating Jewish learning and creativity, will take place over the Queen's Birthday weekend of 12-14 June 2010 at the Monash University Caulfield Campus.

The volunteer-led, cross-communal inter-generational event blends Jewish scholarship with art, music, philosophy and drama.

International guests include Professor Raymond Scheindlin, Professor of Medieval Hebrew Literature, Jewish Theological Seminary; Yisrael Campbell, stand-up comedian, three times converted to Judaism; Avital Hochestein Campbell, Talmud teacher; Jeremy Dauber, Professor of Yiddish Studies at Columbia University; Amichai Lau-Lavie, performance artist, writer and teacher of Judaic literature; Katie Green, Maale Film School, Jerusalem; Shira Kline, New York-based performer and music educator, plus many more international and interstate contributors.

For more information, contact Miriam Munz on 9903 5004 or at limmudoz@arts.monash.edu.au

New partnerships in Interreligious Studies

ACJC lecturers Michael Fagenblat and Melanie Landau travelled to Malaysia during the July semester break to participate in a workshop on collaboration in interreligious studies. Sharon Bong, senior lecturer in Gender Studies and Creative Writing, Monash Sunway (Malaysia), gives this update.

Teaching and research collaboration in interreligious studies was forged in an innovative two-day workshop that brought together researchers from Monash Sunway, Monash Australia and the India Institute of Technology (IITB), Mumbai. Hosted by the School of Arts and Social Sciences (Sunway), the workshop was funded by the International Strategic Initiative grant and team-led by Michael Fagenblat.

Explorations included jointly writing new units in religion and gender, religion and media; introducing units in interreligious studies in Masters (taught) programs; developing a new PhD program with areas of specialisation such as multi-faith movements in Asia, nationalism, conflict management, human rights, sports and youth in Interreligious Studies; identifying a Monash network of scholars with research expertise in interreligious studies; and identifying research grants that recognise the merits of interreligious studies.

Other dialogue partners included Greg Barton (Monash Caulfield), Siby George (IITB), Yeoh Seng Guan, Zakir Hossain Raju, Tony See and Sony Jalarajan (Sunway).

Update on Doctoral Students:

Researching the Darfuri genocide

Elissa Lipshutz

‘... what became increasingly evident to me were the parallels between the Darfuris’ experience and that of my grandparents when they rebuilt their lives in Australia.’

During my arts degree I studied the ‘Holocaust in an Age of Genocide’ which prompted my interest in Darfur. I thus decided to undertake a research project that would address the Darfur genocide with a particular focus on the refugee experience. I discovered that many Darfuri refugees who had fled to Egypt, only to receive very hostile treatment there, crossed the Sinai border into Israel. This phenomenon and the way in which Israel dealt with these refugees really moved me and I knew I wanted to investigate further.

As the grand-daughter of Holocaust survivors, it struck me that Israel – which accepted floods of Jewish refugees after the Holocaust – was similarly faced with Darfuris

fleeing genocide. I believe it was Israel's moral imperative to accept these people as so many countries closed their doors to European Jews during the Holocaust.

I decided to do my placement project in Israel working with a non-profit organisation named the Hotline for Migrant Workers which hosted a smaller Darfuri self-help organisation called Bnai Darfur (Sons of Darfur). Here I worked with both Israelis and Darfuris who were attempting to improve conditions for the Darfuri refugees in Israel. I was privileged to conduct interviews with Darfuris who discussed their lives, the violence that killed their families and forced them to flee, as well as their experiences as refugees in both Egypt and Israel. The placement opened my eyes to conflict and reconciliation studies and how traumatised people attempt to rebuild their lives with such limited resources. I learnt a lot about refugee studies, refugee law and policy; however, what became increasingly evident to me were the parallels between the Darfuris' experience and that of my grandparents when they rebuilt their lives in Australia.

My research in Israel formed the primary material for my thesis which explored the Darfur genocide and the experience of refugees in both Egypt and Israel.

I also travelled with a group of 20 Monash students to South Africa and Rwanda and met many genocide survivors. Addressing issues of peace and reconciliation, this fascinating intensive study unit offers many opportunities for research. I am sure I will use the knowledge I have gained in many future endeavours.

Documenting sexual violence in the Holocaust

Annabelle Baldwin

Holocaust and Genocide PhD student Annabelle Baldwin discusses her research into sexual violence during the Holocaust.

My PhD thesis examines both the experience and the memory of sexual violence in the Holocaust. As my main source, I am using survivor testimony from the Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive and I am interested in looking at not only the incidences of rape and sexual molestation that occurred during the Holocaust, but at how these survivors dealt with such events both during and after the war and how they articulated these experiences in testimony.

The investigation of sexual violence in the Holocaust is a fairly recent development as historians have long believed that the occurrence of rape was low due to German racial purity laws. However, my research shows that many women and men were raped, and that the perpetrators were not only Germans, but also aid-givers, local non-Jews and even, in some cases, fellow Jews. While interest in the field has increased in recent years, an in-depth study of sexual assault has not yet been undertaken, so the stories of those who survived rape, molestation or attempted rape have remained untold.

I believe it is worthwhile to document stories of rape from the Holocaust despite it not being a typical experience for most survivors. I have located almost 900 testimonies in the Shoah Archive that discuss this issue in English, with several hundred more in other languages.

The testimonies reveal that these survivors found their experience of sexual violence one of the most difficult aspects to deal with emotionally following the war. Given the lack of historical attention to this topic, many have struggled to make sense of these horrible abuses in the wider context of the Holocaust.

As my thesis uses oral testimony, I am also exploring how survivors remember and give meaning to these experiences. Using video testimony allows me to not only look at these disturbing events, but to include the survivors themselves and their own perspectives in my analysis. It is important to me that the stories of these survivors and their own interpretations of their stories become part of Holocaust discourse.

ANNA ROSENBAUM WHO PUTS TOGETHER THE MATERIAL FOR THE NEWSLETTER AND EDITS IT, IS IN THE WOLPER HOSPITAL, FOLLOWING FOOT SURGERY.

WE WISH HER “REFU’AH SHELMAH”!



BENEFACTOR MEMBER CATEGORY

The Australian Association of Jewish Studies has always operated on a shoe string basis, but this lack of funding really limits what we are able to achieve as an association. Following the pleas by our president, Dr Dvir Abramovich, we have decided to add a new membership category for Benefactor members, with a contribution of \$250, rather than the usual \$60 membership.

**Consider becoming a benefactor, and by doing so,
know you are contributing to the furtherance of Jewish
research. MEMBERSHIP Fees for 2010**

MEMBERSHIP FEES for the Australian Association for Jewish Studies (ABN 16535824946) are current from 1 January 2009–31 December 2009 (include the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* published annually (towards end of current year), AAJS Newsletter, book discounts, and discounted registration fee for the AAJS annual February conference)

Benefactor : \$250

Regular: \$60 (Aus)

Pensioner/ Full-time Student: \$25 (Aus)

Institutional: \$70 (Aus)

Overseas: \$80 (Aus)

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Post your cheque to the above address or access the form at :
<http://www.aajs.org.au>. **Registration at the Conference will include
membership for 2010.**