DEAR FRIENDS,

The Program in Jewish Culture & Society at the University of Illinois is thriving, and we’re looking forward to another great year! We will host two exciting conferences, bring several world-class scholars, and continue to grow in ever-new directions!

In October, the Program’s Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies will convene an ambitious comparative conference, “Recollection, Retribution, Reconciliation: Postmemory and Justice in a Transnational Age,” organized by Colin Flint, Brett Kaplan, and Michael Rothberg, will bring cutting-edge scholars like Vilashini Cooppan, Judith Halberstam, and Marianne Hirsch to our campus to discuss some of the most pressing questions in the field. In March, a second major conference will be differently comparative, focusing on Jewish/non-Jewish relations. Organized by Eugene Avrutin, “The Micropolitics of Small Town Life in Eastern Europe” will feature a keynote lecture by Timothy Snider along with contributions by a dozen other visitors.

We are also continuing our successful Israel Studies Project, the joint venture between the University of Illinois and the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. Over the years, the program has brought such distinguished visitors to our campus as Etgar Keret, Orly Castel-Bloom, Sidra DeKoven Ezrati, and Dan Laor. This fall, we are absolutely thrilled to welcome filmmaker and Academy Award nominee Joseph Cedar and novelist Matan Harmoni. Later in the year, we will continue the series with a visit by Guy Ben-Ner, one of the stars in Israel’s vibrant visual art scene.

Other highlights for the year include visits by Samir El-youssef, Amir Eshel, Alexander Elkind, Charlotte Fonrobert, Robert Gordon, Moshe Halbertal, Sara Horowitz, Lawrence Kritzman, Samuel Moyn, Rashid Khalidi, and Carol Zemel.

It will be tremendous!

As I say every year, everything we do is made possible by our friends and donors. The faculty we hire, the courses we teach, the public lectures we organize, the workshops we convene – the entire presence of Jewish Studies at Illinois – it all comes from the support of our contributors. We want to thank all of our friends who continue to give with such generosity. We simply couldn’t do our work without them.

If you are interested in becoming a friend of the Program, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me at bunzl@illinois.edu. Even the smallest contribution makes a difference!

Matti Bunzl
Director, Program in Jewish Culture & Society
Professor, Department of Anthropology
BRUCE ROSENSTOCK’S NEW TRANSLATION OF
MOSES MENDELSOHN’S LAST WORKS

On February 15, 1781, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing died at the age of 52. The two final works of Mendelssohn’s career, Morning Hours (1785) and To the Friends of Lessing (1786), were written in the long shadow cast by this death over the remaining years of Mendelssohn’s life. “The death of this friend with whom, one could say, I felt I had come to share my life, has struck a deep wound in my heart,” Mendelssohn confessed, just one month after Lessing’s death, in a letter to Johann Gottfried Herder. Two months later, Mendelssohn informs Herder: “I have the intention this summer, if my health permits, to write Morning Hours and To the Friends of Lessing. Mendelssohn informs us in his “Foreword” to Morning Hours that the book was composed in the face of a nervous disorder that in those years plagued him whenever he engaged himself seriously with philosophy. Not many months after publishing Morning Hours, Mendelssohn penned To the Friends of Lessing in great haste. Jacobi had just gone public with not only his story about Lessing’s confessed Spinozism, but he had also published his and Mendelssohn’s sometimes rancorous correspondence about this alleged confession. Feeling that it was urgent that the manuscript defending Lessing against Jacobi’s charges reach his publisher as soon as possible, Mendelssohn carried it to him on a bitterly cold Saturday (after the close of the Sabbath, of course), the 31st of December, 1785. Mendelssohn gave feverish that evening and on Wednesday of the same week he died. He was 56 years old. Reflecting upon the final outcome of Mendelssohn’s intention to “write something about the character of our Lessing,” Alexander Altmann, the great biographer of Mendelssohn, put it best when he wrote that “it was as if [this intention] was born under an evil star.”

Despite the fact that the books as we have them now do not correspond to Mendelssohn’s original intention to write about Lessing’s character, Morning Hours and To the Friends of Lessing are nonetheless testaments to the lifelong friendship and creative collaboration of Lessing and Mendelssohn. They do not, however, provide a more record of a past friendship or a portrait of his dear friend’s character. Rather, Morning Hours and To the Friends of Lessing were written to stake a claim upon the future. They were written to ensure that the friendship between Lessing and Mendelssohn would continue to inspire the transformation of German culture along the path of the Enlightenment ideal of religious toleration to which both men had devoted themselves throughout their decades-long association. The last two writings of Mendelssohn’s career seek to provide a firm foundation for an ambitious cultural project that Mendelssohn characterized with the term Bildung, defined by him as the guided formation of a nation’s character through the intertwined development of, first, the practical and creative arts (generally designated with the term Kultur, or culture) and, second, the theoretical clarification and systematization of the nation’s moral and religious ethos (Aufklärung or enlightenment). Mendelssohn regarded Lessing’s death as a serious blow to their shared Bildung project, but one that could be overcome if posthopes would remember Lessing as a model of Bildung, as the harmonious embodiment both Kultur and Aufklärung.

This was certainly how Mendelssohn remembered him, and it was how he wished him to be remembered by others. But history does not as a rule conform to our wishes. When Mendelssohn published Morning Hours in the fall of 1785, he was instantly caught up in a public battle over Lessing’s legacy that significantly reshaped the course of both German philosophy and literature.

Morning Hours is a wide-ranging and systematic exposition in the form of early-morning “lectures,” occasionally interrupted by the youthful pupils who included Mendelssohn’s son Joseph (born in 1770) and two of his young friends, concerning a number of philosophical topics: the nature of truth, the foundations of human knowledge, the basis of our moral and aesthetic powers of judgment, the reality of the external world, and the grounds for a rational faith in a
EUGENE AVRUTIN ON THE STORY OF A LIFE
THE MEMOIRS OF ANNA VYGDOSKAIA HE JUST PUBLISHED

In the mid-1930s, the renowned Jewish historian Simon Dubnow encouraged the feminist and Jewish educator, Anna Pavlovna Vygodskaya, to write an autobiography about her life experiences in pre-revolutionary Russia. Initially, Vygodskaya was reluctant to take up Dubnow’s offer, fearing that her “ordinary life experiences” would be of little interest to the reading public. Yet in the end Dubnow’s entreaties prevailed, and the first volume appeared in Riga in 1938 to considerable acclaim. One reviewer, writing for the Russian émigré newspaper Segodnia, observed that Vygodskaya’s recollections “are imbued with tender warmth,” which faithfully and simply recounted life as it was half a century before. In his preface to the autobiogra- phy, Dubnow recognized that Vygodskaya illuminated “all of the minor little details of everyday life” to which male memoirists usually pay no heed, but which are so very important for the history of our material culture and national traditions.” Despite Vygodskaya’s initial reservations, Istoria adzhinskikh soyuznykh (“The Story of a Life”) is an extraordinary and rare historical document of Jewish childhood and young adult life in Tsarist Russia that has yet to receive the readership that it deserves.

The Story of a Life draws on a number of popular autobiographical genres – it is styled as a family chronicle, a childhood and school autobiography, and a first-person narrative of social integra- tion. While several Eastern European Jewish women’s memoirs have been translated and published in recent years, The Story of a Life is one of only a handful written in Russian by a Jewish woman, and is the only first-person narrative to describe the unprecedented social opportunities, as well as the many political and personal challenges, that young Jewish women and men experienced in the 1870s and 1880s. In her young adult life, Anna Vygodskaya was not drawn to revolutionary- ary Jewish politics nor tempted by the allure of emigration, but instead sought to integrate herself into an emerging civil society. Vygodskaya situates Jewish assimilation – the gradual transformation of Jewish religious practices, culture and learning, the abandonment of external markers of Jewishness, and her partici- pation in Russian culture, society, and institutions – against the backdrop of profound economic, social, and intellec- tual change that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. At a time when the vast majority of Jews continued to reside in small market towns in the Pale of Settlement, Vygodskaya liber- ized herself from the world of the Pale and immersed herself in the day-to-day rhythms, educational activities, and new intellectual opportunities in the imperial capital. Unlike most Jewish women (and men) in the Russian Empire, Vygodskaya was educated in a Russian gymnasium, spoke and read fluent Russian, pursued (and obtained) higher education in the capital, and traveled frequently to, from, and around St. Petersburg.

Until recently, the reconstruction of Jewish women’s lives, in all of their geographic diversity and social complexity, has been virtually absent from most historical narratives and interpretations of East European Jewish culture and society. The marginalization of Jewish women’s his- tory can be explained in part by the tradi- tional preoccupation with scholarship of the history of ideas and mass politics, and in part by the closure of the archives. Since the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991, scholars have used court records, police reports, letters and petitions, and many other personal papers generated, recorded, and preserved by the state to produce methodologically groundbreak- ing studies of the Jewish family and the gendered construction of everyday experiences. Nevertheless, even with the outsourcing of new archival materials a critical assessment of the life stories of women, whose own personal archives were either fragmentary or in most cases non-existent, remains a complicated task for the historian. Reconstructing Anna Vy- gosdkaya’s life story is beset with numerous methodological challenges. To the best of our knowledge, Vygodskaya’s papers were not preserved in an archive, and her biography remains highly fragmentary and difficult to piece together. Yet Vygod- skaya’s life and work were not entirely erased from the historical record. Traces of her activities appear, however fleeting, in contemporary memoirs and diaries, official administrative records, newspaper articles and pamphlets by and about her, and an all too brief biographical entry in a memorial book of Jewish teachers. As is the case with so many first-person narra- tives written many years after the events recounted, Vygodskaya’s recollections are filled with intentional omissions, lapses in memory, and accidental distortions, to say nothing of editorial alterations. But even if we take into account the docu- mental limitations of the memoir, Vygod- skaya’s life story offers a unique glimpse of Jewish daily life that rarely appears in public sources: of neighborhood interactions, children’s games and household rituals, love affairs and emotional outbursts, clothing customs and klesiyas activities. While most first-person narratives re- construct a Jewish world that is isolated and self-contained, The Story of a Life is remarkable for its depiction of vibrant and dynamic encounters in a multiethnic and multi-confessional imperial com- munity. Anna Vygodskaya describes the changing Jewish world she grew up in and later abandoned. She also relates the various everyday encounters among Jewish parents and young, ambitious children anxious to leave the world of the Pale; Polish teachers and schoolchildren; and Russian students, professors, and imperial administrators. Excerpt from introduction (co-authored by Eugene Avrutin and Robert Greene).
In my dissertation, “The Emergence of Literary Ethnography in the Russian Empire: From the Far East to the Pale of Settlement, 1845-1917,” I examine the intersection of ethnography and literature, the discursive practices and narrative strategies of literary ethnography, its analysis of the different peoples of the Russian Empire, and the use of diverse genres (sketches, diaries, short stories, and plays) by focusing on one Russian and three Jewish populists: Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Semen An-sky (1863-1920), Lev Shternberg (1861-1927), and Vladimir Bogoraz (1865-1936). For Dostoevsky, Shternberg, and Bogoraz, undertaking ethnographic fieldwork was not entirely a voluntary decision, while for understanding whether the tsarist regime made possible the incorporation of peoples’ “folk” into the Russian tradition, and that Russian and Jewish ethnographers shared the same scientific ethnographic method of study, Bogoraz and Shternberg studied the natives of Siberia. However, they approached the study of their own people quite differently from how they had studied these peoples. By turning to the ethnography of the Jewish folk, the Russian narod and indigenous cultures, I attempt to shift the focus from one single ethnic group toward a comparative literary ethnographic approach that examines the “science of peoples” in a broader imperial and discursive context. Since Jews in the Russian Empire did not live in isolation and had close contact with Russian culture, a comparative approach shows that Jewish folklore borrowed considerably from the Russian tradition, and that Russian and Jewish ethnographers shared the same scientific ethnographic method of studying peoples (such as the Russian narod and the Jewish folk).

It was during these years that the populists An-sky, Bogoraz, and Shternberg began studying their own people, the Jews, with the intention of salvaging their own culture, creating museums, and educating the acculturated urban Jewish Russian population. In addition, they intended to employ the science of ethnography to prove the existence of a Jewish folk culture and a Jewish nation, thus subverting racial theories about the inferiority and degeneracy of Jews. Before turning to the Jewish folk, these self-taught ethnographers and populists had studied the Russian narod. In addition, Bogoraz and Shternberg studied the natives of Siberia. However, they approached the study of their own people quite differently from how they had studied these peoples. Unlike many literary ethnographers, they were not interested in the exoticity of the Other, to fix them more firmly as subjects of imperial power as well as to control them more effectively, whether literary ethnography echoed Russian imperial colonial discourses and operated within the stereotypes of representing the Other, or whether the writers, regardless of the official colonial appropriation of the Other, created texts which subverted the colonial discourse. I argue that these writers at times were in tune with and reflected the colonial ambitions of the Empire, while at other times they contested it, depending on their individual political and cultural agendas. As a cultural practice, ethnography made possible the incorporation of different voices and of diverse cultural experiences into a literary or quasi-literary narrative.
of new ideologies or occupations—can activate unrealized potentialities hidden in the discarded past. The past may also reappear, however, in images of violence “hanging on the thin thread of memory” as Bergelson puts it.

To see how Bergelson “marks time,” I situate him in the context of European and Russian modernism, establishing connections that other scholars have left unexplored, including the link between Bergelson and Viktor Shklovsky, and between Bergelson and cinematic slow motion, as in Dziga Vertov’s work. Bergson was crucial to theoretical discussions of time in art, and its potentiality in the 20th and 21st centuries. Bergelson’s writing “marks time” both in the sense of delaying the future and in the sense of making its duration palpable. Gilles Deleuze, Elisabeth Grosz, and Mary Anne Doane have all returned to Bergson to think about the possibility of becoming and renewal. Reading Bergelson through his contemporary Bergson adds to this expanding dialogue about the texture of time, its evocation in art, and its potentiality in the 20th and 21st centuries.

While new translations of his fiction and a volume of critical essays have recently been published, no English-language monograph on Bergelson is available. Marking Time will examine Bergelson’s corpus as an experiment with the multiple nature of temporality by focusing on the tension between creative duration and traumatic belatedness in his work. It will begin by discussing Bergelson’s Matter and Memory and Creative Evolution, Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and the Yiddish reception of Bergson, evidenced in Yiddish criticism and Yiddish translations of his writings. I will argue that in Bergelson’s early fiction the stagnant shirt is the ground from which instants of “creative evolution” emerge. Noah aken (The End of Everything, 1913) establishes the template of belatedness central to Bergelson’s subsequent work: the heroine experiences her life as the echo of the ruined past. Mida-khad (The harshness of the law, 1929), and other works on the Russian revolution and civil war Bergelson considers the potential for messianic renewal in a time of rupture; I compare his combination of Marxism and messianism with Benjamin and Scholm, a point of “contiguity” that other scholars have neglected. The study will conclude with Bergelson’s postwar writings, including his masterpiece, Prince Reuveni (1946) which uses the 18th century history of a false mission to address time itself, asking whether it will bestow renewal to the Jews. Bergelson’s final masterpiece confronts the problem that dominates all his writing: time and its capacity for futurity.

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In 1964, US-based German-Jewish political theorist Hannah Arendt gave what would become a prizewinning interview to West German TV. The 90 minute, free-flowing conversation, which touched on many issues, including philosophy, the Holocaust, Jewishness, literature, politics, and gender, was subsequently published by the interviewer Günter Gauf under the title “Was bleibt? Es bleibt die Mutter sprache” (“What Remains? The Mother Tongue Remains”). With this title, Gauf highlights the attachment to the mother tongue as a key take-away moment of the conversation. As that which remains despite displacement and exile, the singular “mother tongue” becomes synonymous with permanence and stability.

Yet, when I watched this interview on the internet, I noticed a curious circumstance. Just as Arendt attempts to articulate the singular importance of this language – German – for her, she is suddenly at a loss for words. Arendt states “you see, there is an enormous difference between a mother tongue and all other languages. I can say that quite easily for myself. In German I know a ... a quite large part of German poems by heart. They are ... they ... always move somehow in the back [laughter] in the back of my mind * (my translation). What Arendt tries to cover up with embarrassed laughter in this moment is the fact that she cannot remember the German idiomatic expression “im Hinterkopf” and instead briefs switches into English (“in the back of my mind”).

Appearing at the very moment Arendt tries to assert the unique and secure place of the mother tongue, this slip-page tells another story. It reveals the irrepressible significance of Arendt’s non-mother-tongue life and work, fostered in part, to be sure, by forced emigration during the Nazi period. Consider, for instance, the fact that Arendt wrote many of her most important works such as The Origins of Totalitarianism and Eichmann in Jerusalem first (or only) in English, rather than limiting herself to German. This is even more remarkable in light of another statement Arendt makes in the TV interview about the fluent English of her daughter, written in the back of my mind [laughter].

This tension between the assertion of monolingualism in the mother tongue as the unquestionable norm, on the one hand, and the appearance of more or less visible multilingual practices, on the other, is at the center of my recently published book Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012). There I draw attention to the fact that the normative monolingualism that Arendt assumes to be a universal fact is the result of a historical process that is relatively recent and has had a considerable impact on Jews and other minorities in Europe. For, contrary to current expectations, monolingualism and not multilingualism is the more recent historical innovation.
ling only in the course of the eighteenth century at the confluence of radical politi-
cal, philosophical, and cultural changes in Europe, the notion of monolingualism rapidly displaced previously unquestioned practices of living and writing in multiple languages. To pre-modern rulers, for instance, it had been of little concern whether their subjects spoke one or
more languages. With the gendered and affectively charged kinship concept of the unique “mother tongue” at its center, however, a network of discourses and institutions established the idea that hav-
ing one language was the natural norm, and that multiple languages constituted a threat to the cohesion of individuals and societies. Even as they supported the
exclusive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, institutions established the idea that hav-
ing one language was the natural norm, and that multiple languages constituted a threat to the cohesion of individuals and their proper subjectivi-
ties, to the formation of disciplines and institutions, and to imagined collectives
such as cultures or nations. It is, in other words, a paradigm. According to this paradigm, individuals and social formations are imagined to possess one “true” language only, and through this possession to be organically linked to an exclu-
sive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, culture, and nation.

Yet, from the beginning, this paradigm has confronted divergent linguistic prac-
tices, and thus has always required an active process of monolingualization. On
the one hand, this process has entailed the social engineering of monolingual populations, primarily through schooling. On the other hand, it has constantly mini-
nized, pathologized, or simply disallowed existing multilingualisms both in the pres-
ent and the past. Multilingualism, then, has not been absent in the last couple of centuries, but it has been refracted through the monolingual paradigm. This perspective explains why Arendt – very much in keeping with the paradigm – could insist on “true productivity” being reserved for the mother tongue, while ignoring the implications of her own prolific multilingualism. The persistence of a monolingual framework and not its successful transcendence, I propose, is also the backdrop against which we need to see the seeming increase of multilin-
gualism in today’s globalizing, transna-
tional world. By describing the present as “postmonolingual” I aim to capture the tension between this ongoing dominance of the monolingual and a reemergent multilingualism.

As I show in Beyond the Mother Tongue, this tension has also affected (German) Jewish writing. Although the emergence of the paradigm did not necessarily lead to the monolingualization of Jewish culture as such, many Jewish authors nevertheless internalized it as the norm in relation to which they had to situate themselves. Franz Kafka, as I demonstrate in my chapter devoted to him, for instance, sought to adhere to the paradigm for most of his life even as he was aware that he was not consid-
ered properly within its bounds as a German-speaking Jew from Prague. I thus propose to read Kafka from the vantage point of his engagement with monolin-
guism as a force to be reckoned with, rather than as a multilingual speaker of several languages—which he also was. That Kafka came to an aesthetically and poetically productive mode of negotiating the monolingual paradigm through his encounter with the Yiddish language, the-
ter, and literature in his late 20s—that is, through multilingualism—consti-
tutes just one of the postmonolingual ironies of his case.

In the case of philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, who is the subject of the book’s second chapter, it may be more surprising to see him associated with multilingualism rather than monolingual-
ism, given his well-known privileging of the German language and his resistance to English, the language of his long-term American exile. Yet Adorno’s writings on Fremdwörter (words of foreign derivation) can be productively read in a postmono-
inguial light, I argue. Drawing both on what he says about such words – as in his famous aphorism in Minima Moralia, “Fremdwörter sind die Juden der Sprache” (“Words of foreign derivation are the Jews of language”) – and on how he employs such words strategically in his own writing, the chapter reflects on this linguistic category as one subtle way to move “beyond the mother tongue.”

In addition to examining the postmono-
inguial tensions in the writing of pre-and post-Holocaust German Jewish figures Kafka and Adorno, Beyond the Mother Tongue extends the discussion to con-
temporary writers from new immigrant communities, such as Turkish-Germans Emine Sevgi Özdamar and FERIDUN ZAIMGÖL, as well as the unique case of bilingual Japanese-German author Yoko Tawada. By creating this unusual constellation of writers, I am able to point to both continuities and breaks in the postmonolingual condition over the last century. At the same time, this particular constellation provides a new perspec-
tive on commonalities and differences between Jewish and non-Jewish minority writing in German vis-à-vis dominant linguistic ideologies. Using a range of multilingual forms to bring German into contact with a series of other languages, from Yiddish and French, Latin and English, to Japanese, Afrikaans, Arabic, and Turkish, the authors I assemble provide a privileged position from which to explore the strictures of the monolin-
gual paradigm and evaluate the means of reimagining the identity-shaping force of language.
As Hillel Director Rogerio Cukierman.

Azzan Yadin-Israel, Professor of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University, visited in September 2011 to deliver the annual Goldberg Lecture. His talk “What Do We Really Know about the Rabbis? New Findings” was part in a Jewish Studies Workshop where he presented work-in-progress under the title “Textual Foreknowledge: Rabbinic, Pauline, and Pagan.” Yadin-Israel (recorded from right) is pictured here with Religion Professors Bruce Rosenstock, Richard Layton, and Dov Weiss, as well as Hillel Director Rogério Cukierman.

Maxie Diner was in town for a week in March 2012, serving as our Naameh Knouse Visiting Professor in Judaism and Western Culture. During her time at Illinois, the Director of the Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History at NYU gave a public lecture on her book titled “The Bible, the Lure of Antiquity, and Israeli Popular Culture.” She is second from the right, with Schusterman Visiting Israeli Professor Rhona Seidelman and Program in Jewish Culture & Society faculty member Eugene Avrutin.

Eitan Bar-Yosef, with English Professor Lauren Goodlad and English/Jewish Studies Ph.D. student Zak Yarrow, visited in February 2012. The Senior Lecturer in the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics at Ben-Gurion University, who was in the United States for a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, spoke on “New Cities for New Jews: Zionut Ufopa, Fantasy and the Modern Urban Landscape.”

In October 2011, Ilan Troen, Brandeis Professor and doyen of Israel Studies, spoke on “The Right to the Holy Land: Investigating Contending Jewish and Arab Claims of Legitimacy.” He is flanked here by Schusterman Visiting Israeli Professor Rhona Seidelman and Program in Jewish Culture & Society faculty member Dov Weiss.

Sharon Portnoff (sixth from the left) with faculty and graduate students who took part in her Jewish Studies Workshop presentation on “War and Memory: Virgil, Dante and Primo Levi.” Portnoff, a Professor of Religious Studies at Connecticut College, visited in November 2011. She is sitting to the right of Schusterman Visiting Israeli Professor Rhona Seidelman and Program in Jewish Culture & Society faculty member Eugene Avrutin.

Susan Sukerman, Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University, visited in October 2011 to deliver the belated 2010/11 Goldberg Lecture. Her talk “Quentin Tarantino’s Holocaust: Reflections on Inglourious Basterds” drew a standing-room only crowd and was followed by a presentation on “Irene Némirovsky and the Jewish Question in Interior France” to a joint meeting of the French Department and the Jewish Studies Workshop. She is flanked here by Program in Jewish Culture & Society faculty members Hamlet Mares and Brett Kaplan.

Steven Zipperstein (right) with Program in Jewish Culture & Society faculty members Eugene Avrutin and Hamlet Mares. The Stanford historian and longtime Director of its Taube Center for Jewish Studies visited Illinois in April 2012. He presented a public lecture “On Reconstructing the Cultural History of Russian Jewry” and gave a paper titled “Kishinev’s Pogrom in Mythology and History: The Transmutation of the 1903 Riot in Hebrew Poetry, Jewish Politics, and The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” to the Jewish Studies Workshop.

Mia Spira (left), with Program in Jewish Culture & Society faculty member Brett Kaplan, came to campus in February 2012 to share her brand-new research on the Golem in expressionist film and theater. Spira, currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University, is the author of Anti-Nazi Modernism: The Challenges of Resistance in 1930s Fiction.
Israeli literature is sizzling, and it is dominated by young, new writers who are making the biggest impact all among both the reading public and Israel’s prestigious literary awards. In March of 2012, the Program in Jewish Culture & Society hosted the symposium “Israeli Literature in the 21st Century”. This two-and-a-half day event brought together writers, authors, translators and scholars to discuss writing by younger authors, mainly under the age of 40, whose works have attracted attention this century. With many of the speakers participating in this new literature in multiple ways – as scholars, translators, and authors – the event offered the opportunity for fascinating dialogue, examining the literary and aesthetic merits of this exciting new work. This symposium is part of the Israel Studies Project run through the Program in Jewish Culture & Society. Born through the vision of Michael Kotzin, Vice President at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, it seeks to create educational opportunities for writers, artists and scholars from Israel. Additional support from the School of Literature, Cultures and Linguistics and the Program in Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois, as well as Dalkey Archive Press enabled the events to take place.

The opening event focused on readings of the new work in Hebrew and English translation. Many of the pieces were specially translated for this conference, and writers Yehudiel Rahamim and Matan Hamro as well as the poet Eran Ta’iglow were among those who read their own work. Others readers were a remarkable and talented group who not only work as scholars of Hebrew literature in universities throughout the United States, Israel, and Europe, but also as writers and translators (Adriana X. Jacobs and Todd Hasak-Lowy) and editors (like Adam Rovner whose work with Zeek magazine was at the forefront of publishing young Hebrew writers in English during the last decade). Each of the participants is as committed to the process of producing and distributing this new literature as they are to reading and writing scholarship about it. The texts, both poetry and prose, were brought from across Israeli society, including short stories, extracts from novels, and poems, by Russian and Mizrahi Jews, Arab writers who use Hebrew, gay writers, religious feminist women, and writers from throughout Israel including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and the Negev. Their topics ranged from the personal and private to allegories of the national – and demonstrate some of the diversity that contemporary Israeli literature contains. The readings were selected to reflect the material under discussion in the coming days. Among those reading were two students studying advanced Hebrew. They had translated poems for the occasion, as part of the move to bring cutting edge literature and scholarship to the student body.

The audience, including humanities scholars from the university as well as the local community, these readings piqued the curiosity and provided a taste of the material to come. In addition to the conference reading, it will also be featured in a special issue of the Contemporary Review of Fiction to be published soon.

After a welcome reception, Professor Dan Laor delivered the keynote address, Former Dean of the Humanities at Tel Aviv University and a leading figure on the Israeli literary and academic scenes, he spoke on “Writing the Holocaust: Is it Still Relevant?”. At the heart of his talk was the work of younger writers like Amir Gutfreund and Nir Baram and their quest for form in representations of the Holocaust.

The following day brought together papers on topics as diverse as popular street poetry and new moves for traditional Zionism. The morning panel with Ranen Omer-Sherman, Yehezkel Rahamim, and Philip Hollander featured papers exploring Mizrahi writing and the recent boom in fiction by writers of Arab-Jewish descent – Rahamim termed these writers ‘Black Diamonds’. Among those causing a huge literary storm are Ahim Behar and Adaf Shimon but also women such as Tahl Rian and Yis Ela-Et. Cahn. The discussion of Sayed Kashua, an Arab-Israeli writer, within conversations about Mizrahi writers demonstrates the increasingly complicated identity relationships that dominate the current literary scene. This panel particularly noted the physical marginalization of these writers and writing centers as well as the increasing popularity and openness in Israeli society to this fiction.

By contrast, the second panel of the day presented information on poets and poetry groups in Israel who increasingly engage, particularly through acts of translation, with literature beyond the boundaries of state. Using this literary border-crossing, these poets often join together to comment on politics within Israel – creating inter-connected networks of literary and political creativity. Eran Tzilov discussed the ramifications of the contemporary journal scene whose profuse production of poetry in both traditional and non-traditional spaces is engendering a new popularity for the medium. Adriana X. Jacobs focused on poets for whom private and personal literary experience may also be seen as a political act through its gestures towards translations, such as in the poetry of Arna Henmon, whose own work translating Sylvia Plath, among other English poets, influences her use of imagery and form within the Hebrew poetry she writes.

Yaron Polg and Todd Hassak-Lowy returned us to conversations about fiction and, by contrast with the last panel of the day, examined the move to create isolated protagonists living in Tel Aviv bubbles. Through the works of Dor Bushstein and Asaf Shur, they demonstrated that these young male writers are focusing on the universal condition of the modern era and its distance from traditional Zionist values. Shai Ginsburg and Rachel S. Harris at the last panel of the day argued instead that, despite the apparent diversity within contemporary Israeli writing, there is also a return to canonical Jewish fiction. As Ginsburg explained, the historical novels of Ahon Hiu offer an opportunity to both reconnect with a period of Israeli-Jewish history removed from the modern nation-state, as it is the obvious and necessary response. Harris, by contrast, demonstrated that the novels of Eshkol Nivo are preoccupied with the relationship between home
Jeremy Davies – Senior Editor at Dalkey

Tying together many of the threads that had begun to unravel over the course of the previous days, the final panel explored translations and the availability of Hebrew literature in English. Adam Roehn – who had served as the Hebrew literature editor for Zeek magazine during the few years in which they arranged for the translation and publication of literature and poetry from Israel – and Jeremy Davies – Senior Editor at Dalkey Archive Press whose series on Hebrew Literature in Translation is now the only venue dedicated to the translation of Hebrew fiction in the country – challenged the audience’s expectations. While it is an undeniable fact that literature in translation in the US is massively under-represented in every language, in Hebrew literature, even where there is a will by publishers, there is little financial support available for such an enterprise. In the main, American Jews, they argued, do not support Hebrew literature, finding it challenging to their notions of what Israel should be and disconcerted by the literary and social diversity modern fiction and poetry represent. Unlike the Israeli readership who come from all echelons of society, Hebrew literature in translation is often the preserve of literary (though not necessarily Jewish) elites. One outcome of this conference, then, was to reaffirm the importance of promoting and disseminating Israeli literature in the US and to remind the reading public of its literary and aesthetic importance.

Can it be said that this symposium defined a new field, or concluded that it is correct to group these young authors together as a “new generation”? Are there universal threads that cross through these works? Can these writers be seen to share aesthetics, ideas, or experiences? More than anything, this event demonstrated the breadth and range of Israeli literature, suggesting diversity rather than just commonality. It clearly showed that there is something new occurring in Israeli literature, something which must be explored and addressed, and that it will continue to develop, thereby defining the immediate future. Though these writers and poets come from widely different backgrounds, they do share a history of having grown up in Israel at a time when the founding myths of Israeli society were still inculcated within educational systems but were increasingly challenged in the broader political and social spheres. These writers were raised within an Israel in which heroism retained its cache but in which attitudes towards the legitimacy of war found increasing contestation within the very heart of Jewish society – and where land for peace became a real and meaningful form of discourse. Peace with Arab lands was achieved within the lifetime of many, and the Arab in their midst was no longer an idealized vision of oriental connection to the land, or an enemy to be feared. Yet it was precisely at the same time that the civilian population came to experience terror, not only on the battlefield but in every domestic, private, and public sphere. The Gulf war, Katusha rockets, and the waves of suicide bombs changed Israeli attitudes to fear; at times paralyzing the country – and in time, as even fear became routinized, it was this generation that often came to question their own obligation to participate in controlling civilian populations in their midst. While Jewish writers came to depict Arab characters in increasingly sympathetic ways, Arabs also began to write in Hebrew, creating new spaces for dialogue and blurring the boundaries that had existed for previous generations of Israelis.

This generation was raised at a time when immigration continued in major waves, with the arrival of relatively small groups of Ethiopian Jews and Russians in their hundreds of thousands. Thus, the very ethnic melting pot ideals that had previously been excluded – some-thing that has been evident in cultural changes like the rise of Mizrachi culture which has come to find a space within the mainstream. Religion within Israel has evolved in multiple directions during this generation’s lifetime, becoming both more extreme and more open. Sexuality and sexual preference have found greater acceptance within the Israeli public sphere. While images of the traditional pioneer and kibbutz may have disappeared, they have been replaced with the post-army backpacker or the Israeli businessman abroad.

This symposium sought to raise questions about the very nature of the new material being produced, to force the academy to explore the interests and enthusiasm of the reading public, and to engage with the rich, diverse, and exciting works that have taken Israel by storm. Though this may be only the beginning of the work to be done, by both scholars and writers, this event can be seen as a significant moment on the literary map of Israeli culture. As Todd Haskin-Low pointed out, it was interesting to see if “there really is a there “there.” It seems there is.
Starting with the First Aliyah of the 1880s, defence was part of the pioneer ideology. By the 1920s, this had developed into a co-ordinated paramilitary organisation: the Haganah (1920-1948). This defence force operated to protect the Jewish community from Arab attacks, following rioting in Jaffa and elsewhere in 1920-21. Though at first localised, disorganised and unfocused, violence in 1929 changed the role and character of the organisation and it quickly expanded to include much of the Yishuv. Increasingly, the Haganah began making some of its own weapons, gathering foreign fire arms, and developing an unrecognised militia into a highly organised underground army. Of some of their activities during particular periods were sanctioned by the British and at times they worked together in the face of a common foe, though this relationship was always tense.

During the Mandate Period, the Haganah generally displayed a pattern of restraint and defence. For some, this apparent passivity seemed in conflict with the aims of Zionism. By 1931, the more militant group was responsible for much of the Yishuv control had been instructed in from childhood. By 1948, a culture of militarism, responsiveness to terror, and readiness for war were already integrated into the very notion of being a new Hebrew. The military forces were centralised, and with the British withdrawal faced a series of wars beginning with the 1948 War of Independence. Further conflicts followed in 1956 (Suez Crisis), 1967 (Six Day War), 1968-1970 (War of Attrition), 1973 (Yom Kippur War), 1982 (first Lebanon War) and 1993 (first and second Lebanon Wars), as well as 1982-1993 (first and second Intifadas). In addition, there were many other military engagements such as Operation Litani (1978 in Lebanon), the Gulf War (1991), and Operation Cast Lead (2008-09 in Gaza).

The dramatic impact of the Yom Kippur War (1973) – which Israel almost lost and which brought public humiliation both for its unpreparedness and for the images of captured Israeli soldiers dragged as hostages across television screens – produced the first signs of a major change in Israeli society in regard to the myth of the invincible Israeli soldier. In 1977, Menachem Begin, previously head of the Irgun, became Prime Minister. He signed the first Peace Treaty with an Arab country (Egypt, 1979) but was also in power during Operation Litani, the first moves into Lebanon and then during the first Lebanon War (1982). These military incursions into another territory, even under the pretext of defending Israel’s northern borders and disrupting PLO activities, spelled a change in Israeli military policy. Finally, the massacre in Sabra and Shatila, where Christian Phalangist militia attacked Palestinians while Israeli soldiers stood by, led to international condemnation of Israel. Internally, the pro-peace responses from the left grew in support and volume and protestors opposed the annexation of the newly-conquered territories of Gush Enunim.

A grass-roots uprising by Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem in December 1987, which included both non-violent civil disobedience (boycotts against Israeli goods, general strikes, refusal to pay taxes, graffiti) and violent resistance (throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at the IDF, burning tires) lasted until 1993, and is known as the Intifada. His single group can be credited with the beginning of this uprising, but the dominance of Palestinians highlighted the increasing lack of claim Egypt and Jordan had to these territories. The IDF was unprepared for the urban warfare they experienced, and Israeli military and political measures often further inflamed the situation. This conflict profoundly affected Israeli perceptions of Palestinians and forced Israelis to confront their own constructed national ideologies and attitudes towards settling the land. International condemnation of Israeli boy-cotting of Israeli goods and a lack of good will towards the state, gained increasing hold. In the winter of 1990-91, the Gulf War in which Israel remained militarily passive despite shelling by Iraq, revealed that superior military technology was considerably more important than land in maintaining safe national borders and protecting citizens. For a multitude of reasons, Israelis entered peace negotiations in 1993 with the recognition of the need for a change in the status quo, resulting in the Oslo Peace accords (with “Letters of Recognition” by each party of the right of the other to exist) and bringing Nobel prize awards for Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Yasser Arafat.

Attitudes towards militarism had changed as the boundaries of conflicts were renegotiated and moved from international to a sustained period of terror in Israel as suicide bombings and terrorist attacks became the major modes of operation for Palestinians opposing moves towards peace. Meanwhile, Israelis...
Ills, serving in the IDF found themselves increasingly embroiled in protecting right wing settlers on the border lands or maintaining order in Palestinian areas where their very presence was resented. Civil victims of terrorist attacks wanted maintaining order in Palestinian areas veterans (which included civic social honouration with Israel), as well as the creation of Palestinian parliament, a truce finally came in November 2006. In a move to reduce the suicide bombings in Israel, a security fence was erected between Israeli and the West Bank. While this has resulted in issues about the annexation of land and the ways in which the fence bisected Palestinian territories affecting economic and social issues, both sides agree that the fence did indeed reduce the number of attacks on civilians.

Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, which involved the removal and disbursement of Israeli settlements and the removal of military bases and outposts, paved the way to Palestinian self-governance of the area. In Israel, mass protests, symbolised by the colour orange, took place both for and against these activities. Despite anticipated resistance, the IDF completed the withdrawal ahead of schedule. It generally seemed during the first decade of the twenty-first century that Israeli public opinion leaned towards measures that would increase the likelihood of peace, though counter-voices were prominent in all aspects of Israeli society. Meanwhile, in Gaza, Israeli withdrawal triggered both a civil war internally and, over the next couple of years, increasing rocket fire on southern Israel. Thus, by 2008, the Israelis returned to Gaza in Operation Cast Lead to stop the attacks by Qassam rockets, which then escalated to the Gaza War in the winter of 2008-2009. While tension remains, incremental moves toward a long term resolution do seem to be gaining some foothold in the region.

The 1990s and 2000s, reveal a systemic change in the role of the IDF, attitudes towards the military in general, and an increased questioning of authorities by the world at large and by Israeli soldiers. Higher rates of refusal to serve, evident in the increased numbers of conscientious objectors, or the failure to turn up for duty were acts of resistance previously unimaginable. This period has signalled a change in every level of military reception. Suicide bombing particularly changed attitudes towards hierarchies of bereavement and commemoration and hence the invisibility and centrality of the soldier – and refocused attention on Zionism as a movement by all the people of the state. The increased critical attitude toward the IDF and the collapse of its unquestionable status meant that citizens were no longer likely to participate in wars they considered unjust. The move toward peace in the 1990s (including peace with Jordan), the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by an Israeli extremist, as well as terrorist violence all reshaped Israeli attitudes to war and provided widespread momentum for a two-state solution. Despite repeated setbacks public opinion and international attitudes had devolved to expect short wars. This in turn has reshaped the current military agenda.

A clear narrative arc underpins Israeli attitudes to militarism in culture and society. This transformation (which is marked by both radical change and continuity), is the subject of this volume and the ground it is breaking. The conversations about culture and public commemoration overlap as Israeli society evolves its responses to military conflict and to other social pressures within the country; and the innovations in Israeli cultural representations of war and militarization lie at the heart of this collection of essays. Through this volume, we seek to bring together a multitude of disciplines working on forms of representation in order to convey the extent of the cross-cultural dialogue taking place within Israel. While this collection is by no means exhaustive, it is designed to convey a sense of the rich research on cultural responses to war in Israel today.
Course description: The Portuguese voyages on the coast of Africa in the fifteenth century initiated the expansion of western Europe, the period known as the “age of exploration” or the “great navigations.” What role did Jews play in the Atlantic world between 1450 and 1660? These newly “discovered” lands certainly offered European Jews an escape from European oppression and new economic and social opportunities while at the same time the prospect of moving to an unknown place may well have seemed daunting, especially given fears of the unknown. This seminar will examine Jewish communities all over the Atlantic World from Africa to Latin America and the American colonies. It will include an examination of the rise of the Atlantic slave trade and the American Revolution. The class will feature discussions of a variety of primary sources and research methods. Students will pursue research on a topic of their choice and write a 20 page paper based on primary sources.

Dana Rabin Discusses Her Course

“The Jewish Atlantic”

I joined the Department of History at the University of Illinois in 2003, and the Program in Jewish Studies and Culture has offered me a second home right from the start. My affiliation, service on the executive board, and participation at the biweekly Jewish Studies Workshop has been professionally and academically fulfilling. The lectures, seminars, presentations, and workshops sponsored by Jewish Studies have sparked probing, worthwhile conversations, fostering interdisciplinary projects and innovative approaches to familiar narratives. My undergraduate research seminar on the Jewish Atlantic world resulted from the interdisciplinary cross-fertilization and creative and capacious thinking around a Jewish Studies seminar table.

When I first spoke to Matti about my work on conceptions of race and difference in the early modern period (1450-1815) and specifically my study of Britain’s famously named Jew Bill (Jewish Naturalization Bill) of 1753, he suggested that I develop a course exploring the history of Jewish life in the “age of discovery.” I was intrigued by the prospect of taking the concept exploited by Paul Gilroy in his landmark study The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness (1993) and considering whether, how, and to what extent Gilroy’s insights related to the Jewish experience in the early modern world. In this influential work, Gilroy, a sociologist now at the London School of Economics, offered a new perspective on diaspora, proposing the Black Atlantic as a space of transnational cultural construction. Gilroy described black identity in Europe, Africa, and the New World as an ongoing process of trans-Atlantic travel and exchange. He argued that for a century and a half, black intellectuals sojourned and worked in a transnational frame and that their experiences and the creative products that resulted reflect deep ties both to their countries of origin and to the places in which they lived. Gilroy insists on the complex history of African-diasporic intellectual culture and the co-constituted nature of both African and European identities. The book posits a Black identity that is always a hybrid composition through which one can trace a wide range of histories and experiences that are not bounded by any single national story.

To develop a syllabus for the course, I defined the physical boundaries of the Jewish Atlantic very broadly. My criterion for inclusion was simple: any source on Jewish history, primary or secondary, that reached beyond Europe. From the “canonical” sources on early modern Jewry I included many sources that connected Europe to the world beyond. The course design was also influenced by my other teaching assignment at Illinois, the global history survey. Because my own work is in the early modern period – and to resist student temptation to study only modern history – I confi ned the course to the period beginning with the expulsion from Spain in 1492 and ending with the Napo-

/702x290] on the first day of class I give out a blank map of the world and ask students to mark the area they consider to be in the purview of a class on the Jewish Atlantic. The point of the exercise is to show how widespread the Jewish presence was in a global context and that it included North and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Immediately students begin to question the paradigm that sets off the Atlantic Ocean from the Pacific – thus revealing the limitations as well as the benefits of an Atlantic approach. Given the tremendous mobility that is so typical of the Jewish experience in the early modern world, we discuss questions of place, the relationship between space and identity, and how trade, diaspora, and migration shape a community and its identity.

With these starting points established, the course examines European expansion and the Jews involved in that endeavor as refugees from Spain’s expulsion, as concomitants of entrepreneurs, as plantation owners and managers, as slave traders, as imperial actors, as family members, as subjects, and as citizens. We discuss the trans-imperial tensions between the Netherlands where Jews enjoyed a high degree of tolerance and Portugal, Spain, and France where they did not. Students learn the history of Brazil which brought a community of almost 3000 Jews to Recife when the Dutch occupied the west coast of South America (formerly held by the Portuguese) between 1624 and 1654. We follow 23 refugees from that community who fled to the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam (later renamed New York) by its British
In the first half of the twentieth century, the violence of war worked itself deep into the lives of Europeans. Scarcely a family had not been touched by the calamity of World War I, which left nearly 9 million men dead and 20 million wounded. Captured civilians on city streets remained obvious reminders of the war, widows and orphans in aban- doned households more hidden ones. In the decades that followed the armistice in 1918, ordinary memories circled around the bitter experience of loss. For years, the war was relived and remem- bered (and dismembered), Erich Maria Remarque’s All Quiet on the Western Front became an instant, if controversial touchstone upon its publication in 1929. Conversations continued without end about the origins and consequences of the war and the unresolved issues that persisted. Therefore, when the next war seemed to draw close, families across the continent made comparisons and drew distinctions with the Great War. Hit- ler’s rise to power in January 1933, the crisis over Czechoslovakia in September and October 1938, Germany’s attack on Poland in September 1939, Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, and the deportation and murder of Jews created shared spaces of general alarm that generated endless debate, speculation, and rumormongering about the nature of the new war.

What made all the talk about World War II urgent was the fact that civilians were direct targets rather than fanatically by- standers. Civilians across Europe had to deal with occupation authorities, enemy bombs, and military reprisals. Whole populations were targeted for expopria- tion, enslavement, and, in the case of Jews, physical annihilation. Only a small fraction of the dead in World War I were civilians, yet noncombatants, includ- ing women and children, accounted for seventy percent of the dead in World War II. “In the last war, whenever we met up, we recounted our dead and wounded,” noted veteran and novelist Ernst Jünger in 1943; now, “we add the deported and the murdered.” This extraordinary fact only became clear as the fighting lengthened into a protracted global war. It demanded that contemporaries confront the war in existential terms. From the beginning, civilians were conscripted as witnesses. They also inhabited the roles—sometimes simultaneously—of persecuted, collaborators, and perpetrators.

What is more: combat was not carried out in “night and fog” operations, but occurred in broad daylight; people found themselves pushed onto trains as forced laborers, refugees, and deportees, and they also stood by and watched the slow motion of trains churning across Europe. This made for crass encounters: billions of pieces of mail moved across the continent from the homefront to the battlefront and back again. Disaster also could be found on the front lines, in air-bombarded cities, in belaguered ghettos, on the edges of kill- ing fields – in short in all the locations of war across German-occupied Europe. As W. B. Yeats put it about the troubles in Ireland, “we peiced our thoughts into philosophy.”

The “conversations” include the dilemma to interpret Hitler, his intentions, and the aims of the German army; both the misleading and inscrutable nature of this war to World War I or the Napole- onic wars or of Hitler to Stalin or Nazism to Bolshevism; the epical nature of the new authoritarianism which seemed triumphant in summer 1940; the degree to which race and anti-Semitism were understood as drivers of German actions; the whereabouts of God; the idea (or absence) of “humanity” and individual responsibility; and the interpretation of the war as a gigantic technological or natural disaster. These “conversations” will be book-ended by an opening chapter on the urgency of talk in wartime and a concluding chapter on the broken nature of words at the end of World War II.

The Mind Besieged explores the popular work of explanation, the struggle for meaning for an entire wartime generation. The “greatest” generation was only so in the intellectual and existential challenges it faced and only incompletely mastered. The dilemmas of choice, responsibility, and witnessing exposed during World War II still structure the intellectual world we live in today.
RECENT PH.D. ANDREW DEMSHUK ON HIS NEW BOOK

Any European who had left Europe in 1938 would not have recognized it in 1948. Out of the prewar multiethnic landscape with relatively fluid borders, the horror of violent racism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide wrought through Nazism and its aftermath forged ethnically homogeneous nation-states with frontiers made rigid through forced migrations and tighter border controls. By 1948, the Nazis had all but disappeared. The Eastern Europe’s Jewish population, roughly twelve million Germans had fled or been expelled from Eastern Europe into the truncated remnants of the Reich, former forced laborers of multiple nationalities sat in camps across Germany, Soviet troops forced Poles from regions annexed to the Soviet Union, Polish soldiers shipped Ukrainians from Poland’s southeast into former German territories in Poland’s West, and within the nascent postwar nation-states themselves, millions of uprooted people wandered among strangers.

It is against this backdrop of monumental population and border shifts that my work takes place: an investigation into how millions of ordinary Germans from the East looked back on what they had lost. My interest in this project began over a decade ago, when I first learned that one-quarter of prewar German territory was annexed in 1945 by Poland and the USSR, and one-fifth of the postwar population of East and West Germany consisted of German refugees from the East. I wondered what had happened to all of these people. Why didn’t they destabilize the fragile democracy in West Germany, as the Weimar Republic had been destabilized due to far less severe territorial losses and population upheavals in the aftermath of the First World War?

As I researched these questions, I found that most scholarship rested on the assumption that, by thinking of their lost homeland, expellees in West Germany indulged in revanchist fantasies of returning to the East. This contradicted what I found when I examined expellees accounts over the first twenty-five years after the war: whenever they obsessed over their lost homeland, expellees tended to enter into a scarring process after the trauma of ethnic cleansing, which steadily helped them to reject the active political agenda bent on securing a German return to the lost East – an agenda which, if successful, would have perpetuated the cycle of hatred and violence and made impossible the relatively peaceful Europe we know today.

A leading goal of my work was to differentiate millions of expellees from the narrow cast of political spokespersons, who regularly proclaimed that expellees wanted to secure their “right to the homeland,” defined as their right to return and occupy the spaces where many of their families had lived for hundreds of years. Many of these Berufsvertriebenen (“professional expellees”) used their supposed constituents as a way to attend themselves in victimhood: that they had themselves suffered and been wronged in 1945, even though a disproportionate number of them had also been active in the Nazi era and either helped to plan or participated in atrocities. They had strong ties with the West German regime, which believed their claims and feared that it would lose massive public support if it ceased to demand the 1937 borders.

When an expellee cherished memories of the lost Heimat (homeland) it was therefore presumed to imply a revanchist desire to see territorial revisionism and resettlement – a viewpoint that remains prevalent to this day. The allegedly prevalent expellee interest in return to the Lost German East is said to have only been destroyed by the rise of the postwar generation in the 1950s, or by the prosperity of the West German Economic Miracle.

To illustrate this phenomenon, I will provide a typical example from Silesia, a former German region which formed the basis for my study. The 1950 issue of Merian, a popular West German magazine, was devoted to the former Silesian provincial capital of Breslau (now Pol’ish Wrocław). Representative of the Heimat of memory, the cover of Merian featured a large, timeless (actually interned) photograph of the gothic city hall and reunified readers that “the beautiful Breslau town hall still stands today, undestroyed in the heart of the city.” The magazine’s pages used crisp prewar photographs (which included Nazi officers wandering the streets unmentioned) to portray this important metropolis as a static, intact and somehow peaceful German environment that might be toured, if only it could be grasped. Incorporating what Robert Moeller has called “selective remembering,” the Heimat of memory transformed 1930s Germany into a golden age, while Auschwitz (annexed to Upper Silesia during the war) and the burned synagogues in most every Silesian town vanished from memory. Such an emphasis on German victimhood and “forgetting” of German crimes rightly stirs dissatisfaction, even aversion for the aesthetic of the Heimat of memory. Yet as Alan Confino has argued, rather than just asking whether Germans remembered the Nazi period, it is also important to seek out the consequences of “what in fact they did remember.” Accepting that these memories were usually distorted, an investigation of expellee memory work reveals drastic implications: they coped with their loss of the real Heimat by residing in an idealized Heimat of memory, colored by an aesthetic of loss.

Alaside the Heimat of memory, the second image, the Heimat transformed, conveyed a world that had already been lost. In the 1950 Merian issue, graphic
Heimat was not to be found in the all her desires, she knew full well that, dreams, desires, and fleeting reality?” For this fall away into a twilight, created from heart,” she reflected, “but doesn’t all of where I answered the phone with beating kissed me, the café or telephone booth had our first date, the bench where you still want to know the bridge where we transformed was divorced from the real circumstances in which Polish settlers had first encountered and interpreted their surroundings. Depressed by the Heimat transformed, expellees fled back from tangible reality and become a dream -

In her article for the Merian issue, Felicitas Hoppenstedt-Stirum, a German who had been forced to leave Breslau, captured the meaning behind these two, conflicting images; her Heimat, the homeland that she still loved, had diverged from tangible reality and become a dream world, lost in an irretrievable past. “We –

The book explores four areas to demonstrate the steady polarization of the two Heimat images in expellees’ minds: how Germans who remained in the East in the aftermath of the war experienced its transformation and shared their sense of foreignness with old neighbors who had already fled to the West; how expellees in the West fashioned their Heimat of memory in private memoirs, paintings, and chronicles; how at gatherings expellees collectively generated the Heimat of memory and confronted the Heimat transformed; and how the experience of travel back to visit former Heimat spaces in contemporary western Poland usually compelled expellees to recognize the utter break between the world they desired and the world they confronted — and sometimes allowed them to forge new connections with the changed world as informed guests.

The 1970 Treaty of Warsaw, when West Germany formally recognized Poland’s western border, offers a logical ending; for a cultural history seeking to answer the political question of why expellees consigned themselves to the loss of their Heimat rather than radicalize behind the territorial ravine of platforms of their leaders. By the time Willy Brandt went to Warsaw to recognize the border, years of dealing with loss had prepared expellees for their widespread resignation with reality. Though the Heimat was not spiritually renounced, it had been physically sun- rendered long ago. 

My four years at the University of Illinois were greatly influenced by my involvement in the Program in Jewish Culture & Society. Almost all of my semesters at the university included a course within the Program, all of which truly enriched my studies. As a freshman I registered for a Hebrew language course and found myself enjoying Hebrew more than any other class I was in. My involvement with the Hebrew class encouraged me to register for more classes in the Program in Jewish Culture & Society for my sophomore year. I registered for Jewish Storytelling with a professor who was new to the university – Rachel S. Harris – and it ended up being one of my favorite classes that I took throughout college. The class taught me about Jewish culture all over the world in addition to improving my writing skills significantly. After Jewish Storytelling, I “followed” this professor, arranging my schedule so that I could take as many classes with her as possible for the next two years on campus. I was lucky to enroll in two of her classes for my last semester at the University of Illinois.

In addition to the classes that influenced my academics at the university, the Program in Jewish Culture & Society exposed me to an immense amount of speakers from all over the world who gave campus-wide lectures, from watching and critiquing a film with a well-known Israeli author to attending a lecture on European memorial buildings for the Holocaust. The diversity of the lectures ensured that the students and community members on campus could find a connection with Jewish thought at a secular university. The second semester of my junior year I studied abroad at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The Program in Jewish Culture & Society helped me pick classes that I would find relevant to my studies in addition to making sure the classes would fulfill requirements within the minor I was to receive in the Program. I found myself constantly referring to the classes I took at the University of Illinois while I was studying and traveling abroad in Israel for the semester and summer.
In October 2012, the Program in Jewish Culture & Society and the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies is hosting a conference on the theme “Recollection, Retribution, Reconciliation: Postmemory and Justice in a Transnational Age.” “Recollection, Retribution, Reconciliation” will explore the following questions: How do different groups of inheritors of guilt and victimization resonate with one another across space and time? How is reconfiguration configured across national contexts and within transnational norms? How do memories, postmemories, and testimonies contribute to the legal questions of retribution and justice? By bringing together an engaged group of scholars from such fields as literary studies, sociology, law, anthropology, geography, and other disciplines, this working conference will reflect on these and other questions at the cutting edge of global efforts to negotiate traumatic pasts and presents. By looking at diverse events from different regions including Europe, Latin America, Southern Africa, and Southeast Asia – from the Holocaust to the disappeared to apartheid to the killing fields – the event will open up dialogue about pressing issues of transitional and transnational justice across different spaces and discourses.

The way this promising conference came about offers a testament to the Jewish Studies program’s interdisciplinary reach across the University of Illinois campus. In the fall of 2010 the prominent USC queer theorist Judith Halberstam was invited to give a talk cohosted by the Unit for Criticism and the HGMS initiative. Halberstam spoke from her new book, The Queer Art of Failure, and the talk, “The Killer in Me is the Killer in You: Homosexuality and Fascism,” generated many dialogues and much interest among faculty and graduate students. The following day Judith gave a paper on her work on the Kindertransport to the Jewish Studies workshop; it was an incredible -- and quite emotional -- workshop as two people who had been on Kindertransporten were in the room. After the workshop Judith and I talked about perhaps organizing a panel together as we realized we had overlapping interests in memory studies and Holocaust memory/postmemory. I suggested we go to the American Comparative Literature Annual conference in Vancouver that year, and we put together a truly thrilling panel that included Marianne Hirsch and many other established and up-and-coming scholars in the field. Our panel, “Postmemory and the Holocaust in Transnational Contexts,” was so compelling and we all felt so engaged that we agreed to try to continue the conversation at some other point.

When I returned from Vancouver I immediately wrote to the director of Jewish Studies, Matti Burzl, and the director of the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, Memory Studies, Michael Rothberg, to tell them about the interest generated at the ACLA and to ask if we might be able to bring some of the panelists to Illinois for a small conference here. They both not only responded enthusiastically but also felt that this work on postmemory dovetail nicely with a conference that they were in the process of organizing on Justice in a Transnational Age with Colin Flint (Geography). We met with Colin and he agreed to join forces. The result will be “Recollection, Retribution, Reconciliation: Postmemory and Justice in a Transnational Age,” bringing together a small group of distinguished scholars working on topics that provide insights into the intersection of postmemory and transitional justice in different historical-geographical settings.

The distinguished speakers who plan to attend are: Deborati Sanyal (Barkeley), Amy Huber (NYU), Judith Halberstam (USC), Macarena Gomez-Barris (USC), Karin Engle (Texas Austin), James Tyler (Kent State), Vilashini Coopan (UC Santa Cruz), Marianne Hirsch (Columbia), and Lee Spitzer (Darmouth). The conference will kick off with a public, keynote roundtable “Memory, Justice, Generation” on the evening of Thursday, October 4. The remainder of the workshop, on Friday and Saturday will take place in a more intimate setting and feature presentations of pre-circulated papers along with responses and open discussion. This is the second workshop with this format sponsored by HGMS. The first – “Anamnesia, Archive, Autobiography: Networks of Testimony in German Occupied Europe” – took place in March 2011. The range of co-sponsors for the “Recollection, Retribution, Reconciliation” conference testifies to the enthusiasm it has already generated across the disciplines; these contributors include the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, Memory Studies; the Program in Jewish Culture & Society; the Center for Global Studies; the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies; the Program in Comparative and World Literature; and the School of Cultures, Ciences, and Linguistics.

We view this exiting event as a place to work through both academic and current political questions around issues of reconciliation, memory, and justice; and we hope that the ideas discussed at the workshop will provide innovative ways for graduate students and faculty to engage emerging global events in their own research and establish fertile collaborations.

BRETT ASHLEY KAPLAN ON THE UPCOMING CONFERENCE
“RECOLLECTION, RETRIBUTION, RECONCILIATION:
POSTMEMORY AND JUSTICE IN A TRANSNATIONAL AGE”

Brett Ashley Kaplan, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Member of the Executive Committee of the Program in Jewish Culture & Society, is the co-organizer (with Colin Flint and Michael Rothberg) of “Recollection, Retribution, Reconciliation: Postmemory and Justice in a Transnational Age,” which will take place on the campus of the University of Illinois in early October 2012. She is the author of Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasures in Holocaust Representation (2008) and Landscape of Holocaust Postmemory (2010).

Judith Halberstam & Michael Rothberg During Judith’s Visit to Illinois in 2010

Brett Ashley Kaplan, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Member of the Executive Committee of the Program in Jewish Culture & Society, is the co-organizer (with Colin Flint and Michael Rothberg) of “Recollection, Retribution, Reconciliation: Postmemory and Justice in a Transnational Age,” which will take place on the campus of the University of Illinois in early October 2012. She is the author of Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasures in Holocaust Representation (2008) and Landscape of Holocaust Postmemory (2010).
THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH CULTURE & SOCIETY

THE STAFF
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Bruce Rosenstock, Associate Director
Michael Rottenberg, Director, Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies
Craig Alexander, Assistant to the Director

THE FACULTY
Eugene Avrutin* (History): European Jewish History; Jews of Imperial Russia
Dale Bialer* (English): American Women’s Literature
Edward Bruner (Anthropology): Anthropology of Tourism; Jewish Travel
Matti Burdl* (Anthropology): Jews in the Modern World; Central Europe
Kenneth Cuno (History): History of the Middle East; Egypt
Virginia Dominguez* (Anthropology): Anthropology of Peoplehood; Israel
Collin Fleet (Geography): Political Geography; Geography of the Near East
Peter Fritzschke (History): Twentieth-Century German History; Third Reich
George Gasyna (Slavic): Polish Literature; Polish-Jewish Relations
Dara Goldman* (Spanish): Hispanic Caribbean; Jews of the Caribbean
Fred Gottlieb (Economics): Economics of the Middle East; Israel
Alma Gottlieb (Anthropology): West Africa; Jews of Cape Verde
James Hansell (English): British/Irish Modernism; Minorities in British History
Dianne Harris (Landscape Architecture): Architecture; Suburbia and Assimilation
Rachel Harris* (Comparative Literature): Hebrew Literature; Israeli Cultural Studies
Javier Iglesias Garcia (Spanish): Golden Age Spain
Jedah Kahn (History): History of Anti-Semitism; United States; France
Lilya Kaganovsky (Comparative Literature): Soviet Culture
Breit Kaplan* (Comparative Literature): Holocaust Representation in Art and Literature
Yoni Kedem (Religion): Hebrew Language
Harry Liebesohn (History): European Intellectual History
Harriet Murav* (Comparative Literature): Russian- and Soviet-Jewish Writing; Yiddish
Cary Nelson (English): Modern American Poetry; Practice of Anti-Semitism
Carl Nielsen (German): German Cultural History; Vienna 1900
Wayne Pitard* (Religion): History of Ancient Syria; Bible
Gary Porton (Religion): Rabbinics; Judaism in Late Antiquity
David Price (Religion): Jewish-Christian Relations; Early Modern Europe
Dana Rabin* (History): Early Modern British History; Minority in British History
Bruce Rosenstock* (Religion): Jewish Thought; Messianism in the Jewish Tradition
Emanuel Rota (Italian): European Intellectual History; Fascism
Michael Rosenthal* (English): Holocaust Representation; Holocaust and Postcoloniality
Mahr Sahl (Anthropology): West Africa; Sephardim
Rhona Seidelman (Visiting Schusterman Professor): Israeli History; History of Medicine
Michael Shapiro (English): Shakespeare and the Jews
Marek Sroka (Library): Jewish Studies in Eastern Europe
Maria Vido (German): Early Modern German Literature
Terri Weisman (Art History): History of Photography
Dov Weiss* (Religion): Biblical Interpretation, Rabbinic Literature, Jewish Thought
Yasemin Yildiz (German): German-Jewish Literature; Holocaust Studies

* Members of the Program in Jewish Culture & Society Executive Committee

THE COURSES IN JEWISH STUDIES

Listed below are the courses approved for Jewish Studies credit at the University of Illinois. A selection of these courses is taught every academic year.

ANTHROPOLOGY
- The Holocaust and Its Meanings ANTH 161
- American Jewish Culture ANTH 190
- The World of Jewish Sephardim ANTH 275
- Jewish Cultures of the World ANTH 290

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
- Jewish Storytelling: From the Russian Shtetl to New York CWL 221
- Literary Responses to the Holocaust CWL 320
- Jewish Life Writing CWL 421

ENGLISH
- Modernity Images in American Film ENGL 272
- Modern Jewish Literature ENGL 284
- Jewish Immigrant Literature ENGL 363
- Literature of American Minority ENGL 460

GERMAN
- Vienna 1900 GER 257
- The Holocaust in Context GER 260

HEBREW
- Undergraduate Open Seminar HEBR 199
- Elementary Modern Hebrew, I HEBR 201
- Intermediate Modern Hebrew, I HEBR 202
- Intensive Biblical Hebrew HEBR 205
- Jewish Sacred Literature HEBR 425
- Interdisciplinary Readings of the Tanakh HEBR 403
- Intermediate Modern Hebrew, II HEBR 404
- Advanced Modern Hebrew, I HEBR 406
- Advanced Modern Hebrew, II HEBR 408
- Topics in Modern Hebrew Language and Literature, I HEBR 407
- Topics in Modern Hebrew Language and Literature, II HEBR 409

HISTORY
- History of the Islamic Middle East HIST 196
- History of the Jews in the Diaspora HIST 268
- Jewish History to 1700 HIST 299
- Jews in the Twentieth Century HIST 310
- Soviet Jewish History HIST 355
- History of Religion in America HIST 361
- Jewish History since 1700 HIST 362
- The Middle East in the Twentieth Century HIST 363
- Constructing Race in America HIST 364
- The Middle East in the Twentieth Century HIST 365
- Jewish History since 1700 HIST 366
- The Middle East in the Twenty-First Century HIST 367
- Jewish History since 1700 HIST 368
- The History of the Jews in the Diaspora HIST 433
- Twentieth-Century Germany HIST 456

RUSSIAN
- Introduction to Russian Jewish Culture RUS 261
- Jewish History to 1700 RUS 268
- Jewish History since 1700 RUS 269
- Constructing Race in America RUS 281
- The Middle East 1565-1914 RUS 335
- The Middle East in the Twentieth Century RUS 337
- Soviet Jewish History RUS 355
- Russian Jewish History RUS 364

YIDDISH
- Yiddish Literature YIDH 101
- Yiddish Language YIDH 102
- Yiddish Literature YIDH 103
- Yiddish Literature YIDH 104

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