

## Conference Papers – Abstracts

*Samantha Baskind*

*Cleveland State University*

### **Rod Serling's *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* (1960), the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Horizon of Expectations**

In 1960, *Twilight Zone* creator Rod Serling's much anticipated teleplay *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* appeared as the final episode of CBS's acclaimed anthology series *Playhouse 90*. Unlike earlier portrayals of the Warsaw Ghetto in literature, radio plays, and on the stage, Serling's production did not make the uprising – the watershed event that symbolized Jewish resistance during the Holocaust and heretofore superseded all other aspects of ghetto life – the predominant theme. Rather *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, about one family's experience and eventual fate in the sealed Warsaw Ghetto beginning a week before the uprising and after the action that transported 350 000 inhabitants to the death camps, featured surprising emotional involvements and complicated familial relations taking center stage over the uprising. This paper interrogates the very public and hostile critical reaction to the production, and examines why it was so maligned. Among the questions I ask are: What is the cultural imprint of the ghetto and its catastrophic history leading up to the airing of Serling's teleplay? What does the reception of the teleplay convey about the Warsaw Ghetto and the culture of Holocaust memory in America during this early period?

Literary theorist Hans-Robert Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectations" helps to clarify why many viewers found Serling's teleplay so unsatisfying. Jauss understands the "horizon" as the sum of readers' expectations regarding a text and its cultural material, and perceives the role of most authors as playing into or against those expectations or transforming the horizon itself. Serling's play transgressed on several levels. Broadly, he disrupted a burgeoning post-war Holocaust narrative, a convention largely set by the stage (1955) and movie adaptations (1959) of the *Diary of Anne Frank*, as well as the standard representation of the Warsaw Ghetto as a site of heroism and valor. More specifically, Serling failed to write an expected denouement nor did he create familiar characters with whom his audience could identify, or even understand; the rabbi was overly pious, his son too angry, the Nazi too "good", and the Christian Pole too charitable. The dutiful daughter, raped and traumatized,

allowed viewers an opportunity to empathize and mourn, but this kernel did not offset the unrecognizability of most of the teleplay's characters. In the end, Serling felt great remorse about the production, strongly calling it "a source of humiliation for a number of years to come".

To understand Serling's conception and its unsuccessful attempt to transform his viewers' horizon of expectations vis-à-vis the range of responses during the Nazi genocide, I have consulted the writer's personal papers at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. This material includes revealing drafts of the teleplay, letters from viewers, and other relevant correspondence. Near the end of the paper I will briefly digress to illuminate how Serling's research for *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* primed him, even compelled him, to write more forceful stories about fascism and Nazism, influencing subsequent episodes of his celebrated, landmark fantasy series *The Twilight Zone*.

*Sara Bender*

*The University of Haifa*

## **Jews through Polish eyes – The Image of Jews as reflected in the Diaries written in Hiding by Leib Rochman and Haim Einhorn, 1942-1944**

The core issue of Jews' image in Polish eyes is at the heart of two diaries kept by Jews, who had hidden with Poles at a time when most of Poland's Jews were being exterminated. The first, in Yiddish, was written by Leib Rochman, a young writer and journalist, whereas the other, in Polish, was kept by Haim Einhorn, a young Warsaw physician. The proposed lecture will address the reflection of the figure of the Jew in Polish eyes, as experienced and witnessed by these two diarists, both as unseen listeners from their hiding places, and through their own personal experiences. The lecture is drawn from an article I have written about the two diaries, and has never been presented before. Although Rochman and Einhorn's diaries address several themes, their perceptions and observations on rural Poles are at the center of their writings. Through these two diaries, documenting the lives of two different Jewish families hiding at the same time in two different villages in the Warsaw district, the lecture will seek to focus on the image of Jews in Polish eyes in the years 1942-1945, when Polish Jewry was being annihilated.

Eyal Boers

*The Yolanda and David Katz Faculty of the Arts, Tel-Aviv University*

## ***Black Book: Dutch Prototype or Jewish Outsider***

The paper aims to explore the character of Rachel Stein in the film *Zwartboek*<sup>1</sup>. Specifically to examine whether Rachel's character is the prototype of the “Dutch Woman” or that of the “Jewish Other”?

The main hypothesis of this paper is that Rachel's character possesses features of both the Dutch prototype (a white, secular, sexual, freedom-loving individualist) and features which can be defined as specifically Jewish (a black haired victim persecuted by the Nazis, transforming herself into a gentile, while remaining loyal to her fellow Jews and ultimately becoming a Hebrew teacher).

Based on Jon Stratton's article *Not really white – again: performing Jewish difference in Hollywood films since the 1980s*<sup>2</sup>, this paper claims that Rachel's character corresponds with the trend in Hollywood films of the 1950s and 1960s in the sense that she is a Jewess undergoing assimilation into white Dutch society. The ending of the film, however, corresponds with a trend which Stratton identifies in American films of the 1980s – Rachel's assimilation to the “dominant” culture is doomed to fail and in an individualistic act she makes Aliyah and lives in a Kibbutz – in Stratton's words, her Jewish difference is produced through a specific experience and through “performance”.

Finally, the paper claims that Rachel's “Dutchness” is symptomatic of Dutch nostalgia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for the Jews as “others” who blend into the dominant Dutch culture, while Rachel's “Jewish Otherness” reflects a transnational identity – one that is always shifting and traverses cultural and national boundaries. In this sense, a film about Dutch Jews in the Second World War reflects on issues of identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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<sup>1</sup> *Black Book* (English title). 2006. Paul Verhoeven's World War II film about a young Jewish woman who becomes a member of a resistance group in the Netherlands.

<sup>2</sup> Stratton, Jon. 2001. *Not really white--again: performing Jewish difference in Hollywood films since the 1980s*. **SCREEN** 42 (2). pp 142-166.

*Rachel F. Brenner*

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

## **Retelling the Holocaust: Popular Culture and the Evasion of the Message in the Story**

The paper focuses on the cultural reception of the Holocaust in popular culture, mainly in film and comics. The premise is that the preoccupation with the Holocaust originates in the repression of the consciousness of Holocaust terror, so that its emotional impact as well as its ethical message can be evaded. Appropriation and adaptation of the story enables evasion of the horror. Thus, for instance, Art Spiegelman appropriates his father's story by presenting it through the genre of his choice (comics) and by emphasizing his emotional problems that he tries to solve through becoming the sole heir of his father's story. The adaptations of the story to literary thematic codes, such as the fairy tale in the movie *Life is Beautiful*, sin and redemption in *Schindler's List*, or biblical allusions of Exodus in *Defiance* represent strategies of evasion. The modes of representation reflect not only the need for emotional defenses; they also help to obfuscate the responsibility to confront the moral rupture, which has not been mended. In this sense, the search for emotional relief from the horrifying past exempts the second-generation from the responsibility of heeding the ethical message of the Holocaust event. This message expects the recipients of the Holocaust legacy to assume the responsibility to confront the Holocaust as humanistic collapse and to engage in the task of repair. Thus, the popularization of the Holocaust communicates evasion of the responsibility to heed the victims, such as Primo Levi and Jean Améry and accept the duties as heirs to the ethical legacy in their story. This message requires re-validation of the humanistic values of empathy and compassion in the world that failed to live up to the humanistic tradition of the Enlightenment. The prolific production of Holocaust representations and the enormous popularity of these productions evince insistent fear of the experience that the story presents and of the message that it communicates. The evasion precludes the healing of the fearful trauma of the story and thus represses its ethical legacy.

Marta Dudzik-Rudkowska

Warsaw University

## **New Immigrants, Pioneers, Oriental Jews. Images of Early Israelis in Early Israeli Comedy – Case Study: Ephraim Kishon’s *Sallach Shabati* and Uri Zohar’s *Hole in the Moon*.**

Though shaped and inspired by completely different cultures and trends, Ephraim Kishon and Uri Zohar produced the first great Israeli comedies almost simultaneously: *Sallach Shabati* by Ephraim Kishon in 1964, and *Hole in the Moon* (*Hor ba-Levana*) by Uri Zohar in 1965. Intended as a critique of the early Israeli society (*Sallach Shabati*) and a satire on early Israeli cinema (*Hole in the Moon*), both pictures reveal deep criticism of the divisions and ideologies which haunt the new country, despite considerable differences in form and content of the pictures in question.

Even though both directors move within the realm of comedy, they take up completely different tools to come to the conclusions about the condition of the society of the state of Israel. Ephraim Kishon, known to be the father of “bourekas” movies (Israeli version of “spaghetti movies”), explores the ethnic stereotypes, thus laying bare the irrationality of the divisions pervading the Israeli society. Being one of his most famous movies, the Oscar-nominated *Sallach Shabati* presents the story of a Mizrahi Jewish family that immigrates to Israel, just to face the chaos of the new country, skillfully portrayed by means of exploring political and social absurdities.

Uri Zohar, on the other hand, creates a response to the Zionist dramas of the 1950s, challenging both the classical film narrative of the era, as well as the prevalent Zionist discourse. Inspired by the French New Wave, Zohar presents the story of new immigrants, who take up moviemaking and lead the viewer through a chaos of multiple film genres, which eventually brings them to their deaths. Zohar makes use of Zionist clichés, as well as Hollywood movie types, in order to reveal the weaknesses of the “creators”, left helpless in view of the reality they created, which meanwhile takes up its own course.

Regardless of all the differences in cinematic techniques and narratives, the artistic vision of the two directors becomes a rather unoptimistic assessment of the new Israelis: the already settled immigrants from the Ashkenaz with their strong Zionist convictions, socialist ideas and privileged position in the new social structure; the new immigrants, relentlessly seeking out new opportunities,

and the Mizrachim, or Oriental Jews, marginalized by the patronizing Ashkenazi culture.

*Danielle Eliyahu*

*Sapir College*

## **Commemorating Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day: The Significance of National Ceremonies, the Education System and Media**

Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day in Israel is a unique annual event. The government of Israel resolved to dedicate an entire day to commemorating the Holocaust, replete with several directives. These include a law obligating national ceremonies be held, ensuring that the Holocaust is discussed in schools, and requiring the media to show respect in the form of broadcasting appropriate content. In addition, at 10:00 in the morning, there is a siren that can be heard throughout the country for two very long minutes. Everyone and everything comes to a halt: cars stop, there are no ingoing or outgoing phone calls, children stop playing and meetings are put on hold. This intense concentration and focus is meant to honor and pay tribute to the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

This study explores the national ceremony at Yad VaShem, the Israeli education system, and the media in order to examine the way that Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day is managed. The uniqueness of this day is experienced by everyone in Israel, regardless of age, cultural differences or religion. We found that the ceremonies held both at Yad VaShem and in schools are similar to each other and comfortingly familiar to its citizens. The media is completely committed on this day as well: only quiet and sorrowful songs can be heard playing on the radio, and both newspapers and television cover subjects that are solely related to the Holocaust. We suggest that Israelis have learned how to remember and cope with the Holocaust due in large part to the unique way in which Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day is commemorated in Israel.

*Brygida Gasztold*

*Koszalin University of Technology*

## **Of Love and War: Poles and Jews in Rutu Modan's *The Property***

Rutu Modan's graphic novel *The Property* (2013) combines the memory of World War II with family secrets, a love story, and efforts to reclaim long-lost property. The story reveals how the war continues to echo through the years, wielding its influence on family relationships across generations. Modan's graphic novel offers an interesting insight into contemporary Polish-Jewish relations, which are tainted by the memory of war. It portrays Jews who lived in Poland before the war and those who live in present-day Israel, showing how the traumatic memory of loss has shaped their perception of Poland. For example, how Poland is employed as a pedagogical instrument for Jewish identity formation in regard to young Israelis who see Poland as one big Jewish graveyard. Allowing the Jewish protagonist to re-visit Poland, the author demonstrates prejudices and stereotypes that persist in both nations but resists their reductionism by showing their complexity. Despite its specific context of family history, *The Property* offers an examination of intergenerational family relationships that maintains a high degree of universality.

*Roi Izhak, Avigal Rivkin, Yarden Kaplan*

*Sapir College*

## **Highlighting the Selectiveness of Israel's Collective Memory towards the Holocaust**

The dominant culture in Israel is one of secular Judaism with clear, Western undertones. The arrival of European Jews ('Ashkenazim'), and the subsequent establishment of Israel in 1948, secured an Ashkenazi leadership intent on determining the course of events for Israel's new immigrants. European immigrants were granted a privileged status, while successive immigrants from Islamic and Oriental countries ('Mizrahim') were given a lower socioeconomic status. As a result, profound gaps among the members of Israeli society emerged, chief among them being their perception of the Holocaust. Despite the fact that a significantly larger number of European Jews perished in the Holocaust, the suffering endured by Ashkenazim and some of Mizrahim alike

was undeniable. Nevertheless, the Holocaust became linked to the history of Ashkenazim, and rooted itself thereafter in the collective memory of the Jewish people. Less attention was given to safeguarding the private memories of Mizrahim.

Our film portrays the subjective experiences of North African Holocaust survivors living in colonies under Nazi occupation. The survivors' testimonies, as well as those of experts in the field, reflect and attest to the pain at having their memories and history take a back seat upon their arrival to the Promised Land. The film covers the historical background of Tunisia and Libya leading up to and including World War II. It then relays the survivors' immigration to Israel ('Aliyah'). Under Ashkenazi hegemony, these immigrants felt that the suffering they endured during the Holocaust was delegitimized. Lastly, the film depicts a cautious hopefulness for change in present day Israel. In their struggle to be acknowledged, Israeli society and fellow institutions has gradually become cognizant of the need to include the tribulations endured by North Africans Jews during the Holocaust into Israel's collective memory.

*Olga Kaczmarek*

*Institute of Polish Culture, Warsaw University*

## **Popular – Mainstream – Vernacular: Modes of representing the current discussions on wartime Polish/Jewish relations in contemporary Polish culture**

Starting with the publication of Jan T. Gross's *Neighbors*, Poland has been going through a turbulent debate about Poles' attitudes to Jews during World War Two and, more specifically, about the extent to which Poles might have been involved in turning in, killing or robbing Jews under the Nazi occupation. Sixteen years after Gross's revelatory and simultaneously unrevelatory book the echoes of the discussion it sparked have reached various circuits, from academic research, to family dinner discussions, involving media from traditional press or lectures to the plethora of modes of communication offered by the Internet. Polish art, theater and cinema have tackled the problem – including the internationally celebrated *Ida* by Paweł Pawlikowski and the slightly less universally appealing *Aftermath* by Władysław Pasikowski. The POLIN Museum, want it or not, is positioned to be a response to this debate as well. Finally, countless grassroots publishing initiatives fired up to adamantly refute any claim that Poles' might be to blame for the Shoah in any part, while arguing



with great force for the Jews' guilt for bringing the violence on themselves and inflicting even more violence in the post-war years.

The debate has found some stability in recurring images and topoi. Those are often aligned with certain views on the subject but also with particular media and forms. The aim of this paper will be to ask what is popular, mainstream and vernacular in that discussion? How the story of Polish wartimes attitudes to Jews surfaces in these areas? Where and how does opposition, affirmation and negotiation of memories happen? Following some of the most recent expressions of the memory of wartime Polish/Jewish relations I will preliminarily analyze the very discordant and bumpy process of absorbing the revelations about Polish involvement in the persecution of Jews during World War Two into popular imagery.

*Barry Keane*

*Warsaw University & SWPS University*

## **Leon Kruczkowski's *Julius and Ethel* – staging and reception.**

Leon Kruczkowski was one of the few Polish writers to publicly protest about the treatment of Jewish people by the Polish Government in the years preceding World War II. First performed in Warsaw in 1954, his Polish play *Julius and Ethel* depicted the Rosenbergs as victims of political expediency on the part of the United States government. Staged at a time when the writing of drama in post-war Poland was subject to the strictures of social realism, the play was highly propagandistic. As my talk will look to show, Kruczkowski's play offered an exploration into and assessment of the events and circumstances which led to the arrest and subsequent execution of the Rosenbergs. What is more, it will endeavour to illustrate how the reception of the play in Poland ignited discussion about the place and role of Jewish writers and intellectuals in post-war Poland.

Victoria Khiterer

Millersville University

## **We are from Jazz: Leonid Utesov, Isaac Dunaevsky, Alexander Tsfasman and Eddie Rosner**

My paper explores the influence of klezmer music on Soviet jazz. Many Soviet Jewish musicians chose this genre, because jazz relies on improvisation as klezmer music does. Jewish composers, musicians, and actors were able to break cultural and political barriers and stereotypes, and made jazz the most popular music among Soviet audiences in the late 1920s-1940s. The secret of the transformation of the initial Soviet negative attitude toward jazz as ‘bourgeois’ ‘Fat People’s Music’ (as Maxim Gorky originally called jazz) into an acceptable popular music genre was the talent of the Soviet Jewish jazz musicians and composers, as well as the pro-socialist content of some Soviet jazz songs and musicals.

Leonid Utesov (born Lazar Weissbein) was a legend of Soviet popular music: singer, jazz band conductor, film and stage actor. Many of Utesov’s musical hits had deep roots in Odessan Jewish culture. The image of the cheerful, quick-witted Odessan served him well as a comedic actor and as a singer of Odessan songs. In 1928 Utesov traveled to Berlin and Paris, where he attended several performances by German jazz bands. In 1929 he formed one of the first Soviet jazz bands, *Tea-Jazz* (abbreviation for Theatrical Jazz). Utesov’s very popular Tea-Jazz band performed to large audiences throughout the Soviet Union. Its repertoire included adaptations of familiar Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish melodies. As Richard Stites noted: “If urban jazzmen in the States adapted black music motifs to their art, their Soviet counterparts did the same thing with the materials at hand...The strains of the Odessa Jewish wedding were never far away.”

The popularity of Utesov and his orchestra increased even more after their performance in the first Soviet musical comedy, the 1934 film *Veselye Rebiata* (*The Happy Guys*) featuring Utesov and his Tea-Jazz band. The film was a great success in the Soviet Union and abroad.

The Jewish composer Isaac Dunaevsky wrote the music for many Utesov’s hits and for the film *Veselye Rebiata*. Dunaevsky grew up in a musical family: his grandfather was a cantor, his mother played the piano, and all five of his brothers became musicians. The Jewish melodies, which Dunaevsky heard since childhood, were incorporated into many of his songs. For example, the melody of the *Jewish Rhapsody* by Dunaevsky was drawn from Hasidic tunes.

Two other Soviet Jewish jazz stars, composers and conductors Alexander Tsfasman and Eddie Rosner, performed mostly Western jazz hits. In the 1920s - mid 40s jazz dominated Soviet popular music. Soviet musical critics attacked jazz music as bourgeois, but without any success, due to the extreme popularity of the genre. Certainly Stalin's, and other Soviet leaders' interest in jazz protected the jazz musicians until the Cold War. However, during the anti-cosmopolitan campaign in the Soviet Union in the late 1940s-1953 jazz was forbidden as Western, American music. Only during Khrushchev's 'thaw' was the genre rehabilitated again. But by then the Golden Age of jazz had already passed.

*Jacek Konik*

*The Warsaw Family Alliance Institute of Higher Education*

## **Jewish history and culture: programme for in-service teacher training in Poland**

History and culture of Jews has been virtually absent from the Polish educational system for many years. Firstly, it resulted from a lack of time (wide range of obligatory programme content and limited number of hours dedicated to the humanities); secondly, it was the heritage of the previous model of historical education that mentioned the *Shoah*, but omitted the role of the Jewish community in the history of Poland, Europe and the world.

Nowadays the history and culture of Jews came back to the Polish educational system, but these issues are so strange for many teachers that they rarely surpass the content of the textbook. They have to discover this new world to be able to teach about it.

In The Warsaw Family Alliance Institute of Higher Education, within the postgraduate studies for history teachers, we have tried to make the history and culture of Jews more familiar to our students, holding a cycle of seminars:

- *Biblical history and literature* – history and literary heritage of ancient Israel, including the history of creating the biblical text;
- *History and culture of Jews* – from Middle Ages to the 20th century, with special focus on the history of Polish Jews;
- *How to teach about the Holocaust* – history of the *Shoah* (from the origins of the Nazi ideology towards the process of extermination and its results) and the educational challenges related to teaching about it.

Teaching at these seminars, talking to the teachers, and exchange of experiences allowed me to gather information about the methods used by teachers on different educational levels to teach about the history and culture of Jews.

On this basis I can categorise questions and challenges met by the history teachers as follows:

- Should one speak more about the history and culture of Jews and why?
- How to get help from institutions dealing with the history of Jews?
- How to teach about ancient Israel and avoid being suspected of either religious indoctrination or religious offense?
- While teaching about the Middle Ages and the modern era, should one focus on the Jewish presence in Poland or discuss more widely the presence of Jews in Europe (this question is related to how far it is possible to depart from the core history curriculum)?
- How to talk about the origins of the antisemitism?
- The *Shoah* – how long and how deeply to talk about it?
- How to deal with the negative reactions of the young people or their parents to the subjects related to the history and culture of Jews?

Together with our postgraduate students – active teachers – we are trying to answer these questions and to elaborate on the solutions to the problems, but first of all we give them the basic knowledge and the tools for further unassisted research in this field. Our seminars inspired many interesting projects related to the history and culture of Jews implemented by our students in their local environments.

*Karolina Krasuska*

*University of Warsaw*

## **Equality or Difference? Gendering the Holocaust Gallery in POLIN**

In the research of the Holocaust and gender, men and women function as a unified Jewish subject: the victims, the resisters and survivors of the same murderous system. But at the same time, in this body of research Jewish women have become marked as maternal and sexual bodies, which represent women's difference and emphasize the uniquely female experience of birth, sexual violence or prostitution. Although gendering the Holocaust has been an established branch of Holocaust Studies for about two decades, foregrounding

the category of “woman” and gender has been challenged from various, also feminist, perspectives (e.g. Sarah Horowitz, Lawrence Langer, Andrea Peto et al). This paper foregrounds the debates on how to approach gender within the Holocaust Studies on the example of the Holocaust gallery being a part of the core exhibition of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The gallery strives at what we can call parity of representation, including many testimonies by and documents of women, while rather not showcasing the radical female difference of the experience of the Holocaust. But most importantly, the gender narrative that can be read from the gallery strengthens the imminent sense of catastrophe of Polish Jews depicted here. Accordingly, this paper looks at (hetero)normative gender representation, at times implicit in the exhibition and explicit in historical materials, asking about their function. This normative presentation of gender is especially present in the initial part of the gallery focusing on the early stages of life in the ghettos. As we move further into the gallery, the disruption of what is normal and normative can also be read along the lines of gender when we encounter, for instance, the stories about patchwork families or alternative family models, about a multiplicity of casual (sexual) relationships in the later stage of the ghetto, or about, sometimes risky, fictive marriages.

*Vasco Kretschman*

*Free University of Berlin*

## **Local Jewish History in the Museums of Wrocław between 1945 and 2010**

The presentation refers to the history and cultural heritage of German and Polish Jews in present-day Poland as well as its representation in the museums of Wrocław during the period of the People’s Republic of Poland. Wrocław has a rich multicultural history that included a vibrant and large Jewish community until the destruction of the Second World War and at the beginning of the People’s Republic of Poland.

At the beginning of the 20th century this was the third largest Jewish community in Germany. To exhibit the Jewish achievements in arts and culture to the public, the Synagogue Community of Breslau organized in 1929 the largest temporary exhibition of Jewish culture and history in the Weimar Republic: *Jewry in the History of Silesia, 1050-1850*. Undoubtedly for political reasons the collection was removed from the City Museum in 1933 and put on

display in a separated Jewish Museum of the Community until the pogrom of 1938. There is no clear evidence as to what happened to the objects after the museum closed. Nothing from the Jewish collections has been transmitted to the museums of Polish Wrocław, but their cultural heritage played a key role in the search for the city's past in the last years of the People's Republic of Poland.

German-Jewish and even Polish-Jewish history had been neglected by Wrocław's museums in nearly all decades of the People's Republic. But in the 1980s a limited space of free historical interpretation became possible: The most striking example was the temporary exhibition *Wrocławian Jews 1850–1945* opened in the final year of the People's Republic in March 1989 at the Museum of Architecture. The show was dedicated to the German Jews of Breslau and based on a conservation research project on Wrocław's devastated Old Jewish Cemetery. Work and presentations about this graveyard started as early as 1983. Significantly, Jewish history became the first chapter of the city's pre-war German history shown without reservation in a city exhibition. With the political transformation of 1989 various temporary exhibitions showed a different picture of German and Jewish history and culture in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Old Jewish Cemetery remained a branch of the history museum and was not transferred to the Jewish community like most cemeteries in Poland.

Since 2009 the new permanent exhibition *1000 years of Wrocław* at the City Museum has constituted a major step forward in the visualization of an open-minded picture of the city's rich heritage. Beside the City Museum the present Jewish community continues the tradition of presenting Jewish history by a poster exhibition about the German-Jewish and Polish-Jewish history of Wrocław in the White Stork Synagogue. Today the City Museum continues in its branches of the Old Jewish Cemetery and the Royal Palace an approach of presenting Jewish history, which started in 1929 with a joined exhibition project of the Jewish Community and the City Museum.

*Hannah Maischein*

*Munich City Museum*

## **Eye-witnessing: Constructing Jews as Alterity in Polish Holocaust Memory**

Poland was the center of European Jewry before World War II and became the center of the annihilation of the Jews by the German occupier during the war. The geographic vicinity of the Polish locals to the events of the Holocaust is one

reason, why the question of how Poles see themselves in relation to the murdered Jews after the war, is highly vibrant.

Because of the ethnic definitions of Poles and Jews by the German occupier (and in differing ways by the Soviet occupier) and because of its instrumentalizations, the borders between bystanders, victims and perpetrators are often crossed and result in conflicting memories. How did Poles translate this complex experience after the war? Did they express what they saw so it could result in something shown (in visual representation)? My concept of eye-witnessing that links topographical and medial aspects with the question of narration of identity gives a framework to analyze the following question: How is the Polish experience, often described with the contested term “bystanders” of the Holocaust (Raul Hilberg) translated into memory in the after war era? What function does the representation of Jews have for the Polish society? Does it work as an alterity to contrast Polish identity? And how is the encounter of Poles and Jews during the war expressed in pictures?

Visual material from the Polish after war era that shows the act of witnessing or pictures the Poles themselves as eye-witnesses is being analyzed. By doing so, the construction of a Jewish alterity in Polish Holocaust memory can be analyzed. Furthermore it can be shown how the past is turned into history in popular culture and how these concepts are evolving over time.

*Richard Menkis*

*University of British Columbia*

## **“Rogues Need not Apply”: Representations of Canadian Jewish History in two Museum Exhibitions**

Mordecai Richler was at his most acerbic – and funniest – when targeting Jewish communal officials who mouthed platitudes about law-abiding Jews who “contributed” to Canada. He also mocked authors who produced anemic histories focusing on the respectable elites. Where were his Jews? Where were the hustlers, the petty and not-so-petty thieves, the gamblers and the sports fans who lived on the Main? Where were the Jewish crime bosses (including Harry Ship, the inspiration for Richler’s “Boy Wonder” Jerry Dingleman) ?

What is true of Canadian Jewish historical writing is even truer of representations of Canadian Jews for public display in museums. In this study I will focus on two early and influential exhibitions. In the late 1960s the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada created the largely in-house exhibition

*Journey into our Heritage* about Jews in the Canadian West, and it toured widely in Canada and was also exhibited in the Museum of the Diaspora in Israel. The other display to be examined is the 1990 exhibit *A Coat of Many Colours* on the history of the Jews throughout Canada, commissioned by the Museum of the Diaspora, Tel Aviv and the Canadian Museum of Civilization. It also toured widely in Canada. I will also examine the two historical narratives that were closely connected with the exhibits<sup>3</sup>.

Both of these exhibits were created within a Canada that was increasingly defining itself as multicultural. It was a new strategy in what has been referred to as the ongoing challenge of the “management of diversity.” However, many Jews sensed that there was a working assumption within this strategy that members of minorities would remain somewhat distinct but would nevertheless make “positive contributions” to the society as a whole. These museum exhibits present a selective picture of the Jewish community of Canada, by highlighting the Jews who were economically and/or politically successful, as well as those Jews who “enriched” the arts. They represented the “benefits” of Jewish integration – for both Jews and non-Jews – into Canadian society. There was certainly no room for the unsavory types who were actually very prominent in gambling and bootlegging in interwar Montreal and Toronto.

This presentation will thus examine the integrationist discourse by examining the emphases and exclusions in the depiction of Canadian Jewish personalities and narrative arcs. I will also draw on how the exhibitions were received, and especially the responses of different groups who did not feel included.

*Adam Morgenstern*

*California State University, Northridge*

## **Public History of the Holocaust in Two Los Angeles Museums**

Two museums in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust and the Museum of Tolerance, place the Holocaust at the center of their exhibits.

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<sup>3</sup> Harry Gutkin, *Journey into our Heritage: The Story of the Jewish People in the Canadian West* (Toronto, 1980) and Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto, 1990). For the latter, we will also examine the published exhibition guide Sandra Morton Weizman, *Artifacts from “A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada”*, (Ottawa, 1990).



Their methods differ greatly, provoking debate, criticism, and division between the museums' respective supporters.

In my presentation I will describe the strikingly different origins of each museum, their contrasting approaches to teaching about the Holocaust, and discuss the responses they have received from the public and academic observers on their mode of presentation.

A brief description of the two museums will clarify their distinct approaches. The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust was a project initiated by Holocaust survivors who, while attending English classes at Hollywood High School in 1961, united over their shared experiences as survivors. They resolved that their historical artifacts, such as concentration camp uniforms, would find a permanent home in a museum as a visual means to pass on their stories for future generations. Thus, the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust was a project of survivors and others who want to give voice to their experiences and to provide public access to education on the Holocaust. The museum provides free admission, free guest speaking services to public schools, and it specifically seeks out public schools that do not have the capacity to provide these services to their students. The museum promises public school visitors that Holocaust survivors are available to speak upon request.

In contrast, the Museum of Tolerance was opened in 1993 by a non-survivor. American-born Rabbi Marvin Hier founded the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights organization named for the Nazi hunter, and established it in Los Angeles with the determination to build alongside it an educational center. The Los Angeles Riots broke out in 1992 while the Museum of Tolerance was still under construction, prompting its founders to change its exclusive focus from the Holocaust to an inclusive focus on the labeling and discrimination faced by minority groups. Unlike the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, which relies on historical objects and guest speakers, the Museum of Tolerance utilizes contemporary items and gadgetry that require less careful scrutiny, appeal to a broader and younger audience, and are designed to provoke immediate emotional responses and teach the importance of right action. For example, the museum replicated a gas chamber as one of the primary features of its Holocaust exhibit. The dual entrance system in the lobby is novel: Visitors must choose to enter either through the door labeled "prejudiced" or "unprejudiced". Most visitors attempt to enter through the "unprejudiced" doors to find that they are closed. The message behind this mechanism is that everybody has a prejudice of some kind.

In describing the different origins and approaches of these two museums, I will highlight the contrasting backgrounds of their founders and governing

boards. In my discussion of the two museums' reception, I will focus on responses to their contrasting approach to historical artifacts and technology.

*Jody Myers*

*California State University*

## **The Use of Nazi Decrees in Orthodox Jewish Apologetics**

It is widely recognized as inflammatory and improper to use Nazi and Holocaust symbols and comparisons in arguments about political and ethical issues having little to do with the events of the 1930s and 1940s. Jews have been highly offended when their past experience of victimization is appropriated for the sake of a cause that they believe is trivial or unconnected to their actual experience. Yet, Holocaust rhetoric abounds in the contentious debates in America and the EU about animal welfare. Animal welfare advocates have compared contemporary industrialized systems of animal assembling, handling, and slaughter to Nazi era treatment of Jews in ghettos and death camps. They have applied this comparison to the kosher meat industry, too, for they regard *shechitah* – kosher animal slaughter – as a cold, legalistic procedure requiring the animal's painful death. Orthodox Jews are of course outraged by this comparison, especially because Orthodox rabbis govern *shechitah* procedures. Orthodox defenders of the kosher meat industry have responded with their own use of Nazi era symbols and comparisons. Specifically, they invoke Hitler's 1933 decree banning *shechitah* as proof that criticism of *shechitah* is simply antisemitism in disguise, and they reference Hitler's vegetarianism within their critique of modern secular ethics. They generally do not invoke the Holocaust references publically. Rather, they reserve this trope for an Orthodox audience.

My paper examines this trope within American Orthodox apologetics and puts it in the context of other academic scholarship. Robin Judd, in her *Circumcision, Kosher Butchering, and Jewish Political Life in Germany, 1843-1933*, provides the longer history of European debate over *shechitah*, clarifies the ethical, social, and political concerns that – then, and now within the EU – shape the debate over meat industry procedures. Marc B. Shapiro's study of the life and works of Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg (1884-1966), the preeminent Orthodox leader of German Jewry in the Nazi era, demonstrates that while Weinberg managed to find a way within Jewish law to modify kosher slaughter procedures to satisfy Hitler's decree, his colleagues accepted his legal argument but rejected outright any compromise. This episode influenced later rabbinic authorities to resist all efforts to modify *shechitah*. Contemporary Orthodox

Jews, however, are unaware or profess ignorance of the complexity of the rabbinic response to Hitler's decree. They have shaped what I would call a popular history of the Nazi era struggle over *shechitah* that functions to preserve and defend Orthodox insularity and identity.

In my presentation I will first describe the way Hitler's decree is incorporated in a defense of *shechitah* in particular and meat-eating in general. Second, I will describe the contexts of such arguments and the particular methodological challenges of examining this popular writing. Third, I argue that the Nazi comparison addresses two important, internal, Orthodox concerns: the education and socialization of younger Orthodox Jews, and the undermining of Jewish criticism of the kosher certification system.

*Jacek Partyka*

*Institute of Modern Languages, University of Białystok*

## **The Sublimated Holocaust: The Historical Novels of Charles Reznikoff, Isaac Bashevis Singer and Bernard Malamud**

The paper will look at three American novels on Jewish history – Charles Reznikoff's *The Lionhearted* (1944), Isaac Bashevis Singer's *The Slave* (*Der Knecht*) (1962), and Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer* (1966) – as instances of what, for want of a better label, I call the *sublimated* Holocaust fiction. The persecution of the Jews of York in England in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the violence inflicted on Polish Jews in the aftermath of the Khmelnytsky Uprising in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, and the story of Menachem Mendel Beilis, a Russian Jew accused of ritual murder in 1913, are all literary reconsiderations of authentic, well-documented histories of anti-Semitism. Putting aside the problem of the accuracy of representation that the novels are informed by (or, say, *The Fixer*'s plagiarism controversy), my paper will highlight and examine the socio-political circumstances that may have prompted Reznikoff, Singer and Malamud to think of these distant historical events as *analogues* of the on-going (in Reznikoff's case) or relatively recent (for Singer and Malamud) extermination of European Jewry by the Nazis. The assumption of such a critical perspective follows in the footsteps of Alvin H. Rosenfeld who in his *A Double Dying. Reflections of Holocaust Literature* (1980) provocatively proposes to consider *The Slave* and *The Fixer* in the same frame of reference as Holocaust fiction *per se* (and who thinks of certain elements of the narratives as literary pre-figurations of the

genocide). But, while Rosenfeld points to Singer's and Malamud's alleged inability to face the subject matter directly (disregarding Reznikoff's prose completely), my paper will suggest an alternative, or at least supplementary, explanation of the strategy adopted by the above-mentioned American prose writers in the 1940s and the 1960s in their (alleged) treatment of the Holocaust.

*Eva Pfanzelter*

*Institute of Contemporary History, University of Innsbruck*

## **Selfies, Likes & Co: Performances of the Holocaust in German and English Social Media Sites**

Not only since the turn of the century can a trend towards trans-nationalization and globalization of the cultures of remembrance of the Holocaust be observed. While previous practices of commemoration were dominantly national, even local, the end of the Cold War in 1989 introduced an "era of remembrance" that, especially in the western world, can be equaled to a veritable "memory boom". The results were a Europeanization of commemoration and the emergence of a supra-nationally oriented European memory, where the destruction of the European Jewry, the Holocaust, played a central role. On the assumption that the joint memory of the inhuman national-socialist policy of extermination is the frame of reference for a moral – and probably global – community of shared values, numerous trans-national and global "lieux de memoire", and in their wake countless regional memorials, came into being.

Yet, the nationally and internationally conciliatory tenor of these institutionalized practices of memory is not beyond dispute and is also undermined by diverging narratives. Therefore, uneasiness with this institutionalized culture of remembrance has also to be identified as a phenomenon of transcultural commemoration where the developments subsumed under the concept of "globalization" are up for discussion. The Internet, and more particularly social networks, crucially shape the discourse: the presentation, representation and the discourse about the history and the memory of the Holocaust on Internet websites is a paramount example of the transcultural mediation processes between history and memory, between commemoration, technology and culture, between institutionalized and public history.

The proposed talk will analyze these phenomena using examples from German and English content on the web. They address the apparent transcultural

frictions and indicate that the Internet has an influence on the discourse not only as a medium of acceleration but also as a central medium of public history. As such it will mediate, shape, “like”, share, and carry the memory of the Holocaust forward in the future. Still, these performances also follow unwritten laws of aesthetics and authorship that have so far characterized the discourse of memory – even if they stretch the limits of what has been seen as appropriate by institutionalized memory.

It will become apparent that concepts such as „digital memory“, „network memory“ or „culture of connectivity“, much discussed in media studies, can easily be applied to the discourse about the Holocaust on the web. They characterize the remarkable diversity of web-performances that increasingly leave official, institutionalized paths and blur the boundaries to the private. They overcome temporary and spatial barriers. Stability is being exchanged for fluidity and narrative structures dominate, that are not identified by linear multimediality but by a rapid succession of selfies, likes, and similar clickable versions of taking sides.

*Alicja Piechucka*

*Institute of English Studies, University of Łódź*

### **Conspicuous By Their Absence: Jewishness and Jewish Heritage in Glenio Bonder’s Adaptation of Albert Cohen’s *Belle du Seigneur***

Widely considered to be the greatest Francophone Jewish writer, the Greek-born and Swiss-based novelist Albert Cohen published his magnum opus, *Belle du Seigneur*, in 1968. In the space of the half-century which has elapsed since its publication, Cohen’s monumental and complex novel has been hailed a masterpiece, achieved the status of a cult book and inspired references in popular culture. Long believed to be unfilmable, *Belle du Seigneur*, also known to Anglophone readers under the somewhat unimaginative title *Her Lover*, was made into an English-language film by Glenio Bonder in 2012. While inevitably disappointing, Bonder’s adaptation is useful in underscoring those dimensions of its literary original which are all too often overshadowed by the novel’s central theme: the passionate relationship between the protagonist, Solal, and his beloved, Ariane. A love story, *Belle du Seigneur* is frequently described as one of the greatest romantic novels of the twentieth century – or a romantic antinovel, as Cohen himself would have it. Compelling as this aspect of his best-

known work is, it must be remembered that Albert Cohen was a Jewish writer in more than one sense of the word: not only was he Jewish, but he also had a strong sense of his roots, their multiple implications, and the existential painfulness they entailed. *Belle du Seigneur* tells the spellbinding story of an extraordinary emotional and sexual relationship, but also, to a very large extent, the story of Jews and Jewishness. Like Cohen, Solal is aware of his Jewish identity and heritage, as well as his connection to his Jewish ancestors and relatives, and of the complex ways in which they affect various aspects of his existence, including his love affair with Ariane, a Gentile beauty from a Protestant family. Importantly, the novel is set in Geneva in the 1930s and its protagonist is a highly successful diplomat and senior official in the League of Nations. Solal and Ariane's love flourishes in the shadow of the Nazis' rise to power in Germany and the imminence of World War II. Set against the allusions to Jewish identity, culture, and tradition in which *Belle du Seigneur* abounds, the protagonists' amorous self-isolation may be read as a metaphor for the international community ignoring the Nazi menace and thus failing to prevent the war and the Holocaust. The way Bonder's adaptation refers to, but also downplays, the Jewish dimension of the novel further contributes to the analysis of *Belle du Seigneur* as a novel dealing with Jewish heritage and memory.

*Ewa Chomicka, Agnieszka Pindera*

*POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews*

## **Artistic residencies at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews - a case study for a historical museum becoming a centre for creative work**

What is Jewish identity? What is the identity of Warsaw as a centre of Jewish life? What picture of the city can we get from collective or individual memory? Is it different today? What kinds of narration are produced by the politics of memory? Who has the right to the Jewish heritage? What clichés and stereotypes affect it? And, finally, who can be seen as “a local” here? These questions were addressed by contemporary artists, representing a variety of approaches to the issues of Jewish heritage and multiculturalism, invited for short term residencies in Warsaw by the POLIN Museum in the period 2014-2016.

Self-directed questions, about what path to take, what kind of narration to adopt and how to make it multi-voiced, about the role of art in updating history

or the strategy of compiling a collection, and finally about the instruments of interpretation to be chosen, provided a context for establishing by the POLIN Museum of the projects of artistic residencies.

The residency program imposed certain rules on its participants: their stay in Warsaw lasted three weeks and was devoted to extensive exploration of a chosen subject matter, as well as gathering materials (photos, stories, recordings), and collaboration with local communities. The entire process revolved around cooperation: it assumed exchange of knowledge and experience between artists and curators, between artists and local communities, as well as between artists and invited experts – including philosophers, anthropologists, and historians – analysing the methods and practices of particular artists.

The collaboration and involvement of local communities (the people of Warsaw, people living in the Muranów district, representatives of Jewish communities) took various forms. Depending on the nature and subject of their works, some artists decided to invite local people to participate in art workshops or the very process of creating the work, others based their work entirely on interactions, relations, and conversations with such people. Some of the projects were carried out in collaboration with local performers (dancers, musicians, actors), other with people interested in certain forms of expression (performance arts, audio projects), yet other with the participation of people from specific communities (Warsaw Jews, teenage girls from the Youth Center in Rudzienko).

Some works we realized in 2014-2016 deal with difficult issues which are often at the centre of on-going discussions. When they approach matters which are controversial or tend to be omitted, they start to play an important role, becoming a response to faulty language and stagnant forms of public debate. Understanding history is always accompanied by uncertainty, it is open to unexpected interpretations. It is precisely that uncertainty that encourages us to make an effort – both in analytic and artistic terms. The same uncertainty may provide an opportunity for a historical museum to become an experimental laboratory.

*Sharon Rubinstein, Inbar Shiran, Meitar Tubal*

*Sapir College*

## **The Safeguarding of Private Memories**

Ever since the establishment of the State of Israel, the memory of the Holocaust has been a dominant fixture within both Israeli consciousness and culture. The number of survivors decreases with each passing year, and thus, the testimonies

left behind by the survivors become infinitely more significant. As individual memories collide with society's attempt to build a collective memory, our research tries to examine the survivors' attitudes regarding national commemoration of the Holocaust.

This project is dedicated to the analysis of the testimonies of three survivors, each one recounted through the use of varying platforms: Sarah Tessler's memoir describes how she survived the concentration camps at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen; Nachum Hoch's "Testimony Theater" relays his survival at Auschwitz; and Masha Shvartzman's recorded video testimony in cooperation with Yad Vashem, depicts her survival as a partisan in the forest. Accompanying these testimonies are interviews with the two remaining survivors (Sarah Tessler and Nachum Hoch), as well as a second generation representative of the Holocaust survivor Masha Shvartzman, named Zipi Shem Tov. These interviews help explain the circumstances that led to safeguarding these memories in such different ways. Our research reveals that despite society's endeavors to establish a collective memory, the three survivors examined in our project each exhibited their own viewpoint regarding the methods by which to safeguard those memories.

*Na'ama Sheffi*

*Sapir College*

## ***Mephisto* in Israel: Art, Politics and Universal Morals**

The special focus of the Hebrew literary circle on German culture, an intellectual heritage of the long standing relations between Germans and Jews, failed in the case of *Mephisto*. Klaus Mann's 1936 *roman-à-clef* was published in Amsterdam, his temporary exile settlement. However, Mann's book appeared in Hebrew only in 1990, despite the importance of the novel to the general interest of the Hebrew literary circles and the fact that he was later described as "one of the greatest opposing and persistent fighters against the Third Reich's tyranny". Hendrik Hofgen, *Mephisto*'s protagonist, was a marginal, manipulative and hedonistic stage actor, who converted his passion for Bolshevism into enthusiasm for National Socialism. This is the portrayal of an ordinary man who preferred his own success to universal morals. The inspiration for the revolting character was the renowned German actor Gustaf Grundgens, Mann's former lover and brother in law.

My talk analyzes the reception of *Mephisto* in Israel. Since the novel was overlooked in the 1930s, it first attracted the Israeli public only upon the release



of Istvan Szabo's 1981 cinematic adaptation. The reception of the film was complex and reflected an inner political dispute and a discussion on East-West blocks dissimilarities and advantages. I would like to argue that two reasons shaped this diversity. One is the depiction of pre-World War II German society and the petrifying infiltration of National Socialism into every aspect of civil life. This delineation allowed Israelis to confront their own fears of dictatorship, a matter that was usually disregarded in Israel, because of the unique attention given to the Holocaust. The other reason was the timing of the screening. It coincided with the early years of the dramatic political turnaround in which the Likud defeated the Labor party. This political transformation and the turbulent 1981 election campaign evoked analogies to right-wing regimes. Moreover, the involvement of an Hungarian director intensified the discussion over various regimes' approach to freedom of speech and artistic independence. The absence of the Holocaust from this work of art, the aggressive atmosphere in Israel and the East-West cooperation all encouraged Israelis to interpret *Mephisto* as part of their own contemporary culture.

*Sara Shor*

*Yad Vashem Museum*

## **A Birthday Card from Auschwitz: Hand-crafted personal item and significant historical document**

The proposed presentation offers insights into how research of an illustrated birthday card that utilizes documentation preserved in archives turns dry historical facts into a tangible experience.

The traditional divisions between disciplines have blurred as we internalize that nothing is clear cut in human life. Where and why do we draw the lines between historical documentary evidence and hand crafted items created during the event? It is clear to museum curators that presenting dry historical documentation such as endless lists of names, though possibly conveying the magnitude of events such as the Holocaust, remains to the general public “lists of text on a page” unless we can convey a personal glimpse of the people whose names appear. As curators who wish to present past events to the public we understand that it is vital to draw on a broad spectrum of materials if we are to continue to engage the public.

My case study will show that the productive interaction that occurs when one displays art and/or artifacts in the setting of a historical museum enriches

our knowledge of the past as well as enhancing our appreciation of art as a powerful medium of personal expression.

As manager of Yad Vashem's Artifacts Collection I would like to present an unassuming personal artifact. Created as a ray of light in an unlikely setting, it highlights not only personal stories, but it reveals aspects of life in the camps and the mechanics of the transport of prisoners in the Nazi camp system.

This particular artifact, a birthday card made of a folded series of illustrations, was found in Auschwitz on a pile of debris in the camp in early 1945. No further information was known except for what the card itself and its skillful drawings and their attendant headings could tell us.

Who were the creators and its recipient? There were clues, but only access to various archives, facilitated in recent years by computer technology, enabled us to discover who the individuals portrayed were, details of their route through the camp system, aspects of their life in the camps, and most significant, insights into their ability to survive.

This mundane item presented us with an opportunity to give faces to a number of those names on a list. Indeed, without the archival information we would know very little. On the other hand without the sequence of events illustrated on the card, we would never have been able to find the proverbial "needles in the haystack".

Here is a prime example of the mutual benefits of varied sources of information that enrich our understanding and knowledge of historical events. Many questions remain but it is without question that this artifact has enriched our knowledge regarding the personal experiences of a number of victims of the Holocaust and their ability to survive and smile in the face of adversity even after years in the Nazi camp system.

The lecture will be accompanied by a power-point presentation.

My case study relates directly to the subject of de-academization of historical knowledge as well as the subject of popular culture vis-à-vis traditional narratives.

The lines drawn in the past between historical documentary evidence and artistic endeavors, whether they be traditional "high art" or hand crafted artifacts are more blurred today and it is generally accepted that one field cannot be considered without taking the other into consideration. In today's world "What constitutes historical fact?" is almost as debatable a question as, "what is art?"

As time goes on, it is more widely accepted that material culture of all shapes and forms is relevant to understanding events of the past (and present) and there is general agreement that to relate a historical story one must draw on all sorts of materials: personal testimonies, photographs, documentary evidence, art and artifacts.

The natural result of this breaking down of barriers is a broadening of our (curators') view of things which naturally opens the arena to a wider public who can relate personally to familiar objects and experiences.

My case study shows clearly that the de-academization of historical knowledge does not mean that there is nothing to learn from traditional documents and historical tomes, but it does mean that we should understand that there is much to learn even from the most insignificant item. Moreover, there is a mutually beneficial interaction that occurs between artistic description and documentation and archival records that contribute to giving us a more complete view of events from the past.

*Perla Sneh*

*Center for Genocide Studies, University of Tres de Febrero (UNTREF)*

## **Among Letters and “Pilotes” – Jewish Presence in Argentinian Popular Culture and Public Space**

We will sketch the ways in which the Jewish presence appears in the popular culture in Argentina, where the Jewish community is the largest in Latin-America. Since its beginning at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this presence varied with time and historical or political conditions, but up to a certain moment (mid-1960s) it was especially tied to the Yiddish language and culture.

Even if the first immigration headed to the colonies (where the “Jewish gaucho” emerged) we will focus on Buenos Aires, the capital city, where the Jewish voice – nourished by Yiddish – took strong roots in every area of culture: theater, press, radio, literature, etc. Let us not forget that this happened in the midst of a culture born under the denier legacy of the language itself – Spanish – that imposed the Jews’ expulsion decree of 1492.

Since 1898, with the first publication in Yiddish language – *Der Viderkol* – Jewish presence was to become more and more frequent: in certain neighborhoods, posters in Yiddish abounded or Yiddish printed papers in newspaper stands (one of them, *Di Yiddishe Tzeytung*, appears in J. L. Borges’ *Death and the Compass*); it was also common to see marquees announcing plays by Goldfaden or Ansky. This presence had to overcome another one, deeply rooted in Argentinian imaginary: that of the *t’meym*, as they called the Polish-Jewish net of pimps that became so famous that even Scholem Aleikhem devoted a short story to it.

In the mid-1960s, with the coming of age of a new generation that did not speak the language – even more, that actively distanced itself from it, because it was a “sign of strangeness” and the touchstone of a generational confrontation – this kind of linguistic representation slowly drew back and gave way to more indirect ways. One of them, characteristic of Jewish modernity, is notoriety in every intellectual, artistic and professional field. Maybe this is one of the reasons for the high Jewish participation in the revolutionary movements in the 70’s (it also happened – though in another ideological key – in the ’20 and ’30, when the proceedings of certain unions were taken in Yiddish and an anarchist newspaper included a page in that language), the disproportionate amount of Jews “disappeared” under the civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983) and, later, the politics of memory proposed regarding the history of political violence.

In 1994 a bomb destroyed the *Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina* (AMIA), the main institution of the community, leaving more than eighty dead and hundreds of injured. That explosion – second to another that destroyed the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires – poured on the city the ruins of a history that, from then on, was to be epitomized by a strange architectonic device: the piles that were built in the front of every Jewish institution. And these piles – in Spanish: “*pilotes*” – even if built as defensive boundaries – suddenly retroact us to the European tradition of the ghetto.

*Sabine Stach*

*German Historical Institute*

## **Tracing Korczak and Karski... Narrating Jewish History in Commercial Guided Tours - Warsaw as a Case Study**

Tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing economic sectors. Among the main travel motivations are the quest for relaxation and entertainment, but also the desire to gain “insights” into foreign cultures, to learn about “the country and its people”. However, this kind of interest is not at all limited to contemporary urban life and culture. It is the destination’s past that plays a crucial role in all kind of “sightseeing” activities. At least from the 1990s onwards, Jewish history has been one of the subjects frequently (re)presented – Jewish cemeteries, former Jewish neighbourhoods, as well as places connected with the Holocaust have become a regular part of commercial mass tourism.

In my paper, I am going to focus on tourism concerning Jewish themes by taking a closer look at one medium that has not attracted much scholarly

attention so far: guided city tours<sup>4</sup>. By foot, in cars or buses, people move (or: are passively moved) through urban space while a (local) tour guide points out “authentic“ things to be seen at the roadside. By identifying and marking objects and adding background information, the guide presents „local Jewish history“ and promotes the city at the same time. My paper seeks to address the following questions: How do the specific tourists’ needs, wishes, and expectations – the „tourist’s gaze“<sup>5</sup> – impact the presentation? How does the specific logic of tour guiding influence the history told? And what role does the concrete urban topography play in this context?

Reflecting on this subject, I will describe and analyse the „Jewish Warsaw Tour“, run every day by the Polish foundation *FREE walking TOUR*. In recent years, the concept of free walking tours has become one of the most popular ways of tour guiding for individual travellers<sup>6</sup>. The tours are conducted in English or Spanish by local people and they are mainly addressed to young tourists. The only form of remuneration consists in the visitors' tips at the end of each tour. This principle of direct feedback determines the whole tour's performance. Thus, as a „friendly teacher and an ambassador of the city“<sup>7</sup> the tour guide’s task seems to be quite conflicting: He has to entertain the audience, and to popularize Poland while at the same time to disseminate knowledge about the Jews of Warsaw, who were confined in the Ghetto, deported to Treblinka or killed in the Ghetto uprising. My paper is divided into three parts. After a short definition of what could be called „Jewish themed tours“<sup>8</sup> in Poland I will introduce the tour guiding system in Warsaw and the concept of Free Walking

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<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, as yet the relationship between History and Tourism has not been the subject of research - with the exception of heritage studies. In analysing popular representations of the past, historians have so far restricted themselves to the analysis of literature, films or museums.

<sup>5</sup> John Urry: *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London 1990 .

<sup>6</sup> Free walking tours were “invented” by Christopher Sandeman in 2004 by “mixing history and story-telling”. <http://www.neweuropetours.eu/concept.html>. [26.2.2016] First tours were offered in Berlin. Today Sandeman's New Europe Tours are organized in 18 cities in Europe and the US. In many towns, similar groups have emerged.

<sup>7</sup> Free Walking Tour. Foundation. Contemporary guiding, Mission and History, <http://freewalkingtour.com/warsaw/about-us/foundation/> [26.2.2016].

<sup>8</sup> Ruth Ellen Gruber uses the term “Jewish Theme Travel” for the incorporation of all kinds of all kinds of “Things Jewish” into the heritage industry. Gruber: *Virtually Jews. Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, Berkeley 2002, p. 134. I will not deal with the phenomena of „Jewish tourism“ or „Mission Tourism“ to Holocaust Sites. For this subject see Erica T. Lehrer. *Jewish Polish Revisited. Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*, Bloomington 2011.

Tours. In the second part of my paper, I will focus on the „Jewish Warsaw Tour’s“ itinerary and outline some of its characteristic features. On this empirical basis different aspects of historical narration will be exemplified and discussed in the third part: The merging of the categories of time and space, various notions of „authenticity“, the narrative strategies of emotionalization and personalization and not least the implications and consequences of a simplistic language.

*Liat Steir-Livny*

*Sapir College*

## **Humoristic Representations of the Holocaust on Israeli Social Media**

For many years, Israeli culture recoiled from dealing with the Holocaust from a humorous or satirical perspective. The perception was that a humorous approach to the Holocaust might threaten the sanctity of its memory, or evoke feelings of disrespect towards the subject and hurt the survivors’ feelings. Official agents of Holocaust memory continue to use this approach, but from the 1980s, another unofficial path of memory began taking shape in tandem. It is an alternative and subversive path that seeks to remember – but differently. Texts that combine the Holocaust with humor are a major aspect of this new memory perspective and are to be found in Israeli films, theatre, TV sitcoms and satire, stand-up appearances, internet memes, etc. Despite the growing popularity of these depictions, they are still controversial, and often ignite anger and debate.

A current example are the Internet memes, “The Mufti made me do it”. On 20 October 2015 in his speech to the World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu stated that Hitler did not want to murder the Jews, but only to expel them, and that it was the Arab Mufti, Haj Amin El-Husseini, who advised him to murder the Jews. At a very tense time in Israel (October-November 2015) that some refer to as “the third Intifada,” Netanyahu’s subtext was clear: every Arab – from the past to the present – is a Nazi. This comparison turns the Jewish Israelis into eternal victims, trapped in a repetitive Holocaust by the Nazis and the Palestinians combined. Surfers responded immediately and many humoristic Internet memes regarding this statement were released and shared in Israeli social media.

This talk will analyze the changes in the attitude towards Holocaust humor in Israel through “The Mufti made me do it” memes. Internet memes’ research

claims that Internet memes are more than just a fun pastime or simple jokes, and are to be taken seriously. They shape and reflect general social mindsets and can be part of political participation. The talk will object to the notions which view humoristic Holocaust memes as "cheapening" the Holocaust, and will rather claim that they underscore the role of humor as a defense mechanism. Israelis, who live in a society in which Holocaust memory is intensive and creates constant anxiety, seek to lessen reactions of tension and anxiety, even for a few minutes, and they do so through humor.

The talk will maintain that these memes do not deride or scorn the Holocaust. In fact, they do not engage with the Holocaust itself, but rather with the question of Holocaust memory and its perpetuation in Israel. They criticize the way in which Holocaust memory was shaped and took root in Israel and, as such, they are a part of a wider political-cultural struggle against the hegemonic memory of right-wing forces that blend past and present, and create a resemblance between Arabs and Nazis.

*Marianne Windsperger*

*University of Vienna*

## **In Search of a Lost *Shtetl*-World? The Role of the Yiddish Intertext in American Popular Culture**

“We do have writers whose private libraries of meaning are more like those of their Yiddish predecessors than their American English ones”, states the American author Dara Horn and points at lines of continuity in the literary history of Yiddish.

Common reflections on Yiddish language transmission in the United States emphasize discontinuities: Yiddish is regarded as a displaced and disappearing language that made its way from “the *Shtetl* to the Lower East Side”. In my contribution I aim at taking a closer look at the role of Yiddish literature in American Culture and the processes of mediatization and media changes that characterize “post-vernacular languages” (Jeffrey Shandler). With the gradual fading of language transmission within families, strong images, proverbs and songs as well as transferable literary figures (e.g. *The Fiddler on the Roof*) represent important ways of connecting with Yiddish culture. These developments point to the commodification of a language and literature in which consumability replaces the active ability to speak, read and write. Labeled as

“New Ashkenaz” or “Scribblers on the Roof”, a young generation of writers in the United States reconnects to Yiddish texts (Dara Horn, Rebecca Goldstein, Nathan Englander) and to aesthetic practices of Jewish Eastern European Culture.

In my presentation I will discuss the self-positioning of two American Jewish authors who regard Yiddish as their cultural heritage and how they contest images and labels attributed to them. In a closer analysis of two literary works by Dara Horn (*The World to Come*, 2006) and Rebecca Goldstein (*Mazel*, 1995) I will examine the function of intertextual references to Yiddish literature highlighting the concrete mediality of the intertext (e.g. acts of reading, writing, reciting, viewing and listening that are staged in the novels). Finally I will show how in these two novels references to Yiddish texts contest popular images of the *shtetl* and Eastern European Jewish life.

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## **Popular Representations of Irish Jews**

Jews have never constituted more than a tiny minority in Ireland. While barely acknowledged within broader Jewish historiography, as Ireland’s main non-Christian minority for more than 150 years, its Jewish community has attracted a disproportionate amount of external attention and interest. Much of this reflects an ambivalent relationship between Jews and the Catholic majority that has remained largely unacknowledged by the Jewish establishment and by mainstream Irish Jewish historiography. Exoticisation, ‘othering’ and condescension on the one hand have led to ‘ethnic cheerleading’, denial, selective memory and romanticisation on the other. These tensions have determined the ways in which Irish Jewish history has been related, recorded and represented both within and beyond the Jewish community.

This paper will investigate how it might be possible to assess and commemorate the legacy of a small and peripheral European Jewry, in order to progress towards a more honest and balanced historical narrative. Some of the searching questions that surround existing representations of Jews in Irish society and culture will be explored. What has been the real place of Jews in Irish society and is it possible to determine their true level of integration? Have they been a visible or invisible minority, and why have perceptions varied? How do we deal with the legacy of a shrinking community whose position within its host society remains undetermined and nebulous? Can we prevent the



manufacturing, selection and manipulation of its 'history' and 'memory'? Is it possible to strike an objective balance between the positive and negative aspects of Irish Jewish experience, and how should we assess these in terms of broader European Jewish history?

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## **Holocaust memory and humoristic sketches in Israeli television**

This study integrates three research fields: collective memory of the Holocaust, humoristic sketches, and television as popular culture. It does so by exploring skits that were aired on Israeli television and are related to Holocaust memory. At its core the study elaborates on the interrelations between the content (Holocaust memory), the form (television) and the genre (humoristic skits) and suggests a typology of these skits indicating several phases that were gradually developed: Until the 1990s Holocaust was considered as taboo and one could not find any humoristic expressions about it in Israeli television. The second phase, started in the 1990s, is characterized by the use of humor for criticizing Holocaust commemorative discourse. In the third phase, developed later on, televised skits used humor and Holocaust discourse in order to criticize other socio-cultural fields, and in the fourth phase Holocaust memory is used simply as means to create humor. Nowadays skits of all phases can be found in the televised humoristic discourse in Israel. Thus, the study suggests an evolutionary development: from the use of humor to criticize Holocaust remembrance to the use of Holocaust memory to create humorous effects. The subject that was a taboo is now just another raw material for gaining the audience's laughter.

Contextualizing its analysis in the fields of trauma theory and media memory, the study argues that the abovementioned evolutionary development challenges the hegemonic commemorative discourse of the Holocaust: while commemorative discourse plays a distinctive role in *performing* cultural trauma, the media's humorous discourse conveys a sacrilegious viewpoint and thus can play a vital role in *recuperating* from it.