

Rethinking Jewish and Non-Jewish Relations: Transdisciplinary Conference for Early Career Researchers in Jewish Studies

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The conference brought a number of young researchers from Europe, North America, and Israel together to present their current research topics and progress. Though the research topics shared the common ground of Jewish Studies, the participants came from different disciplines and fields such as history, literature, sociology, etc. The conference followed a new approach in presenting each topic. Therefore, instead of having each author present the content of their paper and highlighting the points most relevant to them, it was the commentators who summarized the paper's content and drew attention to certain aspects. It was then the author's turn to respond to the commentators' remarks and, if necessary, add further explanations or defend certain statements. Afterwards, the chair holder would open the discussion to all the conference's participants including guests who were frequently joining panels.

The first panel dealt with the topics of 'Gender and Emotional Relations'. SEBASTIAN HUEBEL's (Vancouver) work is dedicated to gender constructions and contestations between Jewish and non-Jewish men in Nazi prewar concentration camps. According to his research Jewish men were able to increase their chance of survival by preserving their masculinity through relying on the humanistic military values that had shaped their lives during WWI. His main sources are the diaries of middle aged men that either served in different military ranks in the previous war or were influenced by those same morals and standards.

FLORIAN ZABRANSKY's (Brighton) paper also focuses on the time of Nazi perse-

cution. He centers his research on Jewish romantic emotions, including romantic relationships between Jews and non-Jews. He conducts his research through interviews from the USC Shoah foundation and the collection of the Wiener library in London. He is aiming to find similarities and categories among the different cases and mentioned the importance of context (e.g. ghettos, concentration camps) during the discussion.

KATHARINA SEEHUBER (Munich) as well as CHRISTINA WIEDER (Vienna) noted in their commentaries that they found the focus on the male perspective rather interesting since the female perspective is often the main focus of gender studies. Both remarked that during the Nazi regime, men especially were victims of gender specific violence, yet they questioned the differentiation between 'male' and 'female' worries.

The second panel of the conference focused on the topics of 'Othering and Similarities' and dealt with definitions of Jewishness and Jewish identity within music and literature. REBEKAH VINCE's (Coventry) paper focuses on Slimane Benaïssa's and André Chouraqui's *Avenir Oublié* (1999) and questions Benaïssa's polarized Jewish identity positions. In her paper she argues that a better understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict can be achieved through looking at literature. The difficulty of defining certain Jewish identities such as Pied-Noir Jew or Arab Jew were discussed and whether or not these positions still apply or if they have all together been substituted for the term Mizrahi Jew.

During the discussion, another question surfaced concerning the difference between identity and identification which was not just connected to Vince's paper but also to JOHANNA PFUHL-RYBIZKY's (Heidelberg). She focuses on the definitions of 'Oriental Music' and 'Jewish Music' and the anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic structures of arguments in German-speaking musical literature of the 19th century. Though the discussed paper deals exclusively with the anti-Semitic discourse of the time, the main focus of her work lies in examining the Jewish-Zionist (self-)identification in musical discourse.

SEBASTIAN HUEBEL and MAJA HULTMAN (Southampton) delivered the commen-

taries in this panel. They questioned the used terms for Jewish identities in Vince's paper and brought similarity as a concept of research into the discussion. They furthermore encouraged Pfuhl-Rybizki to extend her research beyond German-speaking sources and look for similarities and parallels in other European countries concerning identity definitions in musical discourse.

In the afternoon, the conference continued with its third panel on 'Jewish and non-Jewish Relations in Literatures'. The works of David Fogel and Gershom Scholem are in the center of JUDITH MÜLLER's (Beer Sheva / Freiburg) research which deals with Hebrew as a marginal language and literary works that were written for a secluded audience in a non-Hebrew speaking society.

ASSAF DERRI (Haifa / Jerusalem), in contrast, deals with Hebrew as the majority language of society and focuses on the Arab-Israeli and Mizrahi Jewish authors, such as Sayed Kashua, who contribute to Hebrew literature by including Arabic into their works.

The question of language as a tool for integration arose during the commentaries given by CHANA SHACHAM-ROSBY (Beer Sheva) and AVRAHAM SHAVER (Minneapolis). Shacham-Rosby also wondered about Hebrew female writers in Vienna during the first half of the 20th century and in contemporary Israeli literature, and whether or not there was a feminist perspective that could be included into Derri's research. This led to a rather lively debate between both the panelists and the audience whether or not there were currently any interesting female writers contributing to Israeli literature.

JOACHIM SCHLÖR (Southampton) concluded the first day of the conference with the keynote speech on the changes and new developments within the field of Jewish Studies and emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary approaches. He furthermore reminded the audience of the responsibility of Jewish Studies to respond to the rising antisemitism in Europe, as a body as well as individuals. The speech opened a discourse on national and transnational dimensions and the importance of preserving documents and archives and the contributions of young researchers. The talk was very well received by

the audience and was referred to several times over the following days of the conference.

The second day of the conference started with the fourth panel focusing on 'Visualities'. It dealt with the research, CHRISTINA WIEDER is conducting on cultural transfer and inter-visual relations in Jewish-Argentinian exile. In her work, she focuses on three photographers that left Europe for Argentina due to antisemitism and persecution. Grete Stern and the feminist approach in her photographs as well as the influences of Dadaism and Bauhaus in her art were the main topics of the panel's discussion which was commented by REBEKAH VINCE.

The fifth panel picked up on the concepts of visibility by looking at 'Space and Spatialisation of Jewish and non-Jewish relations'. This topic is the center of MAJA HULTMAN's research on reconstructing the living spaces of Stockholm's Jewish population between 1870–1939. By looking at architecture, such as the construction of the liberal synagogue, she reconstructs the diversity of Stockholm's Jewish population and number of encounters between Jews and non-Jews. JOHANNA PFUHL-RYBIZKI suggested in her commentary that due to Hultman's dedication to drawing maps and visualizing these spaces she should consider investing in an exhibition on the topic.

AVRAHAM SHAVER also dedicates his work to examining spatial relationships between Jews and non-Jews by examining the diverse population living within an Eruv. He further explained the challenges a Jewish community faces and the consequences its non-Jewish inhabitants face while an Eruv is being constructed.

ASSAF DERRI asked Shaver in his commentary to explain the procedure of constructing an Eruv and how its construction can lead to a legal battle when its borders are invisible and irrelevant to non-religious inhabitants.

KLAUS HÖDL (Graz) delivered a Lunch Time Lecture on 'Approaching Interconnectedness', which was attended by a number of his students. He structured his lecture in three major points concerning Jewish and non-Jewish encounters. Firstly, he illuminated the reasons for the increase in research on Jewish

and non-Jewish encounters. Secondly, he explained in which way space can serve as a political tool, and thirdly he dwelled on the consequences of the increasing dispute on inter-spatial encounters.

'Micro-history and Mobility' were the topics, which were discussed in the sixth panel. Both papers dealt with cases of migration and movement, yet during different times of history. ANNA LIDOR-OSPIRAN (Graz) focuses her work on the circumstances surrounding Rabbi Meir, also known as Maharam, a famous rabbi of the 13th century, and the impact he had on the Jewish community in Tyrol. Instead of dedicating her research to his life and death like many other scholars, she takes his influence and followers as an indicator to examine the beginnings of the Jewish community in Tyrol. She does so by combining both Hebrew and Latin sources in order to reconstruct the motivations and movements of migration to and from Tyrol.

KATHARINA SEEHUBER focuses her research on a much later era, the 1930s. By using the tools of micro-history, she limits her research to specific cases, such as the lives of the Goldschmidt sisters who fled from Bavaria to the Netherlands. During her response to JONATHAN KAPLAN (Berlin) and BORBÁLA KLACSMANN (Szeged) who delivered the commentaries to both papers in this panel, she explained the importance to not mistake micro-history for a tool of generalization, but take it as a tool to help understand and reconstruct the circumstances of a certain time.

The second day of the conference concluded with a panel discussion between HILDEGARD FRÜBIS (Berlin), GERALD LAMPRECHT (Graz) and OLAF TERPITZ (Graz) who spoke about the changes and developments in the fields of Jewish Studies from three different perspectives, which were art history, Jewish history, and Jewish literature. They emphasized the importance of combining the different fields of research and encouraged a trans-disciplinary dialogue.

The last day of the conference opened with the seventh panel on 'Jewish and non-Jewish Intersections in Ashkenazi Studies'. AHUVA LIBERLES NOIMAN (Jerusalem) analyzes Hebrew and German sources concern-

ing Jewish conversion to Christianity in the late Middle Ages and how the process of conversion affected their social life, as well as professional and family structures. She points out that the conversions she examines weren't forced instances, but intentional and voluntary. ANNA LIDOR-OSPIRAN directed the discussion towards the topic of female conversion and whether or not women chose to convert for different reasons and if their lives were affected differently.

CHANA SHACHAM-ROSBY focuses her work on the role of the prophet Elijah, „a comment element [in Christianity and Judaism] that creates a gap“ as JUDITH MÜLLER described him during her commentary. Shacham-Rosby explained that the perception of Elijah differs in different societies and communities and that she aims for a better comprehension of the dynamics and transfer of ideas between Jews and Christians on a personal and social level.

The eighth and last panel of the conference focused on 'Jewish and non-Jewish relations Post-Shoah'. Whereas BORBÁLA KLACSMANN examines the situation in Hungary between 1945-1946 and the processes of restitution of previously confiscated Jewish properties, JONATHAN KAPLAN dedicates his research to the post-war activities of the German Democratic Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the GDR's version of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'. Though the GDR neglected the existence of former Nazis among their own ranks they assisted the American Jewry in bringing former Nazis to justice.

During the commentary, FLORIAN ZABRANSKY and AHUVA LIBERLES NOIMAN observed many parallels between these two research areas, mainly the tension between written and actual practice, the relationship between authorities and people, and coming to terms with a nation's past. The following discussion dealt with the role and importance of material belongings and, in addition, the difference between the terms 'restitution' and '(moral) compensation'. An observation made during the final discussion of the conference was that the term 'identity' is often accredited in retrospect, therefore emphasizing the importance of re-thinking

certain ascriptions and relations. The interdisciplinary approach was emphasized once again and the contributions different areas of research have to offer. Jewish Studies have a history of continuity, of re-defining established matters and including new and different approaches and perspectives.

Conference Program:

Panel 1: Gender and Emotional Relations

Sebastian Huebel (University of British Columbia): Gender constructions and contestations between Jewish and non-Jewish men in Nazi prewar concentration camps

Florian Zabransky (University of Sussex): Jewish Romantic Emotions During Nazi Persecution

Commentators: Katharina Seehuber (University of Munich), Christina Wieder (International Research Center for Cultural Studies Vienna)

Panel 2: Othering and Similarities

Rebekah Vince (University of Warwick): Arab-Jew or Pied-Noir Jew? Alternatives to Polarised Identity Positions in Slimane Benaïssa's *Avenir oublié* [Forgotten Future] (1999)

Johanna Pfuhl-Rybizki (University of Heidelberg): From 'Oriental' to 'Jewish Music'. Anti-Judaic and Antisemitic Structures of Arguments in German-speaking Musical Literature of the 19th Century

Commentators: Sebastian Huebel (University of British Columbia), Maja Hultman (University of Southampton)

Panel 3: Jewish and non-Jewish Relations in Literatures

Judith Müller (Ben Gurion University Beer Sheva / University of Freiburg): David Fogel and Gershon Shofman: Vienna as a literary meeting place between Jewish and non-Jewish European literature

Assaf Derri (University of Haifa / Hebrew University of Jerusalem): The Unexpected Melting Pot: Hebrew Reshaped by Arabic in Modern Israeli Literature

Commentators: Chana Shacham-Rosby (Ben

Gurion University Beer Sheva), Avraham Shaver (University of Minnesota)

Keynote

Joachim Schlör (University of Southampton): Jewish Studies in Troubled Times: New Developments in and outside of the Discipline

Panel 4: Visualities

Christina Wieder (International Research Center for Cultural Studies Vienna): On Forms of Cultural Transfer and Intervisual Relations in Jewish-Argentinian Exile

Commentator: Rebekah Vince (University of Warwick)

Panel 5: Space and Spatialisation of Jewish and non-Jewish Relations

Maja Hultman (University of Southampton): 'Not Bound By Given Forms but by Himself Given the Freedom to Invent Them': The Jewish / Non-Jewish Relationship as a Foundation for Jewish Diversity in Stockholm, 1870-1939

Avraham Shaver (University of Minnesota): The *Eruv*: Spatial Relationship among Jews and non-Jews

Commentators: Johanna Pfuhl-Rybizky (University of Heidelberg), Assaf Derri (University of Haifa / Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Lunchtime Talk

Klaus Hödl (University of Graz): Approaching Interconnectedness

Panel 6: Micro-history and Mobility

Anna Lidor-Osprian (University of Graz): A Rabbi on the Run and the Beginning of Jewish Life in Tyrol

Katharina Seehuber (University of Munich): Reduce the scale to increase the insights: Micro-history and its use for Jewish History Studies

Commentators: Jonathan Kaplan (Freie Universität Berlin), Borbála Klacsmann (University of Szeged)

Panel Discussion: New Approaches in Jewish Studies

Hildegard Frübis (Humboldt-University Berlin): Jewish Studies and Art History

Gerald Lamprecht (University of Graz): Jewish Studies and History

Olaf Terpitz (University of Graz): Jewish Literatures: New Approaches

Panel 7: Jewish and non-Jewish Intersections in Ashkenazi Studies

Ahuva Noiman (Hebrew University Jerusalem): Seeking Answers on Both Ends: Advantages and Methods for using Halachic and Archival Material

Chana Shacham-Rosby (Ben Gurion University Beer Sheva): (Re)Claiming Elijah the Prophet in Medieval Ashkenaz

Commentators: Anna Lidor-Osprian (University of Graz), Judith Müller (Ben Gurion University Beer Sheva / University of Freiburg)

Panel 8: Jewish and non-Jewish relations Post-Shoah

Borbála Klacsmann (University of Szeged): After the Storm: Confiscated Properties and Jewish–Non-Jewish Relations in Hungary, 1945–1946

Jonathan Kaplan (Freie Universität Berlin): Personal Histories and National Remembrance: The confrontation of the East German Foreign Ministry with the National-Socialist Past

Commentators: Florian Zabransky (University of Sussex), Ahuva Liberles Noiman (Hebrew University Jerusalem)

Final Discussion

Tagungsbericht *Rethinking Jewish and Non-Jewish Relations: Transdisciplinary Conference for Early Career Researchers in Jewish Studies*. 07.05.2018–09.05.2018, Graz, in: H-Soz-Kult 08.06.2018.