



ACJC news

Second Semester 2011

Jewish identity in a new world

An impressive line-up of international guests will headline next year's annual conference of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies (AAJS) hosted by the ACJC.

Dr Daniel Gordis, Professor Samuel Heilman, Dr Bethamie Horowitz, Professor Moshe Semyonov and Dr David Shneer are the keynote speakers at the Dina and Ron Goldschlager Conference on Contemporary Jewish Life titled 'Old New Jews: Jewish identity in the 21st century', on February 12 and 13 at Monash Caulfield campus.

The title borrows the Jewish idea of *Alt Neu* to depict the ongoing exchange of past and present, innovation and tradition. Papers and keynote addresses will examine Judaism and Jewish identity – their transmission, diversity and specificity in relation to national and global settings. The conference will look at how the Israel-Diaspora relationship is being remodelled; Jewish institutional life; the impact of new technologies; Judaism in an age of choice and hybrid identities; demographic trends and marriage patterns; population movements and scholarly constructs of ethnicity, identity and social cohesion.

The conference will also explore ideas that have been developed through the research on Jewish

continuity and the Gen08 Community Survey by Professor Andrew Markus.

Papers will cover a broad range of themes including:

- Models of Jewish identity through the ages
- Israel, Middle East and globalisation
- New technologies and virtual Jewish communities
- Jewish education and globalisation
- Jews and language
- Judaism in an age of choice
- Immigration, multiculturalism and globalisation
- Antisemitism and globalisation

The first day will feature international keynote speakers and panel discussion, concluding at night with a panel discussion. The second day will feature keynote speakers, parallel sessions of academic papers and a closing address.

Conference chair is Associate Professor Mark Baker and convenor is Dr Miriam Munz.

Photos: Emmanuel Santos



Overseas guests



Daniel Gordis is senior vice president of the Shalem Center, where he is also a senior fellow. The author of numerous books on Jewish thought and currents in Israel, Dr Gordis was the founding dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the University of Judaism. His latest book is *Saving Israel: How the Jewish State Can Win a War That May Never End*.



Samuel Heilman holds the Harold Proshansky Chair in Jewish Studies at the CUNY Graduate Centre of Queens College of the City University of New York, where he serves as a Distinguished Professor of Sociology. He is the author of 10 books with his most recent titled, *The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (co-authored with Menachem Friedman).

(Continued page 2)

Yiddish courses, events thrive

In April, the 'Mameloshn: How Yiddish Made a Home in Melbourne' exhibition opened at the Jewish Museum of Australia, with creative and intellectual input from ACJC staff.

In May, students from Melbourne and Sydney met face to face at Yiddish Australia's annual Yiddish immersion weekend, *Yidish sof-vokh* where the ACJC sponsors students' attendance. Highlights included captivating presentations by New York singer, songwriter and Yiddish librarian, Miryem-Khaye Seigel, and by the ACJC's Jan Randa Visiting Scholar, Dovid Katz.

Our program benefitted significantly from Dovid's visit to Melbourne. In addition to his Winter School, Dovid gave classes to students at all Yiddish levels. A highlight was his advanced Yiddish literature class on ProletPen which attracted members of the broader community, some of whom have since enrolled in the ACJC's advanced Yiddish literature class.

Another visitor, Miryem-Khaye Seigel also enthralled our classes with her presentation of Nokhem Stutchkof's Yiddish radio commercials and offered advice about seeking Yiddish resources on the internet.

Semester two began on a high note, with more than 40 people attending the inaugural Yiddish research seminar conducted in Yiddish on a topic of Yiddish interest. ACJC Adjunct Research Associate Dr Andrew Firestone was guest presenter.

Hinde (Ena) Burstin is an ACJC Yiddish lecturer.

Hinde (Ena) Burstin

The Jacob Kronhill Program in Yiddish Language and Culture has made significant inroads this year, generating increased interest in its activities and strengthening its ties with Yiddish organisations.

The year commenced with the announcement that graduates Dvora Zylberman and Reyzl Zylberman were joint winners of the Peter and Barbara Kolliner Undergraduate Prize in Jewish Civilisation, which is awarded annually to the top student completing a major or minor sequence in Jewish civilisation. Ariella Leski won the ACJC Yiddish Prize.

Before first semester, the ACJC was filled to capacity for a tribute afternoon it co-hosted with the Kadimah honouring the late Yiddish writer, editor, partisan and Nuremberg witness, Avrom Sutskever. Featuring his poetry and songs performed by Arnold Zable, Danielle Charak, Freydi Mrocki, Andrew Firestone and others, the event was conducted in Yiddish with translations.

First semester recorded higher student numbers and classes at all levels. We also welcomed students from the University of Sydney via teleconferencing.

From the director

I'm repeatedly asked by people why students would want to study with the ACJC. I throw a question back before answering, "How many students do you think actually study with us?". The responses range from dozens to 100.

When I say that the actual number of people experiencing our teaching and research programs on an annual basis is closer to 1000, people are astonished. But why, they will ask. I didn't even know there were that many Jewish students studying at Monash.

The success of our program lies in its ability to transcend people's personal identities and backgrounds. Most of the subjects and research pathways we offer are mainstreamed into the broader university curriculum of the humanities and social sciences. Students come from all disciplines to study with us: history, politics, international studies, philosophy, and theology to learn about Jews in the modern world, Kabbalah and Maimonidean philosophy, the Holocaust and other genocides and the place of Israel in the Middle East.

Our Centre is flourishing and expanding. We have established two new academic positions this year and are in the process of making further appointments in Holocaust and genocide studies.

Our Centre is known for its innovative overseas courses that explore topics by encountering people and landscapes in Israel, Europe, South Africa and Rwanda. Our scholars are publishing books in wide-ranging fields from contemporary literature to medieval mysticism. Our research grants have facilitated publications that have surveyed Jewish identity and culture in Australia, paving the way for strategic communal planning. We are equipping students with the tools to understand Jewish civilisation and to be inspired by Monash University's commitment to the values of intercultural dialogue, peace-building and social justice.

No wonder we are attracting so many students. We hope this newsletter gives you a taste of why.

Associate Professor Mark Baker

Jewish identity in a new world

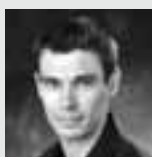
(continued from page 1)



Bethamie Horowitz is a socio-psychologist with 25 years of experience developing usable knowledge to address major issues facing the Jewish world. She conducted the *1991 NY Jewish Population Study*, and subsequently developed the groundbreaking *Connections* and *Journeys Study*, documenting patterns of Jewish engagement among baby boomer and younger American Jews.



Moshe Semyonov is the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Chair Professor in Sociology of Labor at Tel Aviv University and president of the Israeli Sociological Society. He is also Professor of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He has co-authored and edited several books, including *Immigration and Nation Building: Australia and Israel Compared* with Professor Andrew Markus of the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation



David Shneer is the Louis Singer chair of Jewish history and directs the Program in Jewish Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Called a "taboo-breaking scholar" by *Tikkun* magazine, Dr Shneer's books include *Queer Jews*; *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture*; and *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora*. His newest book *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, & The Holocaust*.

Israel a land of passionate debate

Israel must find a liveable compromise with the Palestinians, Amos Oz told a capacity audience at the 2011 Monash Israel Oration. Myer Bloom reports.

Combining humorous personal anecdotes with sharp political analysis, Israeli author Amos Oz enthralled a packed audience at Melbourne Town Hall on August 3 for the fourth Monash Israel Oration.

Speaking on the topic 'Peace, War and Storytelling' to open the 2011 Monash Israel Lecture Series titled 'Israel Today: Real Stories', Oz said Israel was born out of a spectrum of dreams: dreams of Israel as a reconstituted Biblical Jewish state; as a society based on the European shtetl; as a polite middle European society; as a Marxist paradise.

Like all dreams, none of these became fully true, he said. "The truth is that Israel is Mediterranean, middle class, materialistic and hedonistic, argumentative and deeply divided". He listed divisions between State and religion, hawks and doves, rich and poor, Ashkenazim and Sephardim and Jews and Arabs.

He said he was particularly concerned that the social solidarity displayed in Israel's early difficult years had diminished and that the blessings of Israel's advanced technological development were conferred on too few.

Nevertheless he praised Israeli society, calling it a "fiery collection of arguments" and expressed his love for this unique country in which sophisticated political and philosophical debate can break out in bus queues or amongst bunkered soldiers about to do battle.

Describing this positive aspect of Jewish life as "latent anarchism", Oz traced its origins to Abraham's questioning of God and the endless rabbinic debates and compromises in the Talmud.

This led Oz to his most powerful political argument: that Israel must terminate occupation of the territories and find a liveable compromise with the Palestinians. He argued compromise was not defeatist; that it was not the opposite of victory, but the opposite of fundamentalism and death.



He characterised the conflict as a real estate dispute between two parties, both possessing rights to the land. Both sides would have to make painful decisions and the resulting compromise would be a "clenched teeth" compromise, he said. "Israelis and Palestinians will not love each other as neighbours, but the critical point is that they will accept each other as neighbours in two adjacent states."

Oz's advice to the world was that all comment and action on the conflict should be neither pro-Palestinian nor pro-Israeli, but pro-peace.

"Israel is blessed with the most exciting and culturally creative cities in the world and I hope it will also be blessed with peace."

His final words expressed his dream that Israel would disappear from front-page political news (that mainly portrays Israel negatively) and flourish in the arts, culture, literature and sports supplements

Myer Bloom is a lecturer in journalism at Monash College. The Monash Israel Oration was under the auspices of the ACJC's Leon Liberman Chair in Modern Israel Studies and hosted in partnership with The Wheeler Centre.

Around 2000 people packed Melbourne Town Hall to hear Amos Oz deliver the 2011 Monash Israel Oration.
Photos: Ben Weinstein

1. Amos Oz captivates 2000 people at Melbourne Town Hall
2. Alan Finkel (left), Les Reti
3. From left: Eli Salzberger, Betty Kornhauser, Rita Kornhauser
4. Margaret Brener, Zev Zur
5. From left: Rae Francis, Fania Oz-Salzberger, Roba Rasheed
6. From left: Dan Rabinovici, Sue Hampel, Karen Auerbach, David Slucki
7. Kerryn Baker, Emmanuel Santos

Centre welcomes new lecturers

The Centre welcomed two new lecturers at the beginning of semester two.

David Slucki, who completed his PhD at the ACJC in early 2010, has joined the Centre as an Early Career Development Fellow. His new role incorporates teaching and research.

David is course coordinator in the honours/ Masters course, 'History and memory: Interpreting life stories', which focuses on the relationship between memory and the writing of history. He also tutors and lectures in 'Post-conflict: justice, memory, and reconciliation'.

David is putting the finishing touches to his book, *The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945: toward a global history*, which examines the history of the Jewish Labor Bund (socialist party) after 1945 and considers the ways in which Jewish communities around the world re-established themselves in the wake of the Holocaust.

The book will appear in January 2012 and is being published by Rutgers University Press. He is also working on a new research project that focuses on the emergence of Holocaust survivor communities and a global survivor Diaspora in the decades after the war.

Before rejoining the Centre, David was Senior Curator on redevelopment of the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Museum Victoria. There his focus shifted from modern Jewish history to Victorian Aboriginal history and culture, working on developing content, selecting objects and consulting with communities for Bunjilaka's new long-term exhibition.

Karen Auerbach has come to the Centre from the United States for a three-year lectureship in Jewish studies.

She received her PhD in modern Jewish history from Brandeis University in 2009 and recently completed a manuscript titled *A Window on Warsaw: The Jewish Families of 16 Ujazdowskie Avenue after the Holocaust*, a micro history of Jewish integration in post-war Poland focusing on 10 families who were neighbours in an apartment building in Warsaw.

During two year-long stays in Poland, Karen delved into archives and interviewed family members in Warsaw and throughout Europe to reconstruct the families' 20th-century paths and evolving identities. Along the way, this research also led her to write about the life path of a Yiddish poet in Communist Eastern Europe whose tumultuous history she stumbled upon in Poland's security police archives.

Karen's present work takes her to 19th-century Poland for a study of Jewish booksellers and publishers of Polish literature. The book-length project is a cultural and social history of their everyday lives in Warsaw, their role in the city's intellectual circles and their impact on evolving definitions of Polish national identity.

Karen is looking forward to working with both undergraduate and postgraduate students and teaching on the history of the Holocaust and modern Jewish history. She comes to Monash from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the United States, where she held a postdoctoral fellowship and previously taught at Brown and Virginia Tech universities in the United States as well as the University of Southampton in England.



David Slucki



Karen Auerbach

In research positions at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Karen took part in collaborative projects translating Polish and Yiddish diaries, letters and other documents written by Jews during the Holocaust as well as Yiddish testimonies taken down in the earliest post-war years.

Young women guided in social enterprise

ACJC lecturer Dr Melanie Landau facilitated a three-day intensive workshop for 11 young women over three days in March, working with Louise Zygier of the National Council Jewish Women Australia, Victoria (Vic) which received a grant from the Victorian Multicultural Commission to develop a program promoting leadership among women in the community. Participants,

aged between 18 and 39, and from a diverse background of careers and interests, were selected based on their ideas for developing a social enterprise project that would benefit the community. Landau and other presenters assisted the women to develop their proposals resulting in a business plan. They were also guided by staff from Social Traders which supports the growth of social venture by strengthening individual projects and they were addressed by successful career women and funding experts. Some of the participants have been matched with a mentor to help move their project forward. The workshop was part of the Roslyn Smorgon Program in Jewish Communal Leadership and was also supported by Debbie Dadon.



Standing from left: Vivien Brass (NCJW Vic president), Rochelle Serry, Lital Peles, Tamara Newman, Sarah Rosenberg, Samara Hersch, Hali Halphen, Jessica Taft. Seated from left: Melanie Landau, Delia Baron, Gabbi Sar Shalom, Sari Eisen. Absent: Malki Rose

Centre research guides future planning

Major research led by the ACJC's Professor Andrew Markus is helping both the Jewish and wider communities to plan for the future.

The groundbreaking Australian Jewish population study had its origin in a partnership between the ACJC and Jewish Care Victoria (Inc) and was supported by the Australian Research Council, the Jewish Communal Appeal in Sydney, leading foundations and philanthropists. It led to the Gen08 survey which was completed by more than 6200 people in Australia and New Zealand. The detailed questionnaire covered issues of identity, sense of community, perceptions and experience of antisemitism, attitudes to Israel, education, and life satisfaction.

In addition to the survey, more than 30 focus group discussions were held. The project will result in six reports, five of which have been completed or are close to completion. A report on Older Jewish Australians will follow the report on Jewish Continuity, which was released in July 2011.

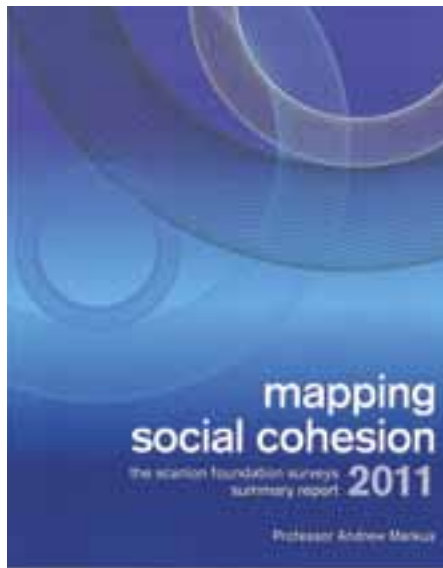
'The surge of post-war refugees has led to a distortion of the Jewish population profile, with a seriously disproportionate number of baby boomers. Between 2006 and 2030 the Melbourne Jewish population aged 75-84 is expected to increase from 4800 to 7400.'

Professor Markus, who holds the Pratt Chair of Jewish Civilisation, said the major issue to emerge from the Jewish continuity report relates to communal planning.

"The big question in Melbourne is whether the model which worked so well in the post-war decades – when individuals and organisations just did what they wanted, without thought for the long-term cost of duplication of effort – will work as effectively and adequately in 2020. In contrast, Sydney is well placed to cope with change through its Jewish Communal Appeal (JCA) planning structure."

Other issues, including the escalating cost of Jewish education and property prices in traditional inner suburban Jewish suburbs, dominated discussion at a community forum organised in response to the continuity survey.

The survey on ageing in our community has highlighted unprecedented challenges to be expected over the next 10 to 25 years.



"The surge of post-war refugees has led to a distortion of the Jewish population profile, with a seriously disproportionate number of baby boomers. Between 2006 and 2030 the Melbourne Jewish population aged 75-84 is expected to increase from 4800 to 7400," Professor Markus said.

There is also significant change in wealth distribution. Not only are people living longer, but for the first time in recent memory, the younger generation is financially less well off than the generation of their parents. The professionals of Gen X and Gen Y have less

earning capacity than earlier generations, many of whom owned businesses.

To engage with the community and make this research widely available, the Centre is adding a section dealing with the Jewish population study to its high-quality website. This follows development of the Yiddish Melbourne site, which presents a comprehensive history of the way of life and institutions of the Yiddish-speaking immigrants who settled in Melbourne. A third site titled 'Israel: Fact and Myth' is being developed by Professor Markus.

Professor Markus is contributing to wider society through his work with the Scanlon Foundation. He has undertaken four national social cohesion surveys, with findings available on the Mapping Australia's Population site. The report from the most recent survey, launched on 27 September 2011 by Senator Kate Lundy, Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, includes analysis directed to the issues of asylum and immigration.

The survey findings received widespread national media coverage, including *The Australian*, *Australian Financial Review*, *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Canberra Times*, *West Australian* and overseas publications.

To access the two sites that have been completed, see:

www.arts.monash.edu/mapping-population
www.arts.monash.edu/yiddish-melbourne

Life in pre-war Carlton

A Shtetl in Ek Velt (A Shtetl at the End of the World), a product of Monash University's Yiddish Melbourne project, is a collection of autobiographical writings about growing up in pre-war Carlton, where Jewish immigrants escaping the hardships and discrimination of Eastern Europe created a vibrant cultural enclave for themselves.

Compiled and edited by Julie Meadows, the book comprises the accounts of 54 authors, providing insight into the lives of myriad characters: the man who thought he was the Messiah, the eight-year-old girl who brought an American sailor home for a Sabbath meal and the house painter who was befriended by an archbishop so they could converse in modern Hebrew.

This is social history at its most enjoyable and informative.

The book will be launched in November.



Myer Bloom reports on the keynote sessions of this year's conference which explored the Politics of Memory.

Scholars discuss pressures on memory

The annual Aftermath conference in Holocaust and Genocide studies has become a flagship of the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation. The conference series explores the long shadow of the Holocaust and genocide not only on the lives of those who experience mass atrocity, but on contemporary culture.

The conference is part of the Centre's broader program in Holocaust and Genocide studies which offers teaching and research pathways for Monash students. The Aftermath conferences are sponsored in memory of a Holocaust survivor, Dr Jan Randa, a Hebrew scholar from Prague

who was interned in the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

The conference series was inaugurated in 2010 on the theme of Holocaust survivors in Australia. This year the conference explored the Politics of Memory.

Memory is usually understood in relation to the testimony of survivors who are the eyewitnesses to mass murder. Yet memory is also transmitted through other means – monuments, museums, movies, commemorations, fiction and historical writing. These vehicles of memory are usually mediated by national experiences which emphasise different aspects of the Holocaust and other genocides.

The 2011 conference on the Politics of Memory invited some of the leading Holocaust scholars to Australia to consider how memory is being subject to political pressures in a variety of national contexts.

Professor Jan Gross of Princeton provided the Polish perspective through his groundbreaking studies of the fate of Jews in the postwar period.

His book on the massacre of Jews in a barn in Jedwabne not only reflected the suppression of Polish memory, but by

bringing it to the surface, impacted on the politics of memory in Poland today.

Father Patrick Desbois delivered the Monash Wallenberg Oration and demonstrated how memory of the Holocaust still lies buried beneath countless villages in the Ukraine and Lithuania; while Yiddish linguist Dovid Katz showed how Lithuanian politics has produced a form of Holocaust obfuscation.

Laura Levitt from the United States spoke about the ways our own memories of loss and mourning are brought into our encounters with museums, while Naama Sheffi discussed her research on the changing use of the word Shoah in Israel.

The second day of the conference explored the politics of memory in other genocidal contexts.

Professor Raimond Gaita gave a philosophical context for considering the relationship between the Holocaust and other genocides, while Professor Andrew Markus talked about the genocide of indigenous Australians.

The conference was attended by 200 people and attracted scholars and postgraduate students from all over the world.

The 2012 Dr Jan Randa Aftermath Conference will be held in November.

Rewriting Polish history

Speaking on the topic 'Neighbours: Memory in post-war Poland', Professor Jan Gross discussed the roles and behaviour of individuals and neighbours of Jews during and after the Holocaust.

Although the three million murdered Jews were 10 percent of the Polish population and 30 percent of Poland's urban population, collective Polish memory and historiography did not 'mark' this significant element of their population.

Professor Gross advanced several reasons for this suppression of memory: locals who killed and plundered not wanting their roles revealed; disbelief of Jewish descriptions of the extremes of violence enacted against them; the desire not to suggest that in any way was the war fought on behalf of the Jews and not to give weight to the Nazi claim that the Jews influenced the Allies.

Historian Raul Hilberg was criticised for dismissing victims' narratives as unreliable and countered with Professor Gross's strong

argument that personal written narratives and oral testimonies were given to provide accurate accounts of what happened, and especially so that people would believe them even if they appeared 'hyper real'.

Professor Gross praised other well-known historians Saul Friedlander, Omer Bartov and Christopher Browning for their "struggle against the sceptics by using testimonies". Combining elements of their work with his, Professor Gross demonstrated how the story of local violence can be accurately constructed.

He found a pattern in distribution and frequency of local violence: violence was committed collectively with socially sanctioned motives of looting, ridding Poland of Jews (who were regarded as an 'internal enemy') and undesirability of Jews returning after the war.

Looting in particular was obsessional. In Salonika, Greece, graves were ransacked and tombstones used for urinals. Professor Gross displayed a photo of Polish farmers harvesting crops that showed, with more careful observation, that the harvest was Jewish skulls and bones. He likened the ground near Treblinka, where peasants had dug many holes in search of gold amongst the human ash, to a cratered lunar landscape.



Jan Gross

Gross said that in the last 10 years, Polish historiography had begun to be rewritten, accurate accounts had come to the fore and all taboos had been addressed.

Jan Gross is the author of Neighbors (2001) and Fear (2006). His latest book Harvest (2011) covers the controversial subject of the exploitation of Jewish property after the Holocaust.

Author 'anchors' Holocaust in history

Historians today must deal with mixed memory cultures and still produce history that is enlightening, plausible and true, says historian Timothy Snyder, author of *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*.

Speaking via Skype from Vienna at a roundtable session titled 'Bloodlands: Reframing the Holocaust' with Father Patrick Desbois, Jan Gross and Dovid Katz (June 5), Professor Snyder said that as the Holocaust occurred in lands where millions of non-Jews lived, individual events of the Holocaust needed to be understood within a wider context.

Survivors reviewing his book indicated that the book recalled aspects of their experience accurately, but other readers, subject to their politics of memory, claimed that he did not treat Hitler and Stalin's crimes accurately, with each side critical of the minimisation of the others' crimes.

Professor Snyder said however, that his attempt to understand history and to demonstrate the extent of evil behaviour has

mainly met with a positive response. He believes he has firmly anchored the Holocaust in European history and in the history of the world. Within this history he argues also for the necessity to acknowledge the Soviet contribution to defeating Hitler and that Jews did survive in eastern Soviet territory.

He added that the Holocaust must now be seen not as only death camp mass murders, but as a more distinct event and as unprecedented in its unique aim to exterminate a whole race.

Professor Snyder concluded with the intention that *Bloodlands* should promote debate, especially within the context

of revisionism today and that the definition of genocide is now of little value because of its corruption by political use. He described the 'Double Genocide' theory in particular as ludicrous.

Respondents Dovid Katz, Patrick Desbois and Jan Gross agreed with Snyder's facts, adding only points about the need to acknowledge all victims and the dangers of Revisionism obfuscating the individual nature of the Holocaust. Jan Gross highlighted the importance of witness testimonies in contributing to understanding the intimate nature of genocidal violence and that witness accounts long after the events can reveal previously unmentioned information.



From left: Dovid Katz, Jan Gross, Patrick Debois. Photo: Myer Bloom

Priest's journey honours victims

Father Patrick Desbois began the Monash Wallenberg Oration (2 June) with a question he suggested was probably in the minds of audience members: "What's a French priest doing with three research teams in Eastern Europe?"

Speaking on the topic, 'The Holocaust by bullets – a Priest's Journey to uncover the Truth behind the Murder of 1.5 million Jews', the name of the book he authored, Father Debois explained how his grandfather had told him about his time as a German prisoner of war in the Ukrainian town of Rawa-Ruska, but said his experience was not as bad as that of 'the others'. Father Desbois later discovered 'the others' were the Jews and that his grandfather must have seen them killed.

This knowledge led Father Desbois to Rawa-Ruska where the Germans

murdered 18,000 Jews, but he found no memorial for the victims. The mayor introduced him to local farmers who provided eyewitness accounts of the killings.

Following this experience, Father Desbois travelled throughout the Ukraine, finding and recording eyewitness accounts of German genocidal actions against more than a million Jews. He also located many unmarked mass graves.

His interviewees, all elderly Ukrainians, many still living in isolated rural areas, told of seeing mass shootings; babies bashed to death with iron bars; live children thrown into mass graves to save bullets; and of local Ukrainian collaboration in the killings. Some were also "requisitioned" to help dig mass graves, provide supplies and to sell victims' clothes.

By combining cross-referenced witness accounts with detailed archival research, Father Desbois was able to establish the organised and methodical process the

Germans used to commit the mass murders.

Father Desbois sees the value in his work as unlocking a "huge quantity of memory that has provided personal details that archival statistics don't", and that relatives of murdered Ukrainian Jews can visit a marked gravesite to say *Kaddish*.

He said his journey has changed his life, but he does not want modern Europe to be built on the forgotten graves of a million and a half murdered Jews and gypsies. From a religious perspective, by acknowledging the truth of the past, contemporary Europe can finally remove alingering mark of Cain it has carried since the Holocaust.

Father Debois is president of Yahad-In-Unum, which locates the mass graves of the Jewish victims of the Einsatzgruppen during World War 2. The Monash Wallenberg Oration was presented in partnership with the Wheeler Centre.

The ACJC is associated with the publication of several fascinating books covering subjects from Wagner's opera to Australasian Judaica and to the role of Holocaust witnesses.

A Knight at the Opera

By Leah Garrett



A Knight at the Opera by Leah Garrett, Loti Smorgon Chair in Contemporary Jewish Life and Culture, examines the remarkable and unknown role that the medieval legend (and Wagner opera) Tannhäuser played in Jewish cultural life in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The book analyses how three of the greatest Jewish thinkers of that era – Heinrich Heine, Theodor Herzl, and I L Peretz – used this central myth of Germany to strengthen Jewish culture and to attack antisemitism.

In the original medieval myth, a Christian knight lives in sin with the seductive pagan goddess Venus in the Venusberg. He escapes her clutches and makes his way to Rome to seek absolution from the Pope. The Pope does not pardon Tannhäuser and he returns to the Venusberg.

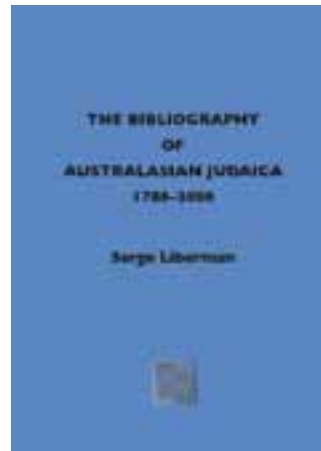
During the course of *A Knight at the Opera*, readers will see how Tannhäuser evolves from a medieval knight, to Heine's German scoundrel in early modern Europe, to Wagner's idealised German male, and finally to Peretz's pious Jewish scholar in the Land of Israel. Venus herself also undergoes major changes from a pagan goddess, to a lusty housewife, to an overbearing Jewish mother.

The book also discusses how the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, was so inspired by Wagner's opera that he wrote *The Jewish State* while attending performances of it, and he even had the Second Zionist Congress open to the music of *Tannhäuser's* overture.

A Knight at the Opera uses *Tannhäuser* as a way to examine the changing relationship between Jews and the broader world during the advent of the modern era, and to question if any art, even that of a prominent antisemite, should be considered taboo.

A Bibliography of Australasian Judaica 1788–2008 (3rd edition)

By Serge Liberman



A Bibliography of Australasian Judaica 1788–2008 (3rd edition) by Serge Liberman, includes all traceable self-contained books, monographs, pamphlets and chapters from books which in some way pertain to Jews in Australia and New Zealand between 1788 and 2008.

Since the first edition of the bibliography was published more than 20 years ago, the author has been working tirelessly to bring it up to date.

It is a major work of scholarship and provides useful information to readers and researchers wanting to know anything about publications with any connection to Judaism, Jewish people, Jewish themes, history, culture, communal life, education, the Jewish press, architecture and the arts. There is no other single source of the information available in this resource.

It is being launched by Professor John Arnold of Monash University, co-compiler of the Bibliography of Australian Literature, on Sunday, 16 October, 2.30pm, at Makor Library, 306 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield.

Co-published by Hybrid Publishers and the ACJC, with support from the Pratt Foundation, it is available for \$55 from Hybrid Publishers www.hybridpublishers.com.au; www.jewishaustralia.com; and from Sunflower Bookshop.

From Victim to Survivor, the emergence and development of the Holocaust witness 1941-1949

Margaret Taft's thesis, 'From Victim to Survivor, the emergence and development of the Holocaust witness 1941-1949' will be published as a book by UK Holocaust history and literature specialists Vallentine Mitchell. It was recently nominated for the Mollie Holman Doctoral Medal.

Margaret is a research fellow at Monash University's School of Political and Social Inquiry, working on its project 'The Search for Family: the Social and Political History of Adoption in Australia'. In this context she recently presented a joint paper at a School of Philosophy, International Studies and History (SOPHIS) seminar with Professor Marian Quartly entitled 'Memory Work: Stories about Forced Adoption'.

Margaret, who completed her thesis in 2010, is a research assistant to Professor Andrew Markus on the ACJC's Yiddish Melbourne project.

Overseas courses give students first-hand experiences

The Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation is leading the way in offering students intensive overseas courses to Europe (post-Holocaust memory) and Israel (conflict resolution).

In July this year, 30 students participated in a two-week course that travelled to South Africa and Rwanda to complement their studies in post-conflict and post-genocide societies. The participants were all studying at one of Monash's international campuses and came from diverse backgrounds – Australia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Germany, Japan and Singapore. Led by Centre Director Mark Baker, the course was co-taught by Professor Simon Adams,

an expert in conflict resolution who has recently left Monash to become executive director of a leading genocide prevention NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) in New York, The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

The first week was based at the Monash South Africa campus in Johannesburg. The main theme of the course was to understand the process of restorative justice and reconciliation that ended apartheid and led to the establishment of democracy. Students met with struggle activists and visited museums, where the students themselves had to deliver site presentations. In Soweto students met with the sister of Hector Pieterson, who recalled her experience of the student riots in which the killing of her brother became a symbol of the struggle for justice. A workshop on 'Truth and Reconciliation' was conducted by the Johannesburg Holocaust museum in the Lilisleaf farm in Rivonia, where ANC activists including Nelson Mandela were captured. Students visited the Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill, Freedom Park in Pretoria,

and the Voortrekker Monument which glorifies Afrikaaner nationalism. A highlight of the course was attending political theatre in Newtown and a formal debate with local students on the theme of the course, held in Bassline, a former Johannesburg jazz venue.

In Rwanda students studied the genocide and the complex process of reconciliation in a society that lives with its traumatic aftermath. Students listened to survivors give testimony, all of them scarred internally and also externally by visible machete wounds. The group visited museums where the bones of the dead are displayed as a warning about the lessons of the past. Government officials representing genocide prevention organisations spoke to the students about efforts being made to combat the ideologies that continue to threaten the cohesion of Rwandan society. A highlight of the journey was an overnight visit to Agohozo Shalom, an orphanage for children of the genocide inspired by the Israeli model of integrating Holocaust survivors in youth villages.

Students drawn to Holocaust study

Two non-Jewish students explain why they have chosen to complete Masters degrees in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and discuss their work placements at the Jewish Holocaust Centre. Next year they are planning to undertake 'Final journey: the life and death of European Jews, 1900-1945', the ACJC Studies Abroad unit that follows the road to Auschwitz.

Sharon Wong, an international student from Singapore, has come to Holocaust and Genocide from left field. She completed a degree in mass communications, but has loved history since she was a young child and so turned to a subject close to her heart.

Before starting her Masters degree, she was a tertiary studies teacher for four years.

Sharon has been interested in the Holocaust since her early teens when she read voraciously on the subject in her community library. "The topic certainly wasn't covered at school. World War 2 for us was about the Japanese occupation," she said.

Her educational background drew her to Holocaust Centre. "I really wanted to learn more about the work done to educate people about the Holocaust. I once attempted to teach a short module/elective on the Holocaust, but I wasn't very happy with how I went about it. ... The centre has really opened my eyes to how it should be taught."

Sharon also wanted to meet survivors face to face and is "amazed" by their courage and strength. "I am always aware of being an outsider [as a non-Jew] and feel bad intruding into their world, but everyone at the centre has been extremely nice and I'm really enjoying my placement."

'The biggest thing is the realisation that we have to gather everything we can before survivors, our only resource, are gone.' – Sabrina Bednarski

Sharon has been assisting curator Jayne Josem with a project that uses suitcases to represent the Holocaust experience – some taken along during hasty pre-war immigration, others at the deportation stage, and others by their owners to a new homeland after the war. She's planning to continue working on the same theme as part of her research project.

For Sabrina Bednarski, whose Polish grandparents were slave labourers in Nazi Germany, studying the Holocaust is particularly poignant.



Sabrina Bednarski (left) and Sharon Wong transcribe oral testimonies at the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

The Masters of Holocaust and Genocide student is helping Josem to reorganise a collection of oral recordings relating to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria.

"The biggest thing is the realisation that we have to gather everything we can before survivors, our only resource, are gone."

Sabrina pointed to a recent news item reporting the death of the only known homosexual Holocaust survivor.

She said she has always been interested in her relationship with Poland and how it was still relevant as well as how different societies and faiths related to each other. "I wanted to learn about the Nazis and went from there."

Sabrina is also studying Interfaith Relations in the 21st Century.

Winter Schools explore history of Yiddish, cultural reactions to Israeli conflict

The ACJC ran intensive Winter School seminar series during May and June featuring two eminent visiting fellows. Myer Bloom reports.

Yiddish's rocky road to safe future

Professor Dovid Katz, Dr Jan Randa Visiting Scholar, introduced his Yiddish history lectures with the Yiddish word *mazl* to demonstrate that the history of Yiddish is older than Yiddish.

He said *mazl* was originally an ancient Akkadian word *mazolo*, meaning the planets or heavens (which were believed to influence human activity). It became an insult in Biblical times because it reflected idol worship. Later it came to mean fate, then luck and good luck; one word with 5000 years of history.

With great wit, humour and erudition, Professor Katz captivated his 100-strong audiences by recounting the past 1000 years of Yiddish. He began with its emergence in Ashkenaz, the name Jews bestowed on the German lands where they settled, and traced its development into a vernacular language



Dovid Katz

that increased in power and status to produce influential and internationally recognised secular, religious and mystical literature.

The Holocaust and the emergence of Hebrew dealt blows to Yiddish, but from the 1960s to the 1980s in the US, the impact of Isaac Bashevis Singer's translated works and the passing of elderly Yiddish speakers contributed to a heritage revival leading to the development of Jewish Studies and Yiddish language courses.

Professor Katz said Yiddish is safe because Charedi (ultra-orthodox) Jews use it as their vernacular language and in the future their

numbers will reach a million. However he highlighted a number of fascinating contradictions. All the secular Yiddish writers had Orthodox backgrounds and often wrote about Orthodox Jews. Today's Charedim speak the language, but are uninterested in the secular literature, while secular Jews may love the literature, but don't speak the language.

Professor Katz' solution to preserve Yiddish is for secularists and Charedim to work together to promote Yiddish education, especially in high schools. He said Melbourne's Yiddish culture and educational institutions have the potential for Melbourne to become a world centre of Yiddish education and a surviving "island" of Yiddish speakers.

In his final lecture, Professor Katz introduced linguistic scholar Gilad Zuckerman who presented his provocative analysis of Hebrew as less a wholly revived ancient language than a hybrid modern Israeli language with Yiddish intonations, root, vowel and consonant structures.

Professor Katz is a Vilnius-based Jewish Studies professor; Yiddish specialist and founder of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute.

Dovid Katz' seminar series was sponsored by The Jacob Kronhill Program in Yiddish Language and Culture.

Israelis see 'good' wars, 'bad' wars

Professor Na'ama Sheffi's four lectures titled "Israel's Wars: Culture, Media, Society", analysed Israeli cultural responses to each of the Jewish state's four wars.

She said Israeli society regarded the 1948 War of Independence as a "good" and necessary war, "fought for the country's establishment". Professor Sheffi showed clips from early Israeli movies that both questioned the fate of Arab refugees and acknowledged the justness of the war.

She described responses to the Six-Day War, also seen as a "good" war, as cultural euphoria. Cultural artefacts including photos, posters, movies and documentaries and children's magazines appeared portraying the war (and soldiers) as heroic, romantic and patriotic, and justified, as the war "liberated" regained areas lost in 1948 such as East Jerusalem.

Lost in this euphoria however was the awareness of the high human toll and the

future problems of managing a land three times Israel's previous size.

However, Israelis regarded the next two wars as "bad" wars, she said. Professor Sheffi demonstrated how the Yom Kippur War punctured the post '67 myth of invincibility and explained a more muted cultural reaction resulting from Israelis finding it harder to

Na'ama Sheffi



express the intensity of their feelings in film or text. Documentaries and TV news reflected Israeli weaknesses and unpreparedness. The media, at first refraining from overt criticism of the war, later backed a war investigation that forced the resignation of the Chief of Staff and eventually the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.

One significant cultural reaction was the emergence of Gush Emunim, the "greater Israel" movement and "Shalom Achshav", a group seeking more peaceful and diplomatic solutions to Arab-Israeli conflict.

The 1982 "invasion" of Lebanon, to stem rocket attacks, was the first time Israel invaded another sovereign state and Professor Sheffi provided many examples of the wide debate about the moral and political necessity of this war. Reactions included revised views of the "Zionist narrative" and amore humanistic view of the "enemy". A major cultural response was cinematic and Professor Sheffi showed clips from several Israeli movies reflecting more critical, non-heroic and tragic perspectives of war.

Professor Sheffi, Visiting Fellow, Leon Liberman Chair in Modern Israel Studies, is Chair and Senior Lecturer, School of Communications, Sapir College, Israel.

Public events showcase local, international scholars

The Centre has hosted a number of public events covering political, religious, cultural, literary and social themes.

Conversing with *The Messenger*

French author Yannick Haenel discussed his book *The Messenger* with ACJC director Mark Baker at The Wheeler Centre on 16 February. Published to immense acclaim in France under the title *Jan Karski*, Haenel's novelised biography is about a man's moral courage and our collective humanity, with parallels to Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark* and WG Sebald's *Austerlitz*.

Freud expert

ACJC Visiting Scholar Dr Eliza Slavet discussed 'What's Jewish? Freud, race, identity' in a lecture on 22 February. Dr Slavet, Visiting Scholar in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, San Diego, is the author of *Racial Fever: Freud and the Jewish Question* which looks at what makes a person Jewish and explores what Freud wrote about Jewishness – what it is, how it is transmitted and how it has survived.

Human rights in Israel

Against the backdrop of the crises gripping Egypt and the region, Professor Itzhak Galnoor (Visiting Fellow, Leon Liberman Chair in Modern Israel Studies) gave a public lecture on 23 February covering the political climate in Israel; the recent push to investigate Israel's human rights groups and challenges to Israel's democratic future. It was titled 'Challenging times: politics, democracy & human rights in Israel'. Professor Galnoor is Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University, Senior

The Biblical Zoo, Jerusalem, whose director Shai Doron featured in the Monash Israel Lecture Series.



Arnold Zable (left), Rabbi Michael Schudrich



Research Fellow at the Van Leer Institute, New Israel Fund board member and Chair of the SHATIL Committee.

Poland's chief rabbi

Chief Rabbi of Poland Rabbi Michael Schudrich was guest of the ACJC in March as a Visiting Fellow. Chief Rabbi of Poland since 2004, Rabbi Schudrich has played a central role in Poland's Jewish renaissance. Previously he was rabbi of Warsaw and Lodz and previously, of the Jewish community of Japan. In Melbourne, he gave a public lecture titled 'Polish Jewry – then and now'.

Avrom Sutzkever remembered

The life of celebrated Yiddish poet Avrom Sutzkever was remembered in verse and song at a tribute organised by the Kadimah in conjunction with the ACJC on 6 March featuring Danielle Charak, Arnold Zable, Andrew Firestone, Hinde Ena Burstin, Jake Dessauer, Doodie Ringelblum, Elisa Gray and Freydi Mrocki. The event honoured the first anniversary of Sutzkever's death.

Taste of Talmud

The Centre hosted a morning of Talmud study in mid May with eminent teacher, philosopher, social critic and spiritual mentor Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. The subject of his session was 'The world is a human responsibility'.

Characterising Israel

'What's Israeli? Nation, Religion, Identity' was subject of a panel discussion in late May with Israeli guests, Professor Yaffa Zilbershats, Deputy President Bar Ilan University, Tikvah Centre for Law & Jewish Civilisation; Professor David Passig, Head Graduate Program, Information & Communication Technology, Bar Ilan University; Dr Ayman Agbaria, Lecturer, Department of Leadership and Policy in Education, University of Haifa; Professor Yedidia Stern, Louis Matheson Visiting Professor, Monash University; and Professor Fania Oz-Salzberger, Leon Liberman Chair in Modern Israel Studies, Monash University. The event was hosted by the Leon Liberman Chair in Modern Israel Studies.

Literary recovery across cultures

In May, 'Writing after decimation: Literary recovery in Jewish, Aboriginal and Native American culture' was examined by three eminent academics speak as members of communities that were decimated in different types of genocides and also as literary critics of Aboriginal, Yiddish and Native American literature. Speakers were: Dr Anthony Birch, a trained historian and Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Melbourne; Professor Leah Garrett, the Loti Smorgon Research Chair of Contemporary Jewish Life and Culture at Monash University; Christopher Teuton, Associate Professor of English at Victoria University, British Columbia. Moderator was Professor Adam Shoemaker, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Education, Monash University.

Equality at Israel's hospitals, zoo

The overarching theme for the 2011 Monash Israel Lecture Series (3–24 August) was 'Israel Today: Real Stories' with anecdotes from Biblical times and tales from the Biblical Zoo; as well as meaningful health statistics and stories across religious and ethnic lines. While Amos Oz delivered the first lecture in the Monash Israel Oration (see page 3), the second lecture in the series, 'Women's health in Israel: Across the cultural divide' was delivered by Professor Ofer Lavie, Head of Gynae-Oncology Carmel Medical Centre, Haifa. Lavie discussed a range of contemporary issues for the many sectors in the community, noting that the hospital in Israel is one place where every community is considered for its specific needs and each receives equal care. In 'Wildlife, Humans and the Holy City: Tales (and Tails) From the Biblical Zoo', Shai Doron, CEO and Director of The Jerusalem Biblical Zoo, shared stories of success and failure; birds who migrated on the last flight from Iran and flamingos who failed to reproduce. Under his guidance, the zoo has literally transformed into a public space where all segments of Israeli society – Jews, Christians and Muslims, religious and secular – feel welcome.

Scholarships and prizes

Each year, the ACJC awards a number of scholarship and prizes to students enrolled in its courses and units.

Prizes 2010

Bernard Rechter Jewish Civilisation Honours Prize

Best Honours thesis

- Jessica Taft

Peter & Barbara Kolliner Undergraduate Prize in Jewish Civilisation

Best major/minor graduate in Jewish civilisation

- Shared by Dvorah Zylberman and Reyzl Zylberman

Holocaust Studies Prize

Best student in Holocaust unit

- William Rayner

Stewart Baron Prize in Middle Eastern and Israel Studies

Best student in Israel unit

- Venettia Milne

Jacob Kronhill Prize in Yiddish Language

- Ariella Leski

Aziz Abu Sarah Humanitarian Prize (donated by Marcia Pinskier)

For best student in overseas Israel course

- Gilad Baker

Scholarships 2011

Leizor Pinskier Memorial Holocaust and Genocide Studies Scholarship

For students travelling to Rwanda or Europe on Holocaust and Genocide studies course

- Katherine Dobson

Peter & Barbara Kolliner Jewish Study Abroad Scholarship

For students travelling on Jewish studies abroad course

- Aaron Murphy

Rivka & Mordechai Lewin Memorial Yiddish Travel Scholarship

For student undertaking Yiddish language intensive overseas

- Olga Baltikalis

Zelman and Diana Elton Honours Scholarship

For Honours student at the ACJC

- Stephanie Kennedy

Zelman and Diana Elton PhD Scholarship

- Miriam Feldheim

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Giving to the ACJC

The success of the ACJC has been made possible largely through a philanthropic partnership between Monash University and the Jewish community. Gifts and endowments to the ACJC support its growth through named lectureships, scholarships and programs.

For further information about giving to the ACJC, contact:

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