

Tradition and Modernity in Jewish Culture and History

Special 10th Anniversary Conference







The Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp (IJS)

The Institute of Jewish Studies was established in the Autumn of 2001. It is fully integrated into the University of Antwerp and supported by the Ministry of Education of the Flemish Community in Belgium. Its goal is the academic study of Judaism from a variety of perspectives: historical, philological, cultural, literary, religious, philosophical and sociological. The Institute's activities cover academic research, university teaching and educational services for a general public.

The Institute organizes an annual series of over twenty lectures on various topics in the field of Jewish Studies, language courses in Yiddish and modern Hebrew at different levels of linguistic competence, courses in Jewish Studies integrated in the Department of Literature, History and Philosophy, and special academic and public events such as conferences, symposia, workshops, and reading groups.

The Institute's research topics, academic gatherings and public events focus on modern Jewish history, literature, philosophy and cultural studies. Simultaneously, they touch upon a range of issues at the heart of current concerns in Europe's academic, cultural and social life.

More information on the Institute, its staff, and its activities can be found on the (bilingual) website: www.ua.ac.be/ijs

Tradition and Modernity in Jewish Culture and History

Special 10th Anniversary Conference

This celebratory event will bring together some of the world's foremost scholars to reflect on decisive moments and processes of interaction between continuity and change in the development of Jewish religion, cultural praxis and aesthetic production in the modern era. The conference aims at presenting current topics, methodologies and case studies in Jewish Studies from a variety of perspectives and scholarly fields.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Conference Program
Speakers
David B. Ruderman
David N. Myers
Ilana Pardes
Elhanan Reiner
Richard I. Cohen
Irene E. Zwiep
Aleida Assmann
Michal Ben Naftali
Ortwin de Graef
Pieter Vermeulen
Vivian Liska
Geoffrey Hartman
Registration and Contact

Tuesday, 31 May 2011

19:00 Registration

19:30 Welcome

Prof. dr. Alain Verschoren - Rector University of Antwerp **Prof. dr. em. Julien Klener** - President of the Belgisch-Israëlitisch Consistorie

Prof. dr. Vivian Liska - Director Institute of Jewish Studies

20:00 Opening Lecture

Prof. dr. David B. Ruderman - University of Pennsylvania Mysticism, Science, and Moral Cosmopolitanism in Enlightenment Jewish Thought

Reception

Wednesday, 1 June 2011

9:30 First Plenary Session

Prof. dr. David N. Myers - University of California, Los Angeles History, Memory, and Modernity

Prof. dr. Ilana Pardes - Hebrew University of Jerusalem Agnon's Moonstruck Lovers: The Song of Songs in Israeli Culture

11:00 coffee break

11:30 Second Plenary Session

Prof. dr. Elhanan Reiner - Tel Aviv University The Printed Talmud: A Project of Modern Jewish Culture

Prof. dr. Richard I. Cohen - Hebrew University of Jerusalem Seven Visual Interpretations of Jewish History: Struggling with Tradition in Modernity

13:00 lunch break

14:00 Third Plenary Session

Prof. dr. Irene E. Zwiep - Universiteit van Amsterdam Bridging the Gap Between Past and Future: Going Dutch, Growing Jewish in the Low Countries (1796-1860)

Prof. dr. Aleida Assmann - Universität Konstanz From Book to Books: Hannah Arendt's Concept of Humanitas as a Literary Universe

15:30 coffee break

16:00-18:00

Special Celebratory Event in Honor of Prof. dr. Geoffrey Hartman

Chair: Dr. Eva Lezzi - Universität Potsdam

- 16:00 Dr. Michal Ben Naftali Independent Scholar A Dis-Identity Card: Geoffrey Hartman on the Paul de Man Affair, After 25 Years
- Prof. dr. Ortwin de Graef Katholieke Universiteit Leuven /
 Dr. Pieter Vermeulen Universiteit Gent
 The Autumnal Imagination
- 16:40 Prof. dr. Vivian Liska Universiteit Antwerpen Winged Words and Wounded Voices: Geoffrey Hartman on Midrash and Testimony
- 17:00 **Prof. dr. Geoffrey Hartman** Yale University Sacred and Secular: Creation's Theological Duality

PROF. DR. DAVID B. RUDERMAN

Mysticism, Science, and Moral Cosmopolitanism in Enlightenment Jewish Thought

The Book of the Covenant (Sefer ha-Brit) was one of the most popular Hebrew books read by modern Jews, as reflected in its thirty-six editions, including three Yiddish and two Ladino translations. Part scientific encyclopedia, part manual of mystical ascent, and part prescription for a universalizing ethics, the work was widely influential in an era of radical change and internal debate for Jews and non-Jews alike. The amazing popularity of the author, the eastern European Jew Phineas Hurwitz, stemmed from his kabbalistic pedigree. He offered his readers an exciting compendium of scientific knowledge they could read in their holy language under the pretext that its acquisition fulfilled their highest spiritual goals. The reception of *The Book of the Covenant* among Jewish readers allows us to understand more profoundly the ways in which a traditional society absorbed and creatively adopted aspects of modern science and cosmopolitanism. The book and its author open a wonderful window into the complex interplay of tradition, science, and inter-group relations in the Modern Era.



David B. Ruderman is a leading scholar of Jewish history and thought in early modern Europe and has directed the prestigious Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania for the past 17 years. Author of the comprehensive volume Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe (Yale University Press, 2001), his most recent books are Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History (Princeton, 2010) and Connecting the

Covenants: Judaism and the Search for Christian Identity in Eighteenth-Century England (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought (Princeton University Press, 2000) won the 2001 Koret Award for the best book in Jewish History. Earlier works include a biography of Abraham B. Mordecai Farissol (1981), for which he received the National Jewish Book Award in History; Kabbalah, Magic, and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician (1988); and A Valley of Vision: The Heavenly Journey of Abraham Ben Hananiah Yagel (1990). Ruderman has taught at Yale University, at the University of Maryland, the Graduate School of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The National Foundation for Jewish Culture honored him with its lifetime achievement award in 2001.

Prof. DR. DAVID N. MYERS

History, Memory, and Modernity

This presentation will reflect on the conference theme by revisiting the famous claim made by Yosef Yerushalmi in *Zakhor* that a defining feature of the project of modernity, and Jewish modernity in particular, was its historicist bent. According to Yerushalmi, the critical, dispassionate, and contextualizing impulse of historicism

became the "faith of fallen Jews," symptomatic of the unraveling of the rich fabric of pre-modern collective memory. This paper will shed light on two currents in modern Jewish thought that challenge the narrative of decline of pre-modern collective memory—and the attendant portrayal of modern Jewish scholarship as hopelessly disengaged. The first is the concerted critique of historicism by Jewish philosophers and theologians in search of precisely the kind of holistic, essential, and transcendent values threatened by the tools of the modern historian. The second is the tendency of modern Jewish historians themselves to serve as "priests of culture," in Amos Funkenstein's phrase, seeking to reframe the contours of traditional collective memory. In thus suggesting that history and memory need not be seen as foils, the paper concludes that Yosef Yerushalmi himself yearned to fuse together the severed domains of history and memory into one.



David N. Myers is a Professor of Jewish History at UCLA, where he serves as Chair of the History Department. For ten years, Myers served as Director of the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies. An alumnus of Yale College (1982), Myers undertook graduate studies at Tel-Aviv and Harvard Universities before receiving his Ph.D with distinction in 1991 in Jewish history from Columbia University. He has written widely in the fields of Jewish intellectual and cultural history. His books include Re-inventing the Jewish Past (Oxford,

1995); Resisting History: The Crisis of Historicism in German-Jewish Thought (Princeton, 2003); and Between Jew and Arab: The Lost Voice of Simon Rawidowicz (Brandeis, 2008). Myers has also edited or co-edited six books, including the recent Acculturation and its Discontents: The Italian Jewish Experience between Exclusion and Integration (Toronto, 2008). At present, he is engaged in three principal research projects: a book tentatively titled 'Is there a Jewish Nation?: Reflections on the State of Jewish Collectivity' (Indiana University Press); a book together with Nomi Stolzenberg on the Satmar Hasidic community of Kiryas Joel, New York; and a book on Jewish history for the 'Very Short Introduction'-series of Oxford University Press. Myers has taught at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris) and the Russian State University for the Humanities (Moscow). He has received fellowships from the Leo Baeck Institute, Fulbright Foundation, Lady David Trust, and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. During the year of 2009-10 year, he was the Ellie and Herbert Katz Distinguished Fellow in Judaic Studies at the Katz Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Myers was previously a fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies (Philadelphia) in 1995, and he was a visiting scholar at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem in 1997. He has also served as a member of the board of the Association for Jewish Studies, as well as a teacher for the Wexner Heritage Foundation. He writes frequently on matters of contemporary Jewish concern and serves on the board of a number of Los Angelesbased organizations. Since 2002, Myers has served as co-editor of the Jewish Quarterly Review. He is an elected Fellow of the American Academy for Jewish Research.

PROF. DR. ELHANAN REINER

The Printed Talmud: A Project of Modern Jewish Culture

Four crucial events—three printings of the Talmud and one order to burn it—are signposts along the road to my claim that the printing of the complete Talmud produced, in practice, a new text hitherto unknown to the Jews of Europe, a foundational work that served as a starting point for some of the central changes that took place in Jewish culture in the modern age. The ongoing development of exegetic strategies turned the Talmud from a legal text, used to make halakhic decisions, into a humanistic, "classical" text, to be read and glossed in accordance with abstract reading and interpretive strategies, thus directly influencing Jewish thought in the modern age—and no less—modern Jewish culture as a whole.



Elhanan Reiner is Professor of Jewish History at Tel Aviv University and a Senior Research Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. His main field of research is the cultural history of Ashkenazi, especially Eastern European Jewry in the Early Modern Period. Reiner also specializes in the study of the popular religious culture of medieval Jews in Palestine, dealing with oral religious traditions and local myths connected to holy places. His early

work on pilgrimages to Palestine in the Middle Ages has been followed by related publications such as "From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story to a Local Myth (A Chapter in the Religious Life of the Galilean Jew)" in Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land (Jerusalem, 1998). Other publications include "The Ashkenazi Elite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book" in Jews in Early Modern Poland (London, 1997) and "Beyond the Realm of the Haskalah: Changing Learning Patterns in the Jewish Traditional Society" in the Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 6 (2007).

PROF. DR. ILANA PARDES

Agnon's Moonstruck Lovers: The Song of Songs in Israeli Culture

Secular Zionism embraced the Song of Songs with unparalleled passion. From the 1920s on, the biblical love poem appeared in numerous forms in diverse cultural realms. I set out to explore Agnon's response to the privileged position of the Song in Israeli culture. Chief among Agnon's observations is the recognition that, as surprising as it may first seem, allegory has not disappeared from the Israeli exegetical scene. New national allegories shaped via the Song emerge with the rise of Zionism, providing modern forms of collective love—primarily the love between the community and the Land. With characteristic virtuosity, Agnon juxtaposes old allegories with new Zionist allegories, mocking normative distinctions between the sacred and the secular.

Ilana Pardes is Professor of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she has been teaching since 1992. She received her Ph.D in Comparative Literature from the University of California, Berkeley in 1990.



She taught at Princeton University in 1990-1992 and as a Visiting Professor at UC Berkeley in 1996 and in 2006. During the fall of 2009 she was a Fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. She has been a Senior Fellow at Scholion, Interdisciplinary Research Center in Jewish Studies at HU since the fall of 2008. Her work has focused on the nexus of Bible, literature, and culture as well as on

questions of aesthetics and hermeneutics. She is the author of Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach (Harvard University Press, 1992); The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible (University of California Press, 2000); Melville's Bibles (University of California Press, 2008); and co-editor of New Perspectives on Freud's Moses and Monotheism (Niemeyer, 2006). She is currently working on a book on Agnon and the Song of Songs in Israeli culture (The Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies) and a comparative study on the reception of the Song of Songs in Israeli and American contexts.

Prof. dr. Richard I. Cohen

Seven Visual Interpretations of Jewish History: Struggling with Tradition in Modernity

The lecture will inquire into the ways several artists of Jewish origin in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries incorporated historical events into their oeuvre to help illuminate their own internal vicissitudes and comment on the evolving Jewish predicament of their time. Artists, unlike historians, did not have to subscribe to historical reality in creating their interpretation of the past, and thus inevitably offered a more direct observation of the contemporary scene. The preoccupation with historical issues was generally limited to events ranging from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, overshadowing Biblical and post-Biblical themes, raising in itself an engaging interplay with modern concerns.



Richard I. Cohen holds the Paulette and Claude Kelman Chair in French Jewry Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research interests have focused on the history of Jews in Western and Central Europe and on the interrelationship between art and society in the modern period. Among his publications are The Burden of Conscience. French-Jewish Leadership during the Holocaust; Jewish Icons. Art and Society in Modern Europe; the war-time diary of

Raymond-Raoul Lambert, Carnet d'un témoin, 1940-1943; and the co-editing of two exhibition catalogues From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600-1800; as well as Le Juif errant. Un témoin de temps.

PROF. DR. IRENE E. ZWIEP

Bridging the Gap Between Past and Future: Going Dutch, Growing Jewish in the Low Countries (1796-1860)

When the Tews of the so-called 'Batavian Republic' received civic equality (the famous 'Gelijkstaat der Joden' of 1796), one could say that they were catapulted into modernity. Since there was no tradition of reflecting on Jewish identity in the modern sense, the gap between their past as a corporate nation and their sudden future as Dutch citizens 'of the Israelite religion' was as wide as it was acute. The decades following 1796 were mainly devoted to 'going Dutch,' i.e. to building new communal structures, dividing the power between religious and lay leadership, developing a new Dutch-style educational system, and to creating ecumenical spaces where Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals could meet and join in Dutch-style enlightened discussions. Soon, however, it was felt that being 'of the Mosaic faith' was not enough. Thus we find that, from the 1820s-1830s onwards, the Dutch Israelites began to rearticulate their Jewish identity, though the term itself interestingly enough was avoided until the 1860s. They did so by means of an eclectic amalgam of strategies, freely combining Dutch patriotism, second-generation maskilic initiatives, traditional genres and sentiments, and odd elements from the culturalhistoricist approach that was just being developed in the German Wissenschaft des Judentums. In this paper, I aim to unravel this intricate set of intellectual impulses and shall try to illustrate how these served together to build an old-new Jewish cultural identity. In particular the varying temporalities of religion, tradition and scholarship which were negotiated in order to produce a modern sense of—Dutch as well as Jewish—citizenship will be explored.



Irene E. Zwiep studied Classics as well as Hebrew and Jewish Studies in Amsterdam and Jerusalem. After her Ph.D in 1995 she was a Frances Yates fellow at the Warburg Institute in London. From 1997 onwards she has held the chair in Hebrew and Jewish Studies in Amsterdam. Her main research interests are the history of Jewish linguistic thought and Jewish scholarship in early modern and modern times.

PROF. DR. ALEIDA ASSMANN

From Book to Books:

Hannah Arendt's Concept of Humanitas as a Literary Universe

This presentation will address the elevated status of writing and books in Jewish culture as a continuous element in both religious and secular thinking. It will inquire into the origins of this high estimation of the written medium and trace it all the way to the affective existential bond between books and Jewish intellectuals in the twentieth century.



Aleida Assmann studied English Literature and Egyptology at the universities of Heidelberg and Tübingen. Since 1993 she holds the chair of English Literature and theory at the University of Konstanz. She lectured at various American universities (Rice University, Princeton, and Yale). Her research topics include the history of reading, writing and of print media, and the theory of cultural memory. Among her key publications feature *Erinnerungsräume*.

Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses (Munich, 1999); Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik (Munich, 2006); Geschichte im Gedächtnis. Von der individuellen Erfahrung zur öffentlichen Inszenierung (Munich, 2007).

Dr. MICHAL BEN NAFTALI

A Dis-Identity Card:

Geoffrey Hartman on the Paul de Man Affair, After 25 Years

This presentation will concentrate upon one aspect of Hartman's famous essay, in casu his notion of intellectual responsibility and judgment. I would like to distinguish between Derrida's melancholic intervention in this affair and Hartman's mournful one, a distinction that brings about two different notions of responsibility. Hartman introduces a complex idea of judgment which resembles that of Arendt, though she is not referred to explicitly in that context. This idea finally distinguishes between Hartman's literary-theoretical task and his moral task, thereby differentiating him from the post-war figure of the philosopher-as-a reader-of-literature.



Michal Ben Naftali holds a Ph.D in philosophy and works as a writer, translator, as well as editor of the series 'The French' for Hakibbutz Hameuchad publishing house. Her books include Chronicle of Separation (2000, Resling); The Visitation of Hannah Arendt (2006, Hakibbutz Hameuchad and Van Leer Institute); the novella Childhood: A Book (2007, Resling); and On Retreat: Four Essays (2009, Resling). Among her translations feature Love Stories by Julia Kristeva (2006), Archive Fever by Jacques

Derrida (2006), Derrida Reads Shakespeare (2007), Nadja by André Breton (2007), and a Blanchot anthology The Book to Come: The Literary Space (forthcoming 2011).

Prof. dr. Ortwin de Graef Dr. Pieter Vermeulen

The Autumnal Imagination

In his memoir A Scholar's Tale, Geoffrey Hartman recognizes the decisive influence of Erich Auerbach, one of his teachers at Yale, on his own early work. Auerbach came to Yale after having spent the Second World War in Istanbul, where he wrote his magisterial Mimesis. That book not only bears the stamp of the war that was then ravaging Europe, the continent whose literary heritage he aimed to preserve in Mimesis, but also of a second trauma: the demise, somewhere (according to Auerbach) in between Dante and Montaigne, of a divinely sanctioned reality, which condemned the West to the historical world. For Auerbach, what saved this historical reality was the unfulfilled figure of the Incarnation still haunting it against all odds... The influence of Auerbach's sense of lateness, and of the autumnal literary ethos it sustains, can be traced in Hartman's lifelong engagement with William Wordsworth, whose exemplary remediation of the loss of rural life, Hartman recognizes, today threatens to fade away in our increasingly networked memory- and mediascapes. It is significant that in the last three decades, Hartman has supplemented his Romanticism and his work on the memory of the Holocaust with an increasingly explicit elaboration of the Jewish imagination. Does this point to the perceived insufficiency of Auerbach's autumnal stance? Or does the tension between the literary, the disaster, and the religious point to an ethos beyond Incarnation?



Ortwin de Graef is Professor of English Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Leuven. He is the author of two books on Paul de Man and has published widely on Romantic and post-Romantic writing in various collections and journals, including Victorian Literature & Culture, ELH, EJES, Partial Answers and Occasion. His current research engages with aesthetic ideologies of sympathy, science, and the State in Victorian and post-Victorian modernity.



Pieter Vermeulen is a postdoctoral research fellow with the Flemish Research Council (FWO) affiliated with Ghent University. He works in the fields of critical theory and contemporary literature. His current project focuses on the relations between trauma, melancholia, and loss in the early twenty-first-century novel. His book on Geoffrey Hartman, *Romanticism after the Holocaust* was published by Continuum in 2010.

PROF. DR. VIVIAN LISKA

Winged Words and Wounded Voices: Geoffrey Hartman on Midrash and Testimony

Geoffrey Hartman's distinctive contribution to Jewish Studies encompasses two separate spheres—a reflection on testimony, poetry, and culture after the Holocaust, as well as an exploration of the Jewish textual tradition, more particularly Midrashic commentary. While seemingly unrelated, Hartman's writings in the two domains display striking similarities. Both bodies of texts are informed by a tension between two forces: on the one hand an attraction towards an unnamable absolute that eludes representation, disrupts the quotidian, and escapes human grasp, and on the other a humanizing impulse turned towards the unintelligible, the moderate, and the concrete that embraces the impure diversity of everyday life. A reconstruction of the oscillation between these two poles in Hartman's "Jewish" writings will focus on the intersection between his idea of Judaism and the role of literature and commentary in invoking an intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical intensity without succumbing to the totalizing dangers of the ecstatic and the sublime.



Vivian Liska is Professor of German Literature and Director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. Her main book publications as (co-)editor include the two-volume Modernism in the ICLA series 'History of the European Literatures' (John Benjamins, 2007); The Power of the Sirens (Academia, 2007); Theodor Herzl between Europe and Zion (Niemeyer, 2007); Contemporary Jewish Writing in Europe (Indiana, 2007); and What does the Veil Know? (with Eva Meyer

- Springer, 2009) as well as Walter Benjamin und das Wiener Judentum (Königshausen und Neumann, 2009). As a single author she has published among others Die Nacht der Hymnen (on Paul Celan's early poetry - Peter Lang, 1993); Die Dichterin und das schelmische Erhabene (on Else Lasker Schüler - Francke, 1998); Die Moderne - ein Weib (on turn-of-the-century women novelists - Francke, 2000); Giorgio Agambens leerer Messianismus (Schlebrügge, 2008), When Kafka says We. Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature (Indiana, 2009), and Fremde Gemeinschaft. Deutsch-Jüdische Literatur der Moderne (Wallstein, 2011).

PROF. DR. GEOFFREY HARTMAN

Sacred and Secular: Creation's Theological Duality

Insofar as there is a Jewish theology, even if rarely developed systematically, it is important to recognize its imaginative content. Matthew Arnold said famously that what would remain of religion is its poetry. I explore that perspective, that liberal bias, in the hope of strengthening rather than merely "updating" the appeal of certain basic and persistent themes, such as Creation (the Ma'aseh Bereshit) and the Perfection of the Creator.



Geoffrey H. Hartman is Sterling Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature and Faculty Advisor to the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. His extensive bibliography ranges from publications on literary Romanticism, over deconstructivism, to memory studies. Professor Hartman has held distinguished visiting appointments at many universities in various countries. He is also a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and was

named Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres de France. Among his books from the last two decades: The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust (1996); The Fateful Question of Culture (1997); A Critic's Journey: Literary Reflections, 1958-1998 (1999); Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Inauthenticity (2004); A Scholar's Tale: Intellectual Journey of a Displaced Child of Europe (2007). Beyond Formalism and Criticism in the Wilderness. The Geoffrey Hartman Reader, which he coedited with Daniel T. O'Hara, was awarded the 2006 Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism. His latest book, The Third Pillar: Essays in Judaic Studies, was published in 2011 and is dedicated to Vivian Liska and David Ruderman.





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Organizer

Institute of Jewish Studies - University of Antwerp

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Conference in English - participation free of charge, registration required.

