

International conference

Jewish Modernity in the Feminine : Jewish Women Writers and Thinkers in the 20th and 21st Centuries

5-6 December 2018

University of Antwerp | Hof van Liere

Prinsstraat 13 | 2000 Antwerpen

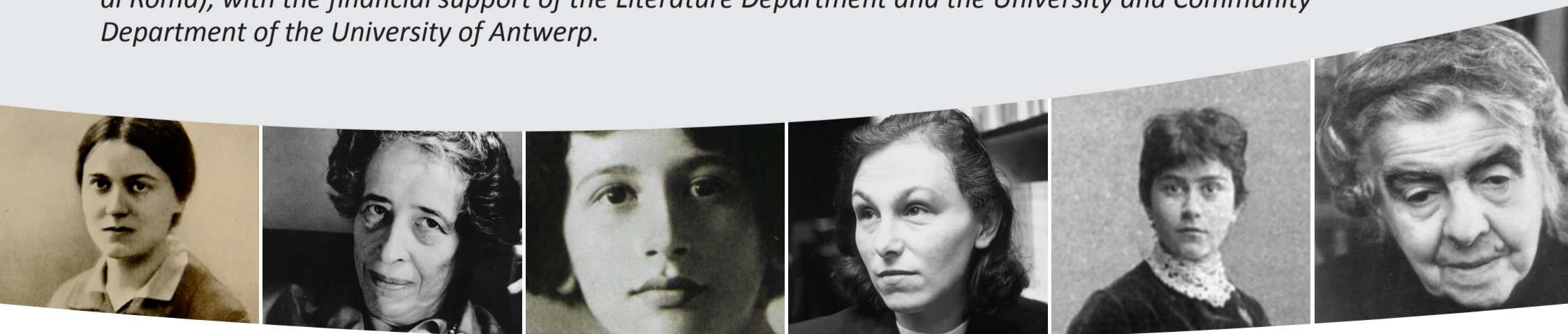
Participation is free

Registration: www.uantwerpen.be/ijs

The conference *Jewish Modernity in the Feminine* will explore how 20th and 21st century women intellectuals and authors from Else Lasker-Schüler to Hélène Cixous more or less explicitly redefined their own identity as Jewish women intellectuals. Aiming at an exploration of how gender and origins defined the lives, and particularly the wartime and/or post-war fates, of these outstanding female figures, the conference focuses on the impact these factors had on their various intellectual journeys and their oeuvre as a whole. It invites international scholars to reflect on the variety of multifaceted and singular philosophical and artistic paths; the literary journeys and autobiographical narratives; and political, historical, and existential writings in which these women reflect on the nexus of Judaism/Jewishness, Femininity/Womanhood and Modernity.

The female figures whose lives and works will be discussed include prominent and highly acclaimed philosophers such as Hannah Arendt and Simone Weil, less well-known thinkers such as Margarete Susman, Rachel Bernaloff and Sarah Kofman, and present-day figures such as Hélène Cixous; eminent German poets such as Else Lasker-Schüler and Ilse Aichinger, and American writers and poets such as Grace Paley, Adrienne Rich and Cynthia Ozick; women who played a special role in the history of ideas and political thought such as Emma Goldman; more marginal but pioneering figures who played a significant role in the world of Jewish learning such as Nechama Leibowitz, or in the relationship between Judaism and Christianity such as Edith Stein; and widely acknowledged intellectuals such as Eliane Amado Lévy-Valensi and Susan Sontag. All these Jewish women were compelled, if sometimes only indirectly and sometimes involuntarily, to confront their belonging to a community, a religion, a gender, while reinventing these categories and themselves. Above all, they have had to rethink, reformulate, restate, but also renounce, disclaim and deconstruct pre-established roles and stereotypical models associated with Judaism and womanhood. This intellectual, aesthetic and existential challenge in turn contributed greatly to the lasting importance of their work, their thinking and their writing.

Conference conceptualized by Vivian Liska (University of Antwerp) and Orietta Ombrosi (Sapienza, Università di Roma), with the financial support of the Literature Department and the University and Community Department of the University of Antwerp.



Wednesday 5 December 2018

- 09.30-09.45 Registration
- 09.45-10.00 Welcome words and introduction
Vivian Liska (University of Antwerp)
Orietta Ombrosi (Sapienza, Università di Roma)
- 10.00-12.30 Session I**
Chair: Orietta Ombrosi (Sapienza, Università di Roma)
- 10.00-10.40 **Ilana Pardes** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
The Book of Ruth and the Question of Migration: From Cynthia Ozick to Bonnie Honig
- 10.40-11.20 **Vivian Liska** (University of Antwerp)
Women and Strangers: Else Lasker-Schüler's Bible in the Feminine
- 11.20-11.50 Coffee break
- 11.50-12.30 **Anke Gilleir** (KU Leuven)
Woman, Intellectual, German, Jew (or vice versa): Reflections on Margarete Susman
- 12.30-14.00 Lunch (speakers only)
- 14.00-16.15 Session II**
Chair: Arthur Cools (University of Antwerp)
- 14.00-14.40 **Birgit R. Erdle** (Lichtenberg Kolleg Göttingen)
Towards a Minor Language: Ilse Aichinger's Counter-Hermeneutics
- 14.40-15.20 **Martine Leibovici** (Université Paris Diderot 7)
Emma Goldman (1869-1940), la dissidente
- 15.20-16.00 **Catherine Chalier** (Université de Paris Ouest Nanterre)
Eliane Amado Lévy-Valensi. « La révélation faite à Israël concerne l'humanité entière »
- 16.00-16.15 Coffee break
- 16.15-17.45 Session III: UCSIA/IJS Chair for Jewish-Christian Relations 2018-2019**
Chair: Dominiek Lootens (University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp, UCSIA)
Leora Batnitzky (Princeton University)
On the Continued Challenge of Edith Stein for Jewish-Christian Dialogue
 Response: **Marion Grau** (Norwegian School of Theology)
- 17.45-18-15 Coffee break

18.15-19.30 **Session IV: A Literary Evening with Michal Ben-Naftali and Dalia Rosenfeld**
Chair: Vivian Liska (University of Antwerp)
Dalia Rosenfeld (Bar Ilan University) & **Michal Ben-Naftali** (Tel Aviv University)

20.00 Conference dinner (speakers only)

Thursday 6 December 2018

- 09.00-11.15** **Session V**
Chair: Chiara Caradonna (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
- 09.00-09.40 **Laura Sanò** (Università degli Studi di Padova)
Rachel Bespaloff. A Thought in Exile
- 09.40-10.20 **Agata Bielik-Robson** (University of Nottingham)
Amor Mundi: The Marrano Background of Hannah Arendt's Love for the World
- 10.20-11.00 **Annabel Herzog** (University of Haifa)
Simone Weil, on Roots and Void
- 11.00-11.15 Coffee break
- 11.15-12.35** **Session VI**
Chair: Michele Chinitz (CUNY Graduate Center, New York)
- 11.15-11.55 **Carola Hilfrich** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
Queering Gender, Genre, Genealogy: The Cixous Idiom of Thinking
- 11.55-12.35 **Orietta Ombrosi** (Sapienza, Università di Roma)
Sarah Kofman: A Feminine Deconstruction of Judaism
- 12.35-14.00 Lunch (speakers only)
- 14.00-16.30** **Session VII**
Chair: Vivian Liska (University of Antwerp)
- 14.00- 14.40 **Dana Rubinstein** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
And Just Give Them the Answers?
Nechama Leibowitz: The Morah and Her Challenge
- 14.40-15.20 **Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
Grace Paley: The American Jewish Comedy in the Female Voice
- 15.20-16.00 **Nancy K. Miller** (CUNY Graduate Center, New York)
Identities in the First Person: Susan Sontag, Adrienne Rich, and Me

Conclusion by **Vivian Liska**

Leora Batnitzky

On the Continued Challenge of Edith Stein for Jewish-Christian Dialogue

The life and thought of Edith Stein, perhaps more than that of any other Jewish convert to Christianity since Saul of Tarsus, present a particular challenge to Jewish thinkers and the possibility of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Somewhat counterintuitively, Stein's challenge stems not from her break with Judaism in converting to Christianity but rather from the deep affinity between her theology and certain basic tenets of Jewish thought, including first and foremost her recognition that despite her conversion she remained part of the Jewish people. In order to better appreciate this challenge, this paper turns to the interconnections between Stein's conception of her Jewishness and her arguments about the being and vocation of women, especially her claim that "We cannot avoid the question of what we are and what we are supposed to be." Seen in this context, the paper argues that while Stein's life and thought challenge Jewish thinkers to answer the question of why someone cannot be Jewish and Christian simultaneously, Stein's own claims about Jewishness raise the question of why she simply did not opt to remain a Jew.

Leora Batnitzky is Ronald O. Perelman Professor of Jewish Studies and Professor and Chair of Religion at Princeton University. She is the author of *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton, 2000), *Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas: Philosophy and the Politics of Revelation* (Cambridge, 2006), and *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton, 2011), as well as the co-editor of *The Book of Job: Aesthetics, Ethics and Hermeneutics* (De Gruyter, 2014), *Jewish Legal Theories* (Brandeis Library of Modern Jewish Thought, 2018), and *Institutionalizing Rights and Religion* (Cambridge, 2017). Her current book project is a comparative study of legal cases concerning religious conversion in Israel and India.

Michal Ben-Naftali

Reading from her work

Dr. Michal Ben-Naftali (Tel Aviv University) and Dr. Dalia Rosenfeld (Bar Ilan University) will read from their own work.

Michal Ben-Naftali, winner of the 2016 Sapir Prize, is an Israeli writer, translator, and editor. She studied history and philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and received her PhD in contemporary French philosophy from the University of Oxford. Having taught at several Israeli academic institutions, she now teaches French literature and creative writing at Tel Aviv University. She has published collections of essays, a novella, a memoir and a novel, as well as many articles on literature, philosophy and art, in Israel and abroad. She is the author of many books, including *Chronicle of Separation: On Deconstruction's Disillusioned Love* (Fordham University Press, 2015). Her translations from French to Hebrew include works by Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot, and André Breton. Her novel *The Teacher* won the 2016 Sapir Prize.

Agata Bielik-Robson

Amor Mundi: The Marrano Background of Hannah Arendt's Love for the World

When I apply the term 'Marrano' to Arendt, I do not mean it in a technical sense of a descendant of the Sephardic Jews forcibly converted to Christianity, but in a metaphorical one, which, as Yirmiyahu Yovel showed, bears a lot of affinities with the condition of the assimilated European Jewry. One of the characteristic features of the 'Marano experience' listed by Yovel is what he calls 'the turn towards the world.' Poised between the two religions of transcendence, the Marranos often wearied of institutionalized religiosity, yet without losing a certain spiritual fervor which they then invested in the newly discovered dimension of the worldliness. This gave birth to the so-called 'religion of the immanence' whose first representative was Spinoza. In my presentation, I would like to apply this diagnosis to Arendt's *amor mundi* or 'love for the world,' which is less secular than it is usually assumed. In *The Life of the Mind*, especially in the volume on 'Willing,' Arendt locates the origins of her metaphysics of appearances in Duns Scotus' nominalistic 'turn towards the world,' but – as I will try to show in my 'cryptological' analysis – she reads Scotus via the implicit lens of the Jewish/ Lurianic theology of the 'withdrawn God,' who retreats from the creation in order to let it become the sole object of a new piety and love. As a result, there emerges a typically Marrano Judeo-Christian combination motivated by a new desire which Arendt calls *amor mundi*, in sharp distinction from the traditional *amor Dei*. Some essays have already been written on Marrano Arendt (most notably by Martine Leibovici), but my paper wants to explore the unique strain of Marrano religiosity in Arendt, so far unnoticed by commentators.

Agata Bielik-Robson received her PhD in philosophy in 1995. She works as a Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Nottingham and at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. She has published articles in Polish, English, Russian and German on philosophical aspects of psychoanalysis, romantic subjectivity, and the philosophy of religion (especially Judaism and its crossings with modern philosophical thought). Her publications include: *The Saving Lie. Harold Bloom and Deconstruction* (in English, Northwestern University Press, 2011), *Errors. Messianic Vitalism and Philosophy* (Cracow 2012), *In the Wilderness. Cryptotheologies of Late Modernity* (Cracow 2008), *Romanticism. An Unfinished Project* (Cracow 2008), *The Spirit of the Surface. Romantic Revision and Philosophy* (Cracow 2004), *Another Modernity* (Cracow 2000), and *On the Other Side of Nihilism* (Warsaw 1997). Together with Adam Lipszyc she coedited the collection of essays *Judaism in Contemporary Thought. Traces and Influence* (Routledge 2014). Her latest book, *Jewish Cryptotheologies of Late Modernity: Philosophical Marranos*, was published with Routledge in September 2014.

Catherine Chalier

Eliane Amado Lévy-Valensi. « La révélation faite à Israël concerne l'humanité entière »

Eliane Amado Lévy-Valensi (Marseille 1919 – Jérusalem 2006) fut une philosophe et psychanalyste qui participa avec vigueur au renouveau intellectuel et spirituel de la pensée juive après la Catastrophe. Je montrerai comment elle compta alors parmi les rares personnes qui firent vivre la source juive de la pensée au cœur de la philosophie et de la psychanalyse. Ce geste était loin d'aller de soi. Or cela lui permit en particulier de renouveler l'approche de l'énigme du mal, de la mémoire et de l'espérance. Ce sont ces trois questions que je présenterai en gardant à l'esprit que, pour elle, le drame de la création « s'exprime de façon la plus pure en l'homme » et le drame de tous les êtres humains, de la façon la plus pure aussi en Israël. L'antisémitisme qu'elle a analysé avec une grande profondeur, prendrait là sa source car qui aime

ce rappel ? La mémoire blessée des êtres humains, en quête de leur propre secret, et tentés par la mort souvent, pourrait-elle donc trouver dans les sources juives une force de créativité ? Leur espérance pourrait-elle y entrevoir comment le rêve de fraternité passe par la patience d'une alliance qui, pour relire à Dieu, doit commencer par relire à la femme et à l'étranger ?

Catherine Chalier est professeure émérite de philosophie à l'université Paris Ouest Nanterre-La Défense. Au centre de son travail se situe le lien entre la source hébraïque de la pensée et la philosophie. Spécialiste de l'œuvre d'Emmanuel Levinas, elle a écrit plusieurs livres sur lui. Ses derniers livres sont *La gravité de l'amour. Philosophie et spiritualité juives*, PUF, 2016 ; *L'appel des images*, Actes Sud, 2017 ; *Mémoire et Pardon*, François Bourin, 2018 et *Le rabbi de Kotzk, un hassidisme tragique*, Arfuyen, 2018.

[Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi](#)

Grace Paley: The American Jewish Comedy in the Female Voice

Grace Paley and Philip Roth burst upon the American stage at the same moment. America in 1959 provided a unique stage for the urban congregation in the comic mode. Jews met Christians and men met women in that new space. Looking forward from that moment of inception, I trace the trajectory of the writer and activist who is one of the most beloved figures in American and in Jewish literature.

Growing up in an immigrant Jewish family in the Bronx, Paley shaped the cacophony of childhood voices into an American dialect that was as specific as it was accessible, as poignant as it was endearing.

There is hardly another writer of the 20th century who epitomizes the continuities of life and work –without forfeiting the magic and autonomy of the imagination—as splendidly as does Grace Paley. And, given her own engagement and activism, her lived life and her imagined lives both shaped and reflected larger political and cultural realities. She was a Jew of her time, an American of her time, and a woman of her time. And the work she has left us is timeless.

Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi is Professor Emerita of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has written on subjects ranging from representations of the Holocaust in postwar American, Israeli and European culture to the configurations of exile and homecoming in contemporary Jewish literature. In 2007 she became a Guggenheim Fellow for her current project on “Jerusalem and the Poetics of Return.”

[Birgit R. Erdle](#)

Towards a Minor Language: Ilse Aichinger's Counter-Hermeneutics

How is Ilse Aichinger's literary work and her poetic thought related to Jewish tradition and European-Jewish modernity? Could one speak of shattered references to Judaism in Aichinger's texts? To what extent could her work be interpreted in the framework offered by the concept of “critical modernity”, in other words, within the meaning of “recovering and rethinking, in new contexts, the pieces that resurface” (Stéphane Mosès)? How does the texture and textual space of Aichinger's writings represent the effects of Nazi politics

against the Jews, thus reinscribing the presence of these events into the topography of Vienna, Aichinger's place of birth, childhood, and survival? In this regard, Aichinger's literary works may testify to a broken universalism.

My paper will explore Ilse Aichinger's reflection on language, mistrust, belonging, remembrance, inconsolability, and will show how Aichinger's artistic path is inspired and shaped by modernist practices and art forms. A focus will be on 'keywords' in Aichinger's poetics such as breathing, listening, 'ent-setzen'/'über-setzen', and 'Rest'.

Birgit R. Erdle is currently Senior Fellow at Lichtenberg-Kolleg, University of Göttingen. She has been DAAD Walter Benjamin Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2012-2018), and was a Visiting Professor at Fritz Bauer Institute, Goethe University Frankfurt/Main (Gastprofessur zur Erforschung des Holocaust und der deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte), at the Technical University of Berlin, the University of Vienna, and at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (USA). Her research focuses on German-Jewish literature and intellectual history, correspondences between literature and philosophy in modernity, post-history of National Socialism and the Shoah, relationships between memory, materiality, and knowledge, and the epistemology of time in literature and theory. Her recent publications include *Literarische Epistemologie der Zeit. Lektüren zu Kant, Kleist, Heine und Kafka* (2015), and *Theorien über Judenhass – eine Denkgeschichte. Kommentierte Quellenedition 1781-1931*, co-edited with Werner Konitzer (2015).

Anke Gilleir

Woman, Intellectual, German, Jew (or vice versa): Reflections on Margarete Susman

My paper on Margarete Susman, indeed "less well-known" today, will address some strands in her thinking related to gender/womanhood, Jewishness and being German against the backdrop of the intellectual and cultural ferment that enveloped her as a philosopher and critic. Susman's life coincided with the schisms and annihilations of 20th century history. She witnessed and shared the vicissitudes of modern Jewish experience, which she tried to bring to representation throughout her life. The span of themes Susman addressed in her oeuvre, however, reveals a lifelong engagement with many factors that affected the *condition humaine* of modernity: aesthetics, religion, history, nationalism, politics, passion, ethics, social emancipation, abysmal destruction. While I do not want to make a holistic assessment of Susman's work, which is rather difficult considering its magnitude and scope, I want to pursue three aspects that can add to the understanding both of her mode of thought and her position in the field of modern cultural critique. First, I focus (briefly) on the strange *desoeuvrement* that befell Susman's work in the circle of fellow-thinkers, who make up the canon of critical theory today, yet who, when looked at more closely, formed an exclusive preserve of men wielding a hegemonic language of intellectual belonging. The second part traces Susman's reflections on Jewishness, from her early analyses of ghetto culture and cultural Zionism from the 1910s to *Das Buch Hiob* (1947), and her (heavily criticized) philosophical-theological attempt to come to terms with the Shoah. In a last part, I turn to Susman's portraits of historical and contemporary Jewish women writers and thinkers and examine to what extent these texts can be read as a genealogy of female Jewish-German thinking that relates to her own situation as an intellectual.

Anke Gilleir is Professor of German literature at KU Leuven (Belgium). She has written and published extensively on German women writers from the 18th until the early 20th centuries, focusing on gender and authorship, aesthetics and politics, and historiography of literature. Among her works are *Johanna Schopenhauer und die Weimarer Klassik* (1999), *Women*

Writing Back/Writing Women Back: Transnational Perspectives from the late Middle Ages to the Dawn of the Modern Era (with A. Montoya and S. van Dijk) (2010), and *Schmerz. Lust.: Künstlerinnen und Autorinnen der deutschen Avantgarde* (with L. Bosco) (2016). With B. Hahn she has co-edited a volume on the work of the German-Jewish author and philosopher Margarete Susman: *Margarete Susman: Grenzgänge zwischen Dichtung, Philosophie und Kulturkritik* (2012). She is also one of the co-directors of the KU Leuven research lab on European modernism MDRN.

Marion Grau

Prof. Marion Grau will act as a respondent to Prof. Leora Batnitzky's lecture *On the Continued Challenge of Edith Stein for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*.

Marion Grau is Professor of Systematic Theology, Ecumenism and Missiology at MF Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo, Norway. Her teaching interests are in constructive theology. Her current research projects include a monograph on the redevelopment of pilgrimage and the reshaping of identity in Norway, and an Arctic Theology of Petroleum economies and climate change in the Northern hemisphere. She is the author of *Rethinking Theological Hermeneutics: Hermes, Trickster, Fool* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony: Salvation, Society, and Subversion* (T&T Clark/Continuum, 2011), and *Of Divine Economy: Refinancing Redemption* (T&T Clark/Continuum, 2004).

Annabel Herzog

Simone Weil, on Roots and Void

This paper is a discussion of Simone Weil's concept of rootedness (*enracinement*) as it is developed in her last work, *The Need for Roots* (1949). Rootedness challenges both the critique of ontology at work in continental philosophy of the second half of the 20th century, and the notions of identity and voice developed in the Third Wave of feminism. Our discussion will show, however, that Weil's concept of rootedness is far from being a clear-cut expression of the metaphysics of presence. Indeed, it expresses the need for a kind of spirituality that would reject that very metaphysics. The paper therefore focuses on the differences between rootedness and being, and on the political implications of these differences.

Annabel Herzog is Professor of Political Theory in the School of Political Science at the University of Haifa, Israel. Her work focuses on 20th century Jewish philosophers, in particular Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. She recently finished a book on the political in Levinas' Talmudic Readings. Her new projects include a reflection on the dystopian imagination in contemporary Jewish thinking and literature. She has been a visiting professor at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and the Ernest Schwarcz Eminent Visiting Professor at Queens College, New York. Her essays have been published in a variety of journals, among which *Political Theory*, *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, *Modern Judaism*, *Revue des Etudes Juives*, *Les Temps Modernes*, *Prooftexts*, *Theory Culture & Society*, *Inquiry* etc.

Carola Hilfrich

Queering Gender, Genre, Genealogy: The Cixous Idiom of Thinking

Prolific, incantatory, devious, and raw – since the late 1960s, the Algerian-born French writer Hélène Cixous weaves an unclassifiable oeuvre. Rooted in the practices of fiction, criticism, and theory, it also departs from them and opens them up to each other in an *ars poetica* and radical literary thinking of its own. My talk draws on Jacques Derrida's notion of "the Cixous idiom" (2003) to revisit her early and arguably most influential call for an *écriture féminine* as a bodily, non-representational, and non-identitary practice of writing in the light of her more contemporary oeuvre's operations. Between "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975) and the "shout of literature" in the written-for-performance piece *Ayai! Le cri de la littérature* (2013), the Cixous idiom conjures with historical specificities of expression in calling on her maternal German Jewish lineage and paternal Sephardic and Berber ancestry in war-times Algeria. In neologisms like *juifemme* (Jewoman) or *juifdire* (Jewsay) and root syllables like *al-*, stretching out to French, German, Hebrew, Berber, and Arabic words and even to more primal modalities of expression such as the notes of pain or mourning evoked in the titles of *Ail!* (2000/2019) and *Ayai!*, it orchestrates a space for critical and creative engagements with the 20th century economy of the unsayable.

Carola Hilfrich is a literary scholar and cultural theorist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she founded the Program in Cultural Studies and co-founded the I-Core "Da'at Hamakom" Center for the Study of Cultures of Place in the Modern Jewish World. She is the author of *Living Script* (in German, Fink 2000), a book on representation and translation in 18th century Jewish German thought, and co-editor of *Between Cultures: Theory and Praxis of Cross-Cultural Dialogue* (in German, Niemeyer 1997) and *Passages of Belonging: Interpreting Jewish Literatures* (De Gruyter, forthcoming 2019). Her articles explore mediations and circulations of Jewish and other modernities in contemporary literatures. To the *Jewish Women's Archive Encyclopedia*, she contributed the entry on Hélène Cixous. Most recently, she collaborated with Matteo Pericoli and Jonathan Charley for the section on literary architecture in *The Routledge Companion on Architecture, Literature, and the City* (2018).

Martine Leibovici

Emma Goldman (1869-1940), la dissidente

Si la question « qui êtes-vous ? » avait un jour été posée à Emma Goldman, elle n'aurait certainement pas répondu « une Juive », mais plutôt « une anarchiste », l'anarchisme étant resté son idéal de liberté sa vie entière. Cependant, comme Rosa Luxemburg qui ne fut jamais une « marxiste orthodoxe », Emma Goldman ne fut jamais une « anarchiste orthodoxe », n'hésitant pas à plusieurs reprises – sur la question des femmes en particulier –, à entrer en dissidence avec ses propres compagnons de lutte.

Il me semble toutefois insuffisant, comme cela est souvent le cas, de ne mentionner sa judéité que comme une origine qui n'aurait eu aucune signification particulière pour elle. C'est cette signification, ou ce nœud de significations, que je me propose de reconstituer à partir de *Living my life*, sa merveilleuse autobiographie, afin de voir si son attitude si fréquente de dissidence est liée d'une manière ou d'une autre à une fidélité souterraine à ce qu'il lui arrive de nommer « son peuple ». En ayant soin aussi de ne jamais réintégrer Emma Goldman, contre son gré, dans une quelconque identité juive.

Martine Leibovici, Maitre de conférences HDR émérite en philosophie à l'Université Paris-Diderot, membre du Laboratoire de Changement Social et Politique. Principales publications : *Hannah Arendt, une Juive. Expérience, politique et histoire* (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1998) ; *Autobiographies de transfuges. Karl Philipp Moritz, Richard Wright, Assia Djébar* (Paris, Ed. Le Manuscrit, 2013) ; avec Anne-Marie Roviello, *Le pervertissement totalitaire. La banalité du mal selon Hannah Arendt* (Paris, Kimé, 2017).

Vivian Liska

Women and Strangers: Else Lasker-Schüler's Bible in the Feminine

The German-Jewish poet Else Lasker-Schüler has often been situated by its critics and readers in a realm not of this world and outside historical time, in a sphere of eternal poetic truth, a realm oblivious of the cultural, political, and social realities of her day. Although her eccentric and exalted poetic imagination indeed seemingly escapes her immediate environment into fairytale fantasies peopled by princes and princesses, sheiks and magicians, angels and tricksters, such a description of her work misses its importance as an artistic as well as existential endeavor of creative innovation in which a return to age-old religious, primarily Jewish, literary, cultural and textual traditions meets a radically modern – or rather modernist – idea of poetry and selfhood. The inspiration she drew from her Jewish legacy, particularly the Hebrew Bible, as well as her situation as a German Jew in the first half of the Twentieth Century, played a major role in her artistic vision and its profoundly critical stance towards the patriarchal bourgeoisie of her time. These two dimensions of Else Lasker-Schüler merge most characteristically in her poetry inspired by Biblical female figures.

Vivian Liska is Professor of German literature and director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. Since 2013 she is Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Faculty of the Humanities at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has published extensively on literary theory, German modernism, and German-Jewish authors and thinkers. Her recent books include *Giorgio Agambens leerer Messianismus* (2008); *When Kafka Says We. Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature* (2008); *Fremde Gemeinschaft. Deutsch-jüdische Literatur der Moderne* (2011) and *German-Jewish Thought and its Afterlife. A Tenuous Legacy* (2017).

Nancy K. Miller

Identities in the First Person: Susan Sontag, Adrienne Rich, and Me

In this textual collage, a feminist critic meets Susan Sontag and Adrienne Rich in their performances as women writers and intellectuals. In what post-war American contexts do they acknowledge their Jewishness, and how?

Nancy K. Miller is Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Among her recent books are *What They Saved: Pieces of a Jewish Past* (for which she received the Jewish Journal Book Prize in 2012), and *Breathless: An American Girl in Paris* (2013). *My Brilliant Friends: Our Lives in Feminism* will be published by Columbia University Press in January 2019.

Orietta Ombrosi

Sarah Kofman: A Feminine Deconstruction of Judaism

In my talk, I would like to consider the question of femininity and Judaism with the French philosopher Sarah Kofman (1934-1994), a forgotten figure for whom writing, and in particular the “writing of disaster” (Blanchot), was essential. The most important thing, for her, was writing. To Kofman’s mind, writing was above all an affirmation of existence rather than a record or transference of thought; an affirmation of existence in the same way that a signature can be, in fact in the same way as the signature given in some of her texts – “Tomb for a Proper Name” and *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* – despite this written signature being suspended, mutilated, cut, painful, torn. Even to the point of death.

Writing to live, like writing to breathe, writing to exist, is for Sarah Kofman not so much about existing in the public sphere, although this is also an aspect of it, but originally, almost *genetically* or *genealogically*, about existing with oneself. Yet writing, for her, means affirming her existence in another sense, the sense of being able to record her identity without necessarily sinking into guilt, having survived and having wanted to make a cut, to “erase her origins”, to “deny her blood”, but rather by accepting them and carrying them inside her, on her, with her, as one carries a proper name – when that is possible, of course; when history and survival allow for it. Writing means looking for herself in her proper name or even, impossibly, finding herself in the name of another, in the destination of the other’s existence, of her family’s existence, the existence of her father and two mothers.

From this perspective of writing, I will examine Sarah Kofman by paying attention to what she writes about her genealogy, about her father – a few lines – and about her two mothers – a short book – in order to understand her double movement of destroying a certain Judaism (that of her mother) and of redeeming, through deconstruction itself, her father’s Judaism, inhabited by the enlightenment brought, perhaps despite herself, by Kofman’s surrogate mother. However, this interpretation is not due to a certain philosophical voyeurism, but rather because Sarah Kofman herself gives permission for her books to be read in this way, just as she read others’ books – that is, undeniably connecting life and work, tying the singular life to a singular thought, to a thought that is therefore fed by the life of its thinker and even by the subjective history of the person who *generates* it.

Orietta Ombrosi is Assistant Professor of Moral Philosophy at Sapienza, University of Rome. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Paris X-Nanterre and has been a research fellow at the University of the Mediterranean and at the University of Bologna. She has published some fifty articles and two monographs: *The Twilight of reason. Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer and Levinas tested by the Catastrophe* (Academic Studies Press, Boston 2012; French edition 2007) and *L'umano ritrovato. Saggio su Emmanuel Levinas* (Marietti, Milan 2010). She has edited the collective volumes *Tra Torah e Sophia. Orizzonti e frontiere della Filosofia ebraica* (Marietti, Milan 2011), *Ebraismo al femminile. Percorsi diversi di intellettuali ebrei del Novecento* (Giuntina, Firenze 2017), and recently *Derrida-Levinas. An Alliance Awaiting the Political*, edited by O. Ombrosi and R. Zagury-Orly, Mimesis International 2018.

Ilana Pardes

The Book of Ruth and the Question of Migration: From Cynthia Ozick to Bonnie Honig

The Book of Ruth has become a key text in current reassessments of the question of migration. I will discuss two prominent readings in this connection by two prominent Jewish thinkers and writers: Cynthia Ozick and Bonnie Honig.

Ilana Pardes is the Katharine Cornell Professor of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Director of the Center for Literary Studies. 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 Visiting Professor at UC Berkeley in 1996 and in 2006 and at Harvard in 2012. During the fall of 2009 she was a fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and in fall of 2017 she was a fellow at the Humanities Council at Princeton University. 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, 2008); *Agnon's Moonstruck Lovers: The Song of Songs in Israeli Culture* (The Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies, University of Washington Press, 2013), and *The Song of Songs: A Biography* (forthcoming in 2019).

Dalia Rosenfeld

Reading from her work

Dr. Dalia Rosenfeld (Bar Ilan University) and Dr. Michal Ben-Naftali (Tel Aviv University) will read from their own work.

Dalia Rosenfeld is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her stories have appeared widely in journals, and her first book, *The Worlds We Think We Know*, was recently published with Milkweed Press. She teaches creative writing at Bar Ilan University and lives with her three children in Tel Aviv.

Dana Rubinstein

And Just Give Them the Answers? Nechama Leibowitz: The *Morah* and Her Challenge

A groundbreaking and venerated female *Torah* scholar in a male-dominated field, Nechama Leibowitz should have been a natural poster child for the fledgling orthodox feminist movement. Yet, she repeatedly eschewed the soap box, refusing to engage in discussions about her gender and its impact on her scholarship. Armed with her famous trope - "I am not a museum" - she exhorted anyone inquiring about her unique role as an orthodox female exegete, to spend their time studying *Torah* instead. Following her lead, we will explore through close biblical text study, the role of the feminine in the thought of Nechama Leibowitz. While the very question "Who are you?" would have been anathema to Nechama, there is one answer that she left us with after all. Inscribed on her gravestone at her request, directly under her name, is one singular word: *Morah* - (female) teacher. Both in the classroom and in her writings, Nechama was loathe to provide easy explanations, challenging her audience with increasingly difficult questions instead. True to her pedagogical

principles, Nechama never made explicit her views on 'gender and Judaism' but she did leave us the tools and sources to attempt our own analysis.

Dana Rubinstein is a graduate student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She holds a BA in philosophy from Yale University and a JD from Columbia School of Law.

[Laura Sanò](#)

Rachel Bepaloff. *A Thought in Exile*

Rachel Bepaloff, a Jewish philosopher and literary critic of Ukrainian origin, emigrated to Switzerland and then to France, eventually taking refuge in the United States during WWII. A survivor of the devastating history of the first half of the 20th century, her exodus did not end, however, with her arrival to the Promised Land. Indeed, a few months after the founding of the State of Israel, she took her own life, aged 54. She was unable to bear the weight of an existence lived in a state of never-ending exile, without a country, like a refugee, always *en route*, always seeking a *land* that always turned out to be blocked, distant, and inaccessible. She did not survive the historical trauma that pierced her discriminating intelligence, through her human weakness. The effects of tragic public events heavily, and inevitably affected her private life. The peculiarity of Bepaloff consists in a symmetrical correspondence between the events of her life, the history and the destiny of the Jewish people, whom she claimed to belong to, and specific elements of her work that are irreducible to every philosophical tendency. In particular, the theoretical aspect that most keenly reflects Bepaloff's authentic and intellectual personality is that of the exodus, of the relentless pursuit of an arrival point that is never definitively reached. Her thought can be defined as a *nomadic*, in the meaning of this inherently ambivalent expression: as a thought constantly traveling and always searching for *nomos*, for a stable reference point of this incessant wandering. After an incessant *querelle* where Bepaloff engages with leading figures of contemporary thought, she was reluctant to unconditionally recognize a specific and determined speculative position. The landmark to which she finally arrived, however, was constituted not by any philosopher but from the Holy Writ, more precisely, by the Prophets. Here, the Jewish *identity*, sometimes disguised or reshaped by the same writer, emerges as the only certainty. Mainly for the sake of understanding what was happening on the eve of the *Shoah*, Bepaloff found in the words of the prophets the *fundamentum inconcussum*, which she had sought elsewhere without success. Although doubts never abandoned her, thereby preventing her from wholeheartedly espousing a religious view and any kind of "orthodoxy," the Bible would henceforth remain her ultimate and unquestioned touchstone.

Laura Sanò teaches in the Philosophy and Literature degree program at the University of Padua, where she holds courses in the field of History of Contemporary Philosophy. She has written numerous articles and monographs on contemporary philosophical thought. In addition to three volumes dedicated to the tradition of "negative thought" (*Un daimon solitario. Il pensiero di Andrea Emo*, Preface by Umberto Curi, La Città del Sole, Napoli 2001; *Il monoteismo democratico. Religione, politica e filosofia nei Quaderni del 1953 di Andrea Emo*, Preface by Massimo Donà, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2003; *Le ragioni del nulla. Il pensiero tragico nella filosofia italiana tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Preface by Sergio Givone, Città Aperta Edizioni, Troina (EN) 2005), she has published two studies of Rachel Bepaloff's thought: a monograph (*Un pensiero in esilio. La filosofia di Rachel Bepaloff*, Preface by Remo Bodei, Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, Napoli 2007) and an anthology (*Rachel Bepaloff, Su Heidegger*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2010). Her most recent publications include: *Leggere la Persuasione e la retorica di Carlo Michelstaedter*, Ibis, Como-Pavia 2011; *Donne e Violenza. Filosofia e guerra nel pensiero del '900*, Postface by Bruna Giacomini, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2012; *Metamorfosi del potere. Percorsi e incroci tra Arendt e Kafka*, Inschibboleth, Romea 2017.

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