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FACULTATEA DE LITERE

20th Century Jewish Exile Remembered

13 March 2023, 10.00-15.45, Romanian time

Online Workshop, The Faculty of Letters at Transilvania University of Brașov

Organizers: Edward Waysband (Transilvania University of Brașov)

Arleen Ionescu (Shanghai Jiao Tong University)

PROGRAM

10.00-10.15: Greetings and opening remarks: Adrian Lăcătuș (Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Transilvania University of Brașov)

10.15-11.15: Keynote lecture

Leona Toker (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

“Ideological Ramifications of Survivor Guilt in the Work of Three Holocaust Writers:

Ka-Tzetnik, Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel”

11.15-11.45: Roundtable on the keynote lecture. Discussants: Edward Waysband (Transilvania University of Brașov) and Arleen Ionescu (Shanghai Jiao Tong University)

Session 1:

Moderator: Georgeta Moarcas (Transilvania University of Brașov)

11.45-12.15: Stefani Hoffman (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

“Exile or Not — Soviet Jewry: Views on Identity and Exile”

12.15-12.45: Jörg Schulte (Cologne University)

“Epic and the End of Exile: Saul Tchernichowsky’s *The Golden People*”

12.45-13.15: Edward Waysband (Transilvania University of Brașov)

“Esoteric Sources of Russian Émigré Antisemitism and Terrorism in the 1920s”

13.15-13.50: Lunch break

Session 2:

Moderator: Edward Waysband (Transilvania University of Brașov)

13.50-14.00: Film *Vapniarka: The Camp of Death*, by Olga Stefan (2022)

14.00-14.30: Olga Stefan (University of Iași)

“Art of the Holocaust in Romania: Vapniarka as a Case Study”

14.30-15.00: Camelia Crăciun (New Europe College / University of Bucharest)

“Yiddish Theatre in Interwar Romania: The Process of Redefining Modern Jewish Identity”

15.00-15.30: Arleen Ionescu (Shanghai Jiao Tong University)

“From Trauma towards Healing: Memoirs of Shanghai Jewish Refugees”

15.30-15.45: Closing remarks and discussion

Abstracts and Participants' Bio-Notes

Ideological Ramifications of Survivor Guilt in the Work of Three Holocaust Writers: Ka-Tzetnik, Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel

Leona Toker

Survivor guilt is a psychological phenomenon, well known in trauma studies, which often emphasize the individuals' ways of dealing with trauma in terms of the Freudian distinction between 'acting out' and 'working through.' The survivor's duty to testify stands in a tense and not unambiguous relationship with the need to cope with a sense guilt, rational or irrational. This paper points to those episodes in the Holocaust works of Ka-Tzetnik, Primo Levi, and Elie Wiesel that bear traces of psychologically fueled survivor guilt. It then relates this phenomenon to the ideological stances of these writers in respect to the issues of secularization and the history of Jewish exile and return and the notion of *hester panim* (God hiding his face).

Leona Toker is Professor Emerita in English Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, still teaching, at the Hebrew University and at the Shalem Academic College. She is the author of *Nabokov: The Mystery of Literary Structures* (Cornell University Press, 1989), *Eloquent Reticence: Withholding Information in Fictional Narrative* (University Press of Kentucky, 1993), *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Indiana University Press, 2000), *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction: Narratives of Cultural Remission* (Ohio State University Press, 2010), *Gulag Literature and the Literature of Nazi Camps: An Intercontextual Reading* (Indiana University Press, 2019), and articles on English, American, and Russian writers. She has edited *Commitment in Reflections: Essays in Literature and Moral Philosophy* (Garland, 1994) and co-edited, with Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan and Shuli Barzilai, *Rereading Texts / Rethinking Critical Presuppositions: Essays in Honour of H.M. Daleski* (Peter Lang, 1996), and, with Esther Cohen, Manuela Consonni, and Otniel Dror, *Knowledge and Pain* (Rodopi, 2021). Since 2003, she is Editor of *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, a semiannual refereed academic periodical now published by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Her current research deals with narratological issues, the history of topoi, and Vladimir Nabokov's middle period works. At the moment she is guest-editing a special issue on Anatoly Kuznetsov for *East European Holocaust Studies*.

Exile or Not

Soviet Jewry: Views on Identity and Exile

Stefani Hoffman

Originally referring to Jewish expulsion from the Land of Israel millennia ago, exile negatively connoted forced departure from one's homeland and the impossibility of a safe return. By the twentieth century, the term exile not only applied to other national/ethnic groups but it also acquired a more fluid meaning, often signifying a dual consciousness of displacement. The concept of Jewish exile, however, is more complex. The term 'galut' refers basically to the original definition, but after the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews are not impeded from returning. The term 'tfutsot' or diaspora is applied to the various Jewish communities around the world. Some Jewish thinkers, for example Daniel Boyarin in the U.S., have stressed the positive effect of diasporic conditions on Jewish identity.

For Soviet Jews in the twentieth century, the concepts of exile and Jewish identity were even more convoluted. As is known, the USSR impeded emigration to Israel and aggressively strove to stamp out Jewish identity but, paradoxically, this very attempt often impelled Soviet Jews to confront this identity. In my talk, I shall consider various positions adopted by the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia to deal with questions of identity and exile. I shall discuss their views while they were in the Soviet Union and then follow the evolution after their departure. Some, while not denying their Jewish identity, veered more toward a western perspective in which exile as displacement can be a creative impetus, as, for example, in Grigorii Pomerants' reflections in his autobiography. In the case of Boris Khazanov, who emigrated to Germany, exile did not diminish his Jewish identity and was a stimulus to his vocation as a writer.

Ironically, new twists in Russian Jewish identity occurred both when Jewish aliyah activists fought to emigrate to Israel in the 1970s and when emigration was no longer restricted at the end of Soviet rule. Russian-speaking Jews contemplated whether Jewish and Russian identities were compatible and was the Jewish homeland a new form of exile? Ultimately, there is no simple answer to these identity questions, which continue to evolve with new circumstances.

Stefani Hoffman is a researcher, academic editor, and Russian to English translator in the field of Russian-Jewish studies. She is the former director of the Mayrock Center for Russian, Eurasian, and East European Research at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has edited the following collections: Ezra Mendelsohn, Stefani Hoffman, Richard I. Cohen, eds. *Against the Grain: Jewish Intellectuals in Hard Times* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2014); Richard I. Cohen, Jonathan Frankel, Stefani Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders: Dilemmas of East European Jewry* (Portland, Oregon: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010); Stefani Hoffman, Ezra Mendelsohn, eds., *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Her more recent essay in the field is 'The World as Exile and the Word as Homeland in the Writing of Boris Khazanov' in *Spiritual Homelands*, ed. A. Bieman, R.I. Cohen, and S. Wobick-Segev (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2019). Her translations include *Journey into the Land of the Zeks and Back: A Memoir of the Gulag* by Julius Margolin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020; *The Russian Army and the Jewish Population, 1914–1917* by Semyon Goldin (Palgrave, 2022); *We Are Jews Again: Reflections on the History of the Zionist Movement in the Soviet Union*, by Yuli Kosharovsky (Syracuse University Press, 2017) and *Fear No Evil* by Natan Sharansky (New York: Random House, 1988).

Epic and the End of Exile: Saul Tchernichowsky's *The Golden People*

Jörg Schulte

Saul Tchernichowsky wrote his epic *The Golden People* on the 'Exodus from Europe' between 1936 and 1941. Even though it was composed as a résumé of his life and his poetic work and as a 'foundation myth' of the future Israeli state, it is probably among the least read of his works. The allegorical structure of the epic is obvious: the swarm of bees that sets off to establish a new hive is the Jewish people that creates a new home in Palestine. Maybe the most remarkable feature of the epic is the idea of inclusiveness. The epic sets out to accomplish the task of merging the most different forms of Jewish life in exile into one nation. It gives human dignity to all fates and individual lives that take part in this process. As a poetic form Tchernichowsky's epic consists of different genres of European poetry: the national epic (with Virgil's foundation myth of Rome as the most obvious point of reference), the epigram, the friendship elegy as well as the ballad, the idyll and the tradition of *poésie scientifique*.

Jörg Schulte is Professor of Slavic literature at Cologne University. He studied in Odessa, London and Hamburg and wrote his PhD thesis on rabbinical sources in the works of Isaac Babel, Bruno Schulz and Danilo Kiš. He held the Aby Warburg-fellowship at The Warburg Institute (London) and taught at the College of Inter-Faculty Individual Studies in the Humanities (College MISH) in Warsaw. At the University of Bath he worked as a network coordinator for the project ‘Russian Jewish Cultural Continuity in the Diaspora’. During the academic year 2010/11, he was a visiting professor at the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies ‘Artes Liberales’ at the University of Warsaw. In the same year, he taught Russian and Polish literature at the University of Hamburg. Between 2009 and 2014, he was an Honorary Research Associate at the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies of the University College London (UCL) and at the Department of Comparative Literature of the Hebrew University. In 2016 he received the Jan Kochanowski prize of the International Association of Polish Studies for the years 2011-2016. In 2020 he was a visiting scholar at the Israel Institute of Advanced Studies (Jerusalem). His research interests include Jewish literatures in Central and Eastern Europe, the survival of the classical tradition in Hebrew, Russian, Polish and Serbian / Croatian literature, the history of translation and the history of prosody. Jörg Schulte’s books include: *Jan Kochanowski und die europäische Renaissance* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011). Polish Edition: Warsaw: Neriton 2014; *Eine Poetik der Offenbarung: Isaak Babel—Bruno Schulz—Danilo Kiš* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004); *Europa Erlesen: Belgrad* (Klagenfurt: Wieser, 2000); *Salomon Dykman: Przekłady, wiersze, eseje, listy* (Kraków: Austeria 2014); (with Olga Tabachnikova and Peter Wagstaff) *Russian Jewish Diaspora and European Culture: 1917-1939* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); *Saul Tschernichowski: Dein Glanz nahm mir die Worte: Das dichterische Werk* (Berlin: Edition Rugerup 2020).

Esoteric Sources of Russian Émigré Antisemitism and Terrorism in the 1920s

Edward Waysband

In my talk, I shall discuss how the turn-of-the-century mixture of anti-Semitism and esoteric interests provided a blueprint for Russian émigré right-wing terrorist activities in 1920s. My case study is Elizaveta Shabelskaya-Bork’s novel *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* (1911) whose enthusiastic re-actualization in the twenty-first century points to a line of continuity from its ideological utilization in the 1920s and 1930s to Russian post-communist right-wing

fundamentalist circles' drawing inspiration from the nationalist anti-Semitic discourse of the previous century.

As a point of departure, I discuss the ideological, political, and terrorist cooperation between Russian right-wing émigrés and right-wing Germans after World War I, in particular, the organization 'Aufbau' (Reconstruction). Its members Petr Shabelsky-Borg and Sergei Taboritsky arranged, among other things, a terrorist attack on Pavel Miliukov, a leader of the Constitutional Democratic party, a major liberal party in Russia. During this attack, another leader of this party, Vladimir Nabokov (the father of the famous writer), was killed. In his book, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism, 1917–1945*, Michael Kellogg discussed the ideological foundations of the 'Aufbau' leaders, in various degrees of detail, but primarily from the perspective of their unquestioning belief in the authenticity of the forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which they introduced to the German readership. Researchers, however, have paid less attention to other sources that contributed to the Russian right-wing émigrés' and by extension their German associates' convictions about international Jewry's conspiratorial striving for world rule. In my paper, I contextualize the influence that *Satanists of the Twentieth Century* had on Russian émigré right-wing representatives, in particular on its author's godson, Petr Shabelsky-Borg. I likewise provide evidence of the novel's possible influence on German associates of 'Aufbau.' I discuss ideological foundations of the novel, paying particular attention to its central theme of the Jewish-Masonic clandestine religion of Satanism. Shabelskaya-Bork's ideological foundations can be defined thus as a mixture of Russian Orthodox fundamentalism, virulent anti-Semitism, and the fin-de-siècle ambivalent fascination with non-traditional religious practices.

Edward Waysband is a Visiting Professor at Transilvania University, Brașov. He taught at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The National University Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg. He was likewise a visiting researcher at The University of Toronto, The University of Caen, Normandy, The Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, and Polish Institute of Advanced Studies in Warsaw. His primary research interests lie at the intersection of modernist studies, postcolonial studies, comparative studies, East European, Russian, and Jewish studies. His publications appeared in *Slavic Review*, *Slavic and East European Journal*, *Russian Literature*, *Ab Imperio*, *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*.

Art of the Holocaust in Romania: Vapniarka as a Case Study

Olga Stefan

Vapniarka was a village on the Odesa-Lviv train line in Romanian-occupied Transnistria. Starting in September 1942, the camp there was designated a political prisoner camp. In the first months after the arrival of the last lot of about 1100 Jews deported to Vapniarka, a system of extermination was imposed by the Romanian administration. Resistance in the camp took many forms: mutual aid, active opposition, and art and culture, particularly education and artistic production. Focus in my presentation will be placed on an art exhibition that took place in 1943 inside the camp, an event that has been unknown to, thus not studied by, any researchers of the Romanian Holocaust. Objects from this unique exhibition made their way to Romania once the survivors were repatriated, including several woodcut plates by a famous expressionist artist who had been active as an engaged antifascist in the interwar period. The woodcut plates produced in the camp were then used to make the first prints depicting the horrors of camp life to be exhibited in post-war Romania, in Bucharest in 1945. I have researched this two-person exhibition entitled 'The Concentration Camp Exhibition' featuring the prints by the expressionist antifascist Vapniarka prisoner and those of another artist who had been interned in the Tîrgu Jiu camp for political prisoners, and I have compiled an almost complete list of the works displayed. Shortly after 1945, with the changing policies of the new communist regime toward Holocaust memory, representations of persecuted Jews in art started to disappear as the idea that Jews had been the primary victims of the fascists and Nazis faded from official historical narration in the public sphere. My presentation will reveal novel works of art produced in the camp and exhibited after liberation, the role art played in the prisoners' strategies of antifascist resistance in the camp, the importance these works had for raising awareness of the horrors experienced in concentration camps to a wilfully blind population; it will also address the post-war communist regime's revisionist approach to the Holocaust as exemplified in the use of language and visual representation.

Olga Stefan is a curator, researcher and documentary filmmaker focusing on the Holocaust in Romania, with special attention to the art produced about this topic in the years of the war and immediately after. In 2016 she founded the transnational platform for Holocaust remembrance, *The Future of Memory*: www.thefutureofmemory.ro, and is currently enrolled

as a doctoral student at the University of Iasi, Romania with a thesis about Vapniarka. She is the author of the book *The Future of Memory*, a chapter about Vapniarka in the volume *Memories of Terror*, Frankfurt: CEEOL Press, 2020, and another chapter in the forthcoming volume, *Deportation in East Central Europe*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang Press, 2023.

Yiddish Theatre in Interwar Romania: The Process of Redefining Modern Jewish Identity

Camelia Crăciun

Starting with the last quarter of the 19th century, Yiddish theatre has constantly represented a major component of Jewish life regardless of the education, culture and even language of its audience. Moreover, significant representatives of the non-Jewish elite attended Yiddish theatre performances, increasing its popularity inside, but also outside of the community. The theatrical scene was very dynamic, including many theatre companies, a rich general repertory, successful tours of the foreign actors expressing insightful perspectives on the local situation, as well as major and necessary projects aiming to create a local national theatre. The current presentation eventually aims at demonstrating the impact of this increasing popularity during the interwar period and the way it was employed by the Jewish Romanian elite in order to foster cultural, but also political objectives.

Camelia Crăciun is an Associate Professor in Jewish Studies, New Europe College / University of Bucharest. She has a PhD in Jewish Studies. Her research interests are in history of Jewish Romanian intellectuals and history of Yiddish theatre. In 2016 she founded the first Centre for Research and Preservation of Yiddish Culture in Romania at the Jewish State Theatre. Editor of the book series ‘Biblioteca de Literatură Idiș’ (Library of Yiddish Literature, 8 titles, at Hasefer Publishing House). Her monographs include: *Traduceri în limba română din literatura clasică idiș* (Translations into Romanian language from Yiddish classic literature) (2015); *140 de ani de teatru idiș în România* (140 years of Yiddish theatre in Romania) (2016); *Scriitori evrei de limbă română: de la rebeli marginali la critici canonici* (Jewish writers in the Romanian language: from marginal rebels to canonical critics) (2018).

From Trauma towards Healing: Memoirs of Shanghai Jewish Refugees

Arleen Ionescu

The main aim of my paper is to offer a thorough analysis of a corpus of memoirs written by German, Austrian, Polish and Russian Jews who found refuge in Shanghai during World War II, contextualizing these memoirs through a theoretical framework that brings a novel perspective on trauma and collective memory and looks into ways in which Jewish refugees used writing as cure. On the one hand, via Judith Herman's tripartite structure of trauma recovery ('establishing safety', 'reconstructing trauma stories', 'regaining a sense of community'), I will investigate how Holocaust survivors started to write their memoirs once they were far from the place of trauma both spatially and temporally (a first phase that corresponds to what Herman designated as 'establishing safety'), how they reconstructed their trauma stories, and finally how after building families and careers, they regained a sense of community. On the other hand, via the new 'positive turn' in memory studies, I will examine these narratives as heading towards a more harmonious future (Alon Goshen-Gottstein), trauma healing (Arleen Ionescu & Maria Margaroni), and hope (Ernst Bloch, Terry Eagleton, Rebecca Solnit, Ann Rigney, Tea Sindbæk Andersen & Jessica Ortner).

Arleen Ionescu is Tenured Professor of English Literature and Critical Theory at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Her major research interests are in the fields of Modernist prose and increasingly, in Critical Theory, Memory Studies, Holocaust Studies and Trauma Studies. She has published on James Joyce and other related aspects of modernism, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, Samuel Beckett as well as on trauma. Her essays have appeared in reputed academic journals such as *James Joyce Quarterly*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, *Memory Studies*, *Oxford Literary Review*, *Parallax*, *Partial Answers*, *Papers on Joyce*, *Joyce Studies Annual*, *SLOVO*, *Style*. She is joint editor-in-chief (with Laurent Milesi) of *Word and Text – A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics*. Her books include *Romanian Joyce: From Hostility to Hospitality* (Peter Lang, 2014), *The Memorial Ethics of Libeskind's Berlin Jewish Museum* (Palgrave, 2017). She co-edited with Maria Margaroni *Arts of Healing: Cultural Narratives of Trauma* (Rowman and Littlefield International, 2020).