



Perspectives

Published by the Woolf Institute,
UK registered charity no. 1069589

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Distributed free of charge in the
UK and worldwide.

Cover

Finding Home #46 Tikkun ha-Olam
gouache and gold leaf on paper;
11.5" x 9" 2000
Artist: Siona Benjamin
www.artsiona.com
www.flomenhaftgallery.com

Design & print management

H2 Associates, Cambridge

Perspectives is printed on chlorine-free
FSC certified paper with vegetable-
based ink.

All opinions expressed in *Perspectives*
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In media res: Marginalised Minorities

Discussions at the Institute over the past six months have focused on Marginalised Minorities against the backdrop of our study of relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims. With our stream of international visiting fellows, student exchanges and collaborations within the academy, we are sensitive to developments in policy and other symptoms of change in relations between and treatment of faith groups, nationally and internationally. Yet the theme has also attracted wider public attention of late, not least during the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Scotland and England, in the many column inches deconstructing what David Cameron's plans for a Big Society really mean for communities, and in Angela Merkel's admission of the "utter failure of multiculturalism in Germany".

The discontent felt by and with minority communities can result in their isolation or self-isolation from communal affairs, eventually leading to the gradual penetration of extremism into mainstream society. It is a subject which cannot be ignored.

In this edition of *Perspectives* we explore the ideas of minority and marginalisation of minorities from numerous viewpoints. The voices of Naomi Gryn, Navras Aafreedi and Trisha Kessler bring to life the Jewish communities of India's past and present. Daniel Langton engages us in the life and works of Grace Aguilar, a pioneering female Jewish voice in 19th century Britain. Rachel Ramsay explores the novel of Jewish Russian émigré Wladimir Kaminer who established the Russendisko in 1990s Berlin. In the Culture section, award-winning novelist Marina Lewycka, whose books give voice to people often marginalised in society, talks to Trisha Kessler. We also hear from one of the UK's leading theatres working with disempowered communities. Five of our alumni who work daily with minorities give a glimpse into their worlds. There is also a report on our standing-room only debate asking whether Christians are the UK's new marginalised minority. I name but a few of the well-researched and impassioned pieces I am pleased to present to you.

Lucia Faltin, **Editor**

PERSPECTIVES

Editorial

In media res	2
From the Director	4

Diary

Events	5
People at Woolf	7
Pilgrimage on Wheels	31

Culture

Book Shelf

The Favourites of Sarah Joseph	36
--------------------------------------	----

Review

Patrick Bade: Andrew Graham-Dixon, <i>Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane</i>	37
--	----

Reflections

Working with Minorities	38
-------------------------------	----

Resources

Courses Publications Dissertations Online	42
---	----

Noticeboard

Calendar & Highlights	44
-----------------------------	----



Giving Marginalised
Minorities a Platform



Minority Writing
in German

Features

Daniel Langton 10

Marginal Minority Experience: The Case
Study of the Nineteenth-Century Jewish
Theologian and Novelist, Grace Aguilar

Eva-Maria Ziege 14

The Frankfurt School in
American Exile

Rachel Ramsay 19

Minority Writing in German:
Self-Portraits and Representing
the Other

In Focus

Naomi Gryn 23

The Jews of India

Trisha Kessler 27

Baghdadi Jewish Female Voices:
From Calcutta to Golders Green

Navras Jaat Aafreedi 30

The Indian Jews: Their Relations with
Muslims and their Marginalisation

Culture: Conversations

Marina Lewycka, award-winning novelist & Trisha Kessler 32

Finding Beauty in Cast-Offs

Anna Myers, Tricycle Theatre & Esther Haworth 34

Giving Marginalised Minorities a Platform



From the Director

Welcome to the Winter issue of Perspectives, which explores the theme Marginalised Minorities and, as always, includes the latest news about the Woolf Institute's educational programmes.

The learning environment at the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations will be particularly fruitful this academic year with three Visiting Fellows: in the autumn Daniel Cowdin has been researching Christian ethics and the Talmud, and in the Spring we will benefit from the wisdom of two eminent American professors, Jay Geller and Amy-Jill Levine from Vanderbilt Divinity School.

As well as welcoming the new 2010–11 Masters students from Europe and North America, we look forward to the first students undertaking a new teaching programme (via e-learning) entitled Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe: modern challenges.

The Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations is also making good progress. Josef Meri, who has been appointed CMJR Academic Director, has initiated some important research projects including an academic journal in Muslim-Jewish Relations and a Reader. CMJR is also pleased to be working closely with the Centre for Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge.

The Public Education Programmes is responding to increasing demands for its high-quality lectures, seminars and short courses. Unfortunately, we are only able to fulfill a small number of the requests due to limited resources but during the year we plan to build up a bank of Woolf Institute-trained tutors in order to respond to the increased demand.

Thank you, as ever, for your ongoing support and encouragement, which are vital to our success. Although there is so much more to be achieved in improving understanding among Jews, Christians and Muslims, you are helping the Woolf Institute make a significant contribution to this urgent cause.

Dr Edward Kessler,
Founding and Executive Director

DIARY

Recent developments at the Woolf Institute

Are Christians the UK's New 'Marginalised Minority'?

It was a full house at the Woolf Institute's debate on Tuesday 5 October as over 75 people packed into the Michaelhouse chancel to attend the Woolf Institute's discussion asking, 'Are Christians the UK's New Marginalised Minority?' Views were expressed from the full range of the



Andrea Williams, Director of the Christian Legal Centre

spectrum in what was a frank and lively discussion. According to the European President of the Humanist Federation David Pollock, it is "scarcely credible that Christianity is marginalised given its [...] control of one in three state schools and privileges in religious broadcasting". He suggested that an increase in secularism in the public realm would eventually create a neutral state. This was challenged by writer, broadcaster and leading authority on Islam, Professor Ziauddin Sardar. He talked about a society which 'ridicules religion' and described many Christians as feeling 'shame and guilt', and a subsequent unwillingness to publicly declare themselves to be Christian.

Andrea Williams, Director of the Christian Legal Centre which seeks to "defend the right of Christians to speak biblical truths in the public sphere", shared her objection to what she calls "modern aggressive secularism" and to a "state enforced morality [that] reacts disproportionately to anyone who voices a criticism of it". She described the large numbers of people seeking her help for cases of discrimination because of their expressions of Christian views.

Williams believes that current developments make the Equality Bill ironically named. She argued that Christians are becoming a marginalised majority, a position she says will prove detrimental for the country.

Rev Dr John Binns of Great St Mary's, Cambridge took a more liberal stance arguing that there "cannot be an imposing pattern of faith but there must be room for an individual response to God's call".

Dr Edward Kessler argued that Christianity is becoming a renewed minority and is "experiencing the pains of adjustment" to the growing religious and cultural pluralism. Yet he challenged those Christians who have an "overly romantic notion of the Christian past of Britain", as "all faiths need to look forward and grapple with the modern phenomenon of the multiplicity of identities within and beyond their faith".

The variety of questions from the audience and the diverse views of the panellists suggested that the theme will remain a hotly contested subject in a society of increasingly diverse individuals and communities.

Life and Death among Jews and Muslims

Marta Dominguez-Diaz reports on her research and a symposium at the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations

The end-of-life has been an enduring concern addressed by religions, philosophies, sciences and the arts throughout history. Yet today we seem to live in a death-denying society. We live longer, and medical advances and developments in end-of-life care can make us detached in thinking about death. The 'dying of death', characteristic of the 20th century, might be coming to an end. There seems to be a revival of interest in the end-of-life in academic and public discourse, from the meanings attached to the processes involved to the social

significance of rituals performed in relation to death and dying. An emerging holistic approach to medical care seeks to take more seriously the feelings and worldviews of the dying ones or those who are bereaved. The care provided at the final stages of life is no longer addressed merely in medical terms, but also increasingly in a spiritual context.

A two-year research project at CMJR is exploring how medical treatment affects the care for Jewish and Muslim patients. It

focuses on conceptions of life and death among Britain's Muslims and Jews, and on the influence of their religious views on their approach to the end of life. Despite their many differences, Judaism and Islam are rooted in a semitic tradition that results in a number of similarities in terms of theology, jurisprudence and religious practice. Both evolved around a monotheistic ethos based on the idea of transcendence and the unity of God envisaged as having revealed a set of values to guide human society. Christianity,

continued on page 6

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on the other hand, has largely retained a Trinitarian approach to monotheism. Although the three faiths are considered to be 'religions of the Book', the value ascribed to Scripture in Judaism and Islam differs from that ascribed to it by Christians. The meanings attached to the ideas of time, the ways of conceptualising the human lifecycle and the process of dying, the moment of death, and the understanding of grief and bereavement present certain differences. Judaism and Islam also present some similarities in ritual terms. Practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are central to the three monotheistic faiths, yet the observance of certain dietary regulations and notions attached to bodily pollution and purification rituals are far more similar in Islam and Judaism than in Christianity. Although Jewish



Reverend Andrew Brown at the symposium

and Muslim mortuary rites differ in some aspects, they also show striking parallels. Autopsies, for instance, should not be permitted unless absolutely necessary: they are considered to be a human-authorised mutilation of a body owned by God, and they also delay burial. Jews and Muslims

have campaigned together to gain the right to use MRI and CR scans instead of open autopsies. The two religions and the diverse communities within them offer an interesting framework for comparative enquiry into the attitudes and practices in the context of death and dying.

These issues were discussed at a symposium organised in May by the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies. The event, held at St Edmund's College, Cambridge, brought together Muslim and Jewish healthcare professionals, religious leaders, hospital chaplains and academics. A report from the symposium will be a resource for medical professionals, scholars of religion, and the interested public and will shortly be available at www.woolf.cam.ac.uk.

Faith and City

On 16 June, Ed Kessler delivered the Faith and City Lecture at the University of Bradford, attended by 100 people, including representatives from most of the city's diverse faith communities. The lecture, entitled *The State of Play in Muslim-Jewish Relations*, explored the common challenges facing Muslims and Jews, and some of the sharp divides between them, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



From left: Kashmir Singh Rajput, Chair of Bradford District Faiths Forum, Nadira Mirza, Dean of School of Lifelong Education and Development, and Ed Kessler

Expanding progressive learning

Continuing its successful educational programmes for the Salford Diocese, the Woolf Institute began a ten-week programme, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations*, in September. An example of both the Woolf Institute and the Diocese's commitment to progressive learning, this is the third in a continuing series of courses for the Diocese.

The Cambridge City Council has invited the Woolf Institute to deliver a one-day programme for sixth formers and university students in Cambridge. The programme, *Islam, Misconceptions and Realities: Perceptions amongst Muslims and Non-Muslims*, is one of three programmes which have been delivered to the public sector and community leaders in Cambridge.

People at Woolf



Keith Heppell

Josef (Yousef) Meri

Joined the Institute in Summer 2010 as CMJR Academic Director. Josef is also a Research Fellow of St. Edmund's College, Cambridge.

I was born in Chicago to a Palestinian Muslim family and grew up mainly in the United States, but I have spent almost half my life in the Middle East and Europe. My family hail from an area near Jerusalem. I embarked on the study of Arab and Jewish themes in 1988 as an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley. Whilst at Berkeley I studied political science and the languages and cultures of the Middle East. I was particularly inspired by my supervisor Prof William Ze'ev Brinner who encouraged me to study Arabic and Hebrew together. During the summer of my junior year, I travelled to Jerusalem on a University of California President's Fellowship to conduct research on Palestinian Arabic proverbs.

At Berkeley, I also explored subjects ranging from medieval Islamic history, classical Islamic exegesis and Qur'anic studies to Arabic literature and the Hebrew novel. I was the first non-Jewish student to achieve an award for excellence in Hebrew.

In the summer of 1992, I studied in Jerusalem at the Hebrew University on a one-year Fulbright Scholarship. I studied Arabic and medieval Judaeo-Arabic (a Jewish language, essentially Arabic written in Hebrew letters). In my early research I studied the prophet Elijah and his Islamic counterpart al-Khadir/al-Khidr in an exegetical context. An encounter with

Norman (Noam) Stillman and his late spouse and colleague Yedida inspired me to enrol on a two-year Master's course in history at Binghamton University in 1993. There I read medieval Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew texts and was appointed a junior lecturer in the Judaic Studies Department to design and teach an undergraduate class in Arabic for Hebrew speakers.

In 1995 I enrolled in the DPhil programme at Oxford University (Wolfson College) where I was greatly inspired by the humility and erudition of my mentor Prof Wilferd Madelung under whom I read and translated various Arabic Islamic texts and also the profound insight and forbearance of my joint-supervisor Daniel Frank with whom I read and translated medieval Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic texts and exegetical commentaries. While there I revived my earlier work on the prophet Elijah which became the basis for a number of publications, including my first book on the *Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford, 2002). I spent most of my second year in Damascus undertaking archival and fieldwork for my thesis. Oxford also allowed me to benefit tremendously from the knowledge and expertise of colleagues in Oriental Studies and History. In early 1999 I took up a postdoctoral appointment at UC Berkeley where I produced a number of articles. In September 2002 I left Berkeley for London where I took up a visiting research fellowship for two years at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. There I taught on the postgraduate course and offered advanced Arabic reading courses. I also produced a number of articles and edited a two-volume encyclopaedia on medieval Islamic civilization as well as an English translation and bilingual edition of a twelfth-century Arabic pilgrimage guide (English title: *A Lonely Wayfarer's Guide to Pilgrimage*) which includes Jewish and Christian sites as well as the antiquities of ancient civilisations.

In 2003 I was offered an opportunity to work for HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad at the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Amman, Jordan. There I oversaw the Great Commentaries on the Qur'an project, particularly translations of exegetical works into English. I also contributed in various capacities, albeit in a

minor way, to the various innovative and successful interfaith (and other) projects which were the brainchild of Prince Ghazi. Both Prince Ghazi and his uncle HRH Prince El-Hassan, who is an Interfaith Patron of the Woolf Institute, have been at the forefront of promoting interfaith relations for years. In June 2010 I left Amman to take up the position of Academic Director of the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations and a Research Fellowship at St. Edmund's College. This represents a unique and exciting opportunity for me to further promote the academic study of Muslim-Jewish Relations at the University of Cambridge and also internationally. I am particularly inspired by the energy and drive of my colleagues at the Woolf Institute. I am now working on commissioning and publishing a thematic reader in Muslim-Jewish Relations for undergraduate, postgraduate and general readership in January 2011. We will also be launching a peer-reviewed e-journal in Muslim-Jewish Relations called *Intertwined Worlds* under the auspices of Wiley-Blackwell's Religion Compass and edited by me. My research interests include the history of the Jews under Islam, medieval Islamic history, pilgrimage and the veneration of holy persons in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, and ritual practice. My teaching interests include the History of Muslim-Jewish Relations, the Jews of Islamic Lands, Medieval Islamic History, pilgrimage, travel literature, popular religion, and ritual studies.

Inaugural Lecture by Josef Meri

Past, Present and Future Historical Memories: the impact of key texts, objects and rituals on Muslim-Jewish Relations

The lecture will explore key Jewish and Muslim historical accounts which depict the 'other' community and how they are (mis)used to create a particular historical narrative, which can manipulate the historical record for apologetic and polemical purposes. (See also Highlights)

**17 February, 17.00,
St Edmund's College, Cambridge**



Ian Karten MBE

A decade of Ian Karten's support for our students

The Ian Karten Charitable Trust has been generously supporting postgraduate students of the Woolf Institute since its inception (originally as CJCR) in 1998. This year we have reached a milestone: over 100 students have benefited from Karten scholarships and bursaries. The recipients, now our alumni, have lived up to the ethos of the support, as illustrated by the following examples:

Since his time at CJCR in 1998, Gleb Iastrebov (Russia) has advanced his career

in Moscow as a university lecturer specialising in Jewish-Christian relations in a number of institutions, including the St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute. He published a book *Who Was Jesus of Nazareth?* in 2008.

Anna Szczepan-Wojnarska (Poland) completed her PhD and habilitation (postgraduate examination) at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. She has two published monographs: *"...you will get married to a fire"* J. Liebert. *The experience of transcendence in the life and the works of Jerzy Liebert*, 2003 and *To Forgive God. Job in the Literature related to WWII*, 2008. She is an Assistant Professor in literature and cultural studies at the Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw.

Anna has also taught on the MA programme at CJCR and facilitated an Erasmus exchange with her University and Cambridge.

Rabbi Danny Burkeman (UK), moved to Los Angeles to advance his Rabbinic training whilst completing his MA studies at CJCR. Danny now serves as a Rabbi at West London Synagogue. He talks about his work on page 41.

Rev Jenny Chalmers (New Zealand) is a Church of England minister. She is one of the leaders of the New Zealand Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) and remains closely connected with CJCR in planning educational courses which she delivers within the CCJ and her parish.



Karten Scholar, Anna Wojnarska (front row, 2nd from left) during her habilitation ceremony at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow

2010 Guardini Prize to CJCR Fellow

Tomáš Halík (CJCR Fellow, September 2003), philosopher, sociologist and theologian at Charles University in Prague, received the Romano Guardini Prize of the Catholic Academy in Germany for "outstanding merit in interpreting contemporary society" in September 2010. Previous recipients of this biennial European prize include physicist and Nobel Prize laureate Werner Heisenberg, theologians Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, and former German President, Richard von Weizsäcker. In his keynote lecture *Power over Power*, Halík warned about the dangers of the misinterpretation of religion today: "the problem of power and violence has not disappeared from the list of humanity's major issues. This is not only manifested through wars, dictatorships and terrorist attacks, but also in environmental challenges."



Guardini Prize award 2010. From left: The Archbishop of Munich, Reinhard Marx; Tomáš Halík; Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karel Schwarzenberg; and Director of the Bavarian Catholic Academy, Dr Florian Schuller

Major award to MSt Student

MSt student Gifty Immanuel from India (now in his second year) was one of the recipients of the 2010 Junior Chamber International (JCI) award which recognises ten young people under the age of 40 for outstanding service to their communities. In this foremost international prize, JCI working in close partnership with the UN, honoured Gifty for his contribution to medical innovation after he volunteered to identify and manage an outbreak of the Bubonic Plague in India with the Department of Community Medicine. In 1996, he established the Centre for AIDS and Antiviral Research at Tuticorin, India. In response to the recent global spread of such diseases as bird flu and swine flu, Gifty and his colleagues at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow set up the Faculty of Travel Medicine that pioneers travel medicine as a new medical discipline. His reflection on the interaction between medicine, faith and religious minorities is on page 39.



Dr Gifty Immanuel donning special lab suits



15 May MSt graduation

From left: Jarrod Ali, Zuzana Lewandowska, Tom Maiello, Anne Hollinghurst, Alan Tang, Gorazd Andrejč

Cambridge Graduation

Seven MSt students of the 2007–2009 cohort met in Cambridge on the weekend of 15–16 May to graduate together. Some have gone on to pursue further studies including doctoral degrees and language training, others returned to their professions such as law, academia, religious ministry and business. One graduate was recruited to work in the US as a consultant involved in the national healthcare reform. Their dissertations are listed on page 43. Congratulations to you all!

The Tangs: Dixon helping Alan to fix the latter's hood outside the Senate House in May 2010. Though sharing the same surname, the two are only related by their homeland Hong Kong, their study of theology at Oxford in 2000 and then at Cambridge from 2007 to 2009. Whilst carrying on with his business and family commitments, Alan has since completed another Master's degree in Theology from the Chinese University.



Alumni Weekend 2010: Marginalised Minorities

Eighteen graduates of our various programmes met for the first Woolf Institute-wide Alumni reunion in June. An obvious like-mindedness and interest in relations between the three faiths quickly dispelled any shyness and paved the way for a weekend of in-depth discussion and the sharing of experiences. Providing the theme of this edition of *Perspectives*, the weekend focused on Marginalised Minorities with a particular emphasis on the Jews of India.

The weekend also launched a fundraising campaign that seeks to raise £100,000 to establish a Student Hardship Fund. The Bike Ride (page 31) scheduled for November 2011 will complement the effort. The next Alumni Weekend will be held on 30 June–1 July 2011. See more at www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/alumni



Cruising on the Cam on board riverboat Georgina

Marginal Minority Experience:

The Case Study of the Nineteenth-Century Jewish Theologian and Novelist, Grace Aguilar

Daniel Langton



Grace Aguilar (1816–1847) has been described as the most important female Anglo-Jewish writer in the nineteenth-century. She belonged to a traditionally observant Sephardi family from Hackney, London, and felt keenly the ambiguous experience of being a member of a minority Jewish community in a majority Christian one. In a work of fiction that should be read autobiographically, she wrote:

Our very position as aliens in a land whose religion is not ours... in a small country town almost entirely surrounded by Christians... must increase the mental difficulties we Jews are now enduring... Circumstances have thrown us almost entirely among Protestants. (Aguilar, 34.)

In her youth, Aguilar made Christian friends and attended Protestant services near her family's somewhat isolated rural home in Devonshire and later in Brighton. There is no evidence that she ever seriously contemplated conversion and she records that she attended these services in some trepidation, fearful that people would think she had abandoned her faith. While she regarded her attendance at these Christian services as a way of clarifying her Jewish sensibilities, there is little doubt that this exposure to Christianity is also important in terms of familiarising her with how Judaism and Jews were represented within Christian culture. For most of her life she taught at a private boy's boarding school run by her mother where she also taught Hebrew. Of fragile health, Aguilar died aged only 31.

Of her fifteen books, a number became best-sellers, specifically her novels *Home Influence* (1847) and *The Vale of Cedars* (1850). The readership of her books was mixed. It is clear from dedications and prefaces that she intended Jewish and Christian mothers and daughters to benefit from her novels and anthologies, such as *Women of Israel* (1845). The same was true for her more theologically-orientated works, such as *The Spirit of Judaism* (1842), *The Jewish Faith* (1846), and *Sabbath Thoughts and Sacred Communings* (1853) – although in writing these studies she was also highly conscious of a male audience, both Christian and Jewish. Aguilar's mid-nineteenth-century historical context was that of Victorian religiosity and the emergence of Anglo-Reform Judaism and the establishment of

the West London Reform Synagogue in 1840, which she appears to have regarded with mixed feelings. The influence of her Sephardi background is also important. Crypto-Jewish families in early-modern Portugal or Spain (Jewish families pretending to be Christian on pain of death or expulsion) could only have risked expressing their Judaism within the secret realm of the home. Aguilar believed that her family history offered a precedent for a woman story-teller who took responsibility for the generational transmission of Jewish identity. From even a cursory glance at her various works, it is clear that she had set out from the beginning to persuade Christians to respect Judaism, and to encourage and develop among Jews, especially Jewish women, a pietistic form of spirituality. That she was influential in her own day in terms of bridging the divide between the Jewish and Christian communities is demonstrated by front page treatment of her death in the *Jewish Chronicle*.

In approaching Aguilar as an illustrative example of the complexities of living as a Jew within Protestant England, we will focus upon just one of her many books: *The Jewish Faith* (1846). In this literary fiction, Aguilar presented a series of letters of religious advice from a Sephardi Jewess Inez Villena to a young girl Annie, who was contemplating conversion, having had only a nominal Jewish upbringing. The artifice of placing her own words in the mouth of an eminently sympathetic woman gave Aguilar greater intellectual freedom than she had had in her other theological writings. In this

work which did not purport to be a formal work of theology, she could talk at length about non-theological aspects of religion, including attitudes and feelings. She was thus able to draw heavily upon her personal experience without fearing the attentions of religious authorities. It was undoubtedly written with both Jewish and Christian audiences in mind, concerned to present Judaism in a positive light and to challenge common Christian misconceptions which, she felt, also influenced the Jews' own self-understanding. Her book achieved three objectives: to explain the spiritual poverty of the Judaism of her own day as a temporary state brought about by the community's history as a beleaguered minority; to found her hopes on the Bible as a text shared by both Jews and Christians; and to outline

In Portugal, as you know, to be even suspected as a Jew exposed our ancestors to all the horrors of the Inquisition, sequestration, torture, and often, death. The religion of our fathers, therefore, was instilled with such impenetrable secrecy, and so burdened with caution and the constant dread of discovery, that, to do more than attend to its mere elements, and keep the mind faithful to the doctrine of the Divine Unity and the perpetuity of the Jewish Faith, in contradistinction to the bewildering dogmas of saints, martyrs, infallibility of the Roman Church, masses, etc, was impossible. To become spiritual was equally so, for the Bible was a forbidden book

Attitudes were changing, as 'a mighty movement' had begun, by which Villena/ Aguilar meant Reform Judaism. While she watched with concern the implementation of some reforms, 'the too indiscriminate clipping away of the old established, and so somewhat treasured forms', she hoped for a truly spiritual Judaism that would allow Jews to hold up their heads in the company of Christians. While focusing on faith, Aguilar was addressing here the more general challenge that faces many religious minority groups who find themselves in new surroundings, namely the dilemma of how to acculturate with integrity and how to decide which past cultural practices and patterns of thought were of enduring value and which were unserviceable and detrimental.

The artifice of placing her own words in the mouth of an eminently sympathetic woman gave Aguilar greater intellectual freedom than she had had in her other theological writings.

the nature of the complicated relationship between the minority and majority communities to which she belonged.

Aguilar was a fervent champion of the idea of Judaism as a profoundly *spiritual* faith, contrary to the claims of Christian critics who viewed it as dry, legalised fossil of a religion. Yet she felt obliged to acknowledge that contemporary Judaism did not live up to its own teachings and that its practice in England was not ideal, mired by an often obsessive concern with ceremony and rabbinic learning. To solve what she saw as an atrophy of the Jewish religion, it was necessary to investigate the causes. In *The Jewish Faith* Aguilar argued that the kind of Anglo-Judaism which privileged external form over spirituality had had its origins in the Sephardi experience of Inquisition and crypto-Judaism. The lives of those Jews, she explained, had been habituated to caution and hurried, superficial observance, and this de-spiritualised conception of religion had continued upon their arrival in England. This state of affairs was, while understandable, a matter of regret. As she explained:

to the Catholics, and therefore equally so to the secret Jews. Those, therefore, who from some immanent pressure of danger fled to other countries, were unable to throw off the caution of centuries. They could not realise that the yoke was so far removed from their necks, as to permit the public practice, and open confession of their faith. To speak of, or impart it, by means of reference to, and discussion upon the Bible, had so long been an utter impossibility, that it was scarcely unnatural, they should suppose it impossible still, when in reality no impossibility existed. This is the reason why so many of our ancient Spanish and Portuguese families, when they came to England, adhered so very strictly to the form, to the utter exclusion of the spirit of their religion; and never spoke of nor attempted to teach it, except by desiring a soulless obedience, which had no power; when the young mind began to enquire for itself. (Aguilar, 35–36.)

How, then, might one go about inculcating the kind of spirituality that Aguilar saw as lacking within Judaism? At the time, the problem was made more acute by the lack of a Jewish English translation of the Bible, which would have been an obvious source of teaching. Nevertheless, in her mind it would have been a mistake to assume that the surrounding Christian culture had a monopoly upon pious, edifying literature. As the Sephardi matron Villena, Aguilar sought to convince Annie, the Jewish girl who was considering conversion, that the inspirational texts of promise, narrative and spiritual guidance, that sounded as though they belonged to the New Testament, actually belonged to their own Bible.

Villena/Aguilar observed with some pleasure that modern expressions of Judaism were increasingly dependent upon the Bible, suggesting that erroneous teachings would soon be a thing of the past, for; she said, the Talmudic sages had never intended that their ingenious commentaries would have taken the place of the Word of God. The same would be true of contemporary un-biblical hopes such as the much-discussed Jewish return to Palestine. There was a dire need for religious, edifying literature for Jewish women in the English vernacular, for whom the wisdom of the Jewish sages was impossible to master. Although many other modern authorities had proved a bitter disappointment, Aguilar

had found inspirational the bibliocentric Reform minister David Wolf-Marks' attempt to reconcile the threat of the law with the comfort of the prophets. So, for Aguilar, the hope of acculturation with integrity of Jews within England depended to a large extent upon the return to the Bible. This is evidence for the influence of Evangelical Christian critique of Judaism that was also vehemently anti-Talmudic. Aguilar's protestation that her vision of a biblical Judaism would prevent conversion does not convince me otherwise in her case, as it failed to do for many of her contemporaries.

A minority must ultimately decide how it relates to the majority at a human or communal level, and this is often expressed in highly ambivalent terms. It is in *The Jewish Faith* that Aguilar wrestled most profoundly with the relationship between the two religious communities, and where we can find bound together many of her complex, even conflicting, views. The attractions to Christianity were many, including the comforting hope of a re-union with lost loved ones, the devotional literature that explained religion, and gave strength and comfort in affliction, the apparent life of peace and happiness reflected in the enviable way in which certain Protestant families lived their religion in stark contrast to Jewish families. For example, she writes to Annie:

When I wrote to you in my first letter of the necessity, the strength and peace of religion, you had felt that, if you were a Christian, you might hope to experience all this, but that as a Jewess, it was impossible – that there were so many books, not merely to explain the Christian religion, but to give sympathy and comfort in every affliction – that there were churches to frequent, and so many home-speaking, heart-appealing prayers to help them to lift up their thoughts to God, that could you but be a Christian, you might be comforted, and even happy – that you have been tempted most strongly to adopt the Christian faith... Whenever you asked any questions

regarding religion, your friend had entreated you to seek information from your own – that in her family, as in other of your Protestant friends, religion was actually taught, made a rule for life, and you could not recall any Jewish family in which this was the case, even your own ... I agree with you in the many and far superior advantages of the Christian over us [Jews]. Religious books adapted for our youth and sympathising in our feelings, we have not indeed. With the sole exception of one Synagogue in London, our houses of worship cannot be to our youth as the Christians' are to theirs ... (Aguilar, 32–33.)

But such grounds, Aguilar argued, were not reason enough to convert, for the doctrine of immortality had been a Hebrew one before Christian, and it was not a Christian life which gave peace, but rather one properly centred on the Bible. More problematic was the fact that Villena/Aguilar was prepared to acknowledge throughout

Jewry was in a poor, lifeless state, but she remained convinced that there was no need for the spiritually-minded to lose hope and abandon their ancestral faith. What was required was the re-vitalisation of Judaism. To achieve this, one needed to return to the Bible. But another effective means was to learn from the example offered by spiritually-minded Christians.

Villena/Aguilar develops in *The Jewish Faith* a theory of Christianity that could be reconciled with Judaism and valued positively. Christianity was a part of God's providential plan for the nations, fulfilment of a promise made to Abraham that "In thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Jesus had been a Jew whose followers had taught the Gentiles the knowledge of the Lord and the Moral Law more accessibly. She thus rejoiced at the efforts of "those noble and pure-spirited" Christian missionaries who brought "some knowledge of the divine commands... to benighted lands". Of course there were enemies among the Nazarenes, but where Christians dedicated themselves to the

Of course there were enemies among the Nazarenes, but where Christians dedicated themselves to the Bible, there had been less persecution of the Jews.

that, when it came to matters of spirituality, there was little to distinguish Christian from Jew. But then why not convert? Her answers included loyalty to one's birth-religion, and the observations that spontaneous prayer was as Hebrew as it was Christian, that adherence to Christianity was no guarantee of spirituality because the Christians were fragmented amongst themselves, and that many forms of Christianity suffered from superstitious teachings, too, which had nothing to do with the teachings of its founder. (Interestingly, she expresses much of this in the anti-Catholic language of the majority Protestant community.) But in the light of her high regard for Christian spirituality, none of these arguments proved convincing. Aguilar's position seems to have been a ready acceptance that Anglo-

Bible, there had been less persecution of the Jews. Certain doctrinal differences, such as the Jewish insistence on God's unity, and the Christian insistence on original sin and on the meaning of sacrifice, had to be maintained. Yet the only criteria that really mattered, she maintained, were those of 'feeling' rather than of 'doctrine', for both systems ultimately upheld the same moral truths and principles. There was therefore no need to convert these fellow "heirs to Immortality" to Judaism. Despite their differences, her attitude was manifested in the exclamation: "I respect, from my very heart, the true spiritual believing Christian". (Aguilar, 209). It was true that Anglo-Judaism was in a poor state but this had nothing to do with exposure to its Christian surroundings. Quite the reverse – Anglo-

If we would seek aid for serious thought, we must go to Christian books ... The spirit of the Christian religion is equally the spirit of the Hebrew; for both owe their origin to the same Bible.

Grace Aguilar

Judaism was lagging behind Anglo-Christian spirituality and intellectuality. Therefore it would do no harm and much good if the girl was to draw upon Christian devotional literature, for example, for a thorough grounding in one's own religion would keep one alive to the rare possibility of confusion of doctrine. Annie would be spiritually uplifted, and should not be afraid. As she explained,

If we would seek aid for serious thought, we must go to Christian books ... The spirit of the Christian religion is equally the spirit of the Hebrew; for both owe their origin to the same Bible ... One [book] especially, a very beautiful work ... was once lent me, not with any wish for its religious doctrines to convert me (that I knew from the upright character of the lender), but for the exquisite beauty of its language and sentiments. It is many years ago, for I was scarcely older than you are now, and just beginning to think

for myself. Well do I remember the trembling with which I began its perusal – trembling lest my dawning hope and trust should be shaken by this Christian book. But both were strengthened, dearest Annie. It was a strange, an almost indefinable effect; but so it was ... I have no fear of you perusing similar works.
(Aguilar, 144–145.)

Nor should one be concerned with those who were suspicious about the influence of Christianity in this construction of a spiritualised Judaism. Those who denied it only strengthened the hand of Christian critics who regarded Judaism as unspiritual. This account, synthesized from the letters, is as close to a coherent theology as we are likely to find. And yet it remains riddled through with problematic aspirations.

Aguilar's particular interfaith project should be categorized as an 'appreciative relational theology' in that it sought to portray the majority culture, Christianity, in a way that encouraged mutual understanding and respect in the minority culture, Judaism. Aguilar was more than simply a reform-oriented Jew with a burning desire to convince Christians of the respectability of Judaism. She was developing an ideological framework to prevent conversion and to justify why one should remain a Jew. She presented a robust critique of Christianity's distinctive doctrines, and yet also granted it a positive value-judgement, even to the extent of encouraging a sense of identification with it, and emulation of it.



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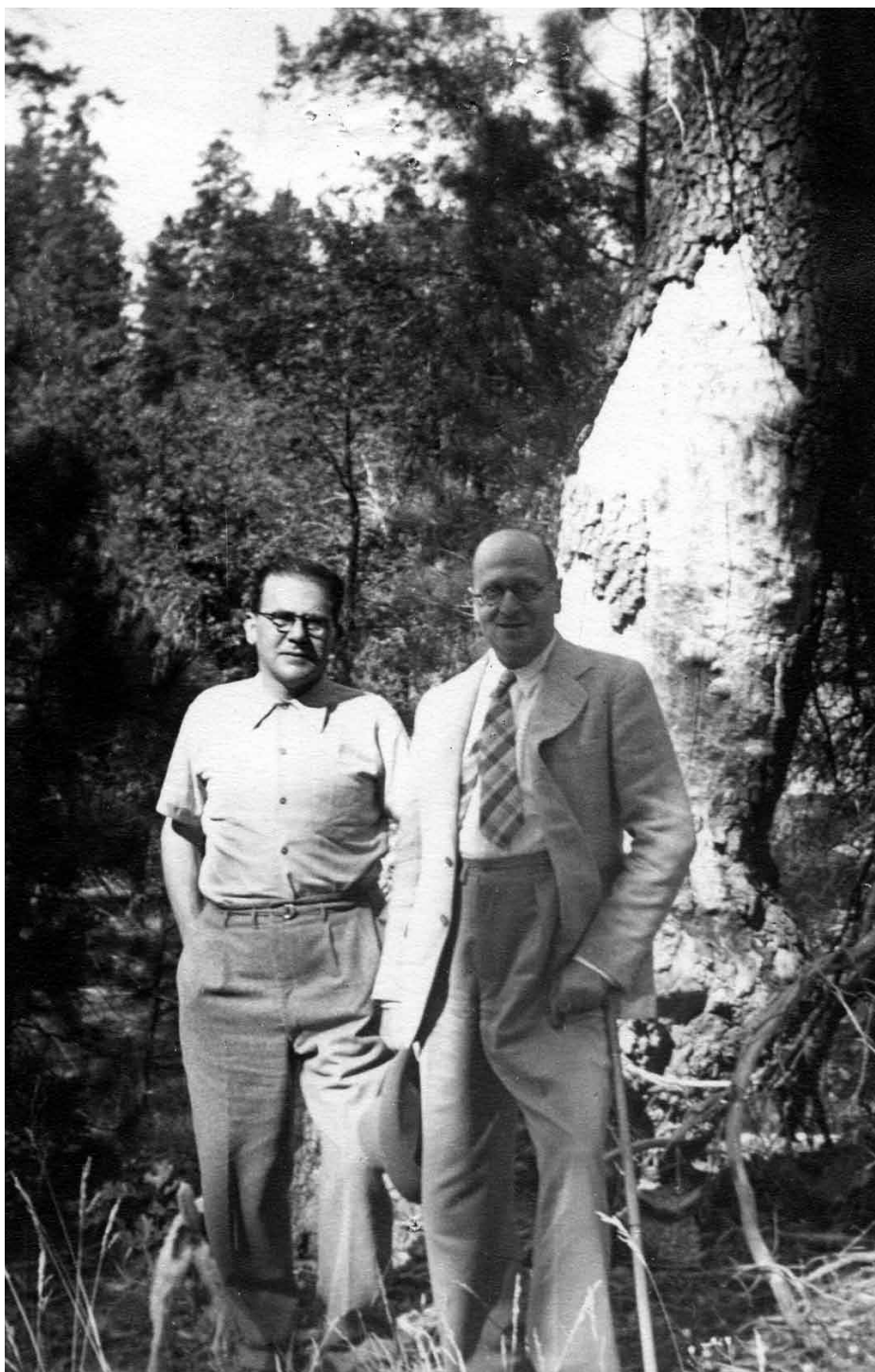
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The Frankfurt School in American Exile

Eva-Maria Ziege



Max Horkheimer (on the right) and his closest friend and collaborator, Friedrich Pollock, after the war. Courtesy of Gunzelin Schmid Noerr and the Archivzentrum/Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt a.M.

Eva-Maria Ziege was a Visiting Fellow at the CJCR from April to June 2010 and is returning from January to March 2011. The Visiting Fellowship was generously funded by the Jerusalem Trust. Ziege is a Sociologist by training and was educated at the universities of Bonn and Potsdam. Her post-doctoral thesis (Habilitationsschrift) on the Frankfurt School's grappling with antisemitism while in exile was published in 2009 by the prestigious Suhrkamp publishing house where her book is advertised alongside titles by Bloch, Habermas and Adorno. She has held positions at the Humboldt Universität in Berlin and, most recently, as a DAAD Associate Professor at the University of Washington in Seattle.

During her first stay in Cambridge Ziege, apart from pursuing her ongoing research and writing, gave a number of talks and seminars in Cambridge, London, Manchester and Southampton, and made a lively and much appreciated contribution to the academic culture of the CJCR and the Woolf Institute more generally. Her stay culminated in an international colloquium, *The Frankfurt School and Antisemitism Revisited*, at Lucy Cavendish College in June 2010. This was the first of a series of colloquia planned for the next couple of years to reflect the expertise of our visiting fellows. The form of the colloquium allows world-leading scholars to speak in detail about the state of their research and leaves space for genuine in-depth discussion between speakers, respondents, and other participants. The Frankfurt School colloquium was enormously gratifying in demonstrating the high level of constructive cutting-edge debate that this form of event can facilitate.

Thomas Wheatland, whose well received book, *The Frankfurt School in Exile*, came out in the same year as Ziege's, and Jack Jacobs, who has published a number of important articles and is currently completing a book specifically about the way in which members of the Frankfurt School assessed matters Jewish (including their own Jewish background), joined Ziege as speakers at the colloquium. Christian Achinger (Warwick), Marcel Stoetzler (who was also a visiting fellow at the CJCR in 2009/10), and the CJCR's academic director, Lars Fischer, acted as respondents and joined the speakers for a concluding round table. We intend to present the discussions that took place at, and have grown out of, the colloquium in a book that will hopefully reflect just how unusually rich and focused an event this was. Ziege's second stay, in the spring of 2011, will allow us to work both on this volume and on a second project, a planned reader of seminal texts by social scientists grappling with antisemitism in the 1940s that will be co-edited by Ziege, Stoetzler, and Fischer. The following text by Ziege on the Frankfurt School in exile reflects some of the issues she raised at the colloquium.

The Institute of Social Research was founded in 1923 with an endowment from Felix Weil (1898–1975). Its first director, the Austrian socialist Carl Grünberg (1861–1940), was officially succeeded by the philosopher Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) in 1931. In 1933, the Institute left Germany after Hitler was brought to power and emigrated to the United States. There, they were given the exceptional opportunity to re-found their Institute in New York in affiliation with Columbia University. While Friedrich Pollock (1894–1970) was Horkheimer's closest collaborator within the Institute, Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969) and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) were amongst its most famous associates, and for years famous thinkers like Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) and Franz L. Neumann (1900–1954) were connected with its projects. Among the best-known publications generated by this cooperation are *Escape from Freedom* (1941), *Behemoth* (1942, 1944), the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

(1944, 1947) and *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950). In 1948/49, Horkheimer, Adorno and Pollock returned to West Germany and the Institute was refounded in Frankfurt in 1951.

In his inaugural lecture as the Institute's director, in January 1931, Horkheimer outlined a research programme that was extraordinary in at least two respects. Firstly, it introduced Marxism into the established research context of a German university. Secondly, he formulated the ambitious goal of combining philosophy and social research and bringing theoretical and empirical work together. It is principally to this distinct approach, alongside the outspoken stance of its members in the 1950s and 1960s regarding Germany's National Socialist past, that the Institute owes the fame it has acquired since the 1960s as the so-called Frankfurt School.

The Institute consisted mainly of thinkers from German-Jewish families who were, for the most part, not religious. Nearly all of the Institute's members, associates and friends were forced to leave Germany in 1933. Yet while it was the Nazi 'Aryan paragraph' that robbed them of their academic positions, on their own understanding they left Germany not as Jews but as Marxists. All of them belonged to the German Left that bore the brunt of the political persecution in 1933. Antisemitism and the persecution of the Jews only became the main focus of the Institute's work after 1939.

Widely accepted is an assessment by Martin Jay, author of the seminal work on the Institute:

In their faithfulness to Marx's own attitude towards anti-Semitism, Horkheimer and his colleagues conformed to a pattern that many observers have noted: the more radical the Marxist, the less interested in the specificity of the Jewish question. . . . those among them with Jewish backgrounds rarely, if ever, found their ethnic identities significant for their work.

But short of accepting the prescriptions of National Socialist racial doctrine, does

it make sense to suggest that they had an ethnic identity as Jews? Adorno, for example, had a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, was christened a Catholic, confirmed into the Protestant Church, subsequently became an atheist and married a woman of Jewish background. The Austrian sociologist Marie Jahoda (1907–2001), who was also exiled, famously said in retrospect: 'For myself being Jewish became real only with Hitler.' Adorno and Horkheimer would have objected to the term 'identity' just as much as they would have to the term 'ethnic'. The critique of identity, after all, was at the core of the Institute's endeavours and of what came to be called 'Critical Theory'.

As Horkheimer defined it in the 1930s, the Institute's purpose was the development of a theory of society based on the Marxist assumption that the antagonism between labour and capital was the key driving force in the dynamics of society. In his famous article, 'Traditionelle und Kritische Theorie' (1937), Horkheimer juxtaposed traditional and critical theory and established the term Critical Theory for a form of Marxist social theory that aspired to a radical change of society but no longer accepted Marx's prognosis that the working class would bring about this change. This momentous shift was a response to the rise of Stalinism and National Socialism, and the fact that there had been no revolutionary uprising in Germany.

In the decade between 1939 and 1949, the Institute worked almost exclusively on antisemitism, ethnocentrism and prejudice in Europe and the United States. How did the endeavour of a theory of society in late capitalism fit together with the so-called 'Jewish question'?

I. Critical Theory, the Institute of Social Research, and the Frankfurt School have been researched intensely since the 1970s, yet the Frankfurt School has not been analysed as a 'school' in the sociological sense of the term. This is all the more remarkable given the obvious similarities to other schools (say, the Durkheim School or the Chicago School). Three points are worth emphasizing in this context.

1. Every school has presuppositions that are implied elements of the paradigm maintaining its core, yet this paradigm may become less and less pronounced at the school's margins and even more or less unrecognizable in its generational renewal. What may be essential for the founder(s) may lose importance for the next generation or those at the periphery of a school.

2. The more successful a school becomes, the more easily it can open itself up to other schools and dissenting or even radically different paradigms. Consequently, schools can cooperate with one another even though their core assumptions may be fundamentally irreconcilable. The Frankfurt School's dealings with a number of schools such as positivism and pragmatism that have often been perceived as being antagonistic to them are a case in point.

3. For the Frankfurt School in the 1930s and 1940s, an esoteric form of communication has to be distinguished from an exoteric one. This distinction between things one can formulate explicitly and others that one can articulate only implicitly in the hope that those in the know will recognize and understand them all the same, was one that had been important to enlightenment thinkers and featured prominently in the thought of Leo Strauss (1899–1973), who emigrated to the USA in 1932 and argued that contemporary thinkers too needed to maintain this distinction in an age of persecution and dictatorship. Thus, at the core of Critical Theory, philosophical assumptions were presupposed that were, nevertheless, negligible in everyday research and remained esoteric. It is possible to conceive of this distinction between esoteric and exoteric, as well as the process of transcending Marxist orthodoxy, not as a corruption or decline of, let alone as a contradiction to, Marxism or Critical Theory, but as the normality of any evolving school. The Marxist core paradigm in fact remained paradigmatic for the social thought of the key members of the Institute while other associates did not necessarily acknowledge it to the same extent. In some cases they

remained ignorant of this paradigm, in other cases, they even contradicted it.

This approach leads to an evaluation of the Institute's development in exile that differs considerably from other interpretations. The Institute has often been described as working in 'splendid isolation', untouched by, and removed from, the academic and political realities of the United States. Turning themselves actively into outsiders, they doggedly pursued their German research programme and communicated almost exclusively with other European immigrants and exiles. Indeed, for many years they even published the Institute's journal in German, firmly convinced that in matters philosophical the German language was superior to English just as the German philosophical tradition was superior to American positivism with its profound belief in the authority of numbers, utilitarianism, empiricism, and pragmatism.

This portrayal of the Frankfurt School as virtually autonomous springs in part from the fact that it was, thanks to the endowment from Felix Weil's family, indeed financially independent. Yet in the late 1930s, the Institute lost a substantial part of its funds due to serious financial miscalculations. Along with much of its financial independence, it also lost its

academic autonomy and all the Institute's subsequent major research projects during its time in the United States were undertaken as contract research and depended on perpetual fund raising efforts and a willingness to negotiate the funding bodies' requirements.

II.

It was by no means a foregone conclusion in 1939 that research on antisemitism would define the Institute's academic work over the following decade. From 1939 onwards, dozens and dozens of project outlines and grant applications were written in search of funds. Writing to a friend on 14 July 1939, Horkheimer mentioned no fewer than nine potential projects before singling out the one that would specifically address antisemitism. 'I have invested more libido into the project on antisemitism than any of the others,' he wrote, adding that 'I think it would be really worthwhile and at the moment things don't look too bad.' He then went on to explain that,

Depending on the foundations or private individuals who are the potential donors the project outlines will of course be complemented by special cover notes. Needless to say, these will be a lot more popularized and directly phrased than the outlines



The JLC's first president, Baruch Vladeck, addressing a JLC convention in October 1935. Courtesy of the JLC Photographs Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University

themselves. In these notes, it will also be explained that we will not allow any interference into the academic implementation although opportune publications may be discussed with respective patrons.

In the United States, he went on, 'the director of an institute, even the president of an entire university, is a cross between travelling salesman and diplomat. I am quite ill suited to this task.'

Horkheimer added that 'the objectivity of an impartial study on antisemitism as we plan it' might be drawn into question if it was conducted under the auspices of a 'predominantly Jewish group'. Time and again he tried to acquire money from the major funding bodies in the United States, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation. Yet ultimately, precisely what Horkheimer had hoped to avoid happened. All his efforts notwithstanding, the Institute's external funding in the event came exclusively from two Jewish organisations, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC). Both were political, not religious, groups lobbying for Jewish interests and committed to the defence against antisemitism. All of the Institute's scholarship, and its empirical research in particular, were subsequently influenced by the external demands and pressures emanating from their new-found financial supporters' political interests.

These political interests were by no means homogeneous. The JLC was an umbrella organisation of the Jewish labour unions that was founded in 1934 to coordinate the public response of the political Left to developments in Nazi Germany. It principally represented migrants from the East European labouring classes and propagated an originally Eastern European brand of moderate socialism. Against the ideal of the American 'melting pot', it maintained the idea of a distinct Jewishness and cultivated Yiddish. The AJC, by contrast, was the organisation of the 'German Jews'. Founded in 1906, its members came from the influential economic élite and were generally conservatives committed to assimilation (or acculturation) and 'Americanism'.

Both politically and sociologically, the AJC and the JLC represented opposite poles within secular US Jewry. Equally opposed were their immediate strategies against antisemitism at home and abroad. The JLC from the very beginning propagated an open boycott of Nazi Germany and in the 1940s actively supported rescue operations from, and illegal armed resistance in, Nazi-dominated Europe. The AJC, by contrast, favoured a policy of appeasement towards Germany and propagated a strategy of silent diplomacy, maintaining this stance well into the late 1930s. In marked contrast to the JLC's position, they argued that Jews in the United States should prove themselves by becoming Americans first and foremost, playing down antisemitism and resisting Jewish 'particularism'. Yet these positions notwithstanding, the two organisations also shared two main tenets – a commitment to Jewish existence in the diaspora and the willingness to cooperate with the Jews who had fled Germany.

These, then, were the Institute's new-found partners and these partnerships, as much as the research on antisemitism in the 1940s, increasingly confronted the associates of the Institute with questions as to what it meant to be Jewish. Numerous drafts for research projects written and discarded since the late 1930s show that their research was continually redefined in the ensuing interaction with these two organisations. The Institute was finally able to secure funding from them, in 1943, for research on antisemitism in the United States that would include a major field study on *Antisemitism among American Labor* and the now famous *Studies in Prejudice*, including *The Authoritarian Personality*. Yet it is evident from their various abortive and rejected grant proposals, how complex and difficult the process of adjustment was that led to this outcome.

III.

This interaction precipitated a professionalisation of the Institute's research. As they became increasingly proficient in the sort of 'academic entrepreneurship' that other exiles had already practised with great success, the Institute was effectively transformed into a new type of institution.



Horkheimer (on the left) and Theodor W. Adorno at the 1964 German Sociologists' Convention in Heidelberg. Photograph by Jeremy J. Shapiro; reprinted with his kind permission

While 'the position of the Institute towards Columbia University is similar to its situation in Frankfurt,' Horkheimer wrote in a letter on 6 March 1941, 'a professorship in this country ... requires an inordinately greater degree of conformism than it does in Germany,' and he was constantly forced to engage in 'a most sophisticated form of begging'. The phrase 'sophisticated begging' recurred frequently in communications between Adorno and Horkheimer in the following years, reflecting their increasing despair.

Horkheimer was only too aware of the ambivalences that came with the role of academic entrepreneur. On 23 June 1941 he wrote to Adorno that the rejection of yet another grant application to the Rockefeller Foundation demonstrated not only 'that the Institute can never ever expect anything from an "outside" source.' It was also indicative of:

a much more general nexus: the universal law of a monopolistic society in which scholarship too is controlled by intermediaries who form part of a corrupt elite so inextricably entangled with economic interests that their names feature as frequently in this context as do those of the major directors in the boardrooms of the industrial corporations.

While Adorno concurred with this assessment in principle, he nevertheless responded on 2 July 1941 that, 'as in the economy, here too one can never know whether one might not occasionally manage to slip through the net all the same.'

For a number of years, slipping through the net became Horkheimer's main task. The external funding led to an increased division of labour; drawing in a growing number of associates working on a variety of studies. Increasingly, American-Jewish associates were suggested to, and in some cases even forced upon, the Institute. These interventions led to a further pluralisation of the Institute's work. This process and the ever increasing complexity of the empirical research transformed the Institute from a small business into a medium-sized company. From 1945 onwards, the Institute's control of its projects became more and more tenuous because commissioned researchers rather than the Institute's own core members were writing up the research results.

While for Horkheimer Marxist assumptions that deliberately remained esoteric continued to hold together all these projects, matters were much less clear at the margins. Even within one and the same study (most notably *The Authoritarian Personality*), tenets that Horkheimer and his inner circle considered indispensable were at times enunciated, at others unintentionally ignored, and in some instances even deliberately contradicted. Consequently, the Frankfurt School was able to cooperate fruitfully with researchers connected to the Vienna Circle of Logical Empiricists, the sociology of Karl Mannheim, the psychology of Karl and Charlotte Bühler, and American pragmatism, even though they considered some of them their theoretical and/or personal archenemies. As suggested, this should not be seen as an indication of a dilution or betrayal of Critical Theory. Looked at dispassionately, in terms of the professionalisation and routinisation of research practices, it signifies a process that enabled the exiles to adapt successfully to their new scholarly environment.

Of course, this does not mean that the external pressures were welcomed by those subjected to them. Horkheimer's profound ambivalence about 'this incessant business' became more and more pronounced over time. 'The position one finds oneself manoeuvred into', he wrote to Adorno on 12 December 1944:

is, needless to say, one of generalized despondency. The months in which one spends endless hours on the phone, interviews innumerable applicants for positions, writes reports about Intercultural Education activities, assesses speeches and brochures that are given and printed the following day, watches propaganda movies and then waxes lyrical about them ...
— these months are, along with one's health, gone with the wind.

Even so, there can be no doubt that Horkheimer and Adorno consistently perceived the Institute's interaction with their American-Jewish partners within the framework of their Marxist convictions. For obvious reasons they neither articulated this when communicating with their partners, nor stressed it in the publications generated by their externally funded research projects. But Horkheimer and Adorno's critical comments in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* leave no doubt as to their actual stance. 'It is not difficult to see', they wrote,

where scholarship fits into the social division of labour. Its task is to accumulate facts and their functional relationships in the greatest possible quantities. The storage system must be clearly designed, so that any industry can instantly pick out the particular assortment of intellectual goods it is seeking. To a large extent, these are in fact already assembled with an eye on the demands of specific branches of industry.

For these Critical Theorists, by contrast, the growing 'business' of research on antisemitism was integral to a much more sophisticated

endeavour designed to understand late capitalism and the mass murder of Jews as inextricably linked. A comprehensive theory of society predicated on the antagonism between capital and labour was both an indispensable prerequisite for any meaningful explanation of antisemitism, on the one hand, and itself impossible to construe without it, on the other.

Like any important innovation in the field of social research, the Frankfurt School owed its success to a specific constellation of academic and political interests that proved conducive to the reception of its work in the United States. Not least, the fact that they were European exiles, not fully integrated into the mainstream of academic and political life, both compelled and enabled them to pursue new paths. That said, it was doubtless above all the historical experience of Auschwitz that rendered the Institute's emphasis on the centrality of antisemitism for social theory topical and plausible to many who in no way sympathised with the programme of Critical Theory more generally.



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Minority Writing in German:

Self-Portraits and Representing the Other. Wladimir Kaminer's *Russendisko* (2002) and Yadé Kara's *Selam Berlin* (2003)

Rachel Ramsay

Writers from minority backgrounds can be considered as subject to a variety of pressures when it comes to literary self-representations, as well as representations of the host nation, its national history and cultural memory, and its ethnic 'others' or outsiders. Cheesman argues of the 'burden of representation': 'First, you are assumed to speak for all those who are assumed to belong to the category to which you are assumed to belong. Second, those who assume that they belong to the same category as you, want you to depict all 'our' people in what they deem to be a positive light'. The expectations placed upon writers from a minority background who portray ethnic 'others' from categories to which they are *not* assumed to belong, are compounded even further. This article looks at the self-representations, and portrayals of ethnic 'others', in two works of contemporary German fiction: Wladimir Kaminer's *Russendisko* and Yadé Kara's *Selam Berlin*, teasing out some of the issues that arise in cross-ethnic representations. In order to do so, it looks at the role of the 'ethnic author' and narrator in both cases, and analyses the representations of Jewish and Turkish subjects in both works of fiction.

Kaminer, Wladimir. *Russendisko*. Munich: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 2002.

Wladimir Kaminer is a well-known writer of popular fiction in Germany as well as abroad. A Russian Jew who migrated to Germany in 1990, Kaminer also writes for German newspapers, regularly appears on German television and radio, and founded the famous 'Russendisko' club night in Kaffee Burger with Juri Gurzhy. Kaminer



Börek Graffiti, Berlin

is a thriving writer who has published ten popular works since *Russendisko*, which have been translated into fifteen languages, with sales figures reaching beyond 1.2 million in Germany alone. However, his popularity and success does not extend to his native Russia, where Kaminer remains relatively unknown, although his works have been translated into Russian. Although Kaminer prefers to label himself as a German writer with a 'private' Russian identity,¹ he nonetheless 'projects a Russian persona to the western public' and is promoted by publishers as a Russian writer. In public, Kaminer tends to downplay his Jewishness and, as Wanner

contends, 'the conundrum of being a Jew in post-Holocaust Germany is of little concern to Kaminer. At best, the topic becomes grist for his ironic mill'. However, Wanner argues that Kaminer's Jewishness, alongside his upbeat portrayal of Berlin as his natural home, may play a role in his success in Germany: 'Even though Kaminer tends to downplay his Jewishness, one suspects that it is an important, if not largely unmentioned, factor that contributes to his popularity with the German reading public'.

Kaminer's desire for a 'private' Russian identity, and a 'public' identity as a writer of

Kaminer's desire for a 'private' Russian identity, and a 'public' identity as a writer of German fiction, seems rather at odds with his tendency towards semi-autobiographical writing.

German fiction, seems rather at odds with his tendency towards semi-autobiographical writing. Kaminer's first-person narrator (Wladimir) shares a great deal of his biography with his author. Like Kaminer, he is a DJ and a writer of German fiction who grew up in Moscow and emigrated to Berlin in 1990. Thus the reader is encouraged to conflate Kaminer the writer with the narrator of his works, and to believe that his writing is based on his 'authentic' experiences. In fact, 'Kaminer claims to eschew fiction altogether and to write nothing but "true stories"'. Kaminer

explains his Jewish background. Apparently only aware of his Jewishness inasmuch as it prevents his father becoming a member of the communist party, the narrator takes advantage of his parents being Jewish to guarantee his migration. Although the narrator's own Jewish status is not questioned, he suggests that the Jewishness of many immigrants from the former Soviet Union was 'suspicious if not outright fraudulent'. Upon arrival in Germany, a Jewish organisation befriends and supports the narrator and his compatriots, attempting to involve them in the Jewish community.

historical contextualisation of Kaminer's book. Whilst Kaminer's containment of Jewishness in *Russendisko* to the 'opening sequence' of his novel could be read as an ingenuously 'realist' representation of a particular demographic of migrants, some of whom happen to be Jewish, others of whom feign it to gain German citizenship, it also appears to be a strategic choice, and one that seems to tally in rather an unusual way with his depictions of Turks; a sector of the German population which remains highly stigmatised.

Kara's representation of Jews bears resemblance to Kaminer's portrayal of Turks, inasmuch as they are more referential than in-depth. However, Selam Berlin also presents Jews and Turks as objects of exchange, with fluctuating 'value'.

is interpreted by some as not only a writer who provides his readers with an insight into the everyday-lives of Russian migrants and the 'Russian soul', but also, since he depicts other German minorities, as offering the reader a *kurze Blick hinter der Schleier* [glimpse behind the veil] of cultures purportedly foreign to a German audience. Thus Kaminer is construed as a kind of 'native informant' for Germany's Russian and Russian-Jewish minorities, and as having 'insider access' to Germany's minorities. Kaminer's strategy of providing the reader with an 'authentic' guide to Russian and non-Russian minorities, seems to amplify his aforementioned 'burden of representation' (the pressure to portray the community that one is thought to belong/represent, both positively and accurately). Indeed, Kaminer has been accused of the mere reproduction, as opposed to the ironic recapitulation, of cultural stereotypes. With this in mind, I now turn to the ways in which Kaminer portrays Jewish and Turkish figures in the collection of anecdotes which constitute *Russendisko*.

The book begins with the story of the narrator's migration to Berlin in 1990, and

The narrator suspects that there is more at stake than generosity. After a friend is persuaded to undergo circumcision, he beats a hasty retreat. This initial anecdote sets the scene for a playful engagement with identities, and makes it clear that, to the narrator, affiliation to Judaism is something to be emphasised or downplayed according to the political climate, and has very little to do with his personal identity. After what the narrator refers to as the 'fifth wave' migration of Russian Jews to Germany is documented in the first chapter,² a line seems to be drawn, and the protagonists are never referred to as Jewish again. *Russendisko* presents its Jewish migrants from the former Soviet Union as an ordinary part of the multicultural mixture of Berlin; neither distinguished by their religious beliefs, nor by their appearance.

Whilst the narrator's description of his demographic may be accurate, in the remainder of the text, the physical invisibility of Jews is re-enforced by their being indistinguishable from the other Russians in the narrative, which means that effectively, any 'Jewish' subject matter is erased from the text, and appears to be simply a

The only 'Turkish' figure to whom there is more than a passing reference in *Russendisko* is the Russian-sounding Masja, a cat. 'Der türkische Kater' (*Russendisko* 100–102) is a satirical portrayal of negative attitudes towards Turks in Germany, in which the narrator acquires a cat whom he decides must be Turkish, because of his penchant for kebabs and pitta bread, and his violent and promiscuous 'macho' temperament (*Russendisko* 100). The narrator's attempts to domesticate Masja are couched in terms highly reminiscent of political integrationist rhetoric that emphasises a Turkish reluctance to assimilate to German norms (*Russendisko* 100). Masja establishes the narrator's bath, in which he unfailingly defecates on Fridays, as his own territory, and 'Wladimir' concludes that Masja has designated the bath to be his mosque (*Russendisko* 101). The narrator's connection of Friday congregational prayers with Masja's habit of defecating in the bath on Fridays is a clear parody of Islamophobia (which could include fears of 'barbaric' practices such as Halal ritual slaughter or women covering themselves), and German fears about 'Überfremdung'.³ Once Masja has impregnated another cat and begun an affair with his own daughter (a parody of the western concept of an Ottoman harem), the narrator opts to have Masja castrated, in the hope that his reduced testosterone levels will aid his integration (*Russendisko* 101). This somewhat drastic attempt fails, much in the way that German newspapers and politicians have indicted the failure of the project of Turkish integration, and Masja runs away once he has come

down from his ketamin trip, only for the narrator to replace him with a new pet.

The story of the narrator's attempts to domesticate Masja is a humorous satire on German negative perceptions of the Turkish minority, but also provides reassurance to the German reader attempting to come to terms with the Turkish minority. The story is narrated not from a 'German' point-of-view, but from the perspective of a first-generation Russian-Jewish migrant. However, through his unsuccessful attempts to integrate a 'Turk', the narrator seems to identify with the position of a 'liberal' German, rather than empathising with a 'Turkish' point-of-view (by implication: the struggle against a set of constrictions being placed upon Masja's personal freedom and self-expression). Since Kaminer is perceived as being part of a minority, his identification with a 'German' position, rather than with that of a fellow minority subject, Germany's 'Türkenproblem' becomes reassuringly universalised. The narrator's choice to anthropomorphise his cat into a 'Turk' (due to his eating, defecation and sexual habits, we recall) seems to me to strike a chord with his tendency to leave his Russian-Jewish figures 'unmarked'. In both cases, 'real' Jews, and 'real' Turks are referred to, but not represented. It seems to me, then, that Kaminer's text attempts to evade the 'burden of representation' by depicting Jewish and Turkish presences in Berlin, but disengaging with fully-drawn 'realist' representations.

Kara, Yadé. *Selam Berlin*. Zurich: Diogenes, 2003.

Yadé Kara's debut novel *Selam Berlin* is set in Berlin, immediately before *Russendisko* begins, and framed by German unification, beginning with the opening of the Wall in 1989, and ending with the official unification in 1990. *Selam Berlin* has been marketed as the first Turkish novel about German unification. Kara does not enjoy the same level of popular success as Kaminer, but was awarded the German Bücherpreis for best debut novel, and the Adelbert-von-Chamisso Förderpreis in 2004. Moreover, Marvin notes that Kara's novel had a reception in Turkey even before it was



Waslawaska Embassy, Berlin

translated into Turkish, suggesting that her novels may be better known in Turkey than are Kaminer's in Germany.

In contrast to Kaminer, whose narrator shares so much of his biography with his creator, Kara's nineteen-year-old protagonist, Hasan, is both significantly younger than herself, and of the opposite gender. Questions about her Turkish heritage irritate Yadé Kara, who maintains that such issues ought to be redundant for a people who have now been a significant part of the German landscape for over forty years. Kara similarly insists that the story of her protagonist, Hasan, has no basis in her own

biography. Kara's strategy of employing a 'cross gender narrator', as Marvin notes, 'strikingly challenge[s] the mapping of author on to protagonist which underlies the assumption of "authenticity" that still persists in some critical approaches to both women's writing and "minority" writing'.

Kara's representations of Turkish-German protagonists demonstrate a constantly shifting construction of the self, as well as self-ethnicisation, and ethnicisation by others. For example, Hasan constantly changes his appearance and his 'motto', taking his inspiration from those around him, both in terms of their clothing, and the

maxims which he accredits to them (*Selam Berlin* 113). Hasan initially seems naïvely unaware of his status as an ethnicised subject, and believes that in the correct outfit, he will exude the particular image of Turkishness that he wishes to portray (*Selam Berlin* 195). After forty hours of deliberation on his outfit, however, Hasan is met with the assumption that he will slaughter chickens in the bath (*Selam Berlin* 201), which somewhat recalls the story of Kaminer's 'ethnicised' cat. Hasan seems to learn from his experiences and subsequently, in order to acquire the role of a young Turkish-German in a film, he exaggerates both the role and his persona. As Fachinger observes, in 'an act of self-Orientalisation, he reinforces the common stereotypes of the 'Turk''. Later, Hasan seems to lose control over his invented persona, and confronts his girlfriend Cora about her infidelity. Assuming that Hasan is again embellishing his role, Cora ridicules his anger: "Spiel nicht den eifersüchtigen Macker... Wir sind nicht beim Film, und wir drehen keine Szene..." ["Stop playing the jealous macho. We're not recording a scene from the film..."] (*Selam Berlin* 322). In response, Hasan curses her, hits her so hard in the face that she loses balance and falls to the floor, and then slashes the tyres of her Volvo with his knife (*Selam Berlin* 322–3). Thus, Kara's novel portrays not only the ethnicisation of Turks in Germany, but

also depicts the performance of Turkishness as a result of this ethnicisation, suggesting a damaging internalisation of cultural stereotypes. These strategic choices also seem calculated to undermine ideas about cultural authenticity, and can be read as another effort to counter the 'burden of representation'.

Kara's representation of Jews bears resemblance to Kaminer's portrayal of Turks, inasmuch as they are more referential than in-depth. However, *Selam Berlin* also presents Jews and Turks as objects of exchange, with fluctuating 'value'. As Hasan is replaced by the Jewish Vladimir from Riga in his girlfriend's affections, a Jewish renaissance in Berlin is proclaimed by Wolf, the director in whose film Hasan had previously acquired a role. At the end of the novel, Wolf deems Turkish culture 'Kuchen von gestern' [yesterday's news] suggesting that Berlin's recent Jewish migrants have more potential for cultural exploitation, since the Turkish issue has by now been 'ausgelutscht' [sucked dry] (*Selam Berlin* 372–3). As Fachinger states, the novel 'makes fun of the German fascination with things Jewish, the commercialisation of ethnicity, as well as the phenomenon of referring to the Turks as the Jews of today'.

In conclusion: both novels appear to circumvent the 'burden of representation',

both in terms of 'self', and the 'other'. Kaminer refrains from depictions of 'real' Turkish figures in *Russendisko* (after all, Masja's Turkishness is a projection of the narrator), and only presents Jewishness as an attribute incidental to himself and his contemporaries. Kara's text exposes the process of ethnicisation, and the exploitation of minority identities. Both prose works depict their 'Turkish' protagonists in terms of cultural stereotypes, but in a way that reveals the constructed nature of such depiction. It remains to be seen, however, whether the authors themselves will become recognised as writers of German fiction, in line with their desires, in the future.

Notes

¹ Asked whether he perceived himself as a Russian German, cosmopolitan, or "Multikulti-Berliner," Kaminer replied: "The Soviet Union is my homeland [meine Heimat]. Berlin is my home [mein Zuhause]. Russian is my mother tongue. German writing is my profession." In "Leser wie Tanzpartner bewegen," Wanner 2005: 594.

² The 'fifth wave' refers to those who migrated to Germany after Honecker's promise in 1990 to receive Jews from the former Soviet Union (*Russendisko*, 9).

³ Literally, 'overforeignisation'; the sense of being swamped by foreigners.

All translations from German are my own.

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In Focus

Jewish communities in India: historical and cultural transition

Naomi Gryn, Trisha Kessler and Navras Jaat Aafreedi reflect on their experiences exploring India's Jewish communities. The following articles arise from their contributions at the 2010 Alumni Weekend in Cambridge.



The Jews of India

Naomi Gryn

Naomi Gryn (photographed here in a Hindu temple in Kerala) is a writer and documentary filmmaker who recently returned to India, where her late father, Hugo Gryn, was a rabbi in the 1950s. She explored the change in the lives of Jews since then for a radio documentary for the BBC World Service. Naomi recently edited a collection of Hugo's scripts for radio 'God slots', including some about the Jews of India, published as *Three Minutes of Hope: Hugo Gryn on the God Slot* (London, Continuum, 2010).

My late father Hugo Gryn's first job as a reform rabbi was in Bombay. It was a condition of his scholarship at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati that he should take a far-flung pulpit after ordination in 1957. He and my mother, Jackie, were newly wed, and the two and a half years they spent there became the stuff of legend in our family history. Our home was filled with furniture and trinkets that

they'd bought in India, as well as visitors from Bombay. We also had a family tradition – a box of Alphonso mangoes that arrived each spring as a gift from a friend they'd got to know during their Indian years. You can now buy Alphonso mangoes at any decent Lebanese greengrocer but at that time they were rare and much-prized.

In October 2009, fifty years after my parents left India, I followed in their footsteps to find out how things have changed for Jews there.

The Jewish community in India is one of the oldest in the Jewish Diaspora and the smallest of India's minorities, just a pin drop in the country's population of 1.1 billion. There have been Jews in Kerala since the days of King Solomon; today there are just 36 Malabar Jews and 11 White

Jews whose lovely Paradesi synagogue in Cochin dates back to 1568 and has been declared a national monument by the Indian government. In Maharashtra, the Bene Israel believe that they are the descendants of seven men and seven women who survived a shipwreck many centuries ago and were washed up on India's Konkan coast. And although only a few dozen Baghdadi Jews still live in India, many streets and buildings carry the names of Jews whose families came from Persia and Arab countries.

At its peak in the 1940s there were 30,000 Jews in India. Since then – if you don't count the legions of Israelis who come on holiday in India after finishing army service – a steady flow of emigration and assimilation has reduced numbers to about 4,500. In 1958, my father wrote:



Rabbi Hugo Gryn arrives in Bombay, August 1957

Courtesy of Naomi Gryn

Regular flights to Israel at the rate of about 70 per month are coupled with immigration to Britain. Poverty and lack of communal facilities seem to be the chief causes. It would be untrue to say that the Jews have any more pressing reasons for leaving than the average Indian.

The condition of the Jewish community is less than satisfactory. Most of the Jews are unskilled labourers, office-clerks or artisans. The average monthly income is around £8.10 [even then not a fortune] and compulsory retirement age is 55. The average family has no fewer than 6 to 8 members, and frequently as many as 12 or 14. Housing shortage is acute and most families live in one or (if lucky) two room tenements providing minimum sanitary requirements. Children of the Baghdadi Jews – in India for the last century – have free schooling facilities in Calcutta and Bombay; some 500 Bene Israel children attend the Sir Elly Kadoorie School where a limited number of freeships is available, and the medium of instruction is Marathi. However, most parents prefer to send their children to the better English schools which are generally run by Christian missions and charge high fees.

Regrettably there are hardly any communal agencies to cope with these staggering problems. International Jewish charities such as the Joint, ORT, and the Alliance [aid and education trusts] are conspicuously absent. Monies left by the [Baghdadi] Sassoon family in various trusts do maintain two synagogues, a school, a dispensary and a system of dole – but special clauses exclude the Bene Israel from any benefits... There is an orphanage which has 34 children but no support. There is a scholarship fund which receives many applications but has to turn down most of them. Cemeteries are in states of worsening neglect. One of the municipal hospitals has a

The Jewish community in India is one of the oldest in the Jewish Diaspora and the smallest of India's minorities, just a pin drop in the country's population of 1.1 billion. There have been Jews in Kerala since the days of King Solomon.

Jewish ward but there is no communal interest shown in its patients.

Half a century on, the size of the Jewish population, though much diminished, has more or less stabilised, with some Jews returning from Israel to take advantage of India's recent economic progress. Most of the Jews I met last year had family scattered across the world, particularly the USA, Australia, Israel, Britain and Canada – and there were frequent visits to and fro.

Just two Jewish children still attend the Sir Elly Kadoorie School, but its grounds are rented for wedding receptions and other Jewish communal events. I visited the Sir Jacob Sassoon High School – the other Jewish school in Bombay, where the language of instruction is English.

Its neighbourhood, Byculla, is now predominantly Muslim, so while the school currently has 596 students, about 400 are Muslim and just 16 are Jewish. Despite this, there are Jewish prayers everyday at Assembly (the Jewish boys say the prayers and the rest of the children stand in silence as the prayers are said), Jewish instruction is given twice a week to Jewish students after school, and they close the school for all Jewish holidays.

Bombay is undoubtedly more crowded and more polluted than it was in my parents' time, but some things don't change: it's not easy to practice Judaism in isolation from other Jews, nor can you stay impervious to the customs of non-Jews around you. Bene Israel Jews don't eat beef in common with their Hindu neighbours, some of their young people still have marriages arranged, and in some synagogues you'll be asked to take off your shoes as you would in a mosque or Hindu temple. Some Bene Israel traditions are unique, like the Malida ceremony, a

thanksgiving offering of prayer and food – a mixture of rice, coconut, cardamom, and sugar, eaten with different types of fruit and flowers.

My father encouraged the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint) and ORT (a Jewish vocational training organisation) to set up offices in India and both of these organisations still provide much needed services for India's remaining Jews. The Joint runs a free medical clinic, youth activities and a Sunday school, gives cash assistance to the needy and provides to some of its clients the means to make a meagre living, such as candle-making kits. Elijah Jacobs, the very able executive director of the Joint's Indian office, is able to reel off precise statistics on how many Jews there are in the different parts of India and he probably knows their individual economic circumstances too.

ORT, which gave vocational training to many Indian Jews preparing for emigration to Israel, has had to reinvent itself since numbers of Jews planning to make *aliyah* have dropped. I stayed for a week at its hostel in Mumbai, which also accommodates several young women from Manipur and Mizoram in north-east India. Their community, the Bnei Menashe, claims descent from one of the lost tribes of Israel (as do the Bnei Ephraim community in Andhra Pradesh). Some of the girls are studying hairdressing and baking, others study early childcare and IT. A group of Bnei Menashe men stay at another hostel nearby. They are preparing for formal conversion to Judaism before applying to immigrate to Israel. I sat in on an afternoon study session during which a Manipuri speaker translated as their teacher, Sharon Galsurkar, instructed the young people in Jewish philosophy. Sharon is quite an inspiration, a learned man in his thirties who studied at yeshiva in

Jerusalem, but returned to India to dedicate himself, at least for the time being, to the spiritual needs of India's Jews.

It's difficult to judge the motivation of those Bnei Menashe who want to move to Israel. There is violent unrest in their homeland and little economic prospect, while Israel can always make room for enthusiastic newcomers to the Jewish state. Training them for this purpose keeps ORT alive, along with its other communal functions – a kosher bakery, a training centre for teachers of young children, and a nursery and junior school which specialises in the needs of disabled children who are integrated with the sighted and more able bodied students.

Sharon Galsurkar accompanied me on a visit to some of the Konkan villages from where the Bene Israel emanate and where, until not so very long ago, their chief craft was pressing oil for lamps in a manner that probably hadn't changed much since a time when there was still a temple in Jerusalem. Although there are only a handful of Jews still living in these villages, we stopped by two synagogues which were both well looked after; with a Chazan still employed at the synagogue in Alibaug. Jews living in Bombay, Thane and Poone visit and maintain links with their ancestral homes.

My father wrote:

The majority of India's Jewry are nominally orthodox. This means that the synagogues are well attended on

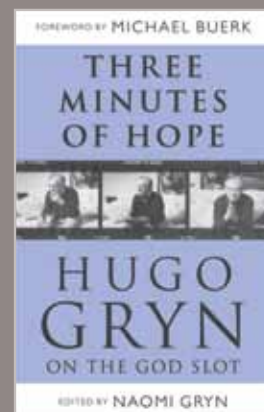
the High Holy Days and especially on Simchat Torah. The services follow the Oriental-Sephardi ritual and are led by the Chazan or Kazi who freely confess a total lack of understanding... circumcisions and weddings are lavish and long functions leave the families in debt for many years. Conversion, prelude to increasing intermarriage, is a purely ritual affair: Divorces are granted by the synagogues and even individuals, often with appalling consequences. Claiming that the edict of Rabbi Gershom's¹, enforcing monogamy, does not apply to the Orient – polygamy is tolerated, though of late discouraged. [But all was not harmonious] apart from personalities it is difficult to see other dividing factors but divisions there are and accompanied by a good deal of acrimony. Suits of libel and, more direct, fistfights are not unknown in the annals of the community.

On the other hand, it is remarkable that Judaism is alive at all. Isolated from other Jewries and surrounded by an unbelievably vast non-Jewish population, the tenacity and pride of the Indian Jew is most admirable. Scrupulous dietary observance and faithful adherence to home rituals are characteristic of virtually every family. Respect for parents is very real and loyalty to Judaism is unquestionable. Signs of progress are also evident: the odious distinction between the

so-called Kala (black) Bene Israel (i.e. descendant of intermarriage) and the White Bene Israel is gradually disappearing'

I was struck by how the Jews I met in India were simultaneously so authentically Jewish and authentically Indian. There are few Jewish communities elsewhere with such long, deep roots. But they have much in common with Jews everywhere: a sense of a shared history and beliefs, Hebrew as the language of prayer and study, and the Jewish calendar.

Three Minutes of Hope: Hugo Gryn on the God Slot has been published by Continuum, London in September 2010.



The publication marks what would have been the 80th birthday of Rabbi Hugo Gryn, one of the leading figures in interfaith dialogue, who died in 1996. The book is a collection of Hugo Gryn's radio scripts for the various 'God Slot' programmes on Capital Radio and the BBC. The contextualised reflections are thematically organised and cover the Jewish calendar and episodes of Jewish history, quoting biblical and talmudic sources as well as Hugo Gryn's spiritual heroes from both within and outside the Jewish world. As a child survivor of the Nazi death camps, his autobiographical anecdotes are particularly poignant. Hugo Gryn's message of good leadership, tolerance and never losing hope has lost none of its currency and offers a timely reflection on the challenges which we face today.



Jacob Dandekar is Chazan at the synagogue in Alibaug, a village on the Konkan coast

© Naomi Gryn

While the Jewish community in Maharashtra is vibrant and forward-looking, in Kerala the number of Jews has fallen below what might make for a tenable community. Even though the Paradesi synagogue in Cochin attracts tourists by the busload, they only manage to hold a minyan a couple of times a year. In Ernakulum, just a short ferry ride away, none of the synagogues still function as places of worship. Josephai Elias, who runs an aquatic centre and horticultural business in one of the abandoned synagogues, is trained as a Shochet, but since he is not *shomer shabbat*, a keeper of the Sabbath, he can't slaughter chickens on behalf of the Paradesi Jews. It's hard to imagine that the Jewish community of Kerala has much future at all.

By contrast, in Maharashtra, resources are limited, but the Jewish community is impressively well organised. The community of which my father was rabbi, the Jewish Religious Union, is still the only liberal Jewish community in India. When he arrived in 1957, services were held in a sewing school in Byculla, with High Holy Day services held in rented premises.

According to a booklet about the Reform Jewish Movement in India:

The Gryn's spent over two years in India, during which period the JRU and the Reform movement took wings. Membership tripled; there was a tremendous surge of religious fervour; the Iraqi, European and Bene Israel Jews came to a better understanding of each other. In short, Rabbi Gryn electrified the community in addition to his work for Reform Judaism ... Because of his amiable personality and sincerity, Rabbi Gryn succeeded in gaining the confidence and cooperation of everyone to actively participate in the events and activities of the organisation ... So dynamic was the Rabbi's influence, that it attracted many Orthodox members of the community ... The children's Sunday School attendance rose from about 20 to over 100 ... A school bus service which brought children from as far north as Bandra to central Byculla, a distance of about 15km, now had to

be extended to travel a further 7km to the south end of the city. And High Holy Days services had to be held in a large rented hall to accommodate over 250 persons.

After 50 years my parents are still remembered by this community with huge affection, even by people born after they left. Perhaps the biggest difference my father made to this community was to help them find loans to build their own synagogue, Rodef Shalom (meaning Pursuer of Peace) in a beautiful building in Byculla. It was dedicated on 20 September 1959, just two months before my father left Bombay, by then in something of a hurry to see his mother in Czechoslovakia who had been diagnosed with what would prove to be terminal cancer.

My father and I were supposed to come to Bombay in 1992 to make a documentary film for Channel 4 Television, but our trip was cancelled when race riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims. Under the cover of these riots, in January 1993, Hindu militants firebombed the synagogue, most likely to settle a score with a Muslim gangster living in the same building. The *sifrei torah* were destroyed along with the congregation's prayer books and records and the synagogue was so badly damaged that since then, the Jewish Religious Union has been again without a meeting place of its own, holding services from time to time in communal halls or members' homes. At last it looks like they've finally worked through all the necessary bureaucracy and hopefully redevelopment of the site will begin soon.

Though they are a minority even among the Bene Israel, several members of the JRU have stepped forward to take positions of responsibility as communal leaders. Jonathan

Solomon is a lawyer and Chairman of the Indian Jewish Federation. His grandfather was a founding member of the Jewish Religious Union and Jonathan is also an active member:

When the Indian economy started booming, we started looking forward to Jews from India now in different parts of the world coming back to India – if not on a permanent basis at least as a second home or as a holiday destination – and interacting with us, strengthening us and our institutions. Then we were hit by two calamities. One was the recession the world over which also affected the Indian economy, and then 26 November [2008] when, for first time in our living history, a Jew was targeted in India because he is a Jew. It has been catastrophic for us to realise that we can be targeted in this country because of our religion. And though this threat is faced by all Indians, whether Hindu or Muslim or Christian or Jew, we are at risk both as Indians and as Jews.

The terror attack has had the unexpected outcome of bringing India's Jews closer together: "We realise," says Jonathan, "that we need to sink our differences, to work in closer cooperation with each other. We hope that people realise the importance of peaceful co-existence. We hope that the economy revives very soon and that a Jewish presence in India can continue for centuries to come."

Notes

¹ In the 11th century CE Rabbi Judah Gershom of Mainz forbade polygamy for Jews. His decree was accepted without opposition by French and German Jews, though not in Spain and Portugal or the Orient.

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Baghdadi Jewish Female Voices: From Calcutta to Golders Green

Trisha Kessler

Trisha Kessler has researched into the transition of Baghdadi Jewish women from a vibrant Jewish Community in Calcutta to life in London. She spent some time living in India. Her study included collating the oral histories of these women as well as examining in some detail the role of the Sassoon family in India. She is Interfaith Project Manager at the Woolf Institute.

In 2002 I spent a couple of months at a regular Tuesday gathering of Baghdadi Jewish ladies from Calcutta, now living in London. My initial interest in meeting them had been to further my research into the women of the Sassoon family. I soon realised I was in the presence of something quite special, listening to conversations about life in Calcutta in the early-to-mid 20th Century. In a Golders Green living room, these ladies had created a space in which they were able to reminisce and continue the memories of a community which once thrived in India and is now dispersed. As well as my own research, this article owes much to the published personal accounts from three women of the Baghdadi community in Calcutta, Mavis Hyman,¹ Flower Elias and Judith Elias Cooper;² the latter two were regulars at this coffee circle.

My observations and the following conversations are personal and not

historical accounts. They are narrated by women who gathered together to reminisce and who enjoyed my presence as an audience they could impress. And impress they did. Here were women who had lived amongst a vibrant Jewish community in Calcutta at the peak of its activity. Their conversations recounted a community that has now virtually disappeared in India.

It is important to place these women in an historical and social context. They were members of the Baghdadi Jewish Community in India, mainly coming from Baghdad, Basra and Aleppo and other Arabic speaking lands who formed diaspora communities in Bombay, Calcutta and Pune.

The community peaked in the 1940's with about 3800 in Calcutta, including 1200 refugees from Burma in 1942. Another 3000 Baghdadi Jews lived in Bombay and Pune. They adhered to Iraqi or Syrian customs but embraced an English lifestyle and education.

In the first part of the 18th Century traders from Baghdad arrived in India and settled in Bombay and Calcutta. However it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the Baghdadi community in India began to flourish with the arrival of prominent Jews from Baghdad. A number of these newly established families – the Sassoons, Ezras, Eliases, Gubbays, Kadouries and Abrahams – became middlemen for the large cotton jute and tobacco processing plants and, with entrepreneurial skills, secured successful trading empires, utilising the trading routes opened by the East India Company.

In Calcutta, the Ezra Family, alongside other dominant trading families, created a community which, like Bombay, had Jewish schools, hospitals and housing. Inter-marriage between these prominent families was encouraged and so the communities in Bombay, Calcutta and Pune had close ties. The Baghdadi community flourished because of these families, their businesses and their benevolence.

The shifting political landscape of mid 20th Century India and the end of the Raj had huge consequences on this community. The wealthy Baghdadi Jewish community had aligned themselves to British rule. Many

within the community enjoyed the status of being a British Protected Person and were consequently accepted as a British subject which provided hugely important political, economical, social and educational benefits. They had joined clubs from which Indians were excluded and affiliated their commercial and industrial establishments to the British Chambers of Commerce. Yet, as a result of the British Nationality Act of 1948, the British Protected Person was no longer acknowledged as a British subject and, alongside stringent economic reforms, the closing of the Sassoon factories in the mid 1940's (and the Elias mills in 1973), the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the loss of educational benefits, the community began to steadily decline.

Baghdadi Jews actively distinguished themselves from the indigenous Jewish community, the Bene Israel who were treated with contempt by the British, as they represented the native Indian by their skin and their customs. Many Baghdadis doubted the correctness of the Bene Israel practices and for a considerable time they were not counted in the Minyan or called up to read the Torah.

In comparison with the Bene Israel community, the Baghdadi community was much smaller in numbers and, for many scholars, their presence in India was of less interest than the Bene Israel and Cochin community. The Baghdadis were seen as a Jewish community who happened to live in India with little distinctive culture.

Perhaps as an intuitive response to this, as well as a need to keep cherished memories alive, many in the Baghdadi community have published their private memoirs, eager to be heard. Publishing was at the centre of the intellectual activity of Calcutta and religious, historical and literary works were encouraged. Thanks to these publications we are able to gain insight into how the community narrated its presence in India. Typical of this literature is Isaac Abraham's book *Origin and History of the Calcutta Jews*³ in which he identifies all institutions created by his community; many of which are still in use today. The list indicates a thriving community committed to the well being of its Calcutta Jewish family.

- Beth-El Synagogue
- The Magen David Synagogue
- The Jewish Girls School
- The Elias Meyer Free School and Talmud Torah
- The Jewish Women's League
- The Jewish Women's Baby Clinic
- The Ezra Hospital
- The I.S. Musleah Memorial Clinic

Listening to the Calcutta ladies it was evident that they grew up in a secure, seemingly confident and self-contained community. Religiously orthodox in observance they enjoyed sharing memories around the celebration of festivals, which were a special time with huge gatherings and wonderful food. Within the community there was an open house policy for Shabbat and festivals. Hospitality was hugely important and much consideration was given to food. Most households employed a cook, normally a Muslim whose knowledge of Islamic dietary laws was beneficial to running a kosher kitchen. The cook occupied an important position.

The ladies spoke of lighting seven wicks of oil lamps on Shabbat, one to mark each day of the week and the table was prepared in advance for Shabbat as Hyman remembers:

By late afternoon on Friday the table was laid with the best linen and tableware, and adorned with flowers and a bowl of yas to be used at the close of the Sabbath. Covered glass bowls, placed down the centre of the table, contained a variety of relishes; halba, a sauce made from the soaked seeds of fenugreek, pounded fresh coriander leaves and crushed ginger; zalatta, finely sliced cucumber; chopped fresh ginger and Greek parsley and tomato chutney, chopped fresh tomatoes, spring onion, coriander leaves and fresh green chillies. Freshly baked loaves, covered with an embroidered satin cloth, were placed at the head of the table, with a large silver wine cup which would be filled to the brim with wine made by Jews in the synagogues, extracted from large black raisins.⁴



Courtesy of Mavis Hyman

Celebration in the Succa, Agarpara

On Saturday morning the men would go off to Synagogue at 6.30am returning at 9am and the day would be one of rest for the parents and games for the children.

One of their favourite festivals was Succot, a colourful affair; building booths out of bamboo, coconut and palm leaves with lights and garlands. All meals would be eaten outside with huge tables for all the extended family. One lady remembered as a child groaning during Passover as the Seder was recounted in three languages, Hebrew, Arabic and English. Preparing for festivals was a special responsibility for these women who guarded and preserved their religious traditions from Baghdad.

Central to these celebrations and fondly remembered by these ladies were the delicacies brought from the famous Nahoums bakery which is still trading in the New Market in Calcutta. It imported goodies from England and sold home-made pastries, breads etc. It was a 'meeting place', the hub of information and often the first port of call when visitors arrived. Food parcels would be sent from Nahoums to those at boarding school in the hills, plates of sweets and savouries would be distributed to those celebrating mitzvahs, weddings and sitting shivas.

Much of their social life was spent within the community, which was self sufficient with its own sports clubs, scout and guide groups, schools, and even a regular place to go on holiday, called Madhupur, as Hyman notes;

When Calcutta Jews took their vacations they often chose to congregate in the same place. It is possible that the tight social circles

which coexisted in the wider society compelled numbers of various communities to turn in on themselves ... On the one hand the Baghdadi Jews may have had a preference for socialising between themselves but on the other hand the norms which existed right across the board may have left them with little alternative.⁵

When I asked these ladies how they had mixed with other communities, all agreed that they had good relations with their neighbours, society was tolerant and they had never experienced any antisemitism. One lady was proud to mention that the local Catholic Priest came to their wedding. From their conversations and from my reading of other sources it is clear that there was an acknowledgment of religious and cultural boundaries not only within their community but also between faiths, which facilitated mixing without feeling threatened. As some respondents pointed out in a questionnaire sent out to the community in the 1970's:

It was easier in India to have non-Jewish friends because the other communities also did not encourage intermarriage, so each knew where they stood in their friendships.⁶

There were instances of mixed marriages but, whilst frowned upon, couples would in time be accepted. They could not understand the Ashkenazim practice of cutting off their erring children who had 'married out'.

Interestingly, some respondents spoke of a vulnerable place the community occupied:

We wanted to copy the English, so looked down on the Indians and would not assimilate with them. The British looked down on us, so we could not assimilate with them. Therefore we remained ourselves.

I think the reason was probably fear. There was strength in their togetherness. They were not Indians, not Europeans, so feared neither would accept them. They felt superior

to Indians and inferior to Europeans. They were not well educated (majority not beyond secondary level) and so often stayed in a family business or joined a large Jewish concern, which was just paternal organisation without any policy.⁷

Listening to the ladies, I glimpsed how hard it must have been to be a wife and mother. One lady said that the men were the bosses and were demanding of their wives who were on duty 24 hours a day. Wives did not know their domestic financial status and rarely went out. This lady's aunt was married at 12 years old to a 30 year-old man. She had five children and was very rich but had no companionship with either husband or children. Her only strong bond was with other women.

It is evident that women created a special space in which they could support one another. Some husbands often worked away and it was accepted that the men occupied their own space. Gambling could be a problem within the community and also infidelity. In Elias' book many responded openly about sexual relations, acknowledging that men had much greater freedom to mix with women outside of their community.

If a woman goes astray it affects the whole family as the home is hers. If a man goes astray it is not so important as regards the family; he is separated from his family as an individual and his faults are not attached to the family.⁸

Conversely for women, there were strict standards of conformity impacting hugely on women within the community; as one woman respondent stated, the rule was:

There must be seven generations of virtuous women in a good family, but really you must look at the mother and grandmother when you choose a bride.⁹

Divorce rates were low and the atmosphere was of 'live and let live.' Life was not always easy for these women but they felt empowered by their ability to be strong.

This strength of resolve was greatly challenged when they left India and moved to England. Here they experienced for the first time the difficulties of being a minority Jewish community amongst a larger Ashkenazim Jewish community. The transition was not easy. They identified themselves not as Jews but as 'Calcutta Jews' and all Jews from Calcutta were 'one of us'.

This strong sense of community transferred to Golders Green and Stamford Hill. Many felt lost when they arrived and did not attend synagogue until their own was established. Many ladies expressed the deep loss they felt when they first arrived and mentioned how everything looked cold and grey. For those living amongst the Charedi community, they bemoaned a lack of hospitality shown to them. The black and white garb of the Orthodox community seemed to merge into the colourless landscape. They missed the warm weather, the warmth of their community and the lack of colour. In India they had developed a community which flourished on hospitality: doors were always open, festivals were major occasions and with the help of their cooks and Nahoums deliveries, food was plentiful and delicious.

For many of the women, their religious observance had never been questioned

before. They had prided themselves on upholding religious laws within the home. Living amongst the Ashkenazi community began slowly to unnerve some of the women who then questioned their practices. As a consequence, some became more orthodox and others more secular.

Most worrying was the loss of cultural practices as their children married within the Ashkenazi community. Many of the youngsters interviewed by Elias and Elias Cooper stated that the ways of their parents and grandparents were old fashioned. They were embarrassed by their emotional modes of communication, which they understood to be part of an oriental social life and not appropriate to their new lives in the UK. Gradually, as the community gave in to social pressures, families had to contend with children living away from home and the breakdown of family traditions.

Notes

¹ Hyman, 1995.

² Elias, Elias Cooper, c 1974.

³ Abraham, 1969.

⁴ Hyman, *op. cit.* p. 46.

⁵ Hyman, *op. cit.* p. 55.

⁶ Elias, Elias Cooper, *op. cit.* p. 87.

⁷ Elias, Elias Cooper, *op. cit.* p. 101.

⁸ Elias, Elias Cooper, *op. cit.* p. 40.

⁹ Elias, Elias Cooper, *op. cit.* p. 41.

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The Indian Jews: Their Relations with Muslims and their Marginalisation

Navras Jaat Aafreedi

Navras Jaat Aafreedi is Assistant Professor in International Relations at the Gautam Buddha University, India and author of *The Indian Jewry and the Self-Professed 'Lost Tribes of Israel' in India* (2006). His research seeks to understand the factors that shape Muslim perceptions of Jews in South Asia, most of whom have no direct contact with Jews because of their small numbers.

Dr Aafreedi spent six weeks at CMJR as Visiting Fellow in 2010, researching Muslim-Jewish relations in South Asia. Some of his writings are available at: <http://sites.google.com/site/aafreedi>

South Asia is an important region in the study of Muslim-Jewish relations. It contains more Muslims than any other region and South Asian Muslims have a diaspora larger in size and geographical spread than the Muslims of any other part of the world.

Muslim-Jewish relations in South Asia are almost as old as Islam, which reached India during the seventh century CE. The first Muslims to settle were the descendants of Arab merchants who made Kerala their home, where they found a centuries-old Jewish community, Cochini, as their neighbour. This oldest Muslim community of South Asia is known as Moplah. Similarly, Arab merchants also settled on India's Konkan coast in the state of Maharashtra,

where there was already an old Jewish community called Bene Israel.

The minority of Indian Muslims who are in direct contact with Jews has produced positive examples of cultural and social amity. Yet most South Asian Muslims have no interaction with Jews, because of their small numbers, and thus know them only through secondary and often negative sources.

Despite this, almost all synagogues in India are looked after by Muslims. In Mumbai, where eighty percent of Indian Jews live, all Jewish localities are located in predominantly Muslim neighbourhoods. Living in close relation with their Muslim neighbours, the Bene Israel, the most numerous of the three Jewish communities of India, adopted a number of Urdu words, into their language, Marathi. For example, they call a synagogue *masjid*, which is Urdu for mosque and for their prayer; *namāz*, the term for Islamic prayer. Most of the students are Muslim at the three Jewish schools in Mumbai and Kolkata. There have also been well-known Jewish sufis whose shrines are still thronged by Muslims (e.g. Sarmad and Qazi Qidwatuddin). Shye Ben Tzur, the world's only Hebrew Islamic mystical singer is based in Jaipur in Rajasthan.

There have also been Jewish converts to Islam who played important roles in Muslim politics in South Asia, such as Talmudic scholar, Muhammad As'ad (born Leopold Weiss, 1900–1992). As'ad converted to Islam in 1926 and in 1932 joined the movement for the creation of Pakistan. He published an English translation of the Qur'ān with a commentary in 1980. Another example is Maryam Jameelāh (born Margaret Marcus, from New Rochelle, NY) who converted to Islam in 1961, settled in Pakistan and wrote a number of books expounding Jam'at-i-Islami's ideology.

In the Baghdadi Jewish households in India, only Muslims were hired as cooks, which influenced Jewish cuisine in India. Qazi Zakir Husain, Muslim cook of the Holtzbergs, a Lubavitch family, was instrumental in saving the life of their orphan, Moshe, with the help of the child's Christian nanny, Sandra Samuel, during the 2008 attack on the Chabad House in Mumbai. India's most prominent Hebrew calligrapher is a Muslim, Thoufeek Zakriya, from Cochin.

Jewish Studies in India

Regrettably, the virtual absence of Jews from the public scene in India and the non-existence of Jewish studies, leaves Indians very ignorant. The University of Lucknow, where I studied, does teach European History, but the students have never been asked questions about the Holocaust in any examination. Other Indian universities, with a few exceptions like the Jawaharlal Nehru University, are similar. Until 2002 the standard history textbook in Gujarat made no mention of the Holocaust, though it did explain in great detail the treaty of Versailles. When there were complaints, the textbook was revised and now vaguely mentions that many Jews were killed during the war, without mentioning the Holocaust.

The only way to eliminate ignorance, prejudices and consequent hostility is to create awareness and spread knowledge through the dissemination of education. There are several steps which need to be taken, including the establishment of Jewish Studies in India as an academic discipline and the introduction of Indian youth, particularly Muslim, to Jewish cinema and literature; scholarships for Indian Muslim students to study Jewish history and culture; organised visits by Muslim students and journalists to concentration camps in Europe; joint Jewish-Muslim youth camps in Israel; and most importantly endowments for the establishment of Chairs in Jewish Studies at India's leading universities.

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Pilgrimage on Wheels – from Amman to Jerusalem

12–20 November 2011

The Woolf Institute is seeking cyclists – Jews, Christians, Muslims and others – to participate in a charity ride of biblical proportions. The Pilgrimage on Wheels will run from Amman to Jerusalem, covering a little over 300kms.

The Woolf Institute serves as a forum for some of the most important dialogues of our age

Prince Hassan of Jordan

Not only will cyclists raise funds to provide student bursaries and to establish a student hardship fund for the Woolf Institute, but the ride itself will be an interfaith pilgrimage. Cyclists will attend occasional evening lectures on interfaith relations given by Dr Ed Kessler and some special guests. Cyclists are expected to raise £3000 in sponsorship and pay the registration fee of £350. The ride follows in the tracks of the highly successful 2008 Charity Ride, when 23 cyclists covered 400 miles from Cairo, via Mt. Sinai, to

Jerusalem. One 2008 cyclist, who is also participating in the 2011 journey, remarked that, “We asked ourselves questions we had never asked before, and many of us felt that we were on more than one sort of journey”.

The cyclists will fly to Tel-Aviv on 12 November and transfer on the first evening to Nazareth, where the next day, they will visit important Christian sites before crossing the border into Jordan and attending an evening VIP reception in Amman. The following day the ride will begin in earnest and highlights will include cycling along both the Jordanian and Israeli sides of the Dead Sea, climbing Massada, cycling through the Negev desert before heading north to Jerusalem, where the ride ends by the Kotel, the Western Wall, on 18 November. After a free day in Jerusalem, cyclists will fly home on 20 November.

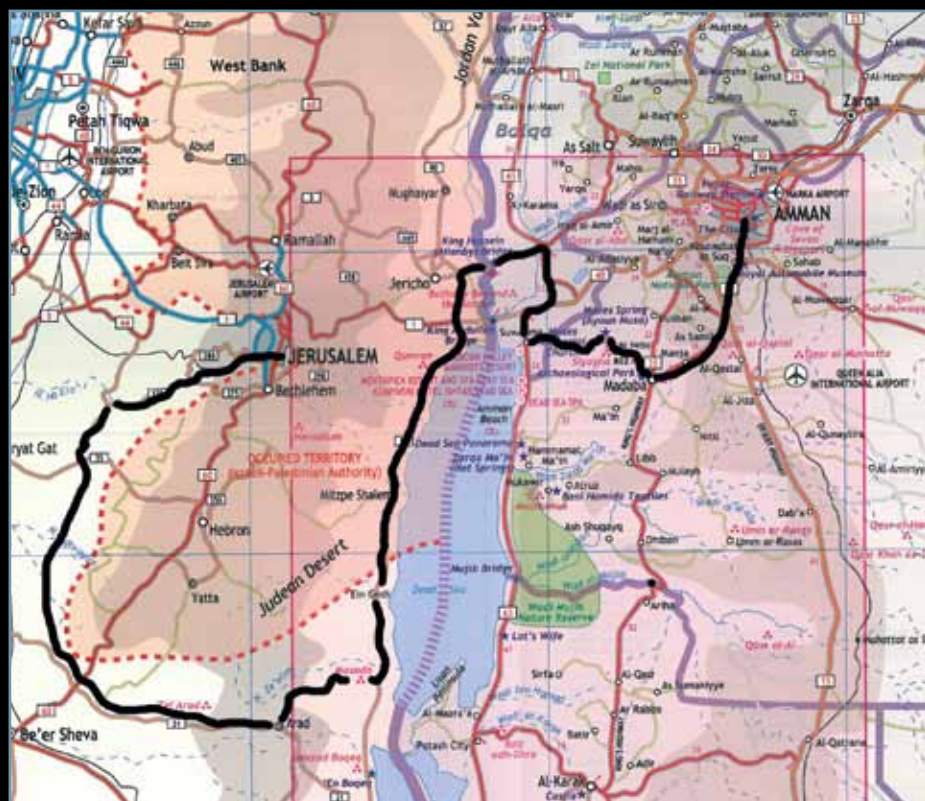


Cyclists on the road to Mount Sinai, 2008

Further information and an itinerary are available at:
www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/bike



Tom Kevill leading (from left to right) Tim Simon, Mary Selby and Paul Silver-Myer in Egypt, 2008



Finding Beauty in Cast-offs

Trisha Kessler talks to Marina Lewycka, award-winning novelist of Ukrainian origin



Ben McMillan

Marina Lewycka is author of *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (which won the 2005 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize and was shortlisted for the 2005 Orange Prize for Fiction), *Two Caravans*, (2007) and *We Are All Made of Glue* (2009), which includes reflections on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Marina was born in a refugee camp in Kiel after World War II and her family moved to England. She lives in London and Sheffield where she lectures at Sheffield Hallam University.

Trisha Kessler: Reading your books, I am struck by how you give a voice to people who are often marginalised in our society, particularly the elderly and immigrants. What inspired you to create such narratives?

Marina Lewycka: I grew up as a refugee and a migrant and lived amongst people who were largely insignificant and overlooked. Listening to them I realised that though they seemed very ordinary on the outside they often had fascinating life-stories. It wasn't a conscious decision to be a voice for the voiceless but I enjoyed listening to them, and thought others might

find them interesting too. This applies equally to the elderly. I used to work for Age Concern, writing guides for carers, and I recorded interviews with some wonderful feisty old people (and their exasperated carers.) This wasn't an archival project collecting oral histories, but it became an exploration of the ageing human. It's one of the experiences that helped turn me into a writer.

Trisha Kessler: You write as if you are delivering an oral story, enveloping the reader into a chain of transmission of history and memories. Did you grow up listening to stories of your parents' childhood or was there a silence about their past?

Marina Lewycka: For many years everything I knew about Ukraine came from my parents. The country acquired a mythical story-like quality until I went there at last. My mother told me many stories about her childhood and when I started to write *A Short History of Ukrainian Tractors*, it was originally meant to be my mother's history. Before she died, I sat down with her and recorded her memories, thinking one day I would make a book out of it. When I began writing, I realised there was not enough material and I would have to add to it from my own imagination. But in a way that was wonderfully liberating. If I had just written about her, it would have been a very different story, a much sadder one. Through the whole process of recording her memories I came to know her in a different way.

The most wonderful thing is that I kept the tape and after she died (and when I eventually discovered my Ukrainian relatives

through the internet), I was able to give her long lost sister a copy. So she could hear her sister's story told in her own voice and language, after having been parted for 62 years.

Trisha Kessler: Hearing someone's story in their own voice and language is compelling. You play with language, encouraging your characters to freely express themselves without worry about grammatical mistakes or pronunciation. Your use of transliteration and an idiomatic style provides a wonderful humour. Do you like playing with language?

Marina Lewycka: I love playing with language and am a fan of James Joyce and other writers like (early) Salman Rushdie and Angela Carter who can make their words do whatever they want. For example, I happily turn adjectives into adverbs and make verbs out of nouns – although I do send Microsoft Spell Check mad!

Creating new language was something I experienced at home and also when I worked teaching English as a foreign language to Asian women. Within that female space, women feel safe to talk and gossip, and they make words up constantly, pulling words out of one language into another, adapting them to the grammar. We all do it in some ways.

Trisha Kessler: With this freedom, you allow for a diversity of viewpoints and your characters tell their stories openly. How do you develop each character and allow them to say who they are, where they have come from and what they have experienced?

Marina Lewycka: It takes me a really long time to write a book – I write and rewrite many times. A lot of authors will tell you this. I start off with the externals: appearance, speech and habits and then I arrive at the point when the characters begin to write themselves. They obtain their freedom at the point at which I discover what it is about each character that I love. It is as if I am no longer writing them, but they are writing themselves. The moment when the characters take over and I lose control can be scary.

Trisha Kessler: Was it particularly scary in *We Are Made of Glue* since your characters deal with such contested narratives?

Marina Lewycka: It was particularly hard by the end of that novel, because I felt terrified that this book was going to upset everybody. I did a lot of research into the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. But essentially I realised it is not a book about faith and culture but about humanity. It is our humanity that glues us together – it is the only hope we have. I'm only a novelist at the end of the day, and all I can do is tell the story of a person's life and experience. I know it sounds simplistic, and maybe too ambitious for a 'comic' novel, but hope lies in the moment when people come to recognise the 'other' as equally human.

One of the things I learned when I was writing *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* is that you can't write a story about 20 million or even 6 million dying. I can only write about one person, one family and their suffering within the context of a larger history and tragedy, and hope the readers make the connection themselves. At the end of *We Are All Made of Glue* I could only have resolution for my characters. I couldn't solve the problem of the Middle East – I wish I could! There was a point when I was writing when I thought I had to come up with a correct answer to this conflict. Talking to people, reading books, searching the internet, I kept thinking, there *must* be an answer. But actually I realised, with a great sense of relief, that this is not my job. I just have to make things OK for my characters.

Trisha Kessler: The idea of searching for answers comes across powerfully in the character of the son, Ben, in *We are all Made of Glue*. You portray the sense of loneliness and confusion experienced by some young people and their quest to make sense of life through the internet. In many ways, Ben also represents a marginalised figure.

Marina Lewycka: I am pleased you asked about that. Most readers didn't even notice the son, they focussed on the relationship between Georgie (his mother) and Naomi (the old woman, whom Georgie befriends). Ben was a child who had moved away from home and had no peer group of friends, so was drawn into a weird cultish online peer group. In many ways Georgie took her eye off the ball, and failed to realise at what point you need to be 'hands on' as a parent, or when to stand back. It is tough for children like Ben who find themselves alone within a fractured family. I spent so much time thinking about Ben, who brings a peculiar and slightly sinister Christian perspective into the narrative, alongside the Jewish and Muslim ones. The apocalyptic Christian vision for the Holy Land on the websites which Ben frequents intersects with the highly charged historical narratives of the other peoples who lay claim to that space.

Trisha Kessler: Survival is a strong theme in your novels. In *Two Caravans*, young migrant workers find themselves vulnerable and open to exploitation by greedy shark-like individuals. Yet against the odds they survive.

Marina Lewycka: Yes, they do survive. All of my characters in all of my books, are people for whom tragedy could have been written, but they refuse to accept it: they don't go there in the end. In *We Are All Made of Glue* Mrs Shapiro could have been a tragic figure, but she wanted to grab life and enjoy it to the full. I am drawn to people like that. It makes me think about my parents, who were also survivors.

Trisha Kessler: You obviously enjoy writing about women. Are you more at ease writing about women than men?

Marina Lewycka: Women and the space they occupy interest me. Women often find themselves in the 'domestic sphere'. This is something I address in my next novel, though it becomes reinterpreted as the 'Domestos Fear' by my young character – before she is fitted with grommets!

Women are much easier for me to write about, but I do find it interesting to try and work out how men think about things. I find it more of a challenge creating a male character. In my next novel I have two female voices and one male. It is set partly in a 1960s commune, partly in a Doncaster council estate, and partly in the City of London.

Trisha Kessler: Finally, on a more personal note, of all your characters, I adore Naomi. Not only does she remind me of my husband's late Grandmother Fritzi, but she has a liberating way of being which is infectious and charming, a quirky model of old age which appeals to me.

Marina Lewycka: Naomi is like so many older people struggling to be allowed to stay in their own place, whom I came across in my Age Concern interviews. I love the idea that you can be a bit outrageous as you get older. Old people often get to the point where they lose their inhibitions and don't care what anyone thinks of them, which is quite liberating.

Naomi is partly modelled on an old lady who used to live across the road from us in Sheffield, called Mrs Moss. She belonged to the Moss Bros family, and she was always very elegantly turned out. I used to say hello to her. Then one day she went into a nursing home, and all her stuff was thrown into a skip in front of the house. My daughter and I, for our sins (well, we were doing the world a service!), went and pulled out hats, coats, gloves and beautiful shoes. But in the book, I changed *her* into the skip rummager.

Trisha Kessler: Finding beauty in something cast off as unvalued and marginalised takes great skill. Thank you, Marina, for doing this with your characters.

Giving Marginalised Minorities a Platform

Esther Haworth interviews Anna Myers of the Tricycle Theatre



Anna Myers is the Education Officer at the much acclaimed Tricycle Theatre, Cinema and Gallery in North West London. She talks to the Woolf Institute's Esther Haworth about the Tricycle's Social Inclusion Programme and how the theatre works with marginalised communities to provide a platform for free self-expression.

Esther Haworth: The Tricycle has a unique reputation for presenting plays which reflect the cultural diversity of the local community including Black, Irish, Jewish, Asian and South African writers. Do you think these groups are being marginalised?

Anna Myers: Definitely. They've all faced marginalisation in the past and some are still experiencing it. You don't see it as much in London, particularly Brent, which is apparently Europe's most diverse borough, but it definitely exists. Mainstream West End theatres still marginalise these groups by under-representing them. That's where the Tricycle comes in, providing a platform for unheard voices and unseen faces.

Esther Haworth: In your experience, does giving a voice to these writers' productions affect their status? Do people become less marginalised?

Anna Myers: I think the first effect of the Tricycle Theatre is that it improves the way people see themselves and how they feel about themselves. It's this, along with their greater visibility that I think, yes, does ultimately improve the way they are viewed and their status.

Giving under-represented groups the opportunity to stage plays at a theatre as well-known as the Tricycle does help bring them into the mainstream and increase their status within the arts. Many of our plays are 'spotted' and move to the West End or around the country.

Esther Haworth: That must be an exciting moment for the Tricycle as well, to be that springboard for new, untapped talent. Do you think this also affects the overall self-perception and status of their community?

Anna Myers: I like to think that this does have a knock-on effect on the particular community and makes it feel more included within society. It also opens up the idea of 'theatre', a potentially elitist concept, as something that they can be part of.

Esther Haworth: Can you give some examples of projects that have brought new communities in or raised awareness about a particular community?

Anna Myers: There have been so many over the last 25 years! I think that's the main reason for the Tricycle's success, that is to say, the consistency of programming diverse work.

We're known for our black British and American work; we've become a home for those communities to migrate to. Last year, for instance, the Not Black and White

season included three plays about the state of Britain from the perspective of three black playwrights, with a majority of black cast members. Naturally this attracts a more culturally diverse audience.

The Colour of Justice (1999) was based on the murder of Stephen Lawrence. It's a good example of a production that reached out to all levels of our community from the friends and family of the victim, to other potential victims, the concerned public, and even law makers and the police.

Playboy of the West Indies, which was performed in 1984, 1993 and 2005 is a brilliant example of bringing together black and Irish audiences to see such reworking of an Irish classic. It proves that themes from the traditional play transcend time and remain relevant to different communities.

Esther Haworth: Are there any other groups that you see as marginalised who you would like to attract but who aren't yet coming forward with ideas?

Anna Myers: This year, the Arts Council commissioned us to find a deaf-led theatre company to produce a children's theatre show called *The Boy and the Statue*. The performances were a great success and the whole exercise brought in a large number of deaf children and their families. We'd really like to build on the foundation and develop this particular audience.

Esther Haworth: Our society is constantly changing. Are the newer immigrant communities getting involved, particularly those from Eastern Europe?

Anna Myers: A play we had on last December, *Detaining Justice* by Bola Agbaje, was part of the Not Black and White season. It focussed on the immigration system in the UK and featured various ethnic minorities, including those from Eastern Europe.

I've also seen an increase in the number of young people from these communities taking part in our education programme. We run a drama and visual art project called *Minding the Gap*, which works with young

people who have just arrived in the UK. The project helps them to bond with peers from different cultures, which is a great experience. This sort of artistic collaboration also really helps to build community cohesion. When the young people who attend Minding the Gap watched *Detaining Justice*, there was a lot they could relate to. It proved to be a really significant and lasting theatre experience for them.

Esther Haworth: Making the arts and arts education accessible for all children is clearly a key priority for the Tricycle, reflected in the array of workshops and after-school clubs you run and the numbers you attract. What backgrounds do these children come from?

Anna Myers: In keeping with the Tricycle's ethos we obviously maintain a broad diversity. The Education and Social Inclusion Programmes attract a large number of young people from a range of backgrounds including young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. There are also young people from the traveller community, and those from particularly deprived areas and areas with very high crime rates.

Esther Haworth: It may be that working with children can be challenging but rewarding for you in this field. What sort of changes do you see in these children once they have completed one of your programmes?

Anna Myers: The changes are much the same as we see in the adults, when people

are just given an opportunity. When young people engage with our projects, we see their confidence and self-esteem grow. Young people from these communities often face negative responses in their school or from other communities and are underserved and overlooked. We include them and we welcome them, and as a result we see a dramatic improvement in their behaviour and social skills. This can be as small as someone learning to make eye contact.

Esther Haworth: Your website states that one of the groups you aim to include in your Social Inclusion Programmes is "young people who have been, or are at risk of being excluded from mainstream education". Presumably many of them face this situation because of their difficult behaviour, whatever its cause. How do you handle these people? What techniques do you use, above and beyond those available in the mainstream education system?

Anna Myers: We are engaged with the Pupil Referral Units [PRUs] that work with young people who have been excluded or are at risk of being permanently excluded from school. I think we have the advantage of being able to welcome them into a completely new environment; many of these people will never have been in an arts environment. As I say, I think this helps them feel valued. Our activities also offer a very different form of expression for people who have struggled within the mainstream education system. Drama can be a very successful outlet for young people who have difficulty concentrating or who find academic work too challenging to persist with. For those who feel they are always 'getting things wrong' in school, drama is accessible, as there is never a wrong answer. Having said all that, our work here is limited as it involves working with the young people once a week, often for a limited time and sometimes we only see them once if they have moved on to another PRU. But I am certain that the work we do helps them start to build their confidence and enables them to engage with teachers, peers and the wider community better. I am certain we are instrumental in improving their lives and the lives of those around them.

Esther Haworth: Working with such diverse communities, have any of your programmes worked to build relations between faith communities?

Anna Myers: MUJU [the title referring to the Muslim and Jewish makeup of the group] is a company that started at the Tricycle in 2004. The intention of the sponsors was that it would be a young people's group for Muslims and Jews as they felt that youths from the two communities were becoming polarised. The collaboration has produced plays for theatre, arts festivals and other live events. And perhaps more importantly, genuine friendships formed which led to a deeper level of commitment from the crew.

Despite the fact that funding for MUJU was withdrawn in 2008 and the Tricycle can now only offer support through rehearsal space, the Crew has now developed into a self run charity, two of the original group members remain actors and one has become a successful playwright who still writes for MUJU. A new similar youth group is just emerging and already meets every week.

The Tricycle Theatre

The Tricycle has an outstanding reputation for presenting plays that reflect the cultural diversity of its community and an unparalleled international reputation for responding to contemporary events. It also has one of the largest and most diverse educational outreach programmes of any British theatre.

Launched in 2003, the Tricycle's Social Inclusion Programme offers a framework for self expression that enables socially excluded young people to overcome the consequences of exclusion, such as low educational attainment, low self-esteem or aggressive behaviour.

www.tricycle.co.uk



The Book Shelf

In each edition a guest contributor is invited by *Perspectives* to share their favourite and most formative books. The aim is to inspire us all to widen our reading, thinking and knowledge. Do send us your thoughts on the selection and your tips for books: trisha.kessler@woolf.cam.ac.uk



Sarah Joseph OBE is the CEO and Editor-in-Chief of *Emel*, a Muslim Lifestyle magazine. She converted from Christianity to Islam in 1988 and has, since then, worked to bridge the gulf between the two traditions which mean so much to her. She believes that people share more than divides them, and that commonality is the way to bridge the fear of the unknown and the 'other'. Sarah was awarded an OBE in 2004 for services to interfaith dialogue and the promotion of women's rights. She is listed as one of the World's 500 most influential Muslims by Georgetown University. Sarah is married to human rights barrister Mahmud Al-Rashid, and they have three children: Hasan, Sumayyah and Amirah.

The Bible

From my grandmother's oft quoted refrains, to Robert Powell's portrayal of the Bible story; from Bible study Quest club during morning break at school, to personal reflection and reading of its passages, the Bible was probably the most influential book for me when growing up. Even today, 22 years lived as a Muslim, the Bible – considered sacred in Islam – is still very influential in my life.

The Twelfth Day of July (series), Joan Lingard

Growing up as a pre-teen Catholic at a school with a sizeable Irish student population during the height of the problems in Ireland in the 1980s, the Kevin and Sadie series was compelling reading. The stories look at the faith divide, born of history and fuelled by prejudice and ignorance, but conquered by love.

The Metamorphosis, Franz Kafka

For some reason I was slightly obsessed by European literature as a teenager. *The Metamorphosis* was the most influential of that genre. Watching how an individual could be ostracised – even by those who claim to love him – affected my forming mind, and represents to me how easy it is for humanity to turn on the 'other'. The parallel between Gregor Samsa and anyone alienated from society through disability, severe ill-health, loss of fortune, homelessness and so on represents a potential future for all of us, yet most of us refuse to see it.

Animal Farm: A Fairy Story, George Orwell

This is a fairy story of the old school; it scares you to the bone. The narrative of ideals being manipulated to persecute was at once shocking and powerful to my idealistic mind. The book always illustrated my maternal mantra, Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. The character of Boxer represents to me the finest quality of loyalty within people, but also represents how such people have to be protected from dictatorial regimes.

Let There Be a World, Felix Greene

This book led me to become a passionate advocate for nuclear disarmament. The notion that we continue to spend limited resources on something that has the potential to destroy the very fabric of our planet is at once terrifying and insane. To this day I believe that nuclear weapons are fundamentally at odds with both a faith tradition and a civilised society.

City of Joy, Dominique Lapierre

This evocative, passionate book about the slums of Calcutta express the poverty of the body and the richness of the human spirit. The message that faith could be so transformative, as well as the conduit to a more just society, gave me hope that as person of faith I could perhaps help change the world, if not totally, then certainly my corner of it. The book added to my contemplation of a calling to become a nun, but in the end my destiny was to be within a different tradition. However, the belief in the role of faith in the formation of a just society has never left me.

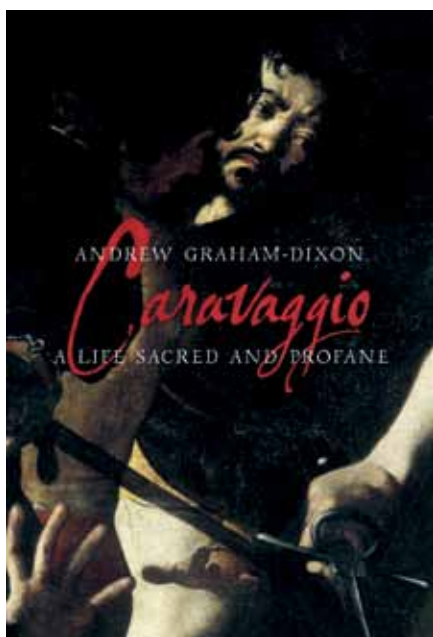
All of these books were formative in my youth. As an adult some of the most influential books I have read and which I recommend are the *Message of the Qur'an* (translated by Muhammad Asad), *Road to Makkah* by Muhammad Asad, *Islam and the Destiny of Man* by Hasan Le Gai Eaton and *Muhammad* by Martin Lings.

Review

Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane

Andrew Graham-Dixon

Reviewed by Patrick Bade, Senior
Lecturer and Tutor, Christie's Education



It seems we can't get enough of the bad boy of Western art. Andrew Graham-Dixon's new 443 page biography of Caravaggio is the third in a dozen years following Peter Robb's *M* (496 pages) and Helen Langdon's *Caravaggio: A Life* (391 pages). There have also been several weighty catalogues to accompany the bewildering number of block-buster Caravaggio exhibitions held over the same years. What more could possibly be added to our knowledge of the patchily documented life of an artist who died 400 years ago?

Great claims have been made for the new book, not least by Andrew Graham-Dixon, in the preface to his book. We are told that new archival research has enabled him to cast fresh light on key incidents in Caravaggio's life such as his murder of the pimp Ranuccio Tomassoni and his premature death and also on his much contested sexuality. The account

of Tomassoni's murder over 12 pages is incredibly detailed. Graham-Dixon's conclusion that Tomassoni died in a pre-arranged duel rather than a spontaneous brawl is interesting but does not add greatly to our understanding of Caravaggio or his art. The equally detailed examination of the circumstances surrounding Caravaggio's own death does indeed clarify a number of mysteries and misapprehensions. As for Graham-Dixon's proud boast that he has succeeded in identifying several individuals who posed for figures in his paintings, the reader may be tempted to retort, So what? The new revelations prove to be less than revelatory and the sheer density of detail makes a rather dull read out of what was evidently an action packed and exciting life.

The great debate about Caravaggio's sexuality, one that Graham-Dixon continues, was stoked by Peter Robb's book *M* which promoted the idea of Caravaggio as a kind of gay martyr or icon. Helen Langdon's contribution to the discussion is prim and naïve. She is anxious to downplay early gossip about homosexual activities in Caravaggio's circle and seems to believe that marriage or the frequenting of brothels is proof of undoubted heterosexuality. Though considerably more sophisticated than Helen Langdon in discussing Caravaggio's sexuality, Andrew Graham-Dixon seems to draw broadly the same conclusions. Inevitably perhaps, Caravaggio's biographers have tended to project their own sexual preferences and prejudices onto their subject. Graham-Dixon is right to assert, in a swipe at Peter Robb, "The idea that he was an early martyr to the drives of an unconventional sexuality is an anachronistic fiction". He is probably right to conclude that Caravaggio was omnisexual rather than homosexual or heterosexual as we would understand those terms today. Along the way, when in doubt Graham-Dixon usually inclines to the heterosexual answer.

"The balance of probability suggests that Caravaggio did indeed have sexual relations with men", he says rather reluctantly and adds quickly "but he certainly had female lovers."

Andrew Graham-Dixon prefers to present Caravaggio as a man of his time in the apparent contradiction between his profound religious belief, the chaos of his personal life and the fluidity of his sexuality, rather than as an outsider or rebel in the modern sense. In the end the pictures themselves speak far more eloquently of Caravaggio's sexual preferences than anything his biographers can say. It is blindingly obvious that it is the male body from pre-pubescent boys to muscle-bound men that really excites him. This range of sexual interest even within the homosexual spectrum sits uncomfortably with the modern tendency to categorise and pigeonhole sexuality.

Peter Robb's book is *sui generis* and will appeal to a very specific audience. Helen Langdon will satisfy those who want a well written biography and aren't too worried about the sex. Do we need Andrew Graham-Dixon's book as well? Though hardly a page turner and not quite coming up with the revelations it promises, there is enough here to justify the price for those in thrall to Caravaggio's complex and mysterious art.

Andrew Graham-Dixon (2010) *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane*: London Penguin Books

Further reading

P. Robb, *M* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2000).

H. Langdon, *Caravaggio: A Life* (London, Pimlico Press, 1999).

Reflections: Working with Minorities

Minorities and their role in society is of particular interest to a number of our students. Together with some of our alumni here they share their experiences of engaging in interfaith relations.



John Su

Dr John Su is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne. Trained as a paediatrician and dermatologist, he came to CJCR to pursue the MSt after undertaking theological studies at the Melbourne College of Divinity.

My family arrived in Melbourne, Australia in 1972, just as the White Australia Policy came to an end. Despite the presence of ethnic and religious diversity in the early days of European settlement, racial tensions had developed in Australia during the gold rush years, resulting in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901. Immigration nonetheless continued, from Post-Second World War Southern Europe (including Jews and Turkish Muslims) and more recently from South-East Asia, India and Africa. Official multicultural policies have subsequently been introduced in Australia. Rapidly increasing ethnic and religious diversity has raised many questions relating to community life, questions that seem to many Australians to be best answered by

a simplistic concept of pluralistic tolerance. The 2005 Cronulla riots suggested, however, that much work has yet to be done, not just for 'self-other' understandings, but also to help Australian youths give meaning to their lives. In recent pre-election debates, immigration remained a central issue.

For the past decade, I have worked in Melbourne as a dermatologist attending three teaching hospitals and a private practice. Understanding faith issues has been pertinent for my work in at least three ways.

First, the variety of faiths found amongst colleagues and the families of patients has significance for my everyday work relationships. For example, yesterday, my Orthodox Jewish colleague asked me to discuss baby-feeding recommendations with a Muslim baby's parents. Greater cultural understanding and sensitivity facilitate clearer communication. Through my studies at CJCR, I have come to realise that the cultural or religious 'other' cannot be reduced or depersonalised to a knowable concept. I am learning instead to appreciate the diversity and particularities of the

cultural, traditional and religious contexts of the faithful 'other'. This has further facilitated interfaith relationships. Prejudice towards, and fear of, the 'other' can transform into respect for and openness to the 'other', who remains unique and unknowable.

Second, ethical problems faced in my daily work invariably involve faith issues. My work in paediatric dermatology often addresses beginning-of-life questions (such as prenatal diagnosis of genetic diseases, assisted pregnancy and genetic manipulation) and less commonly, end-of-life questions. The common concern of the three Abrahamic faiths for human dignity means, for me, that there is a real possibility of interfaith co-operation in addressing these socio-ethical questions vis-à-vis the frequently unquestioned directives of utilitarian and commercialised secularism.

Compromised human dignity, I believe, also relates to a third phenomenon that I face at work: the rising depression and alienation. This may directly or indirectly affect the presentation of illness and the non-compliance of the patient with therapy. In realising existential meaning and in attaining an improved quality of life, I see a place for interfaith co-operation beyond the realms of the social and ethical, touching the philosophical and perhaps even the theological. Although nominally a primarily Christian country, only about nine percent of Australians attend church. Despite the difficulties of theological interfaith dialogue, the Abrahamic religions can vitally contribute to an otherwise increasingly secular Australia. They have a depth dimension that is alluded to by words such as *kawannah* [intent], *aslama* [obedience] and *autoexousia* [self determination]. This dimension concerns the possibility of a person opening up to hear and respond to what Tillich refers to as the *Grundoffenbarung* [foundational revelation] in all religions and cultures.



Gifty Immanuel

Dr Gifty Immanuel MD MPH FRSA is Director of the Centre for AIDS & Antiviral Research in Tuticorin, India. He holds a number of medical qualifications, including a PhD in human virology and a Public Health certificate from Harvard. He is currently in his second year on the MSt.

I work as a Physician/Scientist at the Center for AIDS & Antiviral Research in Tuticorin, India. We are involved in the treatment and prevention of human viral diseases. The majority of the local population are Hindus, the minorities include Christians, Muslims and Jews. Cochin which has one of the

smallest settlements of Jews in India is a few hours drive from Tuticorin.

Religion plays a major role in treatment compliance and response. One of the key challenges in treating Muslim patients is their fasting requirements during Ramadan. Due to religious restrictions most Muslims refuse medication during this time. It is hard to convince them of the serious consequences of neglecting to take their prescribed medications. On the other hand, a quarter of the Christian population believes that diseases are a result of divine punishment for sins, ignoring proven causative factors. New Age Christians, like Jehovah's Witnesses and some Pentecostal groups often opt for faith-based healing rather than conventional medical management. Cochin Jews, though small in number, have a positive attitude towards medicine but often refuse or neglect medical attention when religious customs are strictly followed, such as during the Sabbath.

Medicine is customised to meet the patient's needs, including their spiritual needs and customs. We have trialed autologous blood transfusion (using donated blood from their

own communities) for certain groups like Jehovah's Witnesses. In the past, Jewish and Muslim patients have refused porcine insulin due to religious convictions. With advances in biotechnology we have been able to deliver recombinant insulins which do not contain any animal component. Similarly, capsules made from gelatine of animal origin have been replaced by synthetic materials to meet certain religious needs. Long-acting and sustained-release drugs have been designed to match the fasting patterns of religious groups. Christian chaplaincy services are also worth mentioning. Voluntary pastoral care and counseling for those terminally-ill with HIV/AIDS at our Centre have been well received.

Using the latest developments in medical research and development to meet the spiritual requirements of one's patients, a physician can greatly enhance doctor-patient relations. Such a patient-driven system will surely have a positive outcome. But there is also a growing body of evidence which suggests that religion can play an important role in healing and health care. It is perhaps this which will make for even more interesting developments in the future.



Imam Fahim

Dr Fahim is the Head Imam of the South Woodford Muslim Community Centre and Chairman of the trust responsible for running the Centre. He came to the CJCR in 2007–8 and is a Muslim Chaplain for the Metropolitan Police and Forest School (a Church of England school). Dr Fahim is also a member of the Redbridge Three Faiths Forum.

The South Woodford Muslim Community Centre provides a range of services and facilities to the local Muslim community, from Friday sermons in English to marriage registration and counselling. Our catchment area stretches from Loughton to Snaresbrook and Wanstead. The local population is mainly white middle class although it is becoming more ethnically diverse.

As a community we do face opposition from a vocal minority of neighbours, notably the more hard-line members of the local council and the local British National Party who do not want our Centre to exist. Some of these people are concerned that the establishment of a mosque will encourage Muslims and/or ethnic minorities to move into the area believing that this will devalue their properties and change the social qualities of the area. Some fear Islam itself, partly because they misunderstand it and partly because some Muslims, having

misunderstood Islam themselves, have become extreme, anti-social and even criminal in their behaviour. Local opposition has manifested itself openly in a firebomb attack 9 years ago and through an ongoing campaign by the BNP against the "notorious South Woodford mosque". The BNP are particularly exercised about our Centre because we challenge their prejudices by being atypical of mosques: we empower women, educate children in a modern way, participate in multi faith forums, and work to develop relationships with the local community bodies including the police and schools. Opposition within the Council has shown itself more subtly when the local council have repeatedly blocked our applications for planning permission and closed the car park that was used by Centre users on Fridays.

Our response is to promote understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims. We host visits from and provide speakers to

local schools; we deliver special lectures and open days for non Muslims at Christmas and Easter; we design and deliver Christmas cards to our neighbours, religious and political leaders and the Queen every year; promoting the message of peace and understanding; we host meetings of the Three Faiths Forum and fortnightly meetings of community police, QMT and local neighbors; and we participate in the annual Woodford Festival.

We also face challenges from within our own community such as managing the response to international developments that provoke outrage. We encourage the congregation to respond within the limits of the law of the land – by campaigning, writing to our politicians and the media, and through peaceful demonstrations.

Our Centre users come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and hold different traditions regarding Islam. Our strategy is to call people to the core, universal values that were revealed to the Prophet. We have an explicit policy not to promote the teachings of any single tradition. Where divergent views arise, opinions from the four main schools of Sunni thought are presented to the congregation. One of our greatest challenges is educating people who do not want to change. How do you call a militant or a Wahabi to the virtues of classical Islam like enlightenment, kindness and humility? I have had some success in educating people regarding the rights of women, the proper conduct of men towards their wives and daughters, inheritance law, marriage and divorce. This requires people to undergo a major paradigm shift which men in particular resist, as it results in them losing power

and control over their wives and children. I have found that framing these issues as obligations that incur God's wrath if not fully discharged has resulted in men changing their behaviour. I have also been able to persuade some people that there are a range of well-supported and legitimate views concerning halal meat and bank interest. Whether facing challenges from within or from 'without', studying at the Woolf Institute has shown me that there are many lessons to be learned from Christians and Jews in how we address them. In particular, Muslims can learn how to present grievances in a peaceful and proper manner, not by burning flags or throwing bricks, and should observe their Jewish brothers and sisters in particular, in learning how to maintain a religious and cultural identity in the UK and Europe, without violating the rights of others.



The Rev'd Patrick Morrow

Patrick Morrow is Associate Priest to St Matthew's, Camberwell, South Central London, and Chaplain to the Denmark Hill Campus of King's College London. From 2011 he will be Anglican Chaplain and Inter Faith Advisor to the University of Brunel, overseeing chaplains of different faiths. He completed his MA in Jewish-Christian Relations at CJCR as part of his ordination training, and has taught for the Woolf Institute's Public Education Programmes. He is active in the Council for Christians and Jews, the Lambeth Jewish Forum and the London Presence and Engagement Network.

Diversity is at the core of all I do. My church congregation is 90% African or of Afro-Caribbean heritage; the campus is devoted to health-related matters, centred on King's College Hospital and the Maudsley psychiatric hospital. I am part of two communities. The internal diversity within each group is as marked and important as that which binds us. St Matthew's Church, Camberwell is small, and aware that it is just one of many Christian families in the area, ranging from Pentecostal to Eritrean Orthodox. Independent Black-led churches have a history of being suspicious of ecumenical and other relations and there is something of a 'turnover' of communities renting spaces on a temporary basis.

The college community is large, and growing, though it too faces financial issues, given the economic threats to higher education. Diversity here takes the form of a large Muslim minority, among the medical and dental students especially. But there is another continuum between those who combine their scientific work with faith (of any kind), and those who place all hope for progress in science. Psychiatry's habitual judgements on religion, as meaningless at

best, and harmful at worst, are still around, though not the whole story. Both teachers and medical students are aware that there are 'gaps', at least when it comes to dealing with death, both the grief of relatives and the sense of failure of the medics. But that does not make chaplaincy a natural place to turn to – at least not yet!

Recently I was approached on the street by someone asking: "Hey, what is your word?" Not an unusual event in this part of the world. I answered: "My word is hope". I learned this form of 'hope' from my time as a student of the Woolf Institute: hope, that is not naïve optimism, but has real content. Hope, that by addressing and not running away from all the controversies, difficulties, contradictions, rivalries and histories of misunderstandings, many of which are malignant, new perspectives will come. Such new perspectives are so much more interesting than empty secular tolerance or some mythical agreement.

I'll give an example of hope from my chaplaincy work. I was involved in a discussion with an engaged Muslim on some work-a-day matters such as the *niqab*

and security and dignity. She commented that differences between us, as Christian and Muslim, must be matters of taste. I argued that there is more to it than that, that something really is at stake, among our different claims about Revelation and human flourishing. She replied that it must mean, deep down, each believes the other is destined for hell. I disagreed, and, inspired by this, organised a panel discussion with a

rabbi, imam, priest, and agnostic philosopher, on Difference and Damnation. What most moved her was not the discussion, but the humility of the rabbi. It was her first encounter with any Jewish person speaking on faith, and it 'confused' her worldview in a creative way. The rabbi began by saying that, for her, Judaism was not perfect, striking a note of openness which the Muslim student would never have expected. This happens

in the parish too, where, say, I set out to 'confuse' deeply ingrained Christian views on those wonderful Pharisees.

These issues are not going to go away, and I hope to play my part in promoting in-depth discussions. In these, it should never be obligatory to begin by saying how we all agree deep down. By the grace of God (as I would put it), we don't.



Rabbi Danny Burkeman

Danny Burkeman is a Rabbi at West London Synagogue having completed his MA at CJCR. He was ordained by the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, where he wrote his rabbinical thesis on the subject of non-Israelite women in the Bible. He is currently expanding this research into a PhD at King's College, London.

As a Reform rabbi living in the UK, there are many minorities which I consider myself a part of. On the widest level being a religious person in twenty-first century Britain places me as part of a minority in the face of the sweeping secularisation of our society. I am also a part of the Jewish minority, accounting for less than 1% of the country's total population. And as a specifically Reform Jew, I am a minority within that Jewish minority, which in affiliation remains predominantly orthodox.

I have been working as a Rabbi at West London Synagogue (WLS) for a year now,

and it is a fascinating community to be a part of. The congregation is steadfastly Jewish, but at the same time, throughout its 170 year history, it has viewed its British identity as equally important. The Synagogue's full name is the West London Synagogue of British Jews. We are British, part of the majority culture, but we are also Jewish, part of a minority. On the walls as one enters the Synagogue there are plaques remembering members of the community who fell in both World Wars. It makes a statement that we may be a minority, but our young men fought and died alongside the rest of British society.

Often religious groups are positioned against each other by the media. This is especially true of the Jewish and Muslim communities, who are often portrayed as enemies, especially in relation to the Middle East conflict.

WLS is situated near the Edgware Road, close to the West End of London. While there is no longer a significant Jewish community living near to the Synagogue, today we share the neighbourhood with one of the capital's largest Muslim populations. I walk to work past shops and restaurants with signs in Arabic, and my experience has always been of a very diverse, harmonious neighbourhood community. Many of our events are catered for by the local Lebanese grocery shop, and we have entertained guests at the local Middle Eastern restaurants.

As a member of the Reform Jewish community I face specific challenges as a minority within a minority. Often there is a need to explain what Reform Judaism

believes and how it differs from other elements of the Jewish community; in the wider society this might include explaining why I do not wear a big black hat or have a beard. Being a minority within a minority requires a confidence in the authenticity, legitimacy and validity of one's own personal religious identity. I am a Reform Jew because of our commitment to tradition balanced with modernity, a pledge to complete egalitarianism and a dedication to social action.

The wider Jewish community today is often faced with creeping antisemitism, dressed up in the clothing of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric. When Israel and Jews are used interchangeably by voices in the media, one begins to feel like a member of a persecuted minority. And with the Jewish memory of discrimination and persecution there is a need for constant vigilance.

However, in British society all religious people are part of a combined religious minority. We must all explain to the wider world why God is not just relevant in our lives, but should be relevant for all people. We must unite when any religious freedoms are threatened; the burqa today, the kippah tomorrow. The Woolf Institute is therefore vital in bringing together people from different religious backgrounds. By learning about the 'other' we strengthen our own identity, but equally importantly we strengthen the wider society. When different religious minorities come together to bring God's presence into the world, the influence we can have far outweighs our small numbers.

Master of Studies in the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations

The MSt is a two-year, part-time University of Cambridge degree, offered in conjunction with the Divinity Faculty and the Institute of Continuing Education. It offers a unique opportunity to study Jewish-Christian relations from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (including history, sociology, political, cultural, and biblical studies) and acquire a Master's degree from one of the world's foremost universities. The course is available residentially in Cambridge or primarily via e-learning.

In the first year of the MSt students take four taught modules (Foundations, Scripture, History, Culture) and prepare for the dissertation which is further developed in the second year.

www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/cjcr/courses/mst.php



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Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe: modern challenges

**An e-learning programme:
10 January–21 April 2011**

This three-part course focuses on the relationship between and impact of Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe today, their history, culture and issues of citizenship.

Is there more to Jewish history in Europe than the Holocaust? Is the presence of Muslims in Europe a new phenomenon spanning only the last few decades? How have Jews, Christians and Muslims influenced European culture? Students will be encouraged to address challenging questions, some easier to answer than others, through teaching, case studies and set reading.

The course is taught at a final-year undergraduate level. You may wish to use this course as a stepping stone to further studies.

You will work with Woolf Institute tutors who will support you through the course. The course fee is £300. Bursaries are available.

For further information: www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/jcme

Contact:
lucia.faltin@woolf.cam.ac.uk

Muslims and Jews: the historical and contemporary encounter

An e-learning programme: 10 January–21 April 2011

Relations between Muslims and Jews are often overshadowed by the conflict in the Middle East and by an increasing sense of insecurity felt by each community. But there is more to Muslim-Jewish relations than a history of discord.

This pioneering course will study the historical periods of fruitful co-existence and tolerance, the encounters which brought Muslims and Jews together, and the shared rituals that are part of the fabric of everyday life. We will also tackle difficult topics such as to what extent Islamophobia and Antisemitism are on the increase and the rise of modern Zionism and the place of Palestine in Muslim consciousness.

You will work with Woolf Institute tutors who will support you through the course. The course fee is £300. Bursaries are available.

For further information: www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/cmjr/courses/elearning.php
Contact: trisha.kessler@woolf.cam.ac.uk

Public Education Programmes

The Woolf Institute offers a number of public education programmes specially tailored for faith communities, public-sector bodies and wider community-based groups. They are delivered through seminars, workshops and plenary sessions, and also via e-learning.

These programmes are designed in consultation with individual groups. Amongst those we have worked with are the Metropolitan Police Service, the Diocese of Salford and Cambridge City Council offering variations on the following courses:

- Islam, misconceptions and realities
- Faith literacy and the interfaith encounter
- An introduction to Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations

For further information: www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/courses/pep.php
Contact: andrew.brown@woolf.cam.ac.uk

VISITING FELLOWS

Amy-Jill Levine at CJCR

Amy-Jill Levine, the renowned New Testament scholar and author of *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (2006), will be at CJCR as a Visiting Fellow from April to June 2011. She will be here to undertake research but there will also be an exciting and diverse programme of events, including an international colloquium on 30 June–1 July focusing on her work.

Camilla Adang at CMJR

Dr Adang is a Senior Lecturer in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Tel Aviv University and will be a Visiting Fellow at CMJR from June–August 2011. She will be researching relations between Muslims and Jews in the Islamic West.

Jay Geller at CJCR

Jay Geller, Associate Professor of Modern Jewish Culture at Vanderbilt Divinity School, will be a Visiting Fellow at CJCR from April–June 2011. Jay has published numerous articles on Freud and Jewish identity. While in Cambridge, he will be researching antisemitism and will hold a colloquium on 27–28 June.

NEW ONLINE JOURNAL

Announcement of a new journal in the study of Muslim-Jewish Relations: *Intertwined Worlds*

In January 2011, the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations will launch a new peer-reviewed e-journal *Intertwined Worlds* under the auspices of Wiley-Blackwell's Religion Compass (www.religion-compass.com). Edited by CMJR Academic Director Dr Josef (Yousef) Meri, it will explore the historical relationships and spiritual affinities between Islam and Judaism. The journal will offer authoritative articles on a wide variety of topics within the study of Muslim-Jewish relations accessible to a broad audience. It will also engage in discussions of timely issues within the field of Muslim-Jewish relations and explore the civilisational context of Muslim-Jewish relations.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Recordings of major events and lectures given at the Woolf Institute are available at: www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/events

Highlights include:

JEWS OF ARAB CULTURE

Opening address by HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal

Jewish Writers from Iraq and Arab Writers in Israel

Shmuel Moreh (Hebrew University)

We Cannot Understand Ourselves without the Arabic

Almog Behar (Hebrew University)

Palestinian Poetry in Arabic and Hebrew

Nida Nitsa Khoury

Palestinian Writing in Hebrew: Conflict and Identity

Sayed Kashua

Jewish Translators of Arabic Literature into Hebrew

Hannah Amit-Kochavi (Bar Ilan University)

LIFE AND DEATH IN JUDAISM AND ISLAM

Medical Practice at the End of life in Judaism and Islam

David Katz (University College London) and Aiman Alzetani (National Health Service)

Religious Insights into Life and Death

Rabbi David Hulbert and Imam Mohammed Fahim

End of Life Issues and Chaplaincy

Imam Yunus Dudwhalla and Rabbi Amanda Golby

MASTERS DISSERTATIONS

submitted in 2010

The following list of Masters Dissertations can now be found in the Cambridge Theological Federation Library Catalogue: <http://affint-newton.lib.cam.ac.uk>. They are a valuable reference for further study.

Jewish Topographies in Eastern Poland in the XXI Century. On the Trail to Lizhansk's Tzadik.

Reconciliation in the Theology of Miroslav Volf and its Application to Jewish-Christian Relations 2010

Patterns of Memorialisation in *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer and its Film Adaptation by Liev Schreiber

A Right to Reflect: Relating Elie Wiesel's *Night* to Christians

The Presbyterian Church (USA) and Jewish-Christian Relations: A Critical Analysis of the Debate Surrounding the Document *Christians and Jews: People of God*

"Antipathy and Empathy". Glasgow's Jews and their Relationship with Scotland's Christian Churches from 1878 to 1902

Philosophy of Language as a Tool for Theology in Jewish-Christian Relations: Franz Rosenzweig and Paul M. van Buren

Jewish and Christian Theological Reflections on the Talmudic Passages about Jesus.

The Belfast Jewish Community during the Troubles and their Aftermath

Highlights

Inaugural Lecture by Josef Meri

Past, Present and Future Historical Memories: the impact of key texts, objects and rituals on Muslim-Jewish relations

The lecture will address the effect of texts, objects and rituals in the Muslim-Jewish encounter which has implications for remembering the past and remembering for the future. (See more on page 7)

17 February, 17.00, St Edmund's College, Cambridge

Lecture by Simon Schama

Simon Schama, one of Britain's leading historians, and cultural critics, will speak at the Woolf Institute on 8 March. Further details will be posted at: www.woolf.cam.ac.uk

Colloquia

The Other Jewish Question

A CJCR Colloquium with Jay Geller, Vivian Liska, Liliane Weissberg and Lars Fischer

27–28 June

Understanding and Affirming Judaism in Christian Preaching and Teaching

A CJCR Colloquium with Amy-Jill Levine and Bill Brosend (further speakers to be confirmed)

30 June–1 July

Calendar

WOOLF INSTITUTE LECTURES

Zionism and the British Empire

MSt Plenary Lecture with James Renton (Edge Hill)

26 January, 14.15, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge

Evolution and Jewish-Christian Relations

MSt Plenary Lecture with Daniel Langton (University of Manchester)

2 February, 14.15, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge

Isaac and Ishmael: what's next?

A lecture by Ed Kessler

9 February, 16.00, Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University Harcourt Hill, Oxford, OX2 9AT

Allegories of Destruction. Antisemitism and Misogyny in Weininger's *Sex and Character*

MSt Plenary Lecture with Christine Achinger (University of Warwick)

9 February, 14.15, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge

True Poles: Catholicism, Antisemitism, and the Legacy of Collaboration in Post-war Poland

MSt Plenary Lecture with Jim Bjork (King's College London)

16 February, 14.15, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge

Controversial Preaching in Medieval Judaism – with some comparisons to Christianity and Islam

CMJR lecture by Marc Saperstein (Leo Baeck College)

24 February, 15.00, Wesley House

Beyond Polemics and Pluralism: The Universality of the Qur'an

CMJR lecture by Reza Shah-Kazemi (Institute of Ismaili Studies, London)

28 February, 15.00, Rank Room, Wesley House.

Laughter and Literary "Quality": Friederike Kempner's Reception as a Jewish writer, the Genius of Involuntary Humour, and Germany's Worst Poet

MSt Plenary Lecture with Susanne Kord (University College London)

9 March, 14.15, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge

More plenary lectures and other events are at www.woolf.cam.ac.uk

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