

Newsletter No 58

April

2014

Australian Association for Jewish Studies

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Editorial



President's Message

Dear Friends,

With a very successful conference behind us, the year is speeding ahead, and Pesach is already upon us! Quite soon we hope to despatch to members the 2013 *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, which we hope you will find of much interest and value. We are very fortunate as an association to have secured more volunteers on our team of dedicated individuals, which is most welcome in terms of sharing the workload, but even of more value, when it comes to the infusion of new ideas and energies. To those new volunteers and members, we welcome you and thank you for being a part of our association.

On both a personal note and on behalf of the AAJS, I would like to wish you all an uplifting and joyful Pesach!

Chag Pesach kasher ve'sameach!

Michael

Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod,
President,
Australian Association for Jewish Studies



Call for Papers – Australian Association for Jewish Studies
The 27th AAJS Conference, 15-16 February 2015
The University of New South Wales and the Shalom Institute, Kensington, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Neighbours: Relations between Jews and non-Jews throughout History

In 2001, Polish-American historian Jan T. Gross published a controversial monograph entitled *Neighbours* in which he described the destruction of the Jewish community in the Polish city of Jedwabne at the hands of the local Polish population. The term *neighbour* became synonymous with the suffering of the Jews at the hands of the non-Jewish locals. Relations between Jews and non-Jews throughout history are often depicted as full of prejudice, mistrust, violence, pogroms and murder. Authors often debate the impossibility of a beneficial multicultural and multiethnic coexistence between the Jewish and non-Jewish locals. They also conjecture that it was this impossibility of coexistence that ultimately led to the collapse of the European Jewish world in the twentieth century, but also to the subsequent complicated establishment of the Jews in other parts of the world. However, looking at the history of the Jewish people all over the world, we also need to consider the benefits of the coexistence between the Jews and other people. The moments of crisis were often followed by centuries of peaceful coexistence, where interactions between communities led to political, cultural and spiritual developments and improvements. The Jews and their neighbours maintained close relations, influenced each other and created bonds that beneficially shaped the lives of both communities throughout the centuries.

Since antiquity the Jews have lived side by side with other peoples. With the geographic dispersion of the Jews after the destruction of the Second Temple and their

gradual settlement in Europe, Asia, Africa and later in the 'New World', the interactions between the Jews and other communities invariably increased. The purpose of the conference is to convene scholars who are involved in academic research of Jewish/non-Jewish (however defined) relations throughout the centuries. We intend to offer a multifaceted perspective on the lives of the Jews and their rich interactions with their neighbours all over the world.

We welcome papers that address the issue of Jewish coexistence with other peoples from diverse perspectives, including:

- Interactions between the Jews and non-Jews throughout centuries
- Ancient Israel and its neighbours
- Cultural and spiritual interactions between the Jews and other communities
- Influence of other communities on Jewish languages
- Impact of Jews and Judaism on other communities
- Impact of other communities on Jews and Judaism
- Judaism and other religious communities
- Jewish communities and their neighbours in the modern era
- Modern Israel and its neighbours
- Violence in Jewish history
- Representation of Jews and their neighbours in film and literature
- Proposals for special sessions (roundtables, film screenings or discussions of new book releases) will also be considered.

Papers on other topics will be considered but preference will be given to those bearing directly on the conference theme.

Please submit your paper proposal by 1 September 2014 to Dr Jan Láníček via email J.Lanicek@unsw.edu.au. **The Subject of the message should be 'AAJS UNSW 2015 Proposal'** (All applicants will be informed about the decision by 31 October 2014).

Submissions must include the following:

- Applicant's full name and institutional affiliation
- Postal and email address
- Abstract of the paper to be presented (no more than 250 words)
- Short biographical note (no more than 50 words).

AAJS encourages students engaged in academic research to submit proposals based on their work to the conference committee. Authors should clearly indicate their student status on their submission.

Presenters are also invited to submit written articles for consideration for publication in the Australian Journal for Jewish Studies.

Communication about the conference should be sent electronically to Dr Jan Láníček, email: J.Lanicek@unsw.edu.au

Conference Committee

- Dr Jan Lanicek, Conference Convener
- Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod, AAJS President
- Professor Suzanne Rutland OAM
- Michael Misrachi
- Dr Avril Alba
- Dr Myer Samra

- Dr Miriam Munz
- Neta Steigrad
- Anna Rosenbaum
- Professor Ghil'ad Zuckermann

As this Conference addresses a small community of scholars, it is imperative that we all support the Association. Thus, it is a requirement that all presenters at this conference must have paid the conference registration fee, which includes the AAJS membership for 2014, by 10 January 2015. Visit www.aajs.org.au for details.

The Adelaide Conference

Our conference this year in Adelaide revolved around the theme of 'Jews, Judaism and Hybridity'. It attracted a diverse group of researchers from across the globe. The keynote speaker for the conference was Professor Bernard Wasserstein from the University of Chicago whose wide-ranging paper 'The Smile of the Cheshire Cat: Reflections on Jewish Cultural Crossings in the 58th century' set the tone for the engaging series of papers that followed. The major sponsor for the conference as well as Professor Wasserstein's trip to Australia was the Pratt Foundation.



Several participants at Port Elliot excursion

As always, we held our AGM during lunchtime at the conference. As this is the alternative year, elections were not held, but Professor Ghil'ad Zuckerman has agreed to be co-opted as Vice-President for Adelaide. We are deeply indebted to his outstanding efforts to ensure that the conference was such an outstanding success.

The following article was published in the Australian Jewish news after the conference:

CELEBRATING JEWISH HYBRIDITY
 An article by Timna Jacks **THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH NEWS**
 Friday February 21, 2014

“ARE Jews in the Diaspora so far launched on a trajectory of demographic declines, social disintegration and cultural dissolution that they are in the process of vanishing? Or is there an irreducible core of Judaism, Jewish culture that will endure?” This was just one of the questions put to more than 100 academics and community members by former president of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies Professor Bernard Wasserstein, the keynote speaker at the Australian Association of Jewish Studies’ 26th annual conference at The University of Adelaide last week, which centred on the theme “Jews, Judaism and Hybridity”.



Meeting some Australian fauna



Prof Bernard Wasserman



Seth Cunin

Wasserstein considered cases such as the Jewish communities of China and India, the Falashas in Ethiopia, the Jews of the Muslim world and European Jewry, as he explored the question: “how can the concept of hybridity help? All these Jewries have exhibited syncretic characteristics in the course of their history. I suggest that the idea of Jewish peoplehood, serviceable for political reasons over the past century, may be losing its cohesive force,” he posed.



Prof Bernard Wasserman and Prof Ghil'ad Zuckermann

The ways in which Jewish identity has influenced or been influenced by other cultures and traditions, was explored over three days by leading academics from across the country. Seventy six years after Aboriginal activist William Cooper protested against Nazi treatment of Jews, Cooper's grandson Uncle Boydie Turner was joined on a panel by Abe Schwartz and Professor Ghil'ad Zuckermann, chair of linguistics and endangered languages at Adelaide University. The panel focused on parallels between Jewishness and Aboriginality and also featured Bangarla man Stephen Atkinson who is working with Zuckermann to revive the Bangarla Aboriginal language.



From L-R. Andrew Steiner
(Holocaust Survivor,
artist, historian and Uncle
Boydie (Aboriginal Hero
William Cooper's Grandson
AAJS Adelaide 9-11 February 2014
Photographer Laurence Castle
Adelaide 11 February 2014



Uncle Boydie



Hava Nagila



Stephen Goldsmith

Another panel explored the nature of common stereotypes of Jews in China, and another focused on Greek-Jewish child survivors who had been saved by Christian families during

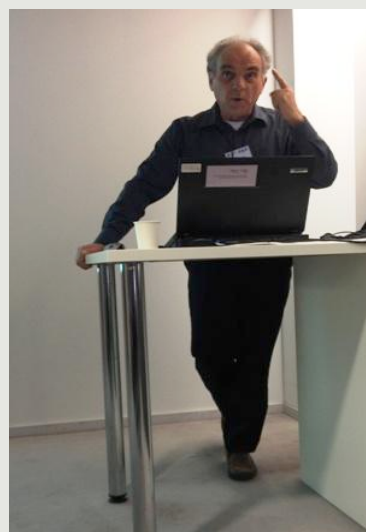
the German occupation, Zuckermann, the event convenor, said the conference was a “celebration” of the “lack of purity and hybridity” in Jewish tradition and culture.

“Extensive study of the Jewish faith, method of scriptural interpretation, Jewish identity, society, literature, art, philosophy and language throughout history, demonstrates that they were all heavily influenced by diverse cultures and religions, and by no means can they be satisfactorily explained as being the outcome of their Jewish or Hebrew classical origins alone”, he said. “This conference celebrates the relationship between Jews and others. Judaism is not just about keeping kosher and circumcision. We are more than that. Judaism is a culture, it is a language, it is a civilisation. If we can recognise this complexity, I think we will be more compassionate towards others.

One of three parallel sessions



*Dr Lynn Arnold (AO)
A/Prof*



*Dan Avon who was boycotted by
Jake Lynch*



L-R Atkinson, Uncle Boydie, Stephen Goldsmith

Letters of Appreciation:

Professor Bernard Wasserstein

Dear Mr Lipski,

I am sorry that I did not have an opportunity to meet you during my recent visit to Australia so that I could thank you in person but I want to write and express my appreciation to you and your colleagues at the Pratt Foundation for your sponsorship of my trip – my first to your extraordinary continent. Australia, the Australian Jewish community, and the Australian Association for Jewish Studies were each and all a revelation. The Association's conference was an intellectual feast that I greatly relished and I was only sorry that it did not last longer so that I might have heard many of the papers in extended form since they were full of so much to engage and enthuse the mind and spirit. Ghil'ad Zuckerman was a superb impresario of the conference and of my visit. My hosts in Sydney and Melbourne were no less gracious, conscientious, and informative: they gave me superb insights into those cities and their Jewish communities. All in all, I was delighted by - and learned an immense amount from - my trip. I am correspondingly grateful to you all.

Best wishes,

Bernard Wasserstein



March 5, 2014

RE: Thank you letter - AAJS 2014 Pratt Foundation support fund

Dear Prof. Zuckermann,

I was very happy to learn that I was one of the recipients of the *Pratt foundation* support fund dedicated to the 26th annual conference of the Association of Australian Jewish Studies conference at the University of Adelaide, February 2014.

I am writing to personally thank you for the *Pratt foundation's* generous, financial support which enabled me to attend this important scholarly event.

Thanks to this generosity I was able to present my paper about the Israeli emigration to Australia to my fellow AAJS members, and hopefully contribute to the body of Jewish studies academic knowledge in Australia. In the near future, the paper presented would be published in an academic venue.

I found the conference itself of the highest academic standards. It was very educational and diverse and included interesting and informative lectures which explored various aspects of Jewish culture and Israel studies. The event was also well organised and enabled participants to communicate with each other and exchange thoughts and ideas about further research.

Please convey my gratitude and appreciation to the organisers, the participants, the supporters and sponsors. I am looking forward to next year's conference.

Yours,

Dr. Ran Porat

Monash University - Melbourne

News from the Department of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies University of Sydney

The summer research period was a busy and productive one for members of the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies. Individual staff members undertook both conference and research trips. In December 2013 Dr Ari Lobel participated in the Annual Association for Jewish Studies Conference in Boston, the single largest gathering of Jewish studies scholars globally. Professor Suzanne Rutland continued her work on a collaborative research project on Jewish Education in Australasia with A/Professor Zehavit Gross of Bar Ilan University, with research taking place in Israel, New Zealand, China as well as various locations within Australia. Professor Konrad Kwiet undertook a joint expedition with Yad Vashem researchers to identify and catalogue previously unknown mass graves in the Białowieska

forests, Poland and Dr Avril Alba travelled to Amsterdam and London to undertake research on pre-war Jewish museums and exhibitions as part of the FASS Research Incubator project. In addition, she participated a one-day research workshop at the Weiner Library in London as part of an ongoing research project between the Universities of Southampton, Cape Town and Sydney *The Holocaust and Legacies of Race in the Post Colonial World*.

Department Chair Associate Professor Ian Young has returned to duties after his SSP in Semester II, 2013. Ian describes this SSP as being his most productive and significant. He completed his contribution to a monograph co-authored with Robert Rezetko titled *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, which is expected to be published in the Society of Biblical Literature's Ancient Near Eastern Monographs series. He then moved on to a new research project on the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, focused on the book of Daniel, and wrote a draft of a monograph currently titled Ian Young, *Texts Without an Original: The Old Greek and the Masoretic Text in Daniel 5*. After having worked on Hebrew language as his research area for so long, he enjoyed working with Aramaic and Greek texts for a change.

Professor Rutland, Dr Lobel, Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod (AAJS President) and Dr Alba all gave papers at the 26th Annual Australian Association for Jewish Studies conference held at the University of Adelaide from 9-11 February. Papers included a fascinating historical overview of Egyptian Jewish migration to Adelaide by HBJs graduate Dr Racheline Barda.

The year ahead is also set to be a busy and productive one for HBJs with the planned launch of a mini exhibition curated by Professor Rutland honoring the Department's founders and major sponsors, an international Holocaust Studies conference planned by Professor Kwiet to mark his final year as Pratt Foundation Professor and an expansion of the department's teaching program with Dr Alba's participation in the University's new Masters of Museum and Heritage program. To view a detailed report of the activities of the Department in 2013 please follow the link to view the NBJs Annual Report:

http://sydney.edu.au/arts/hebrew_biblical_jewish_studies/about/news/index.shtml?id=2409

Young Ambassadors for Interfaith Dialogue

Recently, four young French students in their ninth month of an Interfaith World Tour meeting people involved in interfaith initiatives, visited Sydney. The group to which they belong, the Coexster Youth Movement for Interfaith Dialogue was founded in 2009 and has been joined by thousands of French students from the nation's universities. The group are hearing about what is motivating people to carry out this work and discovering what methods others are finding successful. Young, energetic and passionate, Samuel Grzybowski, Christian, the group's founder; Ismael Medjdoub, Muslim; Victor Grezes, atheist; and Josselin Rieth, agnostic are all in their early twenties. The Jewish member of the group, who had been travelling with them, Ilan Scialom had to return briefly to France. They have a vision to bring about interreligious harmony in their home country of France and they are going to the ends of the earth to make it happen.



On the morning that we met, under the auspices of the New South Wales Council of Christians and Jews, the four young men, had visited 44 countries and learned of 350 different interfaith initiatives. They strongly believe that interfaith dialogue is not an end itself but rather, a tool for peace and social cohesion. When the students return to France, they will spend several months touring their home country, explaining how interfaith dialogue is carried out in other parts of the world and inspiring their own countrymen and women to actively seek harmony in their own communities.

Marianne Dacy

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES

MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2014

MEMBERSHIP FEES for the Australian Association for Jewish Studies (ABN 16535824946) are current from 1 January 2014–31 December 2014 (includes the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* published annually and the AAJS Newsletter)

<http://www.aajs.org.au>

Fees for 2014

Benefactor: \$250.00

Regular: \$60.00 (Aus)

Pensioner/Full-time Student: \$25.00 (Aus)

Institutional: \$70.00 (Aus)

Overseas: \$80.00 (Aus)

All correspondence to:

AAJS

C/- Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod

Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies

School of Languages and Cultures, A18

The University of Sydney NSW 2006

michael.abrahams-sprod@sydney.edu.au

Payment Options:

1. Pay directly into our account: BSB: 082-372; Account No: 507 802 547; SWIFT Code: NATAAU33025
2. Via the AAJS webpage <http://www.aajs.org.au> or
3. By cheque. Post to Membership Secretary, AAJS, C/- Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod (as above)

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

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TEL:.....

EMAIL:.....





Easter blessings for our Christian members and friends.

Newsletter edited by Anna Rosenbaum