

***THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL
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JEWISH STUDIES***

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Introduction

Jennifer Creese, Suzanne Faigan & Jan Lániček

This year has seen the world continue to change, for Jewish Studies academia and Jewish life alike. While the societal and institutional upheaval of COVID-19 has abated and 'normal life' and travel resumed for many, the after-effects of the pandemic, and the conflict in the Ukraine, have continued both their economic and scholarly impacts in many ways. Research plans interrupted by these events have made way for priorities in teaching and supporting students left academically and emotionally vulnerable by the pandemic, and balancing work and life in the face of uncertainty. It was a pleasure to be able to return our annual Australian Association for Jewish Studies conference in February 2022 to an in-person format, hosted to an exceptional standard by Deakin University, Melbourne, and featuring the work of dozens of amazing scholars, several of whom can be found in this year's Journal.

For the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, we are pleased to have gone from strength to strength in delivering our high-quality open-access interdisciplinary Jewish Studies journal to international readers and authors. The quality of the submissions remains high, and this year we are pleased to present seven journal articles and three book reviews covering a whole range of topics, from authors across Australia and internationally. We have also seen our editorial committee grow with the welcome addition of Dr Suzanne Faigan. Dr Faigan, who was awarded her PhD in 2019 from the Australian National University for her production of an annotated bibliography of the work of the Russian Jewish educationalist and political figure Maria Yakovlevna Frumkina (Esther Frumkin), has worked behind-the-scenes as web administrator for the Association since 2005, and Publication Officer for the journal since publication went online in 2019, and now is very much enjoying the opportunity to contribute to the work of the journal's editorial team.

Opening this year's volume, Elizabeth Offer's 'A Good Sound Schooling: Hebrew Schools and Jewish Education on the Central Victorian Goldfields, 1851-1901' takes us through a window into the lives of Jewish children and their families in Bendigo and Ballarat during the Gold Rush. Offer situates her work on the delicate fine line between religious tradition and pioneer practicality, theorising how the negotiation of education for Jewish families in such a time and place was not just about education, but the navigation between religious tradition, middle-class British values, developments in educational practice and changing legal and identity frameworks of the frontier.

The second article also explores Australian Jewish communal history, offering a commentary and response back on an article published in the 2021 *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* by Jennifer Creese & Joyce Arnold on

the architectural provenance of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation's synagogue, constructed in 1886. The authors, Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton and Dr Jana Vytrhlik, both of the Great Synagogue, Sydney, bring their knowledge of the architectural history of the Great Synagogue, and synagogues in England constructed in a similar period to the Brisbane Synagogue, to respectfully debate the conclusions of Creese & Arnold's analysis of the Brisbane Synagogue's designer, style and influences. We are pleased to be able to facilitate spirited and collegial discussion between scholars within the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* in such a manner.

Staying in the world of synagogue architecture, we move to America and the 'Golden Age' of synagogue architecture with a paper by Rabbi Dr Dana Evan Kaplan. In 'Architectural Representations of Jewish Identity and Achievement in America's Golden Age', Kaplan explores the Modernist architectural style used extensively in American synagogues in the years after World War II. Kaplan, similarly to Elton & Vytrhlik, explores the way in which architecture came to symbolise the manifestation of a philosophy of identity and belonging for Jewish communities, and convey a message at the same time theological and sociological about the meaning of Jewishness and Judaism for congregations.

In a third paper along the architectural theme, Professor Meir Loewenberg takes us to the nineteenth century and the Western Wall to explore social customs of praying in this space, in 'The Politics of Praying at the Western Wall with or without a Mechitza: Examining the Historical Evidence from the Nineteenth Century'. Taking the novel approach of photographic analysis as evidence for his research, and comparing this with contemporaneous travel writings, Loewenberg challenges the common claim that men and women were historically not separated at prayer at the Western Wall site, and uses the photographic documentary evidence to explore changing demographic and lifestyle norms in the historic Jerusalem Jewish community.

Staying in Israel, Dr Eran Eldar provides an account of the relationship between the central government of Israel and the municipality of Tel Aviv and its surrounding cities, during the period of municipal reform which was happening worldwide in the 1960s-1970s and found its way to Israel. In 'The Attempts to Implement Municipal Reform in the Tel Aviv Metropolis in the 1960s and 1970s', Eldar provides a history of international developments in local politics in this period, and charts the rise and fall of Tel Aviv's efforts to change its status with its neighbouring cities, seeking an 'umbrella metropolis' of shared oversight which was vehemently opposed by both Israel's central government and several of the cities who would have been encompassed in the plan.

From nineteenth century Israel to sixteenth century Netherlands, Professor David Frankel explores the forms and functions of artwork in the printed religious literature of the Dutch Jewish community of the period. In

‘Romulus and Moses: Expressing Social Conformity through Images of the Past in the Amsterdam *Haggadot* of 1695 and 1712’, Frankel examines the selection, construction and visual rhetoric of the artworks created for these religious texts. He argues for the importance of examining these pieces of print artwork, not only for their place in print history as archetypes for Jewish scriptural imagery for the proceeding centuries, but for their insight into the way the Dutch Jewish community of the time worked through their printed artefacts towards acceptance of and conformity to the social and cultural context of the host society

In the final scholarly article of this volume, Dr Joshua Nash provides a deeply insightful and highly personal autoethnographic reflection of coming to terms with Jewish identity as a third-generation Holocaust survivor and the son of a Jewish father, considering whether or not he might consider himself a ‘half-Jew’ and what that might mean for himself, his relationships with other Jewish and non-Jewish friends and family, and how this genealogical and ideological heritage might move through generations and manifest in different meanings. Six years after the initial presentation of his reflections on this topic at the 2016 Australian Association for Jewish Studies conference in Brisbane, following a visit to the Jewish Museum Berlin, Nash situates his reflection in his own lived experience and negotiation of identity within an anthropological discourse on memory, identification, family trauma and renewal, gifting the reader with a deeply personal and scholarly rich examination of the potential for broad experiences and expressions of modern-day Jewish identity and belonging.

We also present three book reviews in this issue, which have been collated on a range of new books in Jewish Studies by our new Reviews editor, Dr Suzanne Faigan. First, Allan Borowski reviews David Livingstone Smith’s *On Inhumanity: Dehumanization and How to Resist It*; a small but hard-hitting work on dehumanisation from a number of disciplines, teasing out this ‘wicked problem’ and our responses to it. In our second review, Rabbi Benjamin J. Elton reviews *To Be a Holy People: Jewish Tradition and Ethical Values*; this edited collection of the essays of renowned Modern Orthodox theological philosopher Rabbi Dr Eugene Korn thinks through the struggles of reconciling halachic norms with contemporary and secular moral standards, focusing on core ethical values and often controversial elements. Rounding out the volume, Lidia Zessin-Jurek reviews Shira Birnbaum’s *Trauma and Resilience in Holocaust Memoir: Strategies of Self-preservation and Inter-Generational Encounter with Narrative*; this book, part family history and part psychoanalytical analysis, considers Holocaust escape, refugeeism, survival, and memory through memoirs, commentary and critical reflection.

We hope that our readers enjoy this volume’s selection of papers and reviews, and wish all a prosperous 2023. This next year will see a changing of the guard at the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, as both Dr Jan

Lániček and Dr Jennifer Creese hand on the reins of the Journal to new editors after five years of service, though our new Reviews Editor and Publication Officer Dr Suzanne Faigan will continue her role. We encourage any Jewish Studies scholars, in Australia or beyond, who are interested in developing their academic skills and portfolios and helping grow and distribute the scholarship of Jewish Studies internationally to consider joining the editorial team, and reaching out to the Australian Association for Jewish Studies to get involved. We also encourage readers to consider submissions for the 2023 volume, either as a standard research paper, review paper, response to a published article, roundtable or book review on any topic of relevance to the broad academic scope encompassed in Jewish Studies. Please see <http://www.aajs.org.au/journal/> for more details on submitting your work.