From the Director...

Every year as I sit down to write this update, it seems that the situation for Jews, especially in Europe, has grown worse. This year was certainly no exception. Protest marches during last summer’s Gaza War turned violent in many European capitals. In Germany, chants of “Death to Israel!” and “Gas the Jews!” at pro-Palestinian rallies brought back memories of the Nazi era. In Paris and its suburbs, anti-Israel demonstrations turned physically violent. In Sarcelles, protesters attacked Jewish shops and synagogues. In the center of the French capital, an angry mob laid siege to a synagogue, engaging in a kind of violence against Jews not seen in France since the middle ages.

But it was really the events of January that focused the world’s attention on the threats faced by Europe’s Jews. After two young men with radical Islamist ties attacked the offices of the Parisian satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, their associate wreaked terror on a kosher supermarket, killing four shoppers. Although the news media at first denied the antisemitic nature of this second attack, the killer gave an interview while facing off with the police that made clear his desire to target Jews. Since these attacks, Jews in Europe have felt increasingly insecure. The French army has mobilized to protect Jewish businesses and synagogues, but many observant French Jews are understandably questioning how much longer they can live in France. Experts expect the number of French immigrants to Israel to double this year.

Jews around the world have wondered just how worried they should be about the rising tide of Muslim extremism. Some have asked whether we have returned to 1939. But despite these serious threats, much separates the current situation from the eve of World War II. One major difference is that European governments have strongly condemned this latest round of antisemitic violence. The French prime minister Manuel Valls has been among the most vocal leaders, even going so far as to ban pro-Palestinian rallies in certain parts of Paris out of fear for the safety of the Jewish population. In a series of stirring speeches, he declared that if large numbers of French Jews leave for Israel, France will no longer be France. And yet, as long as soldiers must guard kosher stores, and as long as certain disaffected Muslim youths find themselves drawn to radical Islamist teachings, the situation remains ominous.

While the United States has not seen antisemitic violence on the level experienced in Europe, Jews in America have also faced threats. American college campuses are on the front line of the campaign by certain proponents of the BDS (Boycott-Divest-Sanctions) movement to delegitimize Israel and demonize Israel’s supporters. Students who support Israel on many college campuses report intimidation and even occasional physical violence. Meanwhile, calls to boycott Israeli academics have divided
the membership of major American academic professional organizations and BDS petitions have cleaved the faculties of many universities. More than ever, it is important to educate the public to distinguish between reasonable criticism of Israel’s policies and the kind of anti-Zionism that crosses the line toward antisemitism.

At the Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism, we have redoubled our efforts to cast light on these various issues. As this newsletter goes to press, we have just completed the production of a short (20 minute) educational video featuring the renowned scholar and former President of the American Association of University Professors, Cary Nelson of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offering a critique of the BDS movement. This video is available on the homepage of the YPSA website and on YouTube. We hope it will be diffused widely in the academic community and beyond, and I encourage you to take a look.

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Benjamin and Barbara Zucker lecture series, and the support of the Whitney Humanities Center, we hosted no fewer than fifteen major events about antisemitism on the Yale campus this past academic year. In order to respond to questions raised in the wake of the Gaza War, we began the fall semester with a panel entitled "Antisemitism Today: What’s Causing It and What – If Anything – Can We Do About It?" co-sponsored with the Slifka Center, featuring Deborah Lipstadt of Emory University in conversation with three Yale scholars — Jeffrey Alexander (Sociology), Jay Winter (History), and myself. A video of this panel is available on our website (http://ypsa.yale.edu/media). We followed this event with another panel, organized by Seyla Benhabib (Political Science), entitled “Living Together, Thinking the Future: Coexistence after the Gaza War of 2014,” featuring Hassan Jabareen, a visiting scholar at the Yale Law School and the General Director of Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. Both these events drew a standing-room-only crowd.

Other lectures in the fall included: Ken Stern, formerly the director for antisemitism at the American Jewish Committee on the BDS movement; Doron Ben-Atar (Fordham) on Jew-hatred on the contemporary American left; Karen Underhill (Illinois, Chicago) on the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw; Noah Shenker (Monash) on Holocaust testimony; and the artists Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock on their installations relating to antisemitism in Berlin. In September, we also hosted a major conference, co-sponsored with several Yale departments and programs, entitled “Troubling Legacies: Antisemitism in Antiquity and Its Aftermath,” which examined early Christian representations of Jews and their repercussions in contemporary discourse. I’m very grateful to my colleagues Harold Attridge, Dale Martin, and Hindy Najman for their leadership in putting this important conference together.

Just as we returned to campus in the fall still stunned by the events that followed the Gaza War, so too did the shadow of the January attacks in Paris cast a pall over the start of spring semester. We quickly organized three major lectures to try to understand these events: the eminent political sociologist Pierre Birnbaum came from Paris to discuss the “new antisemitic moment” in France; Bruno Chaouat (Minnesota) spoke about the antisemitic provocations of the French “comedian” Dieudonné M’balax M’balax; and Günther Jikeli (Potsdam, CNRS) drew on his empirical research to speak about the
The recipients of the Baron grants will present a short summary of their research at an event in the Fall of 2015—check our website for details. The Baron grants also sponsored the research of Yale professors Carolyn J. Dean (History) and Alice Kaplan (French). We look forward to the important contributions to our understanding of antisemitism that they will provide.

The program is currently at something of a cross-roads. As one of only two university programs in the United States dedicated to the study of antisemitism, we play an important role in calling attention to, and studying, both historical and contemporary forms of Jew-hatred. But with threats against Jews growing around the world, we feel we could be doing even more. Yale could become a real center for teaching about antisemitism, helping to devise and diffuse curricula for use at other universities, as well as producing more educational videos on a variety of topics similar to the one we produced on the BDS movement. We have also launched an Iranian Archives Project, which seeks to record the testimonies of Jews who have left Iran. We eventually would like to extend this important work to Jews who have left other Muslim countries as well; it is our belief that this history provides a vital context for understanding debates about Israel today.

In addition, we would like to make postdoctoral fellowships available in order to bring young scholars of antisemitism to the Yale campus. To undertake these big projects, however, we need significantly more funding. If you are interested in becoming a YPSA sponsor, please do not hesitate to contact me at maurice.samuels@yale.edu.

Let me call your attention to the redesign of our website: http://ypsa.yale.edu. Inessa Laskova has done a fantastic job creating a new look for the program! And let me conclude, as I always do, by offering my deepest gratitude to everyone who helped make our work this year possible, especially the YPSA Advisory Board, Gary Tomlinson and the staff of the Whitney Humanities Center, Emily Bakemeier and the Provost’s office, and our wonderful YPSA administrator, Inessa Laskova.
Monday, September 8
Annual Conference: Troubling Legacies: Anti-Judaism in Antiquity and Its Aftermath

Wednesday, September 17
Deborah Lipstadt (Emory University) in conversation with Jeffrey Alexander (Yale), Maurice Samuels (Yale), and Jay Winter (Yale)
“Antisemitism Today: What’s Causing It and What – If Anything – Can We Do About It?”

Tuesday, September 23
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock, artists
“Dark Sides of Berlin”
Co-sponsored by Judaic Studies, Institute of Sacred Music

Wednesday, October 1
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Noah Shenker, Lecturer in Holocaust and Genocide Studies within the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University
“Reframing Holocaust Testimony”

Noah Shenker, Lecturer, Monash University
Tuesday, October 7
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Karen Underhill, University of Illinois, Chicago

Tuesday, October 14
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
“Living Together, Thinking the Future: Coexistence after the Gaza War of 2014”
A panel discussion featuring:
Hassan Jabareen, Yale Law School and General Director of Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
Hillel Levine, Professor of Sociology and Religion at Boston University, and President of the International Center for Conciliation
Itamar Mann, National Security Law Fellow, Georgetown Law Center
Diala Shamas, Attorney with the CLEAR project at CUNY School of Law
Moderated by Seyla Benhabib, Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Philosophy

Monday, October 20
Screening of the documentary “Kisses to the Children”: Q&A with Vassiles Loules, director
Sponsored by the Onassis Foundation, Hellenic Studies Program, and Program for Judaic Studies Program, YPSA

Wednesday, November 5
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Doron Ben-Atar, Professor of History, Fordham University
“Progressive Apostasy and the Dialectic of Contemporary Jew-Hatred”

Tuesday, November 11
Baron Scholars Presented Their Research

Thursday, November 20
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Robert Wistrich, Professor of European History and Head of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem
“Antisemitism and the Future of French Jewry”

Wednesday, December 4
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Ken Stern, Former Director on Antisemitism and Extremism, American Jewish Committee
“The BDS Movement Against Israel: Reasons, Reactions, Responses”
Wednesday, January 28
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Daniel Lee, Brasenose College, Oxford
“Coexistence with the Enemy? French Jewish Youth and the Vichy Regime”

Thursday, February 5
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Pierre Birnbaum, University of Paris 1
“A New Antisemitic Moment in Contemporary France”
Co-sponsored by the Judaic Studies Program

Wednesday, February 11
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
“An Antisemitic Laughter: Reading the Dieudonné Affair”

Wednesday, March 4
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series
Bruno Chaouat, Chair of French and Italian departments, University of Minnesota
“Antisemitic Laughter: Reading the Dieudonné Affair”
Tuesday, March 24

The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series

Christian Benne, Syddansk Universitet, Denmark
“Intellectual Antisemitism? Martin Heidegger on Richard Höningswald”

Co-sponsored by Judaic Studies, Comparative Literature and German Studies departments

Wednesday, April 1

The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series

Günther Jikeli, Potsdam University and GSRL/CNRS, Paris
“European Muslim Antisemitism”
Students

Kate Brackney, Graduate Student in History
My dissertation examines images of the horizon in memory of the Holocaust and their relation to changing cultural conceptions of transcendence and representation. Scholars in many different fields have claimed that the Holocaust is qualitatively indescribable and that, historically, it marks a moment when major narrative techniques and metaphoric conventions in both the Jewish tradition and in the broader Western canon were revealed to be inadequate to the task of depicting modernity. Yet the poetic tropes of sky and horizon—ancient images in literature and art—persist in many pieces of writing, visual art, and even oral testimony about the Holocaust, performing an enormous range of formal and symbolic work. Their persistence suggests something other than representational collapse. Before the Holocaust was deemed unimaginable, what did it look like and how was it situated on a figurative landscape? This project focuses on three different periods. Immediately after the war, when Jews who had survived found themselves in DP camps, awaiting immigration, how were relatively conventional photographic genres—portraiture and landscape—used to frame and ground survivors in a rapidly transforming postwar world? Meanwhile, in the realm of high culture, how did Jewish writers and poets map out their memories of the Holocaust in ashen spaces between earth and sky? In the 1960s, when the murder of Europe’s Jews began to receive broad international attention and became an archetype for modernity, how were figurations of “Planet Auschwitz” influenced by other limit discourses of modernity—namely the rhetoric of space exploration during the Cold War? Finally, after the landmark airing of the miniseries “Holocaust” in 1978, survivors found an increasing number of platforms to voice their own experiences and deliver testimony in the public sphere. As this history “came back to earth,” where did the horizon move—particularly for deconstructionist literary critics, artists, and memorial designers who reacted to “popularization” of the Holocaust with an aesthetics of fragmentation, opacity, and blank landscape?

This summer, a grant from YPSA will allow me to conduct extended research at archives and memorial sites in Jerusalem and Poland, and study Yiddish at YIVO in New York City. I am grateful for the program’s continued support.

Jacob Prince, Yale Undergraduate Student
To what extent is the European antisemitism of today different than that of past generations? To what degree do French Jews feel threatened (or protected) as they go about their daily lives in 2015? I am applying for the Baron Research Grant to help fund summer research at Yale and in Paris into the historical roots and contemporary state of French antisemitism. According to an oft-cited statistic from the ADL, France is now the most antisemitic country in Western Europe, with nearly 40% of its adult population harboring negative attitudes toward Jews. For the first time, French Jews are immigrating to Israel at a faster rate than American Jews, purportedly a direct result of rising violence over the past decade—the killing of Ilan Halimi in 2006, the murders of Jewish children and teachers in Toulouse in 2012, and the recent massacre at the kosher supermarket in Porte de Vincennes following the tragic Charlie Hebdo affair stand out, among other incidents. Through this project, I seek to give voice to those whose perspectives are often less glamorous, but whose opinions are of superior value to the ongoing discussion. By taking advantage of library and archival resources both at Yale and abroad, I plan to construct a thorough and reasonably objective portrait of French antisemitism, and to place it into conversation with information gathered from a comprehensive set of interviews conducted overseas in order to draw relevant conclusions. My long-term goal is to gain a nuanced understanding of global antisemitism in its many forms, and the Baron Student Research Grant will help make possible a truly significant first step forward in that endeavor this summer.

Robyn Pront, Graduate Student in French
In my dissertation, I will be examining different literary representations of the Liberation of Occupied France in the immediate aftermath of World War II. How do writers like Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Marguerite Duras (and later Elisabeth Gille) juxtapose their experiences of the first days of Liberation with the political event as well as with the
Through the generous support of the Salo W. and Jeannette M. Baron Foundation, YPSA was able to award eight research grants to Yale students and faculty this year.

myth of liberation? In what ways does these writers’ formal experimentation foreground—or not—personal expression in Liberation literature? By focusing on questions of adaptation, unfinished works, and generic ambivalence, I aim to unpack the tensions between personal, literary, and historical narratives of this particular moment in French history.

The generous support of the Baron Student Research Grant would allow me to participate in the 2015 Institute of French Cultural Studies, hosted this summer at Dartmouth University, on “Culture and the Political.” This interdisciplinary program will interrogate the boundaries between politics and culture across centuries and countries in order to integrate these reflections into the study and teaching of French. One of the focal points for this thematic inquiry will be theories of the new Antisemitism, which will inform my research. This opportunity to work closely with prominent scholars of Holocaust studies, such as Bruno Chaouat and Susan Suleiman, will enable me to better situate my dissertation project—tentatively titled “Liberation Fiction(s): Representing the Aftermath of Occupied France”—within current debates about French national identity.

Thomas Schmidt, Graduate Student in Religious Studies

The Foil of Empires: Jews and the Balance of Power in Rome, Persia, and Palmyra

The third and fourth centuries of the Common Era were fraught with political and cultural realignment, the consequences of which weighed heavily upon those Jews inhabiting the border territories of the Roman, Sassanian, and Palmyrene empires. My project examines how these empires used Jews as political and religious pawns to centralize power and shore up opposition during this uncertain time. Drawing on Greco-Roman, Jewish, Christian, Manichaean, and Zoroastrian primary sources, I focus on a handful of important rulers: Emperors Shapur I and II of Persia, Empress Zenobia of Palmyra, and Emperors Aurelian and Julian of Rome. In their wars with each other, these sovereigns patronized Jews for political gain, but such patronage, though likely welcome at the time, often concluded in great suffering when hopeful
promises failed to materialize. I argue that the cyclical pattern of political elevation and then rejection culminated in great catastrophe with Emperor Julian’s pledge to rescind Jewish taxes and rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. These efforts of goodwill were likely an attempt by Julian to curry favor with the Jews of Persia during his invasion of that empire. The Jewish response appears to have been overwhelmingly positive, but after Julian’s defeat by Shapur II, the Jews met a cruel fate with tens of thousands slaughtered and many more deported and enslaved by the Persian emperor.

Edmond Zuckier, Graduate Student in Religious Studies

Exploring Sacrifice in Ancient Judaism and Ritual Theory

The shadow of antisemitism is cast over the academic study of sacrifice within Ancient Judaism, as early Protestant Bible scholars have assumed an evolutionist perspective in presuming that sacrifice has been superseded by higher forms of divine worship. In a parallel but distinct development, some Jewish scholars have viewed sacrifice as no longer relevant, for other, less pugnacious theological reasons. This bias that many scholars harbor against animal sacrifice has contributed to a situation where scholarship on sacrifice in Ancient Judaism is significantly underrepresented, to the point where there has been no book-length treatment of matters relating to sacrifice, despite the fact that this material comprises approximately a quarter of rabbinic literature. I am at the early stages of my dissertation project, which will study central themes relating to sacrifice in rabbinic literature. Such work would mostly constitute the first treatment of these passages in an academic context, which one could view as a righting of the historical wrong of the neglect of these passages. Ritual theory, in itself and in its expression within Judaic Studies, has advanced to a place where one can study areas that were previously “off-limits,” expanding the boundaries of accepted fields of study. My work will include both further research on explicating the central rabbinic texts on sacrifice and intensive encounter with ritual theory. The latter will include a trip to Varanasi, India for research on ritual structures, as I consider matters of ritual theory and correlate them to my studies in Ancient Judaism within a theoretical comparative framework.

Shaun Jacob Halper is the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Post-doctoral Associate in Judaic Studies and Lecturer in History at Yale University. He completed his Ph.D. in History at the University of California, Berkeley, in May 2013. His forthcoming book, tentatively titled “Mordechai Langer (1894-1943): Jewish Homosexuality and the Zionist Revolution”, inaugurates the historical study of male homosexuality within Israel, and Jewish Studies, including modern Hebrew literature, as well the history of antisemitism in the first homosexual rights movement in Germany. It recovers the life and thought of Mordechai Langer—a Hebrew poet, Hasidic folklorist, and Zionist intellectual, who was affiliated with the Prague Circle around Franz Kafka and Max Brod, as well as the Hebrew circle of literary critic Dov Sadan in Jewish Palestine. A rare modern Jewish thinker deeply attuned to the ideas of the first German homosexual rights movement, which flourished in Central Europe in the 1920s, Langer thought through the meaning and place of homosexuality for Judaism, Zionism, and Hebrew culture for the first time. Already in the decade prior to World War I, the masculinist and proto-fascist wing of the German homosexual rights movement was defining itself politically and culturally against Jews and Judaism, and in opposition to Zionism. This influential wing of German homosexuals believed homosexuality to be an expression of masculinity and the social building block of the nation-state. They distinguished themselves from Jewish men who suffered from an excess of feminine traits and who were prone to gender inversion—a pathology. Jews, they asserted, were incapable of exhibiting true homosexuality, which was antithetical to Judaism. Jewish history was thus devoid of manifestations of Männerliebe, male-male erotic love, while Jewish men lacked the superior homosexual aesthetic sensibility that enabled homosexuals to serve as cultural and political leaders of the nation. They also concluded, was destined to fail as a nationalist movement. Langer, excluded by the masculinist wing of German homosexuals, turned inward to the centuries-long Jewish experience to build a homosexual identity out of a wide range of classical and modern Jewish cultural materials. He reconciled homosexuality with Jewish nationalism and Jewish theology; he adumbrated a history
of male-male Eros in Jewish history; he created a sociology of Jewish homosexuality in which the male-oriented social life of Hasidism facilitates male-male love and erotic desire; and he reconciled the male homosexual experience with the aesthetic modes of modern Hebrew literature, leaving behind the most important body of homosexual poetry that exists in Hebrew.

Faculty

Carolyn J. Dean, Professor of History
Carolyn is a cultural and intellectual historian of modern Europe with a focus on the twentieth century. She is the author of five books, most recently Aversion and Erasure: The Fate of the Victim after the Holocaust (Cornell, 2010) and The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust (Cornell, 2004). She is also the author of work on gender and sexuality, focusing on France in particular. She is currently working on a research project concerning the evolution of the concept of “bearing witness” to suffering since World War II and its impact on the creation of global humanity.

She was the John Hay Professor of International Studies at Brown University, where she taught before coming to Yale in 2013. She has been the recipient of several fellowships, including a Guggenheim and an ACLS, and was awarded Professor of the Year in 1996 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Council for the Advancement of Support of Education.

Alice Kaplan, John M. Musser Professor of French
Alice Kaplan, John M. Musser Professor of French and Chair of the Department of French through spring 2016, is a literary historian of twentieth-century France, specializing in the period from the 1930s through World War II and the Liberation. Her courses at Yale include: Camus and Algeria, World War II in French Cinema, One Hundred Years of Swann’s Way, The Archives Fact and Fiction, and The Modern French Novel (with Maurice Samuels). Kaplan was one of the first scholars in her field to study French literary fascism (Reproductions of Banality 1986) and to track down the antisemitic sources of Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s Bagatelles pour un massacre (1987). Kaplan’s books include French Lessons: A Memoir (1993), The Collaborator (2000, National Book Award Finalist and Los Angeles Times Book Prize in History), The Interpreter (2005, Henry Adams Prize) and Dreaming in French: The Paris Years of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Susan Sontag and Angela Davis (2012). A former Guggenheim and NEH fellow, she is a member of the American Library in Paris Writers Council and the American Heritage Dictionary Usage Panel, and a regular contributor of essays on culture to the French online journal Contreligne. Recent work on Camus has taken her to Algeria. She is the editor of Albert Camus’ Algerian Chronicles (2013), and author of a forthcoming book, Looking for the Stranger: Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic (fall 2016). Kaplan is the recipient of a Baron grant in summer 2015 to study “Memory Traces of Algerian Jewry.”
Troubling Legacies:

Anti-Judaism in Antiquity and Its Aftermath

September 8, 2014 • 11:00 AM • Whitney Humanities Center

Panel 1
ERICH GRUEN University of California, Berkeley • BENJAMIN ISAAC Tel Aviv University, Israel
DALE B. MARTIN Yale University

Panel 2
ADELE REINHARTZ University of Ottawa, Canada • RUTH SHERIDAN United Theological College, Australia
HAROLD ATTIDGE Yale University

Panel 3
GEORGE KOHLER Bar-Ilan University, Israel • ANDERS GERDMAR Uppsala University, Sweden
PAUL FRANKS Yale University • JOSHUA EZRA BURNS Marquette University

Panel 4
SARAH HAMMERSCHLAG University of Chicago • WARD BLANTON University of Kent, UK
J. Kameron Carter Duke University • BEN DUNNING Fordham University

Co-Sponsored by the Department of Religious Studies, Program in Judaic Studies, and Yale Initiative for the Study of Antiquity and the Premodern World.
Made possible by a generous grant from the Goldhirsh-Yellin Foundation.
Followed by a reception.

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