

The Politics of Jewish Literature and the Making of Post-War Europe

Jewish literature — by which we understand all literature that is perceived or labeled as Jewish by critics, readers, publishers and/or authors — has struck a powerful chord in postwar European culture. Its unprecedented popularity can be discerned in the interest in authors whose work is labeled as Jewish within various European countries, but also in the popularity of particular authors throughout the continent (including also the European wide admiration of American Jewish and Israeli literature).

As an umbrella term, Jewish literature in the postwar era covers a wealth of topics crucial to the re-imagining of a cultural, post-Holocaust Europe. These topics range from testimonial literature about the Holocaust experience (e.g. Jean Améry, Tadeusz Borowski, Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, G.L. Durlacher, Natalia Ginzburg, Imre Kertész, Aleksandar Tišma), groundbreaking inventions in the art of the novel (Danilo Kiš, Georges Perec) to literature ‘documenting’ Jewish life, be it of the shtetl (e.g. Isaac Bashevis Singer, Eva Hoffman), of ultraorthodox societies (e.g. Chaim Potok) or exploring modern Jewish identity (e.g. Philip Roth, Nathan Englander, Robert Menasse, David Bezmozgis), the Zionist project (e.g. Amos Oz and David Grossman) and the unrelenting interest for and re-canonization of prewar authors (Kafka, Benjamin, Zweig, Josef Roth, Bruno Schulz).

The notion of Jewish literature, in short, establishes new transnational connections in a fragmented post-war Europe, across geographical borders (transatlantic and transmediterranean, and east-west during the Cold War), but also across borders of time, reconnecting Europe to a past that has been destroyed. Today, as we witness fundamental transformations in Holocaust remembrance alongside the rise of new tensions and divisions, it is time to assess the nature, functionality, and limits of this European cultural paradigm.

An Amsterdam Centre for European Studies Conference, organised with the support of the Amsterdam School for Regional, Transnational and European Studies (ARTES) and in collaboration with the Menasseh ben Israel Institute.

Programme

28 January

16:00 - 17:30 Interview with Arnon Grunberg (in Dutch). Check the [website of SPUI25](#) for more information and registration.

2 February

12:30 -14:00 **Paul Celan and the regeneration of postwar Europe and the memory of the Holocaust**

Paul Celan, and in particular his poem Todesfuge occupies a central place in the postwar literary memory culture of the Holocaust. On the occasion of an exhibition on Celan in the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, this panel uses Celan as a departure point to discuss the centrality of Holocaust testimonial literature for the regeneration of Europe as a cultural continent.

Panelists: Ton Naaijken (Utrecht University), Paul Sars (Radboud University) and Andreas Kilcher (ETH Zürich)

Moderator: Ann Rigney

14:30-15:30 **Kafka, Zweig, Anna Seghers and the postwar European renaissance of prewar German - Jewish Literature**

A number of Jewish authors that wrote before 1940 experienced renaissances at various moments after the war, when the Jewish condition they wrote about had markedly changed. This panel will investigate the postwar appeal of these authors by looking at the work of Franz Kafka, Anne Seghers and Stefan Zweig.

Panelists: Vivian Liska (University of Antwerp), Nicole Colin (University of Amsterdam) and Marleen Rensen (University of Amsterdam)

Moderator: Yolande Jansen

16:00-17:00 **Contemporary Jewish literature on Jewish Identity in the Netherlands and France**

The problem of Jewish identity and its place in an ever more culturally diverse world has become an important inspiration for many Jewish writers and also caused several controversies. This panel will discuss this topic through the work of the Dutch-Jewish authors Arnon Grunberg and Robert Vuisje and the French-Jewish authors Jean-Christophe Attias and Denis Guénoun.

Panelists: Yolande Jansen (University of Amsterdam), Remco Ensel (Radboud University) and Yra van Dijk (Leiden University)

Moderator: David Duindam

3 February

12:30-14:00 **Dialogue and Conflict: The European appeal of Israeli literature**

Modern Hebrew literature holds a salient place in the landscape of current world literatures; specifically, its prominence in the United States and in Europe is noteworthy. Historically tied to various cultural and political traditions and attitudes, such as Zionism, nationalism, as well as cosmopolitanism, what does the European interest in Israeli literature tell us about Europe's self-perception today?

Panelists: Yaniv Hagbi (University of Amsterdam), Anat Feinberg (University of Pennsylvania) and Hilde Pach, (translator of Israeli literature to Dutch)

Moderator: Irene Zwiép

14:30-15:30 **American Jewish literature and Europe's transatlantic imaginaries of Jewishness**

Jewishness as a literary theme and identity opened up an extremely influential channel of cultural and political cross-fertilization between Europe and North-America in post-WWII Europe. What exactly is the appeal of American Jewish Literature, and how do its specific configurations of individual and group identity relate to Europe's post-WWII conceptions of cultural diversity?

Panelists: Michael Kimmage (Catholic University of America, Washington D.C) and Andrew Gross (author)

Moderator: Luiza Bialasiewicz

16:00-17:00 **Eastern European Jewish literature**

Europe's post-WWII recovery and integration was motivated by a shared aversion to the violence, racism, and persecution under totalitarian rule. There are important differences, however, in cultures of memory, specifically between former communist countries and their Western-European neighbors. What role did and does the notion of Jewish literature play in these old and new distinctions between an Eastern and Western half of Europe?

Panelists: Guido Snel (University of Amsterdam), Gabor Schein (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) and Ewa Stanczyk (University of Amsterdam),

Moderator: Artemy Kalinovsky

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Paul Celan and the regeneration of postwar Europe and the memory of the Holocaust

Ton Naaijens: Provoked Jewishness – Celan's work in context of postwar Europe

Six months before his death Paul Celan (1920-1970) claimed, in a conversation with Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000), that for him Jewishness was self-evident. He did so in the kitchen of the Israeli poet while on a visit; he, the Parisian, had travelled to Jerusalem because he 'needed it'. The question is whether this self-evidence prevailed during the whole of Celan's life and, moreover, how this subjective feeling related to the historical developments in world events he lived through: the war, the fifties, the sixties.

Amichai, born in Würzburg, had emigrated to Palestine in 1936; Celan had stayed in Bukovina and had lost his parents in the war – Jewishness formed a common bond between them, they differed in the course and shape their lives had taken. The Celan family could have made other choices – during his visit to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in the autumn of 1969 Paul Celan met several former compatriots from Czernowitz who, like Amichai, emigrated to Palestine before the war, among them Ilana Shmueli (born Liane Schindler; 1924-2011) who was of the same year as Amichai. Lives take different courses but intersect at decisive points. During his visit to Israel Celan had an affair with Ilana, and it was for her that he wrote his last poems. Apart from his emigration to France and the psychological difficulties he was in, these poems discuss his Jewishness.

Celan called his Jewishness 'pneumatic', after a term used by Franz Rosenzweig, and not just 'thematic' – Jewishness was as natural to him as his breath. Nevertheless, he constantly refers to that pneuma, and he does so against the background of postwar cultural, historical, and political developments in Europa, in poems bearing the watermark of the Holocaust, that other self-evidence in his life and work. Celan's themes can be divided roughly into poetological phases that at the same time reflect social developments and events:

- 1 Addressing the legacy of the Holocaust in the 1950s, when Nazism was still prevalent, at least in the Federal Republic – the reception of Celan's 'Todesfuge' then and there is a case in point.
- 2 At the same time 'Todesfuge' is a youth poem and an emotional testimony on behalf of others – it was followed by an extensive oeuvre containing other artistic forms of coping with 'what geschah'. The rest of his oeuvre is characterized by a fusion of Jewish themes and a growing awareness of developments in European society, e.g. criticism of the atomic bomb, the situation in Eastern Europe (Budapest, Prague).
- 3 The resurgence of anti-Semitism in the 1960s that Celan took personally and coincided with a reorientation on his Jewishness. This was expressed ambiguously and led to euphoria as well as irony – and to resistance. In that sense his poems were written as 'Gegenwort', as retort.

4 Celan's position on Israel and its politics became precarious at the time of the Six-Day War in the late 1960s, when he had to deal with the pro-Palestinian attitude of the student movement and representatives of the cultural elite.

'My poems imply my Judaism,' said Celan: they are always overshadowed by what happened, but at the same time they stand 'for-nobody-and-nothing'. His famed statement 'all poets are Jews', taken from the Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva, lifts his reflections on Jewishness to another, more general level.

Paul Sars: Paul Celan and The Making of Post-War Europe: The Case of Jewish Literature

The belief of 'Never Auschwitz again' can be used as a base of 'The Making of Post-War Europe'. When doing so, the appreciation of Paul Celan and his poem Holocaust-Todesfuge in Germany occasionally starkly contrasts with this belief. What social impact has Jewish literature had in the past decennia, and in particular the poem Todesfuge from the 'Jude (und-nicht-nur-Jude) Paul Celan?

Some authors claim that the incomprehension for Celan's work had to do with the fact that initially, people were unfamiliar with his personal motives. Meanwhile, his writing style comes from a tradition that was considered obsolete by the mainstream of the 1960s. Celan wanted to connect with 'the big German tradition' from poets like Hölderlin and Rilke, because of his Jewish-German socialisation in the former Donaumonarch. He was therefore appreciated by representatives from the post-war cultural conservative elite, some of which had (covertly) embraced the Nazi regime. Celan was feted by the 'wrong' carriers of culture and their open appreciation for him might have derived from improper motives. Celan was a Persil-Jude to many people; their friendship with him and appreciation for his work could help one to clear suspicions of anti-Semitic or Nazi sympathies. Celan was aware of these situations and criticized 'philosemite' behaviour, but could not prevent the use of his aura.

An example is the reception of the poem Todesfuge, which was written in May 1945 in Bucharest. It was immediately 'recognised' as a poem about the horrors of the work- and extermination camps in his own German, partly Jewish surroundings. In The Netherlands, it was also immediately 'recognised' by H. Wielek and included in its documentation "The Third Reich and the Jews" (1956). In Germany, the poem remained undiscussed for a long time and the theme was (perhaps wilfully) not recognised. The later fame of Todesfuge simultaneously created a social role, which Celan himself had serious doubts about. According to him, the poem was instrumentalised, used in textbooks "to deal with the Holocaust," cleaning the conscience of the readers through an aesthetic experience, as the purification after the drama. Adorno expressed precisely this criticism, after he later nuanced his initial assertion "Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben ist barbarisch" (1949) with the words "the persistent suffering may be expressed, as a tortured person has the right to scream. But the aesthetic stylization was still criticized (1965).

In my contribution I want to address this social issue in a philosophical reflection on the meaning of being a Jew and of Celan's Holocaust experience in relation to the reception of his work and the qualification of his person as a poet. The latter is important, because Celan made the personal use of his poems - against the spirit of the times. The "datability" of his poems makes the social impact of his person and work worth knowing (in which every poem also echoes the 20th January 1942 of the Wannseekonferenz, according to Celan). After all, if our occupation with Europe is connected with our collective memory of the Holocaust, then every poem by Celan is at least a signal. [527 w]

Forum

In the forum, I especially want to raise the question which focus I should follow. Does it make sense to focus specifically on a Todesfuge discussion, or could a broader perspective yield more insights? A second theme concerns the question of whether a comparison of the

situation in Germany with that in other countries is feasible and meaningful, in particular the Netherlands and France.

Literature: Barbara Wiedemann: "etwas ganz und gar Persönliches" (Brieven, 2019);

Wolfgang Emmerich: „Nahe Fremde. Paul Celan und die Deutschen“ (2020); Thomas Sparr:

„Todesfuge. Biographie eines Gedichts.“ (2020); Helmut Böttiger: "Celans Zerrissenheit"

(2020); Hans-Peter Kunisch: „Todtnauberg“ (2020).

Andreas Kilcher: Increased Impossibilities. Jewish Literature and German Language before and after the War

Before 1933

- For Jewish literature, language was not only a condition of possibility, but also a condition of impossibility.
- This is not an ironic insight *ex post*, but was already discussed in the development of a modern Jewish philology in the science of Judaism in the 19th century.
- Moritz Steinschneider can be seen as an early example of this, as he was one of the first to define what "Jewish literature" actually is. The result may surprise you: it is by no means the case that this can be defined through the language - namely through Hebrew. Rather, he understood Jewish literature to be basically transnational, diasporic and multilingual. It is also remarkable that he understands this disposition of Jewish literature as a "difficulty", more precisely difficult for those who would have expected clear cultural identities here:
"The literature of the Jews in the broadest sense actually understands everything that Jews have written from the most ancient times up to the present day, regardless of content, language and fatherland. It therefore includes the Hebrew, Chaldean and Greek scriptures of the Bible and the Apocrypha, the new Hebrew [...] literature through two millennia, but also the writings of the Jews in the languages of the ancient world, which replaced or even superseded Hebrew at different times. In this passage through so many countries, languages and subjects there is a peculiarity which makes understanding and appreciation particularly difficult."
- This "particularly aggravating peculiarity" also distinguishes Jewish literature in German in particular. In this case in particular, the language, i.e. German, is less of an affirmative condition of the possibility of literature. Rather, it gives rise to new difficulties, even impossibilities, which are based on the cultural crossing of the German and the Jewish.
- This is what contemporary observers of German-Jewish literature have repeatedly pointed out, from different perspectives. One possible was the national interpretation of literature as in Zionism, which forms a striking counterpoint to the pluricultural literary model of the science of Judaism. In this model of the cultural nation - with a view to Hebrew, of course - language forms the national criterion *par excellence*.
- Against this background, Jewish literature in German had to appear as a downright tragic contradiction. At least this is how Martin Buber interpreted it in his presentation on Jewish art in December 1901 at the 5th Zionist Congress in Basel. The possibility of a Jewish poetry in the German language seemed extremely problematic to him: as a sign of the "splitting of the soul" in general. Buber rightly considered "Jewish poetry in the non-Jewish language to be something abnormal, tragic, almost a disease."
- When Moritz Goldstein set out to measure the German-Jewish Parnassus, the "mountain of muses" of Jewish literature in the mountains of the German literary landscape, in a highly acclaimed article in 1912, he felt compelled to warn of major difficulties in the first lines: "'The Jews in German literature' is one of the most delicate things that must not be put in one's mouth if one does not want to compromise oneself hopelessly." He meant not only the Zionist reservations about this hybrid literature, but also the anti-Semitic, which resisted the "usurpation" of German culture by the Jews - another impossibility.

- In view of all these different impossibilities of Jewish literature in the German language, Franz Kafka, in a letter to Max Brod from 1921, characterized German-Jewish literature as "impossible literature on all sides".
- By this he meant the reservations against this hybrid literature from the point of view of all clear classifications of culture in general. German-Jewish literature, however, can neither be territorialized nor appropriated for either German or Jewish culture. If Kafka also counted his own writing as part of the heterogeneous "world of German-Jewish literature", then he meant precisely this intermediate position between two great literary and cultural systems.
- In this remarkable letter, Kafka also described this impossibility psychoanalytically: From it emerges "the knowledge" "that the father complex from which some people are spiritually nourished does not concern the innocent father but rather the Judaism of the father. Most of the people who began to write in German want to get away from Judaism, they wanted to, but their hind legs were still stuck to their father's Judaism and with their front legs they could not find any new ground. The desperation about it was their inspiration." The oedipal dispositive of German-Jewish literature consists more precisely in a double obligation towards two great cultural, religious, social and political systems, the Jewish and the German.
- But it is precisely this German-Jewish double bond that creates not possibilities for writing, but rather impossibilities; In this sense, Kafka says that German-Jewish literature is "a literature that is impossible from all sides, a gypsy literature".
- Here we distinguish more precisely four impossibilities: The first is the "impossibility of not writing"; it forms, as it were, the premise of German-Jewish interculturality and arises from the desperation of standing between two cultural identities. The second is the "impossibility of writing in German", which corresponds to the need for assimilation, which wants to be German, but always involuntarily remains "Jewish". The third is the "impossibility of writing any other way", which corresponds to the plight of Zionism, which does not want to write in German but in Hebrew, but has difficulty getting away from German.
- Finally, the fourth impossibility lies beyond assimilation and Zionism. It is Kafka's so-called "Western Jewish" impossibility: namely, "the impossibility to write" in general. This writing is, as it were, at the dead end between German and Jewish literature. Standing between the two father literatures, Kafka's "Western Jewish literature" is driven to write, but without this writing being able to connect to one of the two large, cultural family systems.

After 1945

- Impossibilities much more than possibilities are the conditions of German-language Jewish literature, especially after 1945. It appeared to be impossible in a political and cultural environment in which Jewish life should no longer exist.
- Siegmund Kaznelson, the head of the "Jüdischer Verlag" at the time, put this very clearly in his anthology "Jüdisches Schicksal in Deutschen Gedichten" (1959): "This collection is called 'final', [...] because it is human If German-language poetry with Jewish content comes to an end with our or perhaps the next generation. So this anthology is a warning call, a legacy [...] of the perished German Jewry to the survivors. "

- Adorno's doubt, which he formulated in 1949/51 (*Society and Criticism*), was even more radical: whether, given the uncanny dialectic of culture and barbarism, poems after Auschwitz would still be possible. Adorno's misgivings were more radical in that it questioned not only Jewish literature in the German language, but literature in general, and even more: even the speech about German-Jewish literature.
- Adorno followed his much-quoted sentence from 1949/51 into the much less well-known second half, which addresses precisely this difficulty of "recognizing" and naming: "Writing a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and that also eats up the knowledge that expresses why it was impossible to write poems today." What makes writing poems impossible after Auschwitz, namely the transition from culture to barbarism, also affects knowledge, and thus also the "scientific" speech about the destroyed German-Jewish literature.
- The attempts at Jewish literature in German after 1945 also show this in practice. The performative contradiction, however, had to be entered into, which consisted in making the impossible nonetheless possible, in saying the unspeakable.
- Against this dictum, a generation of Holocaust survivors tried out a new German-Jewish literature: Paul Celan (since "Sand aus den Urnen", 1948), Nelly Sachs (since "In den Wohnungen des Todes", 1947), Rose Ausländer (including "Blinder Sommer", 1965), Wolfgang Hildesheimer (including "Tynset", 1965), Jurek Becker (including "Jakob der Lügner", 1969), Ruth Klüger ("Weiter Leben", 1992). It was, however, a broken letter, mostly formulated in a complicated German language that is no longer self-evident and tries to name the crimes as well as the difficulties of survival. This literature of the "first generation" of Holocaust survivors worked on a difficult memory and an equally difficult dialogue between Jews and Germans in post-war Germany.
- Contrary to Kaznelson's prognosis, a younger generation continued this difficult writing in German under new conditions since the 1980s. The so-called "second generation" refers to the children of the Holocaust survivors, including Katja Behrens (born 1942), Robert Schindel (born 1944), Barbara Honigmann (born 1949), Chaim Noll (born 1954), Daniel Ganzfried (born 1958), Maxim Biller (born 1960), Doron Rabinovici (born 1961), Gila Lustiger (born 1963). In this literature, too, the Holocaust is a central topic, but now from the perspective of its political and cultural processing - or even taboo.
- This younger German-Jewish literature appears to be problematic, even impossible (or "negative") recently, in a space in which remembrance, enlightenment and dialogue take place under negative auspices and remain difficult. The tabooing of history and resistance to remembering are painfully explored in this literature - combined with the demand for the incontrovertible necessity of remembering in relation to every need for an "end line" and in relation to all wishes to be forgotten.
- This new German-Jewish literature also appears problematic from a Jewish perspective, to which the German language and literature - a guarantee of cultural integration for Jews until the Weimar Republic - have become extremely suspect. From the point of view of certain (also Jewish) identities in the post-war period, it seems questionable that German language is being used again on the margins of German culture.
- The expression of the impossibility of Jewish writing in Germany after 1945 is the term "negative symbiosis", which Dan Diner coined in 1987. The "symbiosis" between German and Jewish culture, hoped for by the Jews up until the 1930s, and finally answered with anti-Semitism by the Germans, took on a negative form after the Holocaust: Germans and Jews are now indissoluble bound together in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The

question of the possibilities of writing in a precarious place and in a language and culture that has become precarious therefore arises all the more urgently for the younger generation of German-speaking Jewish writers.

- Doron Rabinovici describes in his novel the "Search for M." as an example, who makes the difficult circumstances of the parents' generation and the "second generation" on the one hand, of perpetrators and victims on the other, the issue of this need to justify the cultural identity of the second Generation on the figure of a son of Holocaust survivors: "Dani could not meet the various expectations: He should be a boy like everyone else in his class, but he must not forget his origins if he should prove to others his equality and that of the Jews, should be able to keep up with the German language, even better than all the others, and study Hebrew at the same time, should be able to appeal to the poets and thinkers, but never believe in them, should acquire the foreign without alienating oneself from one's own. "

- Explanations are expected about how these Jewish writers justify their precarious writing in German after 1945. The answer lies in a new extraterritoriality. It denies a secure Jewish identity and consciously exposes itself to the disharmonies and impossibilities of the 'negative symbiosis'.

- Esther Dischereit sees this increased negativity of the symbiosis in "Exercises to be Jewish" (1998) already in the fact that the Jews in Germany can no longer be "German Jews", but also "against each other" as "Jews and Germans". The problematization of the German language is symptomatic of this difference at the cultural level.

- With recourse not only to Victor Klemperer's "LTI", but also to the inexpressibility of the generation of survivors such as Paul Celan and Nelly Sachs, Dischereit is directing its gaze towards the impossibilities of the German language. "Even German as a language is like and not like me. Not all words are available to me anymore. For example the word 'ramp' ".

- Gila Lustiger also formulated such doubts in her "Reflections on the Situation of Jewish Authors in Germany" (1999). She makes the break with the construction of a sublimated German literary language clear by distancing herself from Hannah Arendt's answer to the question of what remains of the German-Jewish relationship: Lustiger comments on Arendt's "It remains the language" as an answer from the generation of exiles :

"This language, the language of the Enlightenment, the German Classical and Romantic periods, this language in which Lessing had programmatically exclaimed: 'Be my friend!', They did not allow themselves to be taken away from them. And while they were still in exile, on the run, it rang in their ears. "But what significance can the German language still have for the younger generation, as Lustiger asks? What remains of it? Can language still be home? Does she have the magical, does she have the protective power? Or let me put it another way, can we, those born afterward, inherit the Enlightenment and humanism of the 18th century without what followed? Language remains the home of those born afterward, but the magic wand is broken. Language as we know it cannot be caressed. She is not a lover, we eyeball her suspiciously, we are wary of her. It is a language that has been exploded by words such as eradicate, incest, hereditary, foreign nation, master people, pure Jew, race theory ... here, by the words and their reality. It is a language that disaster has broken into. This rupture cannot be denied, not even with the means of poetry. "

- You can only write in the knowledge that the German language not only conveyed culture but also unculture. This writing is exposed to a permanent aporia: the impossibility of writing in German and at the same time the impossibility of not writing in German.

Kafka, Zweig, Anna Seghers and the postwar European renaissance of prewar German - Jewish Literature

Vivian Liska: "How 'Jewish' were the Writings and Identity of Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin?" Reflections on a Title

What does it mean to speak of German-Jewish figures like Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin as Jewish authors and thinkers? How justified is it to call their writings "Jewish"? My lecture addresses fundamental questions concerning the adjective "Jewish" applied to modernist authors and texts in general, to intellectual pillars of the German-Jewish canon, and to Kafka and Benjamin in particular. What role does the hyphen play in their case? How do these assessments reflect wider ideological, philosophical and literary positions? How have these assessments changed over the past century and what were the driving forces of these transformations? I will explore the complexity of each word in my title and demonstrate the necessity to redefine these terms anew in each context. Beyond emphasizing the role of the time, place and situation in which the adjective "Jewish" is applied to modern thinkers and authors, I will point to some of the major and ultimately unresolved debates about this question. These general reflections will be followed by an elaborate example: the epistolary correspondence between Benjamin and Scholem, particularly about Kafka and the Law.

In the first part of my paper I will address 1) the distinction between a quantitative and a qualitative assessment of Jewishness 2) the value of an author's self-definition as Jewish 3) the question of changing determinations of Jewishness over time 4) the question of talking about a form of writing as Jewish, both in terms of content and form 5) the very notion of identity and its relevance or anachronism in pre-modern, modernist and postmodern historical contexts 6) a brief reception of Kafka and Benjamin in the European post-1945 context 7) the manifestation of Jewishness in Benjamin's writings about Kafka as well as 8) the status of the question about the Jewishness of the German-Jewish canon itself and its role in Europe in the second half of the 20th century. The second part of my paper will focus on the attempt to approach the Jewishness of one of the most important German-Jewish epistolary exchanges, the correspondence between Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, in which the two friends discussed their affinities and differences in terms of politics, philosophy, history, literature and, running through all of these perspectives and questions - their Judaism. The climax of these debates occurs in Scholem's critique of Benjamin's turn to Marxism as well as in the disagreements about Kafka's Jewishness that reflect opposing views on Judaism and modernity. Special attention will be given to short texts and passages in which Benjamin and Scholem define the meaning of epistolarity in more or less explicitly Jewish terms. I will end my paper on a discussion of attempts by critics to describe this correspondence, and, more generally, correspondences with and among Jews, in light of a Jewish tradition of ongoing discussion and debate. This post-1945 reception is, as I will show, a paradigmatic example of reconfiguring Jewishness in recent decades.

Nicole Colin: European Ghost Stories: the Revenant Motif in the Novels of Anna Seghers

The work of Anna Seghers (1900-1983) is one of the most interesting and international examples of the important role German Jewish literature has played in the construction of a European narrative. For a long time, the former GDR model writer, born as Nelly Rieling in Mainz, had been almost forgotten. During her lifetime, her loyal behaviour to the regime as president of the GDR writers' association provoked harsh criticism in the western world in general and the FRG in particular and led to a rejection of her literary work. After her death in 1983 and the German reunification in 1990 her fame faded.

It seems astonishing that Anna Seghers has attracted renewed attention since Christian Petzold's much-acclaimed film adaptation of her novel "Transit" in 2018 – even across the German border. The new translations of "The Seventh Cross" and "Transit" in France, for example, received an unusually large media response, with the literary supplement of *Le Monde* devoting several pages to the GDR writer. Although this renaissance cannot be compared with the intensity of Hannah Arendt's current reception hype, these two rediscoveries do not seem to be coincidental. Hannah Arendt too, for reasons other than Seghers, was often criticised for her opinions. In this respect, the attention that these two once controversial Jewish women emigrants have been receiving for some years now points to a fundamental discursive paradigm shift, which cannot be solely attributed to the fall of the wall and the end of the iron curtain in 1989. Much more important is the fact that Anna Seghers – like Hannah Arendt – was a Jewish intellectual woman who gained very specific experiences – not only during the time of exile and (re)migration but also as an outsider before 1933. As shown by Patrick Farges, Anna Seghers "also widely addressed issues of displacement" before and even after her exile (Farges 2013).

As if trying to prove with her own life the paradox of exile as described in "Transit", that refugees are only allowed to stay if they can prove that they want to leave, Seghers immigrated via France to Mexico with the sole aim to ultimately return to Germany. Her literary work affirms the utter improbability of this biography: having survived as a Jewish woman in a global landscape that was not only politically determined by the Nazi persecution of Jews and political opponents, but also by the battle between the irreconcilable East-West antagonism – before, during and after the Second World War. To settle down as a Jewish Western immigrant in the post-war GDR, highly influenced by Stalinism, was not without danger. As a communist in a socialistic state she finally became a member of the majority society, yet as Jewish women coming back from Mexico she always remained an outsider. Sonia Combe explains: "her Stasi file [...] reveals that the GDR's most famous and loyal novelist was under constant surveillance, shows Seghers was very different from the public image she maintained to her death" (Combe 2019).

Based on these observations, this paper proposes to analyse the revenant perspective in the work of Anna Seghers as a female Jewish author. If the (his)story of Odysseus can be considered one of the most important European narratives, the work of Seghers presents a completely new version of this re-migration-tale. The specific perspective of her-story is rooted in the redefinition of the emigrant as a revenant. Seghers tells about the destiny of the homeless, about revenants without right of residence, in short: about ghosts.

Marleen Rensen: Proposal for the conference 'The Making of Post-War Europe: The Case of Jewish Literature'

In this paper I will discuss the renewed interest in the life and works of the Austrian Jewish writer Stefan Zweig (1881-1942) in the context of Europe's alleged identity crisis in the twenty-first century. I will compare two of the many contemporary works which narrate Zweig's life story: Laurent Seksik's biographical novel *Les derniers jours de Stefan Zweig* (2010) and the biopic *Vor der Morgenröte / Farewell to Europe* (2016) made by Maria Schrader. Even though there are obvious differences between the ways they portray their subjects, there are enough similarities for a comparative reading.

Both Seksik and Schrader focus on the writer's final phase of life. They evoke Zweig in exile during the Second World War in Brazil, where he committed suicide in 1942. Moreover, in a similar vein, they foreground (the shaping and shattering of) his ideal of a tolerant and humanist Europe, which Zweig articulated in the memoir he finalized in Brazil *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers*. Finally, both the novel and the film discuss the interpretation of Zweig's legacy, which invites a reading in the light of political and social concerns in present-day Europe, such as resurgent nationalism, multiculturalism and the search for a common European identity. Looking closely at the depiction of Zweig's Jewish identity, I will explore how this (re-)imagination of Europe is related to certain conceptions of Jewish culture and Jewishness.

Finally, in order to explore the transnational dimension of *Les derniers jours* and *Vor der Morgenröte* — made by authors who come from different cultural areas— I will analyse how they cast Zweig in Petropolis, outside of the European continent, in such a way that the life of this European speaks to readers across continents, cultures and languages.

Contemporary Jewish literature on Jewish Identity in the Netherlands and France

Yolande Jansen: 'Re-membering the Semite in the Europe-Islam-Judaism constellation'.

My chapter addresses how two contemporary French authors of Jewish background (Jean-Christophe Attias and Denis Guénoun) each propose a critical understanding of Europe in relation to Judaism that also implies Islam. They both refer to the 19th century figure of the 'Semite' connecting (and dividing) Judaism, Islam and Europe. I address the question of how their proposals relate to this 19th century colonial and surely also antisemitic figure, and to how it had become the object of literary irony in modernist literature (Proust, Joyce, Raczymov). How do Attias and Guénoun 're-member' the Semite? (Gil Hochberg, ref. Gil Anidjar and Ella Shohat.)

The French mediaevalist Jean-Christophe Attias, in his contribution to *Les Grecs, Les Arabes et nous. Enquête sur l'islamophobie savante* (2009) gives a comment on a book by Sylvain Gouguenheim, *Aristote au Mont-Saint-Michel. Les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne*, Paris, Seuil, «L'Univers historique», 2008, p. 93-94 (abr. AMSM). Attias critiques Gouguenheim's exclusive focus on Ancient Greece for his understanding of Christianity. He reminds the reader especially of how Jewish and Arabic authors have shaped mediaeval and modern Europe as a continent of translation, of 're-inventing the other' and through it, re-inventing the self, through practices of reading and critique in Biblical and Qu'ranic studies. He draws on this history for interpreting the meaning of Europe today, as a continent with uncertain boundaries, a continent of translation, of cultural transference:

'Ce n'est pas sa 'langue' qui fait l'Europe. Quelle est-elle, au fait? Le latin, le grec, l'indo-européen'? Peut-être. Mais alors l'hebreu aussi, et l'arabe. Quoi qu'en dise S. Gouguenheim: l'incertitude de son identité linguistique, la porosité de ses frontières linguistiques, sa perméabilité aux transferts culturels, voilà ce qui a fait l'Europe - en même temps que ce qui a fait le judaïsme européen. Une incertitude, une porosité, une perméabilité dont les Juifs donneront à leur façon, une illustration exemplaire en inventant sur le continent européen deux idiomes à la fois 'indo-européens' et 'sémitiques': le yiddish et le judéo-espagnol (...) 'Même s'il faut bien entendu se garder d'en majorer indûment la part et le rôle, et de verser dans une apologétique naïve, à partir du moment où l'on veut bien réintroduire les Juifs et le judaïsme au sein de notre vision de la culture européenne (mais qui, aujourd'hui, après le génocide, oserait les en exclure?), il apparaît tout à coup qu'on ne peut plus en exclure non plus l'islam et les musulmans. On comprend bien, dès lors, pourquoi S. Gouguenheim n'en a pas soufflé mot (Attias 2009).

In his *Hypothèses sur L'Europe. Un Essai de Philosophie* (2000, transl. *About Europe, Philosophical Hypotheses*) and in his *Un Sémite* (transl. *A semite, A Memoir of Algeria* (2003), Denis Guénoun similarly assigns a constitutive (and ambivalent) position for the meaning of Europe today, to the 'Oriental' and the Semite, hence to the 19th century colonial, scholarly and imaginary construction that connected Judaism and Islam/arab, and

that emerged as the racial counterpart to the 'Athens/Jerusalem' binary in European intellectual culture.

Both authors remind us of the constitutive role of Judaism and Islam for Europe, to trace and resist patterns of exclusion and assimilationism with regard to both Islam and Judaism, and Muslims and Jews, both historically and today, and to claim a position in Europe, as a critical and de-centering contribution to Europe, without which it couldn't exist, neither historically nor morally. In my contribution, I will analyse how these authors' interventions relate to the 19th century figure of the 'Semite', and the ways in which European modernist literature had made this figure into a figure of irony, critique and entanglement or 'imbrication' (Proust, Joyce, ref. Cheyette). A number of figures (and critiques of the 'figure' in general) were invented that had undermined the genocidal binaries inherited from the nineteenth century, in which the cultural intricacy of Judaism and Europe had been stressed, such as the JewGreek (James Joyce, Jacques Derrida), etranjuif and juifemme (Cixous), the judan as a literary genre invented by Henri Raczymov and as an alternative to the roman (in the reading of Cécilia Hanania, Annelies Schulte Nordholt). I will try to develop a perspective on what it can mean, in the light of that genealogy of the 'Semite', to 're-member the Semite in relation to Europe today (with reference to Gil Hochberg, Miriam Leonard and Gil Anidjar's reflections on the question). In Leonard's words at the end of her book *Socrates and the Jews; Hellenism and Hebraism from Moses Mendelssohn to Sigmund Freud*, 'if we have truly entered a secular age, if we have really escaped from the shadow of the Aryan and the Semite, if we live, moreover, in a globalized world with an infinite number of possible identifications, how are we to understand the compulsive recurrence of the polarity?' (p. 223, Leonard 2012).

Remco Ensel: Robert Vuijsje and the Reinvention of Jewish Ghetto Literature

'We are mainly indebted to writers of fiction for our more intimate knowledge of contemporary urban life.'

Robert E. Park

'I am being dissected under white eyes'

Frantz Fanon

In 2008, journalist Robert Vuijsje surprised with a fictional coming-of-age story of a young Jewish boy in 1980s Amsterdam. *Alleen maar nette mensen* hit like a bomb, and elicited a lot of public debate about the portrayal of the characters, the stereotypes used and the rather plain, unliterary language, but it became a bestseller all the same. A film adaptation soon followed. Vuijsje then published two more novels, *Beste Vriend* (2012) and *Salomons oordeel* (2019), which closely followed the theme and literary style of the first novel without gaining the same success and public attention. The author was already working as a journalist before his literary debut and afterwards he would profile himself as such even more. The novel launched him as an enduring public voice in the debate about racism, antisemitism and ethnicity in Dutch society. He gained critical acclaim with a series of interviews with Dutch people of colour (*Land van afkomst* – Country of Origin). He joined talk shows and gave a much publicized key note speech in honour of the Surinamese intellectual and resistance fighter Anton de Kom.

While this has been his strongest line of defence, when he was charged for the tastes and sayings of his characters, fiction and non-fiction, as well as work and person, seem difficult to separate in the case of Robert Vuijsje. In all cases, we are dealing with the perspective of an aging man who comes from an urban middle-class Jewish family with an obvious Holocaust past, who is confronted with a modern society in which ethnicity is increasingly problematized but in which this is not expressed in terms of attention and respect for Jews as victims of the largest mass murder in Dutch history. Neither the wave of identity politics, nor the recent black and anti-racist projects, creates room for a Jewish perspective, nor does it recognize that Jews are the knowledge specialists of violent social exclusion. On the contrary. Jews are reclassified to the white establishment, disenfranchised to speak out in matters of discrimination, ethnic violence and victimhood. Vuijsje's novels as well as his op-ed contributions probe the current status of Jews and the public presence of Jewishness by exploring the fast changing field of urban life brimming with ethnic markers and potential faux pas. I see his work as an attempt to reinscribe Jews and Jewishness into this post "racial innocence"- (i.e., the performance of not-noticing, not-thinking and forgetting of race) – phase of Dutch literary and public debate (Bernstein, 2011).

In my contribution I will especially argue that Robert Vuijsje has revived the close literary connection between European city life and Jewishness like no other (cf. Sennett 2002). His novels can be read as a reinvention of the ghetto literature that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Central to this is a Jewish community as an ambivalent urban community – seen as one but internally divided – in a strange, sometimes even hostile environment. Vuijsje shows how the awareness of the persecution, as expressed in so-called destruction literature (Roskies, 1989), has an impact, but is met with a lot of misunderstanding. But even more, Vuijsje's work can be read as an attempt to map the refined symbolic system of urban

ethnicity, with a great emphasis on the body, physicality and materiality. If there is a taboo-breaking aspect to his work, it lies in showing the enduring meaning of the embodiment of ethnicity in a society that sees itself as modern and enlightened. Being urban means being able to read on the square millimetre the cultural codes associated with the body – skin colour, hair style, personal names, language – and attributes, from clothing to car brand to spatial movement. A stigmatized body is quickly reclassified, in Mary Douglas' felicitous expression, 'matter out of place'. In the city, ethnicity and with it stigmatization and inclusion and exclusion is ubiquitous. In this respect, Vuijsje's work offers a shocking picture of the Netherlands. In the city it is not just spiritualized, autonomous hyper-individual subjects that walk around. It is their bodies that help determine what their subjectivity can be: whether or not they are admitted to a disco or subjected to inspection in a store. In the city the body is provided with meaning in an ethnic, psychological and sexual sense. Elizabeth Grosz speaks here about citified bodies. I would say, following the city slogan, I AM-STERDAM.

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[Yra van Dijk: When they speak about Maroccans..](#)

Second generation Holocaust survivors often take a strong ethical or moral stance in their professional life: choosing to be judges, lawyers or teachers. Jewish writers of that generation, take a strongly engaged position too vis-à-vis injustice or discrimination, but from the autonomous position of the artist. In this conversation, we will explore the best way to chart recent interventions of Arnon Grunberg (1971) in the public debate, on topics like #metoo and the refugee-crisis. In what sense are his strategies specific for literary authors? Identification seems to be one of the crucial strategies involved.

Dialogue and Conflict: The European appeal of Israeli literature

Yaniv Hagbi: Methodological Notes on the Reception of Modern Hebrew Literature in Post War Europe

A common maxim in Israeli literary circles claims that the only Hebrew authors who can live only by their writing are those who sell well in translation. It make sense. In Israel only about 50% of the adult population are native speakers. The market is too small. Despite its obvious concrete limitations it seems that modern Hebrew literature became not only inherent to World- and European literature but that it constitutes a share which is much more significant than its size. The first question one should ask is than, is it true? In order to examine that hypothesis we must ask ourselves how can we measure it? If the answer is positive we can move to the next one which is, why is it so? Does it have inherent qualities such as the shared Judeo-Christian ethos the appeals to the European readership? Or the literary objective qualities of Modern Hebrew Literature? Or maybe other external factors play a role such as public interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict or the European reflection and coming to terms with the aftermath of World War 2 and the Holocaust.

Until recently, the study of sociology of translation practices knew two major attitudes (Heilbron & Sapiro 2007). The objectivists aim at gaining access to the unique (literary, philosophical) meaning of a text by a certain “art of understanding” (Gadamer 1960). The subjectivists on the other hand are trying (at least since the 60’s) to show the multiple modes of text’s appropriations and meanings. In his paper “Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées” (2002) Pierre Bourdieu notes that a meaning of a translated work is determined in the ‘space of reception’ at least as it is determined in the ‘space of origin’ one that can be analyzed by a third attitude, the social attitude.

The proposed paper will aim at creating a workable method later to be used on a given cultural space within the Western European context in order to understand its reception of Hebrew literature. Though there are universal aspects for the suggested method(s), we’ll concentrate on Western Europe. The United States and England or Eastern Europe create other spaces of reception not only because of the language barrier. The last for example - at least till the end of the 20th century - demands another set of methods. Studying the reception of Hebrew literature in Eastern Europe could be very interesting and can help understands shifts within it after the collapse of the Iron Curtain.

Western Europe offers us various ‘lingual spaces of reception’ such as the Dutch space (Netherland and Belgium), the German space (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) or the French space (France and Belgium). Comparing these different space according to some formulated parameters would help us to first of all to know if one can claim that there is a European reception of Hebrew literature (Western Europe as whole can thus become another ‘space of reception’). If there is such a defined attitude towards Hebrew literature what are its attributes?

In establishing the field one should start with setting the perimeters of the research. First of all, time and space, i.e. post-war Western Europe. Within these limitation of time and space we can start with the first step of the research, namely the creation of a bibliography of translated Hebrew works (novels, poetry, special literary issues, etc.) into a given space of reception. The list will also help us answer some of the question we raised at the beginning.

Comparing it to several other “literatures” coming from other ‘spaces of origin’ will help us define the specific weight Hebrew literature has in European and World literature.

We can further use the bibliography by, for example, comparing it to historical events. Historically, as hinted before, one should investigate the effect historical and political events had on the dissemination of Hebrew literature. One may presume that a few years after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 European publishers will choose (for various reasons, commercial reason not the least of these) to publish translated Hebrew literature. The list of extra-literary indicators can be very long. Next to the publishers it involves various cultural mediators such as translators, book reviewers, state representatives, communities, newspapers, literary prizes, etc.

The proposed paper will formulate the theory and methods for investigating the role Hebrew literature plays in a given space of reception. When possible we will use the Dutch space as our case study.

Anat Feinberg: Israeli Literature in German-speaking Countries (temporary title)

The proposed paper seeks to shed light on the reception of Hebrew/Israeli literature in the German speaking countries, especially Germany. The first translations of Hebrew literature (i.e. Bialik and Agnon) were initiated by Jewish publishers in Germany and came to an abrupt end in 1938. One might not be surprised to discover that the first translations into German after the Holocaust were initiated and published in Switzerland. Tellingly, the titles marked a change of attitude. The emphasis lay on “Dichterische Erstlinge des Landes Israel” (emphasis mine), foregrounding the national component. And yet, the translations were few (Agnon, T. Carmi, and David Rokeach; the latter – a marginal figure in the Israeli poetry scene – was in those days the best-known Hebrew poet in German translation!)

Strange as it may appear, the man who paved the way for German translations of Israeli literature was an author who was not accepted as a member in the Union of Hebrew Writers: The first work of Holocaust-survivor Ephraim Kishon was published in 1958, followed by 80 titles - satires, stories, children books as well as plays. Up to this day, Kishon is the most successful Israeli author in the German-speaking countries, with over 32 million sold copies. The reason for this singular success will be discussed in detail in the proposed paper (for instance, the image of the Israeli vs. the Jew; the legitimatization of laughing at the Jew/Israeli after the Holocaust; and not least important the role of Friedrich Torberg, the Swiss author who translated most of Kishon’s oeuvre into German).

Slowly but surely Hebrew authors made their way to the German literary scene. The numbers illustrate this: while only 8 books were published between 1945 and 1960, the 1970s saw the translation of 48 works (of which 32 were still by Kishon). The main obstacle was the cautious attitude of German publishers (diplomatic relationships between the Bundesrepublik and the State of Israel were established only in 1965) as well as in the lack of competent translators. Until this very day the number of translators is extremely small, which by the way was the reason why, a few years ago, the German and Israeli governments decided to establish a bi-annual translator’s prize. Being a member of the jury from the outset, I would like to share some of my observations.

After the 1970s, the German-speaking literary scene became vitally important for the reception of Hebrew literature in Europe. Bestselling authors, such as Yoram Kaniuk, Amos Oz, Zeruya Shalev or David Grossman, had/have all their books translated into German. Still, why are some authors more successful than others? Why, for instance, is Abraham B. Yehoshua not very well known to German readers (unlike in Italy?). Do German readers and/or publishers look for a particular “image” when they decide to translate a Hebrew book? Does politics play a role? Why are there very few Hebrew books in German translation dealing with the Mizrachi community in Israel, and hardly any novels depicting life in the orthodox community?

Other questions deserving attention will include the recent decrease of translations from Hebrew into German in the past decade; the rise and decline of smaller publishing houses concentrating primarily on Israeli literature (Alibaba, Bleicher, to name but two); as well as the absence of major “classical” modern Hebrew books in translation (for instance, Brenner, Shamir, Shlonsky).

Hilde Pach: Why do Dutch people read Israeli literature?

Twenty years ago, I presented a paper on the reception of Israeli literature in the Netherlands. It was based on reviews, sales figures and my own experience as a translator.

In the last decades of the twentieth century Israeli literature gained a firm foothold in the Netherlands. In 1973, *Mijn Michael* appeared, the Dutch translation (by M. van Tijn) of Amos Oz's novel *Michael sheli (My Michael)*. It was the first novel written after the foundation of the state of Israel that was translated from Hebrew into Dutch. In 1980 the small publishing house Amphora Books published the novella *Vroeg in de zomer van 1970 (Bitchilat kaits 1970; Early in the Summer of 1970)* by A.B. Yehoshua. It was followed by other novellas and collections of short stories by Yehoshua and by Amos Oz. Then, in 1987, the prestigious publishing house Meulenhoff published Amos Oz's novel *Volmaakte rust (Menuha nekhona; A Perfect Peace)*. Oz visited Holland for the first time and became a well-known person in Holland. He gave a lecture, was interviewed by newspapers and got serious reviews. The interviews were almost without exception about his – dovish – political views on Israel and its policy towards the Palestinians. The reviews did concentrate on his literary works, but also looked for political messages and metaphors in his work.

When *Volmaakte rust* appeared, other translations were in the making, of books by Oz, by A.B. Yehoshua, but also by the young authors David Grossman and Meir Shalev. Israeli literature gained momentum in the Netherlands. In the nineties many publishers were interested in publishing Israeli authors, not only the 'big shots', but also unknown young authors, several women among them, who often wrote 'simple' love stories, without much reference to Israel. Many authors were willing to visit the country to promote their books, to give interviews and lectures and to appear in television shows. Not all of them sold well, but new and promising authors continued to be published, and usually got favourable reviews.

At the time my conclusion was that Israeli literature might appeal to Dutch readers because of the combination of the description of human relations and the specific Israeli atmosphere. Using local Israeli elements, political and non-political, Israeli literature conveyed a universal message. Although at the end of the century many Israeli writers were fed-up with writing about Israeli politics, quite a few of them did create this special atmosphere in their books.

Developments in the last twenty years

In the short time I had at my disposal, I was unable to continue my research of twenty years ago. As a translator and a reviewer I venture a few remarks about the reception of Israeli literature in the first two decades of the 21st century. After the turn of the century many more books were published by different publishing houses. Amos Oz's impressive novel *Sippur al ahava vehoshekh (A Tale of Love and Darkness)* was a huge success all over the world, and also in the Netherlands (*Een verhaal van liefde en duisternis*). For many people this was their first acquaintance with Amos Oz, and for some even with Israeli literature. I am not sure, though, whether it made a great difference for the reception of other Israeli authors. The great names were still being published and new names emerged, like Etgar Keret, who was welcomed with enthusiasm: although his absurd, tragicomical stories don't deal with big Israeli issues, they definitely have an Israeli atmosphere.

Interestingly, Aharon Appelfeld, who was translated into Dutch (from the English) in the eighties, wasn't very successful at the time, possibly because he wrote about Europe before and in World War II, a subject that we knew too well from our own literature.

However, from 2003 onwards, several books of Appelfeld were translated directly from Hebrew, and this time they got positive reviews and Appelfeld was recognized as an important author. In 2012 *Goede mensen* (*Anashim tovim; Good people*) was published, a novel by the young author Nir Baram, which is set in World War II and deals with the ethical choices of 'ordinary' people in Nazi-Germany and the Soviet Union. This novel, in which Israel isn't even mentioned, was a tremendous success. This may also have to do with circumstances beyond the book itself, like the charismatic personality of Baram (a son and grandson of well-known politicians) and his well-timed visit to Holland. Nir Baram was added to the list of well-known Israeli authors. His next books had completely different subjects and were also sold well, although their reception didn't equal that of *Goede mensen*.

In general, in the latest decade translations of Israeli books continue to be published, but as Israeli literature comes in many flavours these days, it becomes more and more difficult to speak of *the* Israeli literature, and thus of the reception of it. Different people are drawn to different Israeli books. In the Dutch media, it seems to me, they are more and more considered as 'normal' literature, their Israeli character being less prominent. However, the 'Israeliness' will never completely vanish. Although the great majority of Israeli books published in the Netherlands are written by Jewish authors, Judaism doesn't play an important role. This may also have to do with the choice of the Dutch publishers.

Who are the readers of the translations and what kind of reactions do I get?

I haven't done research on this topic, so I can only tell from my own experience: people who send me questions or comments, friends who tell me what they think. Of course there are Jews among them, and people who are interested in Israel for some reason. As I am the main translator of Amos Oz, I am approached by quite a few 'Amos Oz fans', who sometimes just want to tell me how fond they are of his books, especially his novel *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. But I am also approached by average literature readers, who are more interested in the literary quality of the books than in their Israeli descent.

What level of knowledge do I take into account when translating Israeli literature?

My main goal as a translator is to produce a text that is true to the original. I don't have a specific group of readers in mind. The average reader of Dutch literature should be able to understand the text. Only when I think something in the text might be completely incomprehensible to readers who aren't familiar with things Jewish and/or Israeli I add a few clarifying words. This doesn't happen too often, though. Does this mean Israeli authors write with an international readership in mind? I don't think so. Even a widely translated author like Amos Oz knew too well that part of the attraction of Israeli literature is the 'Israeliness' of it. However, something else is happening lately. It turns out that Hebrew books often are too verbose in the eyes of – mainly – English and American publishers, who for that reason shorten and edit the text. This in itself isn't new, but recently, more Israeli authors and publishers tend to accept these interventions, and moreover, sometimes demand of all foreign translators and publishers to use the edited text as the base for their translations. It might be worthwhile to take a closer look at this phenomenon.

American Jewish literature and Europe's transatlantic imaginaries of Jewishness

[Michael Kimmage: The Ghosts in Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*: Haunted United States, Haunted Europe](#)

Philip Roth's 1979 novella, *The Ghost Writer*, marked a turning point in his career. It would be woven into a series of novellas, amounting perhaps to a novel and titled *Zuckerman Bound*. These literary ventures – and *The Ghost Writer* especially – reflect a newly subdued sensibility in Roth's writing, a departure from the verbal antics, obstreperous humor and flagrant obscenity of *Portnoy's Complaint*, published in 1968. Born in 1933, in Newark, New Jersey, Roth often emphasized his desire to be an American writer and not to be categorized as a Jewish-American writer or as a cosmopolitan literary mind untethered to time and place. This desire of Roth's helps to understand his literature. Yet *The Ghost Writer* was also a turning for Roth in its assimilation of European literature (with an accent on Eastern Europe) and of European history (with an accent on the Holocaust). In the 1970s, Roth spent considerable time in Eastern Europe, which sparked his interest in contemporary Eastern European fiction. Its influence on him was stylistic as well as topical, inspiring a certain restraint and a certain mixture of humor and irony on the one hand and an engagement with politics and history on the other, politics and history as forces that shape, constrain and limit the self. The Holocaust epitomizes this notion of history. One might add here that Roth was himself Jewish and that his family had emigrated to the United States from Krakow and Lviv. For Roth, to absorb "Europe" into his American fiction was not just a new departure. It had some of the hallmarks of a return.

The Ghost Writer is a winter's tale set in rural Massachusetts. Its plot covers about two days of action, in the course of which not much happens. An aspiring writer goes to meet an older writer he reveres. They spend some time talking. The younger writer intuits marital problems and ruminates over a fight he has recently had with his own parents – about whether or not it is permissible to portray ugly Jewish characters in fiction. A woman who may or may not be the older writer's mistress elicits from the younger writer a realization or a fantasy that she is none other than Anne Frank, an Anne Frank who did not die in the war but who made it over to the United States in the midst of her elevation to celebrity victim status. On this slender plot hangs a vast structure of literary meaning: the two-fold process of an American writer (Philip Roth) voyaging back in time to contemplate the Second World War and Holocaust from a European point of view; and of this same writer transplanting the purely European story of Anne Frank onto American soil, continuing it in fiction where it had been cut off in real life. Roth's prose in *The Ghost Writer* resembles nothing he had done before. It is a Chekhovian drama, a drama of interior emotions, with touches of Milan Kundera, Ivan Klima and Franz Kafka in it. It is a book written in a European idiom and in the American vernacular that Roth employed in all his fiction. In the United States, the critical reception of *The Ghost Writer* has been admiring. It is also a book that almost begs for a European readership.

In my paper, I will examine the European reception of *The Ghost Writer*. I will begin by exploring the European resonances within the novella. I will speculate about the European

discovery of “Jewish-American literature” after the Second World War and through this lens look at what it means to place Anne Frank (fictionally) in the United States, what it means to give her a Jewish-American life and what it means to rearrange in literature the seemingly irreversible facts of history – and never more painfully irreversible than in the case of the Holocaust. Who is the ghost of *The Ghost Writer*? To whom does he or she belong? From what point of origin does the human pass into the spectral in this short work of fiction, and to what effect? For short as it is, *The Ghost Writer* opens the door to some of the the biggest postwar questions as they have emerged on both sides of the Atlantic; and these questions, once they have been posed, *The Ghost Writer* helps to answer.

Andrew Gross: Before Identity: Jewish American Literature and Postwar Individualism

The United States became an important staging ground for writing by and about Jews in the immediate aftermath of WWII. The destruction of European Jewish communities through the Holocaust, the emigration of many Jewish writers to the United States, their encounter with flourishing Jewish communities there, and the growing importance of groups such as the New York Intellectuals, not to mention New York publishing, all contributed to what might be called the Americanization of Jewish topics and themes. My talk will consider Americanization from a transnational perspective, focusing on how writing by and about Jews published in the United States made its way to Europe through influential books, journals, and other forms of intellectual exchange, with an emphasis on the *Partisan Review*.

Stated polemically, my argument is that America is where “the Jew” went to lose his ethnicity. By “the Jew” I mean a fixed identity created largely through anti-Semitic stereotypes. While these stereotypes played a role in the United States, the diversity of its population and its cornerstone importance in the international alliances of the Cold War, helped transform identity into something more variable in the postwar years. “The Jew” disappeared, at least for a while, to be replaced by “Jewishness,” a secondary attribute interchangeable with the heritage markers of Irish Americans, Polish Americans, and other groups who had successfully become “white folks” in the American racial schema. In much American writing of the 1950s and 1960s, Jews were representative individuals rather than bearers of identity. The Holocaust—not yet called by that name—was understood as an example of a universal threat. Totalitarianism destroyed individuals—and individualism—by assigning people to groups, which were then targeted under the flimsiest of pretexts.

Hannah Arendt was both the representative and the most important theorist of what would become Americanized form of Jewishness. Her tandem partner was Jean-Paul Sartre, though she would have hated the comparison. Both were Europeans (Arendt would soon naturalize as an American citizen), and both published their work in the influential *Partisan Review*, where translations of chapters from *Anti-Semite/Jew* appeared simultaneously with essays that would eventually show up in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Both argued that personal freedom was more important than group identity. Sartre took the extreme position, arguing that Jewish identity was an invention of anti-Semites. Arendt, who was Jewish, rejected Sartre’s negative definition of Jewishness, insisting that Judaism had a tradition independent of its detractors; nevertheless, she believed that the function of politics was to render such social distinctions irrelevant in the public sphere. Like Sartre, she saw identity as a potential limitation on freedom. Other contributors to *Partisan Review* agreed, and their writing shaped a postwar tradition that depicted Jews as representative individuals, who became representative Americans—and protagonists of American realism—on the international stage.

One of the great promoters of American individualism (and realism) in Germany was Alfred Kazin, a friend of Arendt, a participant in the first Salzburg Seminar, one of the first Fulbright professors in Germany, and an active contributor to *Partisan Review*. Kazin’s account of his travels in Austria and Germany, first published as an article and later, in a revised version, in

New York Jew, describes his efforts to bring the literature and politics of American individualism to Europe. Kazin also describes his visit to a DP camp, which brought him in contact with Jewishness in ways he did not anticipate and started a long conversion process that eventually resulted in his reaffirmation of an identity that he at first discounted for political purposes. His career traces an arc from what I am calling the Americanization of Jewishness to what other scholars call the Americanization of the Holocaust, a moment when American Jewish writing strives to “remember” the trauma that many of its authors did not have to experience firsthand. I plan to include brief discussions of Bernard Malamud and the early Philip Roth, who dramatize encounters with displaced persons through the metaphor of changing clothes. The notion that identity is something that can be changed, like a suit, is itself changeable, pointing back to a notion of individualism that strives to liberate itself from social categorization, but also forward to a moment when group identity would be understood both as a performance and a personal enrichment.

Eastern European Jewish literature

Guido Snel: Tangled webs of violence: nationalism and anti-Semitism in post-1989 East-Central Europe

When historian Martin Jay, on a visit to the former Nazi concentration camp Theresienstadt in 1993, unexpectedly came across the manacles of Gavrilo Princip, assassin of archduke Franz Ferdinand, he described his discovery as a 'rude intrusion of Princip's miserable story into that of Hitler's Potemkin Village', and that it can serve as 'a reminder of the tangled web of violence and its ideological justifications that allowed the Holocaust to happen and that permits new atrocities today [...]' (203) As I have argued elsewhere (Snel 2014), there is a tendency in post-1989 Europe to use divergent configurations of memory cultures, specifically pertaining to the extra layer of crimes and trauma in the wake of communist dictatorships, to project new East-West borders in the continent.

My talk, adding a contemporary perspective to Jay's observation from 1993, will address these 'tangled webs' of violence in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and how they relate to such projected East-West borders in Europe. Specifically, I will try to shed light on the intersection of civic, national, ethnic, and religious categories (Serbian and Croatian next to Muslim as predominant labels for the warring factions, and Jewish as a seemingly neutral denomination). I will do so by discussing three Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav writers from a Jewish background, their response in their fiction and essays to the war (Danilo Kiš, Aleksandar Tišma, Filip David), and their specific understanding of their Jewishness, inevitably also in the light of anti-Semitism, which was both a factor under communist rule and in the rise of nationalism, and which is still salient today, when the prospect of EU-accession, in the specific case of Serbia, imposes again a different framework for the memory of the holocaust.

I will present ongoing research for a new book which, among others, tries to understand the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the wars from 1991-1995 in the wider context of the cultural and political realignment of Europe from 1989 up to the present. The book does so by mapping the literary, cultural and political life of a number of cities (starting in Vienna and ending in Istanbul, the book visits Budapest, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Subotica, Novi Sad, Belgrade and Zagreb), discussing the work of a number of a large number of writers, poets, film directors, and visual artists.

Gábor Schein

Jewish people were legally granted a full citizenship in Hungary in 1868. The first antisemitic law came in 1920. It was the so called „nummerus clausus”, which limited the access of Jews to universities and to certain professions. During the next two decades the Hungarian Parliament passed a number of bills against the Jewish citizens. By the year of 1938 Jews were practically excluded from the society. Hungary entered WWII in June 1941 on the side of Hitler’s Germany. At that time lived all together ca. 1 million people in the country who were identified as to be Jews. The first deportation campaign started in August 1941. On 29th of March 1944 German military troops marched into Hungary. The ruler Miklós Horthy - who must had known the Auschwitz archive - and the government remained in place. Within the next few months 600.000 Hungarian Jews were murdered in concentration camps. Their transportation had been executed with the active collaboration of the entire Hungarian state.

During the war many diaries were written by Jewish people, in many cases only published recently, some of which came from female victims (eg. Sándorné Dévényi, Lilla Ecséri, Milán Füst, Éva Heim, Jenő Heltai, Jenő Lévai, Dora Sorell, Emil Weisz, Éva Zsolt). Survivors have also written numerous memoirs and literary works concerning the Holocaust (eg. Edit Bruck, Tibor Déry, Mária Ember, Ágnes Gergely, Pál Királyhegyi, Judit Isaacson Magyar, Miklós Nyiszli, István Örkény, Boris Palotai, János Pilinszky, Miklós Radnóti, Aranka Siegal, György Somlyó, Magda Székely, Ernő Szép, Rezső Török, Sándor Török, Béla Zsolt). Hungarian Holocaust literature had continuously enriched until 1967, while the first major movie „The Revolt of Job” by Barna Kabai and Imre Gyöngyössy came only in 1983.

Up until the Six-Days-War between the State of Israel and the surrounding Arab states in 1967, the principal cultural narrative of the Holocaust in Hungary had served as part of the political regime’s antifascist ideology. After the Six-Days-War however the Holocaust literature appeared to be renewed by the aim to build the foundation of a new Jewish identity in the context of the modern Jewish State, therefore the publication of works concerning the Holocaust fell under heavy censorship by the political regime.

The framework to the understanding of the Hungarian Holocaust literature was set on the one hand by the ethics of compassion and forgiveness, and on the other hand by the narrative of communist antifascism. A fundamentally different framework appeared with the novel of Imre Kertész’s „Fatelessness” in 1975. However the wider reception of that new framework only started in the 90-ies.

The main aim of the first period of Hungarian Holocaust literature was the spontaneous documentation of the survivors’ traumas. The documentation was driven by the anxiety of oblivion. The institutional conditions of the documentation and historical research and elaboration however came into being only in our century when almost no survivors remained alive. The first Holocaust Museum opened in Budapest in 2004.

Imre Kertész reoriented the Holocaust perception, and it was only possible in a totalitarian regime. He did it in a moment, when even the word „holocaust” was sort of a tabu in public speech in Hungary. The interchangeability of the position of victim and perpetrator invented by Kertész is a provocation of the ethics based on compassion and forgiveness as it means that these positions are not fixed. Kertész looked at the ethical event of the Holocaust through the

window opened by Kafka in the 83. fragment of his *Betrachtungen über Sünde, Leid, Hoffnung und den wahren Weg*: „Sündig ist der Stand, in dem wir uns befinden, unabhängig von Schuld.“. Kertész started to prepare the continent to the situation when no survivors would be alive and when the memories of Holocaust will fall back into indifference, amnesia and boredom. A very essential point of Kertész's perspective is the selfdeterminism of the human identity. Kertész's essays broaden the understanding of the Holocaust towards moral universalism.

Hungarian Holocaust literature by the second and third generation of survivors (eg. Szilárd Borbély, László Márton, Gábor Schein, Gábor Szántó T.) brought some important works, each offering yet new perspectives, continueing and reinventing the frame set by Imre Kertész and his contemporaries.

The Holocaust literature is also an important reseraching focus for the scientific fields of literary history, gender studies, social history and psychology. The most significant hungarian centers of such research include CEU (moved to Vienna), Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest and the University of Pécs.

Ewa Stańczyk: Cartoons, Comic Strips and Holocaust Representation in Europe and Beyond

The aim of this paper is to examine how Jewish and non-Jewish illustrators portrayed the Holocaust in war-time and post-World War II Europe and the United States. Taking on a selection of cartoons and comic strips by German, Italian, Polish and American artists, this paper will show that "the Holocaust cartoon" and/or the "Holocaust comic strip" emerged already during World War II. Artists used humour and satire both to deal with the lived realities of camp or ghetto existence and, in the case of those observing the Shoah from afar, to protest the inactivity of their governments. In post-World War II Europe, Eastern Europe in particular, comic strips featuring Auschwitz became an important expression of an alliance with the Soviet Union and a wider subsuming of Jewish suffering into the suffering of socialist people.