

Centre for German-Jewish Studies

newsletter

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'Nazi Germany and the Jews: Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination': The Friedländer Conference at Sussex

A two-day conference will be held at the University of Sussex on June 14-15 dedicated to the recently published second volume of Saul Friedländer's landmark history of the Holocaust; Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945. This book, the sequel to his prize-winning first volume, The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939, has received wide international coverage and scholarly acclaim. Leading historians from Britain, Canada, the United States and Germany have been invited to address a number of conceptual and historio-graphical issues raised by this book, including the concept of "redemptive" antisemitism, which provides a matrix for Friedländer's analysis. By "redemptive antisemitism", as explained in his first volume, he implies an eschatological worldview combining German Christianity, neo-romanticism, ultra-conservative nationalism and the mystical cult of Aryan blood.

The conference will begin with a public lecture by Professor Friedländer entitled: 'An Integrated History of the Holocaust: Some Historiographical Issues'. This will take place at 15.00 on Friday June 13 at Sussex University and Friends of the Centre will be invited. Small-group discussions with Professor Friedländer in attendance will follow the public lecture, which will consider short papers by colleagues.

Distinguished participants from the field of Jewish Studies, Holocaust Studies and Genocide Studies will include Doris Bergen, Richard Bessel, Jane Caplan, Alon Confino, Raphael Gross, Alan Kramer, Tony Kushner, Dirk Moses, Mark Roseman, Nicholas Stargardt, Dan Stone, Nicholas Wachsmann, and Zoe Waxman. They will investigate aspects of Friedländer's book from a variety of perspectives and will follow this with a discussion concerning the general contours of Holocaust and comparative genocide historiography and the continuing relevance of the subject.

This conference will be hosted by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies in conjunction with the newly formed Centre for Modern European History and Culture at the University of Sussex. A central concern for the conference organizers, Prof. Christian Wiese and Dr. Paul Betts, is to place this debate within the broader

terrain of European history, to explore new directions in the knowledge, study and understanding of the Shoah, as well as to address aspects such as gender, the history of everyday life, or the use of testimony in Holocaust historiography.

New project: The "Prague Circle" and the Morality of Jewish Nationalism

Prof. Christian Wiese has been awarded a substantial grant for a new project on 'The Zionists among the 'Prague Circle' of German-Jewish Intellectuals and their Role in the Debates about Jewish Nationalism, 1920-1948: The Case of Robert Weltsch, Hans Kohn and Shmuel H. Bergman'.

Focusing on an almost unexplored episode of German Zionism, this project touches upon important historical and contemporary debates on the nature of nationalism. Nationalism constitutes the most potent and ubiquitous political force in the 20th and 21st centuries and continues to be a major challenge for contemporary historical and political discourse. The study is devoted to a historical analysis of a specific current within Zionism prior to the establishment of the State of Israel that was dominated by German speaking Jewish intellectuals from Prague and that aimed at establishing a humanistic form of Jewish nationalism as well as at promoting a peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs. By portraying the intellectual and political impact of the German speaking Zionist intellectuals Hans Kohn, Shmuel H. Bergman and Robert Weltsch, the project attempts a detailed comparative analysis of these intellectuals' interpretation of Judaism and Zionism, their attitudes towards the Arab population in Palestine from the 1920s to the 1940s, their experience of World War II and the Holocaust and their impact on the debates on nationalism prior to and after 1945. What is intended is a systematic interpretation of what has been called the 'melancholic counter-narrative' within Zionism (Jacqueline Rose) and thus a historical representation of an intriguing inner-Jewish debate that could contribute, firstly to a more differentiated image of early Zionism and secondly, to contemporary discussions on the essence of nationalism.

European Jewish Studies project



Building of the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin (photo 1907)

The first stage of the multifaceted project on 'Jewish Studies in Europe - Comparative Perspectives' will commence this spring with Dr. Leena Petersen's study: 'The European Network of Jewish Studies, 1850-1939: Institutions, Debates, Relations to other Disciplines'. The project is based on the papers of Markus Brann (1849-1920), a student of Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz and the editor (1892-1919) of the important journal Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums, which are kent at the National University Library at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In this correspondence, part of which will be edited by Christian Wiese in a separate project, Brann discusses methodological, political and cultural issues related to Judaism and Jewish Studies and corresponds with Jewish and non-Jewish scholars throughout Europe. These letters are, therefore, an ideal source for a broad history of the transnational network of Jewish scholars in Europe from the 1850s to 1939, when the last volume of the Monatsschrift was published. The project focuses on the relationship between Jewish Studies and other disciplines (Oriental Studies, history, philosophy, Christian theology), on the contemporary scholarly debates in which Jewish scholars were engaged, as well as on the scholarly work of Jewish Studies as expressed in publications throughout Europe during that period.

Leena Petersen joined the Centre in April 2008 as a postdoctoral research fellow. Having studied Philosophy, Literature and Cultural Studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin, she recently finished her doctoral studies at the University of Sussex and has written a dissertation on Walter Benjamin. She spent the past year as a research fellow at the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Centre for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Pictorial Narrative in the Nazi period



Arnold Daghani, Blind bookseller (1962)

Is it true, as argued by the American historian James E. Young, that 'the Holocaust, unlike World War I, has resulted in no startling artistic breakthroughs'? This is one of the questions to be explored in a special number of the journal *Word & Image* (July-September 2008), devoted to the findings of the Centre's research project on 'Pictorial Narrative in the Nazi Period'. This research, funded by a generous grant from the Leverhulme Trust, was undertaken by Deborah Schultz and Edward Timms, assisted by Petru Weber, a doctoral student from Romania.

'Pictorial Narrative' is traditionally associated with pre-modern art, untouched by the aesthetic and intellectual advances of the Enlightenment. In early Christian murals, the visual narration of biblical stories played a significant role. However, Schultz and Timms, in their opening article, set out an alternative approach, presenting pictorial narrative as an art of crisis that can be correlated with periods of ideological upheaval. In the articles that follow, their argument is illustrated by a close analysis of the work of three persecuted Jewish artists of the Nazi period, Felix Nussbaum, Charlotte Salomon and Arnold Daghani.

The unifying factor is the impulse to construct a narrative in pictorial terms. Felix Nussbaum's finest paintings form a compelling sequence charting the experiences of exile, persecution and imprisonment. More elaborate combinations of words and images are deployed by Charlotte Salomon in the boldly inscribed sequence she created while a refugee in the south of France, *Leben? oder Theater? (Life? or Theatre?)*. While both Nussbaum and Salomon were deported to their deaths, Daghani narrowly escaped with his life. His experiences in a German slave labour camp in the Ukraine are recorded both in a poignant diary and in elaborate illustrated albums, comparable to Jewish memorial books.

Further questions arise from the fact that after 1945 all three artists were virtually forgotten. It was not until fifty years after her death that the work of Charlotte Salomon began to receive serious critical attention. In their concluding sections, Schultz and Timms argue that it was precisely the originality of their pictorial narratives that led the achievements of these three artists to be undervalued. Fortunately, the work of Salomon is now preserved at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, while that of Nussbaum is even more prominently displayed at the Felix-Nussbaum-Haus in Osnabrück. Here, at the University of Sussex, the Special Collections section of the Library provides a home for a large collection of works by Arnold Daghani. Moreover, a series of further events and publications are planned to mark the centenary of his birth in February 2009.

Holocaust Memorial Day

How does knowledge translate into action? This was the question explored during the Centre's Holocaust Memorial Day event by three distinguished speakers: Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg (from the New North London Synagogue); the historian Dr Mark Levene (Centre for Jewish/non-Jewish relations, University of Southampton) and Vera Gissing, author of the survivor's memoir *Pearls of Childhood*. This well-attended event, held at Sussex on 23 January, was sponsored by the Association of Jewish Refugees and coordinated by Diana Franklin.

In the Torah, as Rabbi Wittenberg explained during the opening lecture, special weight is given to the word "to know", linking the limited comprehension of human beings with the universal knowledge of the Creator. But knowledge may engender violence and evasion: "Arm I my brother's keeper?" In his memoirs, *Chasing Shadows*, Rabbi Hugo Gryn recalled that in the summer of 1945 he felt certain that race-hatred would never recur, now the world recognized the atrocities committed in the name of racism. The following decades brought disillusionment. Too often, as in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, neighbours who had lived in harmony were plunged into conflict by racist ideology. Those who work – like Rabbi Wittenberg – for inter-faith dialogue, find themselves continuously frustrated by the divisive claim: "You are either for us or against us".

That knowledge is no protection against genocide was also stressed by the second speaker, Dr Mark Levene. But for him the danger lies not simply with racism, but with the competition for scarce resources as our planet is convulsed by climate change. His tone became apocalyptic as he cited scientific findings predicting that certain areas of the world are becoming uninhabitable. We may be aware of these dangers, but – if we fail to act – hunger and thirst, fire and flood will create a ruthlessly darwinistic world of militarized border controls and genocidal conflicts.

For those who felt dispirited by these dire predictions, there was some comfort in the concluding session, a screening of the prize-winning documentary film, *Nicholas Winton: The Power of Good.* In December 1938, Winton was a carefree young man planning a skiing holiday in Switzerland. But when he realized what was happening in Czechoslovakia under Nazi rule, he set up the Children's Section of the Czech Refugee Committee, which succeeded in bringing 669 children to safety in Britain. The film was all the more compelling for being followed by a discussion with Vera Gissing, one of the rescued children. As co-author (with Muriel Emanuel) of the book commemorating those events, *Nicholas Winton and the Rescued Generation*, she provided living testimony to value of individual action, even under the most adverse circumstances.

Recent lectures, seminars and related events

12 February 2008, University of Sussex

Prof. Doron Kiesel (Erfurt)

'Patterns of Integration of Jewish Migrants from the Former Soviet Union in Germany'

An analysis of the dramatic changes undergone by Jewish communities in Germany as a result of immigration from the former Soviet Union.

28 February 2008, University of Sussex

Prof. Tony Kushner (Southampton)

'The Resurgence of Antisemitism in the Modern World? An Alternative Perspective' (Work in Progress Seminar, History Department)

Much has been written about the resurgence of antisemitism on a global scale. This paper argued that the idea of a resurgence is not only debatable, but is often based on an ahistorical conception of antisemitism.

4 March 2008, University of Sussex

Prof. Christian Wiese

Jewish Interpretations of Martin Luther from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust: A Tragic Love'

The paper analysed the multi-faceted reception of Luther during the 19th and 20th centuries, showing that – despite his infamous anti-Jewish writings – most Jewish authors and scholars embraced the dominating view of Luther as the towering figure of German history and the forerunner of political liberalism.

12 March 2008, University College London

Book Launch: Kindertransport, Before and After: Sixty Poems 1980-2007 by Lotte Kramer, edited with an introduction by Sybil Oldfield, published by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex

This event, chaired by Christian Wiese and introduced by the

editor, Sybil Oldfield, offered an opportunity to meet the author, Lotte Kramer, who came to England as a schoolgirl at the age of fifteen. Kramer's poems recall the Germany of her childhood, striking a chord with other refugees and reaching out to a new generation of readers.

12 March 2008, University College London

Prof. Christian Wiese

'Hans Jonas: Philosophy and Ethics in a Post-Holocaust World'

The ethical perspectives Hans Jonas developed in the area of ecology and bioethics represent only one aspect of the rich life and diverse work of the philosopher that is so deeply rooted in the vicissitudes of the 20th century. From early youth, Jonas was a convinced Zionist who left Germany in 1933, was part of a circle of German-Jewish intellectuals in Jerusalem and served in the British Army from 1939 to 1945. The paper showed that, throughout his life, Jonas struggled with the question regarding the religious and philosophical significance of the Holocaust for the interpretation of Judaism and with the ethical implications of this genocide for humankind in general.

10 April 2008, Wiener Library **Prof. Tilmann Allert** (Frankfurt)

'The Führer Gruss: Story of a Gesture'
(Joint Wiener Library, Sussex and LBI
lecture series)

Tilman Allert, professor of sociology and social psychology from the University of Frankfurt spoke about his new book entitled *The Hitler Salute. On the Meaning of a Gesture.* The book is a strikingly original investigation of the origins and dissemination of the world's most infamous greeting. Sometimes the smallest detail reveals the most about a culture. In *The Hitler Salute* Allert uses the Nazi transformation of the most mundane human interaction – the greeting – to show how National Socialism brought about the submission and conformity of a whole society.

Further publications and projects

Everyday Life as Alternative Space in Exile Writing is the title of the new book by Andrea Hammel, published by Peter Lang. This is the first comparative study of novels by German-speaking women who fled to Britain from Nazi-occupied Europe, Anna Gmeyner, Hilde Spiel, Martina Wied and Hermynia Zur Mühlen. The aim is to reassess their narrative strategies, placing their work within the framework of feminist and exile studies focusing on how they depict the politicization of domestic life. Of particular interest is the section on Selma Kahn whose largely unpublished writings about Jewish life in rural Germany are now in the Special Collections of Sussex University Library. An analysis of

Kahn's posthumously published novel *Der Weg ins Dritte Reich* based on manuscripts donated to the University by her son Michael Kean leads Hammel to conclude that 'a strict division between the élitist writer and the ordinary refugee is a misconception'.

The new book by the Director the Centre, Christian Wiese; The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions was published by Brandeis University Press in 2007. Wiese's study examines how Jonas's Jewish background influenced his intellectual development. He shows how philosophical ethics and Jewish identity were two inseparable aspects of his thinking, with the fight against Nihilism as the most important link. Drawing on a wealth of unpublished material and exploring momentous encounters with major figures of 20th century life and letters such as Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt, Wiese demonstrates how Jonas combined religious and philosophical elements in his thought and offers new insights into the work of this eminent thinker.

Dealing with Satan: Rezsö Kasztner's Daring Rescue Mission by Ladislaus Löb, Emeritus Professor of German at Sussex, chronicles the rescue of 1,600 Hungarian Jews from the Nazi death camps through the efforts of Kasztner, a Budapest-based Zionist. The book blends history with memoir, for at the age of eleven Laci Löb was amongst those brought to safety in Switzerland, after Kasztner had struck a deal with Adolf Eichmann.

In October 2007 Romy Langeheine started her dissertation entitled Hebrew Humanism: Hans Kohn's concept of an ethical nationalism in the context of the German cultural-Zionism at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies. From 2000-6 Romy studied Linguistics and Religious Studies (focussing on the cultural history of Judaism) at the University of Erfurt and at the Freie Universität Berlin. In her MA thesis she compared the education of rabbis in Breslau and Berlin in the nineteenth century. Before coming to Sussex. Romy worked as an assistant at the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies (Erfurt).

Jan Schenkenberger joined the Centre in October 2007. He is working on Karl Löwith's turn towards a stoic approach in philosophy and how it was shaped by Löwith's personal background. Before coming to Sussex he studied History and Religious Studies at the European College of Liberal Arts (Berlin), Royal Holloway and the University of Erfurt. His MA thesis dealt with the emancipation of Jews in 18th and 19th-century Germany. It focused on the Congress of Vienna and Carl August Buchholz who represented the Jewish communities of Northern Germany and successfully shaped the Prussian stance pursuing an unconditional and complete emancipation of all Jews in all German states.

In January 2008 Dr. Nitzan Lebovic (Tel Aviv) joined the Centre as a research fellow. In the context of the 'Prague Circle' project he will write a book-length study on 'Hugo Bergman: The late Prague Circle and Jewish Political Theology', devoted to Bergman's activities in Jerusalem in the 1930s and 1940s. Nitzan Lebovic has studied history in Tel Aviv, Munich and Los Angeles and is the author of the forthcoming publication entitled *The Philosophy of Life and Death: Ludwig Klages and the Rise of Nazi Life* (Berkeley, University of California Press 2008).

Thanks to a generous donation from Dr. Kurt Hellman, a former member of the Support Group and a long-term supporter of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, an annual international 'Max and Hilde Kochmann-Summer School for PhD students in European Jewish History and Culture' will start in July 2008. With this series of events the Centre will commit itself to creating a network for young scholars in the field and to providing an institutionalized setting for ongoing interdisciplinary scholarly exchange, intellectual debate and methodological discussion among scholars of European Jewish Studies.

Reports, Lectures and publications

Andrea Hammel, Refugee Archives: Theory and Practice. Exile Studies Yearbook, Vol.9, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2007, co-edited with Anthony Grenville (the book contains her article 'The Online Database of British Archival Resources relating to German-speaking Refugees, 1933-1950 (BARGE) in Context').

Lori Gemeiner-Bihler is currently Visiting Professor in History at the University of Rhode Island. The doctoral dissertation she researched at the Centre on the experiences of German-Jewish refugees in London and New York has been accepted for publication by Berghahn Books.

Deborah Schultz and **Chana Moshenska**, 'Three-Dimensional Learning: Exploring Emotional Responses to Learning and Interacting with Artefacts', contribution to the conference on 'Researching and Theorising the Emotional Dimensions of Learning and Researching Lives: a Neglected Species?' organized by the ESREA Life History and Biographical Research Network at Canterbury Christ Church University, 6-9 March 2008.

Deborah Schultz, 'Art and Place: Crossing Borders in the Work of Perejaume', contribution to a session on 'Dis-Locations: Movements and Migrations' at the Association of Art Historians Annual Conference, London, 2-4 April 2008.

Christian Wiese

Prof. Wiese has recently assumed the function of co-director (together with Dr. Paul Betts) of the Centre for Modern European History and Culture at the University of Sussex. This new Centre plans to cooperate closely with the Centre for German-Jewish Studies.

Recent publications

Hans Jonas, *Memoirs*, edited by Christian Wiese, translated by Krishna Winston (Brandeis University Press, Hanover, N.H., 2008). *The Legacy of Hans Jonas: Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life*, co-edited with Hava Tirosh Samuelson (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2008).

'Gegen Weltverzweiflung und Weltangst: Interpretation der Gnosis und Kritik des Nihilismus als Grundmotiv der Philosophie von Hans Jonas,' in Mensch – Gott – Welt. Philosophie des Lebens, Religionsphilosophie und Metaphysik im Werk von Hans Jonas, edited by Dietrich Böhler, Horst Gronke, and Bernadette Herrmann (Freiburg: Rombach Verlag, 2008).

Lectures

Christian Wiese, 'Luther als Vorbild und Gegner. Zur Zwiespältigkeit der jüdischen Interpretation des Reformators im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert'

(Evangelische Akademie Wittenberg, 10 November 2007). **Christian Wiese**, 'Challenging Cultural Hegemony: Jewish Studies, Liberal Protestantism, and Anti-Semitism in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany'

(Oxford University, 16 November 2007).

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Reports, Lectures and publications continued

Christian Wiese, 'Der Gelehrte Zwi Perez Chajes und die christliche Bibelwissenschaft' (contribution to a conference on Chajes in Vienna, 19 December 2007).

Christian Wiese, 'Robert Weltsch and the Ambivalence of Jewish Nationalism' (University of North Carolina, Wilmington, 8 February 2008).

Christian Wiese, 'Hans Jonas as a Jewish Thinker in the 20th Century' (Dialogue with Prof. Eveline Goodman-Thau, Austrian Association for Literature, Vienna, 17 March 2008).

Christian Wiese, 'Das Frankfurter Jüdische Lehrhaus' (University of Frankfurt, 23 April 2008).

Forthcoming events in Sussex and London

14 May 2008

Prof. Dagmar Lorenz (University of Illinois, Chicago)

'The Land of Hopes, Broken Dreams and Desires. Israel in the Works of Contemporary Jewish Authors in Austria' 18.45, Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London (joint event with UCL), Main Entrance, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT), reception at 18.15 in the Terrace Restaurant.

In her presentation, Dagmar Lorenz will examine the shifting significance of Israel as a touchstone of self-identification in the writings and films of Jewish intellectuals in 1980s Austria. Despite their critical attitude towards their parents' generation, younger Jewish authors remained aware of a fundamental bond with Israel while avoiding uncritical approval of the Jewish State.

15 May 2008

Prof. Robin Judd (Columbus, Ohio)

'Circumcision and Jewish Identity in the Kaiserreich'
19.00 Wiener Library, 4 Devonshire Street, London W1W 5BH
(Joint Wiener Library, Sussex and LBI lecture series)
Places must be reserved in advance by contacting the Leo Baer

Places must be reserved in advance by contacting the Leo Baeck Institute London

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19 May 2008

Book launch: Andrea Hammel

Everyday Life as Alternative Space in Exile Writing: The Novels of Anna Gmeyner, Selma Kahn, Hilde Spiel, Martina Wied and Hermynia Zur Mühlen, Berne, Peter Lang, 2008. 13.00-14.30, Arts B127, University of Sussex

10 June 2008

Prof. Christian Wiese

'Challenging Cultural Hegemony: Jewish Studies, Liberal Protestantism, and Anti-Semitism in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany'

17.00 German Historical Institute, 17 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NJ

13 June 2008

Prof. Saul Friedländer

'An Integrated History of the Holocaust: Some Historiographical Issues'

15.00 Chowen Lecture Theatre, Brighton and Sussex Medical School Building, University of Sussex

Summer event at the British Academy: The German-Speaking Refugees of the 1930s and their Legacy to Britain

An afternoon Workshop, followed by an evening Public Discussion, will be held at the British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace. London SW1 on Tuesday 24 June 2008. This event marks the completion of the project to create a database of 'British Archival Resources Relating to German-Speaking Refugees, 1933-1950' (BARGE), undertaken by researchers at the University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The aim of the afternoon Workshop is to promote further discussion and research about processes of acculturation and the contribution of the refugees to all aspects of public life. The evening Public Discussion will consider whether the study of past experiences of immigration and integration may shed light on the very topical issues of cultural diversity and social cohesion in multi-ethnic Britain.

Presentations by researchers from the Centre will include a short paper by Dr Andrea Hammel on 'Refugee Archives: Theory and Practice', and an online presentation of the BARGE database by Ms Samira Teuteberg. Papers by invited speakers will promote further reflection on the contribution of the refugees to public life in Britain. The first, entitled 'Reconstituting a Traumatized Community', will be a reassessment of the problems of acculturation by Dr Marion Berghahn, author of the recently republished *Continental Britons*. This will be followed by 'The Impact of Refugee Scientists in Britain', a paper by Professor Gustav Born FRS, author of *The Born Family in Göttingen and Beyond*. It is also hoped to include a presentation on the Role of Refugee Nurses, as reflected in the archives.

The evening Public Discussion on 'Immigration, Diversity and Integration: Past Experience and Present Trends' will be chaired by Professor Christian Wiese. A panel of distinguished speakers will compare attitudes towards refugees during the 1930s with the reception of immigrants and asylum seekers in Britain today, considering the ways in which historical research can illuminate contemporary issues.

This event is organized by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies in conjunction with the British Academy. Tea and refreshments will be provided. Readers of this Newsletter who wish to attend should inform Diana Franklin (contact details below).

Research paper, number 5

The Centre for German-Jewish Studies has published a new research paper entitled 'Revolt against Escapism': Jewish Dimensions of Hans Jonas's Response to Martin Heidegger by Christian Wiese.

Copies are being distributed free of charge to Friends of the Centre. Further copies may be ordered from the address below at a cost of £5.00 (incl. postage and packing).



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