

# FRANKELY SPEAKING

April 2012

Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for  
Judaic Studies

From the Director 2

A Conversation with  
Mikhail Krutikov 3

Finding Home  
in Detroit 6

Israel in a Changing  
Middle East 7

U-M Judaic Studies  
Students Reflect 8

Deborah Dash Moore  
Honored 10

Mazel Tov! 11



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# FROM THE DIRECTOR: HUBS & SPOKES



Photo by D.C. Goings.

by **Deborah Dash Moore**, Director, *The Frankel Center*  
**Frederick G.L. Huetwell** Professor of History

Jewish Studies at the Frankel Center is somewhat like a hub, as its name suggests. It fosters and coordinates an array of activities—undergraduate and graduate classes, lectures and workshops, performances and exhibits that illuminate Jewish life. Interactions among resident and visiting faculty and students fuel the Center. One of the pleasures of sitting in the director’s chair is the opportunity to engage with the productive work supported here.

Jewish studies at the Frankel Center is structured with spokes radiating outward across departments and schools at the University of Michigan as well as throughout the United States, Europe, and Israel. Many of these connections come from fellows at the Frankel Institute who stay for four or eight months before returning to home eager to complete projects they have started and share the fruits of discussions with colleagues they’ve met here.

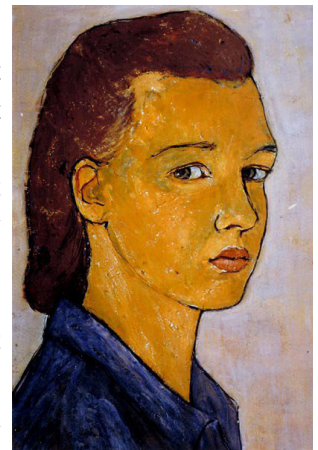
Recently, the Frankel Center added another spoke to its hub, another feather in its cap: Michigan Studies in Comparative Jewish Cultures. When the University of Michigan Press approached the Frankel Center Executive Committee, their overture was welcomed enthusiastically. A new series will publish interdisciplinary, comparative scholarship. As literary scholar Murray Baumgarten commented, the new series “stakes out a scholarly field all its own.”

The series has recruited a distinguished editorial board, including such scholars from Israel as David Assaf and Nurith Gertz from Tel Aviv University and Richard Cohen and Galit Hasan-Rokem from the Hebrew University, as well as academics in the United States such as Francesca Trivellato of Yale, Sarah Abrevaya Stein of UCLA, and Marina Rustow of Johns Hopkins.

Joint editorial leadership will be in the hands of Jonathan Freedman and Scott Spector at the University of Michigan and Barbara Mann at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

The first book chosen to inaugurate the series is Darcy Buerkle’s provocative and ambitious study, *Nothing Happened: Charlotte Salomon and an Archive of Suicide*.

Buerkle approaches the tragic figure of the artist Charlotte Salomon not only through her painting and theatrical writing but also through her family history and hundreds of personal letters. Salomon’s brief life, cut short when Nazi agents arrested her in southern France where she had fled with her family, exemplifies tensions and anguish produced by the



Self-portrait by Charlotte Salomon, 1940. Collection Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam. Photo © Charlotte Salomon Foundation.

suicides of her female family members. Buerkle argues that suicide among German Jewish women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century can be understood as an expression of gendered despair. She reclaims this important dimension of the social history of German Jews, exploring the charged intersection of family, art, and trauma during the Holocaust. This will be a first book for Buerkle, an historian of German Jewish history at Smith College.

The Frankel Center’s new series will benefit from the relocation of the University of Michigan Press under the auspices of the University of Michigan libraries. All of its new books will be published in electronic formats as well as print. It is exciting to contemplate this ambitious initiative to extend the influence of Frankel Center’s distinctive interdisciplinary structure and outlook.



*Mikhail Krutikov is Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Judaic Studies. Among his many projects, he has edited the section on Modern Yiddish Literature for the YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe and published an intellectual biography of Meir Wiener, German and Yiddish writer and literary critic of the interwar years in Central Europe and the Soviet Union. In the summer of 2003, he was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is a Research Associate at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, a co-editor of East European Jewish Affairs, Associate Editor of Prooftexts, a member of the Editorial Board for New Yiddish Library (Yale University Press and the National Yiddish Book Center), as well as a member of the International Academic Board at the Moscow Center for Russian and East European Jewish Studies.*

## A Conversation with Mikhail Krutikov

### What are your current projects?

After two books dealing with the history of Yiddish literature, I decided to turn to contemporary issues. The working title of my current project is “Landscapes of Inner Emigration: Imagining Soviet Jewish Space in Post-Soviet Russian Fiction.” I am interested in how contemporary Russian writers reconstruct their Soviet past, and my focus is on those authors who in one way or another identify as Jews, although most of them regard themselves neither as exclusively Jewish writers nor as exclusively Jewish. Many have “hyphenated” identities with more than one hyphen, such as Russian-German-Jewish or Russian-Israeli-Armenian. Most of them live outside of Russia, in Israel, Germany, North America, but their books are published by mainstream Russian presses and some even become bestsellers. Current Russian culture is very diverse and decentralized, and Jewish themes occupy a prominent place. In some ways Jews come to signify mobility, novelty, creativity, change, and I think many readers find this fascinating. The Jewish lenses help to view the past differently, they magnify and defamiliarize some of its aspects.

I am also continuing my work on Yiddish literature: I have co-edited a volume of articles titled *Translating Sholem Aleichem: History, Politics and Art* ([www.amazon.com/Translating-Sholem-Aleichem-History-Politics/dp/1907975004](http://www.amazon.com/Translating-Sholem-Aleichem-History-Politics/dp/1907975004)), which focuses on the reception of Sholem Aleichem’s work in Europe. I am also interested in the Yiddish literary representation of big modern cities, such as St. Petersburg, Berlin, and New York. I would like to write a book about the progress of Jews from the shtetl to the big cities, first in Russia, then in Europe, and finally in America—how this was reflected in the Yiddish realist novel.

### What brought you to this project?

I’ve been following Russian Jewish writing for the past twenty years and have written over a hundred reviews for my column in the Yiddish weekly *Forverts*. Now I feel that it’s time to bring all my observations and ideas together, give them some form and put them into a book. As the Soviet past moves away from us and turns into memories, it acquires a life of its own as an imaginary country. This is a very interesting

process to follow, and now I am trying to capture it and give it some structure. Most of “my” writers are quite prominent in Russian literature today: They win prestigious prizes and receive a lot of critical attention, but they are yet unknown in the English-speaking world. I hope that my book will introduce this branch of literature to an American audience.

### Where and how are you doing your research?

My main instrument is the Internet. Most new Russian books and periodicals are available online, and I also follow blogs of several writers. Since all my previous work was about dead writers, I am a little unsure of how to deal with the living ones. So far I have been reticent about approaching them and asking about their work, but I think that at some point I will go out and meet them. This spring and summer I will be visiting Russia and Germany, and later I will perhaps go to Israel and talk to these people.

### What classes are you teaching now?

I teach a first-year seminar on Yiddish Love Stories, and I think students find this topic intriguing. We have lively conversations about characters who lived long ago in faraway countries, discuss their relationships, dreams, anxieties and passions. I try to teach students how to read carefully, paying attention to the smallest of details and thinking about style and use of literary devices. I also teach an introductory course on the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe that brings together historical sources, fiction, visual arts and film. At the more advanced level, I focus on Russian Jewish cultural history and Yiddish literature.

### What inspires you when you teach?

It’s always a challenge to get students interested in the material that has no direct relation to their lives or careers. Almost all of my students have never heard the names of the writers on my syllabus, and will probably never read them again. So my task is to show them how to relate to those people and how to make sense of their texts.

## Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Moscow, and my first degree was in mathematics, which enabled me to get a rather undemanding job as a computer programmer. I became very interested in Jewish culture and studied Hebrew privately. I was very fortunate to find a great teacher, Dr. Mikhail Chlenov, who is now the head of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia. During the 1970s and 1980s, he was a prominent figure in the underground Jewish movement and one of the best Hebrew teachers in Moscow. We were a group of about ten people of different ages who met in a private apartment once a week for three hours. Most of the students planned to emigrate to Israel, but in the early 1980s very few people were allowed out of the country. This was an inspiring experience: among my fellow students the future Minister of Interior in Israel, as well as future professors at the universities of Wisconsin, Tel Aviv, and the Smithsonian. Of course, nobody would think about it back then.

## What languages were you raised speaking?

Only Russian. The Soviet education system did not encourage studying foreign languages, although their knowledge carried high prestige. In school I learned German and English, but this was mostly passive reading knowledge. Later German became very useful because there was high demand for translators of technical materials in electronics and computers, and I could complement my modest salary. And when I learned some Hebrew, I realized that I could read Yiddish.

## How did you come to study Yiddish literature?

One of the students in my Hebrew group was a farbrenter ["ardent"] Yiddishist, and he made it very clear that Yiddish was much more cool and fun than Hebrew. At that time he worked as a junior editor at the *Sovetish Heymland* magazine, the Yiddish monthly that came out in Moscow. His ambition was to show to the editor that there is a group of young Yiddish writers who deserve to be published. I was a great asset for him because I could put together a short text in a mixture of German and Hebrew and write it down in Hebrew characters so that he could show it to his boss. He would then rewrite this text in Yiddish and publish it under my name. It was a hard work for him, but he managed to put together a whole issue of "young" (born after World War II) authors, which came out in July 1986. And two years later, I was offered the same position that he had and became a junior editor at that magazine myself.

## Can you recall the first Yiddish work that really moved you? Why did you connect with it?

The first Yiddish book that I read was the Yiddish translation of *Nidbe Yisrael* (The Exiled and the Redeemed) by Yitzhak

Ben-Zvi, the third President of Israel who was also an amateur ethnographer. This is a popular study of various "exotic" Jewish ethnic groups in North Africa and Middle East. I borrowed a copy from my Hebrew teacher and saw that I could read it quite easily. Later, I discovered Yiddish poetry and was surprised how good and how little-known it was. Then I began to read Yiddish literature systematically and to write about it.

## How do you think the perception of Yiddish today is different from the past?

When I got interested in Yiddish in the mid-1980s, this was a lively culture. In the office of *Sovetish Heymland*, I met Yiddish writers every day and all work was done in Yiddish. Of course that was an exceptional place, but at that time Yiddish was still spoken in some families and even on the streets in some small towns in Ukraine. At that time I did not pay enough attention, which I deeply regret now—I could have asked them so many questions. ... But I had little interest in the Soviet past then: It was still very much the present that I did not like. Today I read these works differently. It is easier to see through the mandatory ideological rhetoric—in fact, many of these writers were committed communists and Soviet patriots—but this did not prevent them from loving Yiddish and keeping it alive.

I think that today we are living in a critical moment when Yiddish culture is turning from the living present into a part of the historical past. But the past, like the present, is constantly changing, and we see how different varieties of a Yiddish "usable past" are being formed now: the most popular one is the "Just Say *Nu*" caricature; next comes the nostalgia for the shtetl and "The World That Is No More," and klezmer music. On the other, serious end of the spectrum is the celebration of Yiddish modernist poetry as a neglected part of high culture and engagement with the cultural ideology of Yiddishism, sometimes as an unrealized alternative to Zionism and assimilation. Very interesting work is being done by feminist critics who recover and reinterpret forgotten works by Yiddish women writers. I think what we need now is a large collective project of writing a new history of Yiddish literature.

## To what do you attribute the renewed interest in Yiddish as a language?

I think it varies from country to country. In Europe Yiddish is popular mostly among non-Jews, in particular in Germany and Poland. As one German student once said to me, "it's like German but better." Yiddish can be embraced as an authentic folk culture which is completely "clean" of any association with the nasty past, and yet is quite close to German. But I must say that German students are very serious, committed and deeply interested in Yiddish. In Poland, Yiddish is reclaimed as part of the Polish cultural legacy, perhaps to a certain degree as a reaction against the identification of

Polishness with Catholicism. In Israel, Yiddish is becoming “cool,” perhaps as an element of East European Ashkenazi “ethnic revival” and a reaction against the Zionist notion of the “negation of diaspora.” In North America—a mixture of reasons: nostalgia and search for “roots,” alternative forms of Jewishness, perhaps demanding less commitment than religion or Zionism, cultural curiosity.... I am still waiting for American Jews to realize that they have a very rich and diverse, but nearly completely forgotten, culture. After all, New York has been the world’s major center of Yiddish culture since the turn of the 20th century. It is rather ironic that the only comprehensive history of American Yiddish literature was written in French and has not been translated into English, and an academic conference on the American Yiddish writer Joseph Opatoshu is taking place in Regensburg, a German city which he never visited but used as a setting of one of his historical novels.

**What would your wish for the future of Yiddish be?**

I think Yiddish will have several futures, and my wish is for them to interact with each other. Today Yiddish is the vernacular of the growing Hasidic communities in the U.S., Israel, Antwerp, and London. They not only speak Yiddish in their daily life and use it for teaching, but also have their own press, popular fiction, and movies in Yiddish. Some of those people have interest in “secular” Yiddish literature as well, because they realize that they can learn a great deal about their own past from those books. One or two are trying their hand at writing, and I hope there will be some interesting literature coming from those circles. There are also enthusiasts of Yiddish among secular Jews, as well as among non-Jews: all kinds of clubs, circles, small communities like the Yiddish Farm (<http://www.yiddishfarm.org/>). Yiddish summer programs are perhaps the most important generator of interest in Yiddish, and they are becoming more numerous and diverse: Tel Aviv, New York, Paris, Amherst (Mass.), Vilnius, Warsaw, and occasionally even Birobidzhan.



Krutikov and, clockwise from top, Mendele Moykher



**If you could have dinner with any three writers/thinkers from the past, who would they be? And why?**

I would be very curious to meet three people: the “grandfather” of modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature Sh. Ya Abramovich, better known as his literary alter ego Mendele Moykher Sforim; the symbolist writer Der Nister (Pinhas Kahanovich); and the literary critic Meir Wiener. For each one of them, I have a number of specific questions of personal and literary nature. First of all, I would like to clarify some

of my theories regarding their life and work. After that, I’d be very interested in what they have to say about past, present, and future. Abramovich is in some ways a super-human figure. He was a man of incredible intellect, literary talent, memory, but he was also a deeply troubled man, often depressed and ultimately disappointed in life. There is nothing in modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature that he did not touch upon in a most clever and deeply ironic way. (If only contemporary writers read him, they would not be so naïve in thinking they are original!) Mendele is the first post-modernist character in Jewish—and perhaps in all world literature. And he comes way before modernism!

Der Nister—“The Hidden One”—was by nature a reclusive character, engaged in writing esoteric symbolist tales saturated with mystical imagery. But he also wrote a magisterial historical novel, *The Family Mashber*, a dark Dostoevskian family saga commemorating East European Jewry on the eve of the Holocaust. And I spent about ten years writing my book about Meir Wiener, one of the most important and intriguing among

Yiddish literary figures of the 20th century. He emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1926

from Austria, when he had already established his reputation as a scholar of medieval Hebrew literature, and became a Marxist Yiddish critic and literary historian. And in 1941 he enlisted in the Soviet Army and was killed defending Moscow from the Germans. I know a great deal about his way of thinking before emigration from his letters to his family, but I would be very curious to know how he felt in the Soviet Union and how he managed to have a successful career there. But I don’t think these people would have much time for me—so I would just sit and listen to them talking to each other.



I was fascinated by the ice cream truck and the whimsical, childhood songs it blared through my neighborhood each long, hot, summer afternoon. I had never lived in a neighborhood serviced by this relic of an era thought of fondly by some as, “simpler times,” nor would I have expected such a symbol of innocence to exist in a place as rough and wizened as Detroit.

## Detroit: My Kind of Town

By Ariel Pearl-Jacobvitz

I came to Michigan a Californian with considerable pride for the City of Oakland, my hometown. I love Oakland and have always felt enormously blessed to have been born and raised in such a dynamic, complex place. In fact, Oakland’s complexity is the thing about the city I value and enjoy most. The meaning of this complexity and its implications, however, are the subjects where I find myself in greatest conflict with others.

Like Detroit, a lot of myths about Oakland circulate on a national scale and, in turn, are told or repeated by those who encounter them. People read a headline about violence, crime, and the poor state of public schools in Oakland. What they do not hear about is the communal culture and diversity of Oakland, the openness, acceptance, and willingness to learn from others that characterizes the majority of Oaklanders. I often receive strange, quizzical looks when I disclose I am from this much mused-about city. I am used to being questioned or judged, stared at in disbelief, and even occasionally refuted, told I cannot possibly be from that place because, “There are no white people in Oakland.”

When I encountered Detroit for the first time last year, it was like meeting a long, lost relative. A cousin perhaps who, though very different from my beloved Oakland, possessed enough similar qualities so that the family resemblance was more than

apparent. All of the squeaks and squabbles I had heard about the City of Detroit, its own overwhelmingly negative portrayals continuously called to light in the mainstream media, the disparaging remarks, hurtful stereotypes, and publicized sense of futility and despair lay themselves at my feet like a familiar welcome mat. This was a place I could get used to because in some ways, it was a place I had always known. I was elated!



Walker Electric Ice Cream Delivery Truck - 1920

Ecstatic! I had found a city that spoke to me.

I wanted to know the city. I had an immense desire to sift through what I had heard and seen portrayed by others and develop my own perspectives and experiences. I decided to complete my summer field internship, a required component of my graduate program at the University of Michigan School of Social Work, in Detroit. As a student in the school’s newly branded Jewish Communal Leadership Program (JCLP), I was encouraged to complete this internship at a Jewish organization. Driven by Jewish values that are inextricably tied to its organizational mission and the exemplary services it provides, my decision to complete my internship at JVS Detroit’s midtown office felt natural. I entered my summer experience with a small sense of the JVS’ remarkable relationship to the city. However, the extent to which the agency’s guiding Jewish values acted as an appropriate platform for engaging a vastly non-Jewish population did not become fully enumerated until I began

to witness this phenomenon firsthand on a daily basis. If JVS’ Detroit office serves any Jews, it is incidental. What is not incidental is the agency’s decision to remain in the city and to serve its residents. This intentionality has led to JVS’ status as the only human service agency currently operating within Detroit city limits.

Prior to moving to Detroit, my interdisciplinary study of social work and Jewish communal leadership had given me a glimpse into the complicated relationship of the regional Jewish community to the City of Detroit. I had begun to reflect on this relationship through many lively conversations with my JCLP cohort and our program advisor, Karla Goldman. When the summer began, I moved into an interfaith-intentional community on the city’s lower east side, on the outskirts of Indian Village. My neighborhood was pleasant; my neighbors considerate and kind. At 26 years old, I finally learned to ride a bike. I will always remember the moment I gained my balance and took off down Field Street, my housemate and bike-riding guru throwing his hands up in triumph as our neighbors cheered me on from their front porches.

At JVS, I worked in the Career Initiative Center with homeless Detroiters around job training and employment issues. From conversations with them, I gained perspectives on the city—its landscape, resources, and politics.

I was not raised here. I grew up 2,397 miles away in Oakland, California where Detroit was just a far away city in an awkwardly hand-shaped state. Yet, looking back now, it is difficult to imagine my being on a forward course that could have led me to any other city. At its very core, the City of Detroit is infused with soul and spirit, contagious passion, and compelling community. In experiencing the city, one understands the meaning of divine inspiration. Detroit is a place of revelation and courage, of fastidious visions towards a bright future, and even, on a scorching summer day, a place to grab a cold treat off the ice cream truck.

# Up Against the Wall: U-M Hosts Conference on Israel's Role in a Changing Middle East

by Sarai Aharoni



Photo by D.C. Goings.

This past February, a full-day conference about “Israel in a Changing Middle-East” was held at the University of Michigan. Sponsored by the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and the Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, the event created an opportunity for a wide and diverse audience to gain better knowledge of current issues concerning Israeli politics and society.

The various dimensions explored throughout the event manifested Prof. Shai Feldman’s (Brandies University) remark that “there is no one Israeli viewpoint.” Rather, multiple actors with somewhat competing interests and ideologies are constantly shaping the current dynamic and dramatic picture of Israel’s response to the changes in the Middle East. For example, Prof. Yoram Peri (University of Maryland) who spoke about Israeli military and political decision makers argued that ongoing changes in the structure of Israeli political elites, such as the growing influence of the national religious within the government, can explain competing attitudes towards democracy, territory and security-related issues. In a similar attempt, Prof. Wendy Pearlman (Northwestern University) who considered the status of the Hamas-Fatah rivalry, Fatah’s internal divisions, and the prospects for political reconciliation among Palestinian factions, suggested that Palestinians’ decision-making is also a product of the interactions of multiple parties, agendas, and interests.

Yet, the plurality of political and social forces in Israel and the region produces not only competing ideological claims and interests on ground; they also offer various paths of analysis and theorization. When preparing my own presentation which focused on the reasons and implications of the recent debate about women’s segregation on religious grounds in Israel (Hadarat Nashim), I sought to confront mainstream top-down views of national security that render all non-security narratives, themes, and activities invisible. Consequently, my gender-based analysis explored the gap, or disconnect, between the ways political elites and international actors frame the current challenges facing the State of Israel on the one hand and the expectations, wills and priorities of local communities within Israel on the other.

Another similar point of departure was when Shai Feldman and Sammy Smooha (Haifa University) presented different views concerning the degree of Israel’s isolation versus integration in the region. According to the first view, Israel had never before enjoyed such a high level of multilateral cooperation as it has today, especially in the form of ongoing joint economic projects involving Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians and others; given these long-standing economic interests and personal connections, it is unlikely that Israel will digress into the pre-1978 regional ‘siege reality’. The second view, based upon an analysis of Israeli public opinion, saw ‘isolating trends’ to be far more instrumental in defining Israel’s reaction to regional change. Prof. Smooha, who presented this view, stressed the historical aversion of Israeli Jews to Arab culture, their Western self-identification and political aspirations to create alliances with Europe and the U.S. as examples of Israel’s alienated position within the Middle-East.

The idea to initiate a scholarly informed event about Israel emerged last year as Prof. Mark Tessler and I were thinking of ways to provide students, researchers and the wider public in Ann Arbor with information that goes beyond what is often presented in the media or in community-based activities. It was also a culmination of almost two years of teaching Israel-related courses at the University of Michigan. Being a Schusterman visiting lecturer provided me the opportunity to explore the diverse and deep interests that American students have in Israel Studies. It also forced me to engage with a set of complicated pedagogical and normative concerns such as: why study Israel? What are the most important things to teach? How to overcome students’ personal biases and expectations and engage in meaningful learning?

Although there are no clear answers to some of these questions, I had learned from my students a few simple things. First, that Jewish education provided at the pre-college level, whether in Jewish schools, at home or within a community, offers a very limited understanding of Israel’s society, history and politics. Second, that learning about Israel using a structured, systematic academic approach that involves knowing ‘hard facts’ (geography, history, demography, law, language etc.), could be a true intellectually stimulating experience. Third, that it is possible to acknowledge the richness, complexity and diversity of Israeli society and culture without automatically committing oneself to a specific political agenda.

Finally, the recent conference materialized what I had learned the most from talking to my students—that creating spaces for scholarly discussions about Israel does not provide clear answers or elegant solutions for the most pressing political issues on stake; it only expands the possibilities to approach, engage and understand them better.

# “But What Will You Do with Your Degree?”

## Judaic Studies Graduate Alum Tell Their Stories

*The University of Michigan is known for its “diag” that cuts across the main campus linking many of the buildings that house units of the College of Literature, Science & the Arts. Walking across the diag, I am repeatedly struck by its metaphoric similarity to Judaic Studies on campus. As the diag connects and bisects the classically proportioned spaces of the quadrangle, so does Judaic Studies intersect with different fields and disciplines. Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan brings new perspectives to bear on traditional areas of study as it initiates conversations across disciplines. Faculty and students studying Jewish society and culture learn to engage multiple worlds and speak several languages. Studying Jews involves blending tradition and innovation, inviting strategies of synthesis and disruption.*

*Our students today have not taken a singular path. Because they are able to speak across disciplines, across cultures, and outside of the academy, they are able to engage with a larger audience. Of course, our alums have gone on to pursue successful academic careers, but they’re also working in non-academic vocations.*

—**Deborah Dash Moore**

### **Jessica Evans, Co-Director, The Posen Foundation M.A., Judaic Studies, University of Michigan**

It was a rather winding road that led me from the School of Music, where I began my undergraduate career at the University of Michigan, to the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, which became my academic home for both Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. Advisers including Deborah Dash Moore and Anita Norich inspired me to explore the field, and I grew enamored of 20<sup>th</sup> century American Jewish history and the study of Yiddish.

After graduating in 2008, I became an Instructor of Jewish Studies and English at the Frankel Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit, where I taught high school Jewish history and writing courses for two years. As the school’s only Jewish history teacher, I was invigorated and challenged by the opportunity to create a curriculum that shared my own learning with a younger audience. To my surprise, teaching Jewish history from a rigorous, critical perspective was a hit, and in my second year of teaching the school instituted its first Holocaust course, created by student demand, which I also developed and taught.

With plans to return to the University of Michigan to pursue a Ph.D. in history, I abruptly changed course in 2010 to pursue another lifelong dream: living in New York City. In September of that year, I joined the Posen Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to the study of Jewish culture. Initially serving as an administrator of professional development seminars for secondary educators, in 2011 I was promoted to the role of Co-Director, leading my organization’s efforts to share Jewish culture with a broad audience. In this role, I have discovered my strengths as a business leader, and I someday hope to be able to serve as a school administrator, supporting efforts to close the

achievement gap by providing high-quality education for underserved students in New York City.

### **Sara Halpern, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies M.A., Judaic Studies, University of Michigan**

In addition to reading *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry in 5th grade, my cultural, secular Jewish grandmother introduced me to the Holocaust and Judaism. I certainly had no idea that 15 years later I would be in a position of weaving Holocaust and Judaism into my life—academically and personally. I wanted to explore the meaning of Jewish identity, and so pursuing my M.A. in Judaic Studies at the Frankel Center seemed to be logical, especially with Deborah Dash Moore and Zvi Gitelman on the faculty.

It was intellectually exciting when Dash Moore and Karla Goldman concurrently offered a seminar on American Jewish history, each with own emphasis: Deborah on the intersection of culture, religion, and politics in Jewish identity and Karla on social justice and Jews’ role in the mainstream and their hope of making America a better place for all. They [both professors] supported my interest in American Jewish responses to the Holocaust and encouraged me to pursue my thesis on such a topic.

With generous summer support from the Frankel Center, I started my thesis research in San Francisco, with every intention of studying San Francisco Jews’ response to the Holocaust. However, it occurred to me then that San Francisco was a port for ships arriving from Asia and I recalled reading Ursula Bacon’s *Shanghai Diary: A Young Girl’s Journey from Hitler’s Hate to War-Torn China* (2004) years before, and I realized that German Jewish refugees from Shanghai had to come to the U.S. through San



San Francisco. Shortly after, I left San Francisco to pursue Yiddish studies in Israel, but I wanted to return to interview “Shanghai Jews” and find more material. The Frankel Center agreed, so I flew back and then made a quick trip to New York City to pick up vital documents from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint) and Center for Jewish History. I still am truly thankful to my professors and the Frankel Center in supporting my thesis research over such a short time so that I could begin writing upon my return to Michigan.

Now, I am working as an intern at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies. I am incredulous by how much I appreciate the intellectual atmosphere and support for professionalization, including auditing a faculty seminar on Holocaust geographies and working with an assistant editor on an article. The faculty members at the Frankel Center were excellent role models for me so that I quickly found my niche here among scholars, and I am loving every piece of conversation that I have with them.

Finally, I am thrilled to be heading off to a doctoral program in the fall to pursue transnational Jewish history.

### **Deborah Huerta, U-M Law Student M.A., Judaic Studies, University of Michigan**

I am from Southfield, Michigan, and was very involved with my temple growing up. In high school, I participated in youth group and also taught Sunday School and Hebrew School to younger students. I especially enjoyed learning Hebrew at my temple and knew that I wanted to continue in college, so as soon as I got to U of M I enrolled in Hebrew. On a whim, I also took another Judaic Studies class my first semester. Although I had come to Michigan undecided about my major, by the middle of first semester I knew that I wanted to do Judaic Studies. I ended up finishing my Judaic Studies major and Spanish minor in three years, so I completed the coursework for a master’s degree in Judaic Studies during my fourth year. I then began a full-time position as the Youth, Teen, & Camp Director at the Jewish Community Center in Ann Arbor, and continued working on my master’s thesis part time over the next two years. About a year after finishing my thesis I started getting the “back to school itch.” I considered a PhD in Judaic Studies or a related field, but ultimately decided to go to law school. I am now in my third

semester of law school at Michigan, and I am enjoying the experience immensely. Once finished, I am considering pursuing employment law or corporate law. I also plan to make pro bono work an integral part of my career

### **Emil Kerenji, Applied Research Scholar at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Ph.D., History, University of Michigan**

I arrived in Ann Arbor in the fall of 2000, to pursue a Ph.D. in history. I was born and raised in Yugoslavia, which disintegrated violently as I left it at age 18; I arrived in the United States after a nine-year educational path less traveled, which took me through Austria, Bulgaria, and Hungary, with frequent prolonged stops in Serbia and Israel.

I was accepted to several great Ph.D. programs in the Midwest and the East Coast, but I chose Michigan, because I knew it had great centers for Jewish and East European studies. These were the two fields in which I wanted to situate my work. I was very fortunate to have worked closely, over the course of my studies at Michigan, with Todd Endelman and Zvi Gitelman, as well as with numerous others at the Frankel Center, from whose expertise and advice I benefited greatly. Todd was not only the best academic advisor one could ever hope for, but he also made me learn Hebrew, despite my initial resistance; the Center helped me do that, with generous funding which took me to Israel and New York. I learned to read Yiddish, too, sitting in Vera Szabo’s reading class. I wrote and defended a dissertation on rebuilding Jewish life in Yugoslavia after the Holocaust, and, as good freshly-minted Ph.D.’s are supposed to, got a tenure-track teaching job.

A combination of personal and professional factors, however, took me from the University of South Carolina, where I taught in the Department of History, to Washington. I now work as Applied Research Scholar at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, an academic research arm of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Here I do what I was trained to do in graduate school: do research, in about ten languages, in the vast archival holdings at the Museum, and write a volume in the new multi-volume history of the Holocaust, entitled *Jewish Responses to Persecution, 1933-1946*, that the Museum is sponsoring.

# Deborah Dash Moore Wins Prestigious Awards

U-M History Professor Deborah Dash Moore, director of the Frankel Center, is being recognized with two notable honors this year—National Jewish Book Award and the Lee Max Friedman Award, given by the American Jewish Historical Society.

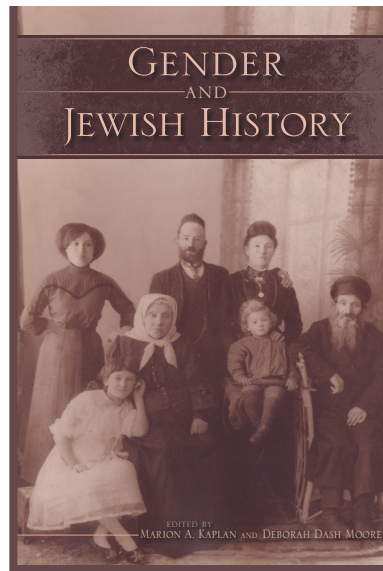
Granted by the Jewish Book Council, The National Jewish Book Award recognizes groundbreaking works in their categories. Moore's *Gender & Jewish History* (Indiana University Press, 2011) took the prize in the category of Anthologies and Collections. Other recipients include Pulitzer Prize-winning author Art Spiegelman for *Metamaus* and Israeli novelist Aharon Appelfeld, whose *Until the Dawn's Light* gains him a third National Jewish Book Award.

*Gender & Jewish History*, co-edited by NYU Professor of History Marion Kaplan and written in honor of Paula Hyman—a founder of Jewish gender studies and professor of History at Yale University who passed away in December—is a collection of essays from such noted scholars of Jewish history as Beth Wenger, Deborah Lipstadt, Todd Endelman, Elishiva Carlebach, and Marsha Rozenblit.

"Indiana University Press congratulates editors Deborah Dash Moore and Marion Kaplan and the extraordinary group of contributors to *Gender and Jewish History*, whose outstanding scholarship, inspired in different ways by the work of Paula Hyman, brought this amazing volume to life under Deborah's and Marion's able guidance," attests Indiana University Press Director Janet Rabinowitch. "We at IU Press are thrilled that this excellent book, an enduring tribute to Paula's memory, has been recognized by a National Jewish Book Award. We are honored

to be its publisher."

"The book and the award are a tribute to Paula Hyman—the field that she inspired and the students she mentored," acknowledged Deborah Dash Moore. The winners of the 2011 National Jewish Book Awards were honored on March 14 at a gala awards ceremony at the Center for Jewish History in Manhattan.



*Gender & Jewish History*, edited by Deborah Dash Moore and Marion Kaplan, written in honor of Paula Kaplan.

Moore's second recognition—the Lee Max Friedman Award Medal—is awarded biennially by the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) to an individual deemed to have rendered distinguished service in the field of American Jewish history. The selection committee, chaired and comprised of Moore's fellow historians, included Pamela Nadell, Jeffrey Gurock, and Rebecca Kobrin, chose Dash Moore "on the merits of her eminent scholarship, innovative contributions, mentorship of younger scholars, and ongoing leadership in the field." The AJHS is the oldest ethnic history society in the United States and maintains an archive with a rich collection of documents

dating back to colonial times.

"In awarding her the Lee Max Friedman Award Medal, the AJHS is honoring Deborah Dash Moore as a path-breaking scholar," attested Beth Wenger, Professor of History and director of the University of Pennsylvania's Jewish Studies Program. "[She is] a generous colleague and mentor, and a person who has given her time and energy to help build the field of American Jewish history."

"Moore's published work has consistently staked new ground in the field of American Jewish history. *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* provided a pioneering perspective on the unique acculturation patterns of the children of immigrants; *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.* was the first book to explore the new communities created by Jews in the sunbelt in the post-World War II era, and Moore's *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* offered an unprecedented exploration of the ways that military service deepened and transformed the identities of Jewish soldiers."

Wenger continues, "Deborah Dash Moore is not only a gifted scholar in her own right, but also someone who regularly conceives, produces, and shepherds a range of broad and innovative projects. Her service to the profession and to the field of American Jewish history is simply exemplary. She is a tireless worker in a host of organizations—planning conferences, serving on editorial boards of leading journals, and never hesitating to volunteer her time."

The award will be presented in June 2012 at the Scholars Conference of the Academic Council of the American Jewish Historical Society.

# Weinberg Prize Awarded: Ronit Stahl Reflects on the Honor

I am honored and delighted to receive this year's Marshall M. Weinberg Prize in Judaic Studies. The generous support provided by the prize will greatly assist my dissertation research and support dissertation writing. As a Ph.D. candidate in history, my work situates American Jews in a comparative context, exploring how the trajectory of American Jewish history intersects with the experiences of other religious Americans. In particular, my dissertation uses the American military chaplaincy from World War I through Vietnam to examine the role of the state in the public expression and negotiation of religion in the United States. I focus on

the ways in which the state has defined and managed religious ideals as well as created new religious practices. Jews played a significant role in framing these developments—as agitators and advocates—and the experience of the military helped shape American Jewish life in the twentieth century.

The Frankel Center has provided invaluable opportunities to learn—formally through classes and informally through workshops and conversations—from some of the most wise scholars in Judaic Studies. I could not ask for a better advisor than Deborah Dash Moore, whose knowledge, guidance, and generosity

is incredible and inspiring. Likewise, Todd Endelman, Julian Levinson, and Anita Norich have generously shared their knowledge and time with me. I have gained valuable experience as a participant in the Judaic Studies Graduate Student Reading Group and as the organizer of the American Jewish Studies Reading Group. Finally, the Frankel Center brings together a wide variety of graduate students from multiple disciplines; my experience at Michigan and my academic work have been tremendously enriched by friendship and conversations with Katie Rosenblatt, Lissy Reiman, David Schlitt, Danny Mintz, Ben Pollack, and Nick Block.

## Students

**Sara Feldman** and **Ronit Stahl** received the Department of History's Sidney Fine Fellowship for Excellence in Teaching for Winter 2012.

**Alexandra Hoffman** organized a panel at the annual Association for Judaic Studies (AJS) meeting in December. Both she and Sara Feldman presented papers; Anita Norich moderated and Marc Caplan responded.

## Faculty

**Ruth Behar** will be given the Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters at Hebrew Union College's Cincinnati Graduation Ceremonies in June.

**Zvi Gitelman** presented lectures at Michigan State University, the University of California-San Diego, and at a conference on Soviet Jewry in WWII at the University of Toronto.

**Karla Goldman** presented a talk entitled "Gender, Decorum, and Aesthetics in the Shaping of the American Synagogue" at a Pepperdine University conference, Surveying Sacred Space: An Interdisciplinary, Interfaith Symposium. She also gave a lecture for Ann Arbor's Temple Beth Emeth's Year of Torah—"Sacred Journey: The Story of the Torah Scroll in America."

**Caroline Helton** and **Kathryn Goodson** will be performing their "Voices of the Italian Holocaust" program at the American Association of Italian Studies Conference in Charleston, S.C., in May.

**Eileen Pollack's** new book, *Breaking and Entering*, was reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Oprah*, and *People*. She was also honored with the Grub Street National Book Prize.

**David Schoem** received the 2012 Michigan Campus

# Mazel Tov!

Compact Faculty/Staff Community Service-Learning Award for his dedication to community service-learning.

**Jindrich Toman** served as guest co-editor and contributed the opening text on a new, monothematic issue of the journal *Judaica Bohemiae* (46/2011, 2), *Jan Neruda and Jews*. The papers published in the journal were originally presented at a workshop of the same name, which was held by the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Institute for Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences in October 2010.

## Fellows

**Anthony Bale** (University of Birkbeck, U.K., Institute fellow 2008-2009) received the prestigious Philip Leverhulme Prize for young scholars.

**Mia Bruch** contributed to a new haggadah compiled by Jonathan Safran Foer that included writer Nathan Englander, Daniel Handler (author of the Lemony Snicket series), and Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic*, among others.

**Brian Horowitz** was invited to participate in a forum on the 95th Anniversary of the February Revolution of 1917 and the question of Jews. His remarks can be found in *Lekhaim* (Russian) vol. 3, 2012, 57-58. Also, Horowitz spoke at the conference on Russian-Jewish immigration (organized by Zvi Gitelman) at Harvard University, December 2011.

**Nancy Sinkoff** published "Fiction's Archive: Authenticity, Ethnography, and Philosemitism in John Hersey's 'The Wall'" in *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* n.s. 17, no. 2 (Winter 2011). She also gave a talk at the University of Arizona's Center for Judaic Studies, "Arch Rivals in 'The Archers' Voice:' Revisiting the Origins of the Hebrew-Yiddish Language War among East European Maskilim."



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SAVE THE DATE

**Sunday, April 22, 2:30pm-6:00pm**

**Monday, April 23, 9am-12:45pm**

**Everyday Jews:  
Reimagining Modern Jewish History**

**(Conference in Honor of Todd Endelman's Retirement)**

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