



# Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies

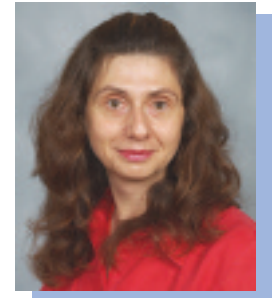
## Newsletter

Lehigh University  
Bethlehem, PA

Volume 19  
Fall 2007

### Joanna Michlic Appointed Helene and Allen Apter Chair of Holocaust Studies and Ethical Values

The Berman Center is pleased to announce the appointment of Joanna B. Michlic to the Helene and Allen Apter Chair of Holocaust Studies and Ethical Values. Dr. Michlic will be a member of Lehigh's Department of History and will be affiliated with the Berman Center. Her appointment was made possible by a generous gift from Helene and Allen Apter '61 and support from Lehigh's College of Arts and Sciences. The new position makes Lehigh University one of a few institutions of higher learning with an endowed chair in the field of Holocaust studies.



In the fall semester, Dr. Michlic is offering two courses—Holocaust: History and Meaning, and Genocide in the Twentieth Century. The addition of a full-time professor of Holocaust studies on the Lehigh campus fulfills a long-term goal of the Berman Center. According to Larry Silberstein, director of the Berman Center, Dr. Michlic's expertise in Holocaust studies and Jewish history will significantly enhance Jewish studies course offerings and programs. In addition, her expertise in modern nationalism and genocide studies will increase Lehigh's offerings in this critical area.

Previously, Dr. Michlic served as an assistant professor in the Holocaust and Genocide Program at Richard Stockton College in Pomona, New Jersey. Born in Poland, she earned her doctorate at University College London and London School of Economics. She has served as a Lady Davis post-doctoral fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a fellow at the Yad Vashem Archives.

Dr. Michlic is the author of a highly praised study, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present*, and co-editor with Antony Polonsky of *Neighbors Respond: The Controversy about Jedwabne*. Her recent publications include "The Dynamics of the Memory of the Holocaust in Post-1945 Poland: An Overview" in *Imaginary Neighbors: Mediating Polish-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust*; "The Concept of the Other and the Formation of Modern National Identity" in *Ethnosymbolism: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity and Nationalism. Essays in Honor of Anthony D. Smith*; and "The Memory of the Holocaust in Poland and Eastern Europe" in *The History of the Shoah, Vol. II, Legacies, Representations, Identities*. She has also published many articles in journals such as *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, *East European Jewish Affairs*, and *Jewish Quarterly*. Her research interests are the history and culture of East European Jewry, particularly Polish-Jewish relations in the modern era, and the Holocaust and its memory in Eastern Europe. ■

### Yechiel Klar Appointed Russell Berrie Visiting Professor



Dr. Yechiel Klar of Tel Aviv University's Department of Psychology has been appointed the 2007-2008 Russell Berrie Visiting Professor at the Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies. The position was created through a challenge grant provided by the Berrie Foundation and the generous response of a select group of Lehigh alumni and friends. The foundation's gift was in large part the result of the efforts of one of its trustees, Lehigh graduate Myron Rosner '59.

Dr. Klar will teach two courses each semester in Lehigh's Department of Psychology. During the fall semester, using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a

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## Diaspora Focus of Spring 2007 Project

In spring 2007, the Berman Center spearheaded a campus-wide project that explored the diverse and complex usages of the concept of diaspora in both Jewish and non-Jewish settings. One of the most oft-cited concepts in contemporary discussions of identity, diaspora relates to issues of displacement, migration, cultural space, ethnic and group identity, post-colonialism, and globalization. Through a series of events accessible to Lehigh students and faculty, as well as the public, “Diaspora: Re-imagining Cultural Space” explored issues of identity and space in the ever-shifting global context.

In a cooperative interdepartmental effort, the Diaspora Project brought to campus three art exhibits, two films, five lectures, a concert, and a two-day conference. Speakers and artists, representing South Asian, African American, Cuban, Indian, Haitian, Jewish, and Chinese ethnic groups, provided diverse views and perspectives on diaspora and identity in the contemporary world. Events such as these reflect the Berman Center’s distinctive interdisciplinary critical orientation that has characterized its programming for the past twenty-three years.

More than a dozen spring 2007 courses in the College of Arts and Sciences incorporated modules on the topic of diaspora, while four courses taught by Jewish studies faculty focused on the Jewish Diaspora. Writer-in-Residence Ruth Setton taught Immigrant Women Writers: Jewish/Indian/Latina and Berman Professor Larry Silberstein offered Israel: Religion, Culture, National Identity. Two new courses were developed in conjunction with the project: Newish Jewish: New Forms of Judaism in the North American Diaspora by Chava Weissler and The Ancient Jewish Diaspora by Ben Wright.

Larry Silberstein and Ruth Setton, who conceived and planned the project and the two-day conference on the Jewish Diaspora, worked closely with Ricardo Viera of the Lehigh University Art Galleries and consulted with Edurne Portela of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures, Rob Rozehnal of the Religion Studies Department, Deep Singh of the English Department, and Connie Cook of Asian Studies. ■

*In a world of exiles, immigrants, nomads, and refugees who must redefine themselves with each border they cross, diaspora has become the catchword of the 21st century. But what does diaspora mean? The term comes from the Greek: “a scattering or sowing of seeds.” When the Hebrew Bible was translated to Greek, the word diaspora was used to describe the exile of the Jews from Judea and Jerusalem.*

*For many, diaspora is still defined as a rupture from one’s homeland, a painful experience of loss: loss of country, family, stability, history, and perhaps most disturbing, loss of identity. However, others see the concept as pointing toward a future of possibility in which people form new bonds, incorporate different languages and customs, redefine tradition, reconfigure and enhance their cultural identity, and recreate themselves.*

—Ruth Knafo Setton  
Berman Center Writer-in-Residence

## Highlights of the Diaspora Project

### Documentary Film Demonstrates the Artistic Repercussions of Diaspora

The Berman Center, in cooperation with the Jewish Community Center in Allentown, presented the documentary *Awake Zion*—a young Jewish woman’s musical journey to discover her roots through reggae. Blurring borders and boundaries, the film demonstrates the artistic repercussions of diaspora. The filmmaker, Monica Haim, was present to discuss her venture into Rastafarian culture and the unexpected connections she found between Jews and reggae, which she described as meditative music. “Although reggae is a relatively new form of music, it has such an ancient spirit,” she said. “It’s very melodic and repetitive, like a human heartbeat, and that is why people find it so soothing.”

Through the themes of music, roots, and culture, *Awake Zion* makes a strong case that people are more alike than different. The film chronicles Haim’s journey from Crown Heights, Brooklyn, where she meets with Hasidic dancehall superstar Matisyahu, to Jamaica, the birthplace of reggae, and ultimately to Israel, where a small, sizzling reggae scene thrives. It features musicians King Django and Super Dantes, and interviews with Rastas, Jamaicans, and Jews from America, Israel, and Ethiopia. It reveals unexpected



*Reggae artists from Awake Zion*

© The Cinema Guild

cultural and historical convergence, including traditions shared by people on opposite ends of the spiritual spectrum. “Music,” Haim commented, “is the common denominator. It drives the conversation.”

Writer, director, and producer, Monica Haim received her master’s degree in cultural journalism from the Gallatin School at New York University. In 2004 she founded her own production company, Twin Goat Productions, which specializes in slice-of-life documentary projects.

The program, enthusiastically received by the entire audience, was sponsored by the Berman Center, the Allentown Jewish Community Center’s Jewish and Israeli Film Series, and the E. F. Robbins Fund in Jewish Studies. ■

## Concert by Pharaoh’s Daughter Traces the Wanderings of the Jews

Another Berman Center program highlighting Jewish Diaspora—particularly the wanderings of the Jews—was the concert by the acclaimed musical group Pharaoh’s Daughter, led by talented singer/musician Basya Schechter. This dynamic band from New York City performed music with a Mediterranean touch. Its repertoire included swirling Hasidic chants, Mizrahi and Sephardi folk-rock, and spiritual stylings filtered through percussion, flute, strings, and electronica.

During the performance, planned especially for the Diaspora Project, Schechter interspersed songs in Aramaic, Ladino, Greek, Hebrew, and Yiddish with comments about the diasporic origin of the music and the meaning of the lyrics. Following the performance, she answered questions from the audience about Pharaoh’s Daughter and their music.

Basya Schechter has cultivated the group’s global sound, drawing from a Hasidic music background and a series of trips to the Middle East, Africa, Turkey, Kurdistan, and Greece. She has studied ethnomusicology in the Mediterranean area and the United States with internationally renowned folk musicians and street performers, from whom she learned songs from their individual musical heritages.



*Basya Schechter, center front, and Pharaoh’s Daughter*

© Pharaoh’s Daughter

Pharaoh’s Daughter has toured extensively through America and Europe, with performances in Central Park’s Summer Stage series, at the Lincoln Center’s Damrosch Park, and at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, among other notable venues. The group has released two CDs on John Zorn’s Tzadik label. Their fifth album, *Haran*, released in 2007, received rave reviews.

The program was sponsored by the Berman Center, Humanities Center, and University Productions. ■

## Exiled Author Discusses the Role of Testimony after Survival

Nora Strejilevich, an ex-detainee-“disappeared” who survived the atrocities of the “Dirty War” in her country of Argentina (1976-83), described her experiences in a talk at Lehigh entitled “Beyond the Language of Truth: Testimony and Exile after Survival.” The Jewish writer addressed the role of testimony as a means for working through traumatic memories and as a mechanism of social and cultural resistance—which she deems essen-

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## Conference Analyzes the Ways that Diaspora is Understood in Contemporary Jewish Culture

The culmination of the semester-long Diaspora Project was the Berman Center's interdisciplinary conference, "No Direction Home: Re-imagining Jewish Geography," organized by Larry Silberstein and Ruth Knafo Setton. The conference, held March 25 and 26, explored the far-reaching changes in the ways that diaspora is defined, interpreted, and imagined in contemporary Jewish scholarship, art, and literature.

In their opening presentation, David Shneer and Caryn Aviv of the University of Denver contended that members of a new generation of Jews do not consider themselves as living in diaspora, nor do they view Israel as the Promised Land. In response, Jonathan Boyarin of the University of Kansas argued for the continuing viability of diaspora as a covering term for the conditions of Jewish life and identity, both beyond and within the borders of the State of Israel. Political activist and writer Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz of Queens College questioned what it would mean for Jews to embrace diaspora, not as mournful exile, not as inferior to Zionism, but as "Jewishly normative."

In his essay, Larry Silberstein contended that concepts formulated by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari provide ways of thinking about diaspora as a dynamic, creative process. University of Miami professor Ranen Omer-Sherman discussed the tensions between Zionism and diaspora in the work of Israeli author A. B. Yehoshua.

Three conference sessions focused on the visual and artistic representation of diaspora. York University art historian Shelley Hornstein introduced the audience to a new Jewish cultural presence on the web, *Mosaica*, the virtual museum of Jewish culture. She demonstrated how an interactive virtual experience can provide many different considerations of diaspora by challenging notions of space while theorizing Jewish cultural place. Art historian Carol Zemel, also from York University and a co-creator of *Project Mosaica*, discussed iconic diasporic Jewish artist Bruno Schulz. Curator Susan Chevlowe of the Jewish Theological Seminary presented and discussed images from contemporary Jewish artists that challenge prevailing notions of Jewish space.

In her essay on the visual art of the Jewish Renewal movement, Berman professor Chava Weissler analyzed the ways that slightly older "New Jews" use American artistic media, such as

quilts, to create *midrash* (new interpretations) of Judaism. Looking at another form of media, Laura Levitt of Temple University discussed the effect of family visual archives on generations that follow. She recounted how an amateur film made by her father came to reveal certain truths about being at home in America.

The topic of artistic representation of diaspora was continued in a special evening session entitled "Diaspora and Diversity: Jews, Asians, and Haitians" when the work of three artists was presented during a panel discussion. Through slides of photographs in his exhibit and published book *Far from Zion: Jews, Diaspora, Memory*, Jason Francisco discussed the contradictory history of European Jewry in the last century. Photographer Pok Chi Lau, who has been documenting the Chinese diaspora for thirty years, showed images from his book *Dreams of the Golden Mountain*. Ricardo Viera, director of the Lehigh University Art Galleries, discussed the issues of dislocation and loss in the work of Haitian painter Paul Gardere, who was unable to participate owing to illness. The works of the artists

were displayed by the Lehigh University Art Galleries throughout the spring semester.

Two literary memoirs of Jewish life on the move were presented by authors Jael Silliman and Ruth Knafo Setton. Silliman offered a lyrical narrative of her Iraqi Jewish family's life in India and their travels on trade routes through East Asia, while Setton provided a first-person account of her Moroccan Jewish family's life among languages and cultures – French, Jewish, Arabic. Anthropologist Joelle Bahloul of Indiana University discussed the layered Jewish life of the Jewish Quarter of Paris and the various ways Jewishness is performed in that historical space.

During the two-day event, the audience, including students from the many courses connected to the Diaspora Project, was given a chance to explore Judaism through a look at the Jewish map and its inhabitants and culture. Attendance at some sessions was more than 150. Many students and other participants observed that they had previously been unaware of the many Jewish communities talked about during the conference and their distinct identities. The presentations led them to reflect, for the first time, on what it might mean to be forced to leave one's home and country and live in exile. ■



Left to right: Photographer Jason Francisco discusses his exhibit "Far from Zion" with Myron '59 and Liesa Rosner, Rochelle Goodman, and Nancy Berman

John Kish IV

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sunday, March 25

### SESSION I, "The End of Jewish Diaspora"

Caryn Aviv and David Shneer, University of Denver

### SESSION II, "Are New Jews New? Jewish Diasporic Culture, Then and Now"

"Jewish Cultural Creativity in Alexandria,"

Benjamin Wright, Lehigh Univ.

"The Old Jews," Jonathan Boyarin, Univ. of Kansas

"Reading Art in Jewish Renewal," Chava Weissler, Lehigh Univ.

### SESSION III, "Uncertain Travelers: Meditations on the Journey"

"Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames," Jael Silliman, author  
"Living Between Question Marks,"

Ruth Knafo Setton, Lehigh Univ.

### SESSION IV, "Smooth Spaces/New Faces: Desert and Diaspora"

"The Virus of Diaspora in A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated  
Bride*," Ranen Omer-Sherman, Univ. of Miami

"Deterritorializing/Reterritorializing Critical  
Reflections on Diaspora," Laurence Silberstein, Lehigh Univ.

### Artists' Reception and Exhibitions

Photographer Jason Francisco (*Far from Zion: Jews,  
Diaspora, Memory*); artist Paul Gardere (*Diaspora: Multiple  
Narratives*); and photographer Pok Chi Lau (*Diaspora:  
Dreams of the Golden Mountain*)

### SESSION V - "Diaspora and Diversity: Jews, Asians, Haitians"

**Panel Discussion:** Jason Francisco, photographer;  
Paul Gardere, artist; Pok Chi Lau, photographer

Monday, March 26

### SESSION VI - "Visualizing Diaspora"

"Back to the Future: Cybermaps and the New Atlas of  
Jewish Geography," Shelley Hornstein, York Univ.

"Modern Artist, Modern Jews: Bruno Schulz's Diasporas,"  
Carol Zemel, York Univ.

"Diaspora, Jewish Artists and the Geographies of Visual  
Culture," Susan Chevlowe, Jewish Theological Seminary

### SESSION VII - "Diasporas, Home and Belonging"

"From My Father's Visual Archive: A Lost American  
Jewish Home," Laura Levitt, Temple Univ.

"Choosing Diaspora," Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz,  
Queens College, City Univ. of New York

"The Parisian Pletzel as 'Makom' or the Jewish Quarter  
as 'Non-Territory'," Joelle Bahloul, Indiana Univ.

## Exiled Author Discusses the Role of Testimony after Survival

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*Left to right: Student Louis Yako, Prof. Ruth Setton,  
Nora Strejilevich, and Prof. Edurne Portela*

tial for the ethical recovery of a community that experienced, in her words, "utmost exclusion."

According to Strejilevich, testimony following genocide gives expression to the intimate, subjective, deep dimension of horror. "Having witnessed the abyss of atrocity," she said, "survivors can no longer rely on knowledge or facts as the basis for thinking. It is mostly in the realm of literature where recounting becomes an elaboration of language so that it can invoke the true nature of the event."

While at Lehigh, Nora Strejilevich visited the classes of professors Ruth Setton and Edurne Portela where she talked with students about her personal experiences in an Argentine concentration camp in 1977 and her use of writing as a survival strategy. In her case, writing her story and the story of the victims of the repression was the way to transform herself from victim to agent. Her public presentation was attended by more than 100 students and faculty. Students commented that Strejilevich's act of testimony gave them much to think about. Many who attended the program expressed surprise that Jews suffered so much in Argentina in the 70s and 80s—something they were unaware of before attending the talk.

Since moving to the United States in 1994, Strejilevich has taught at several universities. Her most recent book, a testimonial novel titled *Una sola muerte numerosa*, won the 1996 Letras de Oro National Literary Award. An English translation of the volume, *A Single Numberless Death*, was published by the University of Virginia Press in 2002.

Strejilevich's visit to Lehigh, organized by Edurne Portela, was sponsored by the Latin American Studies Program, the Berman Center, the Humanities Center, the Office of the Chaplain, Department of Modern Languages and Literature, Women's Studies Program, and Global Citizenship. ■

## Gifts

The Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies recognizes with gratitude the individuals listed here. These generous contributors have greatly enhanced the academic, cultural, and programmatic offerings of the Berman Center and Lehigh University.

*Gifts and pledges received fiscal year  
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Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you are interested in supporting the Berman Center or wish to call our attention to errors or omissions in the list, please contact John Varady, Development Office, Lehigh University, 27 Memorial Drive West, Bethlehem, PA 18015-3089 (610 758-3125).

To obtain additional information concerning the Berman Center and its programs or to be added to our mailing or e-mail list, please contact

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## BCJS Faculty 2007-2008

• **Laurence J. Silberstein**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *modern Jewish thought and culture*

• **Robert L. Cohn**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religious Studies, Lafayette College, *Hebrew Bible, history of Judaism, comparative religion, Jews in Poland*

• **Yechiel Klar**, Russell Berrie Visiting Professor, 2007-2008 (Dept. of Psychology, Tel Aviv Univ.), *social psychology, the social psychology of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, applications of social psychology to social problems*

• **Joanna B. Michlic**, Helene and Allen Apter Professor of Holocaust Studies and Ethical Values, Dept. of History, Lehigh University, *Holocaust studies, history and culture of East European Jewry*

• **Ruth Knafo Setton**, Writer-in-Residence, Berman Center for Jewish Studies and Dept. of English, Lehigh University, *Jewish literature*

• **Chava Weissler**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Civilization, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *Jewish folklore, early modern Judaism, contemporary American Judaism*

• **Benjamin Wright, III**, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *Hebrew Bible, history and literature of early Judaism and Christianity*

### **Affiliated Faculty Lehigh University**

• **Bunnie Piltch**, Dept. of Modern Languages and Literature, *Hebrew language*

• **Roslyn Weiss**, Dept. of Philosophy, *Jewish philosophy*

### **Affiliated Faculty Lafayette College**

• **Ilana Levy**, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures, *Hebrew language*

• **Ilan Peleg**, Dept. of Government and Law, *Middle East politics*

• **Robert Weiner**, Dept. of History, *modern Jewish history*

## Faculty Notes

JOANNA MICHLIC spoke at the First International Congress of Foreign Scholars of Polish History at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow in June. Last year she was awarded the Corrie ten Boom Research Award at the Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education at the University of Southern California. The award was named for the Dutch rescuer of Jews during the Holocaust and funded by the Ahmanson Community Trust. The fellowships are designed to facilitate research in the video archive of USC's Shoah Foundation.

Michlic published "The Dynamics of the Memory of the Holocaust in Post-1945 Poland: An Overview" in *Imaginary Neighbors: Mediating Polish-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust*; "The Concept of the Other and the Formation of Modern National Identity" in *Ethnosymbolism: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity and Nationalism. Essays in Honor of Anthony D. Smith*; and "The Memory of the Holocaust in Poland and Eastern Europe" in *The History of the Shoah*, Vol. II, *Legacies, Representations, Identities*.

LAURENCE SILBERSTEIN presented "Deterritorializing/Reterritorializing Critical Reflections on Diaspora" at the Berman Center's March conference. His edited book, *Postzionism: A Reader*, will be published in 2008 by Rutgers University Press. He contributed "Postzionism and Postmodern Theory: The Challenge to Jewish Studies" to *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness: Identities—Encounters—Perspectives* (Brill 2007), and his article "Becoming Jewish: Jewish Becomings: Critical and Ethical Reflections" appeared in a special issue on Jewish identity in *Transversal: Zeitschrift fur judische Studien*.

RUTH KNAFO SETTON received a residency fellowship from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, where she finished working on her second novel, *Darktown Blues*. In the past year she has published fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry in many anthologies and journals, including *Desire: Women Write about Wanting*, *Tupelo Press Poetry Project*, *Arabesques Review*, *Bridges*, and *Zeek*. She also gave a number of readings and writing workshops. She presented a paper at the Berman Center's conference, "No Direction Home: Re-imagining Jewish Geography," held at Lehigh in March 2007.

ROSLYN WEISS published an article, "Natural Order or Divine Will: Maimonides on Cosmogony and Prophecy" in *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* and "The Piety of Socrates and Maimonides: Doing God's Work on Earth" in *Expositions*.

CHAVA WEISSLER was awarded a Doctor of Hebrew Letters, Honoris Causa by Gratz College in May 2007. Her article "Disciples, Rebbes and Jewish Renewal" appeared in *Sh'ma*. She presented invited lectures at the Jewish Theological Seminary, at the Berman Center's conference, "No Direction Home," and at "On the Lip(s) of Miriam's Well: Jews/Women/Culture," a conference held at Vanderbilt

University. Weissler planned and taught a new course, *Newish Jewish*, in conjunction with the Berman Center's Diaspora Project.

BENJAMIN WRIGHT published "Translation as Scripture: The Septuagint in *Aristeas* and Philo" in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures*; "From Generation to Generation: The Sage as Father in Early Jewish Literature" in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael Knibb*; "Eschatology without a Messiah in the Wisdom of Ben Sira" in *The Septuagint and Messianism: Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense*; "Michael Knibb and George Nickelsburg on the Structure of the Parables of Enoch" in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of the Parables*; and "Three Jewish Ritual Practices in *Aristeas* §§158-160" in *Heavenly Tablets: Interpretation, Identity, and Tradition in Ancient Judaism*. At the Berman Center's conference he spoke on "Jewish Cultural Creativity in Alexandria" and planned a new course, *Ancient Jewish Diasporas*, in conjunction with the Berman Center's Diaspora Project. He also presented papers at the Fourth International Enoch Seminar in Camaldoli, Italy, and the International Meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature in Vienna, Austria. ■

### Yechiel Klar

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case study, one of his classes is focusing on the social psychological dynamics of intergroup conflicts and paths to resolution and reconciliation. He will also teach *Comparisons, Choices, Decisions*. In the spring semester, he will offer a course on the social psychological and societal impact of the Holocaust, and another on social cognition.

As a social psychologist, the Israeli scholar has conducted his primary research in the fields of social cognition, decision making, and social comparison processes. In the last decade he has devoted much of his time and teaching to issues shaping Israeli life. His current research examines the ways in which Israelis address the moral implications of the Jewish-Arab conflict as well as the legacies of the Holocaust in Israeli moral discourse.

Dr. Klar received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Tel Aviv University. A faculty member of Tel Aviv's Department of Psychology since 1990, he currently holds the position of Senior Lecturer. He has also served as a visiting professor at the University of Kansas, Carleton University in Canada, and the University of Connecticut. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including grants from the Israel Foundations Trustees, the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, and the Israel Science Foundation.

Dr. Klar's wife, Yonat, and daughter, Tali, accompanied him to the Lehigh Valley. ■

## Derek Royal Discusses Philip Roth

Derek Parker Royal, professor of English at Texas A&M University, lectured on “Philip Roth: Jewish American Novelist?” Royal, who is a Roth scholar and head of the Philip Roth Society, explained that Roth is considered one of the most lyrical and notorious chroniclers of Jewish life in America. Nevertheless, Roth has expressed his unease at being labeled a Jewish writer throughout his career. In Royal’s words, “He has performed a curious balancing act of inscribing his Jewish roots while at the same time denying the ethnic-specific signifiers that place him in the contemporary American canon.”

Royal believes that what Roth has in mind resisting the classification of a Jewish writer is “an opposition to the departmentalizing or the ghettoizing tendencies of the literary marketplace. This applies to publishing houses and large bookstore chains as much as it does for college classrooms.”

According to Royal, an author runs the risk of being read as an ethnic writer when he/she writes primarily about a minority community. In so doing, a writer unwittingly takes on a huge, potentially explosive cultural burden. For instance, in the case of Roth’s *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories*, what caught the attention of many Jewish readers was not the struggle between heritage and assimilation, but what they saw as negative stereotypes in the text. As a result, Roth was criticized by the Anti-Defamation League and the students at Yeshiva University for being a Jewish anti-Semite. The same accusation was leveled at *Portnoy’s Complaint*.

“Yet for every passage that critics label anti-Semitic, there are examples of Roth’s writing that pay tribute to the Jewish past,” Royal said. “This is especially the case with Roth’s more recent work, those novels from the early 1990s to the present.” Roth’s 1991 book, *Patrimony*, was a moving tribute to his father and his unsuccessful fight with cancer. In it, he links his father’s uphill struggle with the disease, his sense of pride, and his tenacity in maintaining a dignified life, to the kind of Jewish character he found growing up in Newark in the 1940s and 50s.

Royal suggested that expectations as to Philip Roth’s “role” or place as a Jewish American author should always be considered with caution. Nonetheless, despite Roth’s protests to the contrary, Royal contends that Roth is a Jewish American author, one who lyrically encapsulates his understanding of what it means to be a Jew in post-World War II America. However, to Royal this expression of “Jewishness” was not essential and not necessarily linked to religious thought and observation.

Royal believes that for Roth, the *very act* of trying to erase the past, ethnic or otherwise, is a very American project: “By resisting the label ‘Jewish American writer,’ Roth is performing his own brand of erasure. And, it seems to me, this very much puts him, as one of our country’s foremost novelists, truly in the American grain.”

Derek Parker Royal is the executive editor of the journal *Philip Roth Studies* and editor of *Philip Roth: New Perspectives on an American Author*. His essays on American literature have appeared in such journals as *Contemporary Literature*, *Studies in American Jewish Fiction*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, and *Shofar*.

In addition to his public lecture, Royal also visited Professor Ruth Setton’s seminar on the works of Philip Roth, “Philip Roth’s Complaint.” His talk was sponsored by the Berman Center for Jewish Studies and the Creative Writing Program. ■

## Susan Shapiro to Serve as 2008 Master Visiting Professor at the Gregorian

Professor Susan Shapiro of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has been selected to serve as the 2008 Master Visiting Professor in Jewish Studies at the Gregorian University in Rome. She will be the seventh American Jewish studies academician to teach in this collaborative program administered by the Berman Center. Under the auspices of the Gregorian’s Cardinal Bea Center for Judaic Studies, Shapiro will teach a 6-1/2 week course on post-Holocaust philosophy and thought, deliver lectures at the Gregorian, and engage in ongoing dialogue with both students and faculty.

A highly respected scholar, Shapiro specializes in Jewish philosophy, gender and Judaism, Jewish hermeneutics, and post-Holocaust religious thought. She is currently associate professor of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies and director of the Religious Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts. She previously taught at Columbia, Syracuse, Delaware, and Hebrew University.

Shapiro has published numerous journal articles and book chapters. Her most recent publications include “Standing (Again) with Judith Plaskow: A Selective Reading of Her Essays” in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*; “Hegel’s Ghost: Witness and Testimony in the Post-Holocaust Discourse” in *The Witness of Emil Fackenheim*; and “The Return(s) of the Uncanny in Post-Holocaust Discourse” in *The Representation of the Holocaust in Literature and Film*. ■