

Modernity's "Others": Plurality and Counter- Hegemonic Perspectives in 20th-Century German-Language Literature

BUCERIUS INSTITUTE LECTURE SERIES

Moderated by Ariel Pridan

On ZOOM*



Felix Nussbaum (1904–1944) The Folly Square, 1931

March 19, 2025
18:00 (11 am EST)



Katie Trumpener
Yale University

Against State
Information Monopoly:
The Media Experiments
of East German Dissident
Writers

March 26, 2025
18:00 (11 am EST)



Kata Gellen
Duke University

Galicia as a Literary Idea:
Jewish Eastern Europe
in the Writings of Joseph
Roth and Soma
Morgenstern

May 5, 2025
16:00 (9 am EST)**



Hannan Hever
Yale University

Immigrant from an
Imagined Empire:
Manfred Winkler's
Hebrew Poetry

May 7, 2025
18:00 (11 am EST)



Yael Almog
Durham University

The Right to Leave:
A German-Jewish
Eulogy

May 15, 2025
18:00 (11 am EST)



Ulrike Wagner
Bard College Berlin

Doing Things with
Words: Margaret Fuller,
Germaine de Staël, and
Friedrich Nietzsche on
the Use of the
Humanities

May 21, 2025
18:00 (11 am EST)



Ghilad Shenhav
University of Munich

How Can We Read Generously?
Benjamin, Kafka, and the
Hebrew Scriptures

June 4, 2025
18:00 (11 am EST)



Kirk Wetters
Yale University

The Intellectual Outsider: Karl
Markus Michel and the Voice
of Critique

June 18, 2025
18:00 (11 am EST)



Michal Ben-Horin
Bar Ilan University

Simultan: Reading Ingeborg
Bachmann in Israel

July 2, 2025
18:00 (11 am EST)



Michal Peles Almagor
Buber Institute

Interrupted Narratives and
Migrating Voices: The
Performative Power of Mascha
Kaléko's Poetry

* Link will be sent prior to each lecture

** In-person lecture; will be held at Senate Hall, Eshkol Tower, floor 29

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This lecture series will explore 20th-century German-language literature's engagement with various aspects of modern life and its role in rethinking and recentering marginalized and excluded aspects of modernity. Based on the premise that the negation of subjects, ideas, and agendas deemed "others" dialectically incorporates them as inherent participants in the project of modernity, the lectures will examine how 20th-century German-language literature reconstructs counter-hegemonic versions of modernity and highlights its intrinsic plurality and differences.

Based on Enlightenment ideology, modernity is broadly defined as a collection of processes, including industrialization, urbanization, secularization, rationalization, globalization, and the formation of centralizing and unifying nation-states. Theoretical and cultural discussions often portray these processes as monolithic and homogeneous, highlighting modernity's claim to universality and unity. Yet, as scholars such as Timothy Mitchell and Jon Mitchell argue, modernity requires forms of difference that undermine its unity. Rather than being a homogenizing process, modernity continuously generates otherness and is defined by differentiation rather than fixed stability.

The lectures will examine various examples from 20th-century German-language literature that shed light on the "other" voices of modernity and highlight modernity's ethnic, gendered, political, and linguistic "others." These papers will thus illuminate 20th-century German-language literature's role as a site of contestation for core aspects of modernity, such as the primacy of nation-states, the transformation of religion and myth into "irrational" realms, the conception of the modern subject as unitary and sovereign, the view of modern cities as the pinnacle of industrialized societies and of urbanization as a homosocial endeavor, the epistemological charting of the world in dichotomies like 'modern' versus 'traditional,' and so forth.

By bringing together scholars from German Studies and Comparative Literature in North America, Europe, and Israel, the lecture series will attempt to contribute to the broader academic effort to redefine and pluralize the discourse of modernity, aiming for a more nuanced and diverse understanding that reflects the material realities of different social and political groups.

Lectures will take place on ZOOM and will be uploaded to the YouTube channel of the Bucerius Institute



Yael Almog is Associate Professor of German at Durham University. Her research encompasses the cultural history of Germany from 1750 to the present, with a focus on theology, particularly the interactions between Jewish and Christian communities and the evolution of German-Jewish thought. Almog's monograph *Secularism and Hermeneutics* (University of Pennsylvania, 2019) argues that literature and literary theory facilitated the emergence of the Bible as a universal cultural artefact. Her current project engages with literary and artistic presentations of Europe as a Jewish homeland, studying works by Jewish migrants to/from Germany that depict the irony that ensues when the Jewish exile in Europe became an exile from Europe. She asks how fictions of return to Europe have posed a continual challenge to political theories that view the Jewish departure from Europe as irreversible, such as Arendt's accounts of totalitarianism.

📧 Hadas Tapouchi



Michal Ben-Horin is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Bar-Ilan University, specializing in German and modern Jewish literature within historical contexts, with a focus on the intersection of music and literature. She earned her Ph.D. from Tel Aviv University and completed postdoctoral fellowships at the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center at the Hebrew University, the University of Haifa, and the Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung in Berlin. She was also a research fellow at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. From 2017-2022 Ben-Horin has served as Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature at Bar-Ilan University. Her publications include *Musical Biographies: The Music of Memory in Post-1945 German Literature* (De Gruyter, 2016) and *Reading the Voices: Musical Poetics Between German and Hebrew* (The Bialik Institute, 2022). Her current project, which won a research grant from the Israel Science Foundation, focuses on the bilingual poetry of Tuvia Rübner.



Kata Gellen is Associate Professor of German Studies and Director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Duke University. Her main areas of research and teaching include German literary modernism, German-Jewish studies, postwar Austrian literature and cinema, film studies, and sound studies. Her most recent book manuscript, *Galicia as a Literary Idea: Jewish Eastern Europe in the Writings of Joseph Roth and Soma Morgenstern*, is currently under review. She is the author of *Kafka and Noise: The Discovery of Cinematic Sound in Literary Modernism* (Northwestern University Press, 2019) and numerous essays on writers including Robert Musil, Elias Canetti, Rainer Maria Rilke, Gertrud Kolmar, and Thomas Bernhard, as well as essays on Weimar Cinema.



Hannan Hever is the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Professor of Judaic Studies and Comparative Literature at Yale University. He holds a Ph.D. from the Hebrew University (1984), where his dissertation was titled *Poets and Zealots: The Rise of the Hebrew Political Poem*. Hever spent a postdoctoral year at UC Berkeley in 1986 and taught at the Hebrew University (1979–2012) and Tel Aviv University (1989–2000), as well as at including Northwestern University, University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and Columbia University. He is a senior research fellow at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem and editor of a fiction series at HaKibbutz HaMeuchad Publishing House. His research focuses on the cultural history of modern Hebrew literature, critical theory, the politics of Hasidic tales, and theories of nationalism, Marxism, and postcolonialism. Throughout his career, Hever published numerous books and articles in various prestigious platforms. His recent publications include *The Literature of 1948: Philology and Responsibility* (The Freie Universität Berlin, Brill Publishing House, 2019); *Literature of a Tribe, Literature of a Nation* (Jerusalem: Carmel Publishing House, 2021); *Hasidism, Haskalah, Zionism: Chapters in Literary Politics* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023).



Ghilad H. Shenhav is a research associate at the Department of History and at the Center for Israel Studies at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. His first book about language, tradition, and gender in the writings of Gershom Scholem was published this summer. Shenhav has written several articles in the fields of modern Jewish thought, literature, and intellectual history, among them: "Jacques Derrida and the Desertification of the Messianic" (*Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 2022), and "Gershom Scholem's 'Laments Project' and the Question of Gender" (*Journal of Jewish Studies*, 2023). He is developing his second book project about the reception of the Babylonian Talmud in early Zionism and Jewish political thought.



Katie Trumpener is Emily Sanford Professor of Comparative Literature and English at Yale, and affiliated there with Film and Media Studies, German, and Jewish Studies. She has published monographs, co-edited books, and articles on the history of the novel, German literature and film, and on art and visual culture (from the picturebook to the panorama). She has studied East German literature, film and culture for more than 40 years. She is currently finishing two books, one on Third Reich cinema and the Nazi occupation of Europe, and a sequel, on East and West German film culture during the Cold War.



Kirk Wetters is a Professor of German at Yale University, specializing in the intersections of modern literature and critical theory. His research examines the role of "opinion" in post-Enlightenment literature and theory, as explored in his first book, *The Opinion System: Impasses of the Public Sphere from Hobbes to Habermas* (Fordham University Press, 2008). His second monograph, *Demonic History from Goethe to the Present* (Northwestern University Press, 2014), traces the preoccupation with demons in modern literature and philosophy, focusing on figures like Goethe, Benjamin, and Lukács. Wetters has also studied 20th-century Austrian literature, the theories of Hans Blumenberg, and concepts of mass psychology and literary form. His current project, *The Theory Show*, explores the evolution of academic genres and the emergence of interdisciplinary research in postwar West Germany. He will be a Fellow at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich in 2025.



Ulrike Wagner is director of the German Studies Program at Bard College Berlin. She received her Ph.D. in German and Comparative Literature from Columbia University, an M.A. in North American Studies and German Literature from the Free University of Berlin, and was a visiting Fulbright scholar in the Department of Comparative Thought and Literature at Johns Hopkins University. At Bard College Berlin she has developed a variety of courses on European and American Romanticism, Germany's Jewish Enlightenment, the literature and culture of the Weimar period in Berlin, contemporary debates in the German public sphere, and an OSUN network course on Feminism and Community. Her current research interests concern the global history of the humanities and practices of philology; relations between German Romanticism and American Transcendentalism in the context of religious debates, historicism, classicism, and aesthetics; German-Jewish women writers; and feminist theory and practice. She has published, among others, in *Literature and Theology*, the *Hegel Bulletin*, *Herder Jahrbuch/Herder Yearbook*, the *Oxford Handbook* series, and *Amerikastudien/American Studies*. She is currently completing a monograph, titled *Transcendental Philology: Emerson, Fuller, Nietzsche, and the Migrations of a Method*.



Michal Peles-Almagor is a fellow at the Buber Society of Fellows, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her research explores the intersections of migration, multilingualism, and Jewish cultural history, with a focus on modern Hebrew and German-Jewish literature, as well as the performative dimensions of voice and gender. Her forthcoming book, *Writers at the Threshold: Hebrew, German, and the Paradox of Jewish Belonging, 1900-1950*, examines questions of language, home, and identity in the works of Jewish authors. Peles-Almagor is currently working on her second book project, *Voice and Migration in Jewish Women's Writing*, which investigates the literary and performative works of Leah Goldberg, Mascha Kaléko, Else Lasker-Schüler, and Jacqueline Kahanoff. Her work has appeared in leading academic journals and emphasizes the narrative and linguistic innovations of modernist writers.



Ariel Pridan is a Manfred Lahnstein Postdoctoral Fellow at the Bucerius Institute for Research on Contemporary German History and Society. She holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Yale University, specializing in modern Jewish literatures in German, Yiddish, and Hebrew, with a focus on Jewish modernization and debates surrounding Die Judenfrage. Her doctoral dissertation, "Going Urban: The Jewish Experience of the Metropolis in Early 20th-Century Literature" (2023), explores how urban spaces in the works of Brenner, Bergelson, and Roth shape Jewish integration into modern nation-states. Her upcoming research will focus on the role of urban spaces in the fiction of Jewish women writers in early 20th-century German literature.