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Language and Culture

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Yixu Lu, Head of School

As we close the chapter of this year's work, I would like to thank all members of staff who have contributed their creativity to our collective endeavour – the education of our coming generation and our critical enquiry into the myriad ways of human existence in different languages. It is your dedication that has enabled our School once again to live up to the expectations of our students and guide them on their path of exploration and understanding of different peoples and cultures.

As we prepare ourselves for the writing of the new chapter, I want to remind all of us that education is not just the imparting of knowledge and skills. It is a social responsibility we have accepted when we entered our profession. The great German Enlightenment thinker Wilhelm von Humboldt once said: "Absolutely nothing is so important for a nation's culture as its language."

For Humboldt, language did not serve the function of communication alone. Language itself is formative for the human mind. As teachers of languages and cultures, it is our social responsibility to guide and encourage our students to go beyond the confines of tradition and routine and to become more open-minded and generous citizens. Together we can make the world a better place.

Be the change that you want to see in the world. – Mohandas Gandhi

I wish all our students, colleagues and readers a happy festive season.

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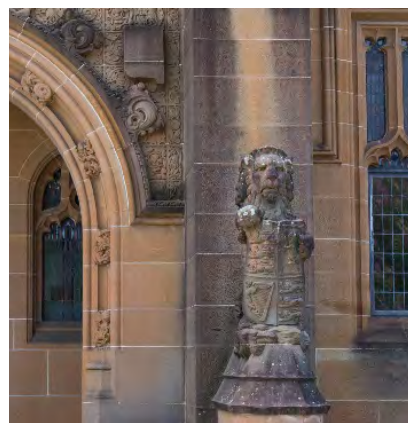
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The School of Languages and Cultures offers the widest range of language studies in Australia, covering Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Americas.

Our departments

- Arabic Language and Cultures
- Chinese Studies
- French and Francophone Studies
- Germanic Studies
- Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies
- Indian Sub-Continental Studies
- Indonesian Studies
- Italian Studies
- Japanese Studies
- Korean Studies
- Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies
- Spanish and Latin American Studies

Our programs

- Asian Studies
- European Studies
- International Comparative Literature and Translation Studies

A monograph on the theatrical dimension in the life of the Tokugawa warriors

Written by Dr Olivier Ansart

Senior Lecturer, Japanese Studies

My SSP project was a monograph on the theatrical dimension that pervaded the life of the warriors (those we call – with some inaccuracy – *samurai*) in the Tokugawa period (1603–1868) in Japan.

Warriors were imposing figures in the landscape of Tokugawa society. Proud and bellicose, for they were descendants of heroes of legendary fame, they strolled down the streets full of martial bravado, flanked by those famous sabres that they would wield on whoever did not pay them the respect they demanded. As many tales attest, they were blindly loyal to their lords, who in turn swore unwavering allegiance to the feared overlord, the *shōgun*. When, through unfortunate circumstances, they failed to behave as true and honourable warriors, they made amends by cutting their belly open, bleeding to death for their lord in the ritual *seppuku* (*harakiri*). In peace they were dedicated servants, infused with Confucian ideology. Arranged in a complex hierarchy they were well versed in the rich etiquette that governed the relationships of the various levels.

Such at least were the claims – the pretences. In fact, surprisingly little of all this was true. Warriors,

like their lords, were playing their role in a careful choreography, a masquerade that reveals upon closer inquiry constant lies, impostures and dissimulations. This theatre is the object of my monograph. I analyse how it was established, why it was necessary and what impact it had on the self-representations of its actors.

Its reason is straightforward. It is the peace that lasted 260 years without major disturbance, collapsing only because of foreign interference. This *Pax Tokugawa* is an intriguing phenomenon. After all, few, if any, feudal systems have experienced such stability. Insured by a set of interrelated policies control by the overlord (of strategic resources, foreign trade and movements of the lords in mandatory residence in the capital, as well as regime of sumptuary expenses that drained the finances of these vassals) made impossible for the lords to forge alliances with external powers or with their peers.

In this long peace warriors were not warriors anymore, but could not admit to the fact: their privileges all rested on the myth that the special fibre that made warriors – their moral qualities and



extraordinary courage – were indispensable to the maintenance of social order.

To sustain the myth, the theatre was crucial. This is why genealogies were frequently forged and always embellished. Initially, before those lies were pronounced truths for the sake of stability, ancestors were even routinely adopted and discarded. The feared sabres were mere status symbols which had never seen much use on the battlefield – the effective weapons, firearms, played no role in the theatre. Behind the statements of loyalty from warriors to their lords as well as from their lords to the *shōgun* were their misleading reports, concocted tales, forged signatures, and plots that frequently ended in sidelining the lords or deceiving the *shōgun*. Self narratives of warriors being able and loyal administrators of the country could not dissimulate that a great many were unemployed or unfit for work. Fed by years of continuous warfare until 1603, the ranks of the warriors had swollen and, in the Tokugawa times, they counted for 7% of the population. There was no way a pre-modern economy could find employment in tertiary activities for such a large

group. In fact those who were lucky to have a job could be forced to share it in rotation with others. But bureaucrats they were, receiving now mostly the undignified salary. Their ancestors used to own their own micro fiefs from which they could live, handling, or mishandling, the few peasant families that were feeding them. Now in most fiefs warriors were required to live around the castle of their lord. They lost those micro fiefs and were salaried from the coffers of their domain. (Employment was only adding a small extra to the stipend due to all.) Numerous diaries and manuals of worldly advice show them – to the relief of the reader – as calculating, self-interested and concerned to avoid trouble: in a term, prosaically human. Lastly, even the famous *seppuku* was, more often than not, a farce – a beheading disguised in ritual suicide where the warrior pretended to cut himself with a fan.

Such was the reality and all knew it, but only appearances counted. Only the theatre was valid.

What was the impact of this institutionalised imposture on representations? Did the warriors understand that they were impostors?

The project was in some way a case study of collective self-deceit. This is such an intriguing notion that some deny it exists - can people not affected by split personality really believe that x is not x? We do have testimonies of an identity crisis, but for many the symbols and ritualistic gestures of the imposture were enough to nurture a feeling, a *habitus*, that was largely immune, because of this incorporation, to any discursive denunciation. The mechanisms of cognitive dissonance also would have insured that incidents that showed the uncomfortable truth were conveniently reduced to insignificance.

My main interest, though, lies in intellectual history. I endeavoured to articulate a connection between some of the boldest philosophical theories formulated in the period and the constant performance of impostures that was warrior life. Political theories were typically inspired by the Confucian tradition - the only vocabulary that was suited to an analysis of social relationships, as neither Buddhism nor Shintoist scriptures had much to say there. The usual way of justifying

political and social arrangements - like the power of the *shōgun* as well as that of lords, the privileges of the ruling class and the duty of the peasants to support it - was to argue (and there were different ways of doing this) that they were part of a natural order of things, beyond the reach of human whims. Some thinkers, however, stressed the artificial and conventional nature of all these arrangements. Many systems could exist, each justified by their internal coherence since this consistency guaranteed their durability as systems.

How come that thinkers living in a feudal world of status were able to propose this seemingly postmodern view of a system without foundations in any reality? Among the many factors that played a role in this movement was the fact that the trope distinguishing validity and truth was already embedded in the social relationships of warrior society. What we have here is what Max Weber, taking the term from Goethe, who had borrowed it from chemists, called "elective affinities".



Paris in Winter: Perfecting the art of *Flanerie*

Written by Dr Carolyn Stott

Senior Lecturer, French and Francophone Studies;
Associate Dean, Student Life, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

After a hectic semester as Acting Chair of French and Francophone Studies, my SSP came upon me almost as a surprise. I arrived in Paris in early January to discover that the appealing studio I had booked for two months was even more miniscule than anticipated, and the *quartier* of the 12th *arrondissement* in which it was situated somewhat sterile. Fortunately, the proximity of a thrice-weekly fresh produce market, range of excellent *boulangeries* and major metro/RER station were sufficient to counteract my initial disappointment.

A change of research project plan in late 2016 led me to the nearby *quartier* of Belleville in the 20th *arrondissement*. The opportunity to write a cultural topography of this fascinating and complex suburb, with its curious juxtaposition of architecture, its melting pot of cultures and ethnicities and its long and tumultuous history was appealing. Belleville was almost certainly not included in the itineraries of great 19th-century *flâneurs* Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin or Honoré de Balzac, but the transformation of the *quartier* since the 1970s make for a fascinating journey of discovery; the process of gentrification that arguably began with Haussmann's makeover of the French capital in the second half of the 19th century, but really took hold in the



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latter part of the 20th century, is still underway, and may never be fully realised. Paris is truly a walker's paradise. If the local Belleville libraries and *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, ideally located on my doorstep, provided a wealth of useful material for this project, so too did the historians who guided me on my regular *flâneries* in Belleville.

Book proposal duly submitted, I returned to various Belleville-related research projects linked to another of my research interests, roman and, more recently, film noir. I sourced relevant material for an overdue article on the representation of Belleville in neo-noir cinema and the evocation of the Belleville stereotype in 21st-century French film.

Belleville's geographical location on the outskirts of Paris *intramuros* and its relatively high immigrant population makes for comparison to *banlieue* politics and issues around race, marginalisation and crime. My research into crime fiction set in Belleville has led me to examine the representation of Paris as a whole in the genre. My two-month residence in Paris allowed me liberal access to the *Bibliothèque des littératures policières* (BiLiPo); this library entirely devoted to crime fiction and its many sub-genres is unique, and provided access to recent



River Seine and Notre Dame. Photo supplied by Carolyn Stott.

documents and authentic material that my students in FRNC2689 *Le Polar à Paris* are currently enjoying this semester as I teach this unit for the first time. Furthermore, I was grateful for the time my semester of SSP allowed me to familiarise myself with Canvas in preparation for participation in the Semester 2 Canvas pilot.

An extended stay in Paris also allowed me to explore a new direction in my crime fiction research: the role of authenticity in contemporary French roman noir. Since 2010 there has been an increasing number of current or former police officers whose names figure among the nominations for prestigious literary crime-fiction prizes such as the *Prix du Quai des Orfèvres*, as well as among the winners. Contrary to peers past and present who have chosen to write memoirs, their medium is fiction, albeit with a heavy dose of realism. If realism is a necessary ingredient in the roman noir, these authors are taking in a new direction a genre that is already enormously diverse. Their close association with the police force enables them to represent their profession with an accuracy that escapes many authors of noir fiction. The police protagonists in literary crime fiction penned by the likes of Danielle Thierry, Olivier Norek or Huges Pagan resemble their (former) colleagues. Drawing

on their own experience of police procedural investigations and emotional dealings with criminals, victims and their families, lawyers and journalists, Norek *et al.* play with reality to highlight suspense whilst losing none of the essential elements of successful literary fiction. Intimately acquainted with the world of crime, these authors write as a cathartic outlet, to exorcise the often traumatic experiences encountered in their profession on a daily basis, whilst attempting to uphold or reinstate an authentic image of their profession. As I discovered at crime fiction festivals I attended during my stay in France, such as *Bloody Fleury, Festival du polar à Fleury-sur-Orne*, Normandy, this practice extends to related professions such as criminologists, lawyers and even ex-criminals. I conducted interviews with former police officers and criminologists turned authors of crime fiction, and am interested in pursuing this direction as a potential new sub-genre of crime fiction.

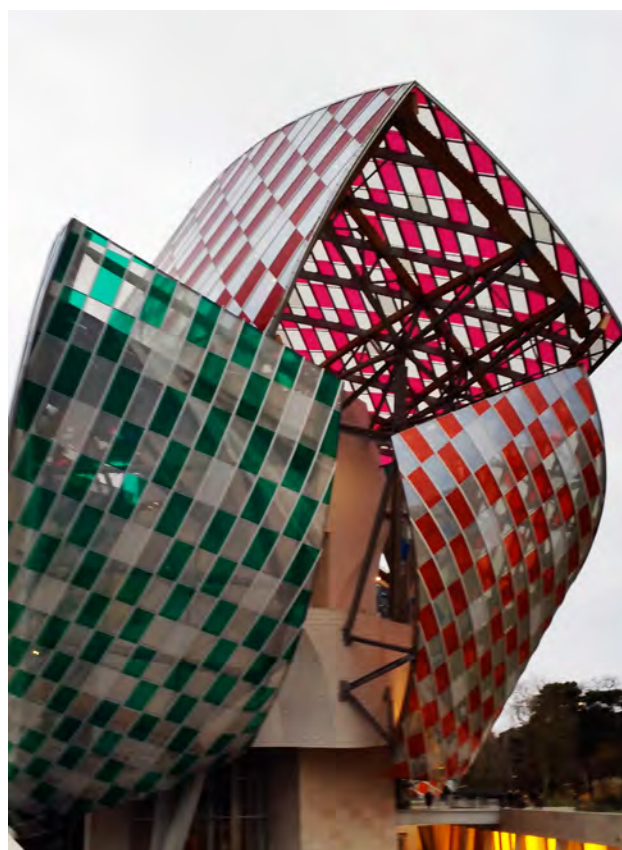
Upon my return to Sydney, I spent the remainder of my SSP yearning the summer I had missed whilst in Paris, writing up an article and preparing a Human Ethics application to collect and analyse data for a new longitudinal research project designed to measure the effectiveness over the next five years

of the annual *Languages at Sydney: Go Global* event. No-one will be surprised at the length of time this approval, finally gained as my semester of SSP drew to a close, took to come to fruition. Fortunately this left time to draft a paper for presentation at the Asia-Pacific branch of the FIPF conference (*Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Français*) that was held in September 2017 at the University of Kyoto, Japan. My paper, entitled « *De la Théorie à la Pratique: L'Apprenant comme Enseignant dans la salle de classe universitaire du FLE* » ("From Theory to Practice: Learners as Teachers in the French as a second language university classroom") focussed on the preparation of university students interested in a career as a teacher of French as a foreign language. Apart from the obvious acquisition of advanced French language skills, such students should possess some foreign-language teaching methodology and obtain practical classroom teaching experience under the supervision of an experienced mentor. I based the presentation on my senior unit FRNC2644 *Pédagogie du Français langue*

étrangère, which was conceived to fill a gap in the existing curriculum for such students by providing access to all three aspects of the abovementioned preparation in one unit of study. The unit makes use of pedagogic material created by the FIPF, hence its particular relevance to this conference.

American author, journalist and humorist James Thurber saw Paris as a "vast university of Art, Literature and Music... a seminar, a postgraduate course in everything." I'm sure colleagues and students in SLC would agree with him, as I do. I am grateful for the opportunities provided by my research and by the University of Sydney to be a regular *flâneuse* (term coined recently by Lauren Elkin in *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris*, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London, London, Chatto and Windus, 2016) in the *City of Light* and thus corroborate Thurber's opinion.

L: Walking tour of Belleville, Paris, with historian guide Stéphane Meusnier.
R: Fondation Louis Vuitton, 16th arrondissement. Photos by Carolyn Stott.





L-R: Dr Jim Rheingans, Khyentse-UBEF Lecturer in Tibetan Buddhism; Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, Khyentse Foundation chair and founder; Dr Eng-Kong Tan, University Buddhist Education Foundation executive member; and Dr Rosalie Chapple, Aberaldie Foundation executive member.

Celebration of donation supporting lectureship in Tibetan Buddhism

An event to celebrate the establishment of the Khyentse-UBEF Lectureship in Tibetan Buddhism and to thank the donors was held at the University of Sydney on 11 August 2017.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is set to expand its expertise in Buddhist Studies with the appointment of Dr Jim Rheingans to a new lectureship in Tibetan Buddhism.

The lectureship will offer wide exposure to the study of Buddhist traditions, particularly Tibetan traditions, not just for students within the Faculty, but also across the University.

The five-year lectureship within the School of Languages and Cultures (SLC) has been made possible thanks to a jointly funded donation from the Khyentse Foundation, the University Buddhist Education Foundation (UBEF) and the Aberaldie Foundation.

“We currently have the most comprehensive Buddhist Studies program in the Australasian region and Southern Hemisphere,” said Chair of the Department of Indian Subcontinental Studies, Dr Mark Allon.

“The establishment of this new lectureship and Dr Rheingans’ expertise in Tibetan Buddhism will allow us to build on our program offerings and continue to grow our reputation globally in this area.”



L-R: Dr Chiew-Hui Ho, Lecturer in East Asian Buddhism; Sydney Jay, Khyentse Foundation executive member; Dr Matthew Stavros, Director of Asian Studies; Professor Yixu Lu, Head of School; Chantal Gabbie, Australian Khyentse Foundation representative; Dr Jim Rheingans; Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche; Dr Eng-Kong Tan; and Dr Rosalie Chapple.

“I see a lot of potential for Buddhist and Tibetan Buddhist Studies at the University of Sydney and in an Australasian and worldwide network,” said the newly appointed Dr. Rheingans.

“Alongside researching the rich heritage of the different Tibetan and Buddhist cultures on the basis of textual sources, it will be useful to foster inter- and cross-disciplinary ways of teaching and research. To take into account contemporary dimensions would also help. I also hope that wider interest in the translation and study of Tibetan and Buddhist texts as well as the different issues of translation can be stimulated.”

– sydney.edu.au/news/arts



L-R: Dr Chiew-Hui Ho with Swee Haa Tang and Dr Eng-Kong Tan, University Buddhist Education Foundation executive members.

Report on the Official Opening of the Travelling Exhibition from the German Foreign Office, Berlin:

Jewish Life in Germany Today

Written by Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod

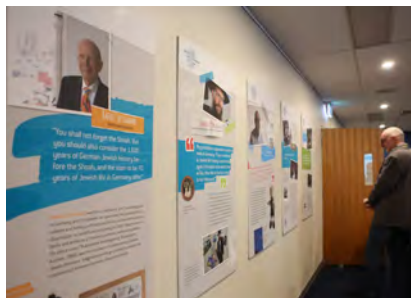
Roth Lecturer in Israel, Jewish Civilisation and Holocaust Studies,
Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies,
Immediate Past President, Australian Association for Jewish Studies

In October 2016, Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod was invited by the Consul General of Germany in Sydney, Lothar Freischlader, to join the organising committee for the travelling poster exhibition: 'Jewish Life in Germany Today'. For the ensuing 10 months he acted as a consultant, advisor and as a member of the planning committee for the exhibition. After much planning the exhibition was officially opened on 16 June 2017 by the His Excellency The Honorable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) Governor of New South Wales and ran until 30 July 2017. The organisation and staging of the exhibition at The B'nai B'rith Centre at Kensington was a cooperation between B'nai B'rith NSW, The Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Sydney and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

Official guests at the opening included Dr Anna Prinz, Germany's Ambassador to Australia, members of the diplomatic corps, state and federal politicians, leaders of the Jewish community and members of both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. The evening comprised a number of addresses, a musical item and a keynote address

entitled: 'The Jews of Germany: The Majesty and the Tragedy of One Thousand Years of History', delivered by Dr Abrahams-Sprod. After His Excellency the Governor officially opened the exhibition, guests enjoyed drinks and canapés, whilst they viewed the exhibition.

In the aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust, there were doubts that Jewish life in Germany would have a future. The idea of rebuilding a Jewish community in the country of the perpetrators seemed far-fetched for most people. Today, Germany is fortunate to once again be home to a vibrant and thriving Jewish community. There are contemporary German Jewish magazines, newspapers, restaurants and community centres. This transformation is nowhere as visible as in Berlin, Germany's multicultural capital. The city is home to more than 40 memorial sites and museums that pay tribute to the victims of Nazi-era crimes. About 20,000 Jews – most of whom are young Israelis – currently live in Berlin, and the city has become a popular travel destination for Jews from all around the world. That the Jewish community again shapes



L-R: Part of the Exhibition; His Excellency The Honorable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of NSW and Lothar Freischlager, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany; Lothar Freischlager, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, His Excellency The Honorable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Dr Anna Prinz, Germany's Ambassador to Australia and Vic Alhadeff, CEO of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.



L-R: Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod, Prof Conrad Kwiet, Chair of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies Dr Avril Alba and Tara Antares Wells; Chair of Germanic Studies Dr Cat Moir, Dr Lynne Swarts and Vivienne Radomsky; Prof Suzanne Rutland OAM and Miriam Kluger. Photos supplied by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

the social life and local culture is an achievement which is due at least in part to the influx of Jewish immigrants in recent years. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, more than 220,000 people of Jewish descent have settled in Germany. In the last two decades alone, the Jewish population increased considerably, growing from fewer than 30,000 in 1990 to more than about 250,000 today – making it the fastest-growing Jewish community worldwide.

The exhibition, originally established in 2014 by the German Information Centre of the German Embassy in Washington DC, brings these numbers to life. In concise and striking statements, Jews explain what living in Germany means to them. From students to best-selling authors to rabbis and entrepreneurs, their biographies reflect the diversity of the German-Jewish community today. And while they all agree that history plays an important role for Jewish life in modern Germany, they also share an optimistic mindset: there is a renaissance of Jewish culture in Germany and it is welcomed as an enriching contribution to an open and diverse society. The relationship of the Jewish community

to Germany will always be influenced by the past. But as W. Michael Blumenthal, former Director of the Jewish Museum Berlin, states, “Today, the Jewish population of Germany consists of many young people from all parts of the world who practice their religion very freely” – just as freely as they do in Australia.

The exhibition in Sydney attracted much attention and over 500 visitors. During the course of the exhibition period a full program of events also took place to complement the exhibition. Most strikingly, B'nai B'rith NSW commissioned a series of video interviews with Jewish Australians who either lived or live in Germany and discuss how they relate to their Jewishness in Germany and to Germany itself. The interviews were screened non-stop in a separate viewing area for the exhibition's duration. The SBS German Radio Program also interviewed Dr Abrahams-Sprod about the exhibition and about Jewish life in Germany today. After its tour in Sydney, the exhibition has now moved on to Canberra and will end its visit to Australia in Melbourne.

Keynote Address

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The Jews of Germany: The Majesty and the Tragedy of One Thousand Years of History



Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod

at the opening of "Jewish Life in Germany Today"
B'nai B'rith Centre, Kensington, Sydney, 15 June 2017

Your Excellencies, members of the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen, my connection to the story of the Jews of Germany is both personal and professional. Personal in that it is my heritage and professional in that as an academic my encounter with the history of the Jews of Magdeburg, when writing my PhD and publishing the history of this community under Nazism as my first book, also led me to explore the richness of a community which dates from 965 CE. This evening I will be presenting you with an overview of the history of the Jews of Germany – a community rich in its history and legacy and also representative of the triumphs and the tragedies of the Jewish people.

“The wise men of Ashkenaz ... were handed down the Torah by their forefathers in the days of the destruction of the Temple”, wrote the

Talmud scholar Asher ben Yehiel, a recognised authority on the Jews in Germany. This is one of the earliest references to the Ashkenazim as a religious and cultural entity in Europe, whose presence extended from France across the Holy Roman Empire and into Russia. The “days of the destruction of the Temple” described by Asher ben Yehiel referred to the destruction of Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem by the Roman legions under Titus in the year 70 CE. This date marks the end of the Jewish state and the beginning of the Diaspora, the dispersion of the Jews to other lands.

In 321 CE a flourishing Jewish community existed in Cologne. The Roman emperor Constantine indeed may have already become acquainted with the community when he erected a bridge over the Rhine at Cologne in the year 306. As emperor,

Constantine sent decrees to the Cologne city council in 321 and 326. These dealt with the Jewish councillors of the town and represent the earliest reference to the presence of a Jewish community in the German provinces of the Roman Empire. Sources from the sixth to the eighth centuries provide firm proof that there were Jews living in the territories of the Frankish kings, and that they were earning their living as merchants, landowners, customs officials, doctors and master-coiners.

With the spread of Christianity, Jews were increasingly ill-treated and persecuted, particularly in the western part of the Frankish kingdom. There are no surviving documents about their life in the eastern part before the time of Charlemagne, king of the Franks, and after 800, the first Holy Roman Emperor. Charlemagne united a large part of western Europe under his rule. Under his protection, his Jewish subjects were granted equal rights as citizens, enabling them to devote themselves to their religious, cultural, and economic life. Jewish seafarers and long-distance traders undertook trade expeditions to Egypt, the Middle East, Persia and India. Trade caravans also left Persia for China where there were also Jewish communities.

Under Charlemagne numerous Jewish communities were founded and existing ones were consolidated. It was this atmosphere of widespread religious freedom that laid the foundations of German Jewish culture which was to flourish over the following centuries. Between the 10th and 13th centuries there were hundreds of Jewish communities both in small villages and in towns such as Bamberg, Erfurt, Regensburg, Vienna, Prague and Cologne. The three municipalities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz, known as the SCHUM municipalities after the initial letters of their Hebrew names were the focus of a vibrant cultural and spiritual way of life. The centres of Jewish life were now no longer Babylon and Jerusalem, but Spanish, French and German communities in Europe such as Troyes and the SCHUM municipalities. Ashkenazi Jewry finally now became the decisive influence among the Jews of the western world.

The Bible, the prayer book, the Talmud and the commentaries were and still remain the pillars of Judaism. It was Solomon ben Isaak, known as Rashi, who wrote the commentaries to the Bible and the Talmud. He had studied in Worms and at the age of twenty-five founded a Talmud school in Troyes. The Ashkenazi communities also developed the *kehillah* (community), an institution of self-administration which was recognised by the

Christian authorities. The chief administrative officers and the wise men worked out the regulations and statutes (*takkanot*), for all communities. Above all, the statutes became the common property of Ashkenazi Jewry. Despite the persecution and destruction of many communities, Jewish cultural and religious life enjoyed a golden age between the 10th and 14th centuries.

As a rule kings and emperors took a benevolent attitude towards the Jews during this period. Nevertheless their power during the Crusades mostly proved too weak. In 1096 bands of marauders moved into the Rhineland killing thousands of Jews. The church had sown religious hatred. Greed fired the fanatical crusaders in their belief that, to please God, their armed pilgrimage to conquer the Holy Land should include the murder of those Jews who refused to be baptised. Nearly all Jews preferred the alternative, the act of *Kiddush HaShem* (the sanctification of the name of God), and committed suicide or had themselves killed, in order to prove their faith. Despite the Crusades, the Jews always built up their communities again; scholars and their schools continued to compile religious writings and develop the ethical principles of Ashkenazi Judaism.

In 1215 Pope Innocent III, merciless enemy of the Jews, convoked the fourth Lateran Council. It was here that this pope pushed through the antisemitic regulations which formed the basis of the humiliating living conditions and slandering of the Jews that has endured to the present day. Innocent III prohibited the charging of interest by Christians and shifted the blame for the exorbitant interest rates onto Jewish greed. The hostile laws of the Lateran Council were to expose Jews to widespread humiliation. Henceforth they were excluded from all public offices, had to sew a piece of yellow cloth on their clothing as a sign of their social degradation, and were not allowed to show themselves in public during Holy Week. Simultaneously Jews were offered special rights and protection in exchange for payment and therefore were caught in a vicious cycle.

During and after the last Crusades, there were renewed massacres of the Jews in Germany. The accusation of ritual murder and host desecration were revived and in the years of the Black Death from 1347 to 1352, when the plague killed a third of Europe's population, the Jews again were scapegoated. Many Jews succeeded in fleeing to Poland, where they were welcomed. By the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries the Jews in most German cities had been

killed or driven out. There now began a decline in the Jewish communities and their scholarship. The cultural consequences of this development and the widespread stagnation and ossification of German Judaism, were to last until the end of the 18th.

The beginning of the 16th century marked a milestone in Christian-Jewish relations, in that after this time the Jews rebelled openly against the attacks of their enemies. This was above all possible because the honorary position of *shtadlan* (intercessor) was set up, a spokesman for Jewish community affairs before the gentile authorities. The most famous *shtadlan* was Josel of Rosheim, initially head of the Jewish community in Lower Alsace, then, on his own initiative, the champion of the Jewish cause in the empire. Josel of Rosheim's stance signified a turning point in the legal and social position of the Jews in Germany. The legal status of the Jewish communities began to consolidate and become more secure.

One of the most bitter opponents of the Jews was the reformer Martin Luther, who whilst attacking the Jews was translating the Bible into German with love and reverence. The Bible became an inspiration for artists, poets and musicians. In the world of the Christian scholars, the study of the Hebrew language and the interest in Hebrew literature had steadily begun with the spread of humanism. The Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, and Kabbalah thus aroused considerable new interest.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the legal situation of the Jews gradually improved. Nevertheless, they had to put up with humiliating regulations and oppressive taxation. In towns they lived mostly in isolated areas, occasionally behind ghetto walls. In a century of merciless civil wars, the towns knew how to make use of the Jews – who were neutral in the conflict between Catholic and Protestant – as traders and moneylenders whose horizons extended beyond regional boundaries. In the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), in which a large part of central Europe was devastated, Jews were welcomed as sutlers, peddlers and money-changers, horse and corn traders, smugglers of foodstuffs and war material, and obtainers of ransoms. Of greater significance for the Jews were the efforts of the German princes after the end of the war to revive the depressed economy of their territories as quickly as possible.

In 1648 thousands of Jews escaped from the massacres of the Cossack Commander Chmielnicki and fled westward. The refugees were totally

without means to support themselves. Some could be absorbed into already existing communities. Some, however, without the right of abode, sank to the level of vagabonds and beggars and even fell in with bands of thieves. It took almost 200 years before the descendants of these refugees found a normal existence. Many of the arrivals were scholars who gave a new impetus to rabbinical study in Germany. This intellectual and cultural activity in the Jewish communities of Germany had never actually been interrupted. Even in the 17th century there were outstanding scholars at work.

The reconstruction of Germany in the 17th century gave many local Jews the opportunity to achieve economic wealth, especially in the new sectors of manufacturing and trade. In the 18th century there was a considerable and very influential number of Jewish army suppliers, moneylenders, court bankers, and agents, the so-called court Jews, who were also mostly close friends of their rulers. Highly regarded court Jews, such as the Oppenheimers, Rothschilds, Behrens-Lippmans, Ephraims, Itzigs, and Liebmanns, nevertheless often remained very protective of their Jewishness. Many schools, hospitals and synagogues owed their existence to such court Jews, who in this way contributed to the economic and cultural flowering of the Jewish communities. Despite the more stable status of many Jewish communities, the majority of the Jews remained poor and found it difficult to do more than eke out a paltry existence in thoroughly miserable conditions.

At the beginning of the 18th century German Jewry consisted of three economic classes. The large majority belonged to the lower and lowest classes, a fair-sized minority to the well-off middle class, and finally there was the small upper class made up of the rich merchants, Jews attached to the court, and the many community heads who were often both scholars and merchants. It was above all in Berlin that their elevation into Germany's cultural elite happened. It was not only wealth and knowledge of the manufacturing sector that those immigrants brought with them, for they were also integrated to a certain extent into German culture. One of these Jews was Moses Mendelssohn. He became famous as a German philosopher of the Enlightenment and as a pioneer and symbol of the emancipation and acculturation of the Jews in Germany. In his private life he was an Orthodox Jew. He recommended a German education for all Jews as a preparation for being useful members of German society. Mendelssohn had little sympathy and understanding for the traditional way of life

of Jewish communities and for later generations became the model for those Jews who hoped that their Jewish belief would be respected as part of their legal rights as equal citizens.

It was also at this time that the split between Eastern and Western Jews occurred. In Berlin the salons of Henriette Herz, Rahel Varnhagen and the de Beers became cultural centres of the German intelligentsia and the educated aristocracy. The majority of urban German Jews during Mendelssohn's lifetime were influenced by the intellectual representatives of the Enlightenment. The Jews on the land, on the other hand, continued to cling to their traditional way of life. After a long period of stagnation this traditional Jewry was reinforced by Polish Jews from the new Prussian provinces and Silesia.

The ideas of the Enlightenment, the revolutions in America and France and the Napoleonic era led the Jews in western and central Europe being liberated. With King Frederick William's edict of 11 March 1812, the Prussian state declared the Jews to be its national subjects and citizens, a right that France had granted 20 years earlier to its own Jewish population. There were, however, two qualifications: the offices of state remained closed to them, and the stipulations of the edict did not apply to the new or regained territories. As a result there were still Jews without rights of nationality in Prussia in 1848. However, most states of the German Federation began to reverse the concessions granted in 1812. A wave of antisemitic laws paved the way for a period of moral depression for Jews.

The disappointing encounter of young Jews with the German Enlightenment and the subsequent wave of jingoistic German nationalism sparked off a period of self-reflection, and an intensive debate within the Jewish community on the problems of Jews in a modern society. Notable in this discussion was Leopold Zunz who founded the study of Judaism as a scholarly discipline. Zunz and his friends researched in all areas of Jewish culture: its historical development, the history of the Jewish people, rabbinical literature and the philosophy of religion, Jewish literature and poetry, and folklore and liturgical music.

Around the middle of the century, Abraham Geiger, the pioneer of Reform Judaism began to make his mark as one the most important representatives of Jewish learning together with Zunz. The first Jewish history writer on a grand scale was Heinrich

Graetz from Breslau, with his 11-volume *History of the Jews from Ancient Times to the Present Day*. Represented here for the first time was the complete story of the Jews.

In the years between 1810 and 1850 decisive internal Jewish struggles took place between Orthodoxy and the Reform movement. The success of the Reform movement in turn sparked off a modern Orthodoxy, as represented by the rabbis Samson Raphael Hirsch in Frankfurt am Main and Esriel Hildesheimer in Berlin. They wanted to preserve a Judaism which was true to the Law, while supporting the use of the vernacular in teaching, along with secular upbringing and modern dress. A further reaction to the Reform movement also led to the birth of Conservative Judaism in Germany – a movement which aimed to position itself midway between Modern Orthodoxy and Reform.

During the period up to the founding of the German Empire in 1871 Jews achieved respected positions in the economy and politics of the now increasingly industrialised country. Ultimately, it was not until after its foundation that all Jews achieved equal rights. The freedoms of trade and profession since 1848 and their almost complete legal equality gave the Jews opportunities to develop in all areas of public life, except for the army and civil service. They soon attained leading positions in banking, transport, and the newspapers. In industry Jews rose to become leading entrepreneurs through new types of organisation, the introduction of modern technology, and the production of new goods. In Germany, Jews above all, developed the setting up of department stores, the manufacture of ready-made ladies' and gentlemen's clothing, the tobacco, leather, and fur industries.

Jews also took up academic posts and became scientists and above all teachers of law. While in earlier centuries as many as half of all Jews would be peddlers or beggars, the number in 1895 amounted to no more than twelve percent of a total Jewish population of 600,000.

Simultaneous to this assimilation – which they did willingly as they considered themselves German patriots – a new wave of hatred for the Jews swept across the country. Traditional antisemitism was now combined with a pseudoscientific race theory which postulated the superiority of German blood. Political antisemitism rallied for de-emancipation of the Jews. This was not taken seriously by the majority of the Jews. At the same time Jewish existence in all its forms experienced a new lease

of life. Moses Hess's idea of a Jewish renaissance and a return to the country of their fathers was kept alive and although he had not read Hess before, it was Theodor Herzl who finally found enthusiastic support amongst the Jews of Eastern Europe whereas, with the exception of a few academics, the great majority of German Jews were skeptical toward political Zionism. Most German Jews still believed in merging with the German people whilst still retaining their Jewish culture. In 1897 the First World Zionist Congress took place in Basle, Switzerland and scarcely 50 years later the state of Israel was founded.

Over 12,000 Jews sacrificed their lives in the First World War for the German fatherland. However, this proof of their patriotism was barely acknowledged. In the years of the Weimar Republic the Jews enjoyed complete equality before the law for the first time. Many were thrust into the limelight in the fields of the arts, economics and politics. German Jews believed that their work and achievements were their contributions to a free society. Many non-Jews however saw it as the Jews imposing their will and culture on German society. Even though it should have been considered an enrichment, it aroused hate and aversion in a country lacking self-confidence. The Zionist movement in Germany grew as did student societies and fraternities. Their representatives, such as Martin Buber, warned against overzealous assimilation and the abandonment of Jewish values. Before and after the First World War a new influx of Eastern European Jews had arrived in Germany. They thereby strengthened the otherwise dwindling number of German Jews. This wave of immigration also aroused fear and aversion, not only amongst right-wing non-Jews but also within the German Jewish community.

The majority of German Jews belonged to the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, or at least identified with its aspirations. In the manner of Moses Mendelssohn, they saw themselves primarily as Germans who belonged to the Jewish religious community. However, rising antisemitism proved to be a stronger force. Despite rising unemployment and poverty, Germany's Jews regarded the Weimar Republic as a high point in the history of the Jewish people. As early as 1923, however, Hitler and his followers had attempted their putsch in Munich with the aim of seizing power. The years of the world economic crisis then helped his movement to grow at an astonishing rate. From 1933 onward Germany's Jews were humiliated and deprived of

their rights. The renaissance of Judaism persisted and became most tenacious in the face of National Socialism and the institutions and ideas of the 1920s helped the Jews to resist Nazi isolation and tyranny through a remarkable commitment to their own communal organisations as well as the values of both German and Jewish culture, as exemplified by the German Jewish leader Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck. Yet, these were no match when faced with the brutality of the regime.

From 1933 Jews were targeted and from 1935 defined racially and stripped of all legal rights. Still, emigration did not peak until the November pogrom of 1938 which led to mass emigration and sadly for many the impossibility of escaping. By the time of the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, few Jewish organisations remained and the community had been reduced to poverty. With the conquest of territories in the east and the unleashing of the Final Solution, German Jews were sent on to various holding centres, killing sites and eventually purpose-built extermination centres. By April 1945 in the shadow of the Holocaust, the only Jews remaining in Germany were those in hiding, of mixed parentage, in so-called privileged mixed marriages or those in camps. The process of economic impoverishment, forced emigrations, physical violence and extermination put an end to the rich historical experience of German Jewry. Approximately 500,000 Jews lived in Germany at the onset of the Nazi terror. Only 12,000 remained after the liberation of the camps in May 1945.

In the aftermath of the war the number of Jews living in Germany remained constant at 30,000 for decades. German reunification did little to change this as there were only about 350 members of the small Jewish communities in the former East Germany. It was the commencement of Jewish immigration from the former Soviet Union beginning in 1990 that served to revive and transform the community, with its population reaching 100,000 in 2000. For a long time, Jews living in Germany refused to define themselves as German Jews and insisted instead on the proverbial 'sitting on packed luggage'. A growing trust in German democracy and connections to the cities in which they lived led many to accept Germany as their home. Despite antisemitism and the exclusionary views of some, Jews of the new Germany have found new trust and it has not been shaken easily. Germany has undergone a transformation – in spite of its Nazi past and the

persistence of right-wing extremism in everyday life – as the result of the honest efforts of German institutions and the general public in responsibly and thoroughly coming to terms with this past. The most recent addition to the Jewish community are Israelis, who now form part of the approximately 250,000-strong Jewish community of Germany in 2017 – which still continues to be the fastest growing Jewish community in the Jewish diaspora today.

As exemplified by the long-standing former president of the Central Council of the Jews in Germany, the late Ignatz Bubis, Jews in Germany once again are proud to identify themselves as German citizens of the Jewish faith.

From beginnings in the German provinces of Rome through to the present day, Jews paved the way for the foundations of the Ashkenazi tradition and contributed disproportionately to the evolution of modern Germany, ultimately ending in their physical destruction during the Holocaust. Yet, through all of the majesty and tragedy of this epic story, the Jews of Germany have prevailed and are once again a vital and important fabric of German society.



Cast of Red-Riding-Hood, members of Sydney Children's Choir. Photo: David Goldman.

Out of the Shadows: rediscovering Jewish music and theatre

Written by Dr Joseph Toltz

Research Fellow, Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Co-Investigator, Performing the Jewish Archive

In the second week of Semester 2, 2017 from August 5 to 14, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music staged *Out of the Shadows: rediscovering Jewish music and theatre*, the fourth international festival for the British Arts & Humanities Research Council grant, *Performing the Jewish Archive*. As the Australian co-investigator on the project, I curated the festival, presenting my own research work in performance, and also work of my overseas colleagues. Two exciting cross-faculty collaborations involved Associate Professor Ian Maxwell (Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, School of Literature, Arts and Media) and Dr Avril Alba (Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies). Ian directed one of the cabarets in the festival, *Prince Bettliegend*, while Avril was co-convenor for a special international symposium held at the Sydney Jewish Museum, *Performance, Empathy, Trauma and the Archive*.



SSO Fellows and members of the Sydney Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, directed by Roger Benedict. Photo: David Goldman.

During the festival, performances were exceptionally well attended, with over 2,100 people viewing 14 performances, including many free concert presentations. Three imperatives guided the choice of material for the Festival:

- the exploration of neglected material in archives, interrogated through performance;
- the presentation of artistic works that resonate across borders;
- the telling of the stories of the involvement of Jewish refugees in the shaping of music in Sydney.

Young composers from the Conservatorium's Department of Composition and Music Technology were commissioned to write music for the festival – for chamber orchestra, choir and new experimental works inspired by the fragmentary nature of archival material. All of the performances will soon be available online in a dedicated web archive.

From 1933 to 1943, Jewish refugees from Central Europe arrived in assimilationist, British-focussed Australia, a culture not welcoming of difference. There was scant opportunity for Jewish musicians to work in their trained fields, with a ban securely in place by the Musicians' Union on foreign performers. Despite the hurdles, obstructions and obfuscations set up by indifferent and even hostile officials, approximately 10,000 Jewish refugees managed to make it to Australia during this period.

After the war, Holocaust survivors and refugees who arrived encountered suspicion and a resolute dismissal of the traumas endured, told at the docks to 'forget the past' and 'leave their troubles in Europe'. Australia seems to be remarkably adept when it comes to cultural amnesia. Even in 1947, well after the horrors of the Nazi camps had been revealed to the world, stories in major Australian newspapers inflated the numbers of Jewish arrivals,



Geoff Sirmay and Doron Chester in *Der tsubrokhene shpigl (The Broken Mirror)* by Jac Weinstein, part of "The Merchants of Helsinki" with Dr Kevin Hunt (SCM) and the Helsinki Stompers in the background. Photo: David Goldman.



L-R: Festival Curator, Dr Joseph Toltz, the pianist Rachel Valler OAM and Professor Anna Reid, Dean of the Conservatorium, at the Gala Opening Event for *Out of the Shadows*. Photo: David Goldman.

deriding the Jewish refugees from Shanghai for carrying "thousands of pounds' worth of personal belongings, including jewels, furs, and expensive cameras". Combined with this overt low-level antisemitism was the imperative to 'blend in', made clear to every 'new Australian'. In this environment, could imported cultural sensibility survive, let alone blossom?

Culture has a habit of manifesting its own identity despite established stricture and convention. Post-war musical tastes expanded exponentially as audiences were bolstered by new migrants, thirsting for concert music, dance and jazz. New compositions were written by eager European-born composers, with varying degrees of success. Werner Baer, George Dreyfus, Marcel Lorber, George Pikler, Georg Tintner, Felix Werder, Walter Wurzbürger – all contributed to the culture of that time. Some of these names are remembered, but not all, and most of their music has disappeared from Australian cultural awareness. In some instances, works were dismissed as too radical, too atonal to pass muster in Australian concert halls. In other cases, they were dismissed as old-fashioned and Eurocentric. I also

suspect that much of this music at the time was classified as cosmopolitan during a period where the establishment of a national identity became a cultural imperative, and anything that smacked of an international sensibility was viewed as suspiciously close to Communism.

Two exceptional international guests gave keynote speeches as part of the festival, addressing the place of cultural expression in the lives of Jewish refugees. Dr Anna Shternshis's talk, sponsored by the School of Languages and Cultures (SLC) and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), discussed songs created by Yiddish-speaking Jews in the Ukraine during World War II, only rediscovered in the late 1990s. Dr Brigid Cohen's talk, one of the Alfred Hook Lecture Series, explored the repertoires created by refugee Jewish artists in flight or in the camps, bringing them into dialogue with crucial philosophers of the period (especially Hannah Arendt) who were addressing questions of responsibility, reality, facticity and truth-telling in the wake of the Holocaust.

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Political symbols and the crisis of democracy: workshop and research project

Written by Luis Angosto-Ferrández and Graeme Gill

Human beings cannot do politics without political symbols, and less so in periods of social instability. In the current global conjuncture of widespread crisis and uncertainty, political symbols, ranging from national flags to mausoleums to street names, have unsurprisingly regained public presence and become pivotal for political manoeuvring in growingly divided societies.

A group of scholars met on 15 September at the University of Sydney with the explicit goal of identifying new parameters for the comparative analysis and theorisation of such phenomenon. The meeting took the form of a workshop entitled *Political Symbolism and the Crisis*

of Democracy, and was deliberately bold in its interdisciplinary character: it brought anthropologists, historians, literature studies experts, sociologists, and political scientists together. Participants from the University of Sydney were Graeme Gill and Luis Angosto-Ferrández (coordinators), Michael Humphrey, Peter Morgan, Robbie Peters and Yelena Zabortseva; from Western Sydney University, Mary Hawkins and Helena Onnudottir; and from Macquarie University, Aleksandar Pavkovic and Chris Houston.

The event was also wide-ranging in the scope of comparison it opened up, with participants addressing case studies from different continents (Asia, Latin America and Europe) and times – some of the cases discussed were current affairs, but others had unfolded during the past century.

While such broad scope always poses challenges when it comes to find parameters for meaningful comparison, participants in the workshop had worked their papers against an initial proposal that demarcated the field of discussion, and the exercise was fruitful.

Key themes were identified that paved the way for participants to continue with the discussion, and for us to focus efforts on a publication project. These themes converge in an invitation to explain how specific political symbols frame our understanding of both the past and the present, and how they become effective tools for the generation of group identity while at the same time remain the foci of contestation and an intrinsic part of much conflict within society and between societies.



The Australian Association of Teachers of Korean 2017 Professional Development Course

Written by Dr Duk-Soo Park (President of AUATK; Senior Lecturer in Korean Studies)

The Australian Association of Teachers of Korean (AUATK) held the *2017 Professional Development (PD) Course: Teacher Training Workshop* on 29th to 30th September 2017 at the University of Sydney. The event was sponsored by the Academy of Korean Studies of the Republic of Korea and the University of Sydney. AUATK was established in November 2016 in the first Conference on Korean Language Education in Australia, and in the meantime it has attracted about 60 members, who are mainly Korean language teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Australia. 53 members participated in this two-day PD Course and all participants received a 13-hour PD course certificate.



Left: AUATK President and Master of Ceremonies Dr Duk-Soo Park
Right: Group of teachers at 'Online Tools and Activities for Korean Language Teaching' session



At the opening, the Vice Chancellor Dr Michael Spence and Acting Head of School Professor Yingjie Guo pointed out that as interest in learning Korean has dramatically increased in recent years, the establishment of AUATK was very timely, and development of good quality teaching and learning material as well as teacher training opportunities like this is crucial. The Consul General of the Republic of Korea, Mr Sangsoo Yoon delivered South Korean government's commitment to promote overseas Korean language education, and wished for a successful event.

Beginning with a keynote address entitled "Phonetic and phonological characteristics of Korean" by Professor Emeritus Chin W. Kim, University of Illinois, and a special lecture on Korean culture by Mr Sinyoung An, Director of Korean Cultural Centre in Australia and New Zealand, the PD Course consisted of five sessions: (1) Grammar instruction approaches: Deductive and inductive methods by

Dr Duk-Soo Park, (2) Learning 'Pansori' (traditional Korean story-singing) by Dr Chan E. Park, Ohio State University, (3) Korean orthography by Dr Gi-Hyun Shin, UNSW, (4) Teaching writing, Ms Jin Sook Yoo, Strathfield North Public School, and (5) Online tools and activities for teaching Korean language by Dr Jeong-Bae Son, University of Southern Queensland.

According to the statistics gathered by the Korean Education Centre, Sydney, as of 2016 there are 9,235 students learning Korean in 67 schools, and about 2,400 enrolments in Korean language and Korean studies units in 6 Australian universities. AUATK will function as the official channel to represent teachers of Korean in the country, and will host regular PD courses and Conferences to promote Korean language education in Australia and beyond.

To find out about AUATK's current activities, visit

– auatk.com.au





To speak of sorrow in many tongues

Written by Darius Sepehri

PhD candidate, International and
Comparative Literary Studies

Not quite midway through the path of his life on one warm Sydney December dawn in 1992, my uncle stepped out of his house to start his beat as a taxi driver – an early morning grind, he worked to pay bills as he planned his future as a health worker. One winter morning late 2007 in New York, Joseph Luzzi, an Italian Studies and Comparative Literature Professor at Bard College habitually kissed his wife goodbye for the day and stepped outside. Hours later, his wife, eight-and-a-half months pregnant, was killed in a car crash. Doctors saved their daughter by surgery. My uncle, who was 32, was changing a flat tire when he was killed violently by a perpetrator, never caught. Later, for his gravestone, another uncle chose two couplets from classical 14th-century Persian poet, Hāfez, to be engraved in elegant calligraphy called *nasta 'liq*. *Nasta 'liq* is a composite word from

Arabic. The latter part, *ta 'liq*, describing the drooping look of the script's earlier version, means “hanging, suspension”: as in the way, for instance, the sure way or *diritta via* is wholly lost between two breaths or a turn of the head as a family's life is thrown into suspension with an abrupt death; into abeyance, or, perhaps, after Dante: into limbo. Liminality, a charged and dangerous space, electrifies language and culture, as in the writing and testimonies of exiles and outcasts such as Solzhenitsyn, Thomas Mann, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, and Mahmoud Darwish, among others. In my essay “To Speak of Sorrow”, which came second in the 2017 *Australian Book Review* Calibre Essay prize, I deal with processes and expressions of grief and mourning in literature and culture, including my own native Persian literary tradition, as well as English and Spanish.

I begin by saying that grief has transformative potential, but this needs craft, art, language and cultural rituals to achieve: the aftermath of grief depends “on the psychological, spiritual, and creative frameworks in which it takes place. Grief is best when it comes in alchemical modes.” In Luzzi’s *In a Dark Wood* (2014), he places great emphasis on the exilic conditions that produced Dante’s *Divina Commedia*: “Only when he stopped trying to get back to Florence and accepted his exile was he able to start writing the *Divine Comedy*. So in his moment of great despair, he created something transcendently beautiful that is still with us.” I did not deal with Luzzi’s book in my Calibre essay; it’s a recent discovery after going through old essays for the Italian Studies unit on Dante I did with my now supervisor, Dr Francesco Borghesi. However, Luzzi does in this book something like my essay, as he explores what Dante gave him to transform his sorrow, lifting him from the suffocating gloom of grief’s *selva oscura*: “I would barely have made my way without Dante,” he writes. “His words helped me withstand the pain of loss.” Luzzi joins Dante’s journey with his own in examining how the beloved dead become bodiless shades, *ombra*, achingly craved but never reached.

In my essay I refer to traditional cultures with rituals to process loss and trauma, but for many of us in post-mythological, secular societies, it is art and especially language and writing that capture sorrow’s suffocation and work upon it, bringing fresh air and light. I remember as a child tracing my fingers in the gravestone’s engraved calligraphy, while my uncle recited couplets of Hāfez, one of which is a vocative address to the dawn wind to take news to the missing beloved. With its airy long vowels, the Persian for dawn wind, *bād-e sabā*, enacts its freshness in a way that *zephyr* or “wind at dawn” cannot. Similarly, in Victor Erice’s film *Spirit of the Beehive*, a girl reads a Rosalia de Castro poem (translated from Galician to Spanish) encapsulating *saudade*, a Portuguese or Galician word for an overpowering

longing and melancholy: “*¡Aire!, que el aire me falta.*” The English, “Air! It’s air that I need”, lacks the desperate sounds of the Spanish. The poem ends, “*Yo voy a caer en donde nunca el que cae se levanta.*” The English, “I am going to fall where they that fall, cannot arise”, again does not conjure the dread in Spanish or the original Galician. Translation is as hard as revivifying the dead, as in Seamus Heaney’s Dante-inspired *Riverbank Field*, where his journey through hell is seen optimistically as metaphor for translation, with dead literary ‘shades’ waiting to be made anew in another tongue. *Katabasis*, the infernal descent of which I speak in my essay, is for Heaney an opportunity to merge classical tradition with local place through making his own translation: “I’ll confound Lethe with Moyola”. Moyola is a river in Northern Ireland; translation is thus for Heaney the confluence of two rivers of language and culture.

“...for many of us in post-mythological, secular societies, it is art and especially language and writing that capture sorrow’s suffocation and work upon it, bringing fresh air and light.”

The fall into hell or *descensus ad Inferos* is where my Calibre essay begins, with the true story of me in my mother’s womb as we descend into a bomb shelter in Tehran, Iran, in 1987, during one of many bombing raids by Saddam in the Iran-Iraq war. With my uncle as a thread, my essay moves from confined entombment to open space, such as the big skies of Lake George near Canberra, where I found myself thinking of the Celtic triskelion, a symbol of tripartition that Dante, with his fondness of threes,

would have liked: three interlocking spirals, each with its own centre. “Let this be a model,” I write. “Let me know the beauty of Persian, Western, Aboriginal traditions, and learn from them all.”

The indigenous Australian rituals described in Margaret Kemarre Turner’s *What It Means to be an Aboriginal Person*, which inspired my essay, are simple and wise. Kemarre Turner describes a “weeping-sadness” at daybreak and at evening: “The sadness of watching the sun go down and the sadness of watching the sun come up is the Law.” In this custom, the quiet time of mourning twice punctuating the day acts as a site of confluence for the waters of personal grief to meet cosmic rhythms. The transformative union of the personal and cosmic in sorrow is found in Persian poetry, and equally in Rilke’s *Duino Elegies*, in which the figure of the angel is influenced by the Islamic and Zoroastrian angel. Reminiscent of Rumi, in whom grief is often called sweet, Rilke’s *Tenth Elegy* claims grief as something to be cherished, as “wintering foliage,” and as permanent “settlement, shelter, soil, abode” amid the impermanence of life. In this last Elegy, Rilke, like Dante, ends with the sight of the stars, though the last word of the poem is still, notably, “falls”. The sight of the stars is like the lifting of a heavy veil, the *linceul* or shroud of which Victor Hugo wrote in his elegy for his daughter Leopoldine, *Les Contemplations*. I too end my essay with stars and the lifting of a shroud, the *hejāb* or *pardeh* of which so many Sufi poets in Persian, Arabic and Urdu speak, which they see as a primordial metaphysical condition of estrangement and exile to be overcome through prayer, love and compassion.

Grief as first metaphysical condition in Persian poetry has even influenced writing in Albania, where the Bektashi Sufi order, centred in Tirana, have absorbed Persian poetry. The poetry in Italian of Albanian Gëzim Hajdari, brought to my attention in a wonderful talk on exophonic poets by Alice Loda of the Department of Italian Studies, expresses a grief



of exile that is both material and spiritual: “*fuggo senza sosta nelle terre straniere*” (“I flee without rest in foreign lands”). Like Dante’s Ulysses condemned to wander restlessly, this is dolorous, but for Hajdari the dialogue of cultures through translation, in which, as he says, “the center moves towards the periphery and vice versa” is how this wandering can be transformed, so that perhaps at last one can say, with Greek poet Georgios Seferis, “fortunate he who’s made the voyage of Odysseus”.

I am joyful for the opportunity to speak through Calibre of the splendour and wisdom of Persian culture, about which there is rarely chance to speak, in a national magazine with a wide readership. I aimed to move the essay, like Dante, from opacity and unwilling fall to clarity and willing transformative embrace, from Rosalia de Castro’s, “*aquí no encuentre/aire, luz, tierra ni sol*” (“Here I cannot find /air, light, earth or sun”) to the ending of Eudora Welty’s *The Optimist’s Daughter*: “All they could see was sky, water, birds, light, and confluence. It was the whole

morning world.” Being a student in the International and Comparative Literary and Translation Studies Program, writing my thesis on comparative philosophy between Europe and the Islamic tradition, I am moved by that word “confluence”, a coming together of sources. It is partly what Pico della Mirandola, the philosopher on whom I write, was involved in, and not far from the word “concord” with which he was also associated.

Today inflamed hatreds are being fanned to conflagration. The answer to this growing anguish and promoted division will not come from technology, the market, or scientific innovation, but from the imaginative powers of expression found in the humanities and the arts, most of all through writing and poetry in various tongues, the best means which we have for homecoming, for return from suspension of limbo to the garden, the ancient Persian word for which, *pairidaeza*, is the source for our paradise or *paradiso*.

Darius' essay 'To Speak with Sorrow' is published in the August 2017 edition of *Australian Book Review*:

– australianbookreview.com.au/abr-online

About Darius:

Darius Sepehri is a PhD candidate in International and Comparative Literary Studies under the supervision of Dr Francesco Borghesi. He is the first student to be awarded the *Australian Book Review's* Calibre Prize Essay since its conception in 2007. In August 2017, Darius was announced one of the three recipients of the Copyright Agency-*Sydney Review of Books* Emerging Critics Fellowship. He was subsequently on ABC Radio National's *Nightlife* program for an extended discussion about the subject of the essay.

My Brother, An Animal

Written by Hiroko Komatsu

PhD candidate, Department of Japanese Studies

兄一匹？

So I talk about my brother as if he were an animal... Is that so bad?

What would you think if a wife uses a grammatical word, which is usually used for animals and insects, to refer to her husband? You may suspect that the relationship between them is pretty bad or that perhaps the wife is disgusted by him, so is treating him as if he was an insect. And what about if a younger sister uses the same word for her elder brother? Some people might think that the sister does not respect her brother at all and maybe is even looking down on him. These suspicions could be right in some cases, but actually... not always.

The two instances given above are actually real cases, observed in my own, Japanese family. These uses of grammatical words do not necessarily mean that my mum and I are expressing negative feelings towards the men in our lives by verbally treating them as non-human creatures. Rather, we use these words with at least a certain degree of affection towards them.

Japanese employs grammatical counting words called numeral classifiers (NCs). These are a little similar to the quantifiers we use when we need to count mass nouns in English, as in ‘a *sheet* of paper’ and ‘two *bottles* of milk’. While Japanese NCs are

a bit like ‘sheet’ and ‘bottle’ in English, except that NCs are used not only for mass nouns but also for count nouns in Japanese.

When counting entities, NCs are considered to be matched with a noun primarily on semantic criteria such as whether the referent is human, animate, or inanimate, and if inanimate, criteria such as the physical characteristics (e.g. shape and size), and function (e.g. a machine, a weapon) of the referent concerned.

For example, in Japanese, just as we say *kami san-mai* (paper three-sheets), we also say *ani san-nin* (brother three-human beings), *neko go-hiki* (cat five-small animate beings), *enpitsu ip-pon* (pencil one-long, thin thing), and *kuruma go-dai* (car five-machines). Just as we say in English ‘a *bottle* of milk’, but not ‘a *bottle* of bread’, so the quantifying word in Japanese is chosen according to the nature of the referent.

However, a combination like *ani ip-piki* (elder brother one-small animate being) would give an odd impression to hearers no matter how physically small or short the elder brother is. This is because

the NC *hiki* (allophone: *piki*) is normally used for comparatively small animate beings such as small mammals, insects, and fish, but not for human beings. Humans have our own, special NC, *nin*, which is used for all human beings including those who are very small, even for babies and human embryos. Thus, the boundary between human beings and other animate beings is considered to be very distinct in the Japanese NC system.

However, interestingly, the previous example – *ani ip-piki* (elder brother one-small animate being) – is not necessarily considered a grammatical mistake, but can instead function as a grammatical metaphor. This kind of metaphorical expression is possible because each NC has a number of semantic components. The speaker can subjectively focus on just one or a few of these semantic components to add extra, personal meaning to the noun representing the referent concerned in a specific context. For instance, in the phrase *ani ip-piki* (elder brother one-small animate being), it can be assumed that the speaker is injecting something ‘*hiki-like*’ in order to modify the meaning of the noun *ani* (elder brother). What, then, might this ‘*hiki-like*’ meaning be?

By analysing authentic data from the largest corpus of written Japanese available, I have found that *hiki* has five core semantic components, as follows:

1. A living creature
2. Natural
3. Not a human being
4. Not as intelligent as a human being
5. Physically smaller or shorter than a human being.

Additionally, a range of extended meanings drawn from these core semantic components have been identified. For example, from the core component ‘natural’, the extended meanings of ‘animal-like’, more specifically, ‘wild’, ‘rough’, and ‘independent’ are extracted.

I will introduce just two examples from my data of *hiki* used metaphorically for human children: one in a negative sense and the other in a positive sense.

In one example from my data, the speaker (writer) met a child who had nowhere to go one morning. He let the child wait for him at home while he went out. When he came back, he found the child and a strange baby together. He had no idea where the baby came from and refers to the baby using *hiki*. As explained previously, the fact that a baby is physically small cannot be a reason to use *hiki* in general, so this is considered to be a metaphorical usage. From the situation the speaker is in, it is clear that he uses *hiki* in order to express his concern that the baby is bringing additional trouble to him. He has no personal relationship with the baby so, to him, the baby is just one of many unidentifiable babies. Thus, the baby’s appearance is not something to welcome but just a nuisance to him. In this use, the semantic components of ‘not a human being’, ‘not as intelligent as a human being’, and also ‘physically smaller than a human being’ are focussed to express the speaker’s negative feeling towards this particular baby.

This usage is probably easy to understand for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, the boundary between human beings and non-human animate beings is generally very distinct in Japanese. Second, human beings are generally thought to be at the top of the hierarchy of creatures. These facts mean that *hiki* has a strong sense of ‘not a human being’ and also ‘less/lower than a human being’. Thus, using *hiki* for a human referent can metaphorically mean that the speaker thinks the person does not deserve to be counted by the special NC *nin* (usually used for humans) but that *hiki* is enough.

With this understanding, it may be hard to imagine that *hiki* can be used for human referents in a positive sense. It is indeed regarded as quite rude to

use *hiki* for human beings in general. However, there are actual usages in which *hiki* is used for human beings with a clear, positive feeling. One example is introduced below.

In another context observed in the data, the speaker, a mother of two daughters, uses *hiki* with reference to them both. One day, the older daughter came to ask her mother if she could go to the wooden deck outside. After the mother gave her permission, the older daughter went out and the younger one followed straight after her. They sat down on the wooden deck and immediately started playing together. When the speaker describes this scene, she refers to them as *ni-hiki* (two-small animate beings). For this use, it is assumed that *hiki* provides an appropriate metaphor, as the way these daughters acted may have evoked the image of puppies: one straightaway runs towards something attractive and the other one follows after. Since the mother goes on to say, ‘they are so charming and cute; I know I am a doting parent’, it is clear that she is talking about her daughters’ behaviour with a great deal of affection. Thus, we can see that *hiki* is used here in a positive way, probably in order to describe their puppy-like, innocent, and adorable behaviour.

The instances used among my own family members – when my mother uses *hiki* for my dad and I use *hiki* for my brother – are somewhat similar to this example. While neither of us think of them as puppy-like, the relationship between the speakers and the referents in this case is actually a good one, as family members, so it is easy to see that *hiki* can be used in an affectionate and joking way. This use conveys the implied meaning that ‘he is sometimes lazy, forgets to do things, and certainly troubles me, but he is still my husband/brother’.

As we have seen, the NC *hiki* in Japanese can be used not only for typical referents – small animate beings – but also for human beings, in both positive and negative ways. We generally think of NCs as required to fulfil a grammatical rule, and as matched with a noun simply according to the inherent nature of the referent. However, as the examples discussed have shown, NCs are not always automatically matched objectively with a noun, but the choice can be flexible. NCs can be chosen subjectively by a speaker to inject a personal, metaphorical meaning in the context concerned.

The Language of Artefact

Written by Jana Vytrhlik

PhD candidate, Art History and Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies

Tucked away in a large showcase on the third-floor galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is one of the most intriguing items of Australian colonial interest objects I have come across during my research. In this article I share the process of discovering the language an artefact can speak to us.



Presentation Cup and Cover, gold, London hallmarks for 1853-54, made by C.F. Hancock. Photo: Alexandra Jones © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The importance of an object and related records as essential witnesses of their time has been understood by historians and art historians for centuries. Evolving disciplines of the last decades, like museum studies, focus on the visitor and the use of the most appropriate language and interpretation. In turn, some European studies are now shifting attention back to an artefact and emphasise its capacity or agency to evoke a response or even a change when encountered by a human.

The centre of my attention is a gold presentation piece in a form of a cup and cover. It was designed and made in London, yet it is essentially of Australian pedigree. From available records we can establish a solid provenance, starting in Melbourne in 1851 and concluding with the manufacturing and personal presentation in London in 1853. As a testimonial expressing respect, appreciation and high esteem, the cup is displayed at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum's Silver Galleries amidst hundreds of silver and gold presentation pieces popular in Victorian Britain. The provenance also shows that it was originally conceived as a Kiddush Cup or Jewish sanctification cup, to be presented to the Chief Rabbi of Jews of Great Britain and its colonies.

As such, the cup could be one of the earliest extant ecclesiastical vessels made from the newly discovered gold in Australia. I had known of the cup from several sources but it took a while to find it. Firstly, there was its blurred sketch in *The Illustrated London News* from 1854 and a journal article in 1952 by E. S. Marks, 'The Gold Kiddush Cup' in *Australian Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. I. The first reproduction of the cup dates to 1990. Being made from Australian colonial gold and featuring strong Australian vernacular which is extremely rare for the mid 19th-century Judaica, this Jewish cup was critical to my research.

Thanks to the curators at V&A, I finally saw the cup in June this year. Surrounded by more spectacular 19th-century gold and silver centrepieces, this little chalice-like cup, decorated with unprecedented iconic Australian symbols, was looking like from another world.



Victoria and Albert Museum's display of the Presentation Cup and Cover. Photo: Jana Vytrhlik.

The oldest Jewish congregation in Australia was formed in Sydney in 1828. The Hebrew congregation in Melbourne dates to 1850, soon followed by the foundation of its first synagogue in 1853. The Jewish religious life and education in the colonies was then shaped by an advice from a Chief Rabbi. In 1845 Nathan Marcus Adler (1803-1890), who was originally from Germany, was appointed to the office in London. Following Rabbi Adler's authorisation, the first Jewish clergyman for Melbourne, the Scotland born Rev Moses Rintel (1824-1880), arrived shortly before an important meeting of Jewish citizens took place in Melbourne in 1852. There, it was agreed to set up a special 'gold subscription committee' aiming to raise funds for a testimonial piece for the Chief Rabbi in London.

Traditionally, Jews in the past felt obliged to show their gratitude to the ruler of the country where they

were permitted to stay by presenting a significant piece of silver or gold. The London Jewish Museum, for instance, displays a large silver dish from 1705, one of which the Jews of London presented every year to the Lord Mayor. The situation in Australia was different. Jews, then mainly of the British origin, were part of the white settlement and although regarded as a religious minority, there was no oppression as known in Europe of the time. The idea of this testimonial speaks of the desire, not an obligation, of the forming Jewish community to express their sentiments of strong links to the Chief Rabbinate in London. It can also be seen as an affirmation of their growing pride and identification with the fledgling and prosperous colony. The cup is a statement of emancipated Jews who feel proper that Rabbi Adler be the owner of a work of fine Australian gold, one with a relevant iconographic theme that would echo the young colony.

Reportedly, within weeks, money was raised and decision reached to make a presentation of a Gold Kiddush Cup to the Rev Dr Nathan Marcus Adler, Chief Rabbi of British Jews. The first Victorian gold was discovered soon after the new colony Victoria was established on 1 July 1851 and Melbourne was

to become one of the most desired immigration destinations. Fine goldsmithing skills were still scarce and it was not unusual to ship the local gold to Britain for manufacturing special pieces by reputable London goldsmiths.

Apparently, prior to assigning the goldsmith to work, Rabbi Adler agreed to the idea of a Kiddush cup, but most probably did not interfere with the design, except maybe suggesting that a distinct Australian look would be delightful. Thus, on view in the V&A's silver galleries, barely 25 cm tall, the gold cup with Australian lineage stands next to its English family.

It took me a couple of visits to appreciate the powers this gold cup projects. First, there is the dark red tone of the precious metal, unlike any other piece nearby. I am not a gold expert, so I am happy to imagine that it is the very colour of the Bendigo gold mines of 1851. I also imagine that when the solid 1.2 kg gold bullion left Melbourne for London the following year, nobody had dreamed of the gold taking a shape of the cup in front of me. The V&A curators confirmed that there are no known records of the designer of the cup, so we can only speculate what the 'design brief' was.



Victoria and Albert Museum's display of the Presentation Cup and Cover.
Photo: Jana Vytrhlik.



Detail, Presentation Cup and Cover, gold, London hallmarks for 1853–54, made by C.F. Hancock. Photo: Alexandra Jones © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

It is rare to find a traditional Kiddush cup with cover, but it is possible to find spectacular donation cups topped with heavy covers made by German court goldsmiths in the 16th and 17th century. Perhaps the Melbourne Jews wished for the cup to reflect Rabbi Adler's German origins as well as their own acquired Australian homeland, and that, clearly, would not be an easy task. The result is a complex design and iconography which I am investigating in detail in my thesis. A circular foot is decorated with gold cast miniatures of iconic Australian fauna – a pair of sitting kangaroos and a standing emu, all looking out. In their centre grows a short palm tree trunk which supports the cup's body. What is usually

a bowl or a vase-shape in a conventional wine cup, is transformed here into a reverse tapered cylinder topped with a hefty brim. The cup's body is divided by pairs of spiralled columns into four arched medallions. In contrast to the little animal carousel below, they are embossed with biblical symbols, a lamb, a lion, vine grapes, a palm branch, and engraved with inscriptions in English and Hebrew, revealing the cup's provenance. The domed lid is decorated with laurels and oak leaves wreaths and topped with a double finial. A pair of discreet elegantly snake-formed handles sits below the lid. The 1853/54 hallmarks are punched on the foot and cover indicating that the 18-karat gold hallmarking

took place in London. The crowned initials C. F. H. belong to a well-known goldsmith's workshop of Charles Frederick Hancock of Bruton Street, London.

Although inscribed 'a token of the high esteem' and made by an accomplished goldsmith, at first glance, the cup seems to be lacking the grandeur of testimonials of the time. What, in my view, makes this cup outstanding, is its apparent charge of not giving in to the fashionable aesthetics and established normative pressures of the Victorian British milieu. The cup's design, whether intentional or not, could be foreshadowing the Australian dislike of conventional and conformist social rules. It seems

that the Chief Rabbi himself was somewhat hesitant in his reaction to the cup. First, at the personal presentation (by the London representatives) at his residence in August, 1853, he excites:

"...this, to me invaluable testimonial – when I look at the refined taste and beauty displayed in its production – has made a great impression on my heart, and I shall rank this day as one of the most happy in my life."

A few days later, Rabbi's letter to Melbourne Jews simply expresses his "most sincere and warmest thanks for tasteful and magnificent Sanctification Cup".



Detail, Presentation Cup and Cover, gold, London hallmarks for 1853-54, made by C.F. Hancock. Photo: Alexandra Jones © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

“Maybe the Jewish gold cup with miniatures of our native wildlife could not bridge the two worlds separated by immeasurable distance in the 1850s. A century later, the world became divided in a very different way.”

How often did the Chief Rabbi fill the cup with wine and recited a prayer over it on Sabbath in his home, we do not know. It was still in his possession many years later, when he included the cup with his Judaica collection for the first Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition at the Royal Albert Hall in London in 1887. As an exhibit No. 628, it is listed *Cup – Australian Gold. Presented to the Chief Rabbi by the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, shortly after the discovery of gold in Australia*. The cup was bequeathed to his eldest daughter in 1890. Later, in 1906 she exhibited it at the Exhibition of Jewish Art and Antiquities which opened at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London’s East End. This time, the catalogue No. 366 lists *Gold Cup, presented by the Jews of Victoria (Australia) to the late Chief Rabbi, the Very Rev. Dr. N. M. Adler*.

Soon after the gold was discovered in Australia, the colony became increasingly cosmopolitan. The Jewish settlers mixed with the Germans, Chinese, English and Irish, all dreaming of good fortune. Many also hoped that the good fortune would transform the image of the colony in the eyes of Britain. Maybe the Jewish gold cup with miniatures of our native wildlife could not bridge the two worlds separated by immeasurable distance in the 1850s. A century later, the world became divided in a very different way. While delving into the past, I could not forget the present. This precious relic of Judaism, while still signalling the virtues and aspirations of young Australia, inadvertently, also became to me a powerful witness of the more recent history. By fortune, it survived in Britain. Had its initial journey taken it to other place in Europe, the destiny would have been different. Thus, transcending the space and time, an artefact can assume new language of significance and power to evoke new response and dialogue.

Jana Vytrhlik is a PhD candidate in the departments of Art History and Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies, University of Sydney, writing a thesis on the visual heritage of the Jewish community in colonial Australia (1830s to 1880s).

Hebrew and Me

Written by **Bathsheba "Zizi" Alyozha**

Diploma of Language Studies

I have always loved languages. I learned French at school, a little Russian and German, and later, a smattering of Arabic. However, I had never got to the stage of becoming fluent in a foreign language.

When I joined the Jewish community in 2012, I fell in love with the Hebrew language. I had completed my undergraduate degree years earlier at the University of Sydney, so I enrolled in a Diploma of Languages in Modern Hebrew in 2015.

After two and a half years, with no background whatsoever in Hebrew – either modern or classical – to my absolute joy, I can now speak correct and reasonably fluent Hebrew.

During my second year, I was beginning to doubt that I would ever be able to carry on a conversation. One day, I was travelling to Central Station by train. I had my head in my Hebrew text book. Suddenly, I heard a charming voice:

את לומדת
עברית?
(Are you learning Hebrew?)

A personable young man was looking at me quizzically. I responded spontaneously – in Hebrew. I was blushing all over. This was not the line to Bondi Junction! My sainted aunt – this was the southwest of Sydney!

It turned out that he was from Jerusalem, and in Australia for work. His English was not good, so we spoke in Hebrew. We conversed for almost half an hour, before we ran out of things to say. I was over the moon when I arrived in class and explained what had befallen me.

I have also noticed that the study of Hebrew has caused notable neurogenesis in my brain. In other words, my brain has strengthened considerably.

After the diploma, I hope to continue my Hebrew studies at a higher level over the next several years. My next dream is to study at Hebrew University. I hope to spend three months of every year in Israel in the future.



Bathsheba "Zizi" Alyozha is the 2015 and 2016 recipient of the Percy Joseph Prize which awards student residents of Mendelbaum House on the basis of need, academic merit and intention to follow a career in Jewish Studies. Zizi graduated from the University of Sydney with the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in the 1970s and will commence a Master's degree by research in 2019. She is also a published author in English, and has started writing her first novel in Hebrew entitled *Abraham: Out of Ur* (רואם: סהרבא).

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Biblical Studies students from the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies share their research and readings through critical tools.

Comedy, conundrums and serious questions in the Hebrew Bible

Written by Stephen Cook

PhD candidate

Following the horrors of the Holocaust there has been a fair degree of rethinking in Jewish theology in the struggle to explain the role of God in Auschwitz. Where was God during the darkest hour in Jewish history? What possible good could have come from the savage industrialised murder of so many innocent people? Why was it that the most pious areas were often the ones which experienced the greatest losses, sometimes the extinction of entire communities?

I can imagine that similar questions were asked in response to earlier persecutions, such as the forced expulsions from Spain and Portugal between 1492 and 1498, as there is considerable evidence of shifts in theological thinking in subsequent decades. Tragedy on such a scale, and with such brutality, inevitably demands a theological response, an explanation of sorts as to why a good god allows good people to suffer. It is not unreasonable to expect that the Jewish communities which experienced the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722BCE, and the Babylonian invasion of the southern kingdom of Judah in 589BCE would have wrestled with similar

questions. How could God’s people be taken into exile away from their homeland when the sacred texts gave assurances that “The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not remain in the land”, and “No harm happens to the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble”?

My research is looking at the message of the story of Jonah in the Hebrew Bible. The story itself is a quirky tale of a prophet who was sent on a mission by God to announce to the city of Nineveh in Assyria that because of their wickedness they were about to be destroyed. Jonah, for reasons not immediately made known, decided not to accept the mission and instead fled in the opposite direction and boarded a ship which would take him to the ends of the known world. However, a storm arose, the ship was about to sink, Jonah confessed to the crew that he was the reason for the storm, and that to save themselves the sailors must throw him overboard.

Somewhat surprisingly, God sent “a great fish” which swallowed Jonah and he survived inside its belly for three days and nights before being vomited on dry land where he was ordered by God a second time to take a message to Nineveh. Even more surprisingly, the people of Nineveh responded enthusiastically to Jonah’s preaching, repented, declared a fast, and hoped that God would relent. I say “surprisingly” because no other prophet in Israel’s history was so successful in convincing anyone to repent! It seems to be part of the prophetic type-cast that no one

listens, and no one ever repents. Yet, with just five words, Jonah’s message managed to convert an entire city renowned for its barbarity.

There is a clever interweaving throughout the story of Jonah of irony, satire, parody, wordplays and other comic elements which tell me that this is not simply historical narrative. It is masterly writing dealing with serious theological issue, albeit in a comic style. After the repentance of Nineveh, and God changing his mind about destroying the city, Jonah accused God of being too compassionate, yet there is nothing in the story itself to suggest that Jonah believed God to be compassionate at all. At least, when it comes to his own people, or to his own prophet, God appears to be capricious rather than compassionate.

In a rather comic scene, when word reached the king of Nineveh that the people of the city had decided to repent in response to God’s preaching, and that they had declared a fast, the king, in an assertion of his own power and authority, (after all, Nineveh wasn’t a democracy), commanded the city’s cattle to join in the fast and to repent! Then, in an ironic twist, the king seemed to display an awareness of Jewish theology and a specific text in Israel’s sacred scriptures, and asked, “Who knows? Maybe God will relent and change his mind and he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.” Ironically, the texts to which he alluded originally were about God relenting from his anger

towards Israel. The chief irony in the book is that, if the story is historically true, then the kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 722BCE by an Assyrian army led by Sennacherib, born in Nineveh, which he made the capital of Assyria. If God had destroyed Nineveh, and not changed his mind from his original intention, Israel most likely would have survived. Another irony is that by the time this story was almost certainly written, during or after the exile of the southern kingdom to Babylon, Assyria had been conquered by the Babylonians and Nineveh had been destroyed. By that time, both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah had been dismantled, their people taken into exile, and there was a struggle to maintain their identity in foreign lands.

In what initially might seem like a simple tale, later found to be highly suitable for children's story books, about a man being saved from drowning by surviving inside a fish, there is evidence that the story is dealing with questions of theodicy – why does God allow good people, especially his people, to suffer, and appears to let evil people go scott free? There is good evidence that other texts in the Hebrew Bible deal with similar issues.

Most notably, the book of Job is a story about a man who is described as “blameless and upright” yet he suffers the loss of his wealth, the deaths of all his children, and a painful and ‘loathsome’ disease. In a lengthy debate the book argues various points of view in an effort to come to terms with why good people suffer. It ends rather disappointingly without a clear answer to the question. It is possible that the book of Job and the story of Jonah were written by the same group of scribal scholars, or at least as part of the same contemporaneous discussion, endeavouring to come to terms with the loss of nationhood, institutions, a homeland, and identity. One story asks why the good suffer, while the other asks why the evil go unpunished. Both tales contain

unanswered questions, conundrums possibly designed to stimulate further thinking and discussion.

I am researching unusual linguistic and literary features in the Jonah story which suggest it should be read as a whimsical, comedic contribution in an ironic or satirical style to a scholarly dialogue dealing with serious theological issues at the core of Jewish identity in a post-trauma setting. Just as we have seen changes in Jewish theology in response to the forced expulsions from Spain and Portugal, and to the horrors of the Holocaust, so I see evidence in the story of Jonah and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible of a shifting theology even during the period when the Bible was still being written. My research consequently has implications for how we understand the production of the Hebrew Bible, and developments in theology during the biblical period in reaction to changing circumstances.

This process has emphasised to me that faith communities millennia apart have wrestled with similar questions about the nature of God, the purpose of suffering and whether or not God provides any special protection for those who believe there is a god. What is most intriguing to me is how the book of Jonah engaged in the dialogue using irony, satire and comedy. I am fascinated about the purpose of this writing style in a serious discussion about deeply personal issues, and its implications for how we read other biblical texts.

I wonder whether humour functions in biblical texts to soften the audience for a message which hits hard, or to ridicule opposing ideas, and whether some parts of the Bible which have generally been taken very seriously and quite literally should be read in a different way. If so, then I hope my research will make a significant contribution to our understanding of the Bible and how its writers sometimes struggled in difficult circumstances in their search for meaning.

Song of Songs: Representation of the Feminine in Biblical Poetry

Written by Tara Oswald

Bachelor of Arts, Honours candidate
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Perhaps the most common response to reading Song of Songs is ‘how on earth did this end up in the bible?’. Scholars and theologians alike have been debating the canonicity of the text since its inception. Rabbi Yosé notes there is dispute on whether Song of Songs “renders the hands unclean”, while Rabbi Akiva famously claimed “the whole world was not worth the day on which Song of Songs was given to Israel, for while all scripture is holy, the Song of Songs is the holy of holies”, effectively bringing the debate to a close. The most contentious aspects seem to be the explicit sexual imagery, and the equal status of the lovers. In order to understand the Song of Songs’ inclusion in the canon, most pre-Modern commentators viewed the text as an allegory of the relationship between God and Israel.

In such a reading, God becomes the man, and Israel the woman. This was not an uncommon way of understanding the Israelite nation and its relation to God as King. Prophets has regularly envisioned Israel as an adulterous woman, worshiping other gods at the expense of her divine husband, God. This relationship reflected a wider cultural system of power and hierarchy being dependent upon gender. The result of this is highlighted in depictions of God

stripping, starving, or beating Israel into submission and faithfulness. The female figure however was not always characterised as such. Women also were used as representatives of foreign Gods and religions. In Wisdom literature particularly, a woman is an exotic temptress, whose lips “drip honey...speech smoother than oil”, but whose “feet do down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol” (Prov. 5:3-5). The feminine is commonly a figure of otherness and foreignness, but almost always acts as a romantic or sexual partner with or as the divine.

While a common literary feature in the Prophets, the casting of Israel as God’s wife in the explicitly sexual Song of Songs brought about serious issues of gender and sexuality. The text functioned as an exposition on the nature of the relationship. Consequently, the heroes of Israelite history, including Jacob, Moses, and Aaron, literally became lovers of God. The homoeroticism is frankly astounding. The ‘de-queering’ of the text in the 19th century resulted in it being read as a series of wedding songs, acting instead as an expression of the love and emotions that act as the basis for marriage. In this reading, of the poems as wedding songs, it is interesting to reveal the demonstrated roles of men and women within marriage.

Women in the bible rarely have any agency of their own. We read of queens, wives, slaves, rape victims, mothers, sisters, but rarely about one who has an independent existence and speaks unmediated. Most are instead relegated to the silent multitudes of women at the margins. Song of Songs is a clear exception to this trend. Both man

and woman are active partners. This notion of gender equality can be found in the lack of a systematic patriarchal hierarchy, thereby allowing a relationship that lacks explicit dominance and submission of one partner over the other. In a more literary approach, the natural and sexual imagery employed highlights the exceptionalism of this particular woman and relationship.

In Ancient Israel, a woman was largely confined to one of two roles: the whore or the wife. As the whore, she provided sexual gratification for her partner whilst not threatening the patriarchal hierarchy. As a wife, she bore her husband’s children. Depiction of sex in which man and woman are satisfied is incredibly rare. Song of Songs however, provides this. One scholar has analysed Song of Songs 6:2-3 (cf. 2:16) as describing cunnilingus:

2 My beloved has gone down to his garden,
to the beds of spices,
to pasture his flock in the gardens,
and to gather lilies.
3 I am my beloved’s and my beloved
is mine;
he pastures his flock among the lilies.

In spite of the rather radical reading of these passages, the potential implication of oral sex emphasises the importance of pleasure for both man and woman. Additionally, it marks the inclusion of sexual acts done without regard for reproduction. The depiction and endorsement of pre-marital sex with no views towards procreation is highly unusual.

The woman is repeatedly linked with the natural world, described throughout as a vineyard. This imagery is used often in Ancient Near Eastern

literature. A Ugaritic poem reads “I will make [my bride’s] field vineyards the field of her love orchards”, and the Canaanite Amarna letters compare a “field without a tiller [to] a woman without a husband”. The casting of vineyards as feminine is due partly to the social reality of them being a place in which men and women would meet. An Ancient Israelite ‘Lovers’ lane’, if you will. Widespread use in literature developed the imagery into a common artistic motif signifying love and eroticism. The appearance of the vineyard in Song of Songs further serves to heighten the eroticism of the text. Another common theme is that of linking women and physical space. In Song of Songs, this appears in the tent and curtain imagery, denoting a space or action that is decidedly sexual. The woman speaks of bringing her beloved “into the house of my mother, into the chamber of her who conceived me”. This chamber being a space within the home able to be closed off, and functioning as a female-designated space, and when explicitly associated with a woman, connotes sexual activity. These imageries, in addition to the others, act to construct the woman as being intimately associated with physical space and the natural world.

The extensive debates on the meaning of the Song are likely to continue. What we do know is that it depicts the sexual relationship between two lovers in a series of poems. There is no clear narrative function, simply multitudes of highly evocative and poetic language. The couple are constructed outside the bounds of a patriarchal hierarchy; They act, feel, and imagine as an equal pair. He loves her just as much as she loves him; They are both beautiful and tender,

powerful and strong; The sexual acts themselves indicate a level of egalitarianism. For a text to describe and depict a woman in such a way, as no more or less than a man, is highly unusual in biblical texts. As Phyllis Bird notes, “The Old Testament is a collection of writings by males from a society dominated by males. These writings portray a man’s world. They speak of events and activities engaged in primarily or exclusively by males (war, cult and government)”. The acknowledgement of this woman’s passions allows a glimpse into the hidden voices that lie behind the Bible.

Miguel Covarrubias: Encounters between Anthropology, Geography and Art

Institute for Aesthetic Investigations,
Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City,
23-24th August 2017

Written by Adrian Vickers
Professor of Southeast Asian Studies



Mural of the library building of The Autonomous University of Mexico, built by Juan O’Gorman in 1952. Photo: Adrian Vickers.

Professor Adrian Vickers gave the keynote (*Conferencia magistral*) in the recent Colloquium in Mexico City on the Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias (1904-1957).

This symposium was a unique opportunity for scholars from all around the world to bring together the latest research on the major aspects of the life and career of Covarrubias, whose work encompassed The United States (specifically the Harlem Renaissance), Indonesia (Bali), China and Mexico. Professor Vickers spoke on the famous book *Island of Bali* and the politics of Covarrubias's work. His paper revealed new information on editorial intervention in the book, which is also relevant to understanding his later books, notably *Mexico South*. The conference papers, which are in English and Spanish, will be published in a special double volume of the Institute's journal.

This was the first time that there had been a comprehensive consideration of the impact of Covarrubias in many fields, and there were surprising new discussions of how influential he had been in Chinese art of the 1930s, particularly in the popular art coming out of Shanghai, amongst other topics. The analyses presented in the papers also pointed towards Covarrubias's influence in Mexican archaeology and its connection to various theories in geography and anthropology, a connection that was underlined by the significance of the map murals he produced in San Francisco in 1939. The day following the Symposium, participants were given a unique opportunity to see more of the archaeological influence of Covarrubias through a curator's tour of the National Museum of Archaeology. This tour highlighted issues of nationalism and the role of private collectors such as Covarrubias in forming major government institutions.



L-R: Prof Adrian Vickers; Dr Paul Bevan, Ashmolean Museum; Prof Nancy Lutkehaus, University of Southern California; Dr Mayabel Ranero Castro, University of Veracruz; Dr Judith Bosnak, Goethe University, Frankfurt

Meet our new academics



Dr Benjamin Nickl

International Comparative
Literary and Translation Studies

“I’m an Early Career Fellow in the Department of International Comparative Literature and Translation Studies.

My academic background is a smorgasbord of different areas: secondary school teaching and American Studies at the University of Regensburg in Germany, European Studies at Georgetown University in the United States, and contemporary mainstream entertainment and Muslim minority comedy at the University of Melbourne.

Literature, film, and television have become my main areas of research – anything to do with pop culture.

Currently I’m co-editing a book on transnational German education and I am interested in the broader implications of competing cultural narratives.”



Dr Jim Rheingans

Asian Studies and Indian Sub-Continental Studies

“As Lecturer for Tibetan Buddhism, I am based in the Asian Studies program. I teach Buddhist Studies units and content about Tibet within Asian Studies and Sanskrit within Indian Sub-Continental Studies. I am planning further units with Tibetan and Buddhist content as well as Tibetan language courses and will also undertake supervision of Honours and postgraduate research students. The establishment of this new Lectureship in Tibetan Buddhism allows us to create an even more comprehensive program.

I am from Germany, being partly of Irish descent. Having started with Cultural Anthropology, I decided to major in Tibetan Studies, studying Classical Tibetan, spoken Tibetan, and Tibetan culture. I took Sanskrit as a minor and also worked as interpreter for Tibetans. While my education in Hamburg was mainly philological-historical, I became interested in approaches from Religious and Literary Studies during my doctoral research in the UK and in interdisciplinary projects as postdoctorate in Bonn.

I started to have an initial fascination for the Himalayas, after I had read some biographical accounts about Tibet in my youth. When traveling to India and Nepal after high school, I first encountered

Tibetan people, culture and Buddhism. This general interest was deepened while studying Cultural Anthropology. After further sojourns in India and learning some Buddhist philosophy, I became quite intent on wanting to read all these texts and be able to talk, and began to study Tibetan.

Recently, I have completed a monograph about a 16th century Tibetan scholar-meditator and I am working to complete a second book focussed on Tibetan religious history. I am currently planning a study of philosophical texts and terminologies for Tibetan type meditations in order to generate a conceptual framework for the interdisciplinary exploration of Tibetan visual meditation. In this context, we hope to provide lectures and classes about mindfulness, meditation and healing open to all in the coming semesters.

I would like to mention that I am really grateful to all who have made this Lectureship possible and am quite impressed with the kind reception by the colleagues at the SLC as well as the deep and diverse competency amassed here. I think there is an enormous potential for Buddhist Studies at the University of Sydney in an Australasian and worldwide network.”

On *Citizen Power: Postwar Reconciliation, a bilingual edition in English and Japanese*

Written by Dr Yasuko Claremont

Honorary Senior Lecturer, Japanese Studies

The atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army in occupied countries over 70 years ago are still live issues in Japan today, the basic cause being the inability of successive Japanese governments to reach settlement and reconciliation chiefly with China and Korea. Against this political background of denial, *Citizen Power* focuses on the emergence of grassroots movements in Japan working successfully in various ways to achieve reconciliation and friendship with peoples from other countries who were once enemies. Written in English and Japanese, *Citizen Power* presents and discusses a variety of initiatives taken by the grassroots groups, including over the years arranging a host of individual meetings that achieved goodwill.

My research and writing of *Citizen Power* stemmed from organizing a collection of reconciliation photographs which were exhibited in the Law School Library foyer in conjunction with the 70th postwar anniversary conference: *Wounds, Scars, and Healing:*

Civil Society and Postwar Pacific Basin Reconciliation (30 September to 2 October 2015).

The book has five parts:

- I. Testaments
- II. Reaching out in understanding and friendship
- III. Fostering the next generations
- IV. 'The tale of Liu Lianren'
- V. Summation

Parts I-III are then broken into sub-groups illustrating a large variety of incidents and initiatives relative to the title. My full translation of an epic poem by Noriko Ibaragi in Part IV entitled 'The tale of Liu Lianren' shows not only the extreme hardship suffered by Liu Lianren, a Chinese forced labourer who hid in the wilderness of Hokkaido for 14 years, but also the compassion and support he received from Chinese and Japanese lawyers working together to bring about his release and return to his wife and children in China.



Liu Lianren (front, far right) in his Caobo village in Shandong province, c. 1968.



On an auspicious day in July 1997: Erected by the Chiba Chapter of the Association of Returnees from China.

Let me show three further examples of reconciliation:

A stone monument of apology was erected in July 1997 on the temple grounds of Myōfukuji, Yōka-ichiba city, Chiba prefecture by 52 members of the Association of Returnees from China, Chiba Chapter and their surviving families. Inscribed on the monument is a powerful message of remorse and apology to the Chinese people. It reads:

Among the 1,109 Japanese prisoners detained in China as war criminals during World War II, 52 of us from Chiba-prefecture were all pardoned after 1956. Not one of us was executed and we were all allowed to return home after receiving unexpectedly lenient judgement by the government of China.

The more we reflect on the sufferings of the victims, the more serious, grave and unrepayable appear the rampaging crimes we committed as aggressors in China.

After our return and out of a deep sense of remorse, we formed the Association of Returnees from China and endeavoured to seek everlasting peace, oppose war and build Sino-Japanese friendship.

To mark the fortieth year since our return and reflect that we are still among the living, we offer our profound gratitude and sincere apologies to the great people of China, who dealt with us according to the principle of 'repaying rancour with virtue'. We and the families of our deceased members erect this monument here as a token of our pledge of eternal friendship between China and Japan.

The inscription clearly mentions ongoing reconciliation activities by the former Japanese soldiers.



Princesses of Wisdom: Schoolgirls who won the national history studies competition in 2015 for their research report on prisoners of war.



Korean and Japanese youths carrying exhumed remains of Korean forced labourers to transfer them from Shumarinai, Hokkaido to Seoul Peace Park.

Of those who experienced the war first-hand, few now are alive and their legacies are being carried out by new generations, including a group of Japanese students who studied how and why the Imperial Army treated prisoners of war so harshly. A group of girls wrote a research report on prisoners of war and won the national history studies competition in 2015. They call themselves the Princesses of Wisdom!

I also featured a group of Korean and Japanese youths who voluntarily participated in a joint project in which the remains of 115 Korean forced labourers were exhumed in Shumarinai, Hokkaidô and returned to the Seoul Peace Park. The project was mainly funded by donations from the pure-land sect of Buddhism in Japan. The six panels, each containing a cluster of photographs on themes, have now been housed in the Japanese Garden and Culture Centre in Cowra for permanent display.

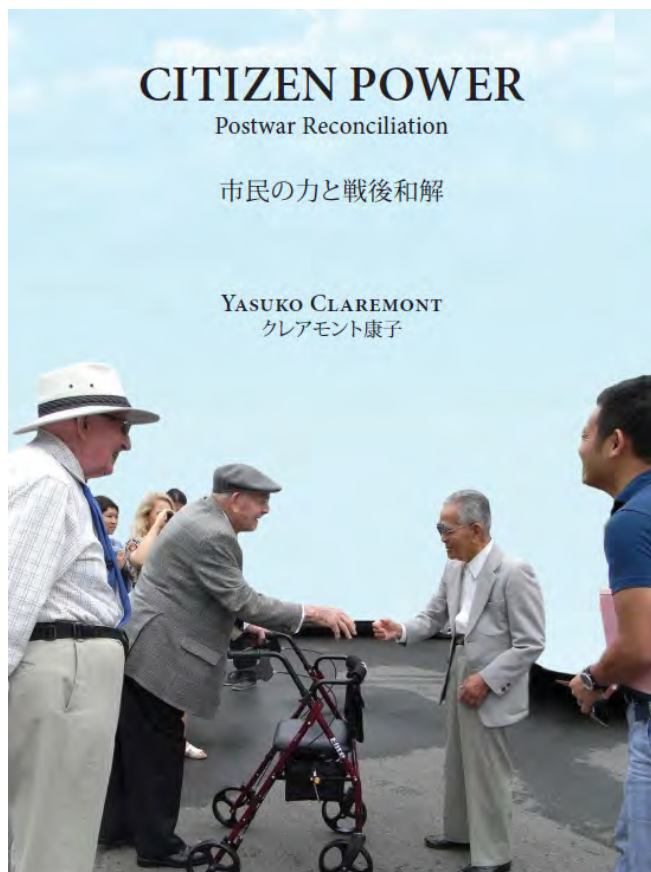
I am grateful for the generous funding support by the Chancellor's Committee of the University of Sydney and the Australian-Japan Foundation for this publication. I owe greatly the contributors of those photographs, and I am indebted to Susannah Smith, Sue Wiles and Ikuko Sorensen for their professional support for this publication.

The 70th postwar anniversary conference was five years in the making from 2011 to 2015 (see *Language and Culture Issue 29 p.9-10* and *Issue 34 p.8-11*). All told, four major conferences were held, two in Sydney and one each in Seongnam (South Korea) and Kyoto. The conferences were linked together forming a whole. Out of them, three books have been published:

- *Ishibumi: a memorial to the atomic annihilation of 321 students of Hiroshima Second Middle School*, English translation of Ishibumi, Yasuko Claremont and Roman Rosenbaum, Poplar Press, 2017;
- *'History Wars' and Reconciliation in Japan and Korea*, ed. Michael Lewis, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017 emanated from the conference at the Academy of Korean Studies;
- *Citizen Power: postwar reconciliation*, Yasuko Claremont, The Oriental Society of Australia, 2017.

I have just submitted all the files of proceedings of the conference, *Wounds, Scars, and Healing: Civil Society and Postwar Pacific Basin Reconciliation*, to Routledge for publication early in 2018. I am editor. Also, on contract I will be completing my monograph, *The Pacific War between America and Japan: Its Impact and Legacy*, to be submitted to Routledge early in 2018.

Written in both English and Japanese, and containing 111 photographs, *Citizen Power: Postwar Reconciliation* 「市民の力と戦後和解」 presents the power of grassroots groups in Japan in achieving reconciliation between those who were once enemies. The translation of poems includes Ibaragi Noriko's 「りゅうりえんれんの物語」 (*The Tale of Liu Lianren*), in English for the first time.



This book offers a graphic illustration of the diversity and persistence of civil society groups in Japan pursuing postwar reconciliation ... By bringing this work together in an eye-catching and cohesive manner, Dr Claremont and her rich array of contributors have provided a major service to Japan and the Asia-Pacific community.

Professor Luke Nottage
Law School, the University of Sydney

The case studies presented in its pages provide inspiring models for others to follow, and give fresh hope for the future of 'reconciliation from below'.

Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki
Australian National University

Presented by the Oriental Society of Australia,
Citizen Power: Postwar Reconciliation is available
through Sydney University Press:

– [purl.library.usyd.edu.au/
osa/9780959226928](http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/osa/9780959226928)

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