

CALL FOR PAPERS

Literary Diasporas in Ashkenaz: Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literatures

June 13th–14th, 2016, Paris

The Middle East and Mediterranean Research Center (CERMOM) at the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilization in Paris (Inalco), the Paris Yiddish Center – Medem Library (Maison de la culture yiddish – Bibliothèque Medem) and the Department of Jewish Culture at Saint Petersburg State University invite paper proposals for the international conference **Literary Diasporas in Ashkenaz: Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literatures**, which will take place in Paris, June 13th–14th, 2016.

“Diaspora,” a term long associated with the Jewish historical experience, has undergone since the 1970s “an amazing inflation that peaked in the 1990s, by which time it was being applied to most of the world’s peoples” (Dufoix 2008). During the last few decades, “diaspora” has been subject to further reconceptualizations and theoretical redefinitions, resulting in what has been observed as a “diaspora” of the term itself (Brubaker 2005). Scholars began to explore the virtues of diaspora, stressing the “positive dimensions of transnational existence” (Werbner 2002) and the ability of diasporas to “mobilize a collective identity [...] in solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries” (Cohen 2008). The conceptual paradigm of center and periphery being increasingly contested (Clifford 1994; Levy 2005), “diaspora” has been recently redefined as “a synchronic cultural situation applicable to people who participate in a doubled cultural (and frequently linguistic) location, in which they share a culture with the place in which they dwell but also with another group of people who live elsewhere” (Boyarin 2015).

It is within the context of these reconceptualizations that this conference wishes to revisit the modern Hebrew and Yiddish literatures of Ashkenaz as literary diasporas, starting with the Haskala and through to the present day. “Ashkenaz” refers here

both to a geographic place and to a cultural context, far exceeding the boundaries of Europe. Emerging in similar and related circumstances, both literatures are diasporic in more than one sense:

First, both literatures emerged “in the diaspora” according to the most common understanding of the term in its Jewish context. However, considering “diaspora” as the dispersion of people across geographic areas, analogous to the fertile dispersion of seeds (according to its etymology, from the Greek dia-, “throughout”, and sperin, “to sow”), Hebrew and Yiddish literatures can be defined as diasporic for they have been germinating in various places and spread across a vast geographic area, establishing a series of consecutive and parallel literary centers in Europe, North and South America, Palestine, South Africa and Australia.

Hebrew and Yiddish literatures produced in places such as Odessa, Vilnius, Warsaw or Berlin, were, on the one hand, anchored in those literary centers and their cultural and political contexts; on the other hand, they were part of a non-territorial republic of letters and were addressed to readers scattered across the world. The diasporic “doubled cultural location” of these literatures can be attributed to their main sources of inspiration: Jewish traditional literature, written mostly in Hebrew and Aramaic,





and European modern literatures. In addition, both literatures can be said to have been situated in a doubled cultural and linguistic location, both in relation to their non-Jewish surroundings and in relation to one another.

The conference organizers invite proposals for papers in English addressing the following questions, in reference to modern Hebrew and/or modern Yiddish literatures:

1. Which definitions can be provided for “diasporic literatures” or “literary diasporas”? What is the relation between the term “diaspora” and terms such as *galut/goles* or *tfutsot/tfutses*?
2. What are the differences between the two literatures in respect to their diasporic character? What aspects should be compared and contrasted?
3. How did the diasporic situation of Ashkenazi Jews influence their literary creations? How did it affect the development of literary schools or the work of individual authors?
4. What was the role of institutions (e.g. literary journals, publishing houses, literary associations) in these literary diasporas?
5. Which theoretical conceptualizations, critical paradigms or historiographies relevant to Ashkenazi literary diasporas were developed by literary critics and intellectuals (such as Simon Dubnow, David Frishman, Simon Rawidowicz, Franz Rosenzweig or Shmuel Niger)?
6. How did “diaspora” and similar concepts inform scholarly research on Hebrew and Yiddish modern literatures by literary scholars (e.g. Dov

Sadan, Chone Shmeruk, Dan Miron)?

7. What was the role of literary diasporas in the development of Jewish national and cultural ideologies (Hebraism, Yiddishism, Diasporism, Zionism, Bundism, Territorialism etc.)?
8. What part did the Hebrew and Yiddish diasporic literatures play in Jewish theology (notably Hasidic theology)?
9. What was the relation between these literary diasporas and Hebrew and Yiddish language politics (e.g. language standardization)?
10. What are the Hebrew or Yiddish literary diasporas today? How can they be defined and what is the relation between the two?

Paper proposal dealing with similar questions will also be considered.

Scholars interested in presenting a paper are invited to send an abstract (approximately 300 words) and a short bio statement (200 words) by February 15th, 2016 to literarydiasporas@yiddishweb.com.

Applications should be written in English. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by March 1st, 2016.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.yiddishweb.com/literarydiasporas>

Conference co-organizers: Sharon Bar-Kochva (Inalco) and Tal Hever-Chybowski (Paris Yiddish Center – Medem Library).

Conference committee: Chana Kronfeld (UC Berkeley), Dan Miron (Columbia University), Yitskhok Niborski (Paris Yiddish Center – Medem Library/ Inalco), Igor Tantlevskiy (Saint Petersburg State University), Masha Itzhaki (Inalco).



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