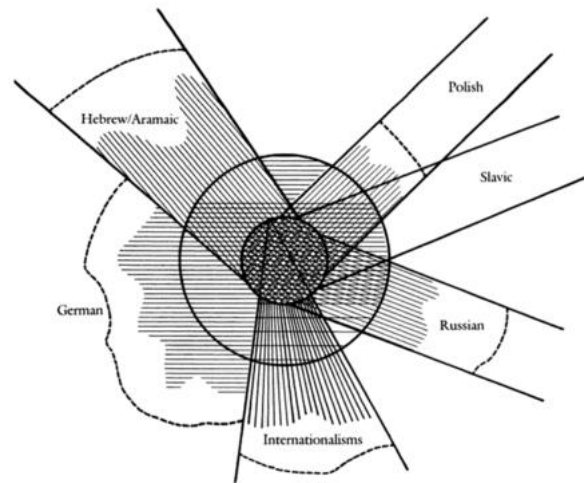


Prof. Anna Elena Torres
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Office: Foster 403

Spring 2018 CMLT 29402
Monday/Wednesday 1:30-2:50pm
Classroom: Classics 113

Yiddish Poetics of the Border



The inner circle is *basic* Yiddish; the central circle represents the domain of *merged* Yiddish (the shaded lines indicate merely the source of the components, without showing their mutual interpenetration). Outside the circle, discontinuous boundaries mark areas of *extension*; dotted lines represent areas open for further borrowing from the adjacent languages.

Image from Benjamin Harshav's *Meaning of Yiddish*, p50

[W]e are cultivated beings: our language is an inheritance; on the one hand, to the extent that it's the result of a history that we study in philology, it is itself made up of sediments of a great many languages... We go on unwittingly using a language that speaks much more richly than we ever consciously realize, such that even when we are very primitive in our expression, a well-trained ear can hear in an apparently simple statement layers and layers of resonances, whether or not you can hear the hum of etymology behind it... An author is all the better for the fact that she has been cultivated like a piece of land, for the fact that her language has been elaborated by a number of other languages since the dawn of time.

~ Hélène Cixous, *White Ink: Interviews on Sex, Text and Politics* (2008)

What and where are the borders of Yiddish? How do the “borders” of the Yiddish language shape its poetics? And how has Yiddish literature informed the development of other world literatures through contact and translation?

This course aims to think with contemporary theories of the border/borderlands during our literary exploration of Yiddishland, as we listen more deeply to the hum of Yiddish etymology. As a diasporic language unattached to a single nation, Yiddish has long been constructed as subversively internationalist or cosmopolitan, raising questions about the relationship between language and the state, vernacularity and statelessness.

Requirements

- Attendance and participation

Please speak up to voice your thoughts, no matter how incomplete. Be present and respectful to your classmates. Reading and other assignments must be completed carefully. Absences may be made up by writing a 3-page response paper on the session’s texts within a week.

- On Canvas

By 9pm of the evening before each class meeting, please post a comment or question about a passage from the reading under “Discussion” on our Canvas page. There is no formal requirement to respond directly to other posts, but you are encouraged to engage with each other’s comments.

- Academic accommodations

If you require any accommodations for this course, as soon as possible please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Services office). If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the University’s programs or services, you are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please contact the office at 773-702-6000/TTY 773-795-1186 or disabilities@uchicago.edu, or visit the website at disabilities.uchicago.edu. If you have any other concerns about your ability to participate fully in the class or to meet the requirements, please discuss them with me as soon as possible.

- Electronic devices

The use of laptops in class is generally not permitted. Note taking should be done with pen and paper, and readings brought to class in print form.

Special Events

Cecilia Vicuña, Performance on Migration and Movement

Wednesday, April 4, 2018 - 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Daniel Kahn: Song Workshop and Performance

Friday, April 6 / 12:30-2pm Classics 110

Screening of *The Great Wall* with Director Tadhg O'Sullivan (TBA)

<http://thegreatwall.eu/>

Assignments

There are three primary assignments:

* Keyword (3-5pp)

Keyword may be from Yiddish or English and should include a genealogy of the term. Possible keywords for this course might include literary and linguistic terms like *macaronic*, *triglossic*, and *komponentn-visikeyt*. Students could also choose to examine poets' keywords, for example, *heymlozikayt* or *umru* in the work of Peretz Markish. For examples of the keyword format, see: *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*; *Keywords for Latino/a Studies*; *Keywords for Radicals*; etc. Please post keyword by 7pm the night before class and be ready to discuss it in seminar.

* Class Presentation (10-20 min)

These presentations should include an introduction to the author/s (consult the JWA encyclopedia or YIVO); summarize the key aspects of primary texts and secondary articles; then ask three questions to begin discussion. Successful, exciting

presentations bring together theoretical insights (especially from the secondary materials) with original readings of primary sources.

* Final Project

– Students may translate a text of 10+ pages from Yiddish and write a translator’s note which engages with course texts. The translated text may be historical, literary, or theoretical. Students may also take the option of translating Yiddish texts from the syllabus throughout the course, then writing a culminating translators’ statement.

OR

– Students may write an original composition, implementing stylistic elements (macaronic, diglossic, etc) and present it with an artist’s statement (3-4pp) that draws inspiration and theory from texts studied.

OR

– Students may write a research paper of 10-15 pages, examining the topic of Yiddish borderlands.

Course Map

Note: Readings may shift according to student interest and language ability.

WEEK ONE (March 26 and 28)— Intro, Weinreich, Rivkin

Monday Yankev Glatshteyn, “*Zing Ladino*”
Cecilia Vicuña, “Language Is Migrant”

Wednesday B. Rivkin, “Quasi-Territorialism in Yiddish Literature.” In *World Literature in Theory*, ed. David Damrosch. Translation by William Runyan.

Haun Saussy, “Macaronics as What Eludes Translation”

Max Weinreich, “The Language of the Way of the Shas,” in *History of the Yiddish Language*

Avrom Sutzkever, “1976”

WEEK TWO (April 2 and 4) – Yiddish Internationalism at the US Border

Monday “Archives,” Kathryn Hellerstein. *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, No. 19, Women and Jewish Poetry (Spring 2010), pp. 134-136

Irena Klepfisz, “*Di rayze aheym/The Journey Home*”

Kadya Molodovsky, “White Night”

Libby Garland, *After They Closed the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921-1965*

Wednesday Kenyon Zimmer, “Yiddish is My Homeland,” *Immigrants Against the State*

Thomas Nail, Introduction and Ch 1, *Theory of the Border*

Dovid Edelshtat, “The Two-Legged Beast”

Yoysef Bovshover, “Revolution” and “To the People”

Moysh-Leyb Halpern, “In Central Park”

For Yiddish readers:

* S. Yanovsky, *Ersht e yorn fun Yidishn frayhayt lekhn sotsyalizm: oyf obiografishe zikhroyneš fun a pioner un boyer fun der yidisher anarkhiš isher bayegung in england un amerike*

* Harkavy on loan-words

* B. Rivkin, “*Der kmoy-teritorializm’ fun der yidisher literatur,*” *Literarishe bleter*, June-July 1938.

Wednesday evening event:

Cecilia Vicuña, Performance on Migration and Movement

6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Please reserve your free tickets here:

<https://www.spertus.edu/programs-events/performance-migration>

Friday afternoon event:

“Yiddish Song Smuggling”: Workshop with Daniel Kahn

12:30-2pm, 110 Classics

WEEK THREE (April 9 and 11) – Yiddish and Spanish (and Ladino)

Monday Isaac Berliner and Diego Rivera, *City of Palaces* (1936)

Rachel Rubinstein, “Encountering Native Origins”

Wednesday Monique R. Balbuena, “*Dibaxu*: A Comparative Analysis of Clarisse Nicoïdski's and Juan Gelman's Bilingual Poetry”

Selections from *Yiddish South of the Border*:

Aaron Zeitlin, “The Gallego”

Rosa Palatnik, “An Engagement Dinner”

Meir Corona, “Quite a Bank”

Salomon Zytner, “The Refugee”

Pinkhes Berniker, “Jesús”

Recommended reading: Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Calypso Jews: Jewishness in the Caribbean Literary Imagination*

Yiddish readers: Isaac Berliner, *Shtot fun palatsn*

WEEK FOUR (April 16 and 18)— Yiddish and Hebrew

Monday Yael Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine*:

“The Problematics of ‘Language Wanderings’”

“Writing as a Native: The ‘Canaanizing’ Poetry of Rikuda Potash”

A. Sutzkever, “Yiddish”

Recommended: Ella Shohat, “The Invention of Judeo-Arabic: Nation, Partition, and the Linguistic Imaginary”

Wednesday Rachel Katznelson, “Language Insomnia” (1918)

Hannah Pollin-Galay, “The History of My Voice: Yiddish at the Seams of Holocaust Video Testimony”

WEEK FIVE (April 23 and 25) – Bergelson

Monday Dalit Assouline, *Contact and Ideology in a Multilingual Community: Yiddish and Hebrew Among the Ultra-Orthodox*

Wednesday Dovid Bergelson, *Judgment*

Screening of *The Great Wall* with Tadhg O’Sullivan

Wednesday, 6pm, Wieboldt 408

WEEK SIX (April 30 and May 2) – Opatoshu and the Underworld

Monday Amelia M. Glaser, *Jews and Ukrainians in Russia's Literary Borderlands: From the Shtetl Fair to the Petersburg Bookshop*

Wednesday Joseph Opatoshu, *Romance of a Horse Thief* (1912)

For Yiddish readers:

Audio:

<https://archive.org/details/262JosephOpatoshuARomanFunAFerdGanefRomanceOfAHorseThief.CD1Of3.ReadBySidneyLipse>

Text: <https://archive.org/details/nybc205898>

WEEK SEVEN (May 7 and 9) – Yiddish and German

Monday Fradel Shtok, “Friedrich Schiller” and “White Furs”
(Translations by Allison Schachter)

G. Agamben, “We Refugees”

[https://thehubedu-
production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/1836/1e788430-c11e-4036-8251-
5406847cd504/AgambenWeRefugees.pdf](https://thehubedu-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/1836/1e788430-c11e-4036-8251-5406847cd504/AgambenWeRefugees.pdf)

Trinh Minh-ha, “An Acoustic Journey,” in *Rethinking Borders*

Optional: Rachel Seelig, *Strangers in Berlin: Modern Jewish Literature Between
East and West, 1919-1933*

Wednesday D. Bergelson, “Between Refugees” (*Tsvishn emigrantn*)

Translation:

[https://www.amazon.com/Shadows-Berlin-Stories-Dovid-
Bergelson/dp/0872864448/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1525412513&sr=8-
1&keywords=bergelson+berlin](https://www.amazon.com/Shadows-Berlin-Stories-Dovid-Bergelson/dp/0872864448/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1525412513&sr=8-1&keywords=bergelson+berlin)

Allison Schachter, “Yiddish Modernism in Weimar Berlin,” in *Diasporic
Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth
Century*

Optional: Harriet Murav, “Bergelson, Benjamin and Berlin,” *The Russian Jewish
Diaspora and European Culture, 1917-1937*, pp 201-217

WEEK EIGHT (May 14 and 16) – Narratives of Return

Proposal for final project due. Please bring a print-out to class and email your work as well.

Monday Y. Glatshiteyn, *The Glatstein Chronicles* (Book One)

Mark Rifkin, “Indigenizing Agamben”

Hannah Pollin-Galay, “The Holocaust is a Foreign Country: Comparing Representations of Place in Lithuanian Jewish Testimony”

Wednesday Y. Glatshiteyn, *The Glatstein Chronicles* (Complete)

Optional: Max Weinreich, “Selectivity and Fusion,” in *History of the Yiddish Language*

WEEK NINE (May 21 and 23) – Utopian Language

Monday NO CLASS

Wednesday K. Szymaniak, “Language of Dispersion and Confusion”
Chana Kronfeld, “Murdered Modernisms”
(Both in *A Captive of the Dawn: The Life and Work of Peretz Markish*)

Optional: Esther Shor, *Bridge of Words: Esperanto and the Dream of a Universal Language*

For Yiddish readers:

Peretz Markish, *Der fertsikyeriker man*

Peretz Markish, “*Yerushe/Inheritance*,” selections

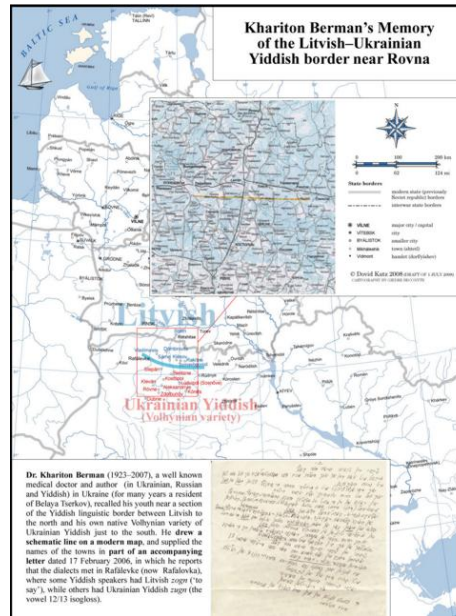
WEEK TEN (May 30) – Yiddish Border Legacies

Note: No class on May 28 for Memorial Day

Wednesday Bruno Schulz, “Cinnamon Shops” and “Street of Crocodiles”
Clarice Lispector, “Brasilia”

Optional: Israeli short film, *A-Maisah* <http://www.maale.co.il/en/movie/13088>

China Mieville, *The City and the City*



Map from *LITVISH: An Atlas of Northeastern Yiddish*. Dovid Katz, cartography by Giedre Beconyte.