



# Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies



Volume 13  
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## Newsletter

Lehigh University  
Bethlehem, Pa.

### Berman Center Initiates Writer-in-Residence Program

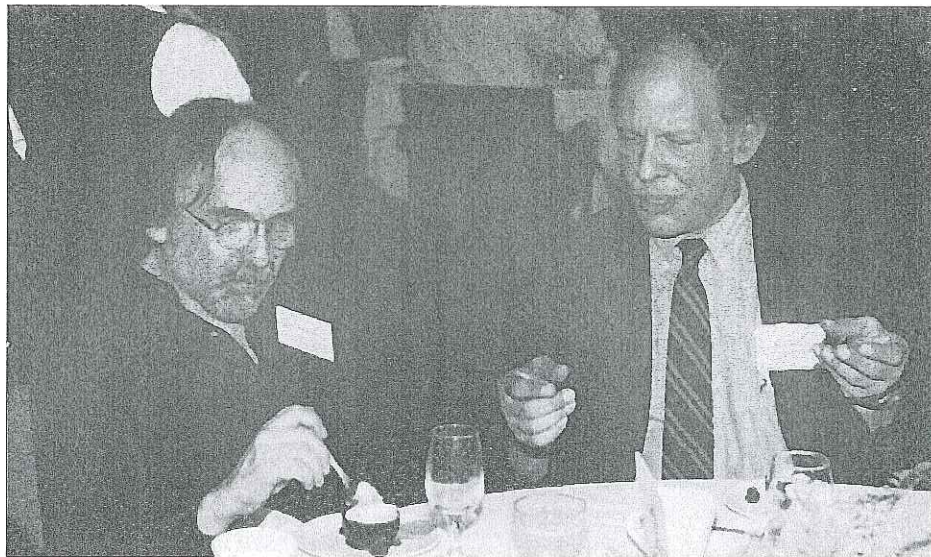
Dr. Ruth Knafo Setton joins the faculty of the Berman Center in January as writer-in-residence and adjunct associate professor in the Department of English. Her responsibilities include teaching one course each semester on different aspects of Jewish literature and writing, and planning programs and projects that will bring Jewish writers to Lehigh's campus. The position is funded by a gift from Susan Beckerman, the widow of Howard Ballenzweig '65.

Setton's first course at Lehigh will be American-Jewish literature. In the course, she will discuss the writings of Russian and Israeli immigrants, Sephardic and Hasidic Jews, and such authors as Isaac Bashevis Singer, Irena Klepfisz, Grace Paley, Philip Roth, Art Spiegelman, and David Mamet. Through novels, stories, poems, films, and videos, the course will examine the implications of anti-Semitism and assimilation while exploring the subtle ironies of contemporary American-Jewish life.

Born in Morocco, Setton brings a unique combination of personal and professional experience to Lehigh's campus. Her first novel, *The Road to Fez*, revolving around the lives of Moroccan Jewish women, will be published by Counterpoint Press in March 2001. Her fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry have appeared in *Luna*, *Tikkun*, *Lilith*, *Nimrod*, *In Posse Review*, *ForPoetry*, *XConnect*, *International Quarterly*, *The Denver Quarterly*, and numerous other journals.

Setton has taught creative writing and literature courses at Lafayette College, Muhlenberg College, the New School for Social Research, and the University of Pittsburgh's Semester-at-Sea program. She is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment of the Arts, PEN, the Sewanee Writer's Conference,

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Photograph by Rob Upton

*Conference speakers Art Spiegelman and Peter Novick*

### Center Sponsors Conference on "Representing the Holocaust"

The Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies held its sixth international conference, "Representing the Holocaust: Practices, Products, Projections," May 21–23, 2000, at Lehigh University. In the first conference of its kind, a distinguished gathering of artists, photographers, curators, cultural critics, and historians analyzed the ways in which the Holocaust is represented in and through art, photographs, museums, and monuments. Specialists from the United States, Israel, Canada, Great Britain, and the Netherlands addressed such questions as:

- How are memory and awareness of the Holocaust being transmitted and produced through representational practices and cultural forms?
- What diverse forms of representational practices are being used to represent the Holocaust in the visual arts?
- What distinctive problems confront artists who seek to represent the Holocaust?
- What representational strategies are evident in Holocaust museums and memorials? Who are the intended audiences and what are the projected outcomes for these museums and memorials?

The theme of "representing the Holocaust" was approached from two decidedly different perspectives in special evening lectures by **Peter Novick**, Professor of History at the University of Chicago, and **Art Spiegelman**, Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist. Both have created works that challenge conventional views about the Holocaust and its representation. In *The Holocaust in American Life*, Novick calls into question the assumption that identification with the Holocaust is a natural and essential component of American Jewish identity and culture. In *Maus I and II*, Spiegelman uses comics to represent the Holocaust, effectively revealing the complexities of memory, testimony, history, and representations.

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## Full Semester of Berman Center Programs Dedicated to "Project 2000: Critical Reflections on Modernity"

This spring, students and faculty of Lehigh's College of Arts and Sciences participated in "Project 2000: Critical Reflections on Modernity." Its aim was to stimulate a critical assessment of modern values and institutions at the end of the 20th century, with particular emphasis on the Holocaust. The project incorporated more than a dozen courses at Lehigh University, as well as courses at other Lehigh Valley colleges. Community and educational organizations throughout the Lehigh Valley area were invited to participate and joined Lehigh in sponsoring exhibitions, films, lectures, and symposia that related to the Holocaust. This unique interdisciplinary, inter-institutional project was conceived of and coordinated by Laurence J. Silberstein, Director of the Berman Center, and Ricardo Viera, Director of the Lehigh University Art Galleries.

A central feature of Project 2000 was the semester-long exhibit of *Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light* at Lehigh. The controversial and provocative art exhibit by internationally known artist Judy Chicago and photographer Donald Woodman takes visitors on a journey through the darkness of the Holocaust while at the same time using the Holocaust as a prism to view other victim experiences. Drawing 4,000 visitors, *Holocaust Project* ranked among the most widely attended events in the history of the Lehigh University Art Galleries. The exhibition served as a catalyst for intellectual debate and reflection throughout the Lehigh campus and the Lehigh Valley community. Visitors included public and private school students, college groups, community organizations, church groups, Jewish organizations, and members of the public. Approximately 1,000 guests received guided group tours conducted by a team of docents trained by Ricardo Viera, Larry Silberstein, Judy Chicago, and Donald Woodman.

Modules on *Holocaust Project* were included in Lehigh courses offered in the departments of Art, English, History, International Relations, Philosophy, Religion Studies, Theater, and Women's Studies. According to instructor Miriamne Krummel, whose Freshman Eng-

lish inquiry class visited the exhibit, her students found Chicago and Woodman's connecting of the Holocaust to other genocides very compelling. Many students chose to address issues raised by Chicago and Woodman in their final papers. Students in Alex Levine's philosophy class on "War and Genocide" reflected on the problems of representation of events that defy human comprehension. In addition to *Holocaust Project*, the class discussed other representations of the Holocaust such as Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah*.

Throughout the showing of *Holocaust Project*, the Berman Center and the Lehigh University Art Galleries sponsored a semester of programs dedicated to Project 2000, highlighted by Judy Chicago's visit to campus as artist-in-residence. In addition to Chicago's presentation of the NEH-Trustee Lecture on Tolerance (see p. 3), a series of gallery lectures addressed many issues raised in *Holocaust Project* (see p. 4).

Two documentary films shown during the semester, *The Last Days* and *The Nazi Concentration Camps*, provided a historical perspective for the project. Winner of the 1999 Academy Award for Best Documentary, *The Last Days* chronicles the destruction of Hungarian Jewry through reports of five first-hand witnesses who were teenagers during World War II. The film was sponsored by the Shoah Visual History Foundation, the Allentown Jewish Community Center, and the Berman Center. *The Nazi Concentration Camps* is a collection of film footage taken by Army photographers when Allied soldiers liberated camps in Western Germany near the end of the war. During panel discussions after both screenings, the audience had the opportunity to meet and talk with Holocaust survivor Eva Cutler of Jim Thorpe, Pa.

Project 2000 concluded with an international symposium, "Representing the Holocaust: Practices, Products, Projections," sponsored by the Berman Center on May 21-23 (see p. 1). This symposium, the first of its kind, was dedicated to the problems and practices of representing the Holocaust through art, monuments, and museums. Speakers and participants included artists, photographers,

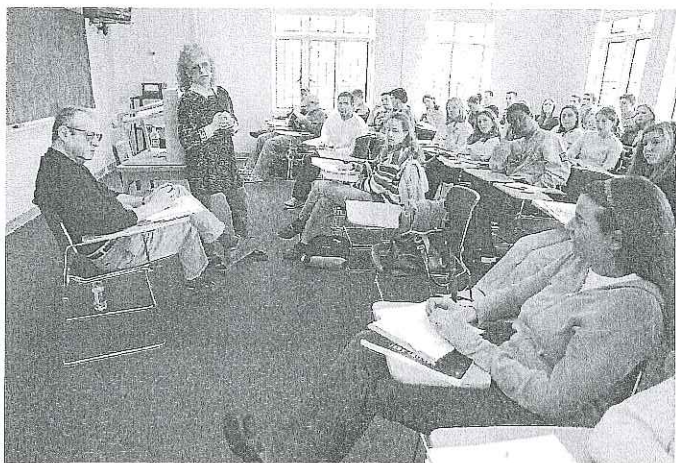
## Silberstein Named Master Visiting Professor at the Gregorian University

Laurence J. Silberstein, Berman Professor of Jewish Studies and Director of the Berman Center, is serving as the Richard and Susan Master Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome for the Fall 2000 semester. This position was established in 1999 through the generosity of Richard and Susan Master of Bethlehem, Pa. Silberstein is teaching a course on "Jewish Identity in Modern/Postmodern Culture: Philosophical and Cultural Studies Perspectives." The Gregorian, one of five Pontifical institutions, has produced an extraordinary percentage of Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops since the 16th century. Representing 124 nations, its student body primarily includes ordained priests, nuns, and members of lay orders pursuing graduate degrees.

The unique relationship between the Berman Center and the Gregorian was initiated in 1995 through the efforts and support of Muriel Berman and the late Philip Berman. That year, Silberstein was invited to be the first visiting Jewish Studies scholar from North America to teach at the Gregorian. In 1996, Father Arij Roest Crollius of the Gregorian faculty visited the Berman Center as a scholar-in-residence, delivering a series of lectures and seminars to students at Lehigh and Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales, as well as to Jewish and Catholic religious and lay leaders from the Lehigh Valley. During the Fall 1999 semester, Professor Manfred Vogel of Northwestern University, a specialist in modern Jewish philosophy and theology, initiated the Master visiting professorship at the Gregorian, teaching a course on "Jewish Theology in the 20th Century."

curators, cultural critics, historians and representatives of such major museums as the Skirball in Los Angeles, the Jewish Museum in New York, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and the Spertus in Chicago.

# Artist-in-Residence Judy Chicago Presents NEH-Trustee Lecture on Tolerance



Photograph by Rob Upton

Judy Chicago (standing) talks with students in Laurence Silberstein's class, "Jewish Responses to the Holocaust."

Judy Chicago, internationally known artist and author, presented "Representing the Holocaust: An Artist's Perspective" to an audience of more than four hundred during Lehigh University's NEH-Trustee Lecture on Tolerance. The event was sponsored by the Berman Center in conjunction with the showing of Chicago's multimedia exhibition *Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light* at Lehigh. A pioneer in the feminist art movement in the 1970s, Chicago is best known for *Dinner Party*, a symbolic history of women in Western Civilization. Seen by more than one million viewers, it has been the subject of countless articles and art historical texts.

In her lecture, accompanied by slides, Chicago discussed the aesthetic and philosophical challenges involved in representing the Holocaust in art. She examined various artistic approaches to the Holocaust and explained how she and her husband and collaborator, Donald Woodman, came to create *Holocaust Project*.

Chicago said she had been surprised by resistance she encountered to the idea of artistically representing the Holocaust. Art on the Holocaust, she was told, was impossible because the Holocaust was beyond human understanding. Yet, she said, anyone versed in art history knows that there are few human events that have not become the subject matter for art. Chicago discovered that there was art on the Holocaust—it was just not found in contemporary art museums in the mid-80s. Instead the art was exhibited in the Jewish community and buried in archives in the concentration camps.

During an arduous trip through the "landscape of the Holocaust," Chicago and Woodman's understanding of what they were seeing in the concentration camps was amplified by hundreds of drawings rendered by prisoners while in the camps and by survivors after the war to "bear witness" to the Nazi atrocities. These drawings challenged the notion that art had no place in relation to the Holocaust. The overwhelming intensity of the art brought the mind-numbing facts of the Final Solution to life. As hideous as the Holocaust was, Chicago said, it was done by people to people.

After Chicago and Woodman visited the concentration camps, the question of *what* to represent became a significant one. They had assumed they would make art focused on the Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy, but they had learned that the Holocaust was larger in scope than they had at first understood and that it had affected many groups besides Jews. While still centering the project on the Jewish experience, they decided to expand their focus to include all groups who suffered during the Holocaust—including homosexuals, whose experiences were rarely mentioned in exhibitions in the United States. Chicago eventually expanded the focus of the exhibition further, using it as a prism to view the experiences of other victims of 20th-century genocide.

Noticing that most Holocaust exhibitions concentrated on men's experiences, Chicago and Woodman were determined to keep all their images gender-balanced and elected to include one image in their

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

## Cornerstone (gifts of \$25,000 and above)

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Charles and Figa Kline Foundation  
Lucius N. Littauer Foundation  
Susan and Richard C. Master  
Eugene Mercy, Jr. '59  
The Skirball Foundation

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Gifts received between March 16, 1999,  
and November 1, 2000

Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you are interested in supporting the Berman Center or wish to call our attention to errors or omissions in the list, please contact Bonnie N. Devlin, Vice President for Advancement, Lehigh University, 27 Memorial Drive West, Bethlehem, PA 18015-3089 (610-758-5535).

exhibition that examined the particularity of women's suffering. It is telling, Chicago said, that when *Holocaust Project* opened in 1993, many commented that it was about women—probably because viewers were so unaccustomed to equitable representation of the sexes that it

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## Gallery Lectures Offer Perspectives on *Holocaust Project*

Through the spring semester 2000, complementing the exhibition *Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light*, six speakers presented gallery lectures on Judy Chicago's art and various issues relating to the exhibit. The programs were sponsored by the Berman Center and the Lehigh University Art Galleries and underwritten by the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.

Lucy Gans, Professor of Art and Design at Lehigh, initiated the gallery series with a discussion of "Judy Chicago's 'Contested Territories': From *Dinner Party* to *Holocaust Project*." Gans focused on issues of representation in Chicago's work—from her symbolic representation of the history of women in Western civilization in *Dinner Party*, to those images in *Holocaust Project* that clearly derive from Chicago's feminist tradition. Chicago's art, Gans said, never wavers from the feminist perspective. Her goal in the *Dinner Party* was consistent with her efforts of the previous decade—to forge a new kind of expression for women's experiences and to make that art accessible to a larger audience.

Issues surrounding the representation of the Holocaust were discussed by Oren Stier, Professor of Religion Studies at Florida International University, who is currently writing a book on contemporary Holocaust memorial culture. In "The Holocaust Project(ion): Identity, Appropriation, and Judy Chicago," Stier offered insights into the controversy surrounding Chicago's installation, which challenges presumed notions of propriety and comparability of Holocaust images. Distinctively different from the art that emerged from the horrors of World War II, *Holocaust Project* acts as a super-commentary on that art and those events, Stier observed. The interweaving of art and commentary in the exhibit is a clearly Jewish strategy of presentation, perhaps akin to the Talmudic technique of textual citation followed by commentary on that text. In his opinion, Chicago and Woodman's strategy of merging of photographs and painting suggests they believe that the proper mode of representation is a balance of documentary realist presentation and artist re-presentation—"text and commentary in another light." By doing so, the artists challenge "the notion that documentary images and strict, historical narratives (and, by analogy, the privileged voices of the survivors alone) are sufficient in and of themselves as representations of the Holocaust."

In "Making Memories: Images of Polish-Jewish Life before the Holocaust," Robert L. Cohn, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies at Lafayette College, discussed several recent studies that attempt to recreate the world of Polish Jews before the Holocaust. Many voices within the Jewish world express the fear that the focus on the Holocaust reduces centuries of Jewish life in Europe to Jewish death under the Nazis and erases the memory of the vibrant and varied lives of Jews in Europe. Cohn said that there had been a virtual explosion of diaries, memoirs, and other accounts that aim to reconstruct the world that is gone. He examined three works on Jewish life in Poland before the Holocaust, each representing a different genre of memory writing. The first was the diary of renowned German author Alfred Döblin, called *Journey to Poland*, published in 1925 but not translated into English until 1990. The second work was a series of essays by Rafael Scharf, a Jew from Krakow, titled

*Poland, What Have I to Do with Thee?* In it, he recalls his life before the war and reflects on his ambivalent feelings toward Poland and the Poles. The last work discussed was Theo Richmond's *Konin, A Quest*, which Cohn said was neither diary nor memoir, but a fascinating effort to reconstruct the life of a small town in Poland that Richmond knew only second-hand.

Examining the effects of the Holocaust in an American context, Laura Levitt, Professor of Religion at Temple University, discussed "Bringing the Holocaust Home: American Jews and the Work of Mourning." After reading excerpts from Irena Klepfisz's dedication to her poem *Bashert*, Levitt suggested that one legacy of the Holocaust is living with the contradictions that Klepfisz enumerated. The fact that we hear about the Holocaust so much in the media makes us immune to it in some ways. Rather than thinking of the Holocaust in terms of overwhelming statistics and documentary photographs, Levitt said that we need to think about how ordinary people were affected by the Holocaust and, as Klepfisz suggests, mourn the loss of ordinariness. Levitt pointed out that this is what Judy Chicago does in *Holocaust Project*—she blurs the distinction between the documentary and the personal and asks us to think about how ordinary people were affected by a traumatic historical event. Chicago's use of the experiences of women in the camps serves to emphasize that feminized or domesticated activities are not valued in the dominant accounts of what it is that survivors did in the camps on a daily basis.

Alice Eckardt, Professor Emerita of Religion Studies at Lehigh University, provided a historical discussion of the experiences of women in "Women in the Third Reich and the Holocaust: Different Treatment? Different Response?" Eckardt, who offered Lehigh University's first course on the Holocaust, reported that those scholars who initially undertook the work of writing the history of the Holocaust were men, who wrote about the community as a whole. The indexes of major history texts on the Holocaust have few references to women. Although many memoirs were written by women survivors, their works are rarely cited by male scholars in the field. Based on several recent studies, Eckardt discussed how women's experiences in the ghettos and camps differed from those of men: The Jewish all-male governing councils (*Judenrat*) were ordered periodically to supply a certain number of Jews for deportation to the camps. The percentage of women selected was higher than that of men, and, tragically, women in the 20-40 year age bracket were deported at two to three times the rate of men. In the four camps operated as death factories, Eckardt finds little difference between the treatment of men and women. But at Auschwitz and Maidanek, where ten to fifteen percent of arriving prisoners were chosen for work, one difference in the treatment of women stands out—all women who had a child by the hand or in their arms were sent to the gas chambers.

Chaim Kaufmann, Associate Professor of International Relations at Lehigh University, who is engaged in the scholarly study of ethnic conflict resolution, discussed "The Long-Run Consequences of Ethnic Cleansing Campaigns." In most of the 100 major ethnic cleansing campaigns that took place since 1900, Kaufmann claimed, the number of people killed is small in comparison to the number killed in the Holocaust, an extreme exam-

ple of ethnic cleansing, in which more than half the Jews and Gypsies in Europe were killed. What is more typical, he reported, is what happened to the Albanian population of Kosovo, where about one percent of the population was killed, while a million were driven from their homes. It is rare that a government or ethnic group responsible for an ethnic cleansing ever yields on the issue of the return of a significant portion of the refugees, mostly because of security concerns. He contended that reintegration projects are doomed and partitions that are a result of war or violence should be accepted as permanent. He believes that understanding why certain groups accept displacement while others do not might help find solutions to ethnic wars.

## Mapping Jewish Identities Available from NYU Press

*Mapping Jewish Identities*, the sixth volume in the Berman Center's series, *New Perspectives on Jewish Studies*, was recently published by New York University Press. The current volume continues the Berman Center's efforts to apply new perspectives to the interpretation of Jewish culture and thought. In this volume, contributors applying insights derived from such fields as literary criticism, cultural critique, and philosophy explore fundamental problems in contemporary Jewish identity construction.

"Each chapter," comments editor Laurence J. Silberstein in his introduction, "reflects the effects of contemporary critical discussions of identity from fields such as Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, and Postcolonial Studies." Publication of the volume was underwritten by the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.

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## Berman Professors Honored by Koret Foundation

A unique event occurred this spring at the Koret Foundation Jewish Book Awards ceremony when two Berman Center faculty were honored. **Chava Weissler** was announced as the winner of the competition in Jewish History, while **Laurence J. Silberstein** was declared a finalist in the competition in Jewish Philosophy and Thought. In each area, more than fifty books were submitted for evaluation to a distinguished panel of scholars. Lehigh was the only university to have two of its faculty so honored.

Weissler's book, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women*, was praised at the ceremonies as a pioneering work that changed the ways in which scholars think about the role of women specifically, and the common folk in general, in the shaping of the religious life of Judaism. Silberstein's book, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture*, was cited in a book review in *Haaretz*, a leading Israeli newspaper, as "one of the most important books on Israeli society to have been published in recent years." Silberstein and Weissler both occupy chairs in Jewish Studies endowed by Muriel Berman and the late Philip Berman.



After an emotionally exhausting search, Lehigh student Jacob Schwartz stands by the graves of his great-great-grandparents, Moshe Aaron and Sasha Schwartz, on the Mount of Olives cemetery in Jerusalem. Jacob was one of eleven students participating in this summer's "Lehigh in Israel" course taught by Professor Benjamin Wright.

# Faculty Notes

**Robert L. Cohn's** *2 Kings* was published by Liturgical Press in its series *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry*. In his commentary, Cohn unfolds the literary dimensions of *2 Kings*, analyzes the strategies through which its words create a world of meaning, and examines the book's tales of prophets, political intrigue, royal apostasy, and religious reform as components of larger patterns.

Cohn, who holds the Philip and Muriel Berman Chair of Jewish Studies at Lafayette College, was awarded the Thomas Roy and Lura Forrest Jones Award for Distinguished Teaching and Scholarship by Lafayette in May. He presented a lecture titled "Making Memories: Images of Jewish Life in Poland before the Holocaust" for the Berman Center as part of its Project 2000 on the Holocaust. His article "The Second Coming of Moses: Deuteronomy and the Construction of Israelite Identity" was published in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*.

**Pam Detrixhe**, who is teaching "The Holocaust: History and Meaning" at Lehigh this semester, is a doctoral candidate in religion at Temple University. She has taught various courses in the religion departments at Temple and the University of Kansas. She will present "Word-crafting at the Gates of Bureaucracy: Coercion, Creativity, and the Public Construction of Identity" at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting in November.

**Ruth Knafo Setton's** novel *The Road to Fez* will be published by Counterpoint Press in March 2001. She gave readings from the novel at Lehigh University, Lafayette College, Moravian College, Open Space Gallery, and University of the South. In the past year, she was awarded fellowships from the Sewanee Writers Conference and the Great River Arts Institute. In April she presented "Wish You Were Here: Travel and Other Fictions" at the Associated Writing Programs Conference in Kansas City. She is a member of the Lehigh Valley Jewish Film Committee and has led discussions of many films following their screenings. In January 2001, she joins the faculty of the Berman Center as writer-in-residence.

**Laurence J. Silberstein** edited *Mapping Jewish Identities* and wrote the introductory chapter titled "Mapping, Not Tracing: Opening Reflection." He orga-

nized and chaired the Berman Center's 2000 conference, "Representing the Holocaust: Practices, Products, Projections," and will co-edit the conference volume. He lectured on his book *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* at Princeton University and Harvard University. This fall he is serving as the Richard and Susan Master Visiting Professor at the Gregorian University in Rome.

**Roslyn Weiss** presented "Maimonides and Hermann Cohen on 'Poqed Avon Avot'" at the 1999 Association for Jewish Studies Annual Meeting. Her article "Saadia on Divine Grace and Human Suffering" appeared in the *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*.

**Chava Weissler's** book *Voices of the Matriarchs* was awarded the 1999 Koret Foundation Book Award in Jewish History and was a finalist for Gratz College's 2000 Tuttleman Foundation Book Award. She was appointed to the Academic Advisory Board of the Center for Jewish History in New York and elected a fellow of the American Academy for Jewish Research. Her articles and translations appeared in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the Sixth EAJIS Congress*; *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition*; *The Defiant Muse: Hebrew Feminist Poems from Antiquity to Present*; and *Moonbeams: A Hadassah Rosh Hodesh Guide*. Her syllabus for "Jewish Folklore" appeared in *The Sociology of Jewry: A Curriculum Guide and Critical Introduction*. At the 1999 Association for Jewish Studies Annual Meeting, she was a discussant on the panel "The Spread of Kabbalah in the Late Twentieth Century," which she organized, and was a respondent on another panel, "Early Yiddish Books: Gender, Text, and Image."

**Benjamin Wright III** coauthored *The Apocryphal Ezekiel* with Michael E. Stone and David Satran, which appeared in the Society of Biblical Literature series *Early Judaism and Its Literature*. He contributed "The Book of Ben Sira" and "Early Christian Literature" to the *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* and "The Apocryphon of Ezekiel and 4QPseudo-Ezekiel" to *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years after Their Discovery, 1947-1997*. Professor Wright again led the "Lehigh in Israel" program in which he taught "Archaeology and the Bible in the Land of Israel."

## BCJS Faculty 2000-2001

- **Laurence J. Silberstein**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *Jewish Responses to the Holocaust, Modes of Jewish Identity in the Modern World, Sex and Gender in Judaism: The Feminist Critique, Judaism in Israel and the United States, The Spiritual Quest in Contemporary Jewish Life*

- **Robert L. Cohn**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religion, Lafayette College, *Hebrew Bible, Biblical Narrative, Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*

- **Chava Weissler**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Civilization, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *Jewish Folklore, Hasidic Tales, Modern Judaism, Mystical Tradition in Judaism, Women in Jewish History, Gendered Jewish Lives*

- **Ruth Knafo Setton**, Writer-in-Residence, Berman Center for Jewish Studies and Department of English, Lehigh University (Spring 2001), *Jewish Literature*

### Affiliated Faculty - Lehigh University

- **David Amidon, Jr.**, Urban Studies Program, *American Jewish Politics and Culture*

- **Pam Detrixhe**, Dept. of Religion Studies (Fall 2000), *The Holocaust*

- **Bunnie Piltch**, Dept. of Modern Languages and Literature, *Hebrew Language*

- **Oles Smolansky**, Dept. of International Relations, *Middle East Studies*

- **Roslyn Weiss**, Dept. of Philosophy, *Jewish Philosophy*

- **Benjamin Wright III**, Dept. of Religion Studies, *Hebrew Bible, Judaism in the Greco-Roman World, Archaeology and the Bible in the Land of Israel*

### Affiliated Faculty - Lafayette College

- **Ilana Levy**, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures, *Hebrew Language*

- **Howard Marblestone**, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures, *Hebrew Language*

- **Ilan Peleg**, Dept. of Government and Law, *Middle East Politics*

- **Robert Weiner**, Dept. of History, *Modern Jewish History*

## Writer-in-Residence

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Ruth Knafo Setton

Great River Arts Institute, Wesleyan Writers' Conference, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and Yaddo Artists' Colony.

## Conference

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In his presentation, "What's Special about Representing the Holocaust?" Novick explored widely held assumptions that contribute to the difficulties of representing the Holocaust. He contended that in theory not much is special about representing the Holocaust. In practice, however, the problems of representing the Holocaust are "special" because of the accepted characterizations of the event itself. Serious people, he said, repeatedly make claims that the Holocaust is sacred, unique, incomprehensible, and unrepresentable. Yet, according to Novick, every historical event, including the Holocaust, in some way resembles events to which it might be compared while differing from them in some ways. "To single out aspects of the Holocaust that were distinctive (there certainly were such), and to ignore those aspects that it shares with other atrocities, and on the basis of this gerrymandering to declare the Holocaust 'unique,' seems to me an intellectual sleight of hand—unworthy of serious discussion," he said.

The notion of the Holocaust as sacred does "hover over" discourse about the event. Novick believes the claim that

the Holocaust is incomprehensible derives from this religious factor: for those to whom the real puzzlement is "How could God have permitted it?" this incomprehension is inevitable. To Novick, all these theoretical propositions—the Holocaust's sacredness, its uniqueness, its incomprehensibility—bear heavily, if sometimes indirectly, on representing the Holocaust. The tension between the memorializing and educative missions of representations of the Holocaust—a tension that was evidenced many times during the conference—adds to the problem. Neither is more legitimate than the other, Novick said, but they are different missions, they often point in different directions, and the two coexist uneasily.

Art Spiegelman offered a different perspective on the problems of representing the Holocaust, one emerging from the position of a "representer." In *"Maus: Packing Memory into Little Boxes,"* he discussed in depth the process of creating *Maus*, which he described as "a memoir of a son and a father, [where] the son happens to be a cartoonist." Unlike much mass entertainment representations of the Holocaust, *Maus* does not attempt to end on a happy note, nor does it provide the reader with "a lesson." In fact, Spiegelman takes issue with those who might read his work for its practical educative value. Calling *Maus* "a diasporist's book," he noted that it does not conclude by pointing toward Israel as the beacon of hope.

From the outset, he said, *Maus* confused people because they did not know what to do with the fact that it was a comic book. While some reviewers ignored the comics dimension, focusing only on the story, Spiegelman argued that it is essential to think of *Maus* as comics. "That is the only way to understand what it is that I have been putzing over for thirteen years," he said.

Besides the fact that Spiegelman is a cartoonist and comics are his natural medium, "the reason that *Maus* is a comic is because comics do some very specific things that no other medium can do," he explained. "Comics are the only medium that allows you to see different times at the same time: past, present, and future; or present, past, and distant past." Comics are also able to turn time into space, by subdividing time and representing it visually. The theme of the past bleeding into the present is already evident in *Maus's* opening pages.

Actually, Spiegelman prefers the word "comix," which alludes to the mixing together of words and pictures, thus putting it in "a whole other category that makes it at odds with most of Western art." By using projected frames from *Maus* to show the complexities of which he spoke, Spiegelman reinforced the integral relation of the visual and the verbal that characterizes "comix."

Other artists discussing their works were

- **Alice Lok Cahana**, Houston, Tex., "From Ashes to the Rainbow"

- **Judy Chicago**, Belen, N.M., "Representing the Holocaust: One Artist's Struggle"

- **Debbie Teicholz**, Demarest, N.J., "Representing the Holocaust Photographically—Fifty Years Later"

- **Mindy Weisel**, Adjunct Professor, Corcoran College of Art and Design, "A Survivor's Daughter: Art as Autobiography"

Presentations by scholars, art historians, architects, curators, and cultural critics included

- "Facing the Body of Horror" by **Ariella Azoulay**, Camera Obscura School of Art, Tel Aviv

- "The Politics of Memorialization" by **Michael Berenbaum**, writer, lecturer, teacher, and consultant

- "Architecture, Landscape, and Holocaust Memory: The 'House' and the (Erased) Garden" by **Julian Bonder**, School of Architecture, Roger Williams Univ.

- "Between Narration and Deconstruction: Conflicts, Problems, and Issues of Some Post-Holocaust Painting and Representation" by **Stephen Feinstein**, Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Univ. of Minnesota

- "Reckoning with Ghosts: Remembering the Holocaust in America" by **Michelle A. Friedman**, Instructor of English, Haverford College

- "Invisible Topographies: Looking for the Mémorial de la Déportation in Paris" by **Shelley Hornstein**, Professor of Art History, York Univ., Toronto

- "'Don't Touch My Holocaust': Israeli Artists Challenging the Holocaust Taboo" by **Tami Katz-Freiman**, independent curator and art critic

- "The Nazi Occupation of the 'White Cube': Piotr Uklanski's *The Nazis* and Rudolf Herz's *Zugzwang*" by **Norman L. Kleeblatt**, Curator of Fine Arts, The Jewish Museum

- "Photographic Testimonies and the Staging of Holocaust Memory" by **Andrea Liss**, Asst. Professor of Art History and Cultural Theory, California State Univ., San Marcos

- "Judy Chicago's 'Holocaust Project' and Other Representations of Genocide" by **Edward Lucie-Smith**, curator, lecturer, and author

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## Artist-in-Residence

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struck them as *unequal*. She voiced the concern that the still-contentious issue of gender must be included in any discussion of representing the Holocaust—whether in literature, memorials, or art.

Even as Chicago and Woodman formulated *what* was to be included in the exhibition, there was still the question of *how* to represent the Holocaust—the actual visual form of the art. From the start of their project in 1985, Chicago and Woodman's goal was to create compelling, humanized images that would engage viewers both intellectually and emotionally while giving them a greater understanding of the Holocaust. The historic photos they viewed provided a sense of place and historic reality, but it was the prisoners' drawings that helped them envision the events in their human dimension. Thus was born the decision to combine Woodman's photography and Chicago's painting, a process that took years to perfect. Chicago said that it was a challenge to match the level of detail in the painting to that of the photograph so that the two media appear fused. Using

what she called "symbolic realism," she fashioned her figurative images based on survivor testimony, prisoner and survivor art, and historic scholarly research.

The NEH-Trustee Lecture on Tolerance was the highlight of Chicago's visit to Lehigh March 12-14 to serve as artist-in-residence. While on campus, Chicago was a special guest speaker at the Friends of Women's Studies dinner and visited several classes. In art classes, she discussed her experiences as a woman artist and the ways that artists generate ideas. In a class on "Jewish Responses to the Holocaust," she discussed the difficulties she encountered creating *Holocaust Project* and the relationship between her artwork and her understanding of herself as a Jew.

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## Conference

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• "Holocaust Icons" by **Oren Baruch Stier**, Asst. Professor of Religious Studies, Florida International Univ.

• "Holocaust Toys" by **Ernst van Alphen**, Professor of Comparative Literature, University of Leiden

• "Holocaust Memory: Then and Now" by **Barbie Zelizer**, Associate Professor, Annenberg School for Communication, Univ. of Pennsylvania

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To obtain further information concerning the Berman Center and its programs or to be added to our mailing list, please contact Shirley Ratushny (inber@lehigh.edu), Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies, Lehigh University, 9 West Packer Avenue, Bethlehem, PA 18015-3082 (<http://www.lehigh.edu/~inber/inber.html>).

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