



## **Pale Jews**

### **Southern African Jewish history in the 1880s – 1930s**

This symposium is intended as an opportunity to share recent research on aspects of Southern African Jewish history. The event is animated by an historiographical interest in locating this history within a wider nexus of global connections and disconnections – as revealed, inter alia, by the dynamics of international and regional migration, colonialism and capitalism, linked to more intimate stories of family, marriage and domesticity. We are also keen to discuss the methodological options and choices we face in pursuit of this research, along with their archival conditions and constraints – and to consider the epistemological implications thereof. This will create opportunities to reflect on different ways of writing Jewish history, in the context of the contested politics of such knowledge.

The historical linkages can be variously explored. The large majority of Jews who migrated to South Africa during this period came from Eastern Europe, and the Pale of Settlement in particular. We welcome papers that focus on these places and the terms and conditions under which Jews made their way to southern Africa; likewise, the history of their passage and its links to technologies, economies and politics of international travel and trade. On the southern African end, we are interested in the terms of Jewish inclusion - not least, as pale/whites - within the modernizing, racialising orders taking shape during this period and how this articulated with regional practices of statecraft, social engineering, economic activity and the conditions of citizenship, along with the modes of thought that informed and reflected the flux of these times. In line with recent literatures on 'the Jewish question' elsewhere in the world, we hope thereby to hold a lens to debates and anxieties about capitalist modernity, and how these were refracted by Jews – materially and ideologically, within local and transnational circuits of goods, ideas and people.

**VENUE: HUMA seminar room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Humanities Graduate School Building, Upper Campus, UCT**

# PROGRAMME

## Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March

### 8.30 – 8.45am

Opening remarks

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### 8.45 – 10.15am

Shula Marks, The challenge of writing family history

Gwynne Schrire, Vermin-eating Jews and other observations on travelling to and living in South Africa: reflections on the Hebrew diary of Yehuda Leib Schrire 1892-1893

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### 10.15 – 10.45 am TEA

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### 10.45am – 12.15pm

Steven Robins, Strange routes: tracking two cases of Jewish immigration from Germany to South Africa in 1888 and 1936

Lorna Levy, Silence: the unmarked death of a smous near Kimberley in 1906

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### 12.15 – 1pm LUNCH

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### 1 – 2.30pm

Veronica Belling, Recovering South African Jewish women's lives during the migration years, c1880-1939

Sally Swartz, Migration and madness: Pale Jews in Cape Colony lunatic asylums, 1890-1910

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### 2.30 – 3pm TEA

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### 3 – 5.15pm

Claudia Braude, South African *Lite*-land: Ethical lessons, historiographical trends and contemporary significance of the local Litvish legacy

Romi Kaplan, Ethical Archiving - preserving the integrity of old Ideals against contemporary positions

Michal Singer, Fragments of Europe: exploring the archive of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre

## **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

**8.45am – 10.30am**

Deborah Posel, Revisiting the story of Jewish prosperity and how to write about it

Robert Gordon, Some specious speculations about adventure capitalism in southern Namibia

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**10.30 – 11am**

**TEA**

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**11am – 12.45pm**

Richard Mendelsohn, The archives of the British post-Boer War compensation commission: an unexpected window on Jewish immigrant experience in South Africa at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Adam Mendelsohn, Pale sweaters: comparing the clothing trade as a vehicle for Jewish economic mobility in England, America and South Africa in the age of mass migration

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**12.45 – 1.30 pm**

**LUNCH**

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**1.30 – 3.15pm**

Rebecca Hodes, 'Free fight on the Parade': Socialism, brawn and resistance to the Greyshirts in 1930s South Africa

Paul Weinberg, Dear Edward – Family footprints

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**3.15– 3.45pm**

**TEA**

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**3.45 – 4.45pm**

Milton Shain, Reflections on the 'Jewish Question' in South Africa during the 1930s

**4.45 – 5.15pm** Concluding reflections