

RUTH TSOFFAR

CURRICULUM VITAE

(April 2013)

Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Women's Studies

EDUCATION

University of California, Berkeley (Ph.D. 1993, Near Eastern Studies Department)

Dissertation: "Koshering the Body: Female Ritual Discourse among the San Francisco Bay Area Karaites" (Co-chairs: Alan Dundes & Chana Kronfeld, William Brinner, Daniel Boyarin)

University of California, Berkeley (M.A. 1985, Department of Anthropology, Folklore)

Thesis: "Power and Vulnerability: A Study of the Middle Eastern Clown, Juha" (Chair: Alan Dundes)

Haifa University (B.A. 1981, Hebrew Literature and Language)

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1999 –

- Associate Professor, Comparative Literature and Women's Studies, September 2006 –
- Faculty Associate, Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, 2008-
- Frankel Institute Fellow, 2010-2011, theme year, "Jewish Languages"
- Director of Graduate Studies, Comparative Literature 2009-2010

- Adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology, September 2006 –2009
- Faculty Associate, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2005 – 2008
- Assistant Professor, Hebrew Language and Culture, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 1999-2006
- Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, 2005 – 2006
- Supervisor of Hebrew Program, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 2002 – 2003

University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 1994 - 1999

- Assistant Professor, Department of Languages & Literature and Middle East Center
- Coordinator of Hebrew lectureship

University of California, Berkeley, 1983 -1994

- Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 1994
- Teaching Associate, Department of Anthropology, 1992
- Teaching Associate, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 1988
- Teaching Associate, All levels Hebrew, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 1983-88
- Hebrew Coordinator, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 1983-1984

University of California, Santa Cruz, 1980-82

- Adjunct Visiting Lecturer & Coordinator, Hebrew Program, Department of Languages and Literatures

Haifa University, Israel 1978-80

- Instructor of Hebrew Language and Literature, College Mekhinhah
- Instructor, Education Abroad Program, advanced Hebrew, summer 1979

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

The Stains of Culture: An Ethno-Reading of Karaite Jewish Women, Raphael Patai Series in Jewish Folklore and Anthropology, Wayne State University Press, January 2006.

ARTICLES

"Reading it, Naming it, and Talking it: The Karaite *Niddah*, 'Ada and the Language of Menstruation," in *Folklore Interpreted: Essays in Honor of Alan Dundes*, eds. Regina Bendix and Rosemary Levi Zumwalt, Garland Publishing, 1995, pp. 375-400.

"Ethno-graphy, Ethno-reading and the Disclosure of the Karaite Female Body," *Women in Jewish Life and Culture – Shofar*, a special issue, ed. Esther Fuchs, Winter 1999: 84-94.

"Avotot Meshahrerim: Chafatsim, Miniyut ve-Sha'aruriah be-Tefillin' shel Yona Vollakh," ("Liberating Bondage: Objects, Sexuality and Desire in Yona Wallach's 'Tefillin,'") *Te'orya u-Vikoret* 17 fall 2000: 75-100 (in Hebrew).

"Staging Sexuality: Reading Wallach's Poetry," *Hebrew Studies*, Vol. 43, 2002: 87-117. Also in *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 2006)
<http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/wjudaism/issue/current>

"The Body that Crumbled': Mizrahi Men Writing Poetic Anatomy, Part I," *HAGAR Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities* Vol. 4 (1-2), 2003: 89-112.

"The Body as a Storyteller: Karaite Women's Experience of Blood and Milk," *Journal of American Folklore*, 117:1 (463) (Winter 2004): 3-21.

"Baghdad-Tel Aviv: Roundtrip to the Promised Land," Social Thought and Commentary Section, *Anthropological Quarterly* 79:1 (Winter 2006): 133-144.

"A Land that Devours its People: Mizrahi Writing from the Gut," *Body & Society*, Vol. 12 (2): 25-55, 2006.

"Forget Baghdad (2003): Jews and Arabs— the Iraqi Connection," In *North African and Middle Eastern Cinema*, Wallflower Press/Columbia University Press: London, May 2007.

"Dissected Identity: Mizrahi Women, Space and Body, Part II" *HAGAR Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities* Vol. 7 (2) 2007: 35-66.

"The Trauma of Otherness and Hunger: Ruth and Lot's Daughters," *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* Vol. 5 (1), 2007
<http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/wjudaism/issue/view/208>

"The Trajectory of Hunger: Appropriation and Prophecy in the Book of Ruth," in Roberta Sabbath, ed. *Sacred Tropes*, Brill 2009. (a more complete version of a previous article, based on a chapter of my book manuscript, *Cannibal Ideology*)

"Textuality," in "Critical terms in Jewish Languages Studies," Edited by Josh Miller and Anita Norich, Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies Annual, 2011: 50-51.

REVIEWS

"The Search For Home: Films by and About Middle Eastern and North African Jews," *Independent Jewish Film: A Resource Guide*, Edited by Janis Plotkin, Caroline Libresco and Josh Feiger, The San

Francisco Jewish Film Festival, 1996, pp. 22-24. Also published in <http://www.sfiff.org/guide/sephardic2.html> 1999-2000 (3rd ed.)

“Four films that illustrate and illuminate the culture of Israel's Mizrahi citizens,” <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/culture/Film/IsraeliFilm/SephardicFilms/SephardicFilms2.htm> 2002-2004. (Abridged version of “The Search for Home”)

FORTHCOMING/ IN PREPARATION

“Menifest Ha-plitut: Etnokri'ah be-Arabeskot shel Anton Shammass (The Refugee Manifesto: Ethnoreading in Anton Shammass' Arabesques,” for *Modern Arab Literatures in Hebrew*, Eds. Hannan Hever & Omri Grinberg, Van Leer, Israel. (submitted)

“*Cannibal Ideology*”: *Food and the Metaphoric Space of Reading in Hebrew Literature* (tentative book title)

“‘Ani, pney panai’: po’etikah anatomit vеха-guf ha-mizrahi,” (I, Face of my face:” the politics of the Mizrahi Body,) Tel Aviv: Resling, (in preparation)

Jamusin: an Ethnographic Memoir, a book monograph

“*Grammatical Shooting and their Roots of Signification: Horeh, Moreh, Torah*,” An essay

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- LSA Egif, “Two invited talks in Tel Aviv,” Summer 2012
- LSA Associate Professor Support Fund, LSA, University of Michigan, 2012
- Frankel Institute for Judaic Studies, Fellow 2010-2011
- IRWG, Faculty Seed Grant, Manuscript, “Cannibal Ideology” 2010-2011
- OVPR, Small scale and preliminary project, Tel Aviv, Israel, August 2009
- LS&A and OVPR travel grant, June 2008
- American Folklore Society, Elli Kongas Miranda Prize, Women Section, *The Stains of Culture: An Ethno-Reading of Karaite Jewish Women*, 2007
- Sweetland Writing Seminar, University of Michigan, Fall 2007
- LS&A and OVPR travel grant, Poland, Gdansk, March 2007
- National Jewish Book Award finalist, *Barbara Dobkin Award*, Women’s Studies for *The Stains of Culture: An Ethno-Reading of Karaite Jewish Women*, January 2007
- The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Research Award, *Cannibal Ideology: Sexuality, Ethnicity and Colonialism in Hebrew Cultures*, December 2006
- LS&A Discretionary Fund, University of Michigan, “*Cannibal Ideology: Sexuality, Ethnicity and Colonialism in Hebrew Cultures*,” Summer 2006
- CRLT, Instructional Development Fund, University of Michigan, for Women's Studies 376 (Women, Bible, Feminism: Critical Readings), May 2006
- LS&A Instructional Technology Grant, University of Michigan, for AnthroCulture 335/HJCS 335 (Tokyo-Tel Aviv: City, Nation, and Identity in Japan and Israel), October 2005
- CRLT, Multimedia Teaching Grant, University of Michigan, for AnthroCulture 335/HJCS 335 (Tokyo-Tel Aviv: City, Nation, and Identity in Japan and Israel), October 2005
- Frankel Center for Jewish Studies, Faculty Summer Grant (research in Tel Aviv), University in Michigan, “National *Unhistory*: War Museums and the Aesthetics of Erasure in Japan and Israel,” May 2005
- Center for Japanese Studies, Faculty Research Grant (research in Tokyo), University of Michigan, “National *Unhistory*: War Museums and the Aesthetics of Erasure in Japan and Israel,” April 2005

- Office of Vice President for Research (OVPR) & College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LS&A), University of Michigan, Subvention award for *The Stains of Culture: An Ethno-Reading of Karaite Jewish Women*, January 2005
- Instructional Development Fund, Workshop for Hebrew instructors with Professor Vardit Ringvald, University of Michigan, December 2002
- Global Ethnic Literatures Seminar (GELS), University of Michigan, Fall 2001
- Office of Vice President for Research (OVPR), University of Michigan, Library Research and Interviews on Rape and Violence in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Summer 2000
- Faculty Fellow Award, University of Utah, Fall 1997
- The College Educational Technology Grant, College of Humanities, University of Utah, May 1997
- University Teaching Committee, University of Utah, Summer 1996
- Institutional/Technology Starter Grant, University of Utah, Spring 1995
- Faculty Research Grant Summer 1995, University of Utah
- Research Assignment 1995, University of Utah, Humanities, Spring 1996
- Newhouse Grant, University of California, Berkeley 1992
- Benjamin Goor Prize in Jewish Studies, University of California, Berkeley 1992
- Chancellor's Dissertation Year Fellowships 1991
- Friedberg Fellowship in Jewish Studies, Berkeley 1990
- Koret Foundation Fellowship in Jewish Studies 1989-90
- Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS), academic year 1988-89
- FLAS, Arabic Summer Course, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1988
- Outstanding Teaching Award, University of California, Berkeley 1984-85
- Benjamin Goor Prize in Jewish Studies, Honorary Mention, University of California, Berkeley 1984
- Humanities Graduate Research Grant, University of California, Berkeley 1985

INVITED LECTURES

- “The Extent of the tragedy reveals itself to me...” in Ann Arbor. Tikva Levi (1960-2012)” in “Closing Distances: Women, Middle East, Self, & Otherness In Conversation,” (Co-organized with Wijdan Alsayegh, Orian Zakai, and Alexandra Hoffman), April 15, 2013.
- “On ‘Silence and Translation,’ an introduction,” A symposium, December 3-4, 2012, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (Co-organized with Frieda Ekotto, Trinh minh-ha, Sara Bouyain, and Mellissa Gelinias)
- “Bloody Silence,” in the panel, “Inaudible dictionaries,” in Silence and Translation, A symposium, December 4, 2012.
- “Ethno-Reading: me’avodat ha-sadeh el ha-tekst ha-sifruti, (Ethnoeading: from the fieldwork to the literary text), Haifa University, The Anthropological Forum, May 24, 2012
- “Ha-Mizrach Ha-Tikhon, Israeliyut ve-Arviyut,” (The Middle East: Israelism and Arabism), Ben-Gurion University, Elyashar Center for Studies in Sephardi and the Orient Heritage, May 17, 2012
- “Between Isaac and Ishmael,” A Panel Discussion, “Rereading the Binding of Isaac and Israeli Society in Albert Swissa’s *Aqud*,” University of Michigan, March 28, 2012
- “Textuality,” A Panel Discussion with Frankel Institute Fellows: “Keywords in the Study of Jewish Languages,” *What and Where are Jewish Languages*, March 31, 2011
- “Roundtable: Fun & Games in Intellectual Life,” CLIFF Conference, *Fun and Games*, University of Michigan, March 25, 2011
- “Genealogy of Violence: Ishmael, Gifts, *Kolbo*,” Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Porter Institute of Poetic and Semiotic, Comparative Literature & the Forum of Women and Gender Studies, Tel Aviv University, March 10, 2011
- “The Trap of Otherness: Ishmael and Ruth,” The Forum for Gender Studies, “Ben Gurion University, March 8, 2011
- “Cultural Location, the Body, and the Production of Knowledge in Mizrahi Poetry,” Mizrahi Women's Writing between Israel and the Diaspora: a Symposium, Ben Gurion University, March 7, 2011
- “A Genealogy of Violence in Modern Hebrew Culture,” Fellows Colloquial, Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, February 25, 2011

- "Mizrahi Poetry-- Gender and EthnoReading" presentation at Ella Shohat's Seminar, "*Arab-Jews and the Writing of Memory*," New York University, November 30th, 2010 (via Video Conference Skype)
- "Cannibal Ideology," Introduction, "The Author's Feast: After Auschwitz, the Meal and the Poem," Fellows Workshop, Frankel Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, November 17, 2010
- "Translational Fictions, Pre- and Post," Panel Commentator in *Between Languages: The Translational Lives and Afterlives of Arabesques*, March 19, 2010
- "*Gvulot ha-Niduy: Nashim Kara'iyot Kor'ot Dam ve-Tum'ah*," (The limits of exclusion: Karaite women read blood and impurity) The annual memorial lecture on Theory and Culture in memory of Inbal Perelson, Porter Institute of Poetic and Semiotic & The Forum of Women and Gender Studies, Tel Aviv University, July 1, 2008
- From Protection to Abuse: Childhood Narratives in Hebrew Literature" Frankel Center for Judaic Studies Faculty Colloquium, University of Michigan, January 25, 2008
- "Tel Aviv: Modern Israeli or Post-Modern Cosmopolitan City," Lecture Series, Middle Eastern Cities Colloquium, Center of Middle Eastern and North African Studies (CMENAS), University of Michigan, October 12, 2007
- "Jewish Diversity," the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology and Journalism, The University of Gdansk, March 14, 2007.
- "Judaism and its Minorities Others," and "Israel: The Crisis of Ideology," Gdansk City Hall, March 15, 2007
- "Water of Purification: Jewish Minorities and Women's Ritual" A one-day colloquium: Women and Water, LS&A, University of Michigan, November 11, 2005
- "From the Literal to the Metaphoric and Back Again: 'A Land Flowing with milk and honey'," Lecture, Center of Middle Eastern and North African Studies (CMENAS), University of Michigan, March 25, 2005
- "Bread, Offspring, Genealogy: Hunger and Amnesia in Hebrew National Narratives," Colloquium, Department of Near Eastern Studies, January 31, 2005
- "The Karaite women: On Body and Text," Lecture Series on Women and Everyday Culture in the Middle East, CMENAS, University of Michigan, October 22, 2004
- "The Privilege to Remember" *Forget Baghdad* (2003), Post-Screening panel discussant, University of Michigan, October 12, 2004
- "Cannibal Ideology: Ethnicity and Gender in Israeli Literature," Lecture Series on Literatures Mediating Conflicts, Tulane World Literature Program, Tulane University, March 21, 2003
- "*Ha-ma'akhelet* (The Slaughtering Knife): Exploring the Limits of Discursive Space in Hebrew Literature," Lecture, Indiana University, Department of Jewish Studies, January 2003
- "Politics and Practices of Ethnography: the Case of Israel," Invited seminar lecture, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, September 20, 2002
- "Cannibal Ideology and National Discourse," Lecture, Global Ethnic Literatures Seminar (GELS), University of Michigan, December 2001
- "The National and the Cannibal in the Hebrew Poetry of Women," Lecture Series on Women and Gender in the Middle East, Bellagio, Italy, August 27 - 31, 2001
- "Reflections on *Mizrahiyut* and Ethnicity in Israel," Conference Plenary Session, Association of Israel Studies (AIS), Washington D.C., May 2001
- "Poetic Anatomy: Marginality and Gender in Contemporary Mizrahi Poetry," Lecture, Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University, March 1999
- "The Enigma of Home: Homed and Unhomed in the Homeland" Convocation lecture, Lecture Series on International Week Israel: Fifty Years of Accomplishment Through Conflict and Change, Southern Utah University, November 19, 1998
- "The Israeli Woman at the Crossroads of Over/Politicized Reality and Under/Politicized Feminism," Panel on "Women's Issues in The Middle East," Middle East Week, University of Utah, April-May 1997.
- "The History of the Israeli Women's Movement," Woman in Middle East Society: A Panel Discussion, University of Utah, February 8, 1997
- "To Be a Body or to Own the Body," Invited lecture, Mizrahi-Feminist Conference, Netanya, Israel, May 1996
- "The Discourse of the Female Body," Lecture, The Middle East Discussion Group of the Middle East Center, University of Utah, May 1995

- "Speaking from the Margins," An address to the Jewish Studies Women's Caucus of the Association of Jewish Studies, Boston, December 1994
- "*I Bajou* (Tunisia) and *Zohar*, (Israel): An Introduction," Lecture, San Francisco & Berkeley Jewish Film Festival, San Francisco and Berkeley, Summer 1994
- "Rethinking Israeli Identity through the Body," Lecture, University of Utah, March 1994
- "Karaites Notebook: The Karaite Community and the Women' Storytelling of Bodily Ritual," Lecture, Oberlin College, March 1994
- "Passages from the Body: Blood, Milk and the Karaite Woman," Lecture, Duke University, March 1993
- "Common Ground: Israelis and Palestinians – Two Communities Looking at Themselves, Social Values as Expressed in Myth, Storytelling, and Crafts," Lecture, Berkeley Jewish Community Center, 1989

CONFERENCE PANELS AND PRESENTATIONS

- "Scandalizing acts in a safe language: Israeli female artists and their rejection of feminism," American Comparative Literature Association, ACLA, New Orleans, April 1-4, 2010
- "False Pleasures: Identification and the Problem of Ideological Kitsch," Intellectual Pleasures, Program in Comparative Literature, Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 19, 2007
- "The Trajectory of Hunger: Ruth, Appropriation, and Prophecy," American Comparative Literature Association, Ann Arbor, Michigan, April 16-18, 2004
- "Cutting through Impossible Limits: Israeli Poetry Confronting the Canon of Sacrifice and Cannibalism," Israeli Anthropology Association, Neve Ilan, Israel, May 28-29, 2003
- "Cannibal Ideology: The Representation of the Israeli Body in Contemporary Hebrew Literature," Association of Israel Studies, Washington D.C., May 2001
- "The Rupture of Innocence: Rape in Modern Hebrew Literature," Association of Israel Studies (AIS), Tel Aviv, Israeli, June 2000
- "Mizrahi Literature" Panel organizer and chair, MESA, Washington, November 1999
- "The Criminal Anthropology of the Mizrahi Body," MESA, Washington, November 1999
- "The Karaites, Body Female Rituals and the Ethnography of Reading," The World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, July-August 1997
- "Mother's Milk and the Dietary Law of the Karaite Jews," American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, Rocky Mountain – Great Plains Regional meeting, Salt Lake City, May 1997
- "Ethnography, Ethno-Reading and the Discourse of the Karaite Female Body," The Western Jewish Studies Association, Tucson, April 1997
- "Major Issues in the Ethnography of the Karaite Jews of the Bay Area," Association of Jewish Studies (AJS), Boston, December 1996
- "Re-imagining the East in Israeli Culture," Panel organizer, AIS, Baltimore, June 1995
- "Nativity and Exile: Reading in Mizrahi Hebrew Literature," AIS, Baltimore, June 1995
- "Landscape of Difference and the Historical Void: Reading in Middle Eastern/Sephardi Literature," AJS, Boston, December 1994
- "Liberating Bondage: Objects, Desire and Sexuality in Wallach's 'Tefillin'," AIS, Philadelphia, June 1994
- "'Until I Strangle You Completely': Wallach's 'Tefillin' and the Writing of the Female Body," National Association of Professors of Hebrew, Berkeley, May-June 1994
- "Fluidity," Panel chair, American Folklore Society (AFS), Eugene, Oregon, October 1993
- "Mother-Daughter Teaching and the Conception of the Pure Body," AFS, Eugene, Oregon, October 1993
- "Community Self-Positioning and the Multiple Others," American Anthropological Association, San-Francisco, December 1992
- "Reading in the First Drop of Blood: Karaite Mother-Daughter Teaching and the Conception of the Pure Body," Boundaries in Question, Feminist Graduate Conference, University of California, Berkeley, October 1992
- "Undocumented Genealogy: The Maternal Discourse of Fertility among the San Francisco Bay Area Karaites," California Folklore Society, Sacramento, California, April 1992
- "The Body as Storyteller: Karaite Women's Experience of *Niddah*, *Yoledah* and the Dietary Laws," AJS, December 1991
- "The Numerical Discourse of the Karaite Female Body," Boundaries in Question, Feminist Graduate Conference, University of California, Berkeley, October 1991
- "Just Kidding: Israeli Jokes and Expressions from the Persian Gulf War," California Folklore Society, April 1991

- “The Marriage of the She-Demon to the Rabbi,” AFS, Oakland, California, October 1990
- “Women’s Anatomy-Women’s Autonomy: The Folklore of Blood and Milk in the Karaite Community,” AFS, Philadelphia, October 1989
- “Women of the Middle East,” Jewish Federation of the East Bay, Berkeley 1988
- “Self Perception of the Body in Israeli Poetry of Middle Eastern Jews,” AJS, October 1987
- “The Legacy of Iraqi Jews,” Panel on Sephardic culture, The Jewish Federation of the East Bay, 1987
- “Power and Vulnerability: Study of the Middle Eastern Clown Juha,” AFS, October 1986
- “Lot’s Wife: Structural Analysis of Genesis 19,” California Folklore Society, San Francisco 1985
- “Israeli Perceptions of Time and Inflation,” Kroeber Anthropological Society, University of California, Berkeley, 1985
- “The Folklore of Middle Eastern Jews” Jewish Federation of the East Bay, lecture series, 1984

EDITORIAL BOARDS

- *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal*

COURSES

- COMPLIT 751: Cultural Diversity
- COMPLIT 376/ JUDAIC 317: The Alternative Jewish Bookshelf
- COMPLIT 372/JUDAIC 317: Home, Homeland and Homelessness: Israel and Palestine
- COMPLIT 140: The Female Experience: Creativity of Difference

- WS 330/AC 341: Feminist Thought
- WS 698-003/WS 483/Anthro 658: Gender and Ethnicity
- WS/REL/JUDAIC 376: Women, Bible, Feminism: Critical Readings
- WS 434/ SAC 455-001; JUDAIC 417: Film, Fiction and Female in Israeli culture
Advanced Topics in Gender, Culture and Representation

- HJCS 335: Tokyo-Tel Aviv: City, Nation and Identity in Japan and Israel (co-taught, upper division)
- HJCS 373: Israeli Society and Culture
- HJCS 471: Home, Homecoming and Exile: Introduction to Hebrew Literature
- HJCS 472: War: Violence and Peace, from the Bible to the Present
- HJCS 472: The *Sabra* and the Making of Native Culture
- HJCS 491: Politics of Culture in Hebrew Literature: Sexuality and Ethnicity
- HJCS 305: Israeli Film and Theater (in Hebrew)
- Hebrew Language (all levels)