

Zukunftsphilologie: Revisiting the Canons of Textual Scholarship
Lecture cum Seminar

Thursday, December 8, 2011, 16.00 – 19.00

Freie Universität Berlin, Room J 23/16, Habelschwerdter Allee 45

Hannan Hever

(Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

**“The Two Gaze Directly into One Another’s Face”:
Avot Yeshurun (1904 – 1992) between the Nakba and the Shoah**

Chair: Ihab Saloul

(EUME Fellow 2011-12 / Maastricht University)

Responsibility is the capacity to respond — response + ability — to the state of the other, to her suffering, to his vulnerability. “Responsibility” is the awareness that one has a debt towards the victim (Agamben 2007: 40-41). The Israeli-Jewish approach to the Nakba and to the Holocaust is trapped in an aporia that arises in the very fact of the contradiction that obtains between the recognition of the Jewish Holocaust as trauma, on the one hand, and the recognition of the Palestinian Nakba as trauma, on the other. Both peoples demand rights and historical justice in the name of their trauma. The aporia here derives from the fact that taking responsibility for the Jewish Holocaust — which results in the establishment of a nation-state which in term brings about the Nakba — does not allow for the assumption of responsibility precisely towards the Palestinian Nakba. When the equation is reversed, it is also the case that those Jews who do assume responsibility for the Palestinian Nakba do so at the price of disavowing responsibility towards the Jewish past and its legacies. Unlike other Hebrew poets, Avot Yeshurun assumes the problematic of bearing Jewish responsibility for the Nakba while juxtaposing it to the Holocaust. He confronts this aporia with unusual poetic depth and courage. Yeshurun has earned the reputation in Hebrew literature as the poet who spoke out about the Nakba a short time after the 1948 war and his most well known poem in this respect is “Passover on Caves” which was published in the newspaper *Haaretz* on May 23, 1952 and provoked a literary and a political storm.

Hannan Hever is a Professor at the Department of Hebrew Literature, and the head of School of Literatures, at The Hebrew University. Recently he published *Producing the Modern Hebrew Canon, Nation Building and Minority Discourse* (New York University Press, 2002), *Beautiful Motherland of Death, Aesthetics and Politics in Uri Zvi Greenberg’s Poetry* (Heb. Am-Oved Press, 2004), *The Narrative and the Nation, Critical Readings in the Canon of Hebrew Fiction* (Resling, 2007) and *From The Beginning, Three Essays on Nativist Hebrew Poetry* (Heb. Keshev, 2008)

Lecture-cum-Seminar

The Lecture-cum-Seminar series is a central element of the scholarly program of the Zukunftsphilologie project. It is conceived as a working seminar of 3 to 5 hours. The lecture (ca. 45-60 minutes) is meant to introduce the audience to the research problem and provide the general analytical and theoretical framework for the topic. This is followed by a practical seminar, wherein the speaker demonstrates his or her case by reference to texts in the original language and in English translation. It is hoped that this Lecture-cum-Seminar series, a combination of theory and a direct engagement with texts, will enable scholars to examine the comparative aspect of the problematic without neglect of the local and singular nature of the texts examined.

Zukunftsphilologie: Revisiting the Canons of Textual Scholarship

The project Zukunftsphilologie endeavours to promote and emphasize primary textual scholarship beyond the classical humanistic canon. In an age of advanced communication, intellectual specialization, and unprecedented migration of knowledge and people, the discipline of philology assumes new relevance. Zukunftsphilologie aspires to support research in neglected varieties of philology with the explicit aim to integrate texts and scholarly traditions from Asia, Africa, the Middle East as well as from Europe itself. Zukunftsphilologie refers to the polemic between the classicist Ulrich von Wilamowitz and Friedrich Nietzsche around the method and meaning of classical studies. As a project it sees itself as part of a growing trend towards a more global intellectual history. It is inspired in particular by the work of Edward Said and Sheldon Pollock.

In order to promote historically-conscious philology, Zukunftsphilologie will foster research in the following areas: genealogies and transformations of philological practice, philology's place in the system of knowledge (e.g. its relation to science, theology and jurisprudence), and philology and the university. Furthermore, Zukunftsphilologie aims to support critical reviews of historical and philological practice. In revisiting important „philological wars“, the goal is not to merely evaluate the argumentative worth of these debates, but to reflect on the wider cultural and political context in which these „philological wars“ emerged and how they have shaped our knowledge of the past.

The project Zukunftsphilologie is co-directed by Angelika Neuwirth, Manan Ahmed and Islam Dayeh (all Freie Universität Berlin) and is associated with and located at the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School for Literary Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Zukunftsphilologie is a project at the Forum Transregionale Studien.

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For more information on the Forum please see
- www.forum-transregionale-studien.de

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- www.zukunftsphilologie.de
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