

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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It is with great excitement that I introduce this new issue of the *University of Toronto Journal of Jewish Thought*, a project founded and produced by graduate students affiliated with the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies. Let me begin by emphasizing what an enormous testament it is to both the fortitude of our small editorial staff and the faith of the university's Jewish Studies department that this journal remains in existence. This issue—the journal's fifth since 2011—arrives after a yearlong hiatus. I want to spotlight some of the new directions the journal has taken over the past year and express my sincere hope that they point to a rich and stimulating future.

This issue is the first in the journal's history to be published in a bounded volume, with a front cover and a back page and a table of contents. This move might seem antiquated in an age of digital publishing, but I have always believed published writing needs an exoskeleton; in my mind, it serves to prevent individual pieces from winding up as bibliographic orphans on the side of the virtual highway. To kick off this new initiative, the journal is privileged to feature a striking cover designed by Nayoung Kim, a Toronto-based Korean artist. Also in this issue, the journal steps beyond the already expansive bounds of its title to publish scholars who work in comparative literature, political science, queer studies, and anthropology. In that spirit of interdisciplinarity, I am excited to bring into the fold new creative forms, including memoir, photography and jazz composition.

It was the idea of my predecessors to assign this edition the theme of "Boundaries" as an opportunity for scholars to reflect on the shape-shifting physical, conceptual and ideological borders that mark the Jewish experience across time and place. Talmudic scholar Daniel Boyarin, whose own discipline-defying work identifies and deconstructs boundaries not only between Jews and non-Jews but also within Jewish communities, is at the intellectual heart of this issue. In a wide-ranging interview conducted by members of the journal's previous editorial team, Boyarin calls for both Jews and Muslims to recognize that there is no real ontological opposition between the two groups, and suggests that mutual awareness of this condition might eventually erode some of the ideological borders that divide them. Boyarin's appeal illuminates an ineluctable reality of negotiating borderlines, whether they are social, cultural or political: it is no easy task.

In different ways, contributors to this issue reflect on the challenges of circumventing, transecting and embracing boundaries. In some cases, complex borderlines exist in both the personal and political experience, as Jason M. Schlude masterfully shows in the case of Herod the Great, a figure of complicated cultural loyalties tasked with balancing allegiances to Rome and the people of Judea. In his essay on J.B. Crighton-Ginsburg, a nineteenth-

century (Jewish-born) Hebrew Christian missionary who worked among North African Jews, Noam Sienna describes how personal borderlines are often spaces of contention and discord, “never static, but rather continuous and porous zones of interference.”

Yet these turbulent zones also yield bouts of tremendous creativity, as Noam Lemish, a jazz pianist and composer, proves in “Jazz Rhapsody on Soviet Jewish Themes,” an original composition that fuses the melodies of two Soviet Yiddish songs with his own unique musical DNA. In recovering these old songs, along with their tragic historical baggage and deep-rooted emotions, Lemish penetrates the border between past and present to produce music that honours a lost tradition while fashioning something entirely new. I encourage you to listen to the sound clips embedded in Lemish’s essay, “Between Utopia and Destruction: The Making of ‘Jazz Rhapsody on Soviet Jewish Themes,’” and look forward to the piece’s live premiere at the April 2016 conference *Music and the Jewish World: Expression Across Real and Imaginary Boundaries* hosted by the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies.

As Lemish evokes a Soviet past, Alexis Lerner reminds us of the Russian present. In the post-Soviet period, Russian Jews have taken great advantage of their freedom to emigrate, crossing the border by the hundreds of thousands. But lest we forget: thousands of Jews remain inside Russia. Legal protections implemented over the past two decades have helped cultivate an environment in which Jews are no longer primary targets of Russian xenophobia. But as Lerner discusses in her timely analysis of contemporary Russian anti-Semitism, the demarcation of Jewish space in such a volatile (and formerly hostile) country still requires delicate negotiation.

In concluding the issue’s thematic content, an affecting memoir by Liza Futerma—herself a Russian immigrant to Israel—and a photo essay by Zohar Weiman-Kelman demand thoughtful consideration of the slippery linguistic boundaries and multifarious, and fluid, gender identities that exist throughout the Jewish world. In each of these creative reflections, the contributors leave us on a hopeful note, compelling us to wonder if boundaries and borderlines are, perhaps, increasingly evanescent in contemporary Jewish life. I hope you find the entire volume engages with—and interrogates—that thought.

Finally, a number of people deserve immense, heartfelt thanks for breathing life into this issue: Liza Futerma and Alexis Lerner, both of whom performed tireless double duty as associate editors and contributors; Anna Shternshis, director of the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies, Doris Bergen, the centre’s graduate coordinator, Emily Springgay, Galina Vaisman, and Daniela Lev-Aviv; and Laurie Drake and the CJS Graduate Student Association executive team for their passionate support.

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