

Fellows



Marc Caplan

IFK_Senior Fellow

Duration of fellowship

01. October 2018 bis 31. January 2019

Marc Caplan

PROJECT TITLE

A Third Space: Translation, Transposition, and Transformation in Interwar Yiddish Modernism

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

His project focuses on the Polish-Yiddish literature of the interwar period, paying particular attention to the historical, linguistic, and social implications of a literature that, in several instances among a number of narratives, presents multiple speakers addressing one another, respectively, in Yiddish, German, and Polish, with none of this dialogue translated from one language to another. Although instances such as these provide explicit examples of linguistic “polytonality”, a heteromultilingual phenomenon, a multilingual dimension can be recognized in the construction of literature as such, insofar as an aesthetic imperative of literature is to articulate the inexpressible and to expand or exceed the limits of any given language. In this regard, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) has proposed “polyphony” and “heteroglossia” to schematize the presence of multiple “voices” within literary and other verbal utterances, and Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) has offered the “palimpsest” to understand the relationship that literary texts maintain with one another. Marc Caplan, in turn, is proposing “polytonality”, rooted in his understanding of Yiddish modernism and music theory, as a theory for conceptualizing the way in which writing simultaneously incorporates and effaces spoken language—spoken languages—in the construction of literary discourse.

CV

Marc Caplan is a native of Louisiana and a graduate of Yale University. In 2003 he earned his Ph.D. in comparative literature from New York University. Since then he has held professorial appointments at Indiana University, Johns Hopkins University, and Yale as well as visiting fellowships at the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University, the Universität Konstanz (Germany), the Center for Jewish History (New York), and the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). In 2011 he published *How Strange the Change: Language, Temporality, and Narrative Form in Peripheral Modernisms*—a comparison of Yiddish and African literatures—with Stanford University Press. His second book, on Yiddish literature written in Weimar Germany, considered in comparison with contemporaneous German literature, theater, and film, is currently under review. In the Fall 2018 he is a Senior Fellow at the IFK in Vienna, Austria.

Publications

“Osterbrot or Matzo? Translation, Transubstantiation, and Temporality in Joseph Roth’s *Hiob*,” in: *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies* Volume 2, Issue 1, Berlin 2015, pp. 147 – 170; *How Strange the Change: Language, Temporality, and Narrative Form in Peripheral Modernisms*, Stanford 2011; “The Hermit at the Circus: Der Nister, Der Blaue Engel, and German-Yiddish Cultural Parallels in the Weimar Period,” in: *Between Two Worlds: Yiddish-German Encounters*, (=Studia Rosenthaliana 41), Bristol 2009, pp. 173 - 196.