

REL/JSP/LIT 235; meets with ETS 230-1

Travel Narratives and Pilgrimages

“Change your place and change your luck.” –Talmudic saying, Rosh ha-shana 16b

When does a trip become a pilgrimage? We can make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or to a recording studio in Nashville, a Hollywood set, the Louvre, or Faulkner’s home. The more we invest a destination with meaning, the more appropriate it is to call a visit a pilgrimage.

Sea voyages influenced the rise of the European novel, and travel has been a prominent motif in religious literature and popular culture. We will look at pilgrimage narratives and accounts of secular travel, primarily by Jewish travelers. Most claim authenticity, referring to places in the world, although the line between fact and fiction is frequently blurred. There are also fictional travel narratives, some of which have moralistic or allegorical meanings.

Because many travel narratives refer to places that still exist, it is possible to find images of those places. Is it the same place, decades or centuries later? How relevant are maps and images that we can find today? The internet facilitates virtual travel, exploring the world on the web.

In this **writing intensive** course, students will be asked to write very short analyses—no more than a page—weekly (except when papers are due). Respond to the italicized questions beneath each Tuesday reading below and post your responses on Blackboard, in Discussions, by 9 a.m. on the morning of class. In addition, there will be four two-page analytical essays about the texts we read. You will also write your own travel narratives. What kind of travel makes the best story?

Required Textbooks (in order of appearance in class)

Frieden, Ken. *Travels in Translation: Sea Tales at the Source of Jewish Fiction*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016.

Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages: 19 Firsthand Accounts. Ed. Elkan Nathan Adler.
New York: Dover, 1987.

Romanelli, Samuel. *Travail in an Arab Land*. Trans. Yedida K. Stillman and Norman A. Stillman.
Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989.

Nahman of Bratslav [and Nathan Sternharz, 1806-1810/1815]. *The Tales*. Trans. Arnold J. Band.
New York: Paulist Press, 1978.

[All available at the SU Bookstore. Used copies of most of these books are available on Amazon.com and bn.com]

*Other readings are available as scanned PDFs on Blackboard. **Print them out and bring them to class for discussion!**

Part One: Early Travel Narratives & Pilgrimages

Jan. 17th – 19th Introduction: Sea Travel in the Hebrew Bible

***The Book of Jonah and Psalm 107.** We will refer to the Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh* [PDFs on Blackboard], but other translations are acceptable.

Frieden, *Travels in Translation*, pp. 19-27.

What do these texts say about God's role in sea travels?

Make note of key phrases that could recur in subsequent sea tales.

Can we situate Jonah's travels on a map?

For Thursday: Post your short response on Blackboard under Discussions

Jan. 24th Early British Fiction of Sea Travel

*Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, PDF under "Content" in Blackboard, pp. 1-91

I suggest that you switch to 2-page view and print this double-sided.

POST your reply to the first question in our Discussion Forum in Blackboard

Discuss the first-person narrator and how he expresses his belief in Providence.

Or: Analyze how this fictional narrative claims to be real and is convincing.

Or: Analyze the moralistic or allegorical meanings of this selection.

Jan. 26th *Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, PDF in Blackboard, pp. 5-14

Jan. 31st Pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Beyond

Benjamin of Tudela in Jerusalem [PDF on Blackboard, pp. 82-86] and

Benjamin of Tudela, in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 38-63

Frieden, *Travels in Translation*, pp. 28-34.

Which sites described by these authors may be found today?

Find images of some places described in these texts and post them to our Discussion Board (Discussions>Maps & Images) in Blackboard.

Feb. 2nd **Isaac Chelo**, in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 130-150

Make a note of passages that are based on the Hebrew Bible and others that convey empirical observations. Check the factual veracity of Chelo's account.

Again, find images of some places described in these texts and post them to our Discussion Board (Discussions>Maps & Images) in Blackboard.

Feb. 7th Fifteenth-Century Travelers from Italy

Rabbi Meshullam ben R. Menahem of Volterra (1481), in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 156-207.

To what extent does Meshullam describe what he has read, heard, and expects to see, and to what extent does he describe what he has in fact seen? Give an example that illustrates his typical way of writing about his travels.

- Feb. 9th **“The Letters of Obadiah Jaré da Bertinoro”** (1487-90), in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 209-250.
Bring notes on illustrative passages to class.
In class: Write a brief travel narrative—based on your experience or fantasy.

Part Two: Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Travels

- Feb. 14th ***Willem Bontekoe, *Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage, 1618-25***, trans. C. B. Bodde-Hodgkinson and Pieter Geyl (New York: McBride, 1929).
[Pages 1-70; PDF on Blackboard, Adobe pages 1-34]
Frieden, *Travels in Translation*, chapter 6.
First 2-page paper is due: *Analyze some religious elements of the text. What is the implicit or explicit worldview of the author? How does the method of presentation relate to the content? Where does Bontekoe show ethnocentrism?*
- Feb. 16th ***Willem Bontekoe, *Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage***, continued
- Feb. 21st **Samuel Romanelli, *Travail in an Arab Land*** [1792], trans. Yedida K. Stillman and Norman A. Stillman (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989).
What is Romanelli’s view of Providence or fate? Note the use of biblical language. Or find some images that are relevant to Romanelli’s narrative and consider his veracity.
- Feb. 23rd **Samuel Romanelli, *Travail in an Arab Land***, continued
- Feb. 28th [Interlude] ***The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor**. In *The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*, trans. Edward Forster (Philadelphia: Hazard, 1856), pp. 67-87.
[PDF on Blackboard]
From a literary standpoint, how do these fantastic narratives differ from other accounts of travel we have read? Leaving aside the fanciful content, describe different narrative techniques. Find illustrations of these tales and contemplate how visual representation corresponds to the text.
- Mar. 2nd ***The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor**, continued

Mar. 7th ***George Keate, *An Account of the Pelew Islands in the Western Part of the Pacific Ocean, and the Shipwreck of the Antelope, East-India Packet, There.*** Dublin: White, 1788, pp. 10-97. [PDF on Blackboard]
Frieden, *Travels in Translation*, chapter 7, especially pp. 209-229.
Second 2-page paper is due: *Analyze George Keate's narrative methods, primarily based on Captain Wilson's first-hand account. Look for passages that show the ethnocentrism of the British. Does Keate foster the myth of the "Noble Savage"? Consider the illustrations that were included in the early editions of this book, available on Blackboard under Content Area "Keate Engravings"*

Mar. 9th ***George Keate, *An Account of the Pelew Islands***, continued

SPRING BREAK [Look ahead at Nahman of Bratslav, *The Tales*]

Part Three: Fantasy Travels, Allegories, & Pilgrimages

Mar. 21st ***"The Tale of the Jerusalemite,"** in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature*, ed. David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990). [PDF on Blackboard]
Compare and contrast this tale to "The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor."

Mar. 23rd **Nahman of Bratslav** [and Nathan Sternharz, 1806-1810/1815], *The Tales*, trans. Arnold J. Band (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), Tales 1 and 2.
Frieden, *Travels in Translation*, pp. 77-90.
Notice how the emperor's daughter becomes the active force in Tale 2. What role does cross-dressing play in this story?

Mar. 28th **Nahman of Bratslav** [and Nathan Sternharz, 1806-1810/1815], *The Tales*, trans. Arnold J. Band (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), Tales 6, 9, 10.
Frieden, *Travels in Translation*, pp. 91-95.
Tale 6: Does the wise man succeed in his quest for a portrait?
Tale 9: In what way is this story a critique of sophistication?
Tale 10: Why do "the seven places" occur twice, in different ways?

Mar. 30th **Nahman of Bratslav** [and Nathan Sternharz, 1806-1810/1815], *The Tales*, *Tale 12: What is the relationship between the misguided factions (pp. 230-34) and "the holy community" gathered together by the Baal Tefilla (Master of Prayer)?*

Apr. 4th ***Nathan of Nemirov** [Nathan Sternharz], **"The Pilgrimage"** ["Order of His Journey to the Land of Israel," 1815], in *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom*, trans. Aryeh

Kaplan (Brooklyn: Breslov Research Institute, 1973). [PDFs of Pilgrimage 1, pp. 33-102]

***Nathan of Breslov [Nathan Sternharz], “Journey to the Holy Land,”** in *Tzaddik (Chayey Moharan)* (1820s/1874), trans. Avraham Greenbaum (Jerusalem: Breslov Research Institute, 1987). [PDFs of Journey 2, pp. 45-60.]

Frieden, *Travels in Translation*, chapter 2.

Third 2-page paper is due: *How do these two accounts, written by the same author about Nahman’s pilgrimage, differ? Analyze the differences and their significance.*

Apr. 6th ***Nathan of Nemirov [Nathan Sternharz], “The Pilgrimage” and “Journey to the Holy Land,”** continued

Apr. 11th NO CLASS—First Day of Passover

First part of reading for Thursday: ***Cervantes, *Don Quixote***,

Part 1, chapters 1-6 [pp. 56-92 on Blackboard]

How is Don Quixote a parody of chivalrous romances? (For Thursday)

Apr. 13th ***Cervantes, *Don Quixote***, Part 1, chapters 39-41 [pp. 393-431 on Blackboard]

Part Four: Travels in Eastern Europe

Apr. 18th ***S. Y. Abramovitsh, “Fishke the Lamé,”** in *Classic Yiddish Stories*, pp. 32-54;

*Lev Binshtok, “A Celebration of Yiddish Literature,” pp. 181-206.

Analyze parallels between the biographical account by Lev Binshtok and the fictional narratives by Abramovitsh. Is the story “autobiographical fiction”?

Apr. 20th ***S. Y. Abramovitsh, “Fishke the Lamé,”** in *Classic Yiddish Stories*, continued

Apr. 25th ***S. Y. Abramovitsh, *The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third***, trans. Hillel Halkin from *Tales of Mendele the Book Peddler*, ed. Ken Frieden and Dan Miron (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), pp. 301-391. [PDF on Blackboard]

Final 2-page paper is due: *Analyze ways in which Abramovitsh parodies aspects of the travel narrative tradition we have studied.*

Apr. 27th ***S. Y. Abramovitsh, *The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third***, continued

May 2nd Review and Conclusions

Learning Outcomes: While learning about travel literature and ethnic literary traditions, students should develop skills such as close reading, critical thinking, scholarly writing, and public speaking.

Papers should be two-page (double-spaced) close analyses, focusing on literary aspects such as narrative techniques or figurative language, in conjunction with ideological issues.

Requirements and Grading: Eight or nine Tuesday Blackboard Discussion posts (20% of grade); four two-page papers, double-spaced (40% of grade); in-class writing (10% of grade); careful preparation of readings, regular attendance, and class participation (30% of grade);

Plagiarism: Always acknowledge your sources, because plagiarism is a serious offense. Don't even think of taking anything off the web without using quotation marks. It's unethical, as easy for professors to catch as it is for students to steal, and the consequence is a failing grade. The difference between research and plagiarism is quotation marks. Use them, and give citations!

WE INTERPRET TEXTS IN THIS CLASS—"TEXT" IS NOT A VERB!

(If you "text" during class, you will be marked absent.)

((More than two absences will lower your grade.))

Syracuse University requires that these paragraphs accompany syllabi:

Academic Integrity

Syracuse University sets high standards for academic integrity. Those standards are supported and enforced by students, including those who serve as academic integrity hearing panel members and hearing officers. The presumptive sanction for a first offense is course failure, accompanied by the transcript notation “Violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.” The standard sanction for a first offense by graduate students is suspension or expulsion. Students should review the Office of Academic Integrity online resource “Twenty Questions and Answers About the Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy” and confer with instructors about course-specific citation methods, permitted collaboration (if any), and rules for examinations. The Policy also governs the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. Additional guidance for students can be found in the Office of Academic Integrity resource: ‘What does academic integrity mean?’

<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/what-does-academic-integrity-mean/>

This course may use Turnitin, a plagiarism prevention system. The Internet has made it all too easy and tempting for students to “cut and paste” material into papers, without including proper citations. Some papers that you write in this class may be submitted to Turnitin, a service that identifies “matched text.” The instructor will then interpret the originality report, based on your writing capability and writing style. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.

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If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Religious Observances Policy

SU religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed because of a religious observance, if they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/StudentServices/Enrollment/MyReligiousObservances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.