

## Fellows



**Lisa Silverman**  
IFK\_Junior Fellow

Duration of fellowship  
01. October 2002 bis 30. June 2003

**Lisa Silverman**

## **PROJECT TITLE**

The Transformation of Jewish Identity in Vienna, 1918-1938

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Most examinations of the cultural legacy of the Jews in Vienna focus on the intense years at the turn of the century, overlooking the unique situation of Viennese Jews from the end of World War I to the 'Anschluß'. However, the years from 1918 to 1938 were ones of debilitating social and economic hardship, with the result that the intensive 'fin de siècle' concern with the arts gave way to more immediate issues such as politics and labor. These insecure, uncertain and volatile years of the interwar period profoundly affected all Austrians, but transformed the lives of Jewish Austrians in particular and, as a result, profoundly affected the culture they produced.

The project examines the ways in which Jewish identity was transformed in Vienna during the decades between the World Wars as reflected primarily in the literature and other cultural products of Jews in this era. Throughout, it will emphasize how Jewish women in particular faced an even greater challenge of identity formation, for even as they gained greater access to the Viennese public sphere, pressures from within both Austrian and Jewish culture worked to limit their ability to forge new careers and roles.

In post-World War I Vienna, Jews faced new challenges. Incidents of anti-Semitism increased and, in addition to being seen as a scapegoat for the loss of the war, Jews were confronted with a theoretically homogenous nation state that demanded a new kind of loyalty as "Austrians" that Jews could not easily reconcile. Many turned to German culture in order to establish a stable identity, while others vigorously pursued the political ideals of Socialism or Zionism. The influx of tens of thousands of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe who populated the city as a result of World War I also transformed Vienna into a center for Yiddish theater during the early 1920s.

## **CV**

M. Phil., born 1969 in Boston, USA, German Studies at Yale University and Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University

## **Publications**

Repossessing the Austrian Jewish Past: the Property and Narrative Histories of Austrian Reémigrés, in: *Austrian Studies* 1/1, 2003 (forthcoming); *Der Richtige Riecher: The Reconfiguration of Jewish and Austrian Identities in the Work of Doron Rabinovici*, in: *German Quarterly* 72:3, 1999