

<b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 25 Area Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Bringing modern Hebrew poetry to a global readership through and in translation		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2015-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Adriana X. Jacobs	Associate Professor of Modern Hebrew Literature	September 2013-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 January 2015-31 July 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Adriana X. Jacobs is a scholar of modern Hebrew poetry and translation as well as an award-winning literary translator (Hebrew to English). She has raised the profile of contemporary Israeli poetry abroad, introducing poets and their work to a much broader audience while situating Hebrew poetry within a dynamic international network of poets, translators and readers. Through her translations and teaching she has transformed understanding and approaches to the translation of modern Hebrew poetry and has broadened the reach and interpretation of the literature to provide consolation and solace in times of modern crisis.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Professor Adriana X. Jacobs is a member of the Faculty of Oriental Studies and Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, and co-convenor of Oxford Comparative Criticism and Translation (St. Anne's College/The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH)). Jacobs' 2018 monograph <i>Strange Cocktail: Translation and the Making of Modern Hebrew Poetry</i>, situates modern Hebrew and Israeli poetry in multilingual and comparative frameworks, with an emphasis on the relation between translation and original writing (<b>R1</b>). Within the field of Hebrew literature, her work has increased an understanding of the role of translation in the history of modern Hebrew literature, with an emphasis on poetry. Her work on the figure of the poet-translator has brought increased visibility to translation as a creative practice and encouraged a closer study of the translated works of poets (<b>R1, R2, R3</b>). Her work as a prize-winning literary translator aligns closely with her scholarship and pedagogy, arguing for translation itself as an interpretative practice and for a consideration of literary translation as a constitutive component of literary scholarship (<b>R2, R4, R6</b>).</p> <p>Jacobs's <i>Strange Cocktail</i> is the first comprehensive study of the relationship between poetry and translation in modern Hebrew literature of the late nineteenth century to the present day (<b>R1</b>). Its chapters on Esther Raab, Leah Goldberg, Avot Yeshurun, and Harold Schimmel offer close readings that examine the distinct poetics of translation that emerge from reciprocal practices of writing and translating. Working in a minor literary vernacular, the translation strategies that these poets employed allowed them to create and participate in transnational and multilingual poetic networks. In this study, Jacobs advances a comparative and multilingual reframing of modern Hebrew literature that considers how canons change and are undone when translation occupies a central position.</p> <p>Within the field of modern Hebrew literature, Jacobs' work has called greater attention to the role of translation in the history of modern Hebrew poetry from the nineteenth century to the present day, thereby challenging how the study and teaching of modern Hebrew literature has been narrated and investigated. Through the translation-centered reading that she advances in her</p>		

published work (articles, monograph, essays), Jacobs has challenged a tendency to read Hebrew literature monolingually; rather, by highlighting the translation praxis of Hebrew authors and relations between their original and translated works, her research has encouraged multilingual and comparative approaches to the study and teaching of modern Hebrew literature (**R2, R4, R6**). For example, in her study on the American Hebrew poet Annabelle Farmelant, Jacobs's shows how Farmelant's poem "The Unwed Maiden" interweaves her translation of a fragment by the Ancient Greek poet Sappho to critique the marginalization of women writers in modern Hebrew literature (**R3**):

"The Unwed Maiden"

after a poem by Sappho

"On the twig above  
an apple reddens."  
The maiden's nest rests  
on the lower step;  
The women buzz  
like bees in the company of men.  
Still virgin after the vintage and oil harvest—  
Among these thousands of gatherers  
not one was able to pluck you?"

By translating the poem into English, Jacobs also places it into a rich network of feminist Anglophone translations of Sappho, thereby showing how Farmelant's Hebrew poetry, which was published in the 1950s and 1960s, was in dialogue with Anglophone poetry and literary translation of the same period (**R3**). Jacobs' commitment to situating Hebrew literature in multilingual, international frameworks continues in her new book project on contemporary poetry of crisis in English, Spanish, and Hebrew. One key output of this project has been her podcast *Staying Alive: Poetry and Crisis*, which features interviews with poets from the US, UK, and Israel/Palestine. Additionally, her work as a translator of contemporary Hebrew poetry has shaped key research outputs that address the continued role and status of translation in Hebrew literature and Israeli culture (**R1, R2**). Combining the roles of translator and scholar in her own work, Jacobs' work often calls attention to poets whose experiences and backgrounds are not duly represented in the global market of translated Israeli literature (**R3, R4, R5, R6**). Israel's political tensions and conflicts are well-known, but through her translations, Jacobs offers readers a more complex, diverse portrait of Israeli culture. In turn, these translations expand the cultural horizons of Anglophone readers.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

*All items authored by Jacobs, unless otherwise stated.*

- R1.** [Authored Book, listed in REF2] 2018. *Strange Cocktail: Translation and the Making of Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9813789>  
Prize: Finalist, 2019 Association for Jewish Studies Jordan Schnitzer Book Award in the category of Jewish Literature and Linguistics
- R2.** [Journal Article] 2017. 'HO! and the Transnational Turn in Contemporary Israeli Poetry'. *Prooftexts* 36.1-2. Special Issue on Jewish/World Literature: 136-166. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2979/prooftexts.36.1-2.06> [on the poets Sivan Beskin, Anna Herman, Dory Manor]
- R3.** [Translation, available on request] 2015. *Women's Hebrew Poetry on American Shores: Poems by Anne Kleiman and Annabelle Farmelant*, trans. Adriana X. Jacobs and Yosefa Raz, ed. Shachar Pinsker (Detroit: Wayne State University Press)

- R4.** [Journal Article] 2015. 'Where You Are From: The Poetry of Vaan Nguyen'. *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 33.4, Contemporary Israeli Literature (Summer): 83-110. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sho.2015.0040>
- R5.** [Chapter] 2020. 'Chapter 7 Extreme Translation', in *Prismatic Translation*, ed. Matthew Reynolds, Transcript, 10 (Cambridge: Legenda), 156–72. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv16km05j.12>
- R6.** [Journal Article] 2018. 'Money, So Much Money: Reading Tahel Frosh's *Avarice*, *Dibur Literary Journal*, Issue 5 (Spring): 87-99. <https://arcade.stanford.edu/dibur/money-so-much-money-reading-tahel-frosh's-avarice>

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

##### Introduced Hebrew poets and poetry to a broader non-specialist audience

Professor Jacobs's research on modern Hebrew poetry and translation has reached a wide, international audience through public lectures, her participation in BBC Radio 3's 'The Verb' (approximately 59,000 live listeners) [R2, E7] and through her publications, which include her monograph *Strange Cocktail: Translation and the Making of Modern Hebrew Poetry* [R1]. As a literary translator, she has contributed directly to expanding the corpus of available contemporary Hebrew and Israeli poetry in translation [R3].

In a public Facebook post, a Yiddish poet and translator implores readers who 'know no Hebrew [to] pick this up if you have interests in poetry and translation' [E1]. Similarly, a blogger and reader of Hebrew literature in translation, drew attention to Jacobs's translations of Annabelle Farmelant: 'With gratitude to Jacobs for making [Farmelant] accessible...like many readers of Hebrew in translation, I can puzzle out words here and there, [...], but would find a whole volume of Hebrew poetry formidable' [R3, E4]. She later remarked in a public Twitter post that her Hebrew poetry study group was reading the translations [R3, E5].

Jacobs has reached wider non-specialist audiences in the UK through a diverse range of talks and events that gathered members of London and Oxford's Jewish communities; poets, writers and translators; and the interested public. She has introduced poets Tahel Frosh (2017, 2019), Roy Chicky Arad (2017) [R6], Marcela Sulak (2017), and Peter Cole (2019), and Israeli filmmaker Yair Qedar (2014, 2020). Of her visit, Sulak reports: 'Not only did I discuss translation strategies with those who had specialized knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish studies, but I also formed professional relationships with several of the faculty members and graduate students'. In 2018, Jacobs co-organized the Yehuda Amichai Poetry Festival (approximately 50 attendees, including members of Oxford's Jewish community), which featured Israeli poet Erez Bitton and UK poet Christopher Reid. She also organized public translation workshops on the work of Yehuda Amichai after which one participant thanked Jacobs for a 'thought-provoking workshop' and who was inspired to attempt their own translation of a poem by Amichai in English, 'taking a couple of liberties, as you can see' [E8].

##### Transformed professional approaches to the translation of modern Hebrew poetry

In May 2016, Jacobs organized a workshop on translating fragments at the Shaindy Rudoff Memorial Conference, Bar-Ilan University in Israel. Free to attend, approximately 60 people took part, including students in the English-language creative writing program and members of the public. That same month, Jacobs spoke to a public audience of approximately 50 people on 'extreme translation' [R5] at the Binyamin Gallery in Tel Aviv on the invitation of their artist-in-residence, who said of her work: 'Part of our problem as a culture... stems from seclusion. We hide behind the Hebrew language and the belief that the whole world is against us. That is why it is important [...] to bring important creators from abroad [...] Jacobs is a steady bridge connecting contemporary Israeli poetry to the world' [E2]. On his blog, he commented: 'The talk has given the Israeli audience a perspective which is hardly ever seen here [...] For me it was an invitation to explore new possibilities [...], especially regarding the reversibility of translation, and the roles of origin and translation in an unoriginal work'. [E2]. After the reading, a translator (a web consultant by profession), posted the following to Facebook: 'I have always looked on poetry translators as active actors, non-neutral in the way they approach an existing work. The

meeting with Adriana, a professor who researches translation and translates herself, illustrated the extent to which translation can be considered an original work [...] (rather than a projection or a derivative of the original). An eye-opening evening' [E1]. Reflecting on the impact of this event on his later work, he observed that 'As a literary translator, I dare say that her work motivates translators to explore and handle texts with additional degrees of freedom. The essence of her study, in my opinion, is an invitation for creativity even in commissioned translation projects'. [E10]. He goes on to describe how this invitation has shaped his own forays in Hebrew to English translation, 'inspired me to write a translation "manifesto" or a translation Ars Poetica poem [...] which is a homage to Hezy Leskly's "Poetry" – the famous Ars Poetica poem in Hebrew, names various tools, techniques and measures which can be employed, either metaphorically or practically, by translators, in order to achieve the ultimate goal—to fuel the "time machine" of the poem and to help the poem evolve. This poem is included in my poetry book, *Hunting a Witch* [...] To sum up, [...] Jacobs has had a profound impact on my creative way of thinking and on my published works'. [E10].

### **Broadened the reach of Hebrew literature to provide consolation and solace in times of modern crisis**

*Women's Hebrew Poetry on American Shores: Poems by Anne Kleiman and Annabelle Farmelant* (214 copies sold to date) featuring Jacob's translations of Farmelant (R3) was part of a collaboration with Shachar Pinsky (University of Michigan) and Yosefa Raz (Haifa University) to expand understandings of Hebrew literature beyond Israel and highlight the still-neglected contributions of women writers in the early to mid-twentieth centuries. One Amazon reviewer remarked: 'So glad to have been exposed to these poets, whose defiant voices offer consolation during our own turbulent times' [E3]. Another reader states 'I have followed her [Jacobs'] career closely, which has led to my being exposed to far more poetry, and certainly Hebrew poetry, than I had ever read or pursued before. In fact, on Jan. 1, 2017, I shared a fragment of [a] Farmelant poem [...] ('Be strong and bold as you approach/ a tomorrow gone mad') [on] Facebook [...] to inspire my friends and family during a bleak time' [E9].

Jacobs has expanded conversations addressing modern crises through her podcast *Staying Alive: Poetry and Crisis* [E11]. Produced by Jacobs, the podcast features interviews with poets from the US, UK, and Israel/Palestine, and discusses crises from the political to the environmental, as well as personal crises like the death of a sibling or the loss of a home. Each episode addresses how poets respond to different types of crisis and the forms and language that they use to address it, as well as the question of poetry's relevance in times of crisis, and what poetry can offer to our understanding. To reach a broad audience, Jacobs publicized the podcast on her public Twitter page where it garnered an enthusiastic reception and led to some unexpected benefits outside the sphere of Hebrew literature [E6]. A listener reports that '*Staying Alive: Poetry and Crisis*...had the greatest impact on my life. In her first episode, [Jacobs] interviewed a poet named Mike Smith, whose work intrigued me. I ended up buying all of his books and then following him on Twitter' [E9]. The listeners' subsequent interactions with Mike Smith encouraged her to return to her own fiction writing, and in the past year, two of her stories have been published by US-based journals.

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**

- E1.** Selection of public Facebook posts – URLs and dates provided, containing endorsement for Jacobs' translation work [contains material in Hebrew].
- E2.** Media coverage by artist-in-residence, Binyamin Gallery, Tel Aviv – URL provided, containing endorsement for Jacobs' work [contains material in Hebrew].
  - i) Public Facebook post, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016
  - ii) Blog post, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016
- E3.** Customer Review on Amazon (US) from 20 March 2016- URL provided, endorsing Jacobs' co-translated book "Women's Hebrew Poetry on American Shores: Poems by Anne Kleiman and Annabelle Farmelant".

- E4.** Blog post from 30 August 2019 – URL provided, confirming Jacobs' role in rendering poetry.
- E5.** Twitter post on 1 September 2019 – URL provided, confirming reach.
- E6.** Podcast analytics (streams, downloads) showing the significance of the impact.
- E7.** Listening figures for Q417 of *The Verb* in BBC Radio 3, containing the BBC Marketing and Audiences analytics. Available from [http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio/commissioning/Radio\\_3 - Friday 2200-2245 FINAL.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio/commissioning/Radio_3_-_Friday_2200-2245_FINAL.pdf)
- E8.** Confidential email from participant endorsing Jacobs' workshop.
- E9.** Letter from reader 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, confirming impact.
- E10.** Letter from poet and literary translator 2020, confirming impact.
- E11.** *Staying Alive: Poetry and Crisis*, podcast – URL provided, confirming the podcast list.