

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Maya Barzilai, associate professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, associate professor of Middle East studies, with tenure, and associate professor of comparative literature, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, professor of Middle East studies, with tenure, and professor of comparative literature, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

2009	Ph.D.	University of California, Berkeley, Comparative Literature
2002	M.A.	Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Comparative Literature
1999	B.A.	Hebrew University of Jerusalem, English and Honors Program

Professional Record:

2022-present	Director, Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan
2020-2021	Co-Head Fellow of the Frankel Institute for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan
2019-2020	Associate Director, Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan
2017-present	Associate Professor, Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and Department of Middle East Studies, University of Michigan
2009-2017	Assistant Professor, Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and Department of Middle East Studies, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Barzilai is a thoughtful and thought-provoking teacher. Her keen pedagogy fosters creative ways to teach twentieth-century literature, film, and comics to students from diverse backgrounds. She teaches a range of cross-listed courses for both Judaic Studies and the Department of Middle East Studies, from undergraduate culture courses to advanced Hebrew language and literature courses and graduate seminars. Her courses are cross-listed with the Departments of Comparative Literature, Film, Television, and Media, Germanic Languages and Literatures, and American Culture, attracting a broad spectrum of our undergraduate and graduate student body. Since her promotion to associate professor, Professor Barzilai has served on six dissertation committees and chaired two in the Departments of Middle East Studies, Comparative Literature, and Film, Television and Media Studies.

Research: Professor Barzilai is a scholar of modern Hebrew and Jewish culture, comparative literature, German literature and film, and translation studies. Her research interests include Israeli and German cinema, translation between Hebrew and German, modern German, Hebrew, and Yiddish literature, with broad political and ethical implications reaching into the issues of violence, persecution, and migration. Since her promotion in 2017, Professor Barzilai has published one monograph, *The Golem, How He Came into the World*, a comprehensive study of the classic German Expressionist film adaptation of the popular medieval legend, as well as four peer-reviewed articles and two book chapters. Three more book chapters are forthcoming in 2023 and one peer-reviewed article is under review. Her work in progress includes a major scholarly monograph project titled *Translation beyond Zionism: The Politics of Emotion in Modern Hebrew-German Exchanges*, as well as an edited translation volume. In her forthcoming monograph, Professor Barzilai offers a

new critical perspective on the dominant concept of “Hebrew Revival,” refuting the model of a uniform, linear, and monolingual development of Hebrew literature.

Recent and Significant Publications:

The Golem, How He Came into the World. Rochester, New York: Camden House, German Film Classics Series, 2020.

“Foreign Coins in Hebrew Gold: Yaakov Fichman and the Gendered Economics of Translation.” *Dibur Literary Journal* 8 (Spring 2020): 5-13.

“‘One Should Finally Learn How to Read This Breath:’ Paul Celan and the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible.” *Comparative Literature* 71, no. 4 (2019): 436-454.

“The Lost German City: Leah Goldberg’s Berlin.” *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 30 (2019): 143-168 [Hebrew].

Service: As a member of the curriculum committee in the Department of Middle East Studies (MES) (2015-2018), in her role as the associate director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies (2019-2020), and as a member and chair of the curriculum committee (2019-2020), Professor Barzilai made teaching an urgent priority. She worked closely with members of the committee and with other faculty members, organized workshops, and planned and led a faculty retreat and faculty-student colloquia. In MES, she served on the review committee of the Hebrew Studies director and provided pedagogical support for updating the curriculum of the Hebrew program. Since 2012, she has served as a member of the MES Board, representing the Transcultural Studies Program. In 2020-2021, Professor Barzilai served as a co-head fellow of the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies for the theme year on “Translating Jewish Culture.” Prior to this, she had served for three years on the steering committee of the Institute (2011, 2018, 2020). In 2019, she was the elected member of the Faculty Senate Assembly, and has served during the last challenging three years of COVID. She is now serving as the director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies (2022-2025).

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: “I sent several articles of Barzilai’s to colleagues in disparate fields around the world; this is testament to what I think of the work, and how useful I think it is, widely speaking.”

Reviewer B: “One of the aspects that struck me most...is the superb quality of Barzilai’s writing. She has an unusually clear prose style—something I’ve noted in her other writings as well—devoid of jargon or opaque language or obfuscation of any kind, which enhances the study’s potential to reach a wide audience of scholars, students, and general readers, specifically those interested in the history of motion pictures and in Jewish and German cultural history.”

Reviewer C: “Given the richness of her research on the relationship between modern Hebrew and German literature, the originality of her thought in general and the compelling nature of her scholarly record so far, it is clear to me that Professor Barzilai has reached the status of a well-established and widely recognized scholar in her field.”

Reviewer D: “Maya Barzilai is an accomplished scholar of early twentieth century culture and literature, in particular Hebrew and German poetry. She excels as a close reader of texts—both filmic and literary—and is a rigorous scholar well-versed in the broader debates about language, translation, culture, and Jewish cultures. She has already made, and continues to make, an original contribution in the fields of Hebrew literature and culture, in particular on German-Hebrew literary encounters. She is able to work not only between the languages that are at the center of her research,

but even more significantly she grounds her analyses in a wide-ranging body of work in the humanities more broadly.”

Reviewer E: “I think the chapters I read of the translation book are truly outstanding. Translation Studies is a growing field in Jewish Studies, and Professor Barzilai brings it into contact with cutting-edge trends in an exciting field. In particular, she is working at the intersections of TS and affect theory, on the one hand, and animal studies, on the other.”

Reviewer F: “Dr. Barzilai’s contributions to the area of Jewish, Hebrew and German (comparative) studies were and continue to be of great value. Her engagement with dual corpus of Hebrew and German, mostly in the framework of modern Jewish literature and culture, from Kafka and Agnon to Paul Celan, is original and creative one [sic].”

Summary of Recommendation:

A multidisciplinary scholar working on the intersection of literature, film, and translation studies, Professor Barzilai has made significant contributions to the planning of scholarly and pedagogic events both within and beyond her two departments. She now steps into the role of the director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies as a strong asset to its future and to the college and the university. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Maya Barzilai be promoted to the rank of professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, professor of Middle East studies, with tenure, and professor of comparative literature, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Anne Curzan, Dean
Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of
English Language and Literature, Linguistics,
and Education
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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