

YIDDISH LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC PERIODICALS AND MISCELLANIES:

A Selective Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

Modern Yiddish Literature and the Modern Yiddish Press

The history of modern Yiddish literature and the history of the Yiddish press are intricately interwoven. The classical triumvirate of Yiddish letters, Mendele Moykher-Sforim, Sholem-Aleykhem and Y.-L. Perets were deeply involved with the press and would have had radically different literary careers had it not been for the press. Mendele was one of those who encouraged Aleksander Tsederboym in 1862 to publish Kol-mevaser. His Dos kleyne mentshele, which appeared in Kol-mevaser in 1864, and which marks Mendele's beginning as a Yiddish author, is often regarded as the terminus a quo of modern Yiddish literature. Mendele also planned with Byalik and Ravnitski to establish a Yiddish journal in Odessa. Sholem-Aleykhem published and edited one of the first prestigious literary journals in Yiddish -- one which payed its authors -- Dos yudishe folks-biblyotek. He was a regular contributor to Der fraynd, the first Yiddish daily in Russia, and to many others. Perets published and edited a series of periodicals and was closely involved with the Yiddish press generally. For a time he served as editor of the feuilleton section of the daily Der veg. The press gave Yiddish writers an audience, impelling and partly shaping their creativity; the audience in turn came to expect stories, poems and essays in their papers and learned to demand them. A large percentage of Yiddish writers have published their work in periodicals. To sketch these immensely varied publications, the prime vehicles of Yiddish literature, is to illuminate its history.

Old Yiddish literature was written in Western Yiddish, a geographical variant of Yiddish closer to New High German than is Eastern Yiddish. Western Yiddish continued to be the language of Yiddish literature in Eastern Europe in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This meant that, as in China and many Arab countries, a gap existed between the vernacular and the literary language. Modern Yiddish literature became possible when, in the Yiddish-speaking landmass of Eastern Europe, writing began to form itself on the spoken language. When, in the middle of the nineteenth century, a secular vernacular literature began to actualize, it was faced by a number of obstacles. The nascent Yiddish press helped to neutralize and overcome them.

Aided by pre-scientific prejudice, Yiddish was denied the status of language and was deemed a jargon. Its cultivation was opposed by many who saw a direct and necessary relationship between speaking Yiddish and social and intellectual backwardness. Jewish distinctness of dress, manners, attitudes, way of life generally -- including speech -- was for many maskilim ('enlighteners') a principal cause of antisemitism. When Jews made the majority tongue their own, their harmonious integration into general society would ensue. Thus it was folly for the folk to insist on

"its own" language, when it could make "its own" the landsprache, the 'language of the country.' Since Yiddish was merely a corrupt form of German, the Jew could, by holding on to Hebrew for spiritual and intellectual needs and using German (or Russian or Polish) for all other purposes, enter the general society and be true to himself and his past. Many maskilim cultivated Hebrew -- familiar to the Jew, respected by all, suitable for abstract thought -- as a medium for secular expression. A minority of intellectuals adopted Russian as their literary language. Thus, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have witnessed language conflict of varying degrees of intensity among Jews in Eastern Europe and in the lands to which they immigrated, especially the Land of Israel. The Yiddish press was an active combatant in this conflict, which cannot be studied without taking into account the enormous range of its activity.

The rise of Yiddish literature is related not only to linguistic conflict, but also to its antithesis, the multilingualism which dominated Eastern European Jewish intellectual life for several crucial generations. The Yiddish press and modern secular Yiddish literature are facets of a larger cultural development which included Hebrew journalism and letters and Russian- and Polish-language press and literature by and for Jews. The Yiddish writer who could write only Yiddish is a late development. Yiddish journalism began in a world where virtually all Jewish writers were at least bilingual.

The Yiddish press may, from one perspective, be seen as an expression of linguistic self-assertion. In a larger historical context it may be viewed as a reflection of a profound cultural change in Jewish life and a means by which that change expressed itself. Zionism, socialism, territorialism, folkism, anarchism, communism, Yiddishism, Hebraism, cultural autonomism, Polonism (and other varieties of assimilationism) can all be seen as varying forms of a single process whose origins lie in the industrial revolution and its complex effects. A highly integrated centuries-old traditional culture (which Max Weinreich has termed derekh hashas 'the talmudic way of life') was severely shaken by urbanization and secularization. But, as Weinreich has so convincingly shown, the folk-tongue weathered the transition to modern times, rooted though it was in the shtetl culture. The Yiddish press both facilitated this modernization process and is evidence of it.

The obvious advantages of Yiddish throughout the period of social and cultural breakup were its almost exclusive use by the masses of Jews and, consequently, its vitality. The maskilim gradually concluded that Yiddish was an inevitable instrumentality for their educational program. In writer after writer, what is at first tolerated as a means comes to be valued for itself. But champions of Yiddish among the learned were few in the mid-nineteenth century.

Kol-mevaser (Odessa, 1862-1873), the first Yiddish periodical in modern times, like modern Yiddish literature itself, was born in the most unencouraging circumstances. Its publishers, Aleksander Tsederboym and his

son-in-law, Y.-A. Goldnblum, were Russifiers, opposed to the cultivation of Yiddish for any but the most rudimentary and utilitarian functions. Like most maskilim of the 1860's, they were contemptuous of Yiddish. The first Yiddish periodical crops up in the Ukraine with a Hebrew title, as though this would magically disinfect it. It is a "Baylage tsum Hamelits in yudish-doytshe shprakhe," a supplement to the prestigious Hebrew-language maskilic organ, Hamelits. This very same Hamelits had started to appear half in Hebrew and half in German written in Jewish letters. The bilingual Hamelits pleased neither the Hebrew- nor the German-reading audience. Tsederboym was pressed by contemporary enthusiasts for Yiddish such as Y.-M. Lifshits and others (including Mendele) to consider the needs of the vast solely Yiddish-reading population. In his decision to issue Kol-mevaser as a Yiddish weekly, Tsederboym gave impetus to a release of energies which had long been pent up. He himself eventually grew attached to his Yiddish-language journal, despite his initial contempt for Yiddish.

To track subsequent journals with any degree of sure-footedness, one needs to keep the historical and geographical contexts in mind, particularly the multilingualism above referred to and the cross-fertilization which accompanied it. As pointed out by Malakhi (Yidn in ukraine, Vol.2, New York, 1967, p. 128), Sholem-Aleykhem modeled his Di yudishe folks-biblyotek (Kiev, 1888-1889) on the yearbook, a popular form in the 1880's and particularly on the successful Hebrew-language Heasif (1884-1888; 1893). Contemporary Hebrew writers were not unaware of the European cultural scene. Ahad Haam's Bney Moshe group founded the Hebrew journal Hashiloach (1896-1926) "striving to make it the Hebrew equivalent of high-culture European journalism, like The Nineteenth Century" (Lucy Dawidowicz, The Golden Tradition, p. 53). The example of Russian literary journals and miscellanies doubtless influenced the first truly European Yiddish journal, Di yidishe velt (Vilna, 1913-1916). (Kirzhnits has called Yidishes folks-blat [St. Petersburg, 1881-1890] "the first modern European periodical in Yiddish," but, important as it doubtless is, it lacks the sophistication of Di yidishe velt.) Europe and America provided models for every conceivable kind of periodical. Familienzeitschrift appeared on the title of a periodical for the first time in Germany in 1840 (see E. A. Kirschstein, Die Familienzeitschrift, Charlottenburg, 1937). By 1887 Mordkhe Spektor had adopted the principle of a "family magazine" in his Der familjen fraynd (Warsaw, 1887-1888). A further stage of domestication is implicit in the title of a later journal, Di yudishe [yidishe] familje (1902), a periodical worth taking a close look at.

In the first issue of Di yudishe familje, the editor complains that the only popular literature in Yiddish is cheap reprints of romances that always end in death or marriage. "Mir viln frir far aleman az dos folk zol visn un kenen zayn eygn lebn mit zayne felern un mayles." The folk must become aware of its own life with all its shortcomings and merits. It can

be helped in this by fiction which reflects that life truthfully. Imaginative writing was part of the enlightener's program, though he hardly needed to teach Yiddish readers to enjoy stories. They already possessed that ability.

Once its audience had been created, the Yiddish periodical could not be squelched, regardless of external obstacles. Once Yiddish writers had tasted the joys of reaching millions with their words, mere governmental suppression could not hold them back. During the period when the Czarist authorities halted publication of Yiddish-language periodicals, writers like Y.-L. Perets contributed stories to the radical Yiddish press in New York -- the Abend blat and Di tsukunft (see NL 7:245). When it was illegal to publish in Yiddish in Russia, journals were printed in Cracow, which was then in Austria, for distribution across the border in Russia.

Writers vs. Journalists

Owing to their small numbers and common interests, Yiddish journalists and Yiddish litterateurs have invariably been organized together in one association. In the largest of all Jewish writer groups (outside of present-day Israel), the Association of Jewish Writers and Journalists in Warsaw (which included Hebrew writers), there was nonetheless a distinct section known as the Literatn-klub. Such a situation was quite unusual. Most Yiddish journalists regarded themselves as serious writers and most of the serious writers depended on the daily press for at least part of their income. Despite this common dependency, the creative writer's relationship to the press was, for a variety of reasons, often a strained one. This strain was often the principal pressure behind the establishment of literary journals.

Though the pattern differs from period to period and country to country, there is always a sense of "lower" and "higher" within journalism and as between journalism and "literature." Not only did a weekly literary supplement add prestige to a daily, but a literary monthly raised the status of a weekly -- as we see in the case of Di yudishe velt (1928) vis a vis Literarishe bleter. The problem, however, was not simply that of a pecking order. There was a feeling at a certain point that the daily press occupied too large a cultural space. In castigating Jewish America for its materialism and inner corruption, Noyekh Shteynberg complained that "Dos yidishe amerike lebt zikh oys gaystik in di tsaytungen." ('Jewish America lives spiritually in the newspapers.') [Idish amerike, New York, 1930, p. 11] The book, the journal and the serious play were continually counterposed to the omnivorous daily newspaper, whose immense success was regarded as a danger. For Shteynberg, the daily press represented external civilization threatening internal culture.

A steady diet of journalism may have endangered the inner life of the reader, but more immediate to the writer was his relation to the newspaper as actual or potential employer. The writer's criticisms of the daily

press were many, and sometimes they smacked of sour grapes. Shteynberg complained that "if a writer doesn't work for a newspaper he is overlooked." More than a decade earlier than Idish amerike, Shteynberg together with the poet Zishe Vaynper edited a journal, Der onhoib ('The Beginning') [New York, 1917-1918], aimed at attracting beginning writers and others who wished to be independent of "professional anarchists, socialists and onshikenishn ('nuisances') who happen to dominate today's press." Whether out of a desire to avoid politics or because they wanted a more prestigious or less philistine outlet than the daily newspaper, writers established independent, non-ideological journals.

In Montreal in 1925, Yisroel Rabinovitch, a leading editor of the Keneder adler, attempted to create a prestigious literary journal. However, his Kanade (q.v.) lasted for only three issues. In 1921, writers on the staff of the Buenos Aires daily, Di idishe [yidish] tsaytung, published a monthly entitled Argentine, in which they presented their best belletristic and publicistic works, those which were "more polished than those appearing in the dailies" (Rozhanski, p. 365). The literary group Zeglen ('Sails'), publisher of the journal of the same name, refused to admit to its ranks members of the editorial staffs of any of the dailies. Its program was "to free writers from the hegemony of journalists and literature from the influence of the press, for the modernization and polishing of Yiddish form and style" (Rozhanski, p. 365). Zeglen is reported to have created a furor but left few permanent traces. In the Argentine, as in America, the Yiddish daily press was enormously successful and supplied as much serious writing as the average reader required. The Zeglen group dispersed because of inter-generational conflict, but it is doubtful if it could have long continued outside the powerful orbit of the daily press.

Tension between writers and partisan journals gave rise to purely literary periodicals such as Di fraye shtunde (New York) as early as 1904. More often, partisanship spurred the creation of new partisan journals. Rozhanski (p. 364) tells us that in the turbulent twenties in Argentina, the pro-Communists, in order "to create positions outside the three dailies," opened a "literary front" by establishing a series of cultural-political organs (e.g. Royte shtern, Nayvelt, Der idisher [yidisher] poyer, Pioner).

Nakhmen Mayzl has claimed that the phenomenon of Di yunge was principally "a 'revolt' against the Yiddish press, which had treated Yiddish literature and Yiddish writers like stepchildren" (Tsurikblikn un perspektivn, p. 35). Mani-Leyb and Dovid Ignatov, members of the Yugend [Yugnt] circle, refused to write for the daily press (see Reyzn 4:39). Khayim Aleksandrov, two years before the appearance of Di yugend [Yugnt] (1907), had criticized the American Yiddish press, blaming it for the low level of taste in America ("Di yidishe literatur in amerike," Dos lebn, St. Petersburg, 1905). Presumably it was to raise that level that Di yunge sought avenues of expression independent of the daily press.

In the relations between literature and journalism or journals and newspapers, we must not look for a single pattern, and certainly not for an intractably philistine daily press. Rozhanski (p. 371 ff.) has claimed that in Argentina newspapers and journals were on a higher level than books, and dailies on a higher level than non-dailies. This is dramatically opposed to what we would normally expect. To the degree to which it is true it can only be explained by the power of the dailies to monopolize talent.

Poets may have been piqued by the insensitivity of newspaper editors to their work or by the vulgarity of the daily press, but it would be wrong to imply that the press was indifferent to literature. Nizer has described the situation in America very well: "The Jewish immigrants in America, as in England (the transit center for many of them) lived a freer and more secular life than they had in the old home. Despite the conditions of the sweatshop, they found ways to enjoy the pleasures of this world, including the pleasures of reading stories. This desire was aided by the fact that in America they had become accustomed to reading, first weeklies, then dailies. The press in general played a large role in disseminating Yiddish belles lettres. The press was the intermediary between the readers and the writers, the trashy and the 'literary' ones." (*Dertseylers un romanistn*, p. 98)

Joshua A. Fishman summarizes the audience-press relationship as follows: "...the Yiddish press represents the acme of mass Yiddish literacy. With the double exception of a very few extremely popular authors, on the one hand, and Yiddish commentaries and translations of religious staples, on the other hand, the masses of Yiddish readers associated Yiddish with the newspaper and the newspaper alone. Thus, whereas even the most popular of Yiddish books and booklets may have reached only hundreds of thousands of readers, the Yiddish press reached millions and did so regularly." As regards the author-press relationship, Fishman writes that "most Yiddish authors were / are also the mainstays of the Yiddish periodical press. The modern world of Yiddish books is to a large extent a by-product of the Yiddish press, for had not the latter subsidized the former (both in the sense of paying wages / honorariums to the authors and being the first arena in which new books, in serialized fashion, saw the light of day) the books themselves would frequently not have appeared." Fishman concludes that "for the lion's share of readers of the press, the books remained unseen and unknown and only the press itself remained to typify the world of Yiddish-in-print." (*Never Say Die*, p. 33)

In both Europe and America it was customary to publish novels in installments in the daily press or in their weekly supplements. Y. Y. Zinger in the Warsaw *Haynt*, Yitskhok Bashevis in the New York *Forverts* and Avrom Reyzn in the *Forverts* and the New York *Tog* were steady fare for tens of thousand of readers. The Yiddish dailies and weeklies also gave literary premiums to new subscribers, thereby disseminating the works of classic authors such as Mendele (whose collected writings in Yiddish were

offered to readers of *Der moment*) and Sholem-Aleykhem (published in popular editions for readers of both the *Forverts* and the *Morgn-frayhayt*). In 1911 the New York satirical weekly *Der groyser kundes sold Perets'* miscellany *Yiddish* (two volumes bound in one) for \$.50 and gave it away free to new subscribers. On balance it seems that the Yiddish press did more good than harm to Yiddish literature. The relationship was one of mutual strengthening. In America especially, where immigrants earned more than their brethren in Europe, the habitual newspaper reader might occasionally buy a literary magazine. But it can not be sufficiently emphasized that the literary journal in Yiddish was cultivated by a minority for a minority.

The Yiddish Journal and the Arts

The creation of literary journals was not merely a revolt against the press. It was closely bound up with the cultural reawakening associated with the Czernowicz [Tshernovits] Conference in 1908 and its aftermath. Literary journals were necessary handmaidens of a conscious worldwide effort to cultivate the Yiddish language as a serious literary vehicle. *Di yugend* [Yugnt] [1907-1908] in America and *Literarishe monatshriftn* [1908] and *Di nay tsayt* [1907-1908] in Europe are devoted solely to literature, which enjoys a certain autonomy. This is quite remarkable, since less than two decades earlier didacticism still reigned in Yiddish literature.

Periodicals devoted wholly to imaginative writing, with or without prose criticism and book reviews, indicate a certain level of literary culture and help us to relate Yiddish literature to the larger literary (and not merely Jewish) scene. It is no accident that in sketching the terrain of American Yiddish writing, Moyshe Shtarkman defines its several trends or schools by naming groups associated with specific literary journals (see *Hemshekh antologye*, New York, 1945, p. [14]). Moreover, he names no fewer than three groups of writers after the journals for which they wrote: *Feder*, *Fayln* and *Tsuzamen* / *Leym un tsigl*. He dates the proletarian stream from *Yung-kuznye*, seeing it broadening through the later publications of the "Proletpen" group. It is unquestionable that American Yiddish writing was to some degree shaped by literary journals which themselves expressed the esthetic and other loyalties of loosely or closely bound groups of writers.

The history of the two most important American Yiddish literary groupings, *Di yunge* ('Young Ones') and *Inzikhistn* ('Introspectivists') can perhaps best be written with reference to their publications. The evolution of a distinctly American, esthetically self-conscious school of Yiddish writing can be traced from *Di yugend* [Yugnt] (1907-1908) through *Literatur* (1910), *Dos naye land* (1911-1912), *Shriftn* (1912-1916), *Di naye heyim* (1914), *Fun mentsh tsu mentsh* (1915), *Velt ayn velt oys* (1916) and *Ist-brodvey* (1916). The introspectivists make their debut with a manifesto in the miscellany *In zikh* (1920), and their individualism, rhythms and

imagery are evident in a number of publications, mainly Inzikh (1920-1940), but also others (e.g. Kern, 1930).

Turning from schools of writers to individuals, we note, for example, that the career of Yankev Glatshetyn as a prose writer started with his installments of Ven Yash iz geforn in Inzikh in 1934. Yitskhok Bashevis won recognition from the discriminating readers of Globus and Swive in the 1930's and 1940's. Z. Libin got his start in Di tsukunft. A. Raboy first published his Her Goldnberg - - hailed as the first broad treatment in Yiddish of Jewish life in America - - in Shriftn 4. His second and third works of fiction appeared in Der indzl (1917) and Shriftn 5 (1919), respectively. The importance of the little magazines and miscellanies for the struggling Yiddish creative writer can hardly be exaggerated.

The development of a modern Yiddish literary consciousness went hand in hand with the growth of interest in all the plastic arts. Writers and artists interacted, often planned journals together and saw their efforts as related. We see this in the activities of Yankl Adler and other Lodz figures who wrote as well as painted and drew. Mark Shvarts may also be mentioned in connection with Lodz. Mark Shagal [= Marc Chagall] is another painter who is close to Yiddish literature and theater. A number of journals devoted space to the fine arts. In this connection we can mention Milgroym (Berlin), Oyfgang (Warsaw) and Shriftn (New York). Bleter 40 was to have included art works. Di naye renesans (New York) was a short-lived effort to cultivate the savoir-faire necessary to buyers of paintings.

A look at Ezra Lahad's "Bibliography of Yiddish Drama" (in Yidishe teater in eyrope, New York, 1971, pp. 323-381) makes clear the role of literary journals in the history of Yiddish drama and theater. Journals could print plays that were too "literary" or too experimental for the stage. The best of the journals printed plays: Der yud, Perets' Di yudishe vokhnshrift and Di yudishe biblyotek, Di yudishe velt, Hemshekh, Ringen, Globus, Shriftn and many others. Journals also reviewed plays and published photographs of theatrical settings, helping to make theater an integral part of the Yiddish cultural enterprise.

Pulse-Taking

Yiddish culture has not only experienced a phenomenal growth; it has been self-consciously aware of itself all the way along. In a typical self-measuring article, "Fun peretses Yudishe biblyotek biz Varshever shriftn" (Literarishe bleter 9, March 4, 1927, 161-163), Nakhmen Mayzl notes that in Poland alone in 1927 there are fifteen dailies (with a total printing of over 100,000) and forty weeklies (with a total printing of 100,000). A year later Maks Erik dates the beginning of Yiddish academic scholarship with the Pinkes of 1913 (in Di yudishe velt, May 1928). In 1929, in another pulse-taking essay, Aleksander Mukdoyni asserts that America is merely the sponge that soaks up Eastern European creativity. There may have been some measure of truth in this claim, but we cannot help but note

that more literary journals were produced in the U.S.A. than in Poland and more literary innovations were first registered in the U.S.A. However, without immigrants from Eastern Europe the Yiddish readership was fated to grow smaller and smaller. The physical and cultural destruction wrought by Hitler and Stalin respectively have irreparably altered the characteristic act of self-appraisal. Yiddish culture today knows that its condition is critical. Yet as long as such quality journals as Di goldene keyt continue to find writers and readers; as long, indeed, as Yiddish little magazines continue to appear anywhere, lovers of Yiddish will continue to take heart.

Selection of Entries

Yiddish Literary and Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies: A Selective Annotated Bibliography aims to serve students of Yiddish language and literature as well as students of related disciplines such as Jewish folklore, Eastern European Jewish history, Jewish onomastics and others. It provides a selective guide to Yiddish periodicals, excluding dailies, which were wholly or partly literary. It annotates the most important journals and, frequently, gives sample contents. It assists the librarian or collector in establishing the scarcity or availability of items. In most instances, it indicates where the item may be found. It also cites references where more information about the journal can be sought. Where the item has been noted in bibliographies or reference works, this too is often recorded. It lists the contributors to each journal, sometimes copiously and sometimes selectively. At the very least it attempts to list a few representative names. It also records (alphabetically rather than chronologically) the editors of the periodical.

In choosing items for inclusion I have sought: 1) the most important Yiddish literary and linguistic periodicals and miscellanies, those which every student of Yiddish literature and language should know, and 2) a representative body of periodicals, including amateurish efforts, short-lived experiments, bibliophilic rarities and weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies of partly literary character.

The principal emphasis in this bibliography is literary, but no major Yiddish linguistic periodical has been omitted. Students of Yiddish linguistics need to be aware of Yivo publications, principally the current Yidishe shprakh, the earlier Filologishe shriftn and Yidish far ale. They should also know the Kiev and Minsk serials of the 1920's and 1930's (Shriftn, Tsaytshrift, Lingvistiche zamlung, Di yidishe shprakh). Today Yiddish linguistic scholarship of merit can be found in the English-language Field of Yiddish (1954-) and Jewish Language Review (1981-).

The total number of periodicals which might have been included in this bibliography for one reason or another would have swelled the list to several thousand. A complete list of Yiddish periodicals does not exist,