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**Roskies, David G. A Bridge of Longing:  
The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling.**

Harvard Univ. Pr. Jul. 1995. c.407p.  
permanent paper. illus. index. ISBN 0-  
674-08139-0. \$20. LT

Yiddish literature flourished for 175 years, renewed by masters of storytelling in a process Roskies calls "creative betrayal." From Reb Nahman of Bratslav, dying young, Keatslike, of consumption in 1810 to I.B. Singer re-creating elements of the *shtetl* in post-Holocaust New York, the major writers remade the tradition by turning its archetypal elements to new, sometimes seemingly perverse purposes.

But key elements remained fixed: amid mysticism and skepticism, surrealism and modernism, the folk material—from *rebbes* to goats—survive; despite changing social and linguistic patterns, the common quest is for redemption; and, uniquely in this tradition, an internal storyteller is always present, whether he is Sholem Aleichem (Mr. How-do-you-do) or Singer's perverse voice of the devil himself. Roskies's scope is encyclopedic, his grasp of the ever-changing Yiddish language sure. In this monumental literary history are the seeds for more flowerings of the tradition.—Alan Cooper, York Coll., CUNY