

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
Gershon Kekst Graduate School

Fall 2021

Prof. David G. Roskies

MJS/LIT 5506x ***Crossing Delancey: Yiddish Writing in America in Translation.***
Monday 2:45-5:25

Unt. 506

Ext 8914

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Course description: Yiddish in America—the Yiddish press, theater and schools; Yiddish popular song, Yiddish prose, poetry, drama and memoir; Yiddish radio and film—represents a great cultural achievement. Sadly neglected for over half a century, enough has been translated into English that it can now be pieced back together and become a living legacy.

Course goals: The goals of this course are threefold:

(1) To closely examine the major landmarks of this culture—the American-Yiddish press, music, theater, prose fiction, poetry—in order of their accessibility.

(2) To go from layer to layer: from popular to highbrow culture; from the iconic to the idiosyncratic; from satire and schmaltz to psychological realism and high modernism.

(3) To cover the historical sweep of Yiddish-American culture: from its proletarian beginnings, to its heady embrace of American vistas, to a negotiated return to Jewish themes and Jewish fate.

Course objectives: To discover the past significance and present meaning of Yiddish-American culture and literature.

Required texts (available for purchase on–line, at Book Culture on 112th Street and on library reserve)

Benjamin & Barbara Harshav, eds. *American Yiddish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology* (University of California Press. (=AYP)

<https://www.bookculture.com/book/9780804751704>

Nahma Sandrow - *God, Man, and Devil: Yiddish Plays in Translation.* Syracuse University Press, 1999. PJ5191 E5G64 1999.

<https://www.bookculture.com/book/9780815627876>

Expectations & Assessment: The final grade will be based on two writing assignments, as follows:

One midterm paper (5-8 pages), due **Sunday October 20**. Worth 33% of the final grade.

Final take home exam. 66% of final grade.

Disability Policy: The JTS policy on disabilities may be found at http://my.jtsa.edu/ICS/Policies/Students_with_Disabilities.jnz

Academic Integrity: Students in this class are expected to maintain academic integrity; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. JTS Student Disciplinary Procedures can be found at: http://my.jtsa.edu/ICS/Policies/Student_Disciplinary_Procedures.jnz

JTS students are expected to bear sole responsibility for their work, to learn the rules and definitions that underlie the practice of academic integrity and to uphold its ideals.

The Month of Sept. **Global Overviews of American Yiddish/Jewish Culture**

1. Benjamin Harshav, "Yiddish Poetry in America," "American Yiddish Artists," *American Yiddish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology [AYP]*, 27-35, 54-62.
2. Ellen D. Kellman, "Entertaining New Americans: Serialized fiction in the 'Forverts' (1910-1930)," *Jews and American Popular Culture*. Vol. 2: *Music, Theater, Popular Art, and Literature*. Edited by Paul Buhle. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007, chap. 12. **Canvas.**
3. Avraham Novershtern, *Kan gar ha'am hayehudi: sifrut yidish be'artsot habrit* (Here Dwells the Jewish People: A Century of American Yiddish Literature). In *geveb* (August 2015). <http://ingeveb.org/articles/review-here-dwells-the-jewish-people>
4. Alexandra Polyan, "Reflections of REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN AMERICAN YIDDISH. POETRY: THE CASE OF PROLETEN." <https://brill.com/previewpdf/book/edcoll/9789401210782/B9789401210782-s012.xml>
5. Ruth R. Wisse, "Language as Fate: Reflections on Jewish Literature in America," *Literary Strategies: Jewish Texts and Contents*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (= *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 12) (Oxford UP: 1996): 129-47. **Canvas.**

13 Sept. **The New Yiddish Sound = The Golden Peacock in America**



Sholem Aleichem - Sleep My Child (1892)

Morris Rosenfeld - My Little Son (1887), My Resting Place

Morris Winchewsky - The Future

David Edelstadt - In Strife, My Testament (1889)

Shloyme Shmulewitz - A Letter to Mama (1913)

Isidore Lillian - Greetings from the Trenches (1917)

J. Leiserowitz - The Greenhorn Cousin (1922)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OeuF60eb1o>

Olshanetsky & Jacobs - Belz

Bernie & Coslow - Levine With Your Flying Machine (1927)

Henry Sapoznik – The Yiddish Radio Project Exhibits Levine and His Flying Machine

<https://www.henrysapoznik.com/levine>

Mark Slobin, *Tenement Songs: The Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants* (Illinois, 1982), chap. 6. **Canvas**.

4 Oct. **Shtetl, Sweatshop, Coney Island: The Serial Novel**



Sholem Asch - *Uncle Moses* (1918) - xeroxed bilingual text.

Adam Strom, The Bintel Brief: Letters from Jewish Life on New York's Lower East Side (with Anita Norich). 11:39. <https://vimeo.com/291170759>

Scenes from *Uncle Moses*, dir. Maurice Schwartz (USA, 1930)

11 Oct.

Jews Without Money: The New Yiddish Theater

Jacob Gordin - *God, Man, and Devil* (1900) - Sandrow
Scenes from 1950 film version.



Osip Dimov - *Bronx Express: A Dream in Three Acts with a Prologue and an Epilogue* (1919, 1926) - Sandrow

18 Oct.

The Aesthetic Revolution aka Di Yunge

Mani Leyb - I Have My Mama's Black Hair, Hush, I Am the Creeper, Yingl, Tsingl Scamp - illustrated El Lissitzky; Come, Serene Plainness; Seven Brothers, My Papa, Avrom Lyesin and I; I Am...

Zishe Landau - Epilogue, I, the People and the Waitress, Verses, Tuesday, August 28, 1915, Pleasures of the Soul, This Evening, Of Course I Know, And Discussing in the Café, At the Silent Movies, For All that Ever Has Been Ours, The Holy Balshemtov

Joseph Rolnik - Home from Praying, The Net, The First Cigarette [Rolnik is in a separate file]



Benjamin Harshav, "Yiddish Poetry in America," 27-35 - **AYP**.
 Ruth R. Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan: Two Yiddish Poets*
 (Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 1-20, 21-44. **Canvas**.
Reuben Iceland – With Zishe Landau (1954) – trans. Gerald Marcus, *PaknTreger*
 (Fall 2010): 32-39. <http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/language-literature-culture/pakn-treger/zishe-landau>

25 Oct. **Two Impressionists**

פראדעל שטאק — אפטיאנאטיאדי
 ש'ע ריכטערין. געבארען אין יאר 1880 אין סטאר
 א, א סלין שטעטל אין נאליצין. אין 1907
 האט זי אויסגעוואנדערט קיין אמעריקא, וואו זי
 האט אין 1910 רעזיגנירט מיט איהר ערשטן
 לער. שפעטער האט זי אנגיייל געוואסן אין פאר
 שידענע אמעריקאנישע אויסגאבען ווי די
 גליק הייל, גילטנפער און פרייע ארכייסטרי
 שטימע. פראדעל שטאק איז א באריימטער דיכ
 טערין און שרייבער אין א מינימע פריינטעלעך
 פארן אויסער דעם און זי איז די ערשטע, וואס
 האט ארויסגעבראכט דעם סאנעט אין אידיש. שפע
 טער האט זי אויך פגעשריבען א רייע אויסגע
 צייכענען דעראפער. וואס האבען געצויגען
 א ספעציעלע אויספערשואפטיק, ביזל. זי הא
 געוואסן, אין פרייע ארכייסטרי שטימע, 1954.

פראדעל שטאק.



**Lamed Shapiro – Smoke (1915) – bilingual format;
 Newyorkish (1931) –bilingual format,**

Fradel Shtok – At the Mill (1919); A Dance

Fradel Shtok, A Shtetl Poet

<https://sites.google.com/site/fradelshtok/home>

Fradel Shtok. "A Dance." *In geveb*, December 2017: Trans. Sonia Gollance.

<https://ingeveb.org/texts-and-translations/a-dance>.

Leah Garrett, "Introduction" to *The Cross and other Jewish Stories* by Lamed Shapiro (2006). **Canvas**

Gollance, Sonia. "A Dance: Fradel Shtok Reconsidered." *In geveb*, December 2017:

<https://ingeveb.org/articles/a-dance-fradel-shtok-reconsidered>.

1 Nov.

Cityscapes



Morris Rosenfeld - The Sweatshop (2 poems)

Yehoash - Subway, Woolworth Tower, Broadway, In the Cinema, In the Crowd

Zishe Landau - In the El

A. Leyeles - Wall Street, Manhattan Bridge, In the Subway, Storms and Towers (1926)

H. Leivick – Shop (1926) – Sandrow

Moyshe Nadir - Display Windows of New York, One of 365 Days (1931)

G. M. Hyde, "The Poetry of the City," in *Modernism: 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury & James McFarlane (Penguin, 1976), pp. 337-48.

"Introspectivism," – **AYP**, 36-44, Appendix: Manifesto, Chronicle of a Movement.

Nov. 8

American Epic, Black America

I. J. Schwartz – *Kentucky: New Earth* (1922) –Xeroxed bilingual format

Berish Vaynshteyn – *Negroes* (1936) – **AYP**, 637-648.

Gertrude Dubrovsky, "Introduction" to *Kentucky*. PJ 5129 A4S298 K413 1990.

Julian Levinson, "Walt Whitman among the Yiddish Poets," *Tikkun* (Sept-Oct. 2003).

Rachel Rubinstein, "Going Native, Becoming Modern," *Members of the Tribe: Native America in the Jewish Imagination*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2010, chap. 2.

Nov. 15

The Caged Lion

Moyshe-Leyb Halpern – AYP, 393-430.



Benjamin Harshav, On talk-verse, **AYP**, 15-17.

Julian Levinson, "Modernism from Below: Moyshe-Leyb Halpern and the Situation of Yiddish Poetry," *Jewish Social Studies*, 10.3. (2004): 143- 160. **Canvas.**

Ruth R. Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan: Two Yiddish Poets* (Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 48-55. **Canvas**

Nov. 22

The Masks of Anna Margolin

Drunk from the Bitter Truth: The Poems of Anna Margolin, ed. & trans. Shirley Kumove (SUNY 2005). **Canvas.**



Barbara Mann, "Picturing the Poetry of Anna Margolin," *Modern Language Quarterly* 63 (2002): 501-36.

Nov. 29

The Pain of Homecoming

Jacob Glatshiteyn – AYP, 209-372.

Glatshiteyn reads “A gute nakht, velt”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyxSmah3gZc>



Dec. 6 **America! America!**

Jospeh Rolnik – Poets, Neighbors (1935)

Mani Leyb – Here Lies, East Broadway (ca. 1940)

H. Leivick –Yiddish Poets (1940), To America (1955) – AYP, 741, 763

Isaac Bashevis Singer – The Little Shoemakers (1945)

Sholem Asch – from: *East River* (1946)

Jacob Glatstein – Sunday Shtetl (1956)

J. L. Teller – New York Landscapes, New York in a Jewish Mood (1972) – AYP, 579, 587

Leon Kobrin, From "Daytchmerish" to Yiddish in America [1943], in *The Life and Times of Yiddish: Studies in the Past and Present of the Language*, edited by Joseph C. Landis (Flushing, NY: Yiddish Books; Queens College, 2000), 133-144.

I.B. Singer – Concerning Yiddish Prose in America (1943) – bilingual format

Reuven Iceland – At Goodman and Levine's (1954)

Judd L. Teller, “Yiddish Litterateurs and American Jews: Have They Come to a Parting of the Ways?,” *Commentary* (July 1954).

Dec. 13 **Class Presentations**

Additional Reading

Richard J. Fein, editor & translator, *Selected poems of Yankev Glatshteyn* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987. PJ5129.A4 G535 A25, 1987.

Benjamin & Barbara Harshav, eds. *Sing, stranger: a century of American Yiddish poetry: a historical anthology*. Stanford University Press, 2006. Reference PJ5191.E3 S56 2006

Hellerstein, Kathryn. *A question of tradition: women poets in Yiddish, 1586-1987*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014. PJ5122.H45 2014.

J. Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds* (MOMA & Schocken, 1991). PN 1995.9 Y54H6 1991.

Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds. *Modernism : 1890-1930* . Reprinted with a new preface. London ; New York : Penguin Books, 1991. PN56.M54 M6 1991

Reuben Iceland, *From our springtime : literary memoirs and portraits of Yiddish New York*; translated by Gerald Marcus. Syracuse, NY : Syracuse University Press, [2013]
PJ5111.5.I24 A3 2013

Edna Nahshon, ed. *New York's Yiddish Theater From the Bowery to Broadway*. Columbia Universtiy Press, 2016. PN3035 .N48 2016

Anita Norich, *Discovering Exile: Yiddish and Jewish American Culture During the Holocaust* (Stanford UP, 2007). PJ5151.1 .N67 2007.

Joseph Rolnick, *With Rake in Hand: Memoirs of a Yiddish Poet*, translated by Gerlad Marcus. Syracuse UP, 2016.