

free verse demands "an intense effort" in coordinating and subordinating all aspects of sound patterning in the poetic texture. Free verse is to be an expression of individuality on all levels: of the poet, of the poem, and of the individual line. It is to express both "the natural rise and fall of a mood" and "the new music that stirs the world," the irregular tempo of the big city and the "disharmony" of the "contemporary psychic experience." Hence the emphasis not on uniformity or prosaic tone but on the interaction of many shifting rhythmical devices and the symphonic nature of a free rhythmic poem. Since individuality of rhythm, rather than freedom of verse, was the issue, this could be accomplished in regular meters as well, provided the variety of selected forms guaranteed the uniqueness of each poem. In sum, free verse was a departure from the dominant, conventional form of a symmetrical, four-line, rhymed strophe, and it went in two opposite directions: of less and more structured texts.

Monotony was death to poetry. Glatshiteyn understood this in his own way when he denied the musicality of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (arguing against Leyeles, who translated it twice, in 1918 and in 1945 (!)). He used the term again when he exposed the danger of a whole literature becoming "monotonic and monothematic" in "wailing together" after the Holocaust. Glatshiteyn himself tried to save the individuality of the poem, even in that age of "collective stammer." As he put it: "Our word is our weapon and we must not let ourselves become primitive [in wailing over the destruction]." Glatshiteyn cites as an example the prophet Jeremiah who, when a whole people was enslaved, "played" with the art of language and sought perfection in his "Jeremiads" ("May one Enjoy Elegies?" *Sum and Substance*, pp. 428-434).

The documents translated in appendix A provide additional details on Introspectivist thinking about the art of poetry. The poets themselves were aware that their poetics was part of an international trend: "Certainly, there is a more direct relation between an Introspectivist and a German Expressionist or English Vorticist than between us and most Yiddish poets of the previous periods" ("Chronicle," No. 14). For the outside world, however, the Yiddish poets were isolated in a sealed ghetto. A telling example was the answer of the editors of the English-language *Poetry*, asking whether the language of *In Zikh* was Chinese (see *In Zikh's* reply in "Chronicle" No. 18, and also Nos. 24, 26). In the Jewish domain itself, there was a chronic scarcity of readers (see "Chronicle," Nos. 8, 13, 23). Of course, English poets, too, had only small circles of readers at the time, before Modernist poetry was introduced into college curricula, but Yiddish poets never enjoyed that canonization. Only the common national tragedy brought them back to the center of Jewish society and made them into social bards, sometimes at the expense of poetic quality. Then it became clear what immense work had been done in the development of a new poetic language in Yiddish in New York between 1919 and 1950.

Jacob Glatshiteyn

1896-1971

After the Holocaust, Jacob Glatshiteyn* was the most celebrated "national" Yiddish poet. Readers found in his poetry a response to the catastrophe and an evocation of Jewish historiosophical awareness. When the critics lauded the later Glatshiteyn as a great "national" poet, A. Leyeles challenged them, arguing that for the Introspectivists, Glatshiteyn had always been a great poet. Indeed, without the development of Glatshiteyn's sophisticated, individualistic, and ironic style, sparkling with wit and innovations of language, the achievements of his Holocaust poetry would have been impossible. Glatshiteyn's nationalist poetry was deceptively simple; between the 1920s and 1950s, the Yiddish reader also grew into accepting Modernist poetry and free verse.

Clearly, the catastrophe in Europe brought Jewish themes into the center of Glatshiteyn's poetry. In earlier poems such as "Autobiography" and "Jewish Kingdoms" (1929), Glatshiteyn still dissociated himself from his Eastern-European past or looked at it with amazement, but the events of the late thirties brought him back to the Jewish ghetto. In 1938 and early 1939, Glatshiteyn was among the first to sense the coming disaster. In such poems as "A Hunger Fell Upon Us," "On the Butcher Block," "Here I Have Never Been," and the celebrated "Goodnight, World," he gave forceful expression to a sense of Jewish isolation in the face of the approaching catastrophe, although only its first signs were apparent at the time. It was only after the Holocaust that he was able to re-create from a certain distance of tragic tranquility the pious world of his parents and his childhood.

His first book, entitled *Jacob Glatshiteyn* (1921), was a celebration of moments in the present, a bewildered individual's attempt to make some sense of the "world tangle" (*velt-plonster*), with some traces of New York in the background and no sign of history. It was also the first book in Yiddish poetry written entirely in free verse. Glatshiteyn went on to write a dozen mature books, very American in their sensibilities, only to announce himself in 1966, in the very title of his book, as *A Jew from Lublin*.

1919 <

די לעצטע צייט איז קיין שפור ניט מער געבליבן
 פון יאנקל ברב יצחק,
 נאָר אַ קליינטשיק פינטעלע אַ קיילעכדיקס,
 וואָס קייקלט זיך צעדולטערהייט איבער גאַסן
 מיט אַרויפגעטשעפעטע, אומגעלומפערטע גלידער.
 דער אויבערהאַר האָט מיט דעם הימלבלוי
 די גאַנצע ערד אַרומגערינגלט
 און ניטאָ קיין רעטונג.
 אומעטום פאַלן "עקסטראַס" פון אויבן
 און צעפלעטשן מיין וואַסערדיקן קאַפּ.
 און איינער מיט אַ לאַנגער צונג
 האָט מיט אַ שטיק רויט מיינע ברילן אויף אייביק באַפּלעקט
 און רויט, רויט, רויט.
 איר הערט:
 אַט די טעג וועט עפעס אַזוינס אין מיין קאַפּ פּלאַצן
 און מיט אַ טעמפּן קראַך זיך אַנצינדן דאָרט
 און איבערלאָזן אַ קופּקע שמוציקלעכן אַש.
 און איך.
 דאָס קיילעכדיקע פינטעלע,
 וועל זיך דרייען אין עטער אויף אייביקייטן
 מיט רויטע וואַלן אַרומגעהילט.

- individuality of ea/line
- accumulating impressions
- Bergson: outside stimuli must be reconciled w/ internal forces
- consciousness - as - jig-lamps (Woolf)
- personal apocalypse

> 1919

Lately, there's no trace left
 Of Yankl, son of Yitskhok,
 But for a tiny round dot
 That rolls crazily through the streets
 With hooked-on, clumsy limbs.
 The lord-above surrounded
 The whole world with heaven-blue
 And there is no escape.
 Everywhere "Extras!" fall from above
 And squash my watery head.
 And someone's long tongue
 Has stained my glasses for good with a smear of red,
 And red, red, red.
 You see:
 One of these days something will explode in my head,
 Ignite there with a dull crash
 And leave behind a heap of dirty ashes.
 And I,
 The tiny dot,
 Will spin in ether for eternities,
 Wrapped in red veils.

trans. Benjamin & Barbara Harshav

1919

The political events of 1919 included Wilson's attempts to create a lasting world peace, the fresh impressions of the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the Red Scare in America, and the wave of massive pogroms in the Ukraine.

Yankl, son of Yitschok—a familiarizing form of the biblical Jacob, son of Isaac, using, however, the real names of the poet and his father.

tiny round dot—an allusion to "dos pintele Yid" (the "tiny dot Jew," or the heart of Jewishness in a person). In most Yiddish dialects, it also means "the tiny dot of 'i.'" Yud (= Yid) is the smallest Hebrew letter, and a dot—for the vowel /i/—is the minimal representation of any Hebrew sound. At the same time, it is the initial letter of both "Jew" and the name of God (YHWH); as well as of Jacob (Yankl) and Isaac (Yitstchok). The idiom refers to the irreducible hard core of Jewishness—that tiny, minimal point that makes the difference, no matter how assimilated a person may be. In this poem, the dot is devoid of any specifically Jewish connotation; he becomes a dot, a hardly observable but stubborn core of existence.

The year 1919 was filled with many bloody events trumpeted by extra editions of daily newspapers (referred to in the poem): the conclusion of the First World War, pogroms against Jews in Poland and the Ukraine, the civil war in Russia.

Using the traditional form of Jewish nomenclature and the familiar diminutive Yankl, the poem refers to the poet Jacob, son of Isaac—names that echo the biblical source of their lineage. The “tiny round particle”—or dot—that remains of the old-country Jewish son can be taken as a reference to the Yiddish expression dos pintele yid, the essential crumb of Jewishness that is said to remain within even the most assimilated Jew. Literally, the dot of the letter yud—pronounced as i—is the smallest vowel sign of the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

1919

די לעצטע צײַט איז קיין שפור ניט מער געבליבן
פֿון יאַנקל ברב יצחק,
נאַר אַ קליינטשיק פינטעלע אַ קיילעכדיקס,
וואָס קיילט זיך צעדולטערהייט איבער גאַסן,
מיט אַרױפֿגעטשעפעטע, אומגעלומפערטע גלידער.
דער אויבערהאַר האָט מיט דעם הימלבלוי
די גאַנצע ערד אַרומגערינגלט
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און איך,
דאָס קיילעכדיקע פינטעלע,
וועל זיך דרייען אין עטער אויף אייביקייטן
מיט רויטע וואַלן אַרומגעהילט.

1919

No trace left these last days
of Yankl, Reb Isaac's son:
only a tiny round particle
wheeling annoyingly through the streets,
thrashing clumsy stumps.
The great lord ringed the whole earth
with sky blue.
And no rescue.
From high up, Extras fall all over,
squashing my soggy head.
One with a long tongue
splattered my glasses
with a permanent splotch of red.
Red, red, red.
Listen:
These days somehow my skull bursts and flames
in a density of uproar, leaving behind
a little heap of dirty ash.
Tiny round particle,
I'll swirl in eternities of ether
swathed in red veils.

Cynthia Ozick

אויפן טיש אַ פּריש ברויט, שוואַנגער מיט זעטיקייט.
 אַרום טיש שווייגנדיקע געסט —
 איך און זי און נאָך אַ זי.
 די מוילער שווייגן, נאָר די הערצער קלאַפּן.
 ווי די קליינע גאַלדענע זייגערלעך, קלאַפּן די הערצער ביי די געסט.
 און לעבן ברויט אַ מעסער אַ שאַרפּס שווייגט נאָך שווערער פון די געסט
 און קלאַפּט מיט אַ הערצל נאָך אומרויקער.
 ווי ביי מיר, ביי איר און ביי דער אַנדערער איר.

די טיר איז אָפּן צו דער זון וואָס גייט אונטער.
 אויף דער סטעליע דרעמלען פליגן מידע פון טאָג
 און די שויבן ליכטיקן פאַרווונדערט מיט דערוואַרטונג און שרעק,
 שרעק און דערוואַרטונג פון אָוונטברויט.

דאָס מעסער און איך האַלדזן שטייף איינס דעם אַנדערנס מורא.
 איך פּאָך אַרום ברויט מיט ציטערדיקע הענט,
 און איך טראַכט פון מיין וואַרעמער ליבע צו זיי.

פון מיין טויטלעכער שינאה צו זיי.
 דאָס מעסער חלשט אין מיין פאַרקלאַמערטער האַנט
 פון שרעק און געפאַר פון אָוונטברויט.

זי נעמט דאָס מעסער און קוקט אויף מיר און אויף איר:
 צוויי טויטע געסט זיצן שטיל אַרום טיש.
 און אין האַרץ פון זי דאָס מעסערשאַרף זינגט
 אַ ליד פון געפאַר פון אָוונטברויט.

די אַנדערע זי שפּילט זיך מיט פּלאַטערדיקער פּרייד
 מיטן שאַרף פון מעסער און געשטאַרבענע רייד;
 און איר ליבע צו אונדז און איר שינאה צו אונדז
 און איר ליבע צו מיר און איר שינאה צו איר
 זינגט אַרויס דורך דער צעפּראַלטער טיר
 צו דער זון וואָס גייט אונטער, צו דער זון, צו דער זון,
 מיט פאַרבענקטע געזאַנגען פון אָוונטברויט.

שויבן פאַרפלייצט מיט קאַליר און געזאַנג.
 דאָס מעסער פאַרמאַטערט פון רויטן פאַרלאַנג.
 שטיל זיצן אַרום טיש שווייגנדיקע געסט —
 איך און זי און נאָך אַ זי.
 דאָס מעסער טאַנצט פון מיר צו איר און פון איר צו איר.
 און שווייגנדיק עסן מיר פון ליבע און האַס
 דאָס אָוונטברויט.

On the table a fresh bread, pregnant with promise.
 Around the table silent guests—
 I and she and another she.
 Mouths are silent, but hearts beat.

5 Like tiny gold watches beat the hearts of the guests.
 And near the bread a sharp knife, its silence heavier than theirs,
 Beating with a heart more restless
 Than mine, than hers, and hers.

The door is open to the declining sun.
 10 On the ceiling, flies doze, tired of the day.
 And the panes light up in wonder of expectation and fear,
 Fear and expectation of evening-bread.

The knife and I clutch tightly each other's fear.
 I flutter with trembling hands over the bread
 5 And think of my warm love for them.

Of my deadly hatred for them.
 In my clenched hand the knife faints
 From fear and danger of evening-bread.

She takes the knife and looks at me and at her:
 20 Around the table, silently, sit two dead guests
 And in her heart the knife blade sings
 The song of danger of evening-bread.

The other she plays in quivering joy
 With the blade of the knife and dead words;
 25 And her love for us and her hatred for us
 And her love for me and her hatred for her
 Sing out through the wide-open doors
 To the sun which declines, to the sun, to the sun,
 Nostalgic songs of evening-bread.

30 Panes flooded with color and song.
 The knife weary of red desire.
 Around the table silent guests:
 I and she and another she.
 The knife dances from me to her and from her to her.
 35 And silently we eat with love and hatred
 The evening-bread.

I

שיני מייק שלאפט אין אַ בראַנדזענעם ארון.
 עס וויינט נאָך אים אַ מלוכה פון צוועלף בלאַק
 און דער מאַמעס שייטל און דעם טאַטנס אַלטע באַרד.
 פאַריתומטע יונגען שטייען ביי די ראַגן
 און קנייטשן ציגאַרטלעך מיט ציטערדיקע. דינע פינגער.
 שטייט אַ יונג בייס ראַג מיט דעם קאַפעלושלאַ אָן אַ זייט
 און שפייט ווייט אַ דינעם שפיי.
 אריפן ברונעם פון טרערן ליגט אַ האַרטער, שווערער שטיין.
 אַבער ער ווייסט אַז שיני מייק שלאפט איצט
 אין אַ בראַנדזענעם ארון.
 דער שרעק און דער היטער, דער מלך און געביטער
 פון אַרום און אַרום צוועלף גאַנצע בלאַק,
 ליגט אויסגעפראַנטעוועט און שלאַפט.
 דער מאַמעס שייטל יאַמערט אים נאָך אַ זכות.
 אַז ער האָט אַלטע טאַטע-מאַמע
 ניט געלאָזט פאַלן מענטשן צו לאַסט.
 און דעם טאַטנס באַרד איז פאַרשעמט אריף די עלטערע יאָרן.
 ווייל אַלע, אַלע ווייסן פון אַרום און אַרום די צוועלף בלאַק.
 אַז שיני מייק איז געפאַלן און שלאַפט איצט
 אין אַ בראַנדזענעם ארון.

II

שווערע שלעפשיפן שניידן דאָס קייטיקע וואַסער.
 שטינקענדיקער רוך פאַרסאַזשעט די דעכער
 אריף די הייזער פון דעם פיצל וועלט.
 דאָ, אריף דעם דאָך האָט ער דאָך דעם חלום פון זיין קיניגרייך דערדען.
 די ציטערדיקע וועש אריף די שטריק
 זיינען געווען זיינע לאַנען.
 ווען אונטן האָט דער טאַטע מיט האַלב-בלינדע אריגן
 איבער אַ פאַרפעצטן ספר
 געלערנט מיט קינדער דעם טייטש
 פון שולחן — אַ טייבל און כּיסא — אַ טשער.
 אַ די מאַמע האָט געוויסט איר בראַך.
 אַז ס'קלעטערט איר קינד שנעל די ליטער,
 פון קעשענע-גנב צום סאַמע שפיי.
 צום גרויסן שררה, מלך און באַפעלער,
 איבער די גאַנצע אַרום און אַרום צוועלף בלאַק.
 די אבות, די פרומע וואַסערטרעגער און פאַרגרעבטע גאַטפאַרכטיקע קצבים.
 זיינען פאַרכליבן אריף די בית-עלמינס פון יענער זייט.

5

I

Sheeny Mike sleeps in a coffin of bronze.
 He is mourned by a kingdom of twelve blocks
 And by his mama's *shaytl* and his papa's old beard.
 Orphaned guys stand at the streetcorners
 And crumple cigarettes with thin, shaking fingers.
 A guy stands on the corner, his hat slanted,
 And spits a thin stream through his teeth.
 A heavy stone covers the well of tears,
 But he knows that Sheeny Mike lies asleep
 In a coffin of bronze.
 The terror and the guardian, the ruler and the king
 Of twelve whole blocks
 Lies spruced up, asleep.
 Mama's *shaytl* wails out his merit:
 He didn't let his old father-and-mother
 Be anybody's burden.
 And papa's beard is ashamed in its old age,
 For everyone, everyone in the twelve whole blocks knows
 That Sheeny Mike fell and is now asleep
 In a coffin of bronze.

Shaytl*

II

Heavy tugboats cut through the dirty water,
 Striking smoke covers with soot
 The roofs of the little world.
 Here, on the roof, he saw the dream of his kingdom.
 The flapping sheets on the lines
 Were his plains,
 While below, over a greasy holy book,
 His papa with half-blind eyes
 Taught children the meaning
 Of *Shulchon*—a *raybel* and *Keessay*—a *chair*.
 Oh, mama knew her woe,
 That her child climbed the ladder fast—
 From pickpocket to the very top,
 To big boss, king and ruler
 Over twelve whole blocks.
 The forefathers, the pious waterbearers and coarsened God-fearing butchers,
 Staved behind in the cemeteries over there.

shulchon—table. The traditional mode of teaching in heder consisted of reading each Hebrew word followed by a translation.

האָבן זיי זיך ניט געמיט.
ווען דער טאַטע מיט די רויטע אויגן האָט כּהרחהדיק
כּאַזעצט דעם דלוח אין הויז מיט זיין געזאַנג —
אוי, שולחן — אַ טייבל און כּיסא — אַ טשער.

III

ווי אַזוי האָט ער אויסגעחלומט זיין מלוכה.
ווי אַזוי האָט ער געוועלטיקט.
ווי אַזוי געהערשט.
ווי אַזוי האָט ער פּאַראונטערטעניקט.
ווי אַזוי פּאַריאַכט
זיין פּיצל וועלט ביז אפילו
צום הויז פון געזעץ מיט דער גרינער לאַמטערנע.
דער מאַמעס פּאַרזשאַווערטע כּענטשליכטער.
דער אַרעמער שכת אין הויז.
די פּייכטע ווענט.
דעם טאַטנס כּאַרד און דער מאַמעס שייטל
האָבן זיי דען געוויסט אז אונטער איין דאַך
ווינט אַ קיניג.
וואָס האָט געקייניגט און געקייניגט. געשאַלט און געוואַלט.
ביז ער איז געפאלן פון אַ שונאס האַנט.
ווער האָט איבערגעריסן די דינאַסטיע?
שיני מייק ווייסט. אַכער מען טאַר ניט דערציילן.
שיני מייק שמייכלט אין כּראַנדזענעם ארון.

IV

וויפל מוט פּאַרמאַנט אַזאָ דינער קערפּער.
וויפל קראַפט אין פּאַרשלאַסענע ליפּן.
וויפל עקשנות אין שטאַלצע פּיס
צו קומען שווייגן. שווייגן. שווייגן.
צוקאַפּנס דעם שווייגנדיקן קאַפּ.

לאַזט זי צו צום כּראַנדזענעם ארון.

אַ. אויף איר יונג און גליענדיק לעבן
איז ער געווען דער איידלמאַן.
דער רייטנדיקער ריטער.
דער טעמפּער יונג, דער שיכור.
וואָס האָט געווערזעט כּעס
און פּיערדיקע רייד.
וויפל עקשנות דורכצוגיין אַלע רייען
און קומען שווייגן. שווייגן. שווייגן.
צוקאַפּנס דעם שווייגנדיקן קאַפּ.

לאַזט זי צו צום כּראַנדזענעם ארון.



They did not intercede
When papa with his red eyes generously
Furnished the poverty of his house with chanting:
Oy, Shulchon—a taybel and Kessay—a chair.

III

How did he dream up his kingdom.
How did he govern.
How did he rule.
How did he subdue,
How did he harness
His little world right up to the
House of the law with the green lantern.
Mama's rusty candle holders,
The poor sabbath at home,
The damp walls,
Papa's beard and mama's *shaytl*—
Did they know that under the same roof
Lived a king,
Who ruled and ruled, governed and commanded
Till he fell by an enemy hand.
Who broke the dynasty?
Sheeny Mike knows, but one must not tell.
Sheeny Mike smiles in a coffin of bronze.

IV

How much courage in a thin body,
How much strength in clenched lips,
How much stubbornness in proud legs
Coming to be silent, silent, silent
At the side of the silent head.

Let her through to the coffin of bronze.

Oh, over her young and glowing life
He was the nobleman,
The knight on horseback,
The dumb guy, the drunkard,
Who exploded with anger
And fiery words.
How much stubbornness walking through all the rows,
Coming to be silent, silent, silent
At the side of the silent head.

Let her through to the coffin of bronze.

► Autobiography

Yesterday I dumped on my son the following story:
 That my father was a cyclops and, of course, had one eye,
 That my fifteen brothers wanted to devour me,
 So, I barely got myself out of their clutches
 And started rolling all over the world.
 Rolling, I grew up in two days,
 But I wouldn't go back to my father's house.
 So, I went to Tsefania and learned *sprechen* Jewish,
 I got myself circumcised and became a Yid.
 So, I started selling flax, wax, esrogs with bitten-off tips,
 And earned water for kasha.
 Till I met an old princess
 Who willed me an estate and died.
 So, I became a landowner
 And began guzzling and gorging.
 And when I saw I was getting fat,
 I made up my mind and got married.
 After the marriage, my estate burned down.
 So, I became a poor newspaper writer.

esrog (Hebrew: ethrog)—citron, a ritual fruit used for Sukkot, not kosher without the tip intact.
 kasha*—"earning water for kasha" is indeed hardly making a living.

To my father, the cyclops, I sometimes write a letter,
 But to my fifteen brothers—the finger.

► Jewish Kingdoms

Konskiwole, Mazelbożec, Korznice,
 Liewertow, Pulawe, Bechewe,
 Glisk, Piusk, Szabeszin—
 Names of Polish towns, the devil knows why
 They float up in my memory like dry leaves in a bath.
 When I was a fat little brat
 I knew that a voyage there
 Smelled of a coach, a carriage, a squeaking wagon,
 Carrying warm maids to new places.
 I saw all the towns as Jewish kingdoms,
 Where Yom Kippur lays its fear
 Even on goyish huts,
 Where crosses hang on the walls
 As amulets against the Jewish god.

I would give a wealth of poverty
 If I could still long for that.

◀ ארטיאביאגראפיע

איך האָב נעכטן אָפגעשטעקט מיין זון די דאָזיקע געשיכטע:
 אז מיין טאָטע איז געווען אַ ציקלאָפּ און, פאַרשטייט זיך, מיט איין אויג.
 אז מייןע פּופּצן ברודער האָבן מיך געוואָלט אויפּפּרעסן.
 האָב איך זיך קוים אַרויסגעראַטעוועט פּון זייערע הענט
 און זיך גענומען קייקלען איבער דער וועלט.
 קייקלענדיק זיך בין איך אויסגעוואַקסן אין צוויי מעת-לעת.
 אָבער צוריק צום פּאַטערס הויז האָב איך שוין ניט געוואָלט גיין.
 בין איך אַוועק קיין צפּניה און זיך אויסגעלערנט שפּרעכן ייִדיש.
 זיך מ'לה געווען און געוואָרן יודע.
 האָב איך אָנגעהויבן האַנדלען מיט פּלאַקס, טריוואַקס, אַחרוגים און אָפּגעביסענע פּיטומס
 און געמאַכט וואַסער אויף קאַשע.
 ביז איך האָב אָנגעגענגט אַן אַלטע פּרינצעסין
 וואָס האָט מיר אָפּגעשריבן אירס אַ גוט און געשטאַרבן.
 בין איך געוואָרן אַ גוט-כאַזיצער
 און אָנגעהויבן פּרעסן און זויפּן.
 און אז כּיהאַב געזען איך ווער אַ ביסל פּעט.
 האָב איך גענומען און חתונה געהאַט.
 נאָך דער חתונה האָט מיין גוט אָפּגעברענט.
 בין איך געוואָרן אַן אַרעמער צייטונג-שרייבער.

צו מיין טאָטן, דעם ציקלאָפּ, שרייב איך נאָך אַ מאַל אַ בריוול.
 אָבער צו מייןע פּופּצן ברודער — אַ זאַסיע.

◀ ייִדישע מלוכות

קאַנסקיוואַליע, מאַזלבוזשעץ, קאַזשניצע,
 ליעווערטאָוו, פּולאַווע און בעכעווע,
 גליסק, פּיוסק און שאַבעשין —
 נעמען פּון פּוילישע שטעט, ווייסט דער טייוול פאַר וואָס.
 שווימען נאָך אום ווי מרחץ-בלעטלעך אין מיין זיכרון.
 ווען איך בין געווען אַ קליינער פּעמפּיק,
 האָב איך געוואוסט אז אַ נסיעה אַהין.
 שמעקט מיט אַ בריד, אַ פּור, אַדער אַ סקריפענדיקן וואָגן.
 וווּ עס פּאַרן שטענדיק וואַרעמע דינסטמיידן אויף דינסט.
 איך האָב געזען אַלע שטעטלעך ווי ייִדישע מלוכות,
 וווּ יום-כיפור לייגט אַוועק אַ שרעק.
 אַפילו איבער די גויישע כאַלופּעס.
 וווּ עס הענגען צלמים
 פאַר אַ שמירה קעגן ייִדישן גאָט.

איך וואָלט אַוועקגעגעבן גאַנצע מאַיאַנטקעס מיט אַרעמקייט
 איך זאָל אַצינדערט נאָך דעם בענקען.

► *Clock and Mommie*

a click ticks and she a
is warm and eye
and eye and ha and hand and hand
and close and click
click click click.

► *A Boy and a Roll*

A boy eats a roll with butter,
A kitten looks into his eyes.
The boy is slee—and hun—
One eye sticky.
The cat has a big glass eye
And the night has three or maybe four
Glass eyes.
And mommie has a tail and paws with nails.
She undresses him and scratches.
She is good and scratches.
The roll is dark as the night
From here to there and away.
And the night is of glass.
The night is a black window,
Lying on the floor and in mommie's song.
Tomorrow will be better.
There will be a little light,
And it won't be scary to look
Through a kitten-eye outside.

► *Night, Be Mood to Me*

Night, be mood to me—
Mood night.
Night, be long to me—
Long night.
With me under the cover, be calm to me—
Calm night.

The Yiddish title of the book, "Yiddishtavtshn," means roughly: Explications in (or of) Yiddish, it is coined from "Ivre-tavtsch," meaning Hebrew translated (or Germanized), the old name for Yiddish as the language for medieval Hebrew teaching and Bible translations, or stylized, archaic Yiddish.

◀ זייגער און מאמע

א קליק טיקט און זי א
איז א וואַרעם און אויג
און אויג און כאַ און האַנט און האַנט
און קלייד און קליק
קליק קליק קליק.

◀ אַ יינגעלע און אַ זעמעלע

אַ יינגעלע עסט אַ זעמל מיט פוטער,
אַ קעצל קוקט אים אין די אויגן.
דאָס יינגעלע איז שלעפע און הונגע.
איין אויג קלעפט זיך.
די קאַץ האָט אַ גרויס גלעזערן אויג
און די נאַכט האָט דריי אָדער אפּשר פּיר
גלעזערנע אויגן.
און די מאַמע האָט אַן עק און לאַפעס מיט נעגל.
זי טוט אים אויס און דראַפעט.
זי איז גוט און דראַפעט.
דער זעמל איז פינצטער, ווי די נאַכט.
פון דאָנען ביז אַהער און העט.
און די נאַכט איז אַ גלעזערנע.
אַ שוואַרץ פענצטער איז די נאַכט,
וואָס ליגט אויפן דיל און אין מאַמעס לידל.
מאָרגן וועט זײַן בעסער.
עס וועט זײַן אַביסל ליכטיק
און מען וועט נישט מורא האָבן צו קוקן
דורכן קעצל-אויג צום דרויסן.

◀ נאַכט, זײ שטיל צו מיר

נאַכט, זײ שטיל צו מיר —
שטילע נאַכט.
נאַכט, זײ לאַנג צו מיר —
לאַנגע נאַכט.
מיט מיר אונטער דעם צודעק זײ שווייג צו מיר —
שווייגע נאַכט.

איך וועל עס דריי מאל איבעראיבערן.
 העכער פון דער מורא זינגען
 היימלעך איז מיר דער גרויל פון דייע
 קעצלדיקע אויגן אין אלע טונקלען.
 ליב איז מיר די שרעק פון דייע
 מיליאסן רוישן אין אלע ווינקלען
 די מאמע איז א מערדערין.
 איר ארט נישט. וואס א שאטן
 שארפט א מעסער און וויל מיך קוילען
 זי איז אוועק. אין טאטנס כעט.
 און איר ארט נישט. וואס מארגן
 וועט מען מיך געפינען א דערווארגן.
 ארט מיך אויך נישט
 ארט מיך נישט
 ארט מיך אויך נישט
 ארט מיך נישט
 ארט מיך אויך
 נישט
 דורך דער שמאלער סטעזשקע
 נאכט. זיי קום צו מיר
 צו מיר אין פענצטער
 נאכט. זיי קוק צו מיר
 קוקע נאכט

1929

9

Three times I shall repeatrepeatrepeat,
 Louder than fear I shall sing.
 Intimate is the terror
 Of your catty eyes in all darknesses.
 Lovely is the scare
 Of your myriad noises in all corners.
 My mother is a murderess,
 She doesn't care that a shadow
 Sharpens his knife and will kill me.
 She left, she's in daddy's bed,
 She doesn't care that in the morning
 They'll find me strangled,
 So I don't care either.
 I don't care
 I don't care either.
 I don't care.
 I don't
 Care either.
 Through the narrow path,
 Night, be come to me.
 To me in the window.
 Night, be look to me.
 Look night.



נאַכט. אין די טונקלסטע ערטער פינקלען ווערטער.
סיייען אָפּ גאַנצע שיפּן מיט באַגריפּן.
און דו. באַפאַנצערט מיט שווייגן און קלוגזיין.
וויקלסט אָפּ וואָרט פון מיין.

מעמענטאַס — פאַרענגטער האַרזאַנט.
אויפגעפלעמלטער צוריקקום. קוים דערקאַנט:
אַ בוך. אַ פנים. אַ שמייכל. ציינער.

די פאַרשאַלטענע נאַכט איז דיר אַרײַן אין די ביינער.

פאַרצערטל. פאַרטוש. פאַרגעס.
מאָך נישט פון קיין הויזן-קנעפל אַ נס.

וואָרטפראָלעטאַריער. ס'פליען אָפּ גאַנצע עראַפלאַנען
מיט פאַרשטאַנען.
און דו האַסט זיך פאַרשפּענצערט מיט סעזאַמעס און אליבאַבעס.
הערסטו דען נישט. ווי עס קרעכצן יאָכן?
אויף דיינע ווערטער ליגן אייזערנע שטאַבעס.
פאַרגרילץ. פאַרשעלט מיט בראַכן.
ווי דיינע געלעכטערס. ווי דיינע געוויינער?

די פאַרשאַלטענע נאַכט איז דיר אַרײַן אין די ביינער.

דיין טייטלבוים טייטלט אונטער דיינע פענצטער.
אַ שטיין און דאָ רוט.
די צווישנצייטן האַבן דיך דערפירט צום אַבסאָלוט.
מצבות פון אינדורידן. מאַסע. ייִדן. ראַסע —
אַרכיוון.

סייגען איצט גאַנצע קאַלעקטיוון.
סטראַטאַספּערן. שטערן. אַפילו מוערן. שטיינער.

די פאַרשאַלטענע נאַכט איז דיר אַרײַן אין די ביינער.
דער הימל. דער בלויער אַזאַרט. האַט זיך פאַרלאָשן.
דו זיצסט און זוכסט נאָך אַלץ די שאַטנס פון וואָרט
און רייניקסט דעם שימל פון מיינען.
ס'ווערן ווערטער טרויעריקער און ריינער.

די פאַרשאַלטענע נאַכט איז דיר אַרײַן אין די ביינער.

Night. In the darkest places sparkle traces
Of words. Loaded ships with ideo-glyphs
Sail away. And you, armored in silence and wisdom,
Unwrap word from sense.

Mementos—rain-veiled horizon,
Flickering return, barely recalled:
A book, a face, a smile, a yawn.

The cursed night has got into your bones.

Soften up, cover up, forget.
Don't make a miracle of a trouser button.

Wordproletarian. Airplanes leave land
Full of understands.
And you in your vest of Sesames and Ali-Babas.
Don't you hear how yokes sigh?
Iron girders lie on your words.
Gnash them, curse them with disaster.
Where are your laughs, where are your groans?

The cursed night has got into your bones.

Your palm dates under your windows.
A stone and Here-Lies.
The in-between times have brought you to the absolute.
Graves of individuals, masses, Jews, races—
Archives.
Now whole collectives sing.
Stratospheres, stars, even buildings, stones.

The cursed night has got into your bones.

The sky, the blue hazard, went out.
You still sit and seek the shadows of a word
And scrape the mold off meanings.
Words take on sadder and purer tones.

The cursed night has got into your bones.

(1938 - 1971)

עס זענען דא 31 עטרים

Memorial Poems (1943)

א גוטע נאכט, וועלט

א גוטע נאכט, ברייטע וועלט.
גרויסע, שטינקענדיקע וועלט.
נישט דו, נאר איך פארהאק דעם טויער.
מיט דעם לאנגן כאלאט,
מיט דער פייערדיקער, געלער לאט,
מיט דעם שטאלצן טראט,
ארף מיין אייגענעם געבאט —
גי איך צוריק אין געטא.
ורש אפ, צעטרעט אלע געשמרטע שפורן.
כיוואלגער זיך אין דיין מיסט,
לרב, לרב, לרב,
צעהרקערט יידיש לעבן.
חרם, וועלט, ארף דייע טרייפענע קולטורן.
כאטש אלץ איז פארדיסט,
שטיב איך זיך אין דיין שטיב,
טרועריק יידיש לעבן.

חרדישער דאטש, פינטלעכער ליאך,
עמלק גנב, לאנד פון זרפן און פרעסן,
שלאברע דעמאקראטיע, מיט דייע קאלטע
סימפאטיע-קאמפרעסן.
א גוטע נאכט, עלעקטריש צעחוצפהטע וועלט.
צוריק צו מיין קעראסין, חלבינעם שאטן,
איביקן אקטאבער, דריבע שטערן,
צו מייע קרומע גאסן, הויקערדיקן לאמטערן,
מייע שמות, מיין סווארבע,
מייע גמרות, צו די הארבע
סוגיות, צום ליכטיקן עברי-טייטש,
צום דין, צום טיפן מיין, צום חוב, צום גערעכט,
וועלט, איך שפאן מיט פרייד צום שטילן געטא-לעכט.

א גוטע נאכט, כיגיב דיר, וועלט, צושטייער
אלע מייע באפרייער.
נעם צו די יעזוסמארקסעס, ווערג זיך מיט זייער מוט,
קראפיר איבער א טראפן פון אונדזער געטריפט בלוט,
און איך האב האפן אז כאטש ער זאמט זיך,
גיט ארף טאג-איין-טאג-אריס מיין ווארטן,
סיוועלן נאך רושן גרינע בלעטער
ארף אונדזער בוים דעם פארקווארטן.
איך דארף קיין טרייסט נישט,
אין גי צוריק צו דלת אמות,
פון וואגנערס געץ-מחיק צו ניגון, ברומען,
כיקוש דין, פארקאלטנט יידיש לעבן,
סוויינט אין מיר די פרייד פון קומען.

► Good Night, World

Good night, wide world.
Big, stinking world.
Not you, but I, slam the gate.
In my long robe,
5 With my flaming, yellow patch,
With my proud gait,
At my own command—
I return to the ghetto.
• Wipe out, stamp out all the alien traces.
10 I grovel in your dirt,
Hail, hail, hail,
Humpbacked Jewish life.
A ban, world, on your unclean cultures.
Though all is desolate,
15 I roll in your dust,
Gloomy Jewish life.

Piggish German, hostile Polack,
Sly Amalek, land of guzzling and gorging.
Flabby democracy, with your cold
20 Compresses of sympathy.
Good night, world of electrical insolence.
Back to my kerosene, tallowy shadow,
Eternal October, wee little stars,
To my crooked alleys, hunchbacked street-lamp,
25 My stray pages, my Twenty-Four-Books,
My Talmud, to the puzzling
Questions, to the bright Hebrew-Yiddish,
To Law, to deep meaning, to duty, to right.
World, I stride with joy to the quiet ghetto-light.

30 Good night. I grant you, world,
All my liberators.
Take the Jesusmarxes, choke on their courage.
Drop dead on a drop of our baptized blood.
And I believe that even though he carries,
35 Day after day rises my waiting.
Surely, green leaves will rustle
On our withered tree.
I do not need consolation.
I go back to my four walls,
40 From Wagner's pagan music—to tune, to humming.
I kiss you, tangled Jewish life.
It cries in me, the joy of coming.

April 1938

Benjamin Harshav

אפריל 1938

stray pages—of torn holy books.
they were preserved in the
synagogue

Twenty-Four-Books—the Bible
(in Yiddish, svarbe, contraction
of the Hebrew esrim-ve-arba,
twenty-four)

puzzling questions—difficult
issues in the study of Jewish law

Hebrew-Yiddish—the
traditional Yiddish translation of
the Hebrew Holy Books, which
acquired an archaic and religious
flavor in modern Yiddish.

even though he carries—an
allusion to the credo, "Ani
Maamin" ("I Believe"), the
affirmation of faith in the coming
of the Messiah

11

◀ אױפן יאטקעקלאַץ

ס'האט זיך אַ ביסל געטאָן נעכטן אַרום מיר,
ווען איך בין געשטאַנען אַ צעדאַמטער
אױפן יאטקעקלאַץ ווי אַ קנעכט צום פאַרקױפן.
אַט איז דער מאַן. האָבן אַלע געטײטלט,
וואָס פאַרדינט אונדזער רחמנות.
אמת, האָט געקױטשעט אַ מױל אויף שרױפן.
ער איז אַ שטיקל שױנדלער און גאַרגלשניידער,
און מען דאַרף אים קוקן אויף די לעפקע פינגער.
אַבער ווער אויב נישט מיר, האָבן אים געשטױסן
צו די פרנסות וואָס זײנען גרינגער.

אָודאי איז ער אַליין אַ ניבּוה
און אַ פּלעק אויף אונדזער משפּחה,
האַט אַ צױיטן, פון גרויס מיטלייד,
אַ טרער געױאַרגן דעם גאַרגל.
נאָר שױער צו פאַרגעסן דעם הייליקן ספר,
וואָס זײנע עלטער-עלטערן האָבן אונדז געלאָזט בירושה,
פאַר די צען פאַרזאַגן אַליין
דאַרף מען מיט אים טאָן חסד
און פאַרטראָגן דעם דאָזיקן קריכער,
לומפּ, הורענוון און מאַרעױכער.

גיט אַ קוק אויף זײן הױקער,
טאַפט מיר אַן אַלטע מױד דעם צעכײלטן רוקן.
דאָס איז פון זיצן, קוקן אין ביכלעך,
און שאַרפן דעם מוח ווי אַזוי צו זיידלען.
נאָר זיידלען דאַרפן מיר זיך אַליין,
וואָס מיר האָבן אים נישט געטריבן
צו די שױיסיקע פאַכן,
ווי קאַפען קאַרטאַפּליעס, שטיינער האַקן.
האַט ער, שטאַט דעם נאַקן, אײנגעשפּאַנט דעם קאַפּ,
ווי אַן אַקס אין דער סאַכע,
אַלעמען איבערגעשכלט
און צוגענומען בײַ אונדז יעדן גראַשן.

און הערט ווי ער בעכעט זײן לשון,
ווי ער פּראָױעט באַזונדערניש אויף אונדזער ערד,
פאַר װעלכער מיר האָבן געפּאַכטן.
האַרט ווי ער ריטשעט וואָס מען האָט זײן ברודער געשאַכטן.
קוקט ווי ער מאַכט אונדז דאָס לעבן מיזעראַבל,
צערטלט מיך אַ באַסאַױער ליבעראַבל —
סױאַלט שױן לאַנג פון אים קיין זכר נישט געבליבן.
ווען מיר װאַלטן אים שטאַט האַסן געטאַן ליבן,
און געעפנט פאַר אים, דעם אויסדערווילטן,
דעם שטאַלצן, אונדזערע אַרעמס —
אונדזערע קירכן װאַלטן אים שױן לאַנג צעשמאַלצן.
מיר פאַרגעסן — פאַרענדיקט ער, מיט אַ גלחישן קנאַק, —
ס'האַנדלט זיך נישט אין כסדר פּראַסקן זײן צױיטע באַק,
נאָר אויפשטעלן אונדזערע אַנטקעגן זײנע
אײנגעװאַרצלעטע געמײנהייטן.

► On the Butcher Block

What a commotion 'there was yesterday around me,
As I stood bleeding on the butcher block
Like a slave for sale.
Here's the man, they pointed at me,
5 Who deserves our pity.
It's true, a fast tongue was shrieking,
You'd better watch out for his sticky fingers,
He's a a bit of a swindler, curthroat, sleazy,
But wasn't it we who pushed him
10 To the livelihoods that are easy.

To be sure, he himself is loathsome,
A stain on our family—
Said another in deep compassion,
A tear choking his gullet—
15 But it's hard to forget the Holy Book
That his fore-forefathers bequeathed to us.
Just for the Ten Forbiddings
One should be gracious unto him
And endure
20 This sneak, whoreson and boor.

Just look at that hump—
An old maid felt my swollen back—
It comes from sitting, from poring over books,
Sharpening his wits for jewing.
25 But the blame, she says, must fall on ourselves,
For we did not force him
Into the sweaty trades,
Like cutting stones, digging potatoes;

So, instead of his neck, he harnessed his head
30 Like an ox to a plow,
Outclevered us all,
And took away our last cent.

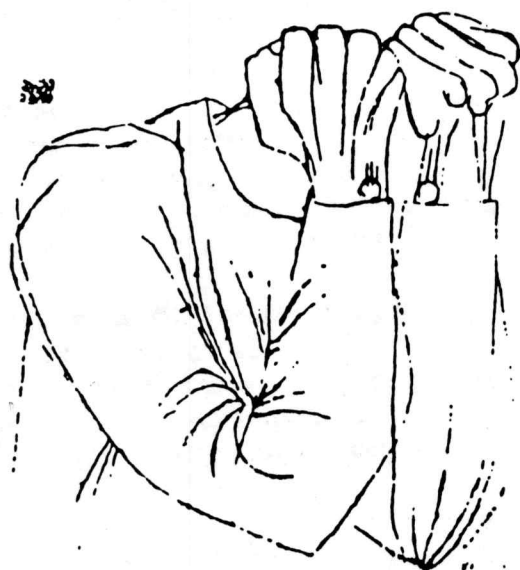
Now listen to the language he babbles,
See, how he celebrates separateness in our land,
35 The land our fathers fought for,
Here how he squeals that they slaughtered his brother,
How he makes our lives miserable—
Caresses me the bass voice of a liberable—
No trace would be left of him
40 If we had loved him instead of hating
And opened our arms
For him, the chosen, the proud one.
Our churches would have melted him long ago.
We must not forget—he concludes with a priestly snap—
45 The point isn't always to slap his other cheek,
But to set ours against
His tribal nastiness.

ס'האָט זיך אַ שיין ביסל געטאָן נעכטן אַרום מיר,
 צווישן די יאָטקעס.
 כ'בין געשטאַנען אין הוילן העמד און צעפליקטע גאַטקעס,
 און זיי האָבן מיר געטריבערט די אָדערן
 מיט פאַרטיידיקעכץ.
 פאַרענטפערט אַזוי ווויל אַלע מיינע נידריקע אינסטינקטן.
 אַזוי שיין געזונגען מיר אַ זכות
 פון מיינע פרומע זיידעס וועגן.
 אַז דער יאָטקעלאַץ האָט אַזש גענומען שפּריצן מיט טרערן.
 אַ פרומע אַלטיטשקע האָט איבער מיר געמאַכט אַ צייכן
 איך דער לענג און אין דער ברייט.
 און אַלץ אַרום האָט גענומען נישט ווערן.
 איך בין געבליבן אַליין אונטער אַ הימל פון קעלטעניש.
 די שייקע איז אַרויס פון באַהעלטעניש
 און איך האָב פאַרמאַכט די אויגן.
 די קלעפּ זיינען מיך שוין נישט אַנגעגאַנגען.
 איך האָב מיט סקרוד געדענקט
 ווי זיי האָבן זיך פאַרזאַמלט
 אַרום דעם יאָטקעלאַץ דעם רונדן.
 ווי זיי האָבן געבלעקערצט איבער מיינ צענערעגט לייב,
 און ווי די בינען איינגעגעסן דעם האַניק איז מיינע ווונדן.
 האָסט פאַרלאָשן איין שטערן. צוויי. דריי.
 דין גאַנצע צעליכטיקטע פּראַכט.
 גאַט. וואָס טו איך דאָ איינער אַליין.
 איך דיין אייביקער נאַכט.

What a commotion there was yesterday around me
 In the butcher shop.
 50 I stood there in a shirt and tattered underwear
 As they purged my veins
 With justifications.
 They explained away my base instincts so well,
 They sang so beautifully the merits
 55 Of my pious grandfathers,
 That even the butcher block spurted tears.
 A pious old woman made a sign over me,
 Down and across;
 And everything around me dissolved.
 60 I remained alone under a cold sky.
 The gang came out of hiding
 And I closed my eyes.
 The blows no longer concerned me.
 With a shudder, I remembered
 65 How they had assembled
 At the round butcher block,
 How they had belched over my beaten body,
 And like bees, were stinging my wounds with honey.
 You extinguished one star, a second, a third,
 70 Your entire shining might.
 God, what am I doing here alone,
 In your eternal night.

יוני 1939

June 1939



אַזאַ אַזכרה ונפעי עדי אַשפּבד
 כי בלעונו ורים כענה בדי
 הפוכה כי בימי השר דא
 ערתה אלוכה דהרוי מלוכה

Ben Shahn. Warsaw, 1941-1961
 Hebrew Quote from a 11th
 century Yom Kippur prayer
 "These martyrs I will remember
 and my soul is torn with sorrow
 In the days of our trials there is
 no one to help us."

אן יידן

אן ייח וועט נישט זיין קיין יידישער גאט.
 גייען מיר, חלילה, אוועק פון דער וועלט,
 פארלעשט זיך דאס ליכט פון דיין אָרעם געצעלט.
 זינט אברהם האָט דיך אין וואַלקן דערקענט,
 האָסטו אויף אַלע יידישע פּנימער געברענט,
 פון אַלע יידישע אויגן געשטראַלט,
 און מיר האָבן דיך געפֿורעמט אין אונזער געשטאַלט.
 אין יעדער לאַנד, אין יעדער שטאַט
 איז מיט אונדז אויך געווען אַ גר
 דער יידישער גאט.
 יעדער צעשמעטערטער יידישער קאַפּ
 איז אַ פֿאַרשעמטער, צעבראַכענער, געטלעכער טאַפּ,
 ווייל מיר זיינען געווען דיין ליכטיק געפֿעס,
 דער וואַרצייך פון דיין ממשותריקן נס.
 איצט ציילן זיך אין די מיליאָנען
 אונזערע טויטע קעפּ.
 ס'לעשן זיך אַרום דיר די שטערן,
 דאָס געדעכעניש פון דיר ווערט פֿאַרטונקלט,
 דיין מלכות וועט באַלד אויפהערן.
 דער יידישער פֿאַרזיי און גאַרפֿלאַנג
 איז פֿאַרברענט.
 אויף טויטע גראַזן וויינען די טויען.
 דער יידישער חלום און יידישע וואָר געשענרט —
 זיי שטאַרבן אין איינעם.
 ס'שלאָפֿן ערות גאַנצע,
 עופֿהלעך, פֿרויען,
 יונגעלייט און קינים.
 אַפֿילו ריינע זיילן, די פֿעלדזשן,
 די שטאַטיקע ליו,
 שלאָפֿן אַ טויטן, און אייביקן שלאָפֿן.

ווער וועט דיך חלומעך
 ווער געדענקעך
 ווער וועט דיך לייקענען,
 ווער וועט דיך בענקעך
 ווער וועט צו דיר, אויף אַ פֿאַרבענקטער בריק,
 אוועק פון דיר, פֿרי צו קומען צוריק

די נאַכט איז אייביק פֿאַר אַ טויט פֿאַלק.
 הימל און ערד אָפּגעווישט.
 ס'לעשט זיך דאָס ליכט אין דיין אָרעם געצעלט.
 ס'שלעמלט די לעצטע יידישע שעה.
 ייִדישער גאט, ביסט שוין באַלד נישטאָ.

1946

vessel of light—imagery from the Kabbalah.
 Pillars, Rocks—biblical epithets applied to great sages.
 The Thirty-Six Just*
 away from you to return again—in allusion to a personal, religious poem by the Spanish Hebrew classical poet Ibn Gabirol, talking to God of fleeing "from You to You"

מיין וואַגל-ברודער

כ'האָב ליב מיין טרויעריקן גאָט.
 מיין וואַגל-ברודער.
 כ'האָב ליב זיך צוצוהעצן מיט אים אַרף אַ שטיין
 און אויסשטומען פון זיך אַלע רייד.
 ווייל אַז מיר זיצן אַזוי ביידע געפלעפט.
 ווערן אונזערע מחשבות באַהעפט —
 אין שווייגן.

Without Jews

Without Jews, no Jewish God.
 If, God forbid, we should quit
 this world, Your poor tent's light
 would out.
 Abraham knew You in a cloud:
 since then, You are the flame
 of our face, the rays
 our eyes blaze,
 our likeness
 whom we formed:
 in every land and town
 a stranger.
 Shattered Jewish skulls,
 shards of the divine,
 smashed, shamed pots—
 these were Your light-bearing vessels,
 Your tangibles,
 Your portents of miracle!
 Now count these heads
 by the millions of the dead.
 Around You the stars go dark.
 Our memory of You, obscured.
 Soon Your reign will close.
 Where Jews sowed,
 a scorched waste.
 Dews weep
 on dead grass.
 The dream raped,
 reality raped,
 both blotted out.
 Whole congregations sleep,
 the babies, the women,
 the young, the old.
 Even Your pillars, Your rocks,
 the tribe of Your saints,
 sleep their dead
 eternal sleep.

'Who will dream You?
 Remember You?
 Deny You?
 Yearn after You?
 Who will flee You,
 only to return
 over a bridge of longing?

No end to night
 for an extinguished people
 Heaven and earth wiped out.
 Your tent void of light.
 Flicker of the Jews' last hour
 Soon, Jewish God,
 Your eclipse.

Cynthia Ozick

My Wander-Brother

I love my sad God,
 My wander-brother.
 I like to sit with him on a stone
 And silence to him all my words.
 When we sit like this, dumbfounded together,
 Our thoughts merge
 In one stillness.

מיין מידער גאט פאררייכערט א פאפיראס
און פארציט דעם ערשטן רויך.
ס'צינדט זיך א שטערן. א פייערדיק און.
זיינע גלידער בענקען נאך שלאף.
די נאכט ליגט אונדז צופוסנס ווי א שאף.

מיין טייערער גאט,
וויפל חפילות צו אים האב איך פארשוועכט.
וויפל מאל האב איך אים געלעסטערט,
דורך די נעכט.
און געווארעמט די שרעקעוודיקע ביינער
ביים פייערטאפ פון וויסן.
און דא זיצט ער, מיין חבר, נעמט מיך ארום,
און טיילט מיט מיר דעם לעצטן ביסן.

דער גאט פון מיין אומגלויבן איז פרעכטיק,
ווי ליב איז מיר מיין פארשלאפטער גאט,
איצט ווען ער איז מענטשלעך און אומגערעכטיק.
ווי דעהויבן איז דער שטאלצער יורד,
ווען ס'מינדסטע קינד איז מורד
אין זיין געבאט.
דורך יכשות און ימען.
וועלן מיר שוין אזוי בלאנדזשען און בלאנדזשען צוזאמען.

צו א דרעמלענדיקן גאט טראכט איך אזוי פון זיך:
ס'שטרעקט זיך אפט אין דער ווארעמסטער היימישקייט —
א ווילדע פרעמד.

און נאך איידער מען באנעמט דעם סוד דערפון,
דערפילט מען אז די אייגענע איבריטייט
האט זיך צעבליט ווי מאך אויף א מצבה.
איז דאס די שטאט וואס איך האב געבויט?
איז דאס די גאס וואס איר האב איך אנפארטרויט?
יעדע נאכט פון מיין זיכרון?
וויפל זומערן זיינען מיר דא געקומען צו-חלום?
אהער בין איך געקומען, זיך פארווארצלען און פארשטאמען,
דא האב איך געוואלט פארפלאנצן שטילקייט
אויף אן אייגענעם לעבעדיקן בית-עולם
פון טאטע-מאמע.
ווייל טויט האב איך דארט געהאט איבערגענוג.
אהער בין איך שוין געקומען א יורש פון טויט,
אן אנטרונענער.

דו רעדסט פון זיך,
שווייגט צו מיר מיין וואגל-ברודער,
און איך טראכט פון אונדז אלעמען.
אזוי צו זאגן:
וויפל חורבן דארף א פאלק פארטראגן,
אז ס'זאל אין אויפבויען אלץ נאך גלייבן.
איצט אז ס'וואלגערט זיך אין שטויבן,
איז דאס פאלק געטלעכער פון מיר.
ס'וועלן נאך פעלקער קומען זיך בוקן
צו זיין ווייטיק.

אבער גאט, מיין ברודער,
צו וואס האסטו אזוי דעהויבן מיין פאלק
און צעשטערנט זיין אומגליק
איבערן גאנצן הימל?

ווייטיק, בלוט, געלעכערטע הענט,
רחמנות פון אויסגערוינענע אדערן —
א קינדערשער משל מיט נארישע רייד.
איך האב עס געפלט אויף זעקס מיליאן,
איך האב דעם משל געגעבן באשייד.
מיין פאלק, מיין זון, מיין טרוים.
וועט אייביק בליען געקריציקט אויף א ליכטיקן כוים.

מיין גאט שלאפט און איך וואך איבער אים,
מיין מידער ברודער חלומט דעם חלום פון מיין פאלק.
ער ווערט קליין ווי א קינד,
און איך וויג אים איין אין חלום פון מיין פאלק.
שלאף מיין גאט, מיין וואגל-ברודער,
שלאף אריין אין חלום פון מיין פאלק.

My weary God lights a cigarette
And inhales the first smoke.
10 A star lights up, a fiery sign.
His limbs long for sleep.
The night lies at our feet like a lamb.

My beloved God,
How many prayers to him have I profaned.
15 How often have I blasphemed
In the nights,
Warmed my fearful bones
At the firepot of knowledge.
And here he sits, my friend, hugging me,
20 And shares with me his last mouthful.

The God of my unbelief is beautiful.
How nice is my feeble God
Now, when he is human and unjust.
How graceful is he in his proud downfall,
25 When the smallest child revolts
Against his command.
Through sea and land,
We two shall ever wander and wander together

I think to my dozing God of myself:
30 At times, an alien space
Will spread in the homiest warmth.
And before you grasp its mystery,
You feel how your own futility
Blossoms like moss on a gravestone.
35 Is this the city that I built?
Is this the street I confided in
Every night of my memory?
How many summers appeared here in my dream?
Here I came to strike roots and grow stems,
40 Here I wanted to plant calm
On my own living graveyard
Of father-mother.
I had plenty of death over there.
I came here, an heir of death,
45 A refugee.

You are talking of yourself,
Answers the silence of my wander-brother,
And I think of all of us:
How much destruction can a people bear
50 And still believe in re-building?
Now, grovelling in the dust,
My people is holier than me.
One day, nations shall come to bow
To its pain.

55 But God, my brother,
Why hast thou raised my people
And spread their misfortune like stars
All over the sky?

Pain, blood, pierced hands,
60 Pity of emptied veins—
A childish fable with silly words.
I multiplied it by six million,
I gave the fable its moral.
My people, my son, my dream
65 Will blossom forever crucified on a tree of light.

My God sleeps and I watch over him.
My tired brother dreams the dream of my people.
He dwindles, grows small as a baby,
And I rock him into the dream of my people.
70 Sleep, my god, my wander-brother,
Sleep into the dream of my people.

מײן מידער גאָט פאַררײכערט אַ פּאַפּיראַס
און פאַרצײט דעם ערשטן רוײך.
ס׳צײנדט זײך אַ שטערן. אַ פּײערדיק אױט.
זײנע גלײדער בענקען נאָך שלאָף.
די נאַכט ליגט אונדז צופּונסן ווי אַ שאָף.

מײן טײערער גאָט.
וויפל חפּילות צו אים האָב איך פאַרשוועכט.
וויפל מאָל האָב איך אים געלעסטערט.
דורך די נעכט.
און געוואָרעמט די שרעקעוודיקע בײנער
בײם פּײערטאַפּ פּון וויסן.
און דאָ זיצט ער. מײן חבּר. נעמט מיך אַרום.
און טײלט מיט מיר דעם לעצטן בײסן.

דער גאָט פּון מײן אומגלױבן איז פּרעכטיק.
ווי ליב איז מיר מײן פאַרשלאָפּטער גאָט.
איצט ווען ער איז מענטשלעך און אומגערעכטיק.
ווי דערהױבן איז דער שטאַלצער יורד.
ווען ס׳מײנדסטע קינד איז מורד
אין זײן געבאַט.
דורך יבשות און ימען.
וועלן מיר שוין אַזוי בלאַנדזשען און בלאַנדזשען צוזאַמען.

צו אַ דרעמלענדיקן גאָט טראַכט איך אַזוי פּון זײך:
ס׳שרעקט זײך אָפט אין דער וואַרעמסטער היימישקײט
אַ ווילדע פּרעמד.

און נאָך אײדער מען באַנעמט דעם סוד דערפּון.
דערפּילט מען אַז די אײגענע איבריטייט
האָט זײך צעבליט ווי מאַך אויף אַ מצבּה.
איז דאָס די שטאַט וואָס איך האָב געבױט?
איז דאָס די גאַס וואָס איר האָב איך אָנפאַרטרויט
יעדע נאַכט פּון מײן זיכרון?
וויפל זומערן זײנען מיר דאָ געקומען צו-חלום?
אַהער בין איך געקומען. זײך פאַרוואַרצלען און פאַרשטאַמען.
דאָ האָב איך געוואָלט פאַרפלאַנצן שטילקײט
אויף אַן אײגענעם לעבעדיקן בית-עולם
פּון טאַטע-מאַמע.
ווייל טױט האָב איך דאָרט געהאַט איבערגענוג.
אַהער בין איך שוין געקומען אַ יורש פּון טױט.
אַן אַנטרונענער.

דו רעדסט פּון זײך.
שווייגט צו מיר מײן וואַגל-ברודער.
און איך טראַכט פּון אונדז אַלעמען.
אַזוי צו זאַגן:
וויפל חורבן דאַרף אַ פּאָלק פאַרטראַגן.
אַז ס׳זאָל אין אויפבויען אַלץ נאָך גלייבן.
איצט אַז ס׳וואַלגערט זײך אין שטױבן.
איז דאָס פּאָלק געטלעכער פּון מיר.
ס׳וועלן נאָך פעלקער קומען זײך בוקן
צו זײן ווייטיק.

אַבער גאָט. מײן ברודער.
צו וואָס האַסטו אַזוי דערהױבן מײן פּאָלק
און צעשטערנט זײן אומגליק
איבערן גאַנצן הימל?

ווייטיק. בלוט. געלעכערטע הענט,
רחמנות פּון אויסגערונענע אַדערן —
אַ קינדערשער משל מיט נאַרישע רײד.
איך האָב עס געפּלט אויף זעקס מיליאָן.
איך האָב דעם משל געגעבן באַשײד.
מײן פּאָלק. מײן זון. מײן טרוים.
וועט אײביק בליען געקרייציקט אויף אַ ליכטיקן בוים.

מײן גאָט שלאָפט און איך וואַך איבער אים.
מײן מידער ברודער חלומט דעם חלום פּון מײן פּאָלק.
ער ווערט קליין ווי אַ קינד.
און איך וויג אים אין אײן אין חלום פּון מײן פּאָלק.
שלאָף מײן גאָט. מײן וואַגל-ברודער.
שלאָף אַרײן אין חלום פּון מײן פּאָלק.

My weary God lights a cigarette
And inhales the first smoke.
10 A star lights up, a fiery sign.
His limbs long for sleep.
The night lies at our feet like a lamb.

My beloved God.
How many prayers to him have I profaned.
15 How often have I blasphemed
In the nights,
Warmed my fearful bones
At the firepot of knowledge.
And here he sits, my friend, hugging me,
20 And shares with me his last mouthful.

The God of my unbelief is beautiful.
How nice is my feeble God
Now, when he is human and unjust.
How graceful is he in his proud downfall,
25 When the smallest child revolts
Against his command.
Through sea and land,
We two shall ever wander and wander together

I think to my dozing God of myself:
30 At times, an alien space
Will spread in the homiest warmth.
And before you grasp its mystery,
You feel how your own futility
Blossoms like moss on a gravestone.
35 Is this the city that I built?
Is this the street I confided in
Every night of my memory?
How many summers appeared here in my dream?
Here I came to strike roots and grow stems,
40 Here I wanted to plant calm
On my own living graveyard
Of father-mother.
I had plenty of death over there.
I came here, an heir of death,
45 A refugee.

You are talking of yourself,
Answers the silence of my wander-brother,
And I think of all of us:
How much destruction can a people bear
50 And still believe in re-building?
Now, grovelling in the dust,
My people is holier than me.
One day, nations shall come to bow
To its pain.

55 But God, my brother,
Why hast thou raised my people
And spread their misfortune like stars
All over the sky?

Pain, blood, pierced hands,
60 Pity of emptied veins—
A childish fable with silly words.
I multiplied it by six million,
I gave the fable its moral.
My people, my son, my dream
65 Will blossom forever crucified on a tree of light.

My God sleeps and I watch over him.
My tired brother dreams the dream of my people.
He dwindles, grows small as a baby,
And I rock him into the dream of my people.
70 Sleep, my god, my wander-brother,
Sleep into the dream of my people.

Maybe it will go sweeter for us.

You'll begin with a scrap of truth,
not promising seventh heaven,
mindful of human flesh, bone, failings;
30 wine that gladdens the heart of man;
the body's pleasures.
You'll cherish us for those moments of belief
when out of our depths we invoke You.
35 You'll keep far from blood, blade, killing.
You'll choose to be the approachable God
of a prayerful huddle
rather than an omnipotent God of Prey.
You'll come near.
40 We'll begin to spin
merciful laws binding on You and on us.

Out of the cradle and little,
why don't we start all over again,
growing up bordered by a hallowed land?
45 Children will laugh all around in delight.
We'll be poor and full of truth.
Your holy blessing will just suffice
for a people peaceable and good.
My own word will be the warm pride
50 of a family.
Your nostrils will savor
the pure meal-offering of a nation
nurturing its God with everything good.
And me they'll feed and fondle like a child.
55 I'll be rocked in cozy fame.
No one beyond our borders will hear my name,
or Yours.

Shouldn't the two of us go home?
Why don't we both, beaten, go home?

60 Thou hast chosen us.
We were both cried up for grandeur
so that they could bring us to dust
and scatter us and stamp us out.
They tricked You out in stars over a whole universe.
65 How is it that great nations flock to You?
You are quiet and content with your own.
You are one of us,
completely.
Why did You abandon your closet-ark,
70 your little tent,
going far away to be converted
into the Lord of the Universe?
Therefore we became Your errant children,
agitators of pillars, world incendiaries.
75 You lapsed into the Jewish International
before we did.

We followed You into Your wide world
and sickened there.
Save Yourself, return
80 with Your pilgrims who go up
to a little land. Come back,
be our Jewish God again.

וועסט אנהייבן פון קליינעם אמת,
נישט צוזאגן קיין זיבן גליקן.
וועסט גערענקען דעם מענטש,
זיין פלייש, זיין ביין, זיינע חסרונות,
דעם וויין וואס דערפרייט ס'הארץ פון מענטש,
די פרייד פון ליב.
וועסט אים ליב האבן און די רגעס
ווען זיין הארץ וועט דאווענען צו דיר מיט גלויבן.
דערווייטערט וועסטו זיין פון בלוט, האק, מאַרד,
וועסט ליבערשט זיין דער דערגרייכטער גאט פון מנין.
איידער דער מעכטיקער גאט פון גולנים.
וועסט קומען נענטער צו אונדו
און מיר וועלן אנהייבן צו שפינען
נייע מענטשלעכע דינים,
גילטיק פאַר דיר, פאַר אונדו.

זאָלן מיר אפשר אנהייבן וויגלדיק און קליין
און וואַקסן מיט די גרענעצן
פון אַ געבענטשט לאַנד?
קינדער וועלן לאַבן מיט פרייד אונדו אַנטקעגן,
ווייל מיר וועלן זיין אַרעם און אמת,
דיין געטלעכע ברכה וועט זיין פונקט גענוג
פאַר אַ רויק און גוט פאַלק.

מיין אייגן וואָרט וועט ווערן
דער וואַרעמער נחת פון אַ משפחה.
דיינע נאָזלעכער וועלן שמעקן
דעם סולח פון אַ פאַלק,
וואָס האַרעוועט זיין גאָט
מיט אַל דאָס גוטס.
מיך וועט מען אויך קאַרמען און צערטלען ווי אַ קינד.
און איך וועל פאַרוויגט ווערן
אין אַן ענג-באַקוועמער באַרעמטקייט.
און קיינער וועט אויסער די גרענעצן
נישט הערן —
נישט דיין נאָמען און נישט (מינעם).

זאָלן מיר אפשר ביידע גיין אַהיים ?
זאָלן מיר אפשר ביידע, געשלאָגענע, גיין אַהיים ?
אתה בחרתנו.

דו האָסט אונדו אויסגעקליבן.
מ'האָט אונדו ביידע פאַרשרינגן פאַר גרויס,
כדי מ'זאָל אונדו צעשטויבן און צעשפרייטן
און מאַכן אויס.
דיך האָט מען אויסגעשטערנט איבער אַ גאַנצער וועלט.
ווי קומען צו דיר גרויסע פֿעלקער ?
ביסט שטיל און נחתדיק
און איך גאַנצן אַן אונדזעריקער.
פאַר וואָס האָסטו פאַרלאָזט דיין משכן,
דיין קליין געצעלט,
און אַוועק צו ווערן דער גאָט פון אַ וועלט ?
זיינען מיר געוואָרן דייןע זינדיקע קינדער,
די זיילן-שאַקלער, וועלטן-צינדער.
דאָס ביסטו פֿריער פון אונדו געוואָרן אַ ייִדישער אינטערנאַציאָנאַל.
מיר זיינען דיר נאַכגעגאַנגען אין דער וועלט,
קראַנק געוואָרן מיט דיין וועלט.
ראַטעווע זיך און קום מיט די עולים
צוריק צו אַ קליין לאַנד,
ווער ווידער דער ייִדישער גאָט.

זונטאג-שטעטל

Sunday Shtetl

רבי לוי יצחקס באַלענאָלע
וואָס שפּירט די רעדער מיט ספּאַלע
אַגעטאָן אין סלית און תּפּילין,
האָט זיך אין דעם מידן.
איינערדיקטן זונטאָג-שטעטל,
פאַרשטעלט פֿאַר עטלעכע יידן,
וואָס שטייען אַרום זייערע הייזער,
וואָסן די אויטאָמאָבילן.
סאָסן איבער בעת-מעשה
דעם סך-הכל
פֿון נעכטיקן צוקה-פינאַקל
אין צענטער.

אַ שטילע האַנט פּיסערט דעם טרויער
פֿון כּראַנישער רו,
וואָס באַפּאַלט דאָס שטעטל,
איין פּאַל אַ וואָך;
מיט דער מאַגאַטאַנער לאַנגיק
פֿון איין פּאַל אין זיבן.
דער ווייזער אויף דעם קליינעם סקווער
קריכט פֿאַרטאַגיק.
אַ קלויסטער-גלאַק וועקט פֿאַרזיכטיק
אַ גאַס אַ פּאַסיזשן.
פֿון די טענצטער הייבט אָן עיפּושן

מיט חזיר-גרייוון.
סיייען שכנים אין קלויסטער.
די פֿאַרשטעלטע באַלעגאַלעס
באַשפּריצן שטילער די רעדער,
שניידן דעם שטראָם פֿון דער קישקע
סיזאַל נישט מאַכן קיין טרעוואַגע.
און יעדער זוכט, פֿאַרלוירן,
שוץ ביי דער עלנטער סינאַגאָגע,
וואָס איז אין שטעטל פֿאַראַנען
און וואָרט נעבעך אויף יום-כיפור.

די זונטאָג-יידן שמייכלען
צו די שכנים ווי מאַראַנען.
דער קלויסטער-גלאַק גיט אַ טאַלעראַנטן היפּער,
פֿאַרביי יידישע טויערן.
זיי האַרכן צום קלויסטער
מיט אַנגעשפיצטע,
דערשראַקענע אויערן.

Rabbi Levi Yitskhok's drayman—the one who wore
tales and tfilin as he smeared the wheels
of his wagon with tar—
turns up in the shape of a bunch of Jews
hanging around their houses,
washing the car
(while the shtetl drowns
in its Sunday snooze),
adding up bills and working out deals
to pay up what's owed to the pinochle fund-raiser
they attended last night at the Center.

A hushed hand feeds the ache
of this chronic languor
that drops on the town:
weekly monotonous logic,
once out of seven.
In the little square
the clock creeps on
to point the dawn;
a wary church bell wakes
its passive god.
Windows start the stench
of bacon crackling.

The neighbors are off to church.
Our draymen-in-disguise,
hosing down their wheels,
cut the stream to cut the noise.
Lost souls, they look for safekeeping
to the deserted synagogue
that waits to fill up on Yom Kippur.

These Sunday Jews are secret Jews
smiling for the neighbors.
The church bell tolerantly skips over
the doorposts of the Jews.
They listen
with pricked-up ear,
in Marrano fear.

Cynthia Ozick

Rabbi Levi Yitskhok of Berdichev (c. 1740–1810): a famous Hasidic rabbi, noted for his benign view of humankind. The story goes that he once saw a drayman, arrayed for the morning service in his prayer shawl and phylacteries, greasing the wheels of his wagon. "Lord of the Universe," he exclaimed with delight, "behold the devoutness of your people! Even when they grease the wheels of a wagon they are still mindful of your name!" (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*)

Yom Kippur: the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, when even nominally observant Jews attend the synagogue.

the doorposts of the Jews: an ironic reference to the story of Passover, which commemorates the flight of the Jews from Egypt. Before the last of the ten plagues, the Jews were invited to mark their doorposts so that the angel of death would avoid their households when he went in search of the Egyptian first-born sons.

Marranos: Jews in Christian Spain and Portugal from the late fourteenth century onward who were forced by the Inquisition to convert to Christianity but who continued to observe certain Jewish customs in secret.

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| 24. | Topic: Yiddish Literature and the World (1937) | (A. L.—) |
| 25. | Poems in Time (1937) | (Jacob Glatshiteyn) |
| 26. | The Ghetto of Yiddish Literature (1938) | (Jacob Glatshiteyn) |
| 27. | Free Verse and the Wise Prosaic Smile of Yiddish
(1947) | (Jacob Glatshiteyn) |
| 28. | Unpoeticalness (1947) | (Jacob Glatshiteyn) |
| 29. | In the Face of the Total Destruction (1947) | (Jacob Glatshiteyn) |
| 30. | A Whole Poetry has Become Monotonic and
Monothematic (1947) | (Jacob Glatshiteyn) |

INTROSPECTIVISM

[Manifesto of 1919]

I

With this collection,¹ we intend to launch a particular trend in Yiddish poetry which has recently emerged in the works of a group of Yiddish poets. We have chosen to call it the *Introspective Movement*, a name that indicates a whole range of individual character and nuance.

We know that introspective poems as such are nothing new. In all ages, poets have occasionally written introspectively; that is, they looked *into themselves*² and created poetry drawn from their own soul* and from the world as reflected in it. There are introspective poems in modern Yiddish poetry as well, even though the poets did not use this term.

The difference, however, between us and those other poets, both Yiddish and non-Yiddish, ancient and modern, is that we are dedicated to deepening, developing, and expanding the introspective method.

The world exists and we are part of it. But for us, the world exists only as it is mirrored in us, as it touches *us*. The world is a nonexistent category, a lie, if it is not related to us. It becomes an actuality only *in* and *through* us.

This general philosophical principle is the foundation of our trend. We will try to develop it in the language of poetry.

Poetry is not only feeling and perception but also, and perhaps primarily, the art of expressing feelings and perceptions adequately. It is not enough to say that all phenomena exist to the extent that they enter into an organic relation with us. The poet's major concern is to express this organic relation in an introspective and fully individual manner.

In an introspective manner means that the poet must really listen to his inner voice, observe his internal panorama—kaleidoscopic, contradictory, unclear or confused as it may be. From these sources, he must create poetry which is the result

* The Yiddish word *zel*, "soul," is equivalent to Freud's *Seele* and can be translated as *psyche*.

1. This Introspectivist manifesto, written in 1919, was published as the opening of *In Zikh: A Collection of Introspective Poems*, Max N. Maisel, New York, 1920.

2. In the original: "*In zikh*," which gave the name to the journal and the movement. Inzikhism.

of both the fusion of the poet's soul with the phenomenon he expresses and the individual image, or cluster of images, that he sees *within himself* at that moment.

What does take place in the poet's psyche under the impression or impact of any phenomenon?

In the language of our local poets, of the "Young Generation" (*Di Yunge*),³ this creates a *mood*. According to them, it is the poet's task to express or convey this mood. How? In a concentrated and well-rounded form. Concentration and well-roundedness are seen as the necessary conditions, or presuppositions, that allow the poet's mood to attain universal or, in more traditional terms, *eternal*, value.

But this method, though sufficient to create poetic vignettes or artful arabesques, is essentially neither sufficient nor true. From our point of view, this method is a *lie*.

Why?

Because the mood and the poem that emerge from this conception and this method must inevitably result in something cut-off, isolated, something which does not really correspond to life and truth.

At best, such poems are embellishments and ornaments. At worst, they ring false, because the impression or the impact of any phenomenon on the poet's soul does not result in an isolated, polished, well-rounded, and concentrated mood. What emerges is more complex, intertwined with a whole galaxy of other "moods," of other feelings and perceptions. In the final analysis, concentration and well-roundedness of poetry symbolize the lie, the awesome contradiction between literature and life, between all of art and life.

We Introspectivists want first of all to present life—the true, the sincere, and the precise—as it is mirrored in *ourselves*, as it merges with us.

The human psyche is an awesome labyrinth. Thousands of beings dwell there. The inhabitants are the various facets of the individual's present self on the one hand and fragments of his inherited self on the other. If we believe that every individual has already lived somewhere in one incarnation or another—and this belief is often vividly sensed by each of us—then the number of inhabitants in the labyrinth of the human psyche is even higher.

This is the real *life* of a human being. In our age of the big metropolis and enormous variety in all domains, this life becomes a thousandfold more complicated and entangled. We Introspectivists feel the need to convey and express it.

In what form and shape does this complexity of moods appear?

In the shape of association and suggestion. For us, these two elements are also the most important methods of poetic expression.

Of course, poets of all times have used suggestion and association. The pre-Raphaelite Rossetti and the later Swinburne often used these elements in their work. Yet we want to make association and suggestion the poet's major tools because it seems to us that they are best suited to express the complex feelings and perceptions of a contemporary person.

So much about the introspective method. As for *individual* manner, it is perhaps even more important.

3. An Impressionist, cosmopolitan trend that dominated Yiddish American poetry from 1900 to 1919.

Because we perceive the world egocentrically and because we think that this is the most natural and therefore *the truest and most human* mode of perception, we think that the poem of every poet must first of all be *his own* poem. In other words, the poet must in every case give us what he himself sees and as he sees it.

Essentially, this should be self-evident as a prerequisite for any poetry. It should be but is not.

Indeed, most poems, not just Yiddish ones but the majority of non-Yiddish ones as well, lack the full individuality of the poet and hence of the poem, too. In most poems, the poet does not delve deeply enough to see what appears in his own psyche. Perhaps the fault lies with language, which generally works in our lives as a misleading and deceiving category. Be that as it may, we think that, in the great majority of all poetry, the poet is not sufficiently individual. He employs too many stock images and ready-made materials. When the poet, or any person, looks at a sunset, he may see the strangest things which, ostensibly, have perhaps no relation to the sunset. The image reflected in his psyche is rather a series of far-reaching associations moving away from what his eye sees, a chain of suggestions evoked by the sunset. *This*, the series of associations and the chain of suggestions, constitutes *truth*, is life, much as an illusion is often more real than the cluster of external appearances we call life. Most poets, however, will not even focus on what occurs inside themselves while they are watching a sunset but will paint it, search for colors, describe the details, etc. If, in addition, they are subjectively attuned, they will perhaps dip their brush into a drop of subjectivity, into a patch of color of their selves, make a comparison with their own lives, express some wisdom about life in general, and the poem is done.

For us, such a poem is not true, is a cliché. We insist that the poet should give us the authentic image that he sees in himself and give it in such a form as only he and no one else can see it.

If such a poem then becomes grist for the mill of Freudian theory, if it provides traces of something morbid or sick in the poet, we do not mind. Art is ultimately redemption, even if it is an illusory redemption or a redemption *through* illusion. And no redemption is possible in any other way but through oneself, through an internal personal concentration. Only a truly individual poem can be a means of self-redemption.

Both the introspectivity of a poem and its individuality must use suggestion and association in order to reach full expression. Now, the individuality of the poem has a lot to do with what is generally known as *form*.

In fact, form and content are the same. A poem that can be rewritten in another form is neither a poem nor poetry. They cannot be separated from one another. To speak of form and content separately is to succumb to the influence of a linguistic fallacy. And if we speak of form as a separate concept, it is merely for the sake of convenience, as is the case with many other linguistic fallacies.

The generally known aspect of form is *rhythm*. Every poem must have rhythm. Rhythm is the mystery of life; art which is no more than an expression of life obviously must also have rhythm. But what kind of rhythm must a poem have?

There is only one answer: it must have the only possible and the only imaginable rhythm. Each poem must have its *individual rhythm*. By this we mean that the rhythm of the poem must fit entirely this particular poem. One poem cannot have the same rhythm as any other poem. Every poem is, in fact, unique.

And if we see, in certain poets, how the most divergent poems are similar in their rhythm, this in itself is the best sign of their lack of productivity and creativity, and also of their lack of genuine sincerity.

We cannot understand how it is possible for a real poet to write one poem about the subway, another about the sand at the seashore in summer, and a third about his love for a girl—all in the same rhythm, in the same “beat.” Two of the three poems are certainly false. But, more certainly, all three are false, because if a poet can write three poems in the same rhythm, this is proof in itself that he does not listen to the music in his own soul, that he does not see anything or hear anything with his own eyes and ears.

We demand individual rhythm because only thus can the truth that we seek and want to express be revealed.

This leads us to the question which has recently stirred the consciousness of poets in all languages and not least that of Yiddish poets, the question of *free verse*.

Free verse is not imperative for introspective poets. It is possible to have introspective poems in regular meter. Though regular meter may often appear as a hindrance, a straitjacket, free verse in itself is not enough. We Introspectivists believe that free verse is best suited to the individuality of the rhythm and of the poem as a whole; and for *that* rather than for any other reason, we prefer it to other verse forms.

Hence it is the greatest mistake, even ignorance, to claim (as many do) that it is easier to write free verse than to write in measured meters. If comparison here makes sense at all, the opposite is true. It is easier to write in regular and conventional meters because, after some experience, one acquires the knack and the poem “writes itself.” But free verse, intended primarily for individual rhythm, demands an intense effort, a genuine sounding of the inner depths. Therefore free verse more easily betrays the non-poet, revealing the internal vacuum, if that is what is at stake.

When non-poets take on free verse, their situation is no easier than when they wrote iambs, trochees, or anapests. On the contrary, while in the latter case they can perhaps produce a certain musicality and thus create the impression that they are writing poetry, in the former case they are unproductive from the first or second moment, and their failure is exposed.

Only for the real poet is free verse a new, powerful means of expression, a new, wide world full of unexplored territories. For the non-poet, however, free verse is nothing but a mousetrap into which he falls in his first or second line. Let the non-poets beware of it!

We emphasize again that we are not against regular meters as such. Every true poet, Introspectivist or not, may sometimes feel that only in a regular rhythm, in a certain “canonical” meter, can he create a particular poem. It is more correct to say (for poets, it is a truism) that, inside every poet, including Introspectivists, *a certain poem will often write itself* in a regular meter. Then he does not fight it. Then he understands that it had to be like this, that in *this* case, this is the truth, this the individual rhythm.

If we prefer free verse, it is only for that reason. In general, we think that regular meter, the rhythm of frequently repeated beats, adapted itself perhaps to an earlier kind of life before the rise of the big city with its machines, its turmoil, and its accelerated, irregular tempo. That life was quiet and flowed tranquilly—in a regular rhythm, in fact—in beats repeated in short, frequent intervals.

Just as contemporary life created new clothing, new dwellings, new color combinations, and new sound combinations, so one needs to create a new art and new and different rhythms. We believe that free verse is best suited for the creation of such new rhythms. It is like fine, yielding plaster in which the inner image of the poet can find its most precise and fullest realization.

For the same reason, we are not against rhyme. Rhyme has its own charm and value. This is natural. The spirit of creative poets has used it for thousands of years as one of its poetic devices. This in itself is proof enough of its value. We say merely that rhyme is *not* a must. It often sounds forced or leads us on like a delusive, fleeting light. In such cases, rhyme is harmful and best avoided. Rhyme is good only when it is well-placed, when it is woven naturally into the verse. It is unnecessary to seek it, to make an effort to have rhyme at any cost, especially in our time when there is no need to learn poems by heart, when traveling poets do not have to recite their poems to amuse an ignorant or unpoetic audience.

Whenever a poet does feel the call of a wandering troubadour to recite his poems for a more primitive audience, as in the case of the American poet, Vachel Lindsay, the rhyme is well-placed and is good.

As with regular and irregular rhythm, many tend to assume mistakenly that writing without rhyme is easier than with rhyme. This is false. One can easily learn to make rhymes. And while one can sometimes cover with rhyme a trivial mood, which thus acquires the pretension to poetry, such a camouflage has no place in a rhymeless poem. There, one *must* be a genuine poet and a genuine creator. If not, the rhymeless poem will betray it much faster and easier than a rhymed one will.

The music of a poem—no doubt a desideratum—does not depend on rhyme. Rhyme is merely one element of its music, and the least important one at that. The music of a poem must also be purely individual and can be attained without rhymes, which necessarily produce a certain stereotype: after all, rhymes are limited in quantity and quality.

The *individual* sound combination is really necessary; indeed, because of our Introspectivism, we believe it to be unusually important. Not only do we not deny this element in poetry but we try to give it a new impetus, precisely through the individuality of the poem.

The musical and sound aspect of the Yiddish language has been generally neglected by most of our poets. Alliteration as a poetic device has remained almost untouched, although it is strongly represented in our language. As far as we can, we will try to remedy this neglect.

Individuality is everything and introspection is everything—this is what we seek, this is what we want to achieve.

When a certain phenomenon appears to a poet in the shape of colors; when an association carries him away to the shores of the Ganges or to Japan; when a suggestion whispers to him of something nebulous, something lurking in a fragment of his previous incarnation or of his hereditary self—all these are the roads and

the labyrinths of his psyche. He must tread them because they are *his*, and only through the authentic, inner, true, *introspective* "I" lies the path that leads to creation and redemption.

3

Once this is accepted, it is self-evident that everything is an object for poetry, that for the poet there is no ugly or beautiful, no good or bad, no high or low. Everything is of equal value for the poet if it appears *inside* him, and everything is simply a stage to his internal redemption.

For us, then, the senseless and unproductive question of whether a poet "should" write on national or social topics or merely on personal ones does not arise. For us, everything is "personal." Wars and revolutions, Jewish pogroms and the workers' movement, Protestantism and Buddha, the Yiddish school and the Cross, the mayoral elections and a ban on our language—all these may concern us or not, just as a blond woman and our own unrest may or may not concern us. If it does concern us, we write poetry; if it does not, we keep quiet. In either case, we write about ourselves because all these exist only insofar as they are in us, insofar as they are perceived *introspectively*.

For the same reason, we do not recognize the difference between "poetry of the heart" and "poetry of the head," two meaningless phrases that belong to the same category of linguistic fallacies mentioned above. If the first phrase implies unconscious creativity and the second *conscious creativity*, then we say that neither we nor anybody else knows the boundary between conscious and unconscious. Certain aspects of the creative process are always conscious and cannot be otherwise. There is no tragedy in that. The modern poet is not, cannot, and should not be that naive stargazer who knows nothing but his little song, who understands nothing that goes on in the world, who has no attitude to life, its problems and events, who cannot even write a line about anything but his little mood, tapped out in iambs and trochees. The contemporary poet is a human being like other human beings and must be an intelligent, conscious person. As a poet, this is what is required of him: to see and feel, know and comprehend, and to see with his own eyes and be capable of expressing the seen, felt, and understood in his own internally true, introspectively sincere manner.

If conscious poetry means the expression of underlying thought in poetry, we see nothing wrong in that, either. A poet need not and must not be spiritually mute. A poet's *thought* is not a drawback but a great advantage. As a poet, as an artist, he must only be capable of expressing his thought in a proper form, of creating from it a work of art. And this depends on just one condition: that the thought should be his own, that it should be the true result of the fusion of his soul and life; and that he should express it in that form, in those very images, in the same true colors and tones as they take shape inside him, as they emerge and permeate him in the labyrinth of his soul. There is no boundary between "feeling" and "thought" in contemporary man or in the contemporary poet. Both are expressions of the same "I"; they are so closely intertwined that it is absurd to wish to separate them.

We make no distinction between intellectual poetry and poetry of feeling. We know of only one distinction: that between authenticity and falsehood, between

true individuality and cliché. In the first case, poetry is born; in the second—"mood-laden" as it may be—merely licorice, vignettes, and false tones.

Our relationship to "Jewishness," too, becomes obvious from our general poetical credo.

We are "Jewish poets" simply because we are Jews and write in Yiddish.⁴ No matter what a Yiddish poet writes in Yiddish, it is ipso facto Jewish. One does not need any particular "Jewish themes." A Jew will write about an Indian fertility temple and Japanese Shinto shrines as a Jew. A Jewish poet will be Jewish when he writes poetry about "vive la France," about the Golden Calf, about gratitude to a Christian woman for a kind word, about roses that turn black, about a courier of an old prince, or about the calm that comes only with sleep. It is not the poet's task to seek and show his Jewishness. Whoever is interested in this endeavor is welcome to it, and whoever looks for Jewishness in Yiddish poets will find it.

In two things we are explicitly Jewish, through and through: in our relationship to the Yiddish language in general, and to Yiddish as a poetic instrument.

We believe in Yiddish. We love Yiddish. We do not hesitate to say that he who has a negative relation to the Yiddish language, or who merely looks down on it, cannot be a Yiddish poet. He who mocks Yiddish, who complains that Yiddish is a poor and shabby language, he who is merely indifferent to Yiddish, does not belong to the high category of Yiddish poets. To be a Yiddish poet is a high status, an achievement, and it is unimaginable that a person creating in Yiddish should spit in the well of his creation. Such a person is a petty human being and an even pettier poet.

As to Yiddish as a language instrument, we think that our language is now beautiful and rich enough for the most profound poetry. All the high achievements of poetry—the highest—are possible in Yiddish. Only a poor poet can complain of the poverty of the Yiddish language. The real poet knows the richness of our language and lacks nothing, can lack nothing.

Poetry is, to a very high degree, the art of language—a principle that is too often forgotten—and Yiddish poetry is the art of the Yiddish language, which is merely a part of the general European-American culture. Yiddish is now rich enough, independent enough to afford to enrich its vocabulary from the treasures of her sister languages. That is why we are not afraid to borrow words from the sister languages, words to cover newly developed concepts, broadened feelings and thoughts. Such words are also *our* words. We have the same right to them as does any other language, any other poetry, because—to repeat—Yiddish poetry is merely a branch, a particular stream in the whole contemporary poetry of the world.

We regard Yiddish as a fully mature, ripe, independent, particular, and unique language. We maintain that Yiddish separated long ago not only from her mother—German—but also from her father—Hebrew. Everything that ties Yiddish to Hebrew in an artificial and enforced way is superfluous, an offence to the language in which we create. Spelling certain words in Yiddish differently from other words because of their Hebrew etymology is false and anachronistic.⁵ All words in Yiddish

4. In Yiddish, the same word, *Yiddish*, means both "Yiddish" and "Jewish."

5. Yiddish, though using the Hebrew alphabet, employs a European-type, close-to-phonetic spelling for words of any origin except Hebrew; the latter preserve their Hebrew, vowelless spelling.

are equal, it is high time to clean out the white basting of Hebrew spelling from certain Yiddish words.

We are not enemies of Hebrew. For us Yiddish poets, there is absolutely no language question.⁶ For us, Hebrew is only a foreign language, while Yiddish is *our* language. We cannot forget, however, that Hebrew and Hebraism have kept on disturbing the natural development of the Yiddish word and of Yiddish poetry. We know that, if not for the Hebraism of the Haskalah movement,⁷ which later branched out into Zionist Hebraism on the one hand and assimilationist anti-Yiddishism on the other, Yiddish poetry would stand on a much higher level than it does today. We know that if Yiddish poetry had developed normally and naturally from the poet Shloyme Etinger⁸ to now, if the natural course had not been interrupted by Hebraism and the Hebraists, there could be no language problem for anyone; it would perhaps never have arisen. The rich Yiddish literature would have nipped it in the bud.

We think, therefore, that one must finally have the courage to sever any tie between our language and any other foreign language. A time comes when a son must break away altogether from his father and set up his own tent. The last vestige of Hebrew in Yiddish is the Hebrew spelling of certain words. This must be abolished. As poets rather than propagandists, we solve the problem first of all for ourselves. We shall spell all Yiddish words equally, with no respect for their pedigree.

These are our views, these are our poetic aspirations in the various realms that must concern a poet in general and a Yiddish poet in particular.

4

Our emergence is not intended as a struggle against anybody or as an attempt to annihilate anyone. We simply want to develop ourselves and take our own road, which is, for us, the truest road.

We come at the right time, at a time when Yiddish poetry is mature and independent enough to bear separate trends and promote differentiation and diversity, instead of straying hesitantly in one herd.

By saying that we come at the right time we admit that everything that has come before us was also at its right time.

Mikhl Gordon, Shimon Frug, Morris Rosenfeld, Avrom Reyzin, A. Liessin, H. Royzenblat—they are all good in their own time, but only *in* their own time.⁹ All that was necessary for the development of Yiddish poetry, for its gradual progress

6. An allusion to "the War of Languages" raging at the beginning of the twentieth century, in which Hebrew and Yiddish competed for the title of "the" national language that would dominate Jewish education and culture.

7. The movement of Enlightenment in European Jewish culture, 1780-1880, promoting aesthetic ideals of German or Russian culture, despising Yiddish as a "jargon" and preferring German or Hebrew with Mendelssohn or, with the poet I. L. Gordon, Russian or Hebrew to the language of the masses.

8. One of the few Yiddish poets of the Haskalah, Etinger (1799-1855) was a learned writer who created fine poetry not published in his lifetime.

9. Mikhl Gordon (1823-1890) was a poet of the Haskalah in Lithuania; Shimon Frug (1860-1916), a famous poet in Russian and Yiddish, introduced meters in Yiddish poetry; Morris

was contributed by them and thus made our appearance possible. To this extent, we do not fight against them, we do not try to shout them down. On the contrary, we express our gratitude for their role in our emergence.

Only one representative of the older Yiddish poets has crossed the boundary of his time and is, for us, not merely a precursor but a fellow poet. This is *Yehoash*.¹⁰ In our view, he is the most important figure in all of Yiddish poetry today. He is a poet who does not stop searching, who has the courage and the talent—we do not know which is more important or more beautiful and greater—to sense at the very zenith of his creativity that this is perhaps not the way and to depart from the well-known path of scanned iambs and trochees to write in new forms and in different modes. Perhaps he should have been the initiator of a new trend in Yiddish poetry and perhaps also, at least in part, of our trend. He did not do this for understandable reasons, and we would like to note that we regard him as one who is close to us.

The development of a new group of Yiddish poets would not have been possible without certain intermediate steps. Art, like life, does not leap but develops gradually. On those intermediate steps, we find the so-called *Yunge* (the Young Generation).

Aynhorn, Menakhem, Mani Leyb, Zisho Landoy, Rolnik, Slonim, Schwartz, Ayzland, M. L. Halpern, B. Lapin—they are all good and good in their time.¹¹ They have accomplishments, and not only do we not deny that but we understand and readily admit that only because of their work was a further development of Yiddish poetry possible, of which the Introspective trend is an expression.

All these poets led Yiddish poetry out onto a broader road. They brought Yiddish poetry, which was strongly akin to the verse of wedding jesters and rhymesters,¹² closer to art and genuine poetry. In the case of poets like Rolnik or Mani Leyb, one could say that they made Yiddish poetry deeper, though as to the latter, it would be more correct to say finer. Slonim has the accomplishment of showing a sensibility for rhythm and, in part, also for individual rhythm.

The major contribution of the Young Generation, however, is with respect to language. They introduced a certain Europeanism into the language, a greater artistic authenticity, and raised the level of a Yiddish poem. They canceled Peretz's "my song would have sounded differently if I sang for Goyim in Goyish."¹³

Rosenfeld (1862–1923), was a major "sweat-shop poet" in America; and Avrom Reyzin (Abraham Reisin; 1876–1953), A. Liessin (1872–1938), and H. Royzenblat (1879–1956) were major American Yiddish poets at the beginning of the twentieth century.

10. Yehoash (1872–1927), born in Russia, published most of his books in America. He is famous for his classical translation of the Bible into Yiddish.

11. David Aynhorn (Einhorn; 1886–1973), Menakhem (later: M. Borevsho; 1888–1949), Mani Leyb (Leib; 1883–1953), Zisho Landoy (Zishe Landau; 1889–1937), J. Rolnik (Rolnick; 1879–1955), J. Slonim (1885–1944), I. J. Schwartz (1885–1971), R. Ayzland (Iceland; 1884–1955), M.-L. Halpern (1886–1932), and B. Lapin (1889–1952) were American Yiddish poets of or close to the Young Generation. Most of them continued writing poetry simultaneously with the Introspectivists.

12. An allusion to the poetry of the *Badkhnim*, wedding jesters who extemporated rhymed verse in Yiddish ranging from coarse comedy to national and topical themes. An example is the popular poet Eliokum Zunser (1836–1913), who was active in Russia and America.

13. I. L. Peretz (1852–1915), one of the three Yiddish "Classics," expressed in these lines from the opening of the long poem, "Monish," the inferiority complex of his time about the poverty of the "Jargon," i.e., Yiddish.

There it remained, however. As for content, even the deepest of them stayed on the surface and the finest hit a wall. With all his sensibility for rhythm, Slonim stopped where he should have, and perhaps could have, started. As for language, there too they came to a dead end. The refreshing, enriching, and refined became ossified and degenerated into a fruitless wasteland.

As with the older writers, here too there is an exception—namely, H. Leyvik.¹⁴

Leyvik is only in part one of the Young Generation. From the first, he introduced so much that is individual—and even profound—that there can be no talk of his stopping, of his having already completed his poetic mission.

We regard him, too, as being close to us.

The Young Generation, as a whole, however—as a group—belong only to their own time. If one wants to characterize their contribution, which we consider finished, it is the contribution of an interim stage, of a bridge to a new poetry—a poetry more independent, courageous, profound, and authentic both in content and in form, to use an old formulation.

5

We would like to add a few comments on the mode of writing, points which can be found in most modern trends, such as, for example, in the American Imagists. We will also remark on the way in which this collection, which we consider the first in a series, was compiled.

Since we see our trend as an expression of a movement toward life, toward life as it is reflected in us—which is real life—we are in favor of making the language of our poems as close as possible to the spoken language in its structure and flow. We therefore abolish any possibility of "inversion," the contortion of the natural sentence structure for the sake of rhythm and rhyme. One cannot and under no circumstances should say "bird thou never wert" or "but not your heart away"¹⁵ or even worse barbarisms. One must write, "you never were a bird," "don't give your heart away," whether there is a rhyme or not, whether it scans or not.

We are against using expressions for their ostensible beauty. There can be no beauty without profound relationship and without authentic meaning.

We strive to avoid banal similes, epithets, and other figurative expressions. Their very banality makes them a lie and we seek, first of all, introspective honesty and individuality.

We try to avoid superfluous adjectives altogether, which add nothing and are merely an unnecessary burden. "Far distance" or "blue distance" or "snowing snow" do not make the distance or the snow different. Instead, it is always better to have an authentic, individual image.

It is always better to use the right word for the corresponding concept, even if it is not "beautiful" according to popular aesthetics. A word in the right place is always beautiful. If anyone has to look it up in the dictionary, this is none of the poet's business.

14. See his poetry in this volume.

15. Here, English equivalents (by Shelley and Houseman) to the Yiddish phrases were used.

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As to the composition of this collection, the initiative lies with the signers of this introduction. They invited others after agreeing on the tenets and goals of this trend. We have included here such poems as are more or less close to our position.

All these rules, as it were, were not formulated in advance of the poems. Should anyone think so, he is guilty of an absurdity. The rules, like the whole movement, grew out of poems already written. It cannot be otherwise. If in the process of writing new rules develop, even contradictory ones, we shall record that, too.

The poem creates the rule and not vice versa, and that is why no rule can be considered binding forever.

The number of poems included in this collection does not by any means indicate the relative importance of a poet. Neither does it have to do with whether the poet was one of the initiators. It indicates merely that someone has written more poems.

All participants are equally important.

We know that every poet develops better in solitude than in a group. The eight poets whose works are represented here are very different from each other. If we have decided to appear as a group with a particular name (which, by the way, should not be taken literally), it is because, through this collective separation and delimitation, we hope to enhance the individual development of each one of us.

We have been led to this collective step by the current internal situation of Yiddish poetry—chaotic, faceless, characterless, and increasingly an obstacle to further development.

Jacob Glatshsteyn

A. Leyeles

N. Minkov

