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THE YIDDISH PRESS IN MONTREAL, 1900-1945

The Yiddish press in Montreal served a dual function: to acclimatize the local Eastern European immigrant community to its adopted home in Canada, and to maintain and foster a distinctive cultural life. For the tens of thousands of Yiddish-speaking immigrants who settled in Montreal between 1900 and 1945, the Yiddish press provided access to the unfamiliar outside world while it both reinforced and expanded the ongoing relationship with the readers' familiar Jewish world. As in Europe, the Montreal press was key to the development and dissemination of Yiddish culture, including political ideology, institutional development, as well as scholarly and literary ventures. This paper will examine the roles filled by the Montreal Yiddish press during its heyday, in particular its leading newspaper, the *Keneder Adler* (Canadian Jewish Eagle).¹ It will begin with some general comments about the history of the Yiddish press and the specific Montreal context. Yiddish newspapers are a relatively recent phenomenon on the world scene. The Yiddish press developed in tandem with modern Yiddish literature, which emerged in the 1860s as a product of the modernization and Europeanization of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment). Technological innovations and increased literacy resulted in the widespread development of the Yiddish press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This expansion corresponded with the emergence of new Jewish ideological movements, such as Socialism, Zionism, and religious Orthodoxy. The first Yiddish weekly in Eastern Europe, a

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supplement to Alexander Zederbaum's St. Petersburg Hebrew weekly *ha-Meliz* ("The Advocate," founded in Odessa, 1860), titled *Kol Mevasser* ("The Harbinger," founded in St. Petersburg, 1862), published pioneering works of modern Yiddish literature.² State censorship in the Yiddish population centre of the Pale of Settlement in Tsarist Russia delayed the establishment of the first lasting Yiddish daily, the St. Petersburg *Der Fraynd* ("The Friend"), until 1903.³ The period following World War I brought with it an international proliferation of the Yiddish daily and periodical press. From 1918 to 1920, some 320 periodicals appeared worldwide, including 42 daily newspapers, 75 weeklies, and 39 monthly magazines.⁴ Between 1920 and 1939, some 20 Yiddish dailies were being published in Poland alone, the majority of them in Vilna, Bialystok, Lodz, Grodno, and Warsaw. These newspapers reached sizable readerships when one considers that each issue was shared by several readers: the leading Warsaw daily, *Haynt* ("Today," founded 1908), surpassed its close rival, the *Moment* (founded 1910), with a circulation of 100,000 during World War I.⁵ Many of these newspapers, in particular the dailies, were commercial endeavors that featured a variety of contents, from local and international news coverage to Yiddish literature. They opened up a new world of knowledge to their readerships.

Meanwhile, the Yiddish press in North America commenced in the rapidly expanding American Yiddish immigrant centre of New York with the founding of Kasriel Sarasohn's *Yidishe gazetn* ("The Jewish Gazette," founded 1874). In 1885 Sarasohn launched the first Yiddish daily in the world, the *Yidishe tageblat* ("Jewish Daily"). The largest newspapers – *Der forverts* ("The Forward," founded 1897) and *Der tog* ("The Day," founded 1914) – published both local and regional editions. During the peak year of 1915-16, the combined circulation of the Yiddish dailies was 500,000 in New York alone, and 600,000 nationwide,⁶ with each copy of the newspaper serving multiple readers. Newspapers were founded across the ideological and political spectrum, from the politically conservative

Yidishe tageblat to the anarchist *Fraye arbeter shtime* ("Free Workers' Voice," founded 1890) and the Communist *Morgn frayhayt* ("Morning Freedom," founded 1922).⁷ Yiddish papers were founded on a smaller scale in many centres of Yiddish settlement, including Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. The North American readership largely consisted of recent immigrants who earned their livings by working long hours in the garment trade or other semi-skilled labour. While books represented luxuries of time and money that many working immigrants could not afford, the Yiddish press was widely accessible. Circulation peaked just after World War I and began to decline with the immigration restrictions of the 1920s.

From the outset, the international Yiddish press enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with Jewish culture and politics. As Alan Mintz writes, "much that was new and important in the creation of [Jewish] culture appeared in journals, newspapers, and miscellanies."⁸ Before the Holocaust, the press served as the primary tribune for the publication of Yiddish literature, with "the history of modern Yiddish literature and the history of the Yiddish press Y inextricably interwoven."⁹ With the high costs associated with the published book, and the limited potential readership, the Yiddish book industry failed as a commercial venture outside of Eastern Europe. Even in the more profitable Eastern European book markets, Yiddish writers tended to publish works of poetry and prose in the press before seeking to publish in book form.¹⁰ The press served as a means for Yiddish writers to reach a wide audience as well as offering them a stable source of financial support for their writing. It is no exaggeration to say that virtually all of the Yiddish writers published in the Yiddish press.¹¹

The Yiddish press served as the mass tribune of Eastern European Jewry and reached millions of readers worldwide. Yiddish newspapers disseminated diverse political and religious ideologies, and played a central role in the rise of Jewish nationalism and the Jewish left wing. Each newspaper tended to promote its distinct religious and political ideology, while at the

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same time presenting its readership with local and world news, edification, entertainment, and, in many cases, sensationalism. With Yiddish serving as the shared language for much of Eastern European Jewry and its colonies until the Holocaust, the Yiddish press brought together readers worldwide, and helped to foster a shared Jewish consciousness. The shared goal of its publishers was not only to circulate news, but also to disseminate ideology, be it Jewish observance and the reinvention of tradition, secularism and radical socialism, cultural nationalism, or a combination thereof. Ultimately, the purveyors of the Yiddish press strove to offer a model of an ideal Jew for the modern world: literate and educated about the ways of the world and, more often than not, committed to some vision of Jewish continuity.

The Yiddish press of Jewish Eastern Europe's new immigrant colonies in the Americas filled a number of additional functions. It served as a tool of acclimatization, informing its readers about their new homes and providing insight into integrating into wider society. At the same time, it served to rally the Jewish community and to consolidate it. The goals of the Yiddish newspaper in Canada were manifold: to inform, to educate, to entertain, and to represent the general interests of the immigrant communities. As Irving Abella writes:

The first regular Yiddish dailies that began to be published in Canada were not merely newspapers; for the newcomer they were an introduction to the New World; they were forums of debate, vehicles for self-expression.... [T]hey were, for all intents and purposes, the university of the Jewish common man and woman.¹²

Corresponding roughly to the generation gap in the mass immigration of Eastern European Jews,¹³ Canada lagged some twenty years behind the United States in the development of a Yiddish press.¹⁴ In 1851, the entire Canadian Jewish population consisted of 500 individuals, with its centre in Montreal. The tiny Montreal Jewish community was educated in English schools and associated with the dominant Protestant, English-speaking

Quebec minority. It had formed religious and community organizations such as the Shearith Israel Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (1768),¹⁵ and the Hebrew Philanthropic Society (founded 1847).¹⁶ On the eve of mass migration of Eastern European Jewry, the 1881 Montreal Jewish population of 989 souls was well integrated into wider Canadian society. Its organ was the Anglo-Jewish weekly, the *Jewish Times*, founded in 1897 as the first enduring Jewish periodical in Canada. Established by two descendants of Jewish pioneer families, Lyon Cohen and prominent lawyer Sam Jacobs, the *Jewish Times* covered local, national, and international news of Jewish interest for an acculturated, English-speaking readership.¹⁷

Beginning with a trickle of several hundred in the late nineteenth century, the established, largely anglicized Jewish population was deluged by largely impoverished Yiddish-speaking settlers. Immigration swelled the 1901 Montreal Jewish population of some 7,000 individuals to 58,000 in 1931, in a Canadian Jewish population of 157,000.¹⁸ The newly expanded, and now dominantly Yiddish-speaking, Jewish community of Montreal formed a “third solitude” as Quebec’s first sizable non-Christian minority, sandwiched between the English Protestant and French Catholic populations. While educated in the English schools, Jews were conspicuous in their increased number, their more audible and visible Jewish language, culture, traditional religious observance, and the radical ideologies that they brought with them. They soon founded new institutions to meet their needs, including synagogues, unions, fraternal orders, schools, libraries, and clubs. In Montreal as in other Jewish centres, the Eastern-European mass immigration created a Yiddish reading public, and consumers of Yiddish culture. Even as the new immigrants acculturated and adopted English, Yiddish remained the dominant language of the community: at its height in the 1931 census, 99 per cent of Quebec Jewry declared Yiddish as mother tongue.¹⁹ Yiddish served ideological as well as utilitarian purposes; for a select but visible group, the language and culture formed an integral part

of the ideological construction of a viable Jewish identity for the present and future.²⁰

The establishment of a Canadian Yiddish press began in Montreal in the 1880s, although none of those publications have survived.²¹ Despite the small Yiddish-speaking population and an absence of facilities for the production of Yiddish type, there were several attempts to found Yiddish publications, all of them short-lived. As early as 1887, later-renowned lexicographer Alexander Harkavy (1863-1939) who had been invited to serve as a Hebrew teacher in the Shaar Hashomayim Talmud Torah School, published a lithographed periodical called *Di tsayt* (“The Time”). A single issue appeared.²² In 1891, Jewish scholar, journalist, and writer, Getsl Zelikovitch (1855-1923) authored and produced a four-page mimeographed newspaper, also entitled *Di tsayt*, that sold out its 200 copies immediately.²³ A.L. Kaplansky (1861-1941), the first Hebrew/Yiddish printer in Canada, was the publisher, editor, and primary author of a Yiddish newspaper titled *Dos likht* (“The Light”) that appeared in three issues in 1897.²⁴ In 1905, writer and cultural activist Hirsch Hershman (1876-1955) published three small issues of a newspaper titled *Der telegraf* (“The Telegraph”).²⁵ A year later, in 1906, several numbers of a small weekly paper were published in the form of a small circular every Friday.²⁶ In 1907, the Orthodox *Der yidisher shtern* (“The Jewish Star”) was published by “Chief Rabbi” of the province of Quebec, Rabbi Joshua Simon Glazer (1876-1938). The weekly struggled for a year before failing.²⁷ Meanwhile, Yiddish newspapers from the United States, most notably from New York, played an important role in the lives of Canadian Jews, both before the establishment of a lasting local Yiddish press and after. Even after the establishment of a Canadian Yiddish press, many Canadian Jews subscribed to, purchased, or borrowed copies of the largest New York dailies, notably the New York *Forverts*, and *Yidishes tageblat*.²⁸ In addition, the American Yiddish press provided a source of support for Canadian Jewry on the most basic level long before there were traces of a Yiddish press in Canada.²⁹

The first enduring and longest lasting Canadian Yiddish newspaper, the *Keneder Adler*, was founded in Montreal in 1907. It appeared as a daily from 1908 to 1963, then less frequently, and finally ceased publication in 1988. The *Adler* was the largest of the Canadian Yiddish newspapers, with its circulation exceeding that of its Anglo-Jewish counterpart during its peak in the mid 1920s.³⁰ Within five years of its creation, lasting Yiddish newspapers appeared in other Canadian centres with the publication of the weekly *Dos yidishe vort/the Israelite Press* (“The Jewish Word,” Winnipeg, founded 1910 as *Der kurier*, “The Courier”) and *Der yidisher zhurnal/The Daily Hebrew Journal* (“The Jewish Journal,” Toronto, founded 1912). The *Adler*’s founder, Polish-born immigrant and community activist Hirsch Wolofsky (1878-1949), served as publisher until his death and played an active role in the development of the newspaper.

Early on, the *Keneder Adler* established the moderate stance that remained its trademark. The maxim of Wolofsky’s *Adler* seems to have been “something for everyone.” The pages of the *Adler* featured international and local news, opinion pieces, serious essays, modern literature, critical reviews of books, art, theatre, and music, light reading, humour, columns for women and children, and concrete assistance with finding an apartment or job. The content of the newspaper encompassed high literature and serious scholarship, as well as popular writing, including sensationalized serialized novels. Contributors varied from local to internationally known writers, both in the original Yiddish and in Yiddish translation. The language of the newspaper ranged from high poetry to lowbrow pieces peppered with English. The spectrum of Jewish ideology was represented in the *Adler*. Many of the individuals involved in the *Adler* had labour Zionist affiliations, including Wolofsky himself, and Zionism is a recurring theme in the newspaper, both as an ideology and as a political movement. The *Adler* expressed clear socialist inclinations and was sympathetic to the plight of workers in its coverage of strikes. It published material on secular

Jewish ideology and cultural activity. At the same time, it published writings of a traditional Jewish bent such as scholarly articles on Jewish texts and Bible translations, as well as special material on the occasion of the Jewish holidays.

This open stance can be traced back to its publisher. Wolofsky in many ways embodied the spirit of the new immigration: raised in a traditional Eastern European milieu, he was influenced by the Haskalah and Zionism, and brought a strong sense of Jewish identity and community with him to Canada. Simultaneously a businessman and an active figure in the Montreal Jewish community, Wolofsky created a popular newspaper that addressed a wide readership. Unlike the political and religious fragmentation that permeated so much of the Yiddish world and its press, Wolofsky's *Adler* set out to unify rather than divide. As Gerald Tulchinsky writes, Wolofsky

had broad liberal and progressive views and saw the primary role of his newspaper as a 'communal institution' whose task was advancement of Jewish cohesion and improvement by means of editorial persuasion and education.³¹ The local context bolstered the *Adler's* tendencies toward all-inclusiveness. Montreal, even though it was Canada's largest Yiddish center, boasted a relatively small Yiddish population, and with it, a limited potential readership. The local Yiddish community found itself in a precarious position as a recent and highly visible minority group wedged between the dominant French-Catholic majority and small English-Protestant elite. With anti-Semitism on both sides, the *Adler* rallied for communal unity rather than divisiveness along ideological lines. In addition, as the first – and for several years, the only – Yiddish daily in Canada, there was early on a deliberate appeal by the *Adler* to Jews across the country, and a sense of serving Canadian Jewry as a whole. In its early years, the newspaper was so moderate that during one of his political talks in Montreal, Dr. Chaim Zhitlowksy (1865-1943), the chief theo-

retician of Diaspora nationalism and Yiddishism, asserted that the paper ought to have been called 'ganz' (goose), instead of 'adler' (eagle).³²

The *Adler* functioned as a bridge between the way of life its readers had experienced in Eastern Europe and the new way of life they found in Canada. It introduced its readership to new ideas and literature, both from within and outside of the Jewish world. It educated its readers about international, national, and local events and issues, and worked to promote Canadianism and political awareness. The most popular *Adler* associate in this area was Israel Medres (1894-1964), who acted as news editor and political affairs columnist during his 40-year association with the newspaper. He was known for his simple and direct style often punctuated with humour. His regular columns, entitled "*Di vokh in kanade*" (This Week in Canada), and "*Bilder in gerikht-zal*" (Pictures in a Courtroom), presented readers with an accessible source on contemporary political and legal matters.³³

At the same time, as a Yiddish-language publication, the *Adler* played an integral part in the maintenance and adaptation of the Yiddish culture brought to Canada from Eastern Europe. The *Adler* early on assumed a leadership role within the Montreal Jewish community, and provided a network among the community's various Jewish groups.³⁴ It was within the pages of the *Adler* in the first decade of the century that editor Wohliner (nom de plume of Eliezer Landau, 1877-1942), pioneered the movement for a Canadian Jewish Union in Canada, eventually to become the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1919. The *Adler* likewise played a key role in the promotion of community-wide philanthropic enterprises such as the relief campaigns for Eastern European Jewry in the 1920s and 1930s. Most basically, the *Adler* presented a forum for Yiddish writing and exchange and, in the process, it created a community of readers.

Under Wolofsky's leadership, the *Adler* quickly attracted a core group of writers who were also active in the local Yiddish community. The *Adler* acted as a school for writ-

ers where they were able to develop and polish their styles, and provided writers and poets with a means of livelihood that freed them to pursue their literary activities.³⁵ The *Keneder Adler* served as a locus for literary activity, and from its inception acted as a gathering site for writers who employed the *Adler* as a forum for their scholarship, poetry and prose, and ideas. For example, during his fifty-year association with the *Adler*, B.G. Sack (1889-1967), the first historian of Canadian Jewish history, published pioneering articles on Canadian and Quebec history. As a longstanding member of the editorial board, rabbi, and Jewish scholar Chaim Kruger (1875-1933) published studies on important personalities from Jewish history. During his tenure as *Adler* editor from 1924 to 1964, musicologist Israel Rabinovitch wrote extensively on the field of music as well as theatre. Longtime contributor, community activist, and literary critic H.M. Caiserman (1884-1950) wrote widely on Yiddish literature, including the first comprehensive overviews of Canadian Yiddish literature.³⁶ As will be discussed below, in many cases their contributions to the *Adler* served as bases for full-length studies to appear later in book-form. Virtually all of the Montreal Yiddish poets and writers published in the *Adler* and many made their debuts in its pages.³⁷ Among them, Canada's best-known Yiddish poet, J.I. Segal (1896-1954), published his first poem in the *Adler* and began a long association that culminated in a post as literary editor from 1938 to 1945.

The *Adler* attracted figures of international stature, and bolstered Jewish cultural life. The period of 1912-15 became known as the "golden age" of the *Keneder Adler* under the editorship of renowned Hebrew essayist Reuben Brainin (1862-1939). He increased the prestige of both the newspaper and the city. Under his leadership, the newspaper grew both in stature and readership.³⁸ Brainin devoted many columns to the development of a comprehensive cultural life among Montreal's Jewish community. Along with a young labour Zionist activist, Yehuda Kaufman (Even Shemuel, 1886-1976), he campaigned for the establishment of a *Folks-biblyotek* (Jewish public

library) in 1913 and for its continued support in 1914. He employed the pages of the *Adler* to highlight issues relating to education, notably the network of modern, secular Yiddish schools, the *Natsyonale-radikale/Peretz-shuln* and the *Folks-shuln* (National Radical/Peretz Schools and the People's Schools) that were founded locally in 1913 and 1914 respectively. The *Adler* continued its support of the library, schools, and other local Jewish organizations both by reporting on their condition, and promoting their programming and events.

The *Adler* dominated the local Yiddish scene, although numerous short-lived attempts were made beginning in the 1910s to establish other Yiddish newspapers in Montreal. In 1915, Brainin left the *Adler* over a disagreement with Wolofsky, and founded a rival daily, *Der veg* ("The Road"). *Der veg* featured contributions by some forty Canadian Yiddish writers and promoted community causes such as the establishment of a Canadian Jewish Congress. *Der veg* lasted under two years. During the 1910s and 1920s, newspapers were founded to represent diverse ideologies, notably the influential labour Zionist presence in Montreal. In 1912, local labour Zionists established a weekly, *Di folkstsaytung* ("The People's Newspaper"), and imported internationally known activist Leon Chazanovitch to serve as editor. Chazanovitch, in turn, brought modernist poet Moyshe Leib-Halpern, a member of the cutting-edge New York *Di yunge* ("The Young Ones") literary group, as his assistant. Halpern published several poems in the *Folkstsaytung*, including *Tsum strayk* ("To the Strike"), penned on the occasion of a local tailor's strike. Despite the prestige of its editor, *Di folkstsaytung* folded in less than a year. On the other end of the ideological spectrum, Rabbi Simon Glazer produced a short-lived Orthodox newspaper called *Di yidishe velt* ("The Jewish World," 1911-12). In 1926, a newspaper titled the *Kanader vokhenblat* ("Canadian Weekly"), dedicated to serious Yiddish literature, appeared. Edited by local writers Yaacov Zipper (born Yaacov Shtern, 1900-83) and Chaim Tolmatsh (1895-1971), the *Kanader vokhenblat* was founded with "purely literary goals"

until it became involved with local politics and ceased publication after fifteen issues.³⁹ Overlap between the Montreal Anglo-Jewish press and the Yiddish press began in the 1910s when, in 1914, Hirsch Wolofsky, purchased the existing English-language weekly, *The Canadian Jewish Times*, and reconstituted it as the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*.⁴⁰ The *Chronicle* and the *Adler* shared resources, and writers. Meanwhile, in Canada's other two main Jewish centres, enduring Yiddish newspapers were founded: the Toronto *Yidisher zhurnal* ("Jewish Journal," 1912), and the Winnipeg *Dos yidishe vort* ("The Jewish Word," 1917).

The *Adler* supported Yiddish letters and promoted local projects, literary or theatrical. It serialized longer works by its associates, including B.G. Sack's pioneering study, the *History of the Jews in Canada*, which subsequently appeared as the opening essay in the 1926 volume, *The Jew in Canada*.⁴¹ The *Adler* filled a key function in the literary community by actively publishing, distributing, and promoting Yiddish books. The *Adler* was not alone in this role: the daily and periodical press played a direct and indirect role in the development of Yiddish literature and book publishing. Joshua A. Fishman characterizes the vital function filled by the press in Yiddish book publishing:

The modern world of Yiddish books is to a large extent a by-product of the Yiddish press, for had the latter not subsidized the former (both in the sense of paying wages/honorariums to the authors and being the first arena in which new books, in serialized fashion, saw the light of day) the books themselves would frequently not have appeared.⁴²

Soon after its founding in 1907, the *Adler* offered the use of its presses to print *Keneder Adler* Yiddish volumes in exchange for payment, and published Canada's first Yiddish book in 1910: Moshe Elimelech Levin's *Kinder ertsiyung bay yidn* ("Children's Education Among Jews").⁴³ By World War I, the *Adler* had expanded its role from printer to sponsor, in

particular of works by its close associates. For example, in 1918 the *Adler* both published and subsidized the appearance of two volumes by its editor H. Hirsch (1918-23): *Fablen* ("Fables") and *Shir ha shirim* ("Song of Songs").⁴⁴

The *Adler's* role as a book printer and publisher expanded in the late 1910s. When World War I interrupted the printing and distribution of Jewish books in Eastern Europe and brought to a virtual standstill the production of the costly-to-produce folios of the Talmud, Wolofsky undertook the ambitious project of producing a local edition under the auspices of the *Adler*: the *Adler's Shas talmud bavli* ("Babylonian Talmud"), or, as it became popularly known, the *Montreoler shas* ("Montreal Talmud").⁴⁵ In the end, the *Montreoler shas* was a money-losing venture,⁴⁶ and with his expanded printing quarters and a bindery sitting idle, Wolofsky sought to increase the volume of outside printing jobs taken on by the *Adler*.⁴⁷ The *Kenender adler drukeray* (the *Keneder Adler* print shop) produced Yiddish volumes commercially in the 1930s: *Yidische geshikhte in fragn un entfers* ("Jewish History in Questions and Answers," 1935, 1938) by pedagogue, *Folks-shuln* teacher and writer Abraham Samuel Sacher (1880-1970), as well as J.I. Segal's volume of poetry, *Di drite sudeh: lider* ("The Third Meal: Poems," 1937).

At the same time it functioned as a commercial printing press, the *Keneder adler* ran a publishing house under the name *Farlag keneder adler*/Eagle Publishing Company. Unlike the print shop, the *Adler* publishing house was not a commercial venture. Under Wolofsky's direction, it supported the publication of works of Jewish scholarship by absorbing the costs for use of its printing presses, providing encouragement to authors, and by disseminating the finished product. *Farlag keneder adler* published a handful of Yiddish-language works, and all of them authored by the *Adler's* associates and contributors, for many a culmination of projects they had begun in the pages of the *Adler*. In the process, the *Adler* supported Jewish scholarship, an endeavor that Wolofsky valued highly. For example,

Israel Rabinovitch published both of his books through the *Adler*: a bilingual volume on pertinent current events called *Di geshikhte fun yidishn shul-problem in kvibek / The Jewish School Problem in the Province of Quebec From its Origin to the Present Day* (1926) and a collection of musicological studies called *Muzik bay yidn* ("Music Among Jews," 1940).⁴⁸ Chaim Kruger's highly regarded studies on key personalities in Jewish tradition included *Der Rambam* ("Maimonides"), which appeared in book-form in 1933).⁴⁹ The *Keneder Adler* published all of Hirsch Wolofsky's own works: a travelogue called *Eyropo un erets yisroel nokh der velt-krig* ("Europe and the Land of Israel After the World War," 1922), a contemporary commentary on the Bible called *Fun eybign kval* ("From the Eternal Source," 1930) and a book of memoirs, *Mayn lebns rayze* ("My Life's Journey," 1946).⁵⁰ Like most publishing houses associated with newspapers, the *Adler* published works that met its wider goals. While a press attached to a radical newspaper such as the New York anarchist *Fraye arbeter shtime* published works of a more militant orientation, the *Adler* avoided works that would have resulted in factionalism. A comparable role was filled by the Yiddish newspapers in Winnipeg and Toronto.⁵¹

The *Adler* played a notable role in the promotion of local Yiddish theatre.⁵² A number of the *Adler*'s regular contributors were theatre enthusiasts who consistently provided reviews of local plays, including early *Adler* editor Dr. Ezekiel Wortsman (1878-1938), longtime contributor B.Y. Goldstein (1879-1953), and Israel Rabinovitch. From the outset the *Adler* faithfully covered the local entertainment scene, both in Yiddish and, to a lesser degree, English and French. The *Adler* endorsed both amateur and professional theatre in its reviews and encouraged attendance. From its beginnings, the *Adler* called for quality Yiddish theatre in Montreal and rejoiced at superior performances,⁵³ and was particularly supportive of local endeavors. The *Adler* was instrumental in creating a Yiddish theatre public in the nascent pre-World War I period.⁵⁴ In the late 1910s and early 1920s, it featured regular columns dedicated to the local

theatre.⁵⁵ The *Adler* also supported attempts at local amateur theatre, notably Chayele Grober's critically acclaimed amateur art theatre, the YTEG Studio (*Yidish-teater-grupe*/ Yiddish Theatre Group, 1939-42).⁵⁶ More directly, the *Adler* introduced local playwrights to the Yiddish stage. During World War I, with the encouragement of Wolofsky and under Brainin's direction, *Adler* writer Y. L. Malamut (1886-1966) revised his serialized novel, *Tserisene neshomes* ("Torn Souls") as a Hassidic play under the title "*Di goldene keyt*" ("The Golden Chain"). Later renamed "*Baym reben in hoyf*" ("In the Rabbi's Court"), the work was produced for the Yiddish theater in Montreal, and subsequently in Winnipeg, Chicago, and Minneapolis.⁵⁷ Similarly, *Adler* editor H. Hirsch authored a play titled "*Der yidisher politishan*" ("The Jewish Politician") that was performed locally in 1919.⁵⁸

The *Adler* was conscious about its changing role as a Canadian Yiddish newspaper and adjusted to the needs of its readers. It added a number of regular features in the 1920s: columns for women and children titled *Di froyen velt* ("Women's World") and *Kinderland* ("Children's Land"), as well as an illustrated Sunday supplement and a humour supplement. The goal, the editors stated, was to make the *Adler* comparable to the New York newspapers while remaining a Canadian paper.⁵⁹ Other special interest columns focused on health, the home, and family. For example, in January 1925, the *Adler* introduced an English page to appeal to a younger and anglicizing readership that featured news, literature, and brief essays.

The *Adler* strove to be a forum for the Canadian community as a whole in its process of acculturation, and it strove to create unity among Jews nationwide. It acted as a mediator between traditional Eastern European Jewish life and the Canadian context, with a high value placed on Jewish tradition, learning, and scholarship. It educated its readers about life inside and outside of the Montreal Yiddish community. It promoted the development of lasting local educational, political, and cultural institutions. The Yiddish press played a pivotal

role in the development of a rich literary life in Montreal; it represented a stable forum for publication, and served as the primary means for Yiddish writers to see their writing in print before the Holocaust.

Ultimately, the *dler* declined together with the culture that created it. The Holocaust destroyed the locus of Yiddish life. While Montreal was much slower to abandon the Yiddish language, acculturation reduced the proportion of Yiddish speakers in Montreal beginning in the 1940s. While an influx of Yiddish-speaking survivors of the Holocaust in the late 1940s and early 1950s strengthened the Yiddish community, the language faced a steady decline. Although it was bolstered in Montreal by the existence of the network of Yiddish parochial schools and strongly Yiddish-oriented institutions such as the Jewish Public Library, the *Adler* largely remained an immigrant newspaper that was unable to survive the attrition of its Yiddish readership.

Like the Yiddish press in general, the *Adler* provides a rich and under-accessed source of information on the Yiddish immigrant community and the way in which it related to the wider Jewish and non-Jewish world. For example, the scholar of the Quebec theatre, in particular of the 1920s, 1940s, and 1940s, will find reviews of French-language productions from the perspective of the Jewish minority. The obituaries alone represent a rich source to genealogists and historians alike. Overall, the *Adler* reflects a complex process of acculturation and negotiation by a culture in flux.

NOTES

¹ For purposes of clarity and consistency, Yiddish words, titles of publications and organizations, and proper names have been transliterated in Standard Yiddish, according to system of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Proper names have been rendered in the form most familiar to the reading public (e.g. J.I. Segal, Chaim Zhitlowsky). In cases of authors less known to the English public, names have been rendered according to the YIVO system. The *Canadian Jewish Eagle*, however, will be called by the name by which it was most commonly known: the *Adler*. The transliterated

name of the newspaper is a matter of ongoing contention. The official title on the masthead is “*Der keneder adler*” and its readers pronounced it as such. Although the Standard Yiddish word for “eagle” is “*odler*,” this study employs the former spelling. Correcting or Yiddishizing the titles of historic Yiddish publications by rendering them in Standard Yiddish would mean changing the name of the Yiddish Daily *Forward*, the *forverts*, to something like the “*farvoys*” (Standard Yiddish for “forward”); like “*forverts*,” “*adler*,” and numerous other titles of Yiddish periodicals were borrowed from the German, a prestige language of intellectual life.

² Two seminal works appeared in the *Kol Mevasser* in the 1860s: Mendele’s (Mendele Moykher-sforim (“Mendele the Book Peddler”), nom de plume of Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh, 1836-1917) *Dos kleyne mentshele* (“The Little Person”), considered by scholars to mark the beginning of modern Yiddish literature, first appeared in 1864. The widely popular anti-Hassidic satire, *Dos Poylishe Yingele* (“The Polish Boy”) by Y.Y. Linetski was likewise serialized in 1867. See Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

³ On *Der Fraynd*, see Sarah Abrehaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 23-55.

⁴ Study cited in Glenn Scott Levine, “Yiddish Publishing in Berlin and the Crisis in Eastern European Culture, 1919-1924,” in *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 42 (1997): 85-108.

⁵ After the Warsaw *Haynt* and *Moment*, the largest circulation Yiddish dailies were the *Letste naves/Der tog*, *Avend-kurier*, *Dos naye lebn*, *Bialostoker telegraf*, *Lodzer tageblat*, *Grodne moment*, *Der morgn*, *Der yid/Dos yidishe vort*.

⁶ Hillel Halkin, “Press,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 13: 1055.

⁷ See B. Z. Goldberg, “The American Yiddish Press At Its Centennial,” in *Judaism* 20 (Spring 1971): 223-28.

⁸ Alan Mintz, “Introduction: The Many Rather than the One: On the Critical Study of Jewish Periodicals.” *Prooftexts* 15 (January 1995). Mintz offers a theory of the periodical. This special issue of *Prooftexts* is dedicated to the subject of Jewish periodicals.

⁹ Leonard Prager with Alfred Avraham Greenbaum, *Yiddish*

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Literary and Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies: A Selective Annotated Bibliography (Darby, PA: Published for the Association for the Study of Jewish Languages by Norwood Editions, 1982), p. 1.

¹⁰ Charles A. Madison, *Jewish Publishing in America: The Impact of Jewish Writing on American Culture* (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1976), p. 207.

¹¹ See Joshua A. Fishman, "The Sociology of Yiddish. A Forward," in *Never Say Die!: A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters*, edited by Joshua A. Fishman, 1-102 (The Hague, Paris and New York: Mouton, 1981), p. 35.

¹² Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1990), p. 124.

¹³ See Eugene Orenstein, "Yiddish Culture in Canada Yesterday and Today," in *The Canadian Cultural Mosaic*, edited by M. Weinfeld, W. Shaffir and I. Cotler, 293-314 (Rexdale, Canada: John Wiley and Sons, 1981), p. 294-97.

¹⁴ According to Lewis Levendel, the Yiddish press in Canada also reached its peak later than the United States. It was most active between 1907 and 1960 with circulation increasing until 1940. Lewis Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press: 1880s-1980s* (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1989), p. 14.

¹⁵ See Salomon Frank, *Two Centuries in the Life of a Synagogue* (Montreal: Shearith Israel, 1968).

¹⁶ The Hebrew Philanthropic Society was a Jewish welfare organization to aid the several hundred Eastern European Jews who arrived that year. It was replaced by the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1863, and renamed the Baron de Hirsh Institute in 1890.

¹⁷ A second Anglo-Jewish newspaper began to appear in 1908 under the name of the *Canadian Jewish Tribune*. Only a few issues appeared before the two publications merged under the title, *The Canadian Jewish Times*. See Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press*, p. 1-9. Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd., 1992), p. 149-50.

¹⁸ Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews – A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1939). Reissued as: *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in*

Canada in the 1930s, edited by Morton Weinberg (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 12, 31-34.

¹⁹ Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, p. 257.

²⁰ See David Roskies, "Yiddish in Montreal: The Utopian Experiment," in *An Everyday Miracle: Yiddish Culture in Montreal*, edited by Ira Robinson, Pierre Anctil and Mervin Butovsky, 22-38 (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1990).

²¹ Hebrew printing, which shares an alphabet with Yiddish, made its first appearance in Canada in the 1840s. The first Yiddish printing in Canada – a leaflet issued during a federal election – was produced in 1887 by Alexander Harkavy, then a resident of Montreal. Because of the absence of a Hebrew printing press locally, the Yiddish-language leaflet was issued in Roman letters. Brad Sabin Hill, "Early Hebrew Typography in Canada," in *Epilogue: Canadian Bulletin for the History of Books, Libraries and Archives* 7 (Spring 1989): 12. According to the research of Eiran Harris, archivist at the Jewish Public Library, Montreal, the earliest Yiddish print appeared in miscellanies such as almanacs. I am grateful to Mr. Harris sharing with me his unpublished bibliography titled "Hebrew and Yiddish Printing in Canada, 1844-1915."

²² Melekh Ravitch, "Yiddish Culture in Canada," in *Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory*, edited by Eli Gottesman, 75=80 (Montreal: Mortimer Ltd, 1963): 76.

²³ A pioneer of the Yiddish press in the United States and Canada, Zelikovitch resided in Montreal from 1890-1893 and served as Montreal correspondent for the New York *Yidishe gazetn* and the *Yidishes tageblat*. Chaim Leib Fuchs, *Hundert yor yidishe un hebreyishe literatur in kanade* (Montreal: Kh. L. Fuks bukh-fund komitet, 1982): 129. Rhinewine writes that four issues of *Di tsayt* appeared in print. Avraham Rhinewine, *Der yid in kanade*, 2 vols (Toronto: Farlag "Kanade," 1925-27): 210.

²⁴ Kaplansky established the first Yiddish printing press in Canada, and produced two calendars for the Jewish year 5655 (1894-95) with Hebrew type imported from New York. Fuchs, *Hundert yor yidishe un hebreyishe literatur in kanade*: 232; David Rome, *The Canadian Story of Reuben Brainin, Part 1*, Canadian Jewish Archives, New Series 47 (Montreal: National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1993), p. 87-88.

²⁵ B.G. Sack, *Canadian Jews – Early in This Century*, trans. Anne

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Glass (Montreal: National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1975), p. 46.

²⁶ Hirsch Wolofsky, “25 yor *Keneder adler*,” *Yoyvl bukh fun Keneder adler* (Montreal, July 8, 1932): 23.

²⁷ Rhinewine, *Der yid in kanade*, p. 213; Sack, *Canadian Jews*, p. 46; Fuchs, *Hundert yor yidische un hebreyishe literatur in kanade*, p. 66. See also Ira Robinson, *Rabbis and Their Community: Studies in the Eastern European Orthodox Rabbinate in Montreal, 1896-1930* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007).

²⁸ Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press*, p. 13.

²⁹ David Rome writes, for example, that in 1886, the Shaar Hashomayim Congregation sought a printer to produce some ritual material, and turned to the printing presses of the New York *Yidische gazett*. In addition, the technical know-how for the first Yiddish presses in Montreal originated in New York. David Rome, ed., *The First Jewish Literary School*, Canadian Jewish Archives 41, p. 11.

³⁰ In 1926, the *Adler* boasted an average circulation of 17,508 while its Anglo-Jewish sister publication, the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, had a circulation of 10,224. Letterhead housed at Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, *Keneder Adler*.

³¹ Gerald Tulchinsky, “The Third Solitude: A. M. Klein’s Jewish Montreal, 1910-1950,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 19 (1984), p. 108.

³² Y. Khaykin, *Yidische bleter in amerike in Yiddish Papers in America: A Contribution to the 75 Year History of the Yiddish Press in the United States and Canada* (New York: Y. Khykin, 1946), p. 201. Montreal Rabbi and writer, Yehuda Leyb Zlotnik, likewise once quipped to David Rome that the *Adler* should be called “*Di katshke*” (“The duck”). This according to Richard Menkis, professor at University of British Columbia, in a talk titled “Yiddish and Hebrew in Interwar Vancouver: A Debate over Language and Diasporic Identity in the Canadian West” (paper delivered at the conference of the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, May 25, 2001, Laval University, Quebec).

³³ Medres went on to author two important volumes of vignettes of Jewish life in Montreal before 1945 based on his columns in the *Adler*: *Montreal fun nekhtn* (Montreal of Yesterday, 1947) and the sequel, *Tsvishn tsvey velt milkhomes* (Between Two World Wars, 1964). Fuks, *Hundert yor yidish un hebreyishe literatur in kanade*, 160; Vivian Felsen, “An Untapped

Treasure: The Journalistic Legacy of Israel Medres” (paper delivered at the Conference of the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, May 24, 2001, Laval University, Quebec).

³⁴ Judy Gordon, *Four Hundred Brothers and Sisters: The Story of Two Jewish Orphanages in Montreal, Quebec, 1909-1942* (Toronto: Lugas Publications, 2002), p. 27.

³⁵ Melekh Ravitch, for example, credits the *Adler* with enabling poet J.I. Segal and others the opportunity to attain their literary achievements. Melekh Ravitch, “*Kanadisher tsvayg fun shtam*,” *Pinkes fun der forschung fun der yidisher literatur un prese*, edited by Shlomo Bikl (New York: Congress for Jewish Culture, 1965), p. 235.

³⁶ These studies formed the basis for the first comprehensive volume on Jewish poets in Canada, Caiserman’s *Yidishe dikhter in kanade* (Jewish Poets in Canada, Montreal: Farlag “nyuansn,” 1934).

³⁷ According to the tabulations of Pierre Anctil, 284 of a total of the 417 Canadian Yiddish and Hebrew writers listed in Fuchs’s lexicon published in the *Keneder Adler*. Of these writers, journalists by far represent the largest group, followed by poets. Private interview with Pierre Anctil, March 8, 2004. See Chaim Fuchs, ed., *Hundert yor yidishe un hebreyishe literatur in kanade*.

³⁸ See Rome, *The Canadian Story of Reuben Brainin, Part 1*.

³⁹ H. M Caiserman, “*Yidish-literarishe tetikayt in kanade*,” (Jewish Literary Activity in Canada), *Keneder Adler* (September 2, 1927).

⁴⁰ Rhinewine, *Der yid in kanade*, p. 211-13.

⁴¹ B. G. Sack’s, “History of the Jews in Canada” was serialized in the *Keneder Adler* in 1925-26 before it appeared in Arthur Daniel Hart, ed., *The Jew in Canada: A Complete Record of Canadian Jewry From the Days of the French Régime to the Present Time* (Toronto and Montreal: Jewish Publications Limited, 1926).

⁴² Joshua A. Fishman, “The Sociology of Yiddish. A Forward,” 33.

⁴³ The book was printed by the “*druk fun ‘keneder adler*” Eagle Publishing Company. It is likely that Levin’s employer and the work’s sponsor, the Montreal Talmud Torah School, financed the work.

⁴⁴ Both volumes are listed as printed by the *Keneder Adler*/Eagle Publishing Company and as published by *Farlag ‘kenede*.” In his forward to *Fablen*, Hirsch expressed the importance of the *Adler*’s support: gratitude

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to Wolofsky for making the volume possible, particularly during a time of war when the condition of the Jewish book market, with increased publishing costs and decreased readership, rendered the publication of books financially unprofitable. H. Hirsch, *Fablen* (Montreal: “*Keneder Adler*” Publishing/ Farlag “kenede,” 1918), p. 9. The *Adler* also promoted *Fablen* in advertisements that appeared virtually every day through 1919 and 1920.

⁴⁵ The *Montreoler shas* was produced in Montreal using type set by an American Rabbinical council. It was slated to appear in 1918 and to be marketed widely in North America and abroad. Wolofsky, who anticipated significant profits from the venture, moved the *Adler*’s presses to larger quarters. Plates were purchased and the bindery set up. Advertisements for advance purchase appeared in the *Adler* from February 9 through April 1919, and again appeared after publication in May 1920 (May 4, 6, 1920).

⁴⁶ Unforeseen by Wolofsky, the printing of the *Shas* was delayed by technical difficulties until 1919, by which time the war had come to an end and the publishing houses in Vilna were able to return to business and undersell him.

⁴⁷ An announcement that appeared in the *Adler* in June 1919 advertised it as a union shop that offered job and book printing, including pamphlets, in Yiddish, English, and Hebrew as well as photoengraving services. Large advertisements appeared in the *Keneder Adler*, e.g. January 7, 1919, June 8, 1919.

⁴⁸ *Di geshikhhte fun yidishn shul-problem in kvibek* addressed the pressing issue of the Jewish schools within a historical context, and was the first Yiddish work to specifically examine local events in the Montreal Jewish community as well as its history. *Muzik bay yidn* examines the history of Jewish music from ancient to modern times and spanning the globe. It includes scholarly analyses along with musical notation. The volume was dedicated to the memory of Jewish musicologist and ethnomusicologist Abraham Zvi Idelsohn (1882-1938), and much of the volume deals with Idelsohn’s research. An English adaptation by A.M. Klein, *Of Jewish Music*, appeared in 1952.

⁴⁹ *Der Rambam* is an account of the life and ideas of twelfth-century rabbinical authority, philosopher, and codifier, Moses ben Maimon/Maimonides. This volume was one of the most popular works on the Rambam to appear in the Yiddish language. Fuks, *Hundert yor yidische*

un hebreyishe literatur in kanade, p. 250; Sh. Niger *et al.*, *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*, 8 (New York: Alveltlekhn yidishn kultur-kongres, 1956-81), p. 253-54. Kruger's *Der Saadiye-gaon* ("Saadia Gaon"), a study of the ninth century philosopher, liturgical poet and Biblical commentator, Saadia Gaon, had been serialized in the *Adler* in 1930.

⁵⁰ This work has been translated into both English and French: Hirsch Wolofsky, *Journey of My Life: A Book of Memoirs*, trans. A. M. Klein (Montreal: Eagle Publishing Co., 1945); *Mayn Lebns Rayze: Une demi-siècle de vie yiddish à Montréal*, 1946, trans. Pierre Anctil (Sillery, QC: Éditions du Septentrion, 2000).

⁵¹ During the period under discussion, Yiddish books were published by the Winnipeg *Dos yidische vort*: Mordkhe Miller's *Siluetn: lider* ("Silhouettes: Poems," 1927), M. Bloshtein's *In farteydikung fun kind* ("In Defense of the Child," 1934), Sholem Miller's *Funem yidishn kval* ("From the Jewish Source," 1937), A. Golomb's *Yidn un yidishkayt in amerike* ("Jewish and Judaism/Jewishness in America," 1940), Falek Zolf's *Oyf fremder erd: bletlekh fun a lebn* ("On Foreign Soil: Pages from a Life," 1945), and A. Osovsky's *Tsvey veltn, dray doyres* ("Two Worlds, Three Generations: Selected Shorts," 1946). The Toronto *Der yidisher zhurnal* published N. Shemen's *Fashizm in eyropa, zayn prognoze un diagnoze* ("Fascism in Europe: Its Prognosis and Diagnosis," 1934), and *Tsvishen krig un fridn* ("Between War and Peace," 1939). The Toronto Communist Toronto weekly *Der kamf* published proletarian literature. It published Sh. Apter's collection of short stories, *Tsvishn shtet* ("Between Cities," 1936).

⁵² From its development in the teens, the Montreal Yiddish theatre scene was made up of seasonal professional troops imported from New York, and sporadic local amateur groups. The repertoire was dominated by light musical fare and melodrama, with some serious art theatre. For more on Montreal's theatre fare of the 1920s and 1930s, see Jean-Marc Larrue, *Le théâtre yiddish à Montréal/ Yiddish Theatre in Montreal*, p. 77-104.

⁵³ See Jean-Marc Larrue, *Le théâtre yiddish à Montréal/ Yiddish Theatre in Montreal*, p. 67.

⁵⁴ As *Adler* writer Y. L. Malamut recalled: "The newspaper was the constant advocate of the Yiddish theatre, particularly in supporting L. Mitnick's Yiddish theatre at the Monument-National and Wiseman's People's Theatre." Quoted in David Rome, *The Immigration Story III: The*

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Yiddish Theatre; the Adler, p. 31. Both theatres were founded in 1913. See Jean-Marc Larrue, *Le théâtre yiddish à Montréal/ Yiddish Theatre in Montreal*, p. 70.

⁵⁵ In 1919, Goldstein penned reviews of current performances as well as overviews of the local theatrical scene in a column titled “*Teater in montreal*” (“Theatre in Montreal”). That year, the *Adler* introduced a column titled “*Teater notitsn*” (“Theatre Notes”) that discussed current and upcoming performances in Montreal, while another column, “*In di teatern*” (“In The Theatres”), reviewed individual plays and announced local theatre happenings. Beginning in 1920, Israel Rabinovitch reported on theatre and music in a weekly column, “*Teater un muzik*” (“Theatre and Music”), and in 1924 in an illustrated column, “*Di teater welt*” (“The Theatre World”).

⁵⁶ See Chayele Grober, “Mayn studye ‘YTEG’,” in *Mayn veg aleyen* (“My Way Alone,” Tel Aviv, Israel: Y.L. Peretz farlag, 1968), p. 103-13.

⁵⁷ Fuks, *Hundert yor yidish un hebreyishe literatur in kanade*, p. 158.

⁵⁸ The “*Yidisher politishan*,” a drama in four acts, played at the Rialto Theatre in January and February of 1919. *Keneder Adler*, January 27, 1919. It was reviewed by B. Y. Goldstein on February 16, 1919.

⁵⁹ See the editors’ editorial, *Keneder Adler*, July 22, 1924.