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***"Nit ahin un nit aher": Yiddish Scholarship in Canada***

Yiddish was the main language of communication for the vast majority of East European immigrants that arrived in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century, including a last wave, composed of survivors of the Holocaust, who set foot in the country around 1948–1950. It was not the only language that Jews from Eastern Europe knew and could use fluently, far from it, but it proved to be the most resilient in the context of a North American diaspora. As a recent study conducted by Bernard Spolsky and Elana Shohamy has demonstrated, individuals hailing from traditional milieus in Jewish Europe were schooled in historical Semitic languages such as Hebrew and Aramaic, used fusion languages such as Yiddish, and commonly spoke co-territorial non-Jewish languages like Russian, Polish, German and a host of other regional dialects.<sup>1</sup> Once in Canada, East Europeans favoured Yiddish over other idioms because it was the language that they had spoken first as children in the *shtetl* environment, and because it had become the main vehicles for revolutionary political activism in Russia during the 1905 insurrection.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that for immigrants, Yiddish carried a deep symbolic significance as the language of cultural modernity and of the ongoing struggle for national liberation in the tsarist Empire. Data collected by Louis Rosenberg from the 1931 Canadian census clearly demonstrates that, whenever among themselves or when they moved within the context of community organisations, immigrant Jews took to Yiddish for communication purpose and were emotionally tied to the language.<sup>3</sup> There is also ample evidence to suggest that East European immigrants, whether living in Montréal, Toronto or Winnipeg, sought to participate in cultural events where Yiddish was featured and were especially attracted to political harangues, plays, concerts and even poetry recitals in that language.<sup>4</sup> For half a century in Montréal Yiddish was the third most commonly spoken language after French and English; that is until the mass migration of Italians in the period immediately after World War II. As for Yiddish literature, published in book form, in literary journals or in the Yiddish press, it remains to this day the most important and most significant among non-official language literatures that appeared in Canada during the twentieth century.

A more detailed and documented understanding of the field of Yiddish literature in Canada is provided by the biographical dictionary published in 1980, by Haim-Leib Fuks, under the title *Hundert yor Yidishe un Hebreyshe literatur in Kanade* [One hundred years of Yiddish and Hebrew literature in Canada].<sup>5</sup> In this work, prepared by Fuks when he was at the end of a long career as a bibliographer, we find the life trajectories of some 400 individuals who contributed to the development of Yiddish publishing and printing in the country.<sup>6</sup> By its scope and breadth, in the first half of the twentieth century, Canadian Yiddish literature could rival its French and English language equivalents, still in their initial stages of development. It featured works in several genres, the most salient being poetry and the essay. Among its most original contributors we find historians, chroniclers, memorialists, pedagogues and translators. Altogether, including works published abroad before they were admitted to

Canada or in other parts of the diaspora, Canadian Yiddish writers have left us a legacy comprising at least one thousand books, plus innumerable short pieces published across the globe in various newspapers and periodicals.

What is to be gained from a closer examination of Yiddish Canadian sources with regards to the constitution of a Jewish Canadian historical narrative encompassing all periods and covering all cultural aspects of Jewish identity? As I hope to show in the following pages, Yiddish language texts, archives and testimonials present a compelling and comprehensive repository of information concerning the period of the great migration from Eastern Europe, starting at the very beginning of the twentieth century, and extending over several decades, that is until English and French became the dominant everyday languages of the Jewish population of Canada. With Yiddish documentation we are provided with a strong sense of the political, cultural and emotional heritage the Jewish migrants from the Russian empire brought to their Canadian host society, and upon what foundations did the institutional network of Canadian Jewry come to rest before World War II. This is especially the case when one examines the complex and very rich Yiddish literature that began to appear in the major urban centers of Canada during the twenties and thirties, and which spans three generations. Unfortunately, this repository of primary sources has tended to be neglected due to the fact that few contemporary historians and students of Canadian Jewish history can read the language or find their way in Yiddish archives. Since for most readers the impressions and ideological reference points of the Yiddishophone immigrants to Canada are no longer accessible in their original idiom, and since only an very negligible proportion of this body of writings has been translated, it has become increasingly difficult for historians to explore in any depth the crucial decades of the early twentieth century, a period for which there is a broad and significant Yiddish Canadian literary legacy.<sup>7</sup>

Because it extends over half a century, this literature can be divided into three separate periods, each having its unique characteristics and artistic coloration. The first Canadian Yiddish authors manifested themselves when the *Keneder Odler* first began publishing in Montréal in 1907. In the pages of the daily founded by Hirsch Wolofsky appeared the earliest manifestations of this literary current, represented often by very young immigrants without prior experience in Europe as writers. This was an initial period marked by the turmoil of mass migration and the emotional stress of exile. East European Jews were discovering Canada and experiencing intense disorientation. It was also a decade when many immigrants worked long hours in the garment industry. Most of the texts written in this period were fragments that appeared in the Montreal and North American Yiddish press, such as poems, short stories and novels by installment, often referring to Eastern Europe with nostalgia and a sense of loss.

Then followed in the twenties and thirties a period of consolidation, which saw the emergence of literary circles and cultural institutions in most large Canadian cities where Yiddish speakers had settled, mainly Montréal, Toronto and Winnipeg. Poets such as Jacob-Isaac Segal, Sholem Shtern and Noah-Isaac Gotlieb, embarked into full literary careers and earned reputations both locally and internationally as gift-ed *shraybers un dikhter*. During those years, literary salons sprang up in Montréal, along with a *Yidische Folks Bibliyotek* and several Yiddish schools for children.<sup>8</sup> There appeared in Canada a poetic impulse with close links to the modernist Yiddish writing in Europe and mostly in New York. This is often referred to as a golden age of Yiddish culture, since much was offered in terms of artistic creativity by a very small contingent of individuals. Urban by definition and produced by recent immigrants, this literature often adopted themes which reflected the personal struggles of writers attempting to come to terms with displacement, poverty and social isolation. It often refers to conditions in the garment industry and in the dense Jewish neighbourhoods where most Canadian Jews lived.

After the Second World War, a last contingent of Yiddish writers arrived from Europe, which had been deeply affected by the destruction of East European Jewry. These individuals settled in Canada to pursue already flourishing careers interrupted by the Holocaust and sought support in the established Jewish community. Among the most remarkable of these *littérateurs* were Melech Ravitch, Rokhl Korn and Chava Rosenfarb. In the fifties and sixties, poets, essayists and novelists from each of these migration period interacted to produce a vibrant literary culture in Yiddish, until a period of gradual decline began to set in, as English and French were becoming the main literary languages of Canadian Jewry. This decline lasted many decades and in a sense began as soon as the last Yiddishophone Jewish immigrants arrived in Canada in the late forties and early fifties. Essentially Yiddish remained throughout its Canadian history an idiom used primarily by individuals born and raised in Eastern Europe, especially when it came to producing high level artistic accomplishments.

This body of Canadian Yiddish literature, whether in book form or found in the pages of several newspapers published over several decades, not to mention some 150 periodical devoted to culture and political discussions, is in itself a very significant resource to historians and researchers.<sup>9</sup> Written in the language of the East European immigrants, it presents a global picture of the period of the great migration and contains in a condensed form much of the cultural heritage that the newcomers brought with them from the *alte haym*. As they were crossing the ocean in great numbers, Yiddishophones not only carried their mother tongue to new shores. They also left with a deep sense of connection to the events taking place in the Russian Empire, and later to the political situation developing in the USSR, and the new Polish and Baltic Republics of the interwar. Institutions and social aspirations common in the *shtetl* world, to which most of Canadian Jews were associated, remained strong reference points as Jewish community networks were being forged in Montréal,

Toronto and Winnipeg in the first third of the twentieth century. In fact, political ideologies, cultural identities and social experiences pertinent to East European Jews were often transplanted wholesale in the New World, until a process of Canadianization could begin some years later. From this angle alone, this vast body of Yiddish language documentation presents itself as a significant testimonial of the period of the great migration, and of subsequent movements of population from *Mizre Eyrope*, which cannot be obtained from any other source today. Yiddish gives us access to the voices of single individuals going through this life changing experience, expressing their hopes and measuring their chances of success, always in a language that was of great significance to them culturally. In addition to the standard records of maritime companies taking immigrants across the seas, of Canadian officials welcoming them at points of entry and of train companies carrying them to their final destination in the country, this is a major reference point to understanding the experience of the great migration taking place between 1904 and 1914.

Of particular importance in this context is the connection of newcomers to Canada with the 1905 insurrection, which represented a significant series of political events for Jews and non-Jews alike. As a large part of the population in Russia was rising against the tsar to demand a liberalisation of the regime, many would-be Jewish immigrants to North America came into contact with the new ideas associated with modernity and secularism. It is these notions that they would take with them across the ocean when time arrived to leave Europe and build new community structures in Canadian cities. This transference, to borrow a term from psychology, is found everywhere in the founding document of the first political, cultural and charitable institutions founded in Canada by Yiddish speakers at the turn of the century. Likewise, Jewish working class associations, mutual aid organisations and workers' unions in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg often reflected in the first two decades of the twentieth century the situation in Russia and the revolutionary situation unfolding everywhere in Eastern Europe. One example of this process is the Jewish Public Library of Montreal (JPL), a Yiddish language institution founded in 1914 and that clearly defined itself from the very start as a modern, progressive and people oriented community resource. It proposed, entirely in Jewish terms, to educate the recently arrived immigrants and to introduce them to the most avant-garde and innovative currents of thought – often meaning revolutionary – emanating from Europe and North America. In his *forvort* to the first annual report, published in 1915, Reuben Brainin went as far as proposing that the JPL “*iz geshafn gevorn fun'm folk, far'n folk.*”<sup>10</sup> This was an entirely new approach to Jewish culture that could only have been inspired by the events unfolding in Late Imperial Russia. Similar language and political sensitivities abound in the Montreal Yiddish sources produced before, during and shortly after World War I. In English and in French Canada at the time, no mainstream cultural institutions made such bold claims or developed strong connections to the Russian intellectual landscape.

Likewise, testimonials written in Yiddish, whether published or not, help us understand the process of economic integration of East European Jews to the New World, a continent already far more industrialized and urbanized than the world that migrants were leaving behind in haste. The early stages of institutional construction and communal networking in Canada are found in the first newspapers that appeared in Yiddish at the turn of the century, where activists described their strategies, discussed ideas and tried to recruit members. In these publications we are often kept abreast of the obstacles that they faced – not always in the form of anti-Semitism – and informed of the efforts that they made to surmount numerous practical difficulties. When immigrants wanted to open schools for children, hoped to establish cultural circles or wished to create mutual benefit societies to protect themselves from want, they usually resorted to the Yiddish press to publicize their endeavours. The same is true of the first salvoes of the Canadian Yiddish literature, which were fired in newspapers and journals of the early twenties, before books were printed and libraries were organized to cater to the need of the Jewish working class. Not surprisingly, ideological confrontations and cultural debates of the early twentieth century were also reflected in Yiddish periodicals of all sorts, not to mention the minutes taken in meetings at synagogues and unions, the correspondence of individuals and the literary musings of poets.

In certain cases, we have at our disposal serialized publications which lasted over several decades and cover most of the twentieth century, such as the already mentioned *Keneder Odler*, published in Montréal starting in 1907, the *Yidisher Zhurnal* coming out of Toronto after 1912 and the *Yidische Vort* founded in Winnipeg in 1917. In these papers we can find day-to-day or week-to-week sequences of events, which make it possible to measure in detail the cultural and political evolution of Canadian Jewry at the time of the great migration. Appeals to readers, invitations to mass demonstrations and denunciations of ideological adversaries abound in such dailies. Strikes, protests and social movements of all stripes were routinely described in their pages, all the more since these struggles were at the time capturing the imagination of readers and eliciting passionate responses. Organized visits of luminaries from distant lands, including Soviet Russia, attending school graduations or participating in cultural events, were also featured in the pages of the Canadian Yiddish press. This is where we learn as well of the founding assemblies of many key institutions such as for example the Hebrew Free Loan Association in 1911 and the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1919.

Yiddish language plays and vaudeville shows were constantly chronicled in these publications, not to mention concerts, left leaning political assemblies and Zionists rallies. Interestingly, opinions often diverged on the value of the plays performed and on the talent of the artists featured by both local and foreign troupes. Was it more important to entertain the masses with vulgar productions that critics labelled as no better than *shund teater*, or was it the role of the impresarios to rise above the

fray and educate their public with lofty images of moral rectitude? If so, should Jews look to models found in modern European culture, or should they favour authors and performances that were based on traditional Biblical characters and posed dilemmas typical to the East European context? And if Jews were to join in the general movement of Canadian society as new citizens, should it be at the expense of their specific cultural values and Judaic origins, or was a compromise possible that would prioritize the emergence of a new form of identity not found in the Old World? Perhaps an answer to this dilemma is to be found in the countless ads for Hollywood films and Broadway plays which Canadian Yiddish papers contained, entirely written in English, and which clearly indicated the preference of their readers for forms of entertainment typical of the broader North American public.

There emerged in the interwar period a first generation of Jewish Canadian historians who were immigrants from Eastern Europe and who belonged to the Yiddish cultural sphere. As cultural activists and contributors to the early Yiddish press, these individuals had a firsthand experience of the initial period in the development of Canadian Jewry, and wished to share their knowledge of this original chain of events. As H. M. Caiserman<sup>11</sup> argued in *Yidishe dikhter in Kanada* [Jewish poets in Canada], published in 1934 and the first anthology of Jewish Canadian literature to appear in the country, documentary evidence from the first two decades of the twentieth century was already disappearing rapidly.<sup>12</sup> Concerned with preserving the not so distant past and wholly cognizant of the necessity of creating a historical narrative that would serve as a legacy to the coming generations, many Yiddish speaking activists and journalists set out to write Canadian Jewish history as early as the twenties and thirties. B. G. Sack, the author in 1948 of *Geshikhte fun Yidn in Kanade, fun di friste onheyb biz der letster tsayt* [History of the Jews in Canada: From the Earliest Beginnings to the Present Day], began to reflect as early as the twenties on certain aspects of the Canadian experience.<sup>13</sup> Some of these texts were published in English in 1926 in Arthur Daniel Hart's *The Jew in Canada* as a series of *tableaux* depicting the initial period of Yiddish life in Montréal.<sup>14</sup> Throughout his career as a journalist in the *Keneder Odler*, which spanned five decades, Sack produced hundreds of articles reaching back in time, in an attempt to lay the basis for a history of the great East European migration to Canada. These texts are often the only reliable source of information that has survived concerning certain aspects of the incipient period in Canadian Jewish history. The same is true of Abraham Reinvein, who worked from a slightly different angle in preserving a memory of the recent past.<sup>15</sup> In 1923, Reinvein published in Toronto a book entitled *Kanade, ir geshikhte un antwicklung* [Canada, its history and development], which was an effort to bring mainstream Canadian history to the attention of recently arrived Yiddish speaking immigrants.<sup>16</sup> Soon after, in 1925, he attempted in *Der Yid in Kanade fun Frantsoyzisher peryod biz der moderner tsayt* [The Jew in Canada, from the French period to the modern times] to situate the Jewish contributions to the development of Canada over several centuries.<sup>17</sup> A few years

before his death, Reinvein even published in English a document entitled *Materials to the History of Canadian Jews*, which he viewed as a testimonial to the many ways in which Jews had influenced Canadian society, this time taken from English and French language sources.<sup>18</sup>

The most exhaustive and thorough historical analysis of Canadian Jewish history during the Yiddish period would come from two immigrants who arrived in the country at the height of the great migration: Simon Belkin in 1911 and Louis Rosenberg in 1915. Both were eye witnesses in their own right to the mass influx from Eastern Europe and both served in a major Canadian Jewish institution of the time: the Jewish Colonisation Association. A graduate of two British universities, Louis Rosenberg (1893–1987) published in 1939 the seminal work entitled *Canada's Jews, a Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada*, an extensive compilation and interpretation of the data contained in the 1931 federal census.<sup>19</sup> Covering virtually every demographic, social and cultural aspect of Jewish life in the country, it serves to this day as a basis for understanding the historical evolution of Canadian Jewry in the first three decades of the twentieth century. In the forties, fifties and sixties, Rosenberg went on to document for Canadian Jewish Congress the complex series of changes that affected Jews in major Canadian cities, as a new generation was born in Canada and as a large number of Jews were entering the liberal professions. Besides being a community administrator, Belkin (1889–1969) was also an early activist in the Montreal branch of the Poale-Zion party and a frequent contributor to the *Keneder Odler* in Montréal. Towards the end of his life he began to chronicle the early achievements of Labor Zionism in the country and the emergence in 1919 of Canadian Jewish Congress. Published in 1956 under the title: *Di Poale-Zion bavegung in Kanade, 1904–1920* [The Labor-Zionist movement in Canada, 1904–1920], his history of the Poale-Zion is still the most thoroughly researched and authoritative source on the subject.<sup>20</sup> In his book, using mostly Yiddish documentation, Belkin has provided us with a detailed analysis of the first Yiddish language school system in Canada, of the first Jewish labour unions and of a host of other immigrant institutions such as the *Yidish Natsyonaler Arbeter Farband*, the *Arbeter Ring*, and the *Yidishe Folks Biblyotek un Folks Universitet* in Montreal.<sup>21</sup> Without access to such a solid piece of research, contemporary historians would indeed find it far more difficult to understand and appreciate an era during which Jewish immigrants to Canada were in a constant state of flux and community institutions in their infancy.

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The difficulty at present is that very few scholars of Canadian Jewry are able to do reasonably serious research using Yiddish language archives or can take advantage of studies already published in that idiom. The same is true of the Yiddish press and Yiddish literary journals, which were so common in large Jewish communities in Canada before World War II, and which form a vast body of primary sources on vir-



tually all aspects of Jewish life. Without the benefit of this documentation, historians are condemned to repeat what already exists in English language monographs or in government sources, without possibly being able to go beyond the already accepted narrative of Canadian Jewish history.

For this reason, our knowledge of the conditions under which the great migration took place has remained rather sketchy and not much new ground has been covered in this respect in the last generation. To uncover decisive new data and obtain a broader sense of this key period when East European Jews were massively setting foot in the country for the first time, we have to break the language barrier that has kept so many academics from examining documents produced in the language of the immigrants. The same is true of the specific regions of Europe from which Canadian Jews hailed at the turn of the century, and of the Jewish milieu in the Russian Empire where many spent their childhood and absorbed their first experience of Jewishness. Are we to remain ignorant of the social and cultural environment that originally conditioned in the Jewish Pale of Settlement so much of their initial response to their new Canadian homeland? What kind of perceptions did the East European migrants bring with them across the ocean? What was their notion of modernity, their attitude to religious orthodoxy or their reaction to state authority? This too was often relayed in raw form in the correspondence that took place between the two continents, and in the later memoirs produced by those who spanned the two worlds most of their lives.

Certainly Yiddish, as Jeffrey Shandler has so convincingly argued, has entered a post-vernacular age that has altered radically the rapport that most university researchers have developed with the language.<sup>22</sup> It is no longer possible to absorb Yiddish by simply entertaining conversations in a natural social setting or by attending cultural events, as was still the case one or two generations ago. The language has become in many ways a curious oddity in a rapidly changing environment or at best an artefact from the past, a tool that has grown obsolete and has outlived its usefulness. While, according to Louis Rosenberg, Yiddish was in 1931 the mother tongue of 96 % of the Jews living in Canada above the age of ten; in 2006, Yiddish was the first language of 16,300 Canadian Jews (4.5 % of the total). Among those, only 3,130 used the idiom as the main language of the home (.9 % of Canadian Jews).<sup>23</sup>

The means at the disposal of young academics are quite limited when it comes to gaining access to reading skills in the language, not to mention an ability to perform a basic oral function such as reading a Yiddish text aloud. Most Jewish studies programs in Canada pay little attention to Yiddish culture as a serious field of research and rarely consider Yiddish itself as a vehicle for high-level academic exchanges. The language is not taught in most Canadian Universities, and does not figure among the many areas of knowledge which have become accredited as Judaism gained acceptance as a field in the Canadian academic world, such as the study of

the Holocaust, of anti-Semitism, of the state of Israel, of Jewish literature and of Jewish demography. In fact, one could argue that Yiddish was already in a state of marked decline when this transition took place in the sixties and seventies, and that the language received little attention from scholars who were the first to teach Jewish studies in a professional capacity. By and large, this is probably explainable by the fact that institutionalized Jewish scholarship at the university level was already the product of a deep acculturation to mainstream North American culture, far from the basic cultural assumptions of Yiddish. This situation is compounded by the fact that very few significant historical documents published in Yiddish in Canada have been translated in an official language. Without a practical knowledge of Yiddish, we are condemned to not hearing certain voices in their original idiom and risk being shut out of historical periods that are highly significant in the Canadian Jewish historical narrative.

I often wondered why it was that most scholars in the field did not share my interest for the period in Canadian Jewish history when the Yiddish language was the dominant mode of expression within the community. This is not meant as a form of bitter criticism or as an attack on the approach generally favoured since the last thirty years in the academic world, but rather as the starting point for a series of observations on how the standard historical narrative has dealt with Yiddish culture. Perhaps that by reflecting more seriously on such a central issue within the confines of Canadian Jewish history, it could be possible to arrive at a better understanding of the ground covered up to now and of the road that lies ahead of us. Much work has been accomplished in the last three decades but clearly progress was greater in certain areas of research and the dominant view has pointed in specific directions.

Most authors, and certainly the most significant, have been deeply preoccupied with the issue of acceptance and socio-economic mobility. Have Jews been full participants within mainstream Canadian society in the twentieth century? Have they been shielded from discrimination, defamation and human rights violation as Jews? In short, how quickly have the obstacles to integration been removed, especially in certain highly charged historical contexts such as during the Holocaust years, when the state of Israel was in crisis or when Soviet Jews were seeking moral and legal support against oppression? When world Jewry was in crisis, could Canadian Jews engage the Canadian state and count on the political and material resources of the country to alleviate the sufferings of coreligionists elsewhere? Or when anti-Semitism was on the rise domestically and when racist voices were heard on the local scene, threatening the wellbeing of religious minorities? These are by no means superficial questions. They are of essence in the unfolding of Canadian Jewish history and raise fundamental issues with regards to social justice, equal treatment and the épanouissement of smaller cultural communities.

The overwhelming trend in the last thirty years has been to go back to the moment

in recent history when Canadian Jews were able to remove, through full cultural and linguistic integration, the perceived stigma of their largely East European origins and became Canadians like all others. Most significant scholars in the field have been essentially preoccupied with measuring the extent to which this evolution, over several decades in the twentieth century, and now almost complete, has produced ready acceptance of Jews on the part of Canadians in general. This is a crucial test because never before has there been so many Jews in the country – to the point that Canada ranks third among diaspora communities in the world – and so well assimilated into its complex social fabric. If Jews have the same aspirations basically as other Canadian citizens, do they reap the same benefits? And if so, are they reasonably protected from abuse should they still choose to express their Jewishness in the public sphere or in the political arena? This is an exercise at which sociologists have been particularly apt, such as Morton Weinfeld in his seminal work: *Like Everyone Else... but Different*.<sup>24</sup> Contributions such as this one have been decisive in helping us understand the delicate balance for Jews between being full participants in Canadian society and also maintaining a significant Jewish identity.

Likewise, historians of Canadian Jewry have often sought to explore the movement from the period of the great migration to the present time, as a process of cultural transformation and integration leading to a full recognition of Jews as equals. As the twentieth century unfolds and as decades pass, Canadian Jewish history is presented as a sustained and constant attempt to achieve acceptance on the part of all Canadians, sometimes with tragic overtones, sometimes with more success. In this global narrative, the present serves as a crescendo, as a norm from which to judge the past, at a time when major advances have been accomplished by Canadian Jews. Or, presented differently, how responsive were Canadian politicians and opinion leaders historically to the many forms of overt discrimination that have been brought to bear on the country's Jewish citizens? Would the fate of Canadian Jewry have been different in times of crisis, as during the Holocaust years, had Canadians readily applied principles of human rights legislation that are current in this day and age? This basically is the question posed by the highly influential study by Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*.<sup>25</sup> It is also the direction taken by Gerald Tulchinsky's monumental work, *Canada's Jew's*,<sup>26</sup> which chronicles the successful advances of Canadian Jews into cultural conformity and full recognition, or the recent biography of Toronto politician Joe Salsberg by the same author.<sup>27</sup>

As Canadian Jewish history races to reach a more familiar present, it tends to neglect the study of Jewish cultural identities that do not exemplify the current Canadian cultural norm – if such a concept ever existed. During the first half of the twentieth century, Yiddish was a dominant element of institutionalized Jewish life in Canada and an integral part of the cultural identity of the vast majority of Canadian Jews. The language formed and informed the perceptions of many of Canada's Jewish prominent leaders, journalists and political activists. There are moments in the early

twentieth century, when cultural and political institutions appeared on the Canadian scene which sought to preserve for future generations some of the legacy brought from the Old World by Yiddish speakers, if only as a transitional stage on the way to complete integration, such as the *Keneder Odler*, the Jewish Public Library of Montreal and the Yiddish schools. By and large, when written in English, Canadian Jewish history has tended to gloss over the fact that there existed for at least half a century a period when Yiddish was dominant and when cultural production in that language was at its apex. It is as if a close scrutiny and understanding of the Yiddish component of those early decades of the twentieth century was of only passing interest, since this would not be the cultural and political basis from which contemporary Canadian Jews ultimately sought entrance in Canadian society.

As a result, many serious and professionally accomplished works of Canadian Jewish history do not delve deeply into the cultural realities extant during the two or three decades following the great migration, often for lack of fluency in Yiddish on the part of the author, or out of conviction that little of long term relevance for today's Jews can be obtained from such sources. A case in point is the very important essay by Abella and Troper entitled *None is Too Many*. In this study, the community leaders of the immigrant generation whose first language was Yiddish, such as H. M. Caizerman, Archibald J. Freiman or Hirsch Wolofsky, are often presented as inadequate to the task of wresting from federal politicians a benevolent attitude to the refugees from Nazi occupied Europe.<sup>28</sup> This, the authors argue, could only be achieved by Canadian Jews who were removed from the early immigrant period and did not exhibit cultural reflexes typical of the first generation.

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Interestingly enough – and this can provide an interesting basis for comparison – also largely missing from the dominant narrative of Canadian Jewish history written in English is the complex and eminently ambivalent relationship of Jews to French Canada, and vice versa. This central issue presents itself differently from that of the early Yiddish period, but there are certain similarities in the treatment of both subjects that warrants noting. Likewise, primary sources on the attitude of French Canada to Jewish immigration in general, notably in the press and in the personal correspondence of leading intellectual figures, have often not been translated into English. For lack of linguistic abilities, many researchers have resorted to understanding the response of French Canadian politicians and institutions to certain events through the prism of Anglo-Protestant Canada, thereby introducing a distortion that tends to blur finer distinctions of perception and approach. When studying the response of Francophones to the plight of Jewish refugees from Europe, or other moments of crisis in Canadian Jewish life, the dominant trend has been to see French Canada as speaking with one voice and as presenting an entirely negative attitude. As for the contributions of the Yiddish speaking immigrant generation, which seem at times

to fade in the distant past as merely a passing moment, the historical rapport of Canadian Jews with Francophone Québec will require a more comprehensive and broader approach if Canadian Jewish history is to move forward to higher ground. This can only be done reintroducing the notion that the field requires multilingual abilities and a strong sense of the cultural complexity at play in Canada, both internally and externally.

Personally I was drawn to the study of Yiddish for reasons that are not the standard ones in the field of Jewish Canadian history. In this respect, I wanted to go backwards to the point of origins when events in Imperial Russia triggered the great East European migration to Canada, and observe the emergence of the a Yiddish speaking community in Montréal a century ago. Starting in 1904, and during each sailing season up to the beginning of World War I, thousands of Jews reached the Atlantic ports of Canada and – thanks to a very efficient railroad system – soon formed dense clusters in the major industrial centers of Montréal, Toronto and Winnipeg. Within a few years, Yiddish became an important component of urban life in these cities and cultural institutions appeared which reflected the political aspirations of the newcomers. For me the question was not so much how far these Jews and their descendants would actually travel to gain entrance and full acceptance into Canada, or how long it would take, but what they brought with them as perceptions, skills and abilities from the Russian hinterland. Many of the social and economic features of East European Jewry were crucial factors in the adaptation process to their new country and could not be overlooked: the high level of literacy, the decidedly urban qualities of *shtetl* life, and the role played by the orthodox institution of the *kehila*. Furthermore, outmigration from Imperial Russia took place at a time of great revolutionary fervour, right on the heel of the 1905 insurrection, when a sizable part of the *shtetl* Jews were fighting to liberalize the tsarist regime. There was thus at the beginning of the East European migration to Canada a combination of traditional forms of Jewish culture and clear manifestations of modernity. For many decades in Montréal, these factors would orient the evolution and the eventual transformation of Canadian Jewry into a significant and fully accepted part of Canadian society.

I was also convinced early on that Yiddish culture was an essential component of recent Québécois history, particularly when it came to retracing the emergence of a pluri-cultural environment in the Montréal neighbourhoods centered on boulevard Saint-Laurent.<sup>29</sup> It was in that city, in the first third of the twentieth century that was found the highest concentration of Yiddish speakers in the country.<sup>30</sup> By and large, this was the milieu in which French Canadians encountered for the first time forms of diversity beyond what had existed historically in nineteenth century Canada. Sometimes this meeting of cultures took place in stores owned by East European Jews, sometimes in garment factories where Francophones and Yiddishophones worked side by side, and sometimes in parks and market places where individuals of both origins strolled. In many instances, during the two decades leading to World

War II, young French Canadian women were unionized by seasoned Yiddish-speaking veterans who had struck and engaged in violent confrontations in the clothing industry much earlier.<sup>31</sup> One case in point is the remarkable and little known contribution of Montréal union activist Lea Roback, whose range of militancy covers the thirties, forties and fifties. Likewise, the "Main" in Montréal provided a venue for artists from various origins, including many Francophones who were to share in the experience of creating a new urban culture based on popular forms of theater, cinema and cabaret performances.<sup>32</sup>

Undoubtedly, this bold and novel experiment in cultural plurality would pave the way for decisive changes in traditional French Canadian notions of culture, and lead to the sudden blooming of Québécois identity during the fifties and sixties. Yiddish-ophones had a part in this historical evolution that is not yet properly documented or understood. Notably, because this process of mutual exchange and cross-fertilization took place outside of the established cultural channels controlled by the Catholic Church and the educated elites, it has not been the object of much scrutiny on the part of Francophone historians until quite recently. This emergence of modern forms of culture within French Canada itself, especially in the Montréal context, is indissolubly tied to cultural practices that the Yiddish speaking immigrants brought with them to Canada, and to notions that audiences belonging to other traditions absorbed over several decades. In a city as permeable to outside influences as Montréal, and where a Yiddish culture was in full bloom as early as in 1914, and in domains as diverse as literature, journalism, theater, visual arts and children's education, it seems almost inevitable that Jewish accomplishments would be readily transferable further afield and contribute to an overall heightening of the city's artistic potential. Much in the Montréal Yiddish archives points in this direction, although in subtle tonalities, as is evidenced for instance in the attempt by H.M. Caiserman to produce in the early twenties, in the Yiddish language, a history of French Canadian literature, or in his desire to encourage Catholic Jewish religious dialogue in Francophone Montréal in the following decade.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, Yiddish speaking union organizers spearheaded the great garment strikes of the mid-thirties in Montreal that involved largely young French Canadian women from the countryside.<sup>34</sup> Here was a clear example of an emerging Francophone working force coming to terms with its class status, and the long term significance of industrialization, through the experience gained by a previous generation of Jewish workers.

There is also the fundamental issue, in the perspective of French Canada, that the Yiddish language in Montreal presented a mirror image in the early twentieth century of what Francophones were attempting to achieve for themselves in the context of a largely Anglo dominated city. Here was another minority striving to create for itself an institutional structure propitious to the preservation of a unique language and culture. What French speakers considered of fundamental importance to their identity, the maintenance of a separate linguistic sphere, was also perceived as cru-

cial by a recently immigrated group. Not only did East European Jews make use of a “national idiom” in the construction of their own notion of self-identity in Canada, they founded newspapers in this language, taught it to their kids in private schools and celebrated it culturally in various ways. It even went to the point that Yiddish was producing in Montréal a vast literature that mirrored in many ways the similar contributions of French Canada. Here we find a very interesting point of comparison in measuring how welcoming the city was to diversity and the peaceful expression of cultural dissidence. If Francophones were not alone in striving to achieve forms of creativity in their “national idiom” and if other contributions were emerging in other languages simultaneously, then perhaps we have to revise and rethink how to articulate better a global cultural history of the city in the first half of the twentieth century. More likely, and contrary to what most established researchers thought, cultural modernity also came to Montréal via the massive international migrations that swelled the population of Canada after 1900, and in forms which were rather accomplished even by contemporary European standard. In other words, a closer examination of Yiddish history will probably provide us with new insights on how the country was progressively exposed to new notions of artistic creativity, social justice and working class solidarity, in forms that Canadians could not quite bring to fruition from their own internal perspective.

Interestingly, the study of Yiddish has been progressing remarkably in Francophone Canada in the last twenty years. This is due in part to the realisation that documents and works produced in Yiddish in Montréal have the potential of unlocking little known aspects of Québec history. Yiddish culture was also showcased in Francophone Montréal in 1992 when Michel Tremblay’s mythical play, *Les belles-soeurs*, was performed in Yiddish at the Segal Centre for Performing Arts. This production was very broadly reviewed in the French press and received accolades from all sides. Somehow Yiddish could stir the imagination of Francophones when it alluded to a common heritage of marginality and oppression. Such encounters, unthinkable in a still recent past, have transformed and enlarged the perception of Yiddish among those who cannot claim to have inherited the language as part of their cultural origins. At a conference which took place in 2004 at Concordia University, entitled *Traduire le Montréal Yiddish / New Readings of Yiddish Montréal*, renowned Québécois poet Pierre Nepveu could declare: “Dans le contexte montréalais, le yiddish est une langue qui ne cesse d’affleurer sur le mode de l’allusion et de la référence.”<sup>35</sup>

The most promising aspect of this *prise de conscience* is the emergence of a school of translation that has produced French language versions of Yiddish works published when this immigrant culture was at its height in Montréal. In the post vernacular age, it cannot be expected that readers attracted to this culture – whether Jewish or not – will gain access to Yiddish texts in their original version. Translation has become the almost exclusive channel available to communicate a sense of the Yiddish environment that existed in Canada between the two wars and in the immediate

post-Holocaust period. According to Sherry Simon, the process of translating Yiddish into a language that had historically not been linked to the social experience of East European immigrants in this country – French – is in itself a sign of a major transformation of the Québec cultural environment.<sup>36</sup> In Montréal, Yiddish is no longer confined to a strictly Jewish audience. It has reached more broadly to a readership that is attracted by the language's unique ability to reflect on the city's cultural complexity from a completely different perspective. In the academic world, translations into the French language have made it possible for students to include the Yiddish period in their analysis and to question prevailing interpretations of Québec history in the twentieth century.

Among important Yiddish Canadian works that have appeared in French recently are a partial translation of Sholem Shtern's literary memoirs, initially published in 1982 under the title *Shrayber vos ikh hob gekent, memuar un esayn* [writers that I knew, memoirs and essays] and which appeared in 2006 as *Nostalgie et tristesse, mémoires littéraires du Montréal Yiddish*.<sup>37</sup> Little known even to the Yiddish speaking Canadian public, Shtern's recollections are a vivid description of the ebullient Montreal literary milieu as it welcomed in the interwar period writers and luminaries from New York. In this book we are witness to conversations between Shtern, then a struggling young Yiddish poet with communist leanings, and avant-garde figures like Mani-Leib, Isaac Raboy, Kalman Marmor and Fishl Bimko, to name only a few. In the process there emerges a fascinating portrait of the Yiddish world that was developing then in Montréal and of its cultural aspirations in the wider North American Jewish diaspora.

Another significant contribution was the publication in 2009 of Hershl Novak's memoirs originally published in New York in 1957 and entitled *Fun mayn yunge yorn* [from my younger years].<sup>38</sup> Written at a time when Novak was near the end of his life, and published posthumously as an unfinished manuscript, this book chronicles the traditional religious upbringing of the author in Poland before World War I and his subsequent migration to Montréal in 1909 at age 17. Published under the title *La première école yiddish de Montréal, 1911-1914*, Novak's book is a rare depiction of the founding in 1914 of the first Yiddish language part time school in Canada, the leftist Zionist inspired *Natsyonal-Radikale Shule* [the national-radical school]. Novak was not the only activist who participated in the creation of a network of Labor-Zionist institution in Montréal, far from it, but his observations are precious indications as to the state of mind of the initiators of this movement and as to their ultimate goals. I have recently completed in the same vein a still unpublished translation of the first annual report of the Montréal Jewish Public Library – Canada's first Yiddish cultural institution –, a 44 page document printed shortly after July 1915 under the title of *Ershter yerlikher berikht fun der Yidisher Folks Biblyotek un Folks Universitet* [first annual report of the Jewish Public Library and Popular University].<sup>39</sup> In this seldom consulted document we find exceptionally pertinent information on the ideological orientations of the founders of the *Biblyotek* – including an introduction by Reuben



Brainin – and an abundance of data on the type of books that the institution housed in its initial months of operation as a community organisation. In fact, through the *berikht* of 1915, we are given detailed indications as to the authors who were being read by the Montréal Yiddish public at the beginning of the twentieth century and in which language. These are very precious elements in our understanding of the literacy level of the immigrants, and as to the type of secular education they had received in Eastern Europe. None of this data is readily available in English or French language historical sources.

A new type of development in this field has been the publication of Canadian Yiddish literary anthologies in translation.<sup>40</sup> In 2007, Rhea Tregebov released a collection of short stories entitled *Arguing with the Storm: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers*, which contained works by several Canadian authors, notably Chava Rosenfarb, Bryna Ber-covitch and Paula Frankel-Zaltzman.<sup>41</sup> More recently there appeared in 2013, under the editorship of Frieda Johles Forman, a new attempt at circumscribing this very broad field, again from the point of view of feminine writing. Entitled *The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Poetry*, this anthology adds to our knowledge of authors who have been rarely studied thoroughly and are not known to a wide circle of readers.<sup>42</sup> Among the Canadian women who have been translated for in this collection are Sheindl Franzus-Garfinkle, Chayele Grober and Ida Maze.<sup>43</sup> Also of note is the publication in 2013 of an anthology of Chava Rosenfarb's poetry translated in English by her daughter Goldie Morgentaler, under the title *Exile at Last*.<sup>44</sup> In this short book, published in the Essential Poets Series by Guernica Editions, we are introduced to one of the most significant literary talents of the post-Holocaust era in Canada. Of particular interest in this case are the reflections of the translator, who was pressed early on by her mother into helping her find an English language audience as the number of Yiddish readers was in rapid decline across the world. Finally Chantal Ringuet published, also in 2013, an anthology of Yiddish writings in Montreal translated in French. It appeared under the title of *Voix yiddish de Montréal*, a first in Canadian Yiddish studies.<sup>45</sup> The author in 2011 of *À la découverte du Montréal Yiddish*, Ringuet is breaking new ground in this collection by offering a wider selection of literary genres, notably poetry, and by introducing to the reader major literary talents such as Melech Ravitch, Rokhl Korn and Noah-Isaac Gotlib.

Two monographs have also appeared recently that are attempts at gaining a wider perception of the contribution of Canadian Yiddish literature in the twentieth century, and that are worth mentioning. In 2011, Rebecca Margolis proposed, under the title *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil*, an interpretation of the significance of Montréal Yiddish culture from the beginning of the great migration to the end of World War II.<sup>46</sup> A year later, the author of this article published a full biography of Montréal's most significant and most prolific Yiddish poet, Jacob-Isaac Segal. Published under the title *Jacob-Isaac Segal (1896-1954), un poète yiddish de Montréal et son milieu*, it included some thirty translations of his works in French.<sup>47</sup>

One of the most interesting features of Canadian Jewish history in the last decade is that it is reaching to a much broader spectrum of readers. More than in the past, researchers and students alike are becoming convinced that the field of Yiddish studies is making an important contribution to our understanding of Canadian society at large, and to a new awareness of its multicultural nature. While this is taking place, the language itself, is now becoming accessible for the first time to a wider public through translation. In both English and French, a new narrative of Canadian Jewish history has surfaced that takes into account the advances and contributions made by Yiddishophone immigrants in several spheres of activity, such as literature and the arts, workers movements, religious dialogue and progressive political activism. Yiddish played a major role in the early twentieth century, an era when Francophones and Anglophones alike were experiencing for the first time forms of cultural diversity in densely populated immigrant neighborhoods, such as the area around Boulevard Saint-Laurent in Montreal or St. John's Ward in Toronto. It is in such urban surroundings that mainstream Canadians would first come to terms with situations of intense cultural plurality.

Nonetheless, Yiddish studies are still a long way from having reached full maturity within the field of Canadian Jewish history, itself a rapidly expanding segment of the humanities. Most researchers seriously involved in studying Yiddish creativity in this country are still scratching the surface and have only begun to measure the depth of this cultural vein. Much remains to be done to convey a sense of the importance of this contribution to the study of contemporary Jewry in Canada and to cultural diversity more broadly. This can only be achieved if more researchers and students learn the language as a tool of exploration into the Canadian Jewish past, and if more Yiddish documents are made available through translation.

**1**

Bernard Spolsky and Elana Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel: Policy, Ideology and Practice* (Clevedon, U.K., Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 1999).

**2**

Stefani Hoffman and Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews* (Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 2008).

**3**

Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews, a Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada* (Montréal, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1939); reedited by Morton Weinfeld under the title *Canada's Jews: a Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

**4**

See for example: Israel Medres, *Montreal of Yesterday, Jewish Life in Montreal, 1900-1920* (Montreal, Véhicule Press, 2000 [1947]) translated from the Yiddish by Vivian Felsen. The second volume of Medres' memoirs has appeared in 2003 under the title: *Between the Wars; Canadian Jews in Transition*, also translated by Vivian Felsen.

**5**

Haim Leib Fuks, *Hundert yor Yidische un Hebreyshe literatur in Kanade* (Montréal, 1980); translated in French by the author of this article under the title: *Cent ans de littérature yiddish et hébraïque au Canada* (Sillery, éditions du Septentrion, 2005).

**6**

Fuks was born in 1896 in Lodz, Poland, and established himself permanently in Montreal in 1974. He had a long career as a Yiddish journalist, as a poet and as a bibliographer. Prior to coming in Montreal, he had been one of the main collaborators for the *Leksikon fun der nayer Yidisher literatur* [biographical dictionary of the modern Yiddish literature], published in New York in 8 volumes from 1956 to 1981.

**7**

Since the exact boundaries of Yiddish literature and Yiddish archives in Canada are not known, it is extremely difficult to estimate what proportion of this corpus has been translated.

**8**

See for example Shtern, Sholem, *Shrayber vos ikh hob gekent, memuar un esayn* [Writers that I have met, memoirs and essays] (Montréal, 1982); a partial French language translation of this book by Pierre Ancil appeared under the title: *Nostalgie et tristesse, mémoires littéraires du Montréal Yiddish* (Montréal, Éditions du Noroît, 2006.)

**9**

See the list of all the Yiddish language periodicals and newspapers mentioned by Fuks in his biographical dictionary on p. 419-424 of the French translation.

**10**

For the people and by the people. *Ershter yerlikher berikht fun der Yidisher Folks Biblyotek un Folks Universitet* [First annual report of the Jewish Public Library and People's University], Montreal, p. 7.

**11**

Caiserman was born in Rumanian in 1884 and migrated to Montreal in 1910. He was the first Yiddish speaking Canadian literary critic and a founder in 1919 of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Until his death in 1950, he remained one of the most active community leaders in the country.

**12**

H. M. Caiserman: *Yidishe dikhter in Kanade* (Montréal, Farlag Nyuansn, 1934).

**13**

Sack arrived in Montreal in 1905 from Lithuania. He was one of the first regular journalists to write in the *Keneder Odler*, where he kept

for decades a column on Montreal Jewish history. B. G. Sack, *Geshikhte fun Yidn in Kanade, fun di friste onheyb biz der letster tsayt* (Montréal, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1948). The book had appeared in English in 1945 under the title: *History of the Jews in Canada: From the Earliest Beginnings to the Present Day* (Montréal, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1945).

**14**

Arthur Daniel Hart, *The Jew in Canada: A Complete Record of Canadian Jewry from the Days of the French Regime to the Present Time* (Montréal, Jewish Publications Ltd., 1926.)

**15**

Abraham Reinvein (1887-1932) arrived in Toronto in 1909 from his native Poland. He was a journalist and the director after 1915 of the Toronto Yiddish daily: *Der Yidisher Zhurnal*.

**16**

Abraham Reinvein: *Kanade, ir geshikhte un antvicklung* (Toronto, 1923).

**17**

Abraham Reinvein: *Der Yid in Kanade fun Frantsoyzisher peryod biz der moderner tsayt* (Toronto, 1925).

**18**

Abraham Reinvein: *Materials to the History of Canadian Jews* (Toronto, 1927).

**19**

Rosenberg, Louis, *op. cit.*

**20**

Simon Belkin, *Di Poale-Zion Bavegung in Kanade, 1904-1920* (Montréal, 1956), 280 p.; translated in French by Pierre Ancil under the title: *Le mouvement ouvrier juif au Canada, 1904-1920* (Sillery, éditions du Septentrion, 1999).

**21**

Today the Jewish Public Library of Montreal.

**22**

Jeffrey Shandler, *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006).

**23**

Louis Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 254-262; see also Table V, Leo Davids, "Hebrew and Yiddish in Canada; a Linguistic Transition Completed",

*Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes*, vol 18-19 (2010-2011): 39-76.

**24**

Morton Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else but Different, the Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 2001).

**25**

Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many; Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2012 [1983]).

**26**

Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews : a People's Journey* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2008).

**27**

Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: a Life of Commitment* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013).

**28**

Irving Abella, *op. cit.*, chapter 1.

**29**

See Pierre Anctil, *Saint-Laurent: Montreal's Main* (Québec, éditions du Septentrion and Musée Pointe-à-Callière, 2012 [2002]), 109.

**30**

See Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

**31**

See Mercedes Steedman, *Angels of the Workplace: Women and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1997).

**32**

André-G. Bourassa and Jean-Marc Larrue, *Les nuits de la « Main » : cent ans de spectacles sur le boulevard Saint-Laurent (1891-1991)* (Montréal, VLB éditeur, 1993).

**33**

See Pierre Anctil, «H.-M. Caiserman, critique littéraire du Canada français», *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes*, vol. 18-19 (2010-2011) : 15-37; see also chapter 6 in Pierre Anctil, *Le rendez-vous manqué; les Juifs de Montréal face au Québec de l'entre-deux-guerres* (Québec, l'Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1988), 261-307

**34**

See Steedman, 1997.

**35**

"In the context of Montréal, Yiddish is a language that never stops rising to the surface, whether through allusion or reference", in Pierre Anctil, Norman Ravvin et Sherry Simon, eds., *Traduire le Montréal yiddish / New Readings of Yiddish Montreal* (Ottawa, les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2007). See also Pierre Anctil, "Nothing in my Formative Years Indicated that I Might Become a Translator" in Sherry Simon, ed., *In Translation, Honouring Sheila Fischman* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 52-64.

**36**

See Sherry Simon, *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 95-115.

**37**

Sholem Shtern, *Shrayber vos ikh hob gekent, memuar un esayn*, Montreal, 1982; partially translated by Pierre Anctil under the title : *Nostalgie et tristesse, mémoires littéraires du Montréal yiddish* (Montréal, les Éditions du Noroît, 2006).

**38**

Hershl Novak, *Fun mayn yunge yorn*, 1957, 227 p.; partially translated by Pierre Anctil under the title : *La première école yiddish de Montréal, 1911-1914* (Sillery, les Éditions du Septentrion, 2009).

**39**

The original document is in the archives of the Montreal Jewish Public Library. The English and French translations will be put online in June 2014 in the Library's one-hundredth anniversary virtual exhibit.

**40**

An earlier anthology of the same type had been published twenty years earlier. See: Frida Forman, Ethel Raicus, Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe, eds., *Found Treasures; Stories by Yiddish Women Writers* (Toronto, Second Story Press, 1994).

**41**

Rhea Tregobov, ed., *Arguing with the Storm; Stories by Yiddish Women Writers* (Toronto, Sumach Press, 2007).

**42**

Frieda Johles Forman, ed., *The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Writers* (Holstein, Ontario, 2013).

**43**

Also known as Sheyndl Garfinkle-Franzus or Garfinkl-Frantsuzki in Haim Leib Fuks biographical dictionary.

**44**

Chava Rosenfarb, *Exile at Last: Selected Poems*, edited by Goldie Morgentaler (Toronto, Guernica Editions, Essential Poets Series no. 198, 2013).

**45**

Chantal Ringuet, *À la découverte du Montréal yiddish* (Montréal, Fides, 2011).

**46**

Rebecca Margolis, *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil: Yiddish Culture in Montreal, 1905-1945* (Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

**47**

Pierre Anctil, *Jacob-Isaac Segal (1896-1954) ; un poète yiddish de Montréal et son milieu* (Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2012).