

KADYE MOLODOWSKY IN *LITERARISHE BLETER*

1925-35: Annotated Bibliography

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Abstract

The rise in feminist consciousness and the growth of Women's Studies has brought Yiddish women writers into sharp focus. Kadye Molodowsky was one of the most prominent of the modern Yiddish women poets.

Her biography is a typical summary of the modernization of Eastern European Jewry in the early twentieth century.

Molodowsky was a leading figure in Yiddish cultural life in interbellum Poland. As a writer, her primary affiliation was with the *Literarische bleter* (Literary Leaves, 1924-1939.) This periodical, founded by prominent Yiddish intellectuals in Warsaw, became the world tribune of secular Yiddish culture. Molodowsky's association with this high-profile publication placed her at the centre of the vibrant Jewish literary, cultural, and social life of the time.

What follows, is an annotated bibliography of her publications and work about her in *Literarische bleter*, from her debut there in 1925 until her departure for the US in 1935.

PRÉCIS

L'ascension du féminisme et l'expansion des études des femmes ont fortement mis en lumière les femmes-écrivains de la culture yiddish. Kadye Molodowsky était une des poétesses contemporaines les plus en vue de cette culture.

Sa biographie est un bref compte-rendu de la modernisation des Juifs de l'Europe de l'est au début du XX^e siècle.

Molodowsky occupait une place prépondérante dans le monde culturel yiddish de la Pologne d'entre les deux guerres. Par son affiliation, comme écrivain, au *Literarische bleter* (Les feuilles littéraires 1924 - 1939), — périodique fondé par l'élite intellectuelle yiddish de Varsovie et plus tard tribune mondiale de la culture séculière yiddish — elle se trouvait en plein coeur de la vie littéraire, culturelle et sociale juive de l'époque.

Ce qui suit est une bibliographie annotée de ses publications et des oeuvres sur Molodowsky parues dans le *Literarische bleter*, de ses débuts en 1925 jusqu'à son départ au États-Unis en 1935.

PREFACE

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The thesis must still conform to all other requirements of the "Guidelines for Thesis Preparation". The thesis must include: A Table of Contents, an abstract in English and French, an introduction which clearly states the rationale and objectives of the study, a review of the literature, a final conclusion and summary, and a thorough bibliography or reference list.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Returning to university as a mother of three adolescent children, after a hiatus of over twenty years, presents one with an interesting set of challenges. From the outset, let me state unequivocally, that without the support of my husband Aron, and my children Benjamin, Yona and Frayda, it would not have been possible. They endured more than what one ought to expect of spouse and children. My love and admiration for them knows no bounds.

The faculty of the Department of Jewish Studies at McGill University, smoothed the way for my return. Professor B. Barry Levy, then Chairman, and Professor Ruth R. Wisse, eased the bureaucratic process and were supportive of my goals and aspirations. Ruth Wisse suggested Kadye Molodowsky as a topic for further study. For that, and for much more, I am thankful to her. Professor Gershon Hundert taught me the merit of brevity, a skill I am still honing, and Mrs. Barbara Feedman was a model of patience, caring and understanding. Mrs. Esther Frank was always a willing listener and reader and Professor Jennifer Sylvor provided helpful advice. Professor Eugene Orenstein was an inspiring teacher and guided this very long, painful process.

Dr. Norma Baumel Joseph, Department of Religious Studies, Concordia University, was a willing walking partner and an invaluable resource as well as purveyor of Shabbat dinners, support and encouragement.

The Librarians and staff of the Jewish Public Library, Montreal, provided invaluable assistance in my research and equally important, a welcoming and nurturing environment in which I spent countless hours and days. Mark Webb, Archivist, and Zachary Baker, Chief Librarian, at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, were most helpful, offering sound advice as well as voluminous amounts of material.

Leah Krolik Goldstein's persistence, forced me to get started on this work as she insisted on typing the first draft. Linda Aboody typed and retyped this work. Her calm disposition was a gift. Beline Littman, ably translated the abstract into French and Cynthia Newman Drysdale, devoted friend, proofread the text for technical accuracy.

Many friends and family members contributed to making the completion of this work possible. My sister, Raizel Fishman Candib, was, as always, a constant source of comfort and encouragement. Her faith in me sustains me. She is more than anyone can ask for. My lifelong friend, Emmanuel Kalles, patiently listened to every word of the first papers I wrote and still remains my friend. Dora Wasserman convinced me of the value of my work when I doubted my own sanity. To the many friends who called from near and far, encouraged me, cajoled me, bought me gallons of coffee but most of all offered their enduring friendship, thank you.

When all is said and done, this work stands on its own. I see it as part of a larger endeavour to bring to light the work of some of the most interesting and important personalities in our recent past, Jewish women activists and Yiddish women writers. It is my hope that this work contributes to that effort. Kadye Molodowsky was an inspiring personality, as were many of her generation. The choices she made in her life, in her writing and her work, captivated me. There remains much to be done.

To my parents

Yentl Rubin Fishman ^{z"l} and Mordkhe Hersh Fishman ^{z"l}

whose love of the Yiddish world and Yiddish word inspired me;

to my husband Aron

who encouraged me to share it

to our children, Benjamin, Yona and Frayda

who will carry on

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years both the academic and the general community have shown a growing interest in modern Yiddish literature and culture. The latest work in the field of Yiddish literature has been influenced by a heightened feminist consciousness and the rise of Women's Studies. This has resulted in the proliferation of research, conferences, and publications, focusing on Yiddish women writers. (1) One of the first to figure prominently as a subject of this interest, was Kadye Molodowsky,(2) renowned poet, literary critic, essayist and teacher.(3)

Kadye Molodowsky (1894-1975), was a leading figure in the Yiddish world of interbellum Poland and later in the United States. Her poetry, literary criticism and social commentary placed her in the centre of that world for most of her life. She was outspoken and unrelenting in her commitment to excellence in the field of Yiddish literature and culture, and to the improvement of the dire economic situation of the Jewish masses, particularly women, in the difficult years for Polish Jewry between the two world wars. She was the voice of the modern Jewish woman at the crossroads of traditional Jewish life and modernity. This confrontation was the theme of much of her early writing and helped to shape the person Kadye Molodowsky, and the poet she became. In addition, her championing of women in her work led to her becoming embroiled in the debate about "women's poetry" that began in the Yiddish literary world of the 1920's and continues to this day in Yiddish literary scholarship and criticism. From 1927 on, when this debate appeared on the pages of the *Warsaw Literarische bleter* (Literary Leaves), to the later years of her life, Molodowsky fought against the label. The idea of being a "women's poet" who wrote "women's poetry " was one she could not accept.

Kadye Molodowsky was representative of much of the generation that was born into traditional Jewish life at the end of the 19th century, and, due to the influences of the *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment) and subsequent modernization, left that world to take up the banner of Jewish nationalism (in its

various forms) and a Hebrew or Yiddish cultural identity. The choices she was to make in her life - becoming a Hebrew and later a Yiddish teacher and a Yiddish writer; settling in Warsaw in the early 1920's and later in the United States and Israel - all reflect the commitment to the ideals of a vibrant secular Jewish cultural life.

Almost all of the information about Kadye Molodowsky's life comes from her memoir, entitled "Fun mayn elterzeydne yerushe", (From My Great-grandfather's Legacy) a collection of sixty-two chapters which appeared serialized, over a ten year period, 1965-1974, in the New York Yiddish literary journal , *Svive* (Milieu) which she edited and published. (4) As a source this memoir is problematic. It is a highly selective account of her life, in which she omits discussion of many of the seminal moments, both personal and historic. Yet she waxes poetic and emotional about much of the rest. A reading of her contributions to the *Literarische bleter*, on the other hand, provides an insight into the personality that has captured the imagination of a new generation of Jewish writers and scholars.

The *Literarische bleter*, subtitled *illustrirte vokhnshrift far literatur, teater un kunst* (Illustrated weekly for literature, theatre and the arts), was the premiere Yiddish cultural journal in the interwar period. It was founded in 1924 and appeared weekly, uninterrupted until the outbreak of the Second World War. Its mission was to provide a forum for the advancement of Yiddish culture, independent of the political strings that much of Yiddish literature and the arts found themselves bound to at that time. The founders of *Literarische bleter* included Nakhmen Meisel, Melech Ravitch, I. J. Singer and Peretz Markish. It soon attracted the attention of the who's who of the world of Yiddish culture and counted among its contributors the luminaries of Yiddish literature in Poland, the United States and other countries.

The bulk of Kadye Molodowsky's literary work, during the years she lived in interbellum Poland, first appeared in the *Literarische bleter*. I undertook an intensive study of this period of her life and the result is this work, an annotated bibliography

of Molodowsky's contributions as well as reviews about her, in the *Literarische bleter*,
1925-1935.(5)

Notes to Introduction

1. The list of conferences, seminars and publications in particular, in this area is impressive. A sampling includes: Jewish Women's Voices Past and Present: Weekend of Culture, Scholarship and Celebration, OISE, Toronto, Ontario, 19-21 February, 1993; Women in Yiddish Literature Program, National Yiddish Book Center, Mount Holyoke College, Ma., 19 - 21 March, 1993; *Di froyen* - Women and Yiddish: Tribute to the Past, Directions for the Future, National Council of Jewish Women, New York Section, Hunter College and the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City, 28-29 October, 1995. The Conference Proceedings were published under the same title by the National Council of Jewish Women, New York Section, 1997. In addition, the topic has been on the programs of the 2nd International Conference Of Yiddish Clubs, Friends of Yiddish, Toronto, Ontario, 7-10 October, 1994; and the 27th Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Studies, Boston, December 17-19, 1995 at which there was an entire session devoted to the topic, "Emerging Themes in Yiddish Women's Writings". At the 28th Annual Conference, there was a paper delivered by Kathryn Hellerstein, "The Metamorphosis of the Matriarchs in Modern Yiddish Poetry."

Recent important publications on Yiddish women writers and their works have been authored by : Adler, Ruth, "Devorah Baron: Chronicler of Women in the Shtetl," *Midstream*, August/September 1988: 40-42; Baskin, Judith R., *Women of the Word: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing*; Cantor, Aviva, *The Jewish Woman 1900-1985: A Bibliography*; Forman, Frieda, et al, eds. *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers*; Seidman, Naomi, *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish*; Sokoloff, Naomi B., Anne Lapidus Lerner and Anita Norich, *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature*; Walden, Daniel, ed., "Jewish Women Writers and Women in Jewish Literature," *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, 3 1983. These appear in the Bibliography at the conclusion of this work.

In addition to the Yiddish language literary criticism devoted to Kadye Molodowsky, a number of important publications in English have appeared in the past few years. See note 3 below.

2. When referring to this poet as the author of a Yiddish language work in the Annotated Bibliography, I transliterate her name from the Yiddish as Kadye Molodovski. When writing about her in English, the spelling of her family name as given in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Molodowsky, is used.

3. Dr. Kathryn Hellerstein is the leading expert on the literary work of Kadye Molodowsky. In addition to her work listed in the end bibliography, Hellerstein's translations of Molodowsky's poetry appear also in *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook* (see end bibliography) and in a soon to be published volume by Hellerstein, *Selected Poems of Kadye Molodowsky*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

Molodowsky is also included in the work of Norma Fain Pratt (see end bibliography). Her short story "Lost Shabes" is translated by Irena Klepfisz in *The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Women's Anthology* (see end bibliography). This translation appears in *The Jews: A Treasury of Art and Literature*. ed. Sharon R. Keller (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc. 1992): 274-276. Her photograph is on the front cover of *Bridges; A Journal for Jewish Feminists and our Friends*. 2:1 (Spring, 1991), which includes a short biography and Hellerstein's translations of four poems. She is also the subject of Sheva Zuker's article, "Kadye Molodowsky's 'Froyen Lider' ('Women's Songs')", *Yiddish* 9:2 (1994): 44-51.

Translations of her work are also found in: Forman, Frieda, et al, eds., *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers*, (see end bibliography); Howe, Irving and Eliezer Greenberg, *A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry* (see end bibliography); Howe, Irving, Ruth R. Wisse and Khone Shmeruk, eds., *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* (see end bibliography); Schwartz, Howard and Anthony Rudolf, *Voices Within the Ark: The Modern Jewish Poets* (see end bibliography); Whitman, Ruth. *An Anthology of Modern Yiddish Poetry*. 2nd ed. (New York: Education Department of the Workmen's Circle, 1966) and 3 ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995). This is not an exhaustive or definitive list.

4. *Svive: tsvey-monat shrift far literatur un kritik*. New York: 1-7: January/February 1943 - April/May 1944; From November 1960 to the end of its run - September 1974, *Fertlyor shrift*.

The memoir is found in No. 15 (March, 1965); 34-41 to No. 41 (April, 1974) : 53-54. For details see end bibliography.

5. For a more inclusive list of journals and periodicals to which Molodowsky contributed, see: Prager, Leonard, *Yiddish Literary and Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies: A Selective Annotated Bibliography* (Darby, Pa.: Association for the Study of Jewish Languages, 1982). He does not, however, include the *Fraynd* (Friend), Warsaw, 1934-1936, of which she was the literary editor. For a list of her published volumes of poetry, see the bibliography at the end of this work.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH - 1896-1935

Kadye Molodowsky, named for her paternal grandfather(1) was born in Bereze (Bereza Kartuska in interbellum Poland) Grodno Province, in the Pale of Settlement of Czarist Russia. The 2,620 Jews at that time represented approximately 42% of the town's population.(2) As early influences in her life, Molodowsky points first to her maternal great-grandfather, Doctor Zakharye Khone Shonhof, who because of his great desire to pursue secular learning, *Bildung*, the rallying cry of the Haskalah, was forced to flee to Paris.(3) Her father, Isaac Molodowsky, was a Talmud teacher who, influenced by the Haskalah, taught Hebrew language as a living language, with the *Ivrit b'Ivrit* method and Jewish history as a subject separate from Bible. The introduction of both these subjects represents a break with the millennial method of Jewish religious education. He was a co-founder of the town's modern Hebrew school in the early years of this century and an ardent Zionist. At the same time, he harboured a sentiment for Yiddishism which came to fruition in the years following World War I.(4) Molodowsky credits her father for much of her own emotional and ideological commitment to Jewish tradition, the Land of Israel and the Jewish people. These influences had a great effect in shaping Molodowsky's personality, as evidenced by the numerous references to them throughout the memoir.

Equally positive and inspiring are the descriptions of the women in her family. Her mother, Itke, is portrayed as a rather worldly woman whose sophisticated intellectual ability placed her in a superior position in the family and town.(5) Her paternal grandmother, Shifre, is depicted as having a strong and independent character. Although widowed, she insisted on living alone and supported herself by teaching girls to read(6) The role model that she provided, as a teacher and independent woman, was not lost on Molodowsky who later included her in the lineage of teachers in her family which served as an imperative in her own choice of career.(7) These qualities of independence and strength of character in the women of her family, whom Molodowsky describes with great admiration and affection, are

later found in the women of her poems in *Dzshike gas* and *Freydke*, her famous works of the inter-war period.

Molodowsky's early education represented a mix of traditional and modern elements. There was no formal schooling as such, but under the guidance of her father, she received not only the traditional education of most Jewish girls but also, a major point of departure, Bible and Talmud study in her father's classes for boys. This unusual practice was magnified by the fact that he later hired a Yeshiva student to teach her Talmud.(8) As well, a private tutor for Hebrew language was provided. Her father also hired a series of university students, male and female, and later also the teacher of the local Crown School for Jewish children to prepare her for the external government examinations which would provide her with a gymnasium matriculation certificate.

It is noteworthy that among the highly enthusiastic descriptions of her studies and discoveries, there is no mention of literature in any language, either as a course of study, or as a source of pleasure. There is not the slightest indication anywhere in the memoir, of any interest in reading or writing of any kind, in any language. Not until her debut in print in 1920, is there any treatment of Molodowsky as poet and writer, and even then it is rather perfunctory. We do not even learn what her first published poem was.(9)

In 1911, at the age of seventeen, Kadye Molodowsky traveled to Libau, Courland, which was outside the Pale of Settlement, to sit the government examination for gymnasium matriculation. This experience, dealing with Russian government bureaucracy and meeting, for the first time, assimilated upper class German-speaking Jews, made a lasting impression on her as it heightened her keen awareness of herself as a Jew and of Jewish destiny.(10)

This sense of Jewish history and destiny, and of her own life being integrally part of these, is a recurring theme both in her memoir and in many of her essays.

One year later, Molodowsky received a teaching certificate and obtained her first posting as a Hebrew teacher in a private Jewish school for girls in Sierpc (Sierpc), Russian Poland.(11) Here she discovered the phenomenon of Polish-speaking Jews. It was here, also, that she discovered for the first time, at the age of eighteen, the works of the great Polish Romantic poets, Mickiewicz and Slowacki. There is no comment in her memoir about what must have been a seminal moment in the life of a budding writer,

Her discomfort among assimilated Jews, further evidence of the strong sense of Jewish identity which permeates Molodowsky's personality, led her to resign her post after only one year. What was probably most important about her year in Sierpc, were the two stops she made in Warsaw, en route to the town and returning from there.

Her encounter with the broad spectrum of Jewish lifestyles offered by the big city excited her. Here, in the early summer of 1913, she learned of I. L. Peretz and of his efforts in establishing a modern Jewish culture. Having been awakened to the possibilities afforded by a big city, she was reluctant to return to Bereze. Her mother suggested a visit with her aunt in Bialystok. This move proved to be a turning point in Molodowsky's life. Coming hard on the heels of her cultural awakening in Warsaw, her stay in Bialystok placed her in the centre of the modern Jewish intellectual circles in that city. Her transformation came with her encounter and eventual involvement with the young Jewish intellectuals of the group *Hovivei Sfat Ever* (Lovers of the Language of Eber, the Hebrew language).(12) Here she experienced Hebrew as a living language. Her love of the Land of Israel, which she had brought from home, was reinforced in this milieu.

The most profound impact of this group on Molodowsky's life was her recognition of her own inadequacies and a subsequent desire to enhance her knowledge, which led to her decision to return to Warsaw to further her studies and to become a Hebrew teacher. Encouraged by her father, she returned to Warsaw in

the fall of 1913 as a student in the Hebrew Froebel Courses, an innovative Hebrew seminary for kindergarten teachers, based on the most modern pedagogical theories. Its director was the noted Zionist Hebraist educator Yehiel Halperin (13) Here, her love for the common Jewish "folk" was reinforced by Halperin's Folkist nationalism. Throughout her future wanderings, and writings, this sentiment for the common Jew, will be sustained. It is also a major element in her writing of the inter-war period as she transfers the disdain for the assimilated aristocracy to the middle class, which she pits against the working masses. It is also evident in her impatience and anger with Jewish writers who chose to write in languages other than Yiddish or Hebrew.

Kadye Molodowsky now emerges as a person with a mission. Her descriptions of the classes and of her classmates are imbued with a heightened sense of purpose.(14) "...We are preparing ourselves for a major conquest. It wasn't a matter of a personal career, rather a common goal; a soaring of youth into the future."(15) She seems to internalize the modern Jewish cultural experience, evidenced in her descriptions of this period in her life. As well, her daily experiences with the working people of Warsaw, served as the inspiration for some of the heroines of her poetry of the interbellum period.

World War I found her in Warsaw, where for the next year, she worked as a teacher in one of the homes for refugee children opened by Yehiel Halperin, director of the Hebrew Froebel Courses., as part of the organized relief effort of the Warsaw Jewish Community Council, the Kehillah. She notes the leading role of I. L. Peretz in this effort. As the front moved closer to Warsaw, in the late summer of 1915, Halperin closed the refugee centre and moved the seminary eastward to Odessa. Kadye Molodowsky returned home to Bereze.

At twenty one years of age, and for the next six years, Kadye Molodowsky would share the fate of the homeless Jewish masses. She herself was to become a

wanderer and would in the process emerge as a new talent on the Yiddish literary scene.

Molodowsky's stay in Bereze was short-lived. She was sent to Poltava (Ukraine) to secure her brother Leybl's draft deferral from the czarist army. Unable to return, due to the advancing front, she remained in Poltava, finding refuge in the home of a Hebrew teacher. Romni (Ukraine), was her next stop. There too she found work in a home for Jewish refugee children. Her next move was to Saratov, on the Volga River. Here she found work in a home for Jewish refugee children. In the summer of 1916, Kadye Molodowsky moved to Odessa where she rejoined Yehiel Halperin at the relocated Froebel Courses. Halperin had invited her to run the model Hebrew kindergarten while she continued a third year of study. Here, she felt, "she had reached a friendly shore."(16)

Odessa was a hub of Jewish intellectual activity. Here, Molodowsky met some of the personalities who were to figure in her later life. Two historic events occurred during Molodowsky's stay in Odessa; the publication of the Balfour Declaration, granting Jews a homeland in Palestine, and the Russian Revolutions of 1917. Her memoir gives them both short shrift, although the Balfour Declaration does merit a paragraph of inspired rhetoric.

...The announcement that the Land of Israel was to be recognized as a Jewish homeland aroused the entire Jewish population of Odessa. In our circle, we congratulated one another and prepared for a manifestation of support in the streets of Odessa. We were all excited as we prepared for this. Greatly inspired by the event, I embroidered a blossoming branch onto the velvet lapel of my jacket. In my youthful fantasy I saw this as a symbol of what would yet flower. I was not alone, some of my friends bought new hats in order to appear festive at the demonstration. In fact, the demonstration was enormous and awe inspiring. It looked as if the Jews were carrying the Balfour Declaration straight to Jerusalem.(17)

The Bolshevik Revolution, which sent the world spinning for the next three quarters of a century, is dealt with in a single sentence, and that only in passing. "After the revolution," she writes, "Odessa became a different city."(18) The

instability created by the ensuing civil war, made her future and that of Halperin's school uncertain. Molodowsky tried to return to Bereze, but was unable to travel beyond Kiev.

In Kiev she found work first as a private Hebrew teacher and later as a teacher in a home for Jewish children fleeing the pogroms which were then rampant in the Ukraine. During her stay in Kiev, which was to last approximately two years, Molodowsky met and married Simkhe Lev, "...an intellectual, a keen mind."(19) a young man from the same region as herself. He was later to become a journalist, essayist and representative of the Communist faction of the Printer's Union in interbellum Warsaw.(20)

The record of her marriage is, as most of Molodowsky's memoir, sparse in detail and, with few exceptions, devoid of any effort to highlight seminal or pivotal moments. She provides little, if any, insight into the rationale for the important decisions in her life. The description of or, perhaps better put, lack of detail about her marriage to Simkhe Lev is indicative of the taciturn, matter of fact quality in much of her memoir.

As stated earlier, although Molodowsky describes the outpouring of enthusiasm on the part of a large segment of Odessa Jewry for the Balfour Declaration, she never tells the reader why she rejected the strong Zionist emotion of her early youth for the commitment to Jewish life in the Diaspora. In the same vein, she is also silent on her exchange of Hebrew for Yiddish as the chief medium of Jewish national expression as well as her own choice of Yiddish as the language for her writing.

A grievous omission in the two chapters (37 & 38) of the memoir dealing with her stay in Kiev is the lack of a discussion about, comment or even hint at what was probably the second most significant moment in her life, (the first being her discovery of her mission as a teacher), i.e., her debut as a writer in the literary

journal of the modernist group of Yiddish writers, *Eygnis*. She, in fact, debuted with two poems, "Dorsht" (Thirst) and "Shtot" (City) in the second volume of *Eygnis*, 1920. (The first volume had appeared in 1918.) "Dorsht" is a cycle of eight poems, numbered Roman numeral I-VIII and appears on pp. 73-75. The second poem "Shtot", has two numbered sections and appears on pp. 76-77. There is nothing in the memoir indicating any active role on her part in her debut. It seems to have happened almost entirely by coincidence and, what is more, she seems almost indifferent to it.(21) She does mention in passing, that Dovid Bergelson played an active role in her debut.

The devastation and upheaval resulting from the First World War, the Russian Revolution and the ensuing pogroms, gave rise to a great deal of intellectual searching and questioning of earlier ideas in Jewish society. The question of language, Hebrew or Yiddish, was now tied up with a whole ideology linked to the question of the very existence and future of the Jewish people. Where would this future be and what shape would it take? The answer to this, Palestine, Eastern Europe or North America, placed one squarely on one side or the other of the language issue. Those who saw their future in a vibrant autonomous Jewish cultural life either in Poland, the Soviet Union or the United States, opted for Yiddish, while the overwhelming majority of those who saw the future in Palestine, opted for Hebrew. It was at this time, as part of this fierce debate, that many writers and intellectuals, Kadye Molodowsky among them, made their choices.

The apocalyptic events of World War I, revolution and counter-revolution and massive pogroms, could not find adequate treatment in the literary styles created by the classic triumvirate of modern Yiddish literature, Mendele Moykher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem and I. L. Peretz, who all died during the First World War. Many younger Yiddish writers were swept up in a new search for meaning, style and purpose, which found expression in modernism and the avant-garde, i.e. the new poetic language and visions of: *Eygnis*, *Yung yidish*, *Inzikh*, *Khalastrye*, *Shtrom*, *In shpan*, *Milgroym* etc.(22)

Kadye Molodowsky was in Kiev when these debates were raging. Kiev was then home to an important group of Yiddish writers, *Di kiever grupe*, some of whom would later become the giants of Soviet Yiddish literature. This group included Der Nister, Dovid Hofshteyn, Dovid Bergelson, Leyb Kvitko, Peretz Markish, Y. Dobrushin and Nakhmen Meisel (23) who later edited the *Literarische bleter* in Warsaw. This group was instrumental in launching Kadye Molodowsky on her literary career.

Kadye Molodowsky writes that it was homesickness and the slowly stabilizing situation that drove her and Simkhe Lev to leave Kiev in 1921. What she omits is that the *Eygn's* group was disbanding due to the destruction caused by the civil war in the Ukraine, and the subsequent institution of Soviet power. The writers fled, in search of more hospitable conditions, to Warsaw, Weimar Germany, Palestine etc.

The difficulty of using Kadye Molodowsky's memoir as a source is brought into bold relief with her move to Warsaw, following her departure from Soviet Russia. Her near silence on the choice of Warsaw is disturbing. One can surmise, however, that, given her convictions and commitment to a renewed Jewish national-cultural existence, to Yiddish literature as well as her new mission as a Yiddish teacher, Poland and Warsaw its capital were the logical choice. The largest Yiddish-speaking community in Europe and the fact that the resurrected Polish Republic signed the National Minorities provision of the Versailles Treaty, guaranteeing minority rights, seemed to hold the promise of a vibrant national-cultural autonomy for Europe's largest and most dynamic Jewry.(24)

The modern Yiddish day school movement, TSISHO (Yiddish acronym for *Tsentrale yidishe shul-organizatsye*, Central Yiddish School Organisation, CYShO), was founded in 1921 at a conference in Warsaw of the already existing Yiddish schools in Poland. It represented Yiddish schools influenced by the Bund, the Left Poalei Zion, and other Yiddishist trends. TSISHO's educational goal was both national and social; to raise Jewish youth to identify with the Jewish people, with

Yiddish language and culture as the best modern expression of secular Jewish identity, and with the ideal of socialism as the guarantor of social justice for all. Government hostility to TSISHO was motivated by Polish nationalism and anti-socialism. Increased harassment of the institutions and their staffs often led to school closings and arrests. This impeded the expansion of this school network but could not hinder the increase in the quality of its education.(25) A secular national education system was central to the realization of the ideal of national-cultural autonomy. Therefore TSISHO was an additional strong attraction for Yiddish intellectuals to settle in Poland, and in Warsaw, its capital, in particular.

The vitality of the Yiddish literary centre of Warsaw with its publishing houses, large number of Yiddish dailies and weeklies, strengthened the possibility and promised the fulfillment of a viable Jewish national cultural autonomy.

The move of a large number of Jewish intellectuals to Warsaw was also dictated by practical considerations. The US immigration gates were closed in the early 1920's and the experiment in Palestine was still very much that - an experiment - and Yiddish was persecuted there by the militant Hebraists.

Following a brief internment by the Polish authorities, while trying to cross the border into Poland, Molodowsky and her husband succeeded in reaching their destination. After a short stay in his home town and then in Bereze, they moved to Warsaw where, except for several brief intervals, Kadye Molodowsky stayed until 1935. Here she accepted employment as a kindergarten teacher in one of the TSISHO schools. She moved into the working class area of Jewish Warsaw and began her career as Yiddish teacher and Yiddish writer.

Notes to Biography

1. Kadye Molodovski, "Mayn bobes eytse (kapitl 11 fun 'mayn elter-zeydns yerushe')," *Svive* 22 (October 1967): 23.

2. Mordkhe V. Bernshteyn, ed. *Pinkes fun finf fartilikte kehiles: pruzshene, bereze, maltsh, shershev, seltz: zeyer oyfkum geshikhte un umkum*. (Buenos Aires: Committee, 1958), 327.

3. Kadye Molodovski, "A mayse vegn elter zeydns yerushe (kapitl dray)," *Svive* 16 (July 1965): 34-38.

4. Bernstein, 338, 443.

5. Kadye Molodovski, "A mayse fun dem elter-zeydns yerushe (a dermonung)," *Svive* 15 (March 1965): 39.

6. _____, "...kapitl dray," *Svive* 16 (July 1965): 42-43.

7. _____, "In byalistok: kapitl 14 fun " mayn elter-zeydns yerushe," *Svive* 24 (February 1968): 33-33.

8. _____, "A hislayvesdike mehume: kapitl 30 fun 'mayn elterzeydns yerushe'," *Svive* 29 (September 1969): 55.

9. _____, "Dovid bergelson drikt op mayne ershte lider in zamibukh 'eygns': (kapitl 37 fun 'mayn elterzeydns yerushe')," *Svive* 33 (January 1971): 54-55.

10. _____, "Kapitl 10: di groyse nesie," *Svive* 21 (September 1966): 30.

11. _____, "Mayn bobes eytse (kapitl 11 fun 'mayn elterzeydns yerushe')," *Svive* (October 1967): 25.

12. _____, "Kapitl 15: di khovre khovivey sfat ever," *Svive* 24 (February 1968): 36-38.

13. Yehiel Halperin (1880-1942), born in the Ukraine, he first taught in a "progressive" *kheder* in Gomel and later in Warsaw. In 1909 he established the first Hebrew kindergarten in Warsaw, and in 1910 a Hebrew Seminary for kindergarten teachers (the Froebbel courses). While in Odessa, he published a journal devoted to the interests of the Hebrew kindergarten, *Haginah*. He immigrated to Palestine in 1920 and continued to serve a leadership role in Hebrew primary education. "Halperin, Yehiel" *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1972 ed.

Kadye Molodovski, "Kapitl 19: 'der iker iz...' - zogt mayn tate," *Svive* 25 (May 1968): 49-50; "Af di hebreishe frebl-kursn: kapitl 20 fu mayn elterzeydns yerushe,"

Svive 26 (October 1968): 49-52; "Kapitl 25: di toyznt tim fun lebn vu men ken farblondzshen," Svive 27 (January 1969): 55.

14. Kadye Molodovski, "Di hislayvesdike mehume....," Svive 29 (September 1969): 54-55; "Kapitl 38 in shvere tsaytn," Svive 33 (January 1971): 58; "Tsurik in bereze (kapitl 41 fun 'mayn elterzeydns yerushe')," Svive 34 (August 1971): 39.

15. _____, "Kapitl 38," Svive 33 (January 1971): 58.

16. _____, "In romni: (kapitl 34 fun 'mayn elterzeydns yerushe')," Svive 31 (May 1970): 9.

17. _____, "Kapitl 36. tsurik in ades," Svive 32 (September 1970): 56.

18. Ibid., 57.

19. _____, "Kapitl 38," Svive 33 (January 1971): 59.

20. Berl Kahn [Kagan], *Leksikon fun yidish-shraybers*, Brooklyn: Published by author, 1986. p. 343, Kupferstein, H, Interview, 6 February 1994.

21. Kadye Molodovski, "Dovid bergelson drikt op mayne ershte lider," Svive 33 (January 1971): 56-57.

22. Discussion of the turmoil of the period and the literary response to it, including modernism are found in: Alt, Arthur Tilo, "The Berlin *Milgroym* Group and Modernism," *Yiddish* 6: 1 (Spring 1985): 33-43; Harshav, Benjamin and Barbara, *American Yiddish Poetry; A Bilingual Anthology*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 3-62 and Appendix A; Wolitz, Seth, "Between Folk and Freedom: The Failure of the Yiddish Modernist Movement in Poland," *Yiddish* 8: 1 (1991): 26-42; Di Khalastrye, the Yiddish Modernist Movement in Poland: An Overview," *Yiddish* 4:3 (1981): 5-19.; "The Kiev - Grupe (1918-1920) Debate: The Function of Literature," *Yiddish* 3:3 (1978): 97-106.

23. Nakhmen Meisel (1887-1968), prolific Yiddish writer, literary critic and editor in Europe and later in the United States, had been involved with the Kiev group that had published *Eygnis*, the journal in which Kadye Molodowsky had her literary debut in 1920, and which also founded the *Kultur lige* (League for Culture), Kiev; an endeavour in which Molodowsky was also involved. When the Kiev group fell apart, its members headed to the various centres of Jewish life, each according to his/her own political and ideological convictions. Meisel went to Warsaw where, in 1924, he was instrumental in the founding of the *Literarische bleter*. This earlier association of Molodowsky with Meisel would aid her entree into the Yiddish literary scene in Warsaw.

Meisel immigrated to the United States in December, 1937 where he continued to be a prominent personality in the Yiddish cultural world as a prolific writer, journalist and editor until the end of his days. *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*, (New York: Congress for Yiddish Culture) 5: 578-584.

24. The paucity of material on this issue in Kadye Molodowsky's memoir is underscored by Melech Ravitch's exuberance, expressed in a four hundred page volume covering the identical decade and a half that Molodowsky lived in Warsaw. Of particular interest is his rationale for the move to Warsaw and the excitement about the vast possibilities accompanying it. Melech Ravitch, *Dos mayse bukh fun mayn lebn*, 2. 19, 60, 88-90, 90-92, 359.

25. In 1921 there were, in 44 Polish cities, 69 Yiddish elementary schools and 35 kindergartens with a total population of 13,457 children. In 1925 that number grew to 91 elementary schools with 16,364 pupils and 3 secondary schools with 780 pupils. In 1929, there were 114 elementary schools representing 17,380 pupils; 46 kindergartens, 52 evening schools, 3 secondary schools, 1 teacher training seminary, representing a total of 216 institutions with 24,000 pupils. "Education (Jewish)", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1972 ed. 435. Kh. Sh. Kazdan, *Di geshikhte fun yidishn shulvezn in umophengikn poyln*, (Mexico: Kultur un hilf, 1947).

ORGANIZATION OF THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This document is arranged chronologically by year of publication, beginning in 1925. It includes all items published by Kadye Molodowsky in *Literarische bleter* from her debut there in late March 1925 until she sent her first contribution from her newly adopted home in the U.S. in late November 1935. Also included are all items about her which appeared in *Literarische bleter* during this period. All items published by Molodowsky are numbered, using arabic numerals. Those about her are lettered, e.g. A, B, C. etc. There is an index by year at the end of the document.

All translations in this work, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY 1925 - 1935

1925

- 1) Vol. 2, No. 47, March 27. p. 3.

"Iz nekht azoyne frilingdike do" (There are spring nights like this-first line of the untitled poem). Molodowsky debuted in *Literarische bleter* with this poem, which eventually became number VII of the famous eight poem cycle, "Froyen lider" ("Women's Songs"), *Keshvndike nekht*, Vilna: vilner farlag fun b. kletskin, 1927, p. 18.

This is one of the poems that deals with woman's sexuality, child birth, and is replete with sexual imagery in nature and the tension between barrenness, sexual longing, and the longing for a child. Molodowsky remained childless. She was a very private person. Her autobiography is absolutely silent on her childlessness, as are her essays. Only in her poetry does she reveal the deep emotion and tension she felt as she confronted modernity head-on and made choices which would shape her life. (See "mayne kinder," *Der meylekh dovid*, pp. 86-87.)¹ Molodowsky's poetry reveals the feminine concerns and the struggle of a Jewish woman with her tradition. It is worth noting that her debut in *Literarische bleter*, whether by her own or the editors' choice, was with this "women's poem," thus identifying her as a "women's poet."

The poem appeared in the center of the page, surrounded by a traditional decorative grapevine border with the initial letter, 'aleph', greatly enlarged and illuminated, reminiscent of a medieval Jewish manuscript, or the page of an old sacred printed book (*seyfer*). It is undated in both *Literarische bleter* and in *Keshvndike nekht*, but several of the poems in the "Froyen-lider" cycle in *Keshvndike nekht* do have dates. The signature appears in bold in the lower left

hand corner as "Kadye Molodovski." For a while, she vacillated in her Yiddish signature between the use of the Polish form of her family name, which requires the feminine ending "a" (molodovska), and her traditional Yiddish family name, the masculine form which ends in "i" (molodovski). Kadye Molodowsky had already appeared in print under the latter form and would eventually retain this signature for the rest of her life.

The poetic cycle "Froyen-lider" catapulted Molodowsky into a debate about "women poets and women's poetry" which still rages.

2) Vol. 2, No. 79, November 6, p. 216.

"Fir lider" ("Four poems"), is the heading under which Kadye Molodowsky is featured on a full page with four untitled poems which are numbered with Roman numerals and appear to be related. However, in *Keshvndike nekht*, these four poems are divided among three different cycles of poems.

(I), which begins with "arum di negl hobn shvartse remlekh ayngesgn zikh in layb" (under my fingernails black dirt has eaten into the flesh) became I of VII poems in the cycle "Oreme vayber" (Poor Women, *Kheshvndike nekht*, p. 90) in which Kadye Molodowsky describes the physical hardship of the poor women of Warsaw and places herself squarely in their midst.

...

Vi bay ale vayber di faroremte, vos shayern farbrente tep
kh'hob oykh shoyn finger gelblekhe
vos trogn beynerdik a koysh.

...

un eyns lem tsveyter trogn mir adurkh di shvere last
vi shtume eyzlen ayngeshpante....

Just like all impoverished women, who scrub burned
pots
I too have yellowed boney fingers
which carry a basket.

...

and one next to the other, we manage in carrying our
heavy burden
like dumb yoked mules.

In the section of her memoir about her Warsaw years (*Svive*, No. 34: 42 - No. 36: 50), Kadye Molodowsky devotes much attention to the plight of these women. She repeatedly states how their suffering weighed heavily on her and depressed her. It became part of her world, "...a midber fun oremkeyt, vos iz gevorn a teyl fun mayn velt." (a desert of poverty, which became a part of my world).² Molodowsky identifies the predominant theme of *Kheshvndike nekht* as the eternal struggle against poverty, citing the poem "Poor Women."

The original version in *Literarische bleter* (undated) varies slightly from the one in *Kheshvndike nekht* (p. 90, undated) and these differ from the version in *Svive* No. 34: 42, (August 1971): p. 42, in that the last two lines are missing in the version in *Svive*. Some minor changes in form were made in the *Kheshvndike nekht* version, 1927.

In this poem, as in "Froyen Lider", the poet's voice becomes the voice of women. Her "I" at the beginning of the poem in line 4 becomes "we" in line 9 as she shares the burden of poverty and even their physical characteristics - "yellowed, boney fingers," (lines 4, 5, 12, 13) "blank eyes," (line 6) and "stooped posture." (line 8 and 11).

(II), which begins with "durkh di yunge yorn mayne" (throughout my young years"), became VIII of "Froyen-lider" in *Kheshvndike nekht*, p. 19. There is a variance between the two versions. In the *Literarische bleter*, the poem begins:

durkh di yunge yorn mayne
hot zikh in shvere, vokhedike teg getsoygn mayn
mames lebn.

Throughout my young years
My mother's life, stretched, in heavy, mundane days

The *Kheshvndike nekht* version, which was reprinted in Ezra Korman's *Yidishe dikhterins; antologye*, (L. M. Stein, Chicago, 1928, p. 194)³ is changed to:

In nekht ven ikh bin vakh,
un s'kumen tsu mir teg mayne fargangene
zikh far di oygn shteln,
kumt far mir mayn mames lebn.

Nights when I'm awake
and my bygone days come to me
and array themselves before my eyes,
my mother's life appears before me....

Lines 17 and 18 of the first version were expanded as lines 17, 18 and 19 of the second. When writing of her tragic life, the *Kheshvndike nekht* version appears as:

Un s'hot der umglik fun mayn eygn lebn mikh deryogt
un vi a kro,
af a kleyn hindele aroyfgefaln.

And the tragedy of my own life caught up with me
and like a crow
fell upon a little chick

This version is more powerful as the imagery clearly underscores her helplessness against her fate. This poem, as does the entire cycle of "Froyen-Lider", confronts head on the author's personal conflict with what and who she has become. She encounters her mother and tradition not in a dream but in a state of wakefulness and must confront the reality of how little comfort was given to pious, virtuous women by the tradition. She also realizes that there is not much more comfort in modernity, neither for herself nor for other women. In the end she, like her mother, recites a quiet plea to God "and tears come like a meager rain of a single drop (*Kheshvndike nekht*, p. 19, last line.)

The pain of this first generation of Jewish women who were born into tradition but opted to maintain their Jewish identity in a secular way of life⁴ reverberates throughout this cycle of poems.

(III), which begins with the line "iz shoyn azoy tayer broyt in land?" (has bread become so dear in the land?) becomes poem V in the cycle "oreme vayber" in *Kheshvndike nekht*, p. 94. It is undated in both and untitled. There is only the modification of one word in the two versions, to be found in line 12 of *Literarishe bleter* and line 13 in the *Kheshvndike nekht*.

In this poem, Kadye Molodowsky decries the need for Jewish women to enter into prostitution. She mourns the loneliness of these women, cut off from family - without a shred of support.

(IV), which begins with the line "nit loz mir untergeyn" (do not let me perish,) undated and untitled in *Literarishe bleter* is I of three poems in the cycle "Tfiles" (Prayers, *Kheshvndike nekht* p. 73.) It is written in the form of a *Tkhine* (woman's prayer in Yiddish.)⁵ The poet, in a personal plea, reminiscent of the generations of women before her, asks for strength and survival. The difference is that the conclusion of the traditional *tkhine* pleads for a benefit beyond the self; one that will strengthen Judaism, e.g., health of the husband and sons to study Torah, the rising of the challah to sanctify the Sabbath, etc. This prayer is for herself, for the strength to carry on, not to be "the last fly, that quivers frightened on a pane of glass."

I am filled with prayer but as a blade of grass in a distant
wild field of yours
loses a seed in the lap of the earth
and dies
plant in me, your breath of life
just as you plant a seed in the earth.

There is no caveat attached to this woman's existence and survival as exists in traditional *tkhines*, where women's lives are so bound to husband and children

and to ritual and tradition. This is individualistic and might be considered egotistical by earlier generations of women because it is centered on the poet herself.

Notes 1925

1. The problem of women's sexuality versus their role as writers and intellectuals was very real for this generation of women. In this poem, Molodowsky speaks to that issue very poignantly, making it clear that choices had to be made that were not necessarily of her own volition. For a fuller critical discussion of the larger issue of the sexuality of Yiddish women writers see Hellerstein, Kathryn. "A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish," *Handbook of American - Jewish Literature*, ed. Lewis Fried (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988). 195-237.

2. Kadye Molodovski, "Kapitl 42. tsurik in varshe," *Svive* 34 (August 1971) : 42.

3. Korman, Ezra (1888-1959). Writer and literary critic, together with N. Meisel founded the "kiever farlag" and participated in the creation of the "kultur lige". He came to America in the mid 1920's where he continued to be active in Yiddish literary circles. In 1928 he published the important work *Yidishe dikhterins: antologye. Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* (New York: Congress for Jewish Culture, 1956-1981). 8: 137-140.

This anthology continues to be a major source of research, discussion and debate about the question of "women's poetry."

4. This painful struggle is discussed by Norma Fain Pratt in two articles, "Culture and Radical Politics: Yiddish Women Writers, 1890-1940," *American Jewish History* 70 September, 1980 : 68-90, and "Anna Margolin's *Lider*. A Study in Women's History, Autobiography, and Poetry," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 3 (1983) : 11- 25. See also: Zuker, Sheva "Kadye Molodowsky's 'Froyen-Lider' ('Women's Songs')," *Yiddish* 9: 2 (1994) : 45.

5. For an in-depth critical discussion of the *tkhine* see Weissler, Chava. "The Traditional Piety of Ashkenazic Women," in *Jewish Spirituality From the Sixteenth - Century Revival to the Present*, 2 vol. ed. Arthur Green. (New York: Crossroad: 1989). vol. 2 245-275.

It is interesting to note that almost all male reviewers of Molodowsky's work include a reference to the quality of her poetry as resembling a *tkhine*.

1926

1) Vol. 3, No. 99-100, March 26, p. 212.

Here Kadye Molodowsky appears as Kadye Molodovska/Warsaw, on a page of poetry along with Yosef Kirman/Warsaw, a Yiddish poet in Warsaw associated with the working class.¹ Molodowsky's work is titled "di imes" (the Biblical Matriarchs) and appears as poem VI in the cycle "Froyen-lider" in *Kheshvndike nekht* pp. 16-17. Neither version is dated and the only variance is in the last two lines of the poem. The poem in *Literarische bleter* ends as follows:

...
un redn mit oysgebrente lipn tsu zikh aleyn,
tsu zey kumt shtil di muter leye
un beyde oygn mit di blase hent farshtelt

...
(and talk to themselves with parched lips,
to them, Mother Leah comes quietly
her eyes covered with her pale hands)²

In *Kheshvndike nekht*, the change appears as:

...
redn zey mit oysgebrente lipn tsu zikh aleyn,
tsu zey kumt shtil di muter leye
halt beyde oygn mit di blase hent farshtelt.

There is also some vocalization in the version that appears in *Literarische bleter*, but not in the book. This vocalization appears sporadically in *Literarische bleter*, not only in Kadye Molodowsky's work, over a period of several years in the 1920's. Modern Yiddish orthography had not yet been standardized.

As previously stated, the cycle "Froyen-Lider" represents the conflict of the first generation of modern Jewish women with the tradition and themselves as they strike out on a new road. The strength of that tradition and the history that shaped it cannot entirely be swept aside by Kadye Molodowsky; so much of the imagery and language and even the style of these poems evoke the past. But, "Molodowsky

turns askew the comfort each of the mothers offers to the street walkers, the poor brides, the barren women, and the unmarried."³

2) Vol. 3, No. 125, September 22, pp. 630-1.

In this issue the signature Kadye Molodovska appears under the poem "Beskidn" (Beskid Mountains). The nine verses of this poem appear in *Kheshvndike nekht* in 1927 as a cycle of seven poems on pp. 42-48; the last page dated 1926. The poem as it appears in *Literarische bleter* is undated. The verses correspond to the numbered poems with variations, as follows: verse 1 is totally rewritten. Only the first line "s'hobn berg shoy n oysgeboyn bloye rukns" (the mountains have already bowed their blue backs) remains unaltered; this becomes poem I in the cycle.

The nine lines of verse two remain virtually unaltered (with the exception of the deletion of "vi napoleonen" from the end of line three and the changing of "zlotuvkes", Polish/Yiddish for zloty coins to "matbeyes" coins, in line 8) and become poem II.

Verse three appears unaltered with the exception of line one, which is deleted, as poem III; verse four is deleted in its entirety in the book; verse five becomes poem VII; verse six becomes poem IV; seven becomes poem V, with minor variations; verse eight becomes poem VI; and verse nine is omitted.

This lengthy poem, describes the Beskid range of the Carpathian Mountains along the Czechoslovakian-Polish border, a region of Poland which the author had probably just visited for the first time. It is an ode to the natural beauty of the mountains, the power of nature, interwoven with the Polish folklore of the region. Sol Liptzin, says of Molodowsky that she "animates the inanimate,"⁴ and this is evident here as she describes the mountains with their "bent backs" in verse one; the streams that "run around the feet of Babya Gura and humbly bathe her footsteps," in verse two.

Kadye Molodowsky writes in her memoir of how she is unable to escape Jewish history - how it verily pursues her.⁵ In fact this sense of being part of history is a recurring theme in her memoir. It is the case in this poem. She seems almost incapable of *not* including a "Jewish component." In verse five, p. 631 of the poem in *Literarische bleter*, she introduces the appearance of the first Jews in medieval Poland, "fun tshekhyen tsu dem keyser dem gnedikn fun kroke," (From the Czech land to the merciful king of Cracow). The poet suggests that she hoped to forget her cares, first and foremost the concern for the suffering Jewish people, in the breathtaking mountains, but ends the poem in verse nine, with resignation, saying about the Jews "ikh hob gehoft aykh do nisht trefn, nor kh'hob getrofn aykh do oykh." (I'd hoped not to find you here, but I have found you here, too.)

Verse five of the poem in *Literarische bleter* is poem VII of the cycle in *Kheshvndike nekht* in which verse nine from the original is entirely omitted. Perhaps it is an attempt to combat the depression she so often speaks of in the memoir and the sense of resignation which permeated much of her writing of the time. On the other hand, we cannot be certain that this editing was entirely her own.

3) Vol. 3, No. 139, December 31, p. 88.

Her third and last published piece for 1926 is a poem titled "A grus" (Greetings) dated 1926, and dedicated to I. Gutman, whom she befriended during her stay in Odessa during World War I.⁶ Her name appears as Kadye Molodovski and under the title there is a note in brackets, indicating that the poem is from the soon to be published volume, *Kheshvndike nekht*. In that volume, this poem appears unaltered on pp. 22-24 as poem III in the cycle "opgeshite bleter" (Fallen Leaves).

Shmuel Niger, renowned Yiddish literary critic and historian of Yiddish literature, in a review of women's poetry "Froyen Lyrik" in *Literarische bleter* No. 46 of

November 16, 1928 pp. 909-910, cites this poem in his discussion of Molodowsky's work as an example of her talent in "binding together" the past and the present and of her ability to assert her individuality through tradition. "Ir poezye iz an originele fareynikung fun 'dem libn altn alef-beys' mit di 'modishe langvaylike klasn'." (Her poetry is a creative binding together of the beloved, age-old Hebrew alphabet with stylish, tedious classes)⁷.

The poem, or perhaps better stated, letter in the form of a poem, a reminiscence of the good times shared together and account of her own life to date in Warsaw, uses the metaphor of a beast of burden to describe her life as a Yiddish teacher (the same metaphor appears in the poem "Oreme Vayber").

Kh'hob ongetsoygn beyde hent vi leytses,
un tsi dem vogn.
mit mir tsuzamen ayngeshpant
a draysik kinderlekh fun niderike gasn...
mir hoybn shver dem libn altn aleph-beyz
in modishe un langvaylike klasn.

I stretched out both my arms, like reins
And pull the wagon.
In harness together with me
Thirty-odd children from lowly streets...
We heave heavily the dear old alphabet
In stylish and tedious classes.⁸

Notes 1926

1. *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*, vol. 8, 201-202.
2. Kathryn Hellerstein, "A Question of Tradition...", 217.
3. Ibid., 216
4. Sol Liptzin, "Kadia Molodowsky: Yiddish Poetess," *Jewish Heritage; a Quarterly for Adult Study* 7:4 (Spring 1965) : 54. Sh. Niger, in 1928/No. C in this annotated bibliography refers to this as well.
5. Kadye Molodovski, "Volkns iber yidishe dekher: (kapitl 32 fun 'mayn elterzeydns yerushe')," *Svive* 30 (January 1970) : 56.
6. Kadye Molodovski, "In romni: (kapitl 34 fun 'mayn elterzeydns yerushe')," *Svive* 31 (May 1970) : 61. Here, Kadye Molodowsky lists Gutman among the former students of Joseph Klausner (renowned Hebraist intellectual who later headed the Hebrew literature department of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem) who would all eventually become famous in their own right, and were part of her circle in Odessa.
7. Kathryn Hellerstein provides a critique of this review in which she points to Niger's condescending manner and double standard when it comes to the writings of Yiddish women poets. See, Hellerstein, Kathryn, "A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish," 215-219.
8. transl. Kathryn Hellerstein, "A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish," 218.

1927

1) Vol. 4, No. 11, March 18, p. 209.

This issue features two poems by Kadye Molodowsky under the heading "Tsvey lider" (Two Poems), numbered I and II, undated, with an asterisk and a footnote indicating that these two poems are from the forthcoming publication *Kheshvndike Nekht*. Kadye Molodowsky's name appears as Kadye Molodovski/Warsaw.

Poem I "s'iz gut dem kop bahaltn in a skirde hey" (It's Good To Hide One's Head in a Haystack) appears on page 30 of *Kheshvndike nekht* as poem IX of XI in the cycle "Opgeshite bleter" (Fallen Leaves) with no changes. The poem is a reflective, wistful longing on the part of the poet to escape the reality of empty grain silos, the approaching fall, and aging.

Un ven der ershter shnay vet faln
vet groy vern der kop
un svet di lip di oybershte zikh onheybn tzu kneytshn.

(And with the first snowfall
my head will turn gray
and my upper lip will begin to wrinkle.)

Kadye Molodowsky often expresses a fear of aging in her poetry of this period. It appears that the poverty and hardship which surrounded her, which she sees in the women, and which she herself endured - greatly affected her, both physically as well as psychologically.

Poem II "bay dr'erd a nideriker ployt" (A Fence, Low To The Ground) appears as poem VIII on page 29 of the same cycle in *Kheshvndike nekht*. The last two lines differ in the two versions. This poem, an ode to nature, love and poetry, ends with:

Bay proste mentshn es ikh broyt mit honik
un s'kumt der reyekh in mayn moyl fun feld un binen
un verter loytere vi regn in a zumerdikn varem
baginen.

(With common people I eat bread and honey
And the aroma of the field and bees fills my mouth
And words, pure as rain, in a warm summer dawn)

The *Kheshvndike nekht* version ends with:

...and words, pure as stars
and warm as the sun, out of the blue.

A) Vol. 4, No. 21, May 27, pp. 395-6.

In May of 1927 Melech Ravitch, the noted poet and essayist who was also a leading figure of secular Yiddish culture, published an article "meydlekh, froyen, vayber - Yidishe dikhterins" (Girls, Women, Wives - Yiddish Poetesses) in which he decried the lack of significant women poets and writers in contemporary Yiddish literature. He went so far as to say that the only thing that women write are little poems full of morality. "Ver ken mir onvayzn a verk fun farmestung...Alts iz dort bay zey mos un mos un keyn eyn verk. Nor lider un lidlekh un lidlekh." (Who can show me a single ambitious work...everything is so measured...not one serious work. Only poems and ditties and ditties.). Ravitch wrote that despite his wishing it, there would be no significant female Yiddish writer until the women would desist from being chaste and virtuous and so tied to tradition.¹

2) Vol. 4, No. 22, June 3, p. 416.

Kadye Molodowsky, who had not yet published her first book, responded to Ravitch (A), with a caustic article, in which the poet, for the first time, reveals herself in print as a strident, outspoken personality.² Kathryn Hellerstein, in "A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish" p. 209, cited earlier, claims that there was an equally "vicious, witty exchange of barbs" between Ravitch and American Yiddish

poet, Malka Heifetz Tussman, which was to have taken place in the *Literarische bleter* of August 1927. Hellerstein's source is the Ravitch archive at The Jewish National and University Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem. After my thorough search of the full run of the *Literarische bleter*, 1925 -1939, I have not found this letter in print. It exists in the Ravitch archive, but not in the *Literarische bleter*.

"Meydlekh, froyen, vayber un...nevue" (Girls, Women, Wives and...Prophecy) is the title of the response and is signed Kadye Molodovska/Warsaw. Kadye Molodowsky, unconcerned with chivalry, thoroughly lambastes Ravitch for trivializing the works of women poets in Yiddish and for having the audacity to predict that there would never be a significant female Yiddish poet. She says that: "A mentsh...un iberhoypt nokh a dikhter...al pi khukey hadikhtung, tor er in nevue zikh nisht toye zayn, vayl oyb nisht a novi, vert er epes andersh." (A person...particularly a poet...may, according to the laws of poetry, not err in prophecy, because if not a prophet he becomes something else...) This allusion seems to refer to the Yiddish proverb "a nar iz a halber novi" (a fool is half a prophet).

She then goes on to say that Ravitch had, in fact, confided in her his own intention to edit an anthology of women poets in Yiddish - which would "...of course not be anonymous, and would include photographs!" Her vicious comment, "I am certain that through mediocre editing it could be quite a *piquante* book" is aimed directly to counter Ravitch's complaint about the piety and lack of sensuality and sexuality in the works he reviewed. It is also an attack on his "polygamous" approach to women writers - grouping them together indiscriminately.

Kadye Molodowsky castigates Ravitch's "prophetic" condemnation of future Yiddish women poets, at the same time making it clear that this is not a personal vendetta because:

... mayn bikhl iz nokh lesate bay aykh afn tish nishto.
Farzikhert ir ober az afile di yenike vos zenen nokh nisht
dershinen, un di, vos veln ershaynen in zibn yor arum,

vein oykh nit toygn. Got! Vi ken a mentsh azoy shlekht zayn. Nor, az s'geyt in nevue iz dokh epes andersh."

...my little book has not yet crossed your desk, but you have ensured that even those works not yet published, and those which will be published seven years hence, will also have no merit. God! How can a person be so evil. But, if it's a question of prophecy, well then, it is a different matter.

She further challenges Ravitch's need to have a great Yiddish female poet "before whom all shall fall on their knees" and ridicules his chivalry. These two articles together form an important episode in the discussion of modern Yiddish women's writing.

B) Vol. 4, No. 31, August 5, pp. 605-6.

In this issue under the bold-type heading "Retsenzyes" (Reviews), there appeared in small type "Kadye Molodovski, *Khezshvndike Nekht, Lider*. Vilner farlag fun B. Kletskin, 1927. 96 zaytn." (Kadye Molodowsky *Kheshvndike Nekht; Poems*. B. Kletskin publ., Vilna, 1927. 96 pgs.). This was the first review of *Kheshvndike Nekht*, Kadye Molodowsky's first published volume of poetry signed; by Sh. Zaromb.³

This generally positive review, one half page in length, focuses on the mood and tone of the collection of poems in the volume. As Molodowsky herself often noted in the chapters of her memoir dealing with her Warsaw experience, Zaromb too points to the "sorrowful landscape" of the poems and the somber tone of the poet.

There is not a single minute of joy...(Her) poetry is not one of excitement...or bawdy drunkenness, just the opposite - of reflection - of forcing oneself to look deep within oneself...at that moment...she seeks out the connection to the rest of the world. This is best seen in "Oreme vayber" (Poor Women).

Zaromb attributes two particular qualities to her poetry. The first is that although it is personal it is also the reality of womanhood. The second is that the tone reflects a quiet strength; the absence of any hysteria but at the same time the absence of any comfort, renders her poetry very powerful. He cannot, however, resist the temptation and lapses into the traditional praises of women's writing in Yiddish and invokes the *tkhine*-like quality of her work:

...Ir tsertlekhkeyt un rakhmones...iz epes a shtiler bashaydener tehilim fun a tif layndiker froyen perzenlekhkeyt vos redt mit fayne, subtile bilder un farglaykhn.

...Her tenderness and compassion...are akin to a humble, simple psalm from a deep suffering female personality, speaking with fine subtle images and metaphors.

The last line of the review could, depending on one's inclination, be a great compliment or as some feminist critics today would contend - the expression of a condescending attitude. "Reyne shafung - in a reyner kinstlerisher genus" (A pristine creation and a sheer artistic delight).

4) Vol. 5, No. 52, December 30, p. 1028.

Kadye Molodowsky's final contribution of the year to *Literarische bleter* consists of two poems, "kinder lider "(Children's Poems) Kadye Molodovskil/ Warsaw." The two poems appearing on this page, which would remain as favorites of children in Yiddish secular schools to this very day were, "A hintl un a hunt" (A Puppy And A Dog) and "Kits, kats, ketsele" (Kit, Cat, Kitty Cat). The title of the former was eventually changed to "di dame mitn hintl (The Lady With The Dog) in her publication of children's poetry Geyen shikhelekh avek vu di velt hot nor an ek: Mayselekh (Little Shoes Go to the End of the World; Stories), 1931, p. 65-8. She won a literary prize offered jointly by the Yiddish literatn fareyn (Yiddish Writers' Union) and the Warsaw Jewish Community Council for this work, which was

published by the Yidishe Shul Organizatsye in Poyln, Warsaw 1931, and printed in 1000 copies. Kadye Molodowsky acknowledges that this poem is patterned after one by the noted Russian children's poet S. Marshak⁴ in both *Literarische bleter* and in the book. The popularity of these poems is attested to by the fact that today, alumni of the Yiddish secular schools of interwar Poland still recite and sing them by heart.

Notes 1927

1. This group review of the works of several Yiddish women poets, whose names Ravitch himself claimed he was too chivalrous to mention, has evoked much contemporary feminist critique. See Kathryn Hellerstein's, "A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish," p. 208-10.

2. Norma Fain Pratt, "Culture and Radical Politics: Yiddish Women Writers 1890-1940), " *American Jewish History* 70 September 1980: 86. In this article, Molodowsky is pointed to as "a role model for other radical women writers"...who, "protested the male categorizing of women as a breed apart".

3. Shmuel Zaromb, adopted name of Moyshe-Tzvi Fayntsayg, was active in the Zionist and Yiddish literary circles of interbellum Poland as writer and lecturer. *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*. (New York: Congress for Jewish Culture) 3: 574-575.

4. "Marshak, Samuel Yakovlevich (1887-1964)." *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1972 ed.

Samuel Marshak, Zionist and Russian poet, is said to have been designated by Maxim Gorki as "the founder of Soviet children's literature... There is hardly a Russian child or young adult who does not know some of Marshak's verse by heart." He was also famous as a translator of the great European poets .

1928

A) Vol. 5, No. 2, January 13, p. 40.

The year begins with a review of Kadye Molodowsky's *Kheshvndike nekht*, in the column "Bikher velt: kritik-retszenzyes-bibliografye-khronik. Vos men shraybt vegn bikher." (Book World: Criticism-Reviews-Bibliography-Literary News. The Latest About Books.). The reviewer, Yehoshua Perle, well known Yiddish journalist, essayist and literary critic in Warsaw,¹ criticizes earlier reviews and acclaims Kadye Molodowsky as a new voice in Yiddish poetry; one which is moving but strong, and above all unique - not only in women's poetry. He describes her as, "a young woman with a voice like a dove... a shy smile who also finds the time to teach in a Yiddish school." Perle too, however, falls back into the sentimental traditional world and compares Molodowsky's laments to that of the Biblical matriarch, Rachel. He waxes poetic about Kadye Molodowsky's Jewish identity, which pervades her writing, and he uses such phrases as "az men trogt nisht in di faldn fun di kleyder keyn yidish atlas un keyn yidishn zayd ken men nisht zingen...." (if one is not wrapped and swathed in Jewish tradition, one cannot be a [Jewish] poet.) He then goes on to quote an excerpt of "Froyen-lider" in which the Biblical matriarchs are called forth, and he continues in an emotional, sentimental tone to suggest that the book itself should have been published as a facsimile of the old traditional women's prayer books,² "...in an alt yidish ksav, in groysn format, likhtike oysyes, un leyenen darf men es mit a shtiln, bahartstn nign, azoy shtil un bahartst vi s'iz di dozike yidishe tokhter aley...yidish fun kop biz di fis." (...in an old-Hebrew typeface, in a large-size book, luminous letters, and it should be read with a quiet, heartfelt melody, as quiet and heartfelt as this Jewish daughter...who is Jewish from her head to her toes.) He ends the review by saying that the strongest characteristic of her poetry is her silent protest.

It seems that the reviewer, in heaping these praises on Molodowsky, entirely missed the point. This volume of poems deals with the struggle of modern Jewish

women against every single one of the elements of praise that the reviewer chose. It is the struggle of the modern woman with her tradition; the struggle against poverty and the world conspiring to overwhelm her. Kadye Molodowsky herself maintained that, although this was her first published book, she did not feel like a novice. After all, she writes in the self-deprecating manner of much of the memoir, "a book is a book."³ thus her work was merely a *bukh*. She also wrote that there was a large number of reviews and that the book was generally well received.⁴

1) Vol. 5, No. 9, March 2, p. 171.

This issue featured a page of poems by four women poets under the heading "Lider" (Poems). The poets were Kadi (sic) Molodovski/Warsaw, Rokhl H. Korn/Przemysl,⁵ Leye Rotkopf/Warsaw,⁶ and Roze Gutman/Berlin⁷. This indiscriminate lumping together of female poets, unrelated in style and theme, would be the topic of a later article by Molodowsky in which she attacks the concept of "women's poetry" (see: 1930/No. 3, in this annotated bibliography). Kadye Molodowsky's poem titled "Af dayn neshome veIn dikhter onflien" (Poets Will Swoop Down on Your Soul), depicts a poet attacked by others like crows who peck at and devour their prey.

This can certainly be read as a response to the numerous reviews of *Kheshvndike nekht* in which her work is analyzed to the nth degree, and she herself is heralded as the greatest writer of *tkhines*, and as an exemplary teacher. (see: 1927/B, 1928/A in this annotated bibliography.) This appears to be Kadye Molodowsky's sole response to the many reviews of *Kheshvndike nekht*.

2) Vol. 5, No. 24, June 15, p. 465.

This issue featured yet another full page of women poets, this time under the heading "Fun der antalogye 'yidishe dikhterins'." (From the Anthology *Yiddish Women Poets*). This anthology, published earlier that year by Ezra Korman, was the

first comprehensive work to appear on this topic. It became the subject of much discussion and debate (see: 1928/nos. B & C, in this annotated bibliography) and continues to this day to be a source of scholarship on women in Yiddish literature.

The poets represented in this issue of *Literarische bleter* were geographically and stylistically even more varied than in the previous one which spotlighted women poets. (see: 1928/no. 1, in this annotated bibliography). They included Celia Drobkin/New York, Khane Levin/Kharkov, Soviet Ukraine, Mire Khenkin/Kiev, Soviet Ukraine, and Kadye Molodovski, no location given, though we know she resided in Warsaw at that time. The Molodowsky selection is poem II of the cycle "Opgeshite bleter" (Fallen Leaves) from *Kheshvndike nekht* although this is not indicated on the page. The poem appears simply under the title "Opgeshite bleter" and is undated. This poem "An alter sider ligt far mir" (An old Jewish prayer book lies before me) describes an old, yellowed prayer book with tattered corners, and on the pages which tell of the binding of Isaac and of Nimrod's fiery furnace, the lines are washed out by tears. The author is faced with a quandary - who shall inherit this prayer book, and who shall turn its yellowed pages? Could she herself perhaps find solace and comfort in it? The tension felt by the modern Jewish woman who struggles with her inherited tradition resonates throughout this poem. It is a personal reflection of the universal Jewish dilemma, the conflict between tradition and modernity.

3) Vol. 5, No. 39, September 28, p.765.

This issue features still another full page of poetry, this one all by Kadye Molodowsky, under the title "Elegyes" (Elegies) in bold print. The poems are numbered in Roman numerals I through IV. Poem II is titled "Tsu Alef." (To A.). Poem III is titled "A Briv" (A Letter) and poem IV is untitled.

1) The first poem begins with the line " amol zenen geven di frilings un itst zenen di harbstn --lang." (once the springtimes were, but now the autumns are -- long). It is about the poet's struggle with her own aging and her choice to remain

childless, as she decries the fact that the bare branches will remain barren (note the choice of words "mer nit bliyen, mer nit vaksn"). This is as painful, she continues, as are the first wrinkles on one's face. It may strike us as odd that at age thirty-two, Molodowsky was so preoccupied with growing old. One is, however, reminded time and time again in the memoir as well as in many of the poems of this period of the terrible toll poverty and depression were taking on women and Kadye Molodowsky placed herself squarely in the picture alongside them. One must also keep in mind that in contemporary Western society, both marriage and childbearing take place at a more advanced age than was the norm of those days. She seems to be often preoccupied with her own physical appearance as well as that of other women, premature aging and stooped bodies, the result of hunger and a difficult life. This poem was to appear later with no changes in *Dzshike gas, Literarishe bleter*, Warsaw, 1936, p. 54, and titled "Harbst" (Autumn) dated 1928. It is the first poem in section IV of *Dzshike gas*, the section titled "Elegyes" (Elegies).

II) This poem, titled "Tsu alef", appears in *Dzshike gas*, pp. 56-7. It is not dated in *Literarishe bleter*, but is dated 1928 in the book. It is the third poem in section IV of the book and it too laments the passing of the springtimes and summers of youth, with their simple pleasures and simple visions, in contrast to the harsh realities and disappointments of the present. The poem is addressed to A, who seems to have been a childhood friend with whom the poet has many memories to share, and who is dressed in a sophisticated and elegant manner, unlike the poet whose own barefoot, Bohemian appearance is ill-suited to her age.

The idealism of Kadye Molodowsky's youth, which catapulted her into a life of teaching and writing, proved difficult to sustain in the face of the economic and political hardships of the period. The fierce clashes of ideologies in the Jewish community, e.g., Communists versus Socialists, anti-Zionists versus Zionists, strongly affected her personal and professional life. The following lines concerning friends of her youth who became hostile toward her may refer to the fact that Molodowsky had abandoned the Zionist/Hebraist orientation of her youth and

embraced the Yiddishist/Diaspora orientation along with a pro-Communist sentiment:

Because my heart is heavy,
As a sinking ship
Wanting to lighten its burden -
I avoid friends of my youth
Not wishing to see, to feel,
The gruesomeness of their hidden glances
And silent tongues.

III) This third poem "A briv" (A Letter) is the fifth poem in the section "Eiegyes" of *Dzshige gas*, p. 60. It is undated in *Literarische bleter*, and dated 1928 in the book. Using her technique of animation, the poet shows how a letter:

White and chirping like a bird
Burns the skin of one's hand
With its sharp edge.

The letter bore sad tidings, and "a tear formed, knotted large and bony in my throat."

IV) This poem, unlike the first three, appears in a different section of the book *Dzshike gas*, p. 77. It is the fifth poem in a cycle entitled "In grinem boym ligt groyer ash" (Grey Ash Lies In The Green Tree) which is also the title of section V of *Dzshike gas*. The poem is unchanged from the way it appeared in *Literarische bleter*. It is undated in both of the publications. In 1928, the poet sums up her life at the age of 32, saying that of all her winters, what remains is the clearness of a cold winter's day and the path her heart has warmed. Of her summers, what remains is the warmth of the breeze and a few words warmed by her heart.

B) Vol. 5, No. 42, October 19, pp. 830-831.

This issue featured a review by Melech Ravitch of Ezra Korman's anthology, *Yidishe dikhterins*. It is a condescending, patronizing review⁸ referring to the anthology as a "bouquet, a wreath of flowers - a gathering of Yiddish women poets."

Ravitch singles out Kadye Molodowsky, first as the "eygntlikhe firshtin fun der gantser antologye" (the virtual princess of the entire anthology). He then refers to her once again when he criticizes Korman's allocation of space in the anthology. He complains that Kadye Molodowsky is given only nine pages in the anthology when Korman could easily have given her three times that amount, because "...her poems are good, perhaps the best in the anthology. Enough of her poetry has certainly been printed in various journals, and she has also published a book..."

C) Vol. 5, No. 6, November 16, pp. 909-910.

One month after Ravitch's controversial review of Korman's anthology, S. Niger published a review as well; one which acknowledged that "di froyen dikhtung farnemt itst a kentikn ort in der yidisher poezye" (women's poetry now occupies a visible place in Yiddish poetry).⁹

Niger chooses to highlight the work of two poets who had recently published books; Rashel Veprinsky's *Ruf fun fligl* (The Call of Wings, New York 1926) and Kadye Molodowsky's *Kheshvndike nekht*, Vilna, 1927. Concerning Molodowsky he writes:

Kadye Molodowsky's poems are individual, rich and diverse, even though suffused with the old "love and longing" motif. Her moods are rooted in tradition, even the purely personal ones. Not only does the voice of eternal "motherhood" speak in her Froyen lider (Women's Songs), and her Alte Vayber (Old Women), but our old mothers' voices are heard in them as they intone their *tkhines*...

Kadye Molodowsky has introduced the Jewish woman and her old Jewish tradition into Yiddish poetry, but she has also connected her to the modern secular world...(Here Niger cites the poem "A Grus". See: 1926/no. 3, in this annotated bibliography).

Even her most intimate experiences are interwoven with the Jewish experience...

Kadye Molodowsky is strongly national, but this does not hinder her - on the contrary, it enables her to express herself - her thoughts and feelings - that are universal. She is profoundly feminine in her motifs and fluid rhythms, but there is something universally human in her poetry and she is already deserving of a special place in Yiddish poetry, not only in women's poetry.

Niger points out two characteristic traits of her poetry - the Jewish traditional on the one hand and her animating the inanimate on the other. He ends the review by paying her what he considers the ultimate compliment " zi iz a dikhterin nisht nor a froyen dikhterin " (she is a poet not only a women's poet) note that the literal translation of dikhterin is poetess. Yiddish nouns have gender, and therefore the feminine form is required. However, it seems that Niger's intended meaning is that Molodowsky is a poet, not only a women's poet.

Notes 1928

1. *Leksikon*, 7: 193-96. Yehoshua Perle (1888 -1943), was a prolific writer, polemicist and journalist. He was also a short story writer and he is described as "artistically depicting the Jew, in and out of the Jewish milieu, and the Jewish woman in particular."

2. In the 1925 debut of Kadye Molodowsky in *Literarische bleter* her poem was in fact presented, surrounded by the traditional Jewish motif, used to illustrate Jewish texts.

3. Kadye Molodovski, "Kapitl 47: mayn ersht bukh lider 'kheshevndike nekht'," *Svive* 35 December 1971: 62.

4. *ibid*

5. *Leksikon*, 8: 140-142. Rokhl Korn (1898 -1982) was by then quite well known as a Yiddish writer and poet, having already been published in a wide variety of Yiddish literary publications. Although she debuted in 1918 in the Polish language, the anti-Semitic events of the next few years led her to a commitment to the Yiddish language. Rokhl Korn is considered to be among the most important Yiddish poets of this century and was the recipient of numerous awards and prizes, among them the Warsaw PEN Club and the Leivick, Manger and Lamed prizes.

Rokhl Korn and Kadye Molodowsky were to strike up a friendship during these Warsaw years that would endure until their deaths. Along with Molodowsky, Rokhl Korn decried the label "women's poetry".

6. *Leksikon*, 8: 371. Leye Rotkopf; short story writer and poet from Warsaw. No dates provided.

7. *Leksikon*, 2: 184. Rosa Gutman-Yasni (1903 -). A poet who appeared in Korman's *Antologye*, as well as publishing her own volumes of poetry, both in Europe and in America. She lived in Berlin, Paris, Spain and London during the interbellum period, coming to America in 1939. Her work has been translated into English, Russian and Hebrew.

8. Kathryn Hellerstein, "A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish."

9. This review is critiqued by Kathryn Hellerstein in, "A Question of Tradition," pp. 210-19, in which she maintains that although Nizer is more positive than Ravitch and does acknowledge a tradition of women's poetry, he cannot resist a condescending tone even while arguing that the woman poet contributes a necessary femininity which counteracts the harshness of the war years.

1929

A) Vol. 6, No. 13, March 29, pp. 249-50.

We learn from this article that in the spring of 1929, Kadye Molodowsky went to Paris in search of an illustrator for her planned book of children's poetry, a fact totally missing from her autobiography. This trip occasioned an article about her, "Kadye Molodovski tsu ir opform fun poyln," (Kadye Molodowsky on The Occasion of Her Leaving Poland) by A. N. (unclear as to who A. N. is) in which the author sings her praises as a poet, teacher, and intellectual. Her talent to create "without the familiar rhetoric and hysteria that has become so monotonous in recent years" is underscored and she is praised further with "she is not only talented - but one can see that she understands poetry - a rare thing today."

In this article, Kadye Molodowsky's own words are cited as she underscores the uniqueness and individuality of the poet's voice, which must stand in opposition to the mundane and the expected. She says that "the highest level of poetry is total honesty with one's self." This ideal leads her to speak out against the notion of literary groups and of literature being used as a servant of political ideologies.

... I don't understand the sense of narrow literary groupings. It is unpleasant and difficult to watch as a poet attempts to crawl out of his own skin, and gropes with his fingers to find the ropes of literary or political guidelines, and is afraid to stray too far from them. But in truth, a poet's own will is powerless in the face of the artistic truths which he brings out....Poetry is vision, and if the poet is true to himself then he cannot 'correct' his visions.

She also speaks out against the whole notion of "women's poetry," and calls the term "an absolute misunderstanding."

There are women poets, but there is no women's poetry. This idea has become so confusing lately that all the contours have become vague. Woman can arrive through her femininity at certain artistic truths, which, must perhaps, remain hidden from man. But, the results must be measured by a purely human standard. As to the means by which one conveys these truths, they are different for all poets, whether man or woman. Therefore, one must conclude that the same criteria must exist for the poetry created by women as for the poetry created by men. Every attempt to define the difference between the two 'types' of poetry would be no more than trivial hair-splitting and could not be honestly, or artistically sound.

This clearly articulated point of view is absent from her autobiography, but is also absent from much of the current scholarship on the topic.

In this article/interview, we learn further that Kadye Molodowsky had plans with the poet and writer, Y. Kirman and I. Bashevis Singer to publish a series of literary anthologies of the writings of new writers and poets. "It is superfluous to say how absolutely necessary such a collection is today in Warsaw, the literary center of the largest Jewish masses."

1) Vol. 6, No. 13, March 29, p. 259.

In the same issue as the farewell piece to Kadye Molodowsky cited above, there appeared in the column "Bikher velt" a review by Kadye Molodowsky of a novel by Rokhl Faigenberg, Yiddish writer and poet who had by then settled in Palestine, *Af fremde vegn* (On Foreign Roads). This is a novel about the tragic confrontation of a traditional sheltered existence with modernity, brought about by the building of the railroad. The train had already, long before, come to symbolize the destruction of old ways in both European and Jewish literature, and this novel focuses on the human relationships which are in and of themselves destructive.

A recurring theme in Kadye Molodowsky's own work, as already noted several times, is aging. It is worth noting that in this review of destructive and destroyed relationships, she focuses on this particular theme and seems to project her own musings and fears.

This is a tragedy of aging for a woman - of losing the natural powers of youth and beauty. Women barricade themselves behind the family; chain themselves to a husband...and thus armored, the woman marches sadly towards old age, secure in the knowledge that she will not be abandoned and will be respected.

2) Vol. 6, No. 15, April 12, p. 293.

This issue features a full page of five poems under a bold heading "Naye lider (New Poems) Kadye Molodovski/Paris." They are:

"A lid tsu a gets" (A Poem To An Idol) - a love poem, undated.

"Oytoportret" (Self-portrait). This is undated in *Literarische bleter*, but dated 1928 in *Dzshike gas*, p. 47. In this poem, which begins with the line "ikh bin a froy," (I am a woman) she uses the image of the crucifixion, and she describes:

Un mayne hent zaynen shoyn gevoynt
bleykh gekreytst tzu zayn iber mayn kop.
Es iz in mayne hent der veytik shtendik do,
khotsh on dem tshvok.

And my hands are already used
To being pale and crucified above my head.
The pain is always in my hands
Even without the nails.

"Tsvishn mir mit dir iz mer nisht do kayn reydn" (Between You and Me There Are No Longer Any Words). This is the third poem, undated; a poem of love that is no more.

"Randevu" (Rendez-vous) is yet another love poem.

"Kh'bin af der velt gekumen" (I Came Into The World) is undated on this page of *Literarische bleter* and in *Dzshike gas* p. 55, the second poem in the section "Elegyes" (Elegies). In this poem, the poet claims to have been born for love, but the world is full of inequality and injustice, so she finds comfort and solace in the mangy, whimpering cat that she takes in to warm her bed.

3) Vol. 6, No. 25, June 21, p. 487.

Molodowsky's poem "Der goy fun di kartoffl" (The Gentile Peasant of the Potatoes) bears the dedication "dintshen a matone" (a gift to Dintshe). The poem was reprinted - with slight modifications in the orthography - in her book of children's poems *Geyen shikhelekh avek... (Mayselekh)* Warsaw, 1931, pp. 5-11. The dedication in the book reads: "dintshe shapiro a matone" (a gift to Dintshe Shapiro).¹

This is a rhyming tale about a Jew and a gentile peasant - the moral of the story being that everyone has his own worth and own identity, and mutual understanding can be arrived at if the will exists.

4) Vol. 6, No. 37, September 13, p. 727.

In this issue, *Literarische bleter* published an essay by Kadye Molodowsky on Dovid Bergelson's language in the novel *Mides Ha-din* (The Quality of Judgment), titled "Bergelsons vort" (Bergelson's Word). Kadye Molodowsky was a great admirer of Bergelson, a fact which she noted in her autobiography² and about whom she was to write six months later (see: 1930/no. 5 in this annotated bibliography), "I like Dovid Bergelson very much. I love his mastery of the language..." The review heaps praise on Bergelson's style claiming it as "uniquely his, and recognizable as only his...symphonic in its complexities."

5) Vol. 6, No. 45, November 8, p. 879.

This is an entire page of poetry entitled "Fun der poetisher ofensive" (From the Poetic Offensive) taken from an evening of the same title organized by the Warsaw Yiddish PEN Club several days earlier. Speakers at that evening included M. Ravitch, and the poet Yisroel Shtern who spoke about lyric poetry and the works of the poets who appear on this page - Avrom Zak, I. M. Nayman, Z. Segalovitsh, and Kadye Molodowsky. Kadye Molodowsky's poem, "Goyim, yidn, rasn," (Gentiles, Jews, Races) Paris, July 1929, is an ode to internationalism and the brotherhood of man.

Notes 1929

1. Dine Kipnis Shapiro, Yiddish poet, sister of the famous writer, I. Kipnis, was most probably acquainted with Kadye Molodowsky from her Kiev days. Published under pseudonym, Dine Lipkes. *Leksikon*, 5: 74.

2. Kadye Molodovski, " Dovid bergelson drukt op mayne lider in zamlbukh 'eygns': (kapitl 37 fun 'mayn elterzeydns yerushe'), " *Svive* 33 (January 1971) : 56-57-discussed earlier.

1930

1) Vol. 7, No. 1, January 3, p. 9.

A full page headed "Lider" (Poems) features a 2" X 3" horizontal photograph (there is no credit given for the photograph) of Kadye Molodowsky and Esther Shumiatcher, poet and wife of Peretz Hirshbein, centered at the top of the page. To the left of the photograph are two poems by Esther Shumiatcher. - "Bushlen" (Storks) and "Kumen teg" (Days Arrive). On the right is Kadye Molodowsky's children's poem "Bay an aromen, aromen, man" (At a Poor, Poor Man's House) a fable about a magical bird that makes its home in the tree of a poor, poor man. The poem is not dated, nor is there a locale given for Kadye Molodowsky. This poem was included in *Geyen Shikhelekh Avek... (Mayselekh)*. pp. 15-19 (not dated). It also appeared in *Martsipanes; Mayselekh un lider far kinder un yugnt*. Education Committee of the Workmens' Circle and CYCO. New York, 1970, pp. 28-30.

2) Vol. 7, No. 3, January 17, p. 48.

In this issue, on a page untitled but again featuring women poets, Kadye Molodowsky's poem "Kinder lid" (Children's Poem) appears under her name and the locale of Warsaw. There is no date. It is a poem of four verses about a pear tree whose fruit fall, by themselves, into eagerly waiting hands. This poem was not included in any of Kadye Molodowsky's books until 1970, when it was reprinted in *Martsipanes*, p. 101. There is no date and there are also no revisions from the way it appeared in *Literarishe bleter*, 1930.

The two other poets appearing on the same page are Esther Shumiatcher/New York, and her poem "a vort un a nomen" (A Word And A Name) and Malka Heifetz Tussman/New York. A 1½" X 3" vertical photograph of Tussman is on the top right hand side. Her two poems are "in der fri" (In the Morning) and "vos ken ikh ton" (What Am I to Do?).

3) Vol. 7, No. 5 (300), January 31, p. 95.

In this issue, Kadye Molodowsky speaks out once more against the indiscriminate and misleading notion of "women's poetry". In this half page article titled "Bagegenishn" (Encounters), Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw, attacks the label "women's poetry" as being meaningless and one "from which the women poets shy away as do their poems..." She claims that the poems "...shtayen oft ayne tsu di andere mit a zayt, mitn rukn, un oft...zay viln zikh maydn." (... look askance at one another, often turning their backs so as to avoid having to meet). She brings examples of how different, how varied in character and style, women's poetry is, citing Anna Margolin/New York as "hiding behind a mask and sharp as steal" against Rokhl Korn's barefoot, peasant feet running through the damp earth. The two women cannot recognize anything familiar in each other. She then describes her own meeting with Khane Levin (Kharkov) on a page of poems (see: 1928/no 2 in this annotated bibliography) where her own poem "...hot geshotn mit shaymes fun an altn sider un der vint hot zey getribn arum mir. Khane levin hot frum getrogn a lenin in eyn hant, un in der tsveyter, a biks." (...was spilling forth stray leaves from an old prayer book which the wind was blowing around me. Khane Levin, piously carried a volume of Lenin in one hand and a rifle in the other).

Levin's poem "Haynt lenins a bild" (Today, A Picture of Lenin) reflects the Soviet party line, while Kadye Molodowsky's responds to an ancient religious tradition. She brings several more examples of women poets and their different views about poetry and their inability to form a consensus. She ends with a very clear condemnation of those who insist on this unnatural grouping.

Un az men port tsunoyf dikhterins vi eyn min, in eyn bukh, oder afile af eyn zaytl, is dos nisht mer vi a formele tsunoyfshtelung, vayl "froyen dikhtung" iz a vortfurem, on a lebedikn inhalt - s'git keyn klang nit.

If one brings together women poets as a single entity,¹ in a single book, or even on a single page, it is in fact no more than a formal composition because "women's

poetry" is merely a word formation without real meaning and has no resonance.

4) Vol. 7, No. 15-6, April 11, p. 286.

This whole issue was dedicated to the fifteenth anniversary of the death of I. L. Peretz. Peretz, in addition to playing a critical role in the shaping of modern Yiddish literature, was also instrumental in the founding of the modern Yiddish school movement. Along with his intimate friend, the writer Yankev Dinezon, he laid the groundwork for what was later to become the widespread system of secular Yiddish Schools, both in Europe and the Americas. He was a heroic figure in the eyes of the new cadre of Yiddish teachers; the one that Kadye Molodowsky was inspired to join. Peretz was, at the end of his life, intensely involved in the relief effort on behalf of the Jewish refugees of World War I in Warsaw, with a particular emphasis on children and orphans. In this period he wrote many of his poems for children and he died while writing one. It was this mammoth relief effort that in the end sapped his energy and his health. Peretz became the icon of Jewish modernity, of modern Yiddish literature, modern Yiddish culture and idealism.² It was fitting to have Molodowsky, a person representing the values and ideals which Peretz symbolized, a modern Yiddish writer and Yiddish educator imbued with the spirit of the folk which Peretz valued so dearly, featured prominently in this issue. The choice of a children's poem was also not a coincidence in light of Peretz's concern for the Jewish child.

Kadye Molodowsky's poem "A mayse mit a mantl" (A Story Of A Coat) appears on the full page. Kadye Molodowsky is given the locale Warsaw, the poem is undated. This poem was reprinted in *Geyen shikhelekh avek...Mayselekh*, pp. 25-32, also undated, with a revised title "a mantl fun a tunkeln gevantl" (A Coat Of Dark Cloth). It appeared in *Yidishe kinder*, Central Committee of the Jewish Folk Schools of the Jewish National Workers Alliance and Poalei Zion of the United States and Canada, New York, 1945, pp. 17-20, with the title "a mantl," and in *Martsepanes*,

pp. 11-14, once again titled "a mantl fun a tunkeln gevantl." The poem has also appeared in numerous anthologies and children's magazines since then.

Kadye Molodowsky writes about this poem in her memoir about the difficult times she experienced in Warsaw, how the children loved this poem, and how their enthusiasm and pride in this story about them eased her burden.³

5) Vol. 7, No. 17, April 25, p. 302. .

As part of its ongoing effort to raise the level of cultural literacy and to encourage the creation and reading of serious Yiddish literature, the *Literarische bleter* published a series in which it asked the well known Yiddish writers of the day to write about their own favorite authors (Yiddish and other). In this issue, Molodowsky's response appears along with several others.

She begins her short essay with a familiar disclaimer, "kh'bin a mentsh on a geshtelter deye..." (I am a person without an idee fixe). Molodowsky states that she lives with all the contradictions of the human condition and then goes on to mention a variety of poets and authors from M. L. Halpern, Mani Leib, and Leivick to Sholem Aleichem, Ash, Opatoshu and Dovid Bergelson, whom she admits to liking "very much" for his word mastery. She ends with a question, "how can I have a favorite writer of Yiddish literature?"

6) Vol. 7, No. 22, May 30, p. 404.

Kadye Molodovski/Warsaw appears on a half page with Aaron Zeitlin/Warsaw, each with one poem; Zeitlin with " dem vort kinstlers lid" (The Word Master's Poem) dedicated to D. Bergelson and Kadye Molodowsky with "mayn papirene brik" (My Paper Bridge) also dedicated to Bergelson. Both poems are undated. "Di papirene brik" was reprinted without any changes in *Dzshike gas*, pp. 43-4, bearing the same dedication, dated 1930. It is also the title of this

volume's third section, containing nine poems. The poem expresses regret for the golden, green dreams of youth and the harsh reality of the present which meet on the paper bridge - the one across which, according to Jewish tradition, the Messiah will come.

Dovid Bergelson was then in Warsaw, returning from a six month tour of the U.S. and a short stay in Berlin. He was to tour Poland and the Baltic Republics and live briefly in Copenhagen before returning permanently to the Soviet Union. His visit in Poland was the occasion for several appearances and lectures, and a large reception hosted by the Yiddish Writers' Union, on June 3, 1930, in the Nowosci Theatre in Warsaw, at which Bergelson delivered a major address about the problems of modern Yiddish literature.⁴ The international PEN was meeting in Warsaw at that time, Bergelson probably timed his visit to coincide with this event.

7) Vol. 7, No. 28, July 11, pp. 525-6.

On a page and a half titled "Lider" (poems) Kadye Molodowsky is presented along with Rokhl Korn/Przemysl. Kadye Molodowsky's poems are "baym shpigl I II," (At the Mirror I and II), "In grinem boym..." (In the Green Tree...), and "Iz mayn shtub den a shif?" (My Home Isn't A Ship, Is It?) This last one is dedicated to Itsik Manger. All three poems are undated." Baym shpigl I and II" were reprinted in *Dzshike gas*, pp. 58-9, also undated in the section "Elegyes" (Elegies).

"In grinem boym..." (In The Green Tree...) appears as the first in an unnumbered cycle of nine poems in *Dzshike gas*, pp. 73, in the section by the same name.

"Iz mayn shtub den a shif?" appears dated 1929 in *Dzshike gas*, p. 61, without the dedication to Manger, in the section "Elegyes."

Notes 1930

1. This translation does not attempt to convey the sharpness of Molodowsky's wordplays. *Tsunoyfporn* does not simply mean to bring together, but is also used to mean to match or pair off. Moreover, the verb is based on *porn zikh*, which means to have sexual relations. In addition, the word *min* means not only sort or kind, which I translate here as entity, but also sex. Molodowsky's choice of words underscores her argument that the male critics' concept of "women's poetry" grows out of their view of women as sex objects.

2. For a full critical discussion on Peretz and his seminal role in the creation of a modern Jewish cultural identity, see: Wisse, Ruth R., *I. L. Peretz and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture*, Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1991.

3. Kadye Molodoski, "Kapitl 43: a bagegenish mit alte khavertes," *Svive* 34 (August 19971) : 44.

4. *Literarische bleter* 7:24 3 June 1930.

1931

A) Vol. 8, No. 3, January 16, p. 51.

This page titled "Interesting Figures" is an index and analysis of the writers and works published in *Literarische bleter* for the year 1930. Of interest to us, is that in the 52 issues of the *Literarische bleter* of 1930, there were 51 writers published. Of the 49 Yiddish writers, 5 were women; Malka Heifetz Tussman, Kadye Molodowsky, Rikude Potash, Rokhl Korn, and Esther Shumiatcher. In the breakdown, in terms of the number of times a single poet was published during the year, Kadye Molodowsky ranks second from the top, at five times, second only to Itsik Manger, who appeared six times. She shared this position with Yosef Papiernikof, and was the only female to have been published this frequently.

1) Vol. 8, No. 7, February 13, pp. 125-126.

In this issue, there are two pages of poems under the heading "Naye lider" (New Poems), all by Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw. There is a 1½" by 2" inch photograph of Kadye Molodowsky in the right hand corner. The poems are numbered I - VII, poems I - IV being titled "Drednout" (Dreadnaught), "Vinter" (Winter), "In gas" (On the Street), and "Tsu dem vos iz gerekht" (To the One Who Is Right). None are dated. The designation Paris appears under Poem VII, but it is not clear whether all the poems were written there or not.

I) The poem "Drednout" appears in *Dzshike gas*, pp. 20-21 in the section of poems "Khronik" (News) and is dated 1931. It, like the other poems in this section, deals with the political uncertainties and tragedies of this period.

II) "Vinter" (Winter) - a poem of hunger and desolation, appears in "Elegyes" (Elegies) in *Dzshike gas*, pp. 636-3, and is dated 1931.

III) "In gas" (In the Street) appeared in *Dzshike gas*, pp. 22-23 as "A gas in yor 1930" (A Street in 1930) and is dated Paris, 1931 in the section "Khronik" (News). The poem depicts the poverty and hunger in the cities.

IV) "Es shpringen di shleyfn fun kop/Vi fintstere shifelekh tsvey" (My temples throb/like two small dark boats...) is how this poem begins. It appears to be an earlier version of the poem "Vu zol ikh itshts geyn" (Where Shall I Go Now?) dated 1929, *Dzshike gas*, p. 50 in the section "Mayn papirene brik" (My Paper Bridge). The poem's first three lines of the first version in *Literarische bleter* were deleted in the poem as it appears in *Dzshike gas*.

In this poem, Kadye Molodowsky is painfully at a loss about herself, her writing and her future. Her experience in Paris, clearly held out no hope for improved opportunities, and now she ponders:

"Un ver darf mikh aleydn?
Un mayn lid un mayn shtiln shigoen?
Saydn der shney fun mayn heym
Saydn der vint fun mayn shtot
Saydn der hunger vos yomert dort itst
un vos kh'ken zayn genod?"

And who needs even me? And my poem?
And my silent madness?
Unless 'tis the snow from my home
Unless 'tis the wind from my city
Unless 'tis the hunger that wails there now
Whose mercy I know.

V) This last poem - "Forst Avek - derken ikh nisht dayn gas" (You leave - And I No Longer Recognize Your Street) signed Paris, appears in *Dzshike gas* p. 75 as the third poem in "In grinem boym..." (In the Green Tree), where it appears undated and without the assignation, Paris. It is a sad poem of love lost.

2) Vol. 8, Nos. 14-15, April 1, p. 272.

This issue dedicates a full page to Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw children's tale, "Olke mit der bloyer parasolke" (Olke With the Blue Parasol); a rhyming tale of a poor little girl, who is always called upon by her parents to care for the younger

children, do chores and not play. Olke, however, has a blue parasol, under which she can hide and dream wondrous things.

This poem appears as "Olke" in *Geyen shikhelekh avek... (Mayselekh)*, pp. 79-84; also in *Yidishe kinder*, pp. 11-16, and appears with the original title in *Martsepanes*, pp. 15-19.

3) Vol. 8, No. 30, July 24, p. 577. -

This poem appears under the title "Dzshike gas" with a dedication to the renowned Yiddish prose writer and leading personality in modern Yiddish literature Y. Opatoshu. *Literarische bleter*. celebrated the 20th anniversary of his literary debut in 1930. *Dzshike gas* was also to be the title of her fourth book of poems and her first poem in the section by that name, in the book. The dedication to Opatoshu is repeated in the book.

The poem describes Warsaw's Jewish working class street and the poverty and politics that reigned there. Once again, she reiterates her unwillingness to "join" despite the hardships and tragedies surrounding and intruding on her life. She writes:

Un ikh -- men tayt af mir do mit di finger:
"ot iz zi, di zingerin,
a ruekh in ir mamen,
zi shlept zikh do arum,
un flekht fun undzer umlik gramen.
volt zi nekhtn geyn mit undz in gas un zen -- "

...
un khotsh es shteyt a kval fun trem hinter mayn oyg,
bin ikh farlibt in lebn vi a tzoyg.

And I -- they point their finger at me:
"Here she is, the singer,
G-d damn her
She drags herself around here
And weaves rhymes out of our tragedy
Had she better gone into the streets with us yesterday and seen

...

And though there is a well-spring of tears behind my eye
I am like a bitch, in love with life.

4) Vol. 8, No. 36, September 4, pp. 689-90.

"Demyon der oremer poet un demyon der oremer kritiker," (Damion the Impoverished Poet and Damion the Poor Critic), is the title, in bold type-face, of a scathing attack on the critics of Polish-Yiddish literature, who demand that Yiddish literature serve the masses and political platforms. In 1930, there appeared in *Literarische bleter*, 116 articles, essays, and discussions, about Yiddish literature and the Yiddish cultural agenda.¹ This discussion continued into 1931 with a series of important essays by the leading Jewish intellectuals and writers. Dr. Mikhl Weichert, *Literarische bleter*, Vol. 8, No. 6, pgs. 102-3, writes of the mission of the Yiddish writer. Nachman Meisel, editor of *Literarische bleter*, carries on the call for support in a lead article, "lomir dem mut nisht farlirn" (Let Us Not Be Discouraged) Vol. 8 no. 38, September 18, 1931. Sholem Asch (p.741-2), Simon Dubnow (p. 742) and Zalmen Reizen (pp. 744-745) in issue no. 39, September 25, 1931, all address the important role of Yiddish literature - not as a servant of any one party, but as a servant of Yiddish culture in its highest form. They also stress the need for continued support for Yiddish literature. In this context, 1931 saw the launching of Yiddish book month as a demonstration of support for the Yiddish writer and for Yiddish literature, *Literarische bleter* v. 8. no. 39. p. 742. "der yidisher pen klub hot proklamirt itst a khoydesh fun yidishn bukh. zorgt derfar, az es zol nisht zayn keyn yidishe shtub on a nay yidish bukh." (The Yiddish PEN Club has proclaimed a month of the Yiddish Book. See to it that no Jewish home should be without a new Yiddish book.)

Kadye Molodowsky's strident attack was directed against certain individuals. She names Kh. Kazdan, a leading member of the Bund and one of the three leaders of the Bund in TSYSHO in particular, as one who cannot recognize good literature if it does not contain in it the "formulary" vocabulary of the "struggle of the proletariat." She accuses him of belittling modern poetry as being beyond the grasp of the

masses. Molodowsky condemns the insulting and patronizing view of these critics, and puts her faith in the reader who will look beyond the "prescribed" formula, and will both recognize and value fine literature. Once again, Kadye Molodowsky's refusal to "join" or accept ideological direction as a writer from a particular political party comes to the fore.

5) Vol. 8, No. 45, November 6, pp. 846-7.

"A mayse mit a fas" (A Story Of A Barrel) Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw, is a poem for children. This rhyming children's tale of a magic barrel, that stands in the middle of a courtyard, where large, poor families live, and in which the children all sought refuge from their daily, sorrowful lives, appears (as indicated on the page in *Literarische bleter*) in the newly published book *Geyen shikhelekh avek vu di velt hot an ek* (The Little Shoes Wander to the Ends of the Earth), pp. 33-42. On page 847 of this issue of *Literarische bleter*, there appears an advertisement for the book. The poem does not appear in *Yidishe Kinder* but does reappear in *Martsepanes*, pp. 23-27, with the same title.

Notes 1931

1. *Literarische bleter* 8: 3 16 January 1931: 51.

1932

1) Vol. 9, No. 1, January 1, p. 6.

In this issue there are two poems under the bold heading "Tsvey lider" (Two Poems); "khronik," (News) and "a telegraf slup" (A Telegraph Pole). They are credited Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw. These two poems deal with the harsh economic and political realities in the world following the 1929 crash and the increasing political uncertainties of the period. She, the poet, is helpless to do anything but write poetry and is "the most useless person of our times." The poems are not dated. They appear in *Dzshike gas*. p. 27 and 29 respectively, both dated 1932, in section II, titled "khronik."

A) Vol. 9, No. 9, February 26, p.143.

"Kadye molodovskis mayselekh fun vor" (Kadye Molodowsky's Stories Of The Real) is a review by Yiddish cultural activist and journalist in Lodz, Tanya Fuks, of *Geyen shikhelelh avek...Mayselekh*. The review is filled with praise for Molodowsky's talent and her ability to take the world that the child and his family live in, and turn it into wonder, laughter and rhyme. She also praises Kadye Molodowsky's pedagogical understanding of the need to give the children hope and belief in a better tomorrow and in mankind.

2) Vol. 9, No. 23, June 3, p. 358.

"Afn sharf fun gevisn" (On The Edge Of One's Conscience), Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw, is a review of H. Leivick's newly published book of poetry *Naye lider* (New Poems), New York. Kadye Molodowsky writes about Leivick with the highest praise for his authenticity and style, and refers to his book as "the echo of our time, it is a savage struggle...in which Leivick's search for the truth, raises him up higher and higher." She underscores Leivick's rootedness in and understanding

of Jewish culture and folk tradition. She pays him the supreme compliment "ekhte dikhter shraybn dos lid fun zeyer lebn un trogn zeyer lid in di tseyn, vi velf, un zeyer lid iz enlekh tzu zeyer lebn vi tsvey tropns vaser." (real poets write the poem of their lives and carry the poem in their teeth like wolves, and their poem is similar to their life, like two drops of water.) Kadye Molodowsky also credits Leivick with profundity and precision in his words. "He does not shout revolutionary slogans, yet his tone is demanding." Molodowsky concludes the article with a statement that it is sheer insanity that Leivick is attacked by some as a reactionary because of his mysticism. According to her, Leivick's is not a "heavenly," i.e. escapist mysticism, but rather the search for human purity.

3) Vol. 9, No. 40, September 30, pp. 635-636.

"Der karshn boym" (The Cherry Tree) Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw, undated, is a children's poem in which Kadye Molodowsky spins a tale of a cherry tree, of children and dreams. This poem was not republished in any of Kadye Molodowsky's collections of her children's poems.

1933

A) Vol. 10, No. 2, January 6, pp. 19-20.

In this issue, there appears a review/essay about Kadye Molodowsky by Yankev Botoshanski (Buenos Aires) taken from his soon to be published book, *Portretn fun yidishe shrayber* (Portraits of Yiddish Writers), *Literarische bleter*, Warsaw. The essay had been written in 1931.

Botoshanski claims that Kadye Molodowsky is not only one of the most talented Jewish women poets, but also one of the most interesting. He devotes much of the review/essay to her conflict with tradition, and her need to find her own voice. Yet, he describes her as " *the expression of the breakthrough in the psyche of the Jewish woman, as she moves from piety to secularism. But Kadye Molodowsky's fundamental principle is the idea of that break, the drive to free secular life, to remove the wig from the Jewish woman's head and the pious seven veils from her body.*" He also claims that this struggle does not seem to have been won by modernity, because Kadye Molodowsky seems unable to escape from her past. He writes that " *Kadye Molodowsky is a beginning of a women's revolt in the Jewish word - but one which was suppressed by fear. The specter of the grandmothers is too threatening.*"

Botoshanski also admits that Kadye Molodowsky is not a poet who restricts her writing to a single theme, and he admires her ability to capture the world around her; the dreams and aspirations of people in general. He is quick to point out the lack of eroticism in these dreams, because Kadye Molodowsky is "after all a teacher, and a daughter of a teacher" and thus she responds to the needs of her charges.

Although it may be true that in her social poetry there is no eroticism, there are certainly, in her oeuvre of the time, enough erotic motifs. Botoshanski seems to be reading Molodowsky in the typical fashion of the male literary critics of the time,

seeing in women poets the pristine and pure. The reviewer adds, though, that her voice can be "manly in decrying the societal woes of the Jewish masses in Poland." He underscores, however, that her poetry is not a handmaiden to any political movement of the period. Kadye Molodowsky's poetry is not, according to Botoshanski, party propaganda. It reflects the issues, the suffering, but not "the protest." Kadye Molodowsky refused to do that.

Botoshanski was a writer of his time and always referred to Kadye Molodowsky as a "dikhterin" (poetess) and not as a "dikhter" (poet) and he reemphasizes that she is the "riterin fun der yidisher froy un ir dikhterin" (the "fighter" for the Jewish woman and her poetess). He goes on to express admiration for her keen ability as a literary critic but in the same breath, belittles her acumen on social issues - almost castigating her for withholding from "joining" her voice to the service of the political agenda. This leads one to question his earlier statement about Kadye Molodowsky's work not being a handmaiden to any one political party, and how he interpreted this. He ends his review in a patronizing tone, claiming that Kadye Molodowsky adds charm to Warsaw's Yiddish literary scene; charm and often misguided temperament. The entire article is punctuated with insulting little anecdotes and a patronizing tone. He concludes with:

The one thing that Kadye Molodowsky knows clearly is that the Jewish woman must free her body from the pious seven veils, but as much as she seems to grasp this, the song of her own blood is drowned out by the *tkhines* of her grandmothers.

- 1) Vol. 10, No. 3, January 13, p. 36.

On this page headed "Lider" (Poems) there appear two 2½" x 2½" sketches of Kadye Molodowsky and Rokhl Korn by Liza Tshertak-Goldstein, on either side of the page, with one poem by each; Rokhl H. Korn's, "Mame in tfise" (The Jailed Mother) and Kadye Molodowsky's "Halo mayn harts" (Hello My Heart). Each poet gives Warsaw as identification, neither poem is dated.

"Halo mayn harts" is a reproach to the poet herself, who sees her own heart and poems as traitorous as Judas himself. Her world is devoid of God, devoid of bread, and filled with bitterness and suffering. Yet she continues to write her poems. This poem appears unaltered in *Dzshike gas*, 1936, pp. 71-2, in section IV "Elegyes" and is dated 1932.

2) Vol. 10, No. 20, May 19, p. 323.

Under the heading "Naye lider" (New Poems) subheading "from the book *Dzshike gas* - currently appearing in Warsaw," Kadye Molodowsky has three poems: "Tshako," (Chako) "A lid tsu mayn kleyder shank" (An Ode To My Wardrobe) and "Shloyminke der shmid" (Shloyminke the Smith). Most of the poems in this volume are a reflection of the times. They include the economic and political hardships faced by the Jewish working masses, as well as her own experiences and contemplations of her life, past and present, including her sojourn in Paris. (It is noteworthy that this episode in her life, which is the subject for much of the poetry in both *Freydke* and *Dzshike gas*, is given short shrift in her memoir.) The poems are divided into eight sections: "Dzshike gas" (Dzika Street), "Khronik," (News), "Mayn papirene brik" (My Paper Bridge), "Elegyes" (Elegies) "In grinem boym ligt groye ash" (Grey Ash Lies in the Green Tree). "Yermie" (Jeremiah), "Komunarn vant" (The Wall of the Communards) and "Tsimbl, tsimbl, tsimbl bok."

The first poem in this issue "Tshako", undated in both *Literarishe bleter* and *Dzshike gas*, pp. 18-19, in the section "Khronik," is about the ship Chako carrying political exiles from Argentina to whom no country offered haven.

"A lid tsu mayn kleydershank" and "Shloyminke der shmid" are found in *Dzshike gas*, p. 93 and p. 95. In "A lid tsu mayn kleydershank," Molodowsky muses whimsically about what to do with a piece of brown material. "Shloyminke der shmid," is a lingering childhood memory.

B) Vol. 10, No. 20, May 26, p. 323.

In this issue there appears a review of *Dzshike gas - lider (Dzika Street - Poems) Literarishe bleter, Warsaw, 1933*, by Nakhmen Meisel.

This is a very positive review, without the patronizing tone of earlier reviewers and without resorting to flowery epithets about Kadye Molodowsky's personality, charm, or her women's poems. This is a serious review, in which Meisel credits Kadye Molodowsky with sincerity, and a social conscience that doesn't resort to the "rezoneray fun plakatn-dikhter." (the arguing of a placard poet). Meisel claims quite the contrary, that she is hard on herself as a poet. He maintains that her own experience is that of the poor Jewish masses among whom she lives. Meisel, in an interesting turn, uses Kadye Molodowsky's own words of praise for H. Leivick's authenticity, in applauding Kadye Molodowsky's rigor. He quotes her "true poets write the poem of their life and carry their poem in their teeth, like wolves, and their poem and their life resemble each other like two drops of water." (see: 1932/no. 2 in this annotated bibliography.)

Meisel concludes the review by saying, as he does several times during the review, "these are not merely poems but are the outcry of our times."

3) Vol. 10, No. 44, November 3, pp. 693-4.

Kadye Molodowsky has the lead article in this issue entitled "Vegn der mode tsu farneynen varshe," (About The Vogue Of Negating Warsaw). It is, as has become her style in such pieces, an outspoken, categorical repudiation of an essay by A. Almi in the August 4, 1933 (no. 31 p. 493-4) issue of *Literarishe bleter*, in which he bemoans the state of Yiddish literature and Yiddish cultural life in general in Poland, and specifically in Warsaw. These were his impressions after a twenty year absence from Warsaw which he left in 1912, when I. L. Peretz was the reigning figure and modern Jewish culture was in its infancy. Almi states that Jewish

America has only one hope and one source of inspiration - Polish Jewry. He describes it as "the spiritual reservoir of our survival, and the inspiration and creative source for our dispersed people." He was however devastated, he continues, to find that twenty years after his having left Warsaw, he returns to find it no longer the Warsaw "...of great Jewish hopes; a Warsaw where the new Jewish spirit was born; where a new Yiddish literature had been born and bloomed - a Warsaw that was the epicenter of the entire Jewish cultural world." He found instead, he says, the same "depressing, mournful sighs that I know in America...here too the new culture is being undermined. Here too Yiddish books are rotting on the shelves. Here too, cynicism and apathy have found a home....Twenty years ago I left at a time of building...now I have come back to devastation."

Kadye Molodowsky responds unabashedly that "searching for yesterday (*nekhtike teg*) has always been an exercise in futility." She is outraged, not only by Almi's comments, but by the tendency in general, of former Warsaw Jews now living abroad, to bemoan the decline of Yiddish Warsaw. She understands nostalgia but cannot under any circumstances accept this "it is not what it used to be" as a standard by which to measure today. She states, furthermore, that "such a yardstick can lead to incorrect, false, and even laughable conclusions."

She also points out the changes in Yiddish cultural life in Warsaw - growth in the number of schools, libraries, Jewish professional associations and unions, and the proliferation of support for Jewish cultural life in general. She claims that today's Jewish Warsaw can even claim three literary weeklies, of various stripes, with a large readership. She admits that with this growth, has also come the growth of partisanship and antagonisms, but concedes "c'est la vie." She then goes on to castigate Almi for not choosing to see the earnest, young generation of writers who take their writing responsibly and seriously. Instead, he chooses, says she, to spend time in the wrong company.

Kadye Molodowsky points out that Almi has chosen the wrong issues to criticize. Here she embarks on one of several visceral attacks on what she, and others, consider to be the biggest problem facing Yiddish literature at that time - the proliferation of "shund," i.e. trash literature. This "lit-syphilis" as she chooses to call the trend, brought with it the cynicism and self-deprecation that Almi was bemoaning. She makes it clear that the struggle against this illness is high on the agenda of the concerned intellectuals and literati.

As for the "rotting Yiddish books," she fired a quick retort that the greatest Polish publishing houses have gone bankrupt, probably not because of the sale of too many books. How then can the situation be different, or better, among Jews? "It is well known that any plague in society is a hundred fold in Jewish society." The present condition is dire, she argues, but that does not mean death. "Seeds which dry over the winter can then sprout again in the spring, what is important is that they have been sown!"

She concludes by reiterating that Almi overlooked a lot during his visit, and that by omitting to underscore what was most harmful and negative in Yiddish life and literature, he carelessly over-generalized, thereby adding to this cynicism which he decried.

4) Vol. 10, No. 46, November 17, p. 730.

In the early 1930's, the combined forces of the economic distress of the Jewish population and the commercial needs of the Yiddish press, led to the proliferation of what many in the literary world considered "shund". The popularity of the serialized novel and the virtual disappearance of most private Yiddish publishing houses, in Poland in particular, (due to financial failure), made this genre a most attractive one to writers, both established and other. The high demand for this type of novel (approximately 300 such novels were then in print in over 50 Yiddish dailies), the sensational, the erotic and the like, led to a major debate in the Jewish

cultural world. Some of that debate took place in the pages of the *Literarishe bleter* and Kadye Molodowsky was a major participant in that debate on and off these pages. Her acerbic manner belies the bittersweet and gentle reminiscence of these years in her memoir, from which this problem and debate are totally absent.

Kadye Molodowsky raised the problem of the spread of sensational, low calibre, Yiddish literature among the Jewish masses, at the general meeting of the Yiddish PEN Club in Warsaw in 1933, several years after this had already been addressed and a resolution against it adopted.¹ She fearlessly demanded that sanctions be brought against PEN members who, under various pseudonyms, contributed to this genre, and who by their actions lowered the standard of the Yiddish press and shamed the Yiddish language

Molodowsky was apparently not well received and the chorus of objections raised against her led her to respond in an article titled "Di khvalye fun vidershtand" (The Wave of Resistance), in which she launched an unabashed attack on those who benefit from this shameful venture and who thereby insult the reading masses and demean them rather than raise their appreciation of literature. She admits that the dire economic times called for desperate measures and suggested that the Yiddish press be held more accountable and pay writers better for better work. They would thereby reduce the large number of shameful novels and instead publish perhaps less, but certainly better quality material. There would also be room, she inserts very skillfully, for poetry, which, she proudly adds, has managed not to stoop to the low level of the novels. "Honour to the poets!"

Molodowsky further exhorts the Yiddish writer to "repent" and given that Warsaw was on the eve of celebrating a Sholem Aleichem week, to look to him as the model, as one who was a bitter enemy of this genre and fought against it.

5) Vol. 10, No. 49, December 8, p. 782.

Under the heading "Tsvey lider" (Two Poems) and with the assignation Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw, there appeared the following two poems: "Es bliit der karshnboym" (The Cherytree is blooming) and "Kh'bin zeyer eint" (I Am Very Alone).

The first poem compares a beautiful spring day - one from long ago and far away with the harsh and brutal reality of Molodowsky's poor and meager existence, which is grey with sorrow as is the entire neighborhood which surrounds her.

In "Kh'bin zeyer eint" the poet expresses her fear of loosing even her spirit in this dire existence of hers, which is leading nowhere.

6) Vol. 10, No. 51, December 22, pp. 824-825.

This issue was dedicated to Sholem Aleichem on the 50th anniversary of his debut in Yiddish literature. For this occasion Kadye Molodowsky wrote an article "Sholem Aleichem far kinder" (Sholem Aleichem For Children), in which she points to his extraordinary talent and success as a writer for children. She credits this to his intuitive understanding of how to reach the child. She writes "children hate being preached to ... but they love works in which there is a clear sense of decency, love and justice. This is the source of the love that children have for Sholem Aleichem." She adds that Sholem Aleichem is honest and simple and full of love and that the children respond to it. His language is their language. And what is more, he never gets too intimate with the upper class and few of the Yiddish schools have yet had the child of a wealthy family come through their doors. Sholem Aleichem, she maintains, is actually the pillar of the Yiddish school and without doubt, the favorite of the Jewish student, young and old alike.

Notes 1933

1. N. Meisel, "Mkoyekh dem shund roman," (Concerning the Trash Novel), *Literarische Bleter*, 10: 45 10 November 1933: 609.

1934

A) Vol. 11, No. 3, January 19, pp. 36-37.

In this issue, Rokhl H. Korn writes a review, "Dzshike gas un ir dikhterin" (Dzika Street and its Poet.) In it, Rokhl Korn takes the opportunity to speak out against the injustice historically done to the Jewish woman by traditionally relegating her to the periphery of Jewish life, to the daily chores and to the mundane. This, however, claims Rokhl Korn, allowed the Jewish woman to develop a relationship to the real world which men lack. Here, Korn points to a historic truth - the real world of economic hardships of the woman, versus the male world of learning; the *eyshe khayil* versus the *bank kvetsher* "Beys menerisher don kishotizm hot gekemft mit di, durkh zikh aleyn oysgetrakhte vintmiln, hot di froy in zorgevdiker akhrayes gefil far der tsukunft getun di shvartsarbet fun lebn" (While masculine Don Quixotism battled imaginary windmills, the woman, with a sense of responsibility for the future, performed the scut-work of life.)

Poetry, Korn continues, should perform more than a single function. It cannot reflect only the beauty or chivalric in life. Nor however, should it be only a cry of hunger and poverty. Its duty is, she maintains, to raise up the mundane and to give it its due in the world of writing. Women, she continues, have been able to do this better, i.e. bring the real into poetry, because they are closest to it and Kadye Molodowsky is one of those writers who actually succeeded in creating "the synthesis of life and poetry".

The review cites many examples of how Kadye Molodowsky makes the tragic, sorrowful existence of "Dzika Street" the subject of excellent writing that is not propaganda, but authentic artistic creation.

1) Vol. 11, No. 9, March 2, p. 135.

On a page of poetry titled "Lider" (Poems), Kadye Molodowsky appears along with A. Liessin/New York and Reyzi Zhikhlinski/Gombin. Molodowsky's poem "Samum" (Simoom), is frightening in its prophetic horror as she documents the rise of German fascism punctuated by the shouts of the Heil! Heil! The poem is not dated. It appears in *Freydke, Literarische bleter*, Warsaw, 1935, pp. 65-67, undated, in the section "Mayn shlep shif" (My Tugboat)

2) Vol. 11, No. 21, May 18, p. 334.

"Vos zogt ir itst vegn ayer eygener onshtendikeyt, khoshever y. khmurner? (an ofener briv tsu y. khmurner)" (What Do You Say Now About Your Own Decency, Honourable Y. Khmurner? (An open letter to Y. Khmurner)¹.

The violent struggle between the Communists and the Bund came to a head in 1934-35 due to the Comintern's policy, dictated by Stalin, that Social Democracy, now termed "Social Fascism," was a greater threat than fascism. The TSYSHO school system, Yiddish Teachers Union and related institutions drew their strength in leadership, teaching staff and students, from the ranks of the Bund and to a lesser extent, from the smaller Left Poalei Zion Party. Communists and their sympathizers also participated in TSYSHO. The Communists succeeded in exploiting a certain dissatisfaction with perceived bureaucratic tendencies in these organizations in order to oust the Bund from these institutions. Kadye Molodowsky was drawn into this struggle and became one of the leading spokesmen of the anti-Bund faction. During this period leftist sympathies were strengthened in the editorial policy of *Literarische bleter* and the periodical adopted the anti-Bund position. This manifested itself in, among others, a vicious attack in the press by Kadye Molodowsky on Y. Khmurner and the leadership of the Bund, specifically on the issue of the TSYSHO schools and the problems in the teacher's organization there. Part of the conflict was played out on the pages of *Literarische bleter*, the pro-Communist

*Fraynd*² in which Kadye Molodowsky played a leading role as the editor of its literary page,³ and the Bundist daily, *Folkstsaytung*.⁴

The articles in the *Literarische bleter* provide only a glimpse into the smear campaign that developed around the Yiddish secular school issue and the role of the press connected to it. In this debate, Kadye Molodowsky is far from the "non-joiner" she pretends to be. Her moralistic preaching and vitriolic attack on the Bund, belie the gentle, soft-spoken writer of her memoir.

On May 18, 1934 in No. 21 on page 334 (incorrectly numbered 20 and 310 respectively in the *Literarische bleter*), Kadye Molodowsky published an open letter to Y. Khmurner in which she attacks him and the "fat, disgusting" leadership of his organization, for the gangster methods they use in dealing with the working class. She accuses them of attacking the already suffering workers who could not pay union dues. She claims that the workers stand in fear of the Bund, not because of its power over public opinion, but rather because of the Bund's physical abuse. She attacks the Bund's followers and leadership for their lack of integrity and dishonesty in their dealings, particularly in the school organization.

She accused Khmurner, Yankev Patt, Kh. Kazdan, S. Mendelsohn⁵ and others of personally benefiting from the American financial support designated for the Yiddish secular schools.⁶ Now that that source has dried up, she said, the leadership have deserted the schools like rats - a sinking ship. She herself, she says, continued to stand by the schools, earning a meager eighteen zlotys a month and has "swollen legs" (this expression quickly gained popularity and the entire Molodowsky/Bund conflict of this period was popularly known as the "swollen legs affair") from the twelve years of starvation work. Even in the "fat years" she claimed, the teachers starved. Molodowsky categorically states that it was not worth working for such "devoted" people and that "one does not have to be your political enemy to bitterly oppose you and hate you. One need only be an honest person."⁷

B) Vol. 11, No. 21, May 18, p. 310.

On the same page as Kadye Molodowsky's attack on Khmurner, the *Literarische bleter* published a greatly edited version of the lengthy letter sent to them by the Executive of the Teacher's Union of the Yiddish secular schools in Poland. There is a note by the editor, (unsigned),⁸ that what has been edited out of the original letter, are the attacks on the representatives of the "other" factions in the Executive, who, according to the letter, "wish to discredit the Union and especially its majority group - the Bund, and thus destroy the Union". The editor claims to be presenting only the main (pertinent) issues.

The resulting edited paragraph presents problems in the membership and the voting within the Union and highlights a particular problem in the Medem Sanitarium staff. There were allegations there that the Executive was trying to eliminate from the Union all Non-Bund members. The letter states that those who left the Union, and the Medem Sanitarium, did so because they were let go for pedagogical and social reasons or had left on their own accord. In other words, there had been no "purge."

There is an editorial response to this, which, basically maintains that *Literarische bleter* had been informed by the opposing faction i.e. anti-Bundists, that they have nothing to do with the letter and they categorically refuse to sign the petition prepared by the Bundist majority which denies Molodowsky's accusation in *Literarische bleter* about corruption in the Union. The way in which the petition was organized was, according to the dissenters, also illegal in that it was created after the Executive had adjourned and the non-Bundist representatives had left the room.

C) Vol. 11, No. 25, June 22, p. 40.

In this issue, there appears a letter, signed by Zerubavel,⁹ Vice-chairman,¹⁰ Yiddish School Organization, (TYSHO). It is addressed to the editorial board of the

Literarische bleter and claims that, although he does not want to get involved in the dispute between Kadye Molodowsky and Khmurner, he nevertheless is compelled to defend the organization and its responsible leadership against the slanderous attack leveled at the Yiddish School (as a whole) at a time when it is being besieged by outside (read government) forces.

Zerubavel rebuffs Kadye Molodowsky's personal attack on the leaders of the organization, claiming that they have remained faithful and dedicated and have never personally benefited from the "dollars". This is a direct reference to Molodowsky's accusation that they used the monies sent from America for the support of the schools for their own purposes. (see 1934/no. 2 in this annotated bibliography.) The beneficiaries of the support from America, he continues, were the schools themselves. TSYSHO, he adds, was never a place for people looking for personal gain.

These attacks, he maintains, are harmful to the school and undermine its supporters, among whom Kadye Molodowsky, as a long-standing teacher, is certainly counted.

He concludes that the schools are presently in a life and death struggle for their very existence and this kind of attack is tantamount to a death sentence.

There is an editorial response, which is nothing short of a partisan defense of Kadye Molodowsky. In agreeing with Zerubavel's defense of the Yiddish School, and finding it admirable, the editor goes on however, to assure him that Molodowsky's intentions were never to undermine the schools. He then launches into an attack on Zerubavel himself, accusing him of a double standard in which he preaches, on the one hand, that Molodowsky's tactics are harmful to the school, while on the other, "...his *Arbeter tsaytung*"¹¹ is full of vitriol against those who oppose his views. He emphasizes that Molodowsky's words in the *Literarische bleter* pale in comparison.

This issue continued to be debated on the pages of the *Literarische bleter*. On July 6, 1934 in No. 27 on page 432, there is an editorial comment about Melech Ravitch's letter to the same newspaper, informing them of his termination of his association with them in response to their having published Kadye Molodowsky's attack on Khmurner. Ravitch's letter appeared in the June 25th issue, No. 197, p. 5 of the *Folkstsaytung*. The editor of the *Literarische bleter* points out the "convenient" timing of Ravitch's letter - after the publication of his travelogue and photographs of his world tour - two weeks after Molodowsky's letter actually appeared. The editors question Ravitch's independence. They ask, what does Ravitch's letter really represent?

The debate and conflict did not resolve themselves either peacefully, or quietly. On January 18, 1935 in Vol. 12, no. 3, p. 43 of *Literarische bleter*, there appeared yet another article on the *Fraynd/Folkstsaytung* conflict. This was a report of a press conference called by *Fraynd* on January 11, 1935, to publicize the dishonorable methods employed by the *Folkstsaytung*. The editor continued to side with the *Fraynd* and concluded that the *Folkstsaytung* allowed itself to employ "unacceptable tactics" against the *Fraynd* and its employees. The experience, the editor contend, has raised the ire of the public against the *Folkstsaytung* and its methods in dealing with political opponents.

I have been unsuccessful in locating any copies of the *Fraynd* in any North American library, or in the National Library and Archives of the Hebrew University in Jersusalem Israel, in order to see how this conflict appeared there. The *Folkstsaytung* issues and numbers pertaining to this particular incident and *Fraynd's* open anti-socialist position are found in New York at the YIVO and are listed in the following note.¹²

3) Vol. 11, No. 25, June 22, p. 396.

Under the title "Lider", there appears a poem by Kadye Molodowsky, "Mayn shlep-shif"(My Tugboat). In this poem, the poet desperately seeks a moment of

peace and respite from the cries of horror and need that surround her. She tries to hold onto a thread of blue sky, the symbol of all that is pleasing and fulfilling to her. The poem is not dated. This poem appears in *Freydke*, pp. 61-62 and is also the title for the collection of eleven poems in this section of the book.

4) Vol. 11, No. 26, June 29, pp. 411-412.

Under the heading "Lider", there appear four poets; Daniel Charney/New York, A. Leyeles/New York, Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw and Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!" in Yiddish (translated by Dr. A. Aysen). None of the poems is dated.

Kadye Molodowsky's poem, "Mayn rebe" (My Teacher), is a bitter reminder of her difficult daily toil and her career as a Yiddish writer. This poem appears in *Freydke*, p. 81. It is undated.

5) Vol. 11, No. 42, October 19, pp. 679-681.

In this issue there is an essay by Kadye Molodowsky entitled "Dovid Bergelson tray zikh" (Dovid Bergelson True to Himself).

This entire issue was dedicated to Dovid Bergelson. During the year, there had been several attacks on Bergelson, particularly on his tendentiousness. Molodowsky's two page review is a categorical refutation of this accusation and she goes on to defend his unique style and singular talent by praising his vision and scope as "Gogol-like. She examines his novels from the earliest, *Nokh alenen* (After All is Said and Done), to the most recent, *Baym dnyeper* (At the Dnieper River), which actually evoked the criticism. She demonstrates how consistently visionary and brilliant his work is. She insists that few writers are gifted with that vision and Bergelson numbers among that select few. She points to the complexity,

the hidden, the understatement in his work which demand thought and pondering on the part of the reader.

6) Vol. 11, No. 44, November 2, p. 733.

The poem "A lid on a nomen" (A Poem Without a Name) appears on a half page titled "Lider". Presented are, Kadye Molodowsky/Warsaw and Y. Glatsteyn/New York, each with one poem. Neither poem is dated. Molodowsky's poem "A lid on a nomen" (A Poem Without a Name) was reprinted in *Freydke*, p. 78, the last poem in the section "Mayn shlep-shif". In this poem, the poet laments how tranquillity and peace avert her. She is always assaulted by noises - those of daily life and struggle, as well as those of her own demons.

Notes 1934

1. Y. Khmurner, pseudonym for Y. Leshtshinsky, became a member of the central committee of the Bund in Poland in 1921, and one of the editors of its organ, the *Folkstsaytung*. After the death of B. Mikhalevitch, leader of the Bund, he assumed the chairmanship of TSISHO. He was also a member of the Jewish Community Council in Warsaw. Y. SH. Herts, "Folkstsaytung 1918-1939," *Di yidishe prese vos iz geven*, (Tel Aviv: Veltrat fun yidishe zshumalstn, 1975): 163.

2. This was the only Communist Yiddish daily in interwar Poland, (20 April, 1934 - 28 March, 1938). Its "official publisher" was B. Klatskin, although it was supported by the Communist party in Poland. Among its editorial staff were many renowned Yiddish writers, artists and intellectuals Alter Katsizne, Kadye Molodowsky, and Simkhe Lev (Molodowsky's husband) among them. D. Sfar, "Di teglikhe tsaytung 'fraynd'," in *Di yidishe prese vos iz geven*, 220-222.

3. Ibid, 221

4. Founded in 1918 in Warsaw as *Lebns-fragn*, the *Folkstsaytung* was the organ of the Bund in Poland until 1939. Frequent acts of repression and government persecution of the Left in general, forced the paper to change its name. The editorial board represented the leading personalities and intellectuals of the Bund: Vladimir Medem, Beynish Mikhalevitsh, Henrikh Erlikh, Viktor Alter, Vladimir Kosovsky, Y. Leshtshinsky (Y. Khmurner) to mention just a few. Y. Sh. Herts, "Folkstsaytung 1918 - 1939," *Di yidishe prese vos iz geven*, 151-169.

5. Yankev Patt, Kh. Sh. Kazdan, Sh. Mendelsohn were leading figures in the Bund and its cultural and educational arm, and as such were its representatives on the Executive of TSYSHO. They were highly respected and well known personalities outside the organization of the Bund as well. Molodowsky chose her prey wisely, knowing that these names had a high profile in the Jewish communities of Warsaw, Poland and abroad.

6. Joseph Marcus writes about the contribution of both local and international Jewish relief efforts to Poland in the interwar period which enabled the continued existence of many Jewish institutions. Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983), 123-144. The economic depression of the 1930's, affected that relief and, combined with the increased government harassment of the Yiddish schools, added to the uncertain future of those institutions.

7. It is interesting to read what Kazdan had to say about the Yiddish teachers and their role in the modern Yiddish school. He credits them with its very survival, noting that this was done with great devotion and sacrifice on the part of the teachers. "The teachers considered their work as an obligation to the folk masses and were infused with love for the folk and for the Jewish child." He adds, "...the teachers were the soul of the school,... its spirit..." Kh. Sh. Kazdan, *Fun kheder un*

"shkoles" biz Tsisho: Dos ruslendische yidntum in gerangi far shul, shprakh and kultur (Mexico: Kultur un Hilf. 1956) 443.

8. The editor of *Literarische bleter* at this time, 1928-1938, was Nakhmen Meisel Prager, Leonard, *Yiddish Literary And Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies; A Selective Annotated Bibliography* (Darby, Pa: Association for the Study of Jewish Languages, 1982) 170. As noted previously, he was sympathetic to the anti-Bund forces.

9. Jacob (Vitkin) Zerubavel, (1886-1967). One of the leaders of Poale Zion from its earliest days, author and journalist, he lived in Palestine and America before returning to help lead the organization in Poland, 1918-1935. After the split in the movement in 1920, he headed the Left Poalei Zion and edited its organ, *Arbetersaytung*. He was also a member of the Warsaw Community Council until he left for Palestine again in 1935. While in Poland and for the duration of his life he remained active in the Yiddish literary world as writer and defender of the Yiddish language. "Zerubavel, Jacob (Vitkin)," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1972 ed.

10. The Left Poalei Zion was a Yiddishist part and a pillar of TSYSHO. For a full discussion of the role of the left Poalei Zion in Jewish education in Poland see Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). 186-221.

11. This was originally the organ of the Poalei Zion, later of the Left Poalei Zion, (1918 - 1939.) It played a key role in the international Zionist arena in this period. Zerubavel was its editor. Moyshe Erem, "Arbeter tsaytung," *Di yidishe prese vos geven*. 214.

12. Khmurner, I., "Fraynd oder epes andersh," *Folkstsaytung*, 136 11 May 1934, p. 9.

(unsigned article), "Nisht ale fartrogn glaykh...(an entfer k. molodovskin)," *Folkstayingtung*, 156 27 May 1934, p. 4.

Erlikh, H., "Tsu di aroysgeber fun 'fraynd'," *Folkstsaytung*, 157 28 May 1934, p. 4.

N., " Vos men tor un vos men tor nisht...", " *Folkstsaytung* 161 31 May 1934, p. 5.

Kosovki, V., " Di kortn fun 'fraynd' , " *Folkstsaytung* 167 5 June 1934, p. 4.

(unsigned article), " Frayndizm - frakizm, " *Folkstsaytung* 168 6 June 1934, p. 4.

Kosovski, V., " Tsu der derklrung fun 'fraynd' , " *Folkstsaytung* 170 7 July 1934, p. 5.

Gilinski, Sh., " Vegn oyfrikhtigkeyt, erlekhtkeyt, gengsteray af der yidisher arbeter gas, " *Folkstsaytung* 171 8 June 1934, p. 6. This is a direct response to Molodowsky's attack of May 18 in the *Literarishe bleter* (1934/No. 2 in this annotated bibliography).

Lerer, A. " Bavustzinike shkorim : vegn di onfaln afn lerer-fareyn, " *Folkstsaytung* 171 8 June 1934, p. 6.

Shefner, B., " Dos shvakhe yesoymele... (vegn eyn numer 'Fraynd'," *Folkstsaytung* 196 24 June 1934, p. 3.

(unsigned article), " Tsviyes mit a krumer mine, " *Folkstsaytung* 196 24 June 1934, p. 5. This is an attack on the *Literarishe bleter* and Nakhmen Meisel, its editor, for not having printed the full text of Zerubavel's letter and for "sanitizing" Molodowsky's role in the conflict (1934/No. C in this annotated bibliography).

Ravitch, M., "Khaver ravitsh rayst iber mit di 'literarishe bleter' : a briv in redaktsye..., " *Folkstsaytung* 197 25 June 1934, p. 5.

I. Khmurner, " Vos mir darfn revidirn un vos nisht : fragn fun undzer shul-front," *Folkstsaytung* 254 17 August 1934, p. 7.

1935

1) Vol. 12, No. 2, January 11, p. 25.

In this issue there appears a poem titled: "A fragment fun der poeme 'Freydke'" (A Fragment of the Poem Freydke).

Freydke was Kadye Molodowsky's fourth book of poems. It was published by the *Literarische bleter* in May, 1935. The title of the book is also the title of a cycle of 16 poems, numbered and titled, which together, capture the essence of Jewish life in inter-war Poland, from the poverty on the Jewish streets, the political debates, to the economic and political crisis of the 1930's. The heroine of these poems is Freydke, a peddler of eggs, who speaks not only for women, (about whom Kadye Molodowsky repeatedly wrote in the most sympathetic language in chapters 42-50 of her memoir,) but is the personification of the issues of the period. The women in these poems are no longer the matriarchs of the Bible or the grandmothers of the softly-chanted "*tkhines*". Molodowsky's women are now of the 1930's and battle daily for their families' and neighbors' dignity and survival.

Molodowsky reveals herself as a powerful poet whose acerbic tongue, already evident in earlier essays and literary criticism, finds itself now equal to the task in her poetry. Her sympathy for the hopelessly poverty ridden masses is almost palpable and although Molodowsky always fought against "joining" and was not actually a member of a political party, her sympathies are all too obvious. Although she may not have written "programmatic agit-prop", segments of this collection certainly border on what many would consider, propaganda. *Freydke* is a poetic documentary of the late 1920's and 1930's - replete with "bosses", "unions", "strikes", politics, love and death.

The segment of the poem, which appears in this issue, is poem II of "Freydke" and is titled "Di stelye is niderik" (The Ceiling is Low). *Freydke*, pp. 9-10.

In this poem, Molodowsky briefly describes the home of her heroine with its low ceiling, its crookedly hung "Rembrandt painting (ha, ha)" (which, Molodowsky adds, was "probably bought from the bailiff") and the bookshelf with *Tevye der milkhiker* and *Penek*.

the door, the squeaking door,
the sharp stones of the courtyard leading into the street-
the barefoot, naked Jewish marketplace.
O, blackness
I can find no words to describe you...

These words complete the picture of desolation. Yet, the poet forces us to see that the oppressive, physical surroundings have not overwhelmed our heroine. The spirit is still very much alive.

2) Vol. 12, No. 10, March 8, p. 53.

"Mitn breytn shtrom fun lebn" (With The Broad Stream Of Life)

Kadye Molodowsky shares this page with Rokhl H. Korn, but this time not as poets, rather as prose writers. They each have an article about Y. Opatoshu. In her short piece, Kadye Molodowsky focuses on Opatoshu's wide range of subjects and on his ability to bring out the fine points and nuances in what might otherwise be glossed-over generalizations. She writes that a writer achieves greatness only by being accepted by "the 'great anonymous'- the reader" and claims that Opatoshu has successfully done that. She points to a discussion she had with some of her older students in which a large number of them had read his works and each student referred to his/her own favorite.

Molodowsky then goes on to quote Opatoshu. "Poetry - just like prose - cannot satisfy itself only with a lyric about a flower or a breeze. It must address the monumental - a people, a class; the great cathedral." She concludes by noting that

Opatoshu does just that. "He takes on the monumental, he takes on the broad stream of life."

A) Vol. 12, No. 18, May 3, p. 286.

In the section edited by Nakhmen Meisel, "Fun vokh tsu vokh" (From week to week), which reviews, in brief, the past as well as the forthcoming week's cultural activities under the headings "Literatur un kultur" (Literature and Culture) and "Teater un Kunst", there appeared under the former, an announcement regarding the forthcoming publication of Kadye Molodowsky's newest book, *Freydke*. The announcement mentions that the book includes, in addition to the work by that name, two series of new poems. There is also a note informing the readers that *Dzshike gas* is sold out.

3) Vol. 12, No. 20, May 17, p. 312.

This entire page is devoted to these two poems by Kadye Molodovski/Warsaw, under the bold heading, "Tzvey fragmentn fun der poeme 'Freydke'" (Two Excerpts From The Poem "Freydke").

The first poem, "di groye maranarke" (The Grey Jacket) animates the grey jacket which then becomes no longer merely the jacket of the illegal immigrant Shmuel Horovitz, but the symbol of the hungry, unemployed masses. The anonymous working man, becomes an object :

The grey jacket comes to a stop;
a second, a third...
a monotone.
They know the cold of dawn
and the thin jackets, the shudder,
the glint of the showcases, that have imprisoned -
satedness and warmth
and left cold and hunger, outside.
What does the grey jacket think
in the face of the honeypots?...

Molodowsky creates an almost Dickensian picture, in which the extremes of poverty and riches are bound to clash, and the anonymous grey jackets become a revolution

"Parizer hintergeslekh" (Parisian Backstreets) contrasts the grandeur of Paris with the tiny backstreets in which an illegal economy operates; one which is the lifeline of the unemployed masses that stream there from other European countries, hoping to find work.

...es zhümet oys a grine hofenung
fun blitsndike nodlen un kupershtik fun finf frank.

(...a green hope is buzzing
of flashing needles and copper five franc pieces

But the vast majority do not find what they had hoped for. "The tiny streets are filled with the shadows of those with nowhere to go and the cinema is filled with grey-coated foreigners, come to watch an old film."

B) Vol. 12, No. 21, May 24, p. 342.

In this issue's page of "Fun vokh tsu vokh", there appeared another announcement regarding the soon to be published book *Freydke*, which includes the "poem of our time" 'Freydke', along with a series of new poems by Kadye Molodowsky. It re-states also that *Dzshike gas*, is entirely sold out and that it had received over 25 outstanding reviews.

C) Vol. 12, No. 23, June 7, p. 373.

From time to time, there appeared in the *Literarische bleter* a column, "Naye bikher" (New Books), which listed newly published works - fiction and non-fiction, with a brief review of each title. This issue listed Kadye Molodowsky's *Freydke*, as the first title. (The listings were not in alphabetical order). The listing provides the

bibliographic information and lists the contents of the book. There is then a brief review which indicates that this book is a major point of departure, depicting the reality of this difficult yet wonderful era.

D) Vol. 12, No. 24, June 14, p. 383.

In this issue, Nakhmen Meisel bids farewell to Molodowsky on the occasion of her trip, which will include a stay of an undetermined duration in the United States. Meisel admits, unabashedly, that she will be greatly missed in the Yiddish literary circles of Warsaw. Her steadfastness in the face of opposing views, her unwillingness to divert from her goal- "good literature" -often singled her out and left her alone. He claims that she was more than a colleague, she was more often in the foreground as scout and leader.

Despite Kadye Molodowsky's unwillingness to be pigeon-holed and categorized, Meisel, nevertheless, places her front and centre among the labouring masses as the expression of their tragic lives and struggles for a better tomorrow. Her own life in Warsaw, he maintains, lent her works an element of painful veracity. He points also to Molodowsky's particular relationship with the young of the Jewish masses, as their teacher and friend,

He bids a sad farewell to Kadye Molodowsky, adding once more, how much she will be missed. There is no mention anywhere in this farewell piece whether this was delivered at an evening or event of any kind.

E) Vol. 2, No. 24, June 14, p. 390.

In this brief overview of the week's cultural events under the heading, "literatur un kultur" , there is a short paragraph announcing that Kadye Molodowsky left for the United States on June 10th. The reader is informed that she will be stopping in Paris for a few days. The report adds that there had been an intimate

gathering of several writers, artists and cultural activists at which an interesting discussion took place about the role of artists today. There appears not to have been any formal or official function to mark this occasion - not at the Yiddish Writers Union, nor anywhere else. It seems that Kadye Molodowsky's outspokenness, her leadership in the fight against "shund" and her involvement in the attacks on the TSYSHO, made her a persona non-grata in many circles in Warsaw.

Meisel observes that the farewell to Kadye Molodowsky had been arranged by a small group of friends and not by the PEN. He comments on the strained relationship that exists today among the most important and influential members of PEN.

Hereafter, the *Literarische bleter* keeps its readership abreast of Kadye Molodowsky's whereabouts and activities while en route to America, through the "Fun vokh tsu vokh" feature. Everything that appears by Kadye Molodowsky in *Literarische bleter* after June 10th, 1935, is submitted from outside of Poland and soon thereafter, from outside of Europe.

F) Vol. 12, No. 28, July 12, p. 451.

This issue presents excerpts from an interview with Kadye Molodowsky, who is in Paris, en route to America. The interview appeared in the Parisian Yiddish Communist daily, *Di naye presse*.¹ In it, Molodowsky continues her campaign against "shund" which, she maintains, seems to have taken over the Yiddish literary scene of the day. The failure of the literati to provide meaningful leadership, hope and inspiration to the Jewish youth and to the labouring Jewish masses in what she refers to as "these horrendous times", arouses her ire. She argues that:

Yiddish literature in Poland owes a great deal to the suffering and heroic Jewish folk masses. (It) has not begun to repay this debt, not through its talent, nor its intellect and not even with its heart. It has remained strangely silent to its surroundings, which are today suffering,...

Every day is a mountain which the Jewish poor must climb in its search for bread. The Jewish poor climbs that mountain, toils and struggles to find a path, searching for decent and human living conditions, sunlight and culture. Yet, Yiddish literature, with few exceptions, does not accompany them in their struggle...

Whatever optimism may have existed, has vanished...Jewish youth is left with a thirst...a dream to find employment - but no possibility of that exists. Yiddish literature in Poland does not recognize the hero of its era; the naked, homeless, unemployed and struggling working man.

Nor does it recognize the impoverished merchant ... It only provides the mass produced "shund" romances...a shameful reflection of the lack of responsibility of the writer.

Molodowsky, once again, lashes out at the irresponsible writers who have become enslaved to the dictatorship of finances and of the publishers - an ignominious occurrence. She further decries the failure of Yiddish literature to be the highest expression of the struggle for a better life. She denounces the "literary masquerade" of shund, "pure art in the most banal sense, in which life does not bleed."

4) Vol. 12, No. 40, October 4, p. 645.

In this issue, *Literarische bleter* published excerpts of letters of support for the *Literarische bleter* from Jewish cultural personalities outside of Warsaw. The journal had embarked on a campaign to raise funds in order to ensure its survival. This campaign was supported from as far away as North and South America. On this page, there are excerpts from various letters of endorsement and praise for the journal from, Zalmen Reizen/Vilna, Yankl Yakir/ Bessarabia and from Kadye Molodowsky/New York.

Molodowsky's words are a sad commentary on the state of affairs of the Yiddish literary journals in America which seem to be published almost entirely for the sake of the writers.

There is no major circulation to speak of, according to Molodowsky, nor do they seem to have the presence or the prestige that literary journals have in Poland. Kadye Molodowsky writes that the esteem in which she holds the *Literarische bleter* has grown a hundred-fold in comparison to anything which she has found here. The American Yiddish literary journals appear, for a person from Poland, where Jewish life still has breadth and scope, to be mere child's play.

G) Vol. 12, No. 44, November 1, pp. 700-701.

This report of an evening to officially welcome Kadye Molodowsky to New York, was submitted by Menashe Unger. He describes the "historic" aspect of this evening in that it was the first time that the various partisan views were all set aside to form a committee from among all sectors of the political and cultural world - "from Dovid Pinski to W. Abrams of the *Signal*".² For several weeks prior, the American Yiddish press had been filled with reviews and announcements welcoming Molodowsky to America.

The reception itself, was attended by over 700 people with many more having been turned away. The most important and influential Yiddish writers and poets had organized the event and it was chaired by Peretz Hirshbein. Welcoming addresses were delivered by a myriad of personalities, only one woman - Esther Shumiatcher - among them. Kadye Molodowsky had befriended Hirshbein and his wife, Esther Shumiatcher, during their visit to Poland in the 1920's.

The report continues that, following a long list of speakers, Kadye Molodowsky delivered a major address about Yiddish literature in Poland. She focused on the "proletarian writers, with 'credentials' (party people), and on those who are revolutionary even without those credentials" such as Y. Opatoshu, Hirshbein and others. She spoke about the group of young writers in Poland who deal with the reality of Polish Jewry and claimed that those who turn away from that reality are not fulfilling their debt to the Jewish labouring masses. She applauded

writers who, like Opatoshu and Hirshbein, dare to address the problems of the day. Works like Opatoshu's *Lincheray* (lynching) and Hirshbein's *Royte felder* (Red Fields) drew her admiration. She gave kudos to the young proletarian writers who are "not poisoned by the newspapers and do not submit sensationalist novels to the press". (It seems that although Opatoshu and Hirshbein were no longer residing in Poland, she felt the need - perhaps because of their presence at the evening, to single them out).

She paid particular attention to Rokhl H. Korn, Moyshe Shulshteyn, Binem Heller, Herts Bergner and the group "Yung vilne."

Unger reports that the lecture was very well received and was followed by a reception at a local cafe, co-hosted by the "family of writers" from all factions, together with the Yiddish teachers. He concluded that the evening demonstrated that the Jewish masses of New York knew how to appreciate a good writer and that Kadye Molodowsky had successfully created a bridge between the Yiddish writers of America and Poland.

H) Vol. 12, No. 45, November 8, p. 721.

"Fun vaysl biz der sen" (From the Vistula to the Seine). In this review of *Freydke*, Rokhl Korn describes the author as "...hurling the naked truth into the face of the world." She claims that to review Kadye Molodowsky's works is not possible without writing about the poet herself, because rarely has a writer so identified herself with her heroes and their fate. "...every line becomes her autobiography." Korn writes that Kadye Molodowsky's work could have benefited from some time to "let it age, like a good wine", but is quick to add that Molodowsky is the sort who feels that in overlooking a wrong, one becomes an accomplice to it. Korn describes Molodowsky as "confronting every occurrence with her own life. She implicates her own eyes, hands and meager existence which she would gladly share, if she could thereby patch an old woman's shirt or feed a hungry child..."

Korn points to Molodowsky's personification of poverty - echoing earlier critics who said that she animates the inanimate - and further applauds the universality of her work.

Korn also critiques the weaknesses in the work , noting that the heroine is weakened not by confronting her own problems, but by the multiplicity of peripheral episodes. The work suffers occasionally, Korn claims, from weak inner construction but in all, the positive aspects override the negative. Most important, Korn emphasizes, Molodowsky points the way to a solution.

5) Vol. 12, No. 47, November 22, p. 602.

This is Kadye Molodowsky's first literary contribution to the *Literarische bleter* from the United States. The poem, "Fort aroys a shif fun hafn" (A Ship Leaving Port) subtitled "rayze ayndrukn" (Impressions of a Journey), is dedicated to the tenth anniversary of *Literarische bleter*.

The poem describes the ship's departure, the people aboard and the sea, which is supposed to yield the promise of mermaids, rainbows and imaginary fleets. But the reality of her own condition quickly insinuates itself into the image. She travels third class, accompanied by her constant companion - poverty, nevertheless she is well groomed, as is expected of travelers to distant lands. On the ship, also traveling third class, with a false passport, is a revolutionary - hunted by the police. The ocean, writes Molodowsky, belongs to everyone; "The ocean is blue and snow white/the ocean belongs to God and the police".

This poem cited above brings to a close a ten year association of Kadye Molodowsky with the *Literarische bleter* in Warsaw, one in which she was an active participant. She brought to it her varied experiences as a teacher, writer and cultural activist, who felt the pulse of Jewish life in that city. Through these contributions one gains an insight into the personality of the writer, educator and public figure that is

not attainable through a reading, no matter how close, of her memoir. The breadth and depth of her involvement in the life of interwar Polish Jewry is there for all to read in the pages of this remarkable literary journal.

Notes 1935

1. Founded in 1934, it had a regular following and appeared regularly despite financial constraints. Aaron Alperin, "Di yidishe prese in frankraykh," *Di yidishe prese vos iz geven*, 604-612.

2. Dovid Pinski, leading Yiddish literary personality who worked closely with Peretz in the creation of modern Yiddish literature and culture, was also active on the same front in the United States. He was an editor of *Tsukunft* and among the prominent figures in the creation of CYCO. He was also among the co-founders of the *alveltlekh yidishn kultur-kongress* (Congress For Jewish Culture) and the first president of the Yiddish Pen Club in New York. He was also active in the leadership of the Poalei Zion and was elected president of the *Yidish natsionaln arbeter farband* in 1933. *Leksikon fun der nayer yidishe literatur*, 7: 134-146.

William Abrams was a member of the editorial board of *Signal*, (New York, 1933-1936), the organ of the proletarian writer's association "Proletpen," which was pro-Communist and pro-Soviet. Leonard Prager, *Yiddish Literary and Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies*, 172.

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