

Tradition and the Avant-garde: Trilingual Literature of Polish Jews

100th Anniversary of I.L. Peretz's Death

University of Warsaw, 14-16 April 2015

On the occasion of one hundred years of the death of the great Yiddish and Hebrew writer Isaac Leib Peretz (April 2015), Warsaw University, Ben-Gurion University in the Negev, with the assistance of Tel-Aviv University, organize a conference dedicated to the trilingual literature of Polish Jews until 1939. There is no writer who, like Peretz, could represent this phenomenon, starting his writing career in Polish then turned to Hebrew and Yiddish.

The trilingual work of I.L. Peretz will be a main topic in the conference discussions. However, our aim is not to concentrate only on Peretz's work, but to discuss the oeuvre of other unique personalities in the cultural space of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe generally, and in Poland particularly.

Another major topic connected to Peretz's life and works is the role played by Warsaw (as well as other places like Krakow, Lviv, Lodz, Odessa, Vilnius, etc.) as centers of Jewish culture and creativity in the 19th and the 20th centuries, and the representation of this activity in Jewish trilingual literary periodicals and documentary literature.

In a broader context we would like to examine the coexistence of two opposing forces in Polish-Jewish cultural life: tradition and avant-garde. What was the effect of traditional contexts (Biblical, Mystic, Messianic, Hasidic and Haskalah) among Polish Jewry? What imagined identities were created by the literature of Eastern European Jews? What relations were formed between this literature and European ones, especially Polish? What was its attitude toward Eastern-European Jewish and non-Jewish folklore, theatre, and other arts? What literary debates concerning modernism in Jewish literature took place? What types of avant-garde movements emerged? Was there a distinct Polish-Jewish avant-garde, and what were its relationships with other European movements (especially Polish, German and Russian)? How were political and ideological movements represented in the trilingual literature of Polish Jews?

The lingual element itself is another important angle worth discussion. How did the trilingual differentiation actually function, and how was the search for the preferred writing language manifested? Was there a "proper" language for writing Jewish Modernism? Above all: was Jewish modernism possible at all? what is "Jewish" in it, or is Modernism by definition a universal phenomenon?

At the end of the conference, we plan to have a commemoration ceremony at the Peretz, An-ski and Dinezon mausoleum in the Jewish cemetery.

Registration and abstract submission

Abstracts (in English) of 250/300 words accompanied by a short bio should be sent to the conference organizers by the 15th of October 2014. Email address:

peretz.conference@gmail.com.

Authors will be informed by e-mail on the acceptance of their abstract by the 15th of December 2014.

There is no registration fee.

The organizers do not provide transport and accommodation. However, we will recommend some good places to stay in Warsaw.

The conference will be held in English and Polish (with simultaneous translation), the presentation of papers will be 20 minutes long.

Selected papers will be published in the peer-reviewed proceedings of the conference. The deadline for the submission of full papers will be announced at a later stage.

We invite you to take part in the conference and to contribute from your knowledge, research and interest to this event.

Organizers:

Warsaw University: Alina Molisak, Shoshana Ronen

Ben-Gurion University: Yigal Schwartz

Tel-Aviv University: Avner Holtzman