

# Pioneers of the Yiddish Word: Women Poets in Yiddish 1586-1987

Yiddish literature, with its rich history and vibrant traditions, has long been dominated by male voices. However, hidden within the pages of forgotten manuscripts and obscure anthologies lies a vibrant and often overlooked chapter in Yiddish literary history: the contributions of women poets.



## A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish, 1586-1987 (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture)

by Kathryn Hellerstein

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 1859 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Print length	: 511 pages
Paperback	: 312 pages
Item Weight	: 12 ounces
Dimensions	: 5.51 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches
Hardcover	: 150 pages



This article delves into the neglected history of women poets who wrote in Yiddish from the 16th to the 20th century. It sheds light on their remarkable contributions to Yiddish literature, Jewish culture, and the broader literary landscape.

## Early Voices: Glikl of Hameln and Sarah Bas Tovim

The earliest known Yiddish woman poet is Glikl of Hameln (1645-1724), a German Jewish businesswoman and memoirist. Her Yiddish autobiography, "The Memoirs of Glikl," contains numerous poems that reflect her personal experiences, her deep faith, and her keen observations of the Jewish community.

Another early Yiddish woman poet is Sarah Bas Tovim (1586-1660), a Turkish Jewish poetess. Her work, which includes poems in both Hebrew and Yiddish, explores themes of love, loss, and the Jewish experience.

### **The Enlightenment and Beyond: Mirele Efros and Kadya Molodowsky**

During the Enlightenment period, a new generation of Yiddish women poets emerged, inspired by the ideals of humanism and education. One notable figure is Mirele Efros (1791-1867), a Russian Jewish poetess who wrote in both Yiddish and Hebrew. Her work is characterized by its lyrical beauty and its exploration of social issues.

In the early 20th century, Kadya Molodowsky (1894-1975) became one of the most prominent Yiddish women poets. Born in Ukraine, she emigrated to the United States in 1913. Her work is deeply rooted in her Jewish heritage and explores themes of identity, exile, and the Holocaust.

### **Modernism and Yiddish Feminism: Chava Rosenfarb and Celia Dropkin**

The modernist movement of the early 20th century brought about a significant shift in Yiddish literature, and women poets played a key role in shaping this new aesthetic. Chava Rosenfarb (1923-2011), a Polish-born survivor of the Holocaust, is considered one of the greatest Yiddish poets of

the 20th century. Her work is characterized by its experimental form, its surreal imagery, and its exploration of trauma and memory.

Celia Dropkin (1887-1956), a Russian Jewish poetess who emigrated to the United States in 1911, is another important figure in modern Yiddish literature. Her work is notable for its feminist themes and its exploration of women's experiences and struggles.

### **Post-Holocaust and Contemporary Voices: Ruth Wisse and Carolyn Kizer**

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Yiddish literature underwent a period of profound transformation. Women poets continued to play a vital role in shaping the Yiddish literary landscape, grappling with the complexities of loss, memory, and the search for identity.

Ruth Wisse (born 1936), an American Yiddish poet and scholar, is a prominent figure in post-Holocaust Yiddish literature. Her work is known for its intellectual rigor, its exploration of Jewish history, and its deeply personal reflections on the Holocaust.

Carolyn Kizer (1925-2014), an American poet of Jewish descent, is known for her work in both English and Yiddish. Her Yiddish poems are characterized by their lyrical beauty, their exploration of female experience, and their dialogue with Jewish tradition.

The history of women poets in Yiddish is a testament to the resilience and creativity of Jewish women throughout the ages. From the early memoirs of Glikl of Hameln to the modernist experiments of Chava Rosenfarb, these women have used the Yiddish language to express their unique voices,

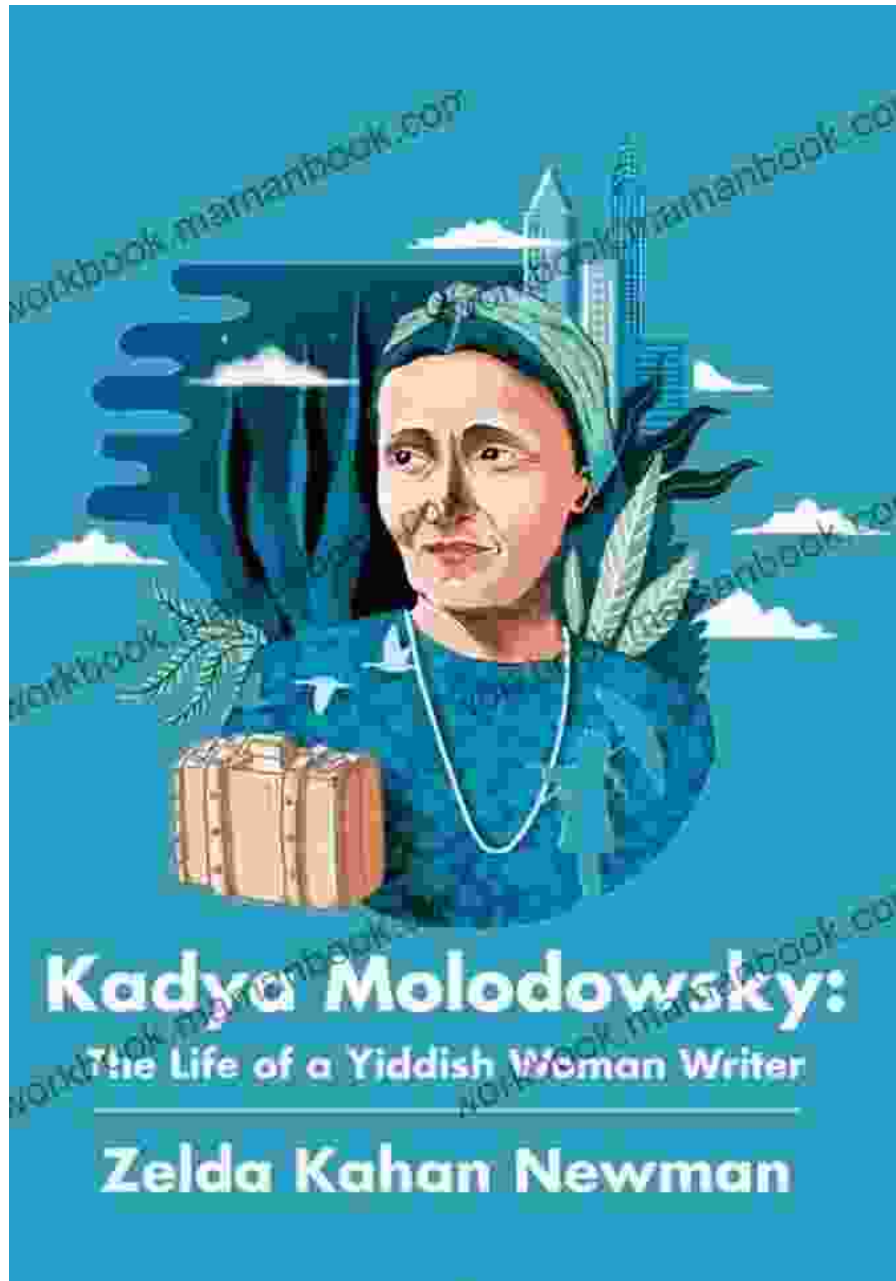
explore complex themes, and contribute to the rich tapestry of Yiddish literature.

Their work not only enriches our understanding of Yiddish literature but also sheds light on the broader experience of Jewish women in history. By recognizing and celebrating the contributions of these pioneers, we can ensure that their voices continue to resonate in contemporary Jewish culture and beyond.

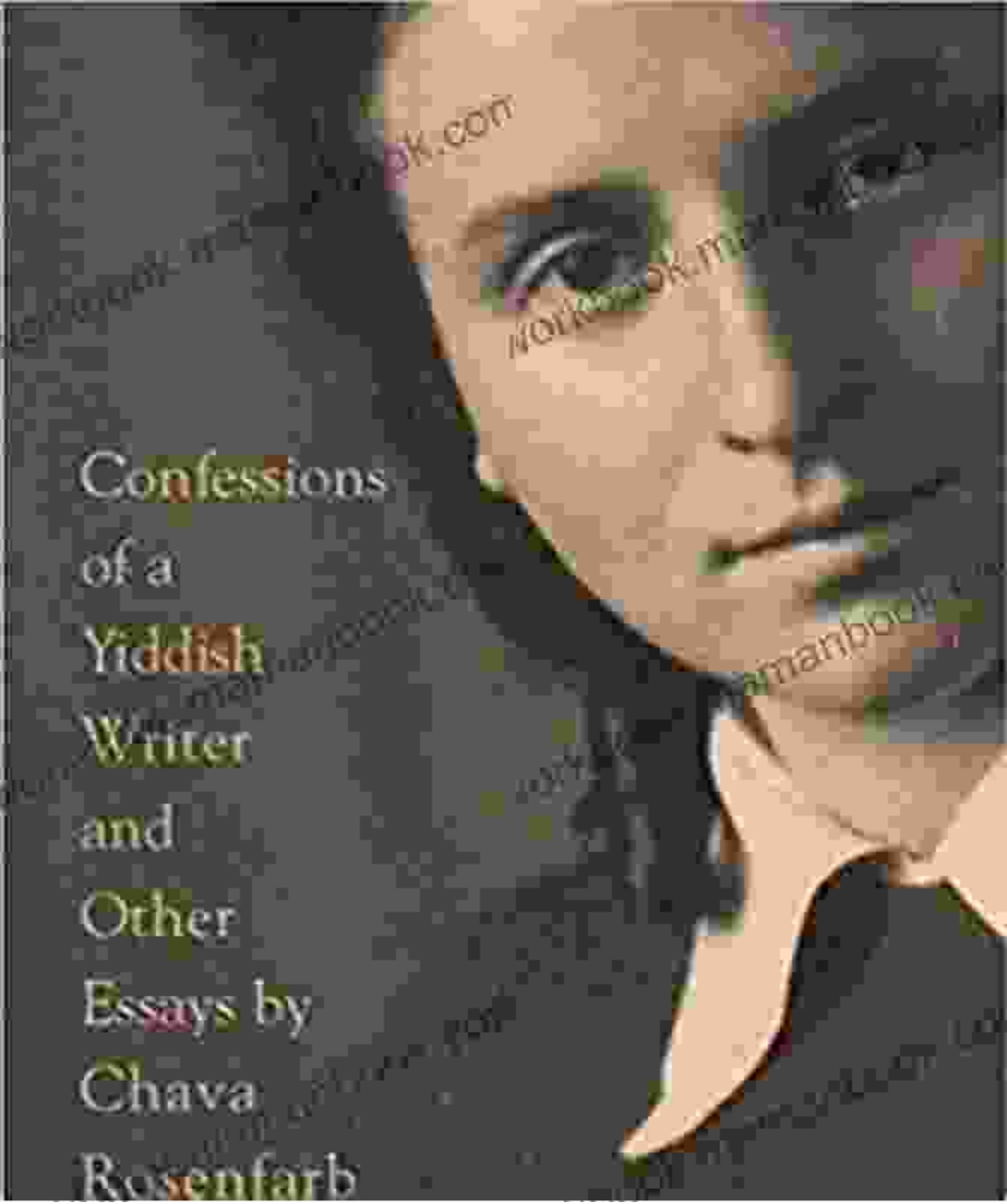
## References

1. Bader, David. "Yiddish Literature." *The Cambridge History of Jewish Literature*, edited by David Stern, vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, 2015.
2. Cole, Harriet. "Women Writers in Yiddish: A Critical Anthology." Jewish Publication Society, 2018.
3. Frajlich, Rachel. "Gliki of Hameln's Memoirs: Gender and Yiddish Autobiography." *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, edited by Nahum M. Sarna and Baruch A. Levine, Jewish Publication Society, 1989.
4. Kahan, Rose. "Celia Dropkin: A Feminist Voice in Yiddish Literature." *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, edited by Miriam Bodian and Freda S. Hochman, Jewish Women's Archive, 2012.
5. Wisse, Ruth R. "No Longer at Ease: The Modernist Revolution in Yiddish Literature." University of Washington Press, 2000.





Photograph of Kadya Molodowsky, a prominent Yiddish woman poet of the 20th century



Confessions  
of a  
Yiddish  
Writer  
and  
Other  
Essays by  
Chava  
Rosenfarb



Portrait of Celia Dropkin, a Russian Jewish poetess who emigrated to the United States in 1911





# Family Traditions

Which questions will help you learn about the traditions in Alisha's family? Check the correct answers.

**ALISHA**

1) What traditional food do you eat?

2) How old are you?

3) What traditional clothes do you wear?

4) How tall is your brother?

5) What holidays do you celebrate?

**KIDS**

Copyright © 2018 Kids Academy Company. All rights reserved. | 101 11010 WORKSHEETS © | WWW.KIDSCADDEMY.COM



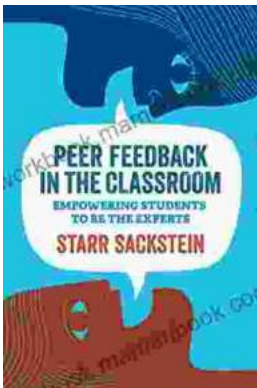
## A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish, 1586-1987 (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture)

by Kathryn Hellerstein

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
 File size : 1859 KB  
 Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
 Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Print length : 511 pages  
Paperback : 312 pages  
Item Weight : 12 ounces  
Dimensions : 5.51 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches  
Hardcover : 150 pages



## Empowering Students to be the Experts: Reshaping the Learning Landscape

Traditional education models have long been characterized by a teacher-centric approach, where students are passive recipients of knowledge....



## Shangri La Frontier 82 Katarina: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Mythical Blade's Abilities and Impact

: Unveiling the Legendary Shangri La Frontier 82 Katarina Within the immersive realm of Shangri La Frontier, a captivating MMORPG that...