

Sigal, Goldie, ed. *A Garment Worker's Legacy; the Joe Fishstein Collection of Yiddish Poetry, the Catalogue*. Montreal: McGill University Libraries, 1998. (Distributed by McGill-Queen's University Press) xlvii, 391, 45 p.

This detailed bibliography presents the life-work of a collector of Yiddish poetry and other works in Yiddish in all its glory. Joe Fishstein, Goldie Segal (Jewish Studies Librarian, McGill University) explains in her detailed and very helpful introduction, was, as the expression has it, an *operayter*, a man who made his living by operating a commercial sewing machine in the garment district of New York. His special distinction was his love of Yiddish and in particular, his passion for Yiddish verse. Fishstein bought books of poetry, read them and re-read them. He often created unique bindings for them out of scraps of cloth and wrote marginal notes and comments in them. This devotion seems to have begun from the time he came to the *goldene medina* in 1910 when he arrived as an immigrant, until the 1970s, when he died. The collection was brought to McGill University in 1981 through the efforts of Dr. Ruth Wisse, who offers an interesting preface to the book.

Because of Fishstein's devotion to Yiddish poetry, he had contacts with appropriate publishers in all corners of the world, eventually amassing a significant collection of some 2300 volumes with not a few rare and unusual books and periodicals. The comprehensive nature of his collection might lead one to think that this catalogue of his books can also stand as a bibliography of Yiddish poetry published over the sixty-odd years of his activity. Unfortunately, that is not the nature of this work. For example, although Canadian Yiddish poets Rachel Korn, Chava Rosenfarb and Sholem Shtern are well represented in the collection and hence in the bibliography, the entries for these significant writers do not present anything approaching an overview of their records of publication. To take but a few specific lacunae, Shtern's important works: *In der fri* (1945), *In Kanade* (1963, 2 vols.) and *Dos vayse hoyz* (1967) are none of them present.

Indeed the great Peretz Miransky is represented by only one of his books, *A likht far a groshen* (1951), while the lesser light Ida Massey has two. This pattern continues with reference books: Shlomo Bickel's *Shrayber fun mayn dor* (1958-70, 3 vols.) is present, but N.B. Minkoff's *Pionern fun idisher poezye in Amerike* (1956, 3 vols.) is not; Josef Kage's *Tsvey hundert yor idisher imigratsye in Kanade* (1960) is found, but Abraham Rhinewine's *Der id in Kanade* (1925, 2 vols.) is not.

On the other hand, taking the bibliography as a catalogue of Joe Fishman's personal collection, which is after all precisely what it purports to be—nothing more and certainly nothing less—one is struck by the editor's careful attention to bibliographical standards and added value details. For example, a decision to use romanized Yiddish was made, thus opening up the collection to more potential, and the American Library Association/ Library of Congress system has been followed consistently. But the editor provides a table and notes instances where there is a difference between this scheme and that of the YIVO Institute of Jewish Research. Goldie Segal intelligently organizes the collection into major groupings and sub-groupings. The former include "Individual Yiddish Literary Authors", "Yiddish Literary Collections" and "Yiddish translations of Other Literatures", while the latter include "Yiddish Literature by Country", "World Literature" and "Yiddish Authors — Collective Biography". She ties the whole work together by providing several indexes to the collection and incorporating some distinctive and important features, such as including editors and translators with the author index, and having a separate index of book illustrators—the latter runs to well over four pages and is a real delight to use. These indexes are the heart of the catalogue, linking together entries for an individual author that may appear in several of the sections or sub-sections, and although an error or two does manage to creep in (all bibliographers' worst nightmare) the work is highly skilled and very exacting in its thoroughness.

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