Yiddish writing produced during World War II in Eastern Europe and its larger émigré centres is well documented; less is known about this literature in minor immigrant centres. More pointedly, how did writers in a minor centre such as Canada respond to the onset of World War II and its decimation of the European Yiddish heartland? *Kanader zhurnal*, the country’s single literary Yiddish journal published between 1939 and 1945, offers a window onto this question unmediated by historical hindsight. It points to two intertwined threads: an acute awareness of the real and potential devastation of the war in Jewish life, and a continued optimism about the future of Yiddish literature and culture.

Immigration from Eastern Europe—an overwhelming majority of it Yiddish-speaking—increased Canada’s Jewish population from 16,000 to over 150,000 in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The interwar period marked a time of creativity and consolidation, and the efflorescence of an all-encompassing Yiddish cultural life that included a press, schools, theatre, and a host of social, political and literary organizations that spanned the country. Among the projects piloted by the local Yiddish intelligentsia were a series of literary journals that served as a forum for wide-ranging expression. Like the scores of Yiddish journals that proliferated globally during the 1920s and 1930s, these publications featured poetry, prose and essays by local and international writers, and spotlighted rapidly evolving trends in the world of arts, letters, and ideas. By publishing collectively in an inexpensive format, these journals mediated the ongoing funding problems that plagued the world of Yiddish culture:


2 On the journals, see L. Prager, *Yiddish Literary and Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies: A Selective Annotated Bibliography* (Darby, PA 1982); *Prooftexts* 15 (1995), dedicated to ‘the Role of Periodicals in the Formation of Jewish Identity.’
an audience that consisted primarily of working-class cutomers with limited disposable income. They also allowed for more experimentation and innovation than the popular press, which dominated the realm of commercial Yiddish publication worldwide.³

As Canada’s largest Jewish centre, Montreal also served as the hub of its Yiddish journal movement. The city produced the country’s largest number and greatest variety of Yiddish journals during the interwar period: *Nyuansn* (Nuances, 1921), *Royerd* (Virgin Soil, 1922–23, 1927, 1929), *Epokhe, Der kwal* (Epoch and The Source, both 1922), *Kanade* (Canada, 1925), *Heftn* (Notebooks, Montreal-Toronto, 1929), *Montreol* (Montreal, 1932–1935), *Prolit* (Pro[letarian] Lit[erature], 1935), and *Heftn* (Montreal-Detroit 1936–1937). Edited by the local literati—poets J.I. Segal, A.Sh. Shkolnikov, N.Y. Gotlib, and others—these journals formed the primary site of Yiddish publication after the daily press, notably Montreal’s daily *Keneder adler* (Canadian Jewish Eagle, founded 1907). Meanwhile, the more working-class city of Toronto produced three journals of a proletarian orientation during the Depression years—*Basheydn* (Modest, 1930), *In gevirl* (In a Whirl, 1930), and *Bay undz* (Amongst Ourselves, 1931)—while Western Canada saw a single Yiddish-English journal appear in *Di yidishe velt* (Jewish World, Vancouver 1928, 1935). While most were short-lived, these publications reflect the dynamic development of Yiddish cultural life across Canada in tandem with an active engagement with cutting-edge global Yiddish culture.⁴ Two issues of the *Kanader zhurnal* (April 1940 and June 1940) published in Montreal mark the only collective Canadian Yiddish literary publication to appear during the years of World War II. This serial offers a mirror into the mixed responses of the Canadian Yiddish intelligentsia to the turbulent realities of 1940.

*Kanader zhurnal: khoydesh-shrift far moderner literatur* (Canadian Journal: A Monthly Magazine for Modern Literature) was edited by A.Sh. Shkolnikov, a baker, union organizer, and literary activist who had produced a number of literary publications in the 1920s and 1930s. The bulk of the contents comprise poetry and prose by Montreal-based authors, all of them immigrants to Canada: Mirl Erdberg-Shatan, N.Y. Gotlib, Ida Maza, Shapse Perl, Esther Segal, J.I. Segal.

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