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| Bergelson, Dovid (1884-1952) |
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| Dovid Bergelson was a major Yiddish prose writer and essayist. He had a lasting impact on Yiddish fiction writing, introducing new narrative techniques such as free indirect discourse. He brought literary creation in Yiddish to new heights, appropriating the language for the purposes of an Impressionist, high literary style. He was also a prolific essayist, committed to the notion of the social role of the writer, and to the ideals of Yiddishism, the creation of a new secular Yiddish culture in the name of a Jewish national project rooted in Eastern Europe and distinct from Zionism. These political ideals partly explain Bergelson’s conversion to Soviet state socialism in 1926: in his view, the Soviet Union was the only place compatible with the Yiddishist project. He settled there permanently in 1934. His later literary production radically differed from his earlier writings, and conformed to the doctrine of Socialist Realism. In 1942, he joined the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, supporting the Soviet war effort against Nazi Germany. After the war, Stalin turned against the Committee. Bergelson was arrested in 1949, then executed on August 12th, 1952, together with twelve other Jewish writers and intellectuals. |
| File: Portrait of Bergelson.pdf  Portrait of Bergelson: [https://www.google.com/search?q=dovid+bergelson&client=firefox-a&hs=4RQ&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=ZQ87U5nLJaGGyAHru4HQBw&ved=0CAkQ\_AUoAg&biw=747&bih=344&dpr=1.71#facrc=\_&imgdii=\_&imgrc=U2xLOA7ejd2aVM%253A%3B9iUKK9eQvsmUVM%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Ffbcdn-photos-a-a.akamaihd.net%252Fhphotos-ak-ash2%252F25198\_363499899124\_4478489\_a.jpg%253Flvh%253D1%3Bhttps%253A%252F%252Fhe-il.facebook.com%252Fpages%252FDovid-Bergelson%252F279966009124%3B180%3B278](https://www.google.com/search?q=dovid+bergelson&client=firefox-a&hs=4RQ&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=ZQ87U5nLJaGGyAHru4HQBw&ved=0CAkQ_AUoAg&biw=747&bih=344&dpr=1.71#facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=U2xLOA7ejd2aVM%253A%3B9iUKK9eQvsmUVM%) (copyright holder: YIVO Archive?)  Dovid Bergelson was a major Yiddish prose writer and essayist. He had a lasting impact on Yiddish fiction writing, introducing new narrative techniques such as free indirect discourse. He brought literary creation in Yiddish to new heights, appropriating the language for the purposes of an Impressionist, high literary style. He was also a prolific essayist, committed to the notion of the social role of the writer, and to the ideals of Yiddishism, the creation of a new secular Yiddish culture in the name of a Jewish national project rooted in Eastern Europe and distinct from Zionism. These political ideals partly explain Bergelson’s conversion to Soviet state socialism in 1926: in his view, the Soviet Union was the only place compatible with the Yiddishist project. He settled there permanently in 1934. His later literary production radically differed from his earlier writings, and conformed to the doctrine of Socialist Realism. In 1942, he joined the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, supporting the Soviet war effort against Nazi Germany. After the war, Stalin turned against the Committee. Bergelson was arrested in 1949, then executed on August 12th, 1952, together with twelve other Jewish writers and intellectuals.  File: Group photo.pdf  Group photo from left to right: Soviet Yiddish poets Peretz Markish, Dovid Bergelson, Izi Kharik, and actor Solomon Mikhoels in Moscow in 1937. Markish, Bergelson, and Mikhoels became leading figures of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in 1942. <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/820/back-from-the-shadows> Copyright holder: YIVO Archive, New York  Dovid Bergelson’s earlier novels and short stories deal with the advent of a new Ukrainian Jewish bourgeoisie, one increasingly at odds with the values of traditional rural Jewish communities. He describes the slow descent of the latter, but also satirizes the nouveaux riches. His nuanced, Impressionist style conveys his ambiguous take on the subject; the narrative constantly shifts between internal and external perspective, adopting the (often irreconcilable) points of view of multiple characters. This technique allows Bergelson to expose contradictions and social tensions; the conflict between tradition and modernity remains unsolved, leaving Bergelson’s characters prey to angst and self-doubt. Mirel, the main character of his 1913 novel, Nokh alemen (The End of Everything), exemplifies this sense of disorientation. Unable to leave her small town, she hesitates between different paths without being able to fully commit to one. The second half of Bergelson’s career, influenced by Socialist Realism, privileged clear political statements. However, recent scholarship by Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh suggests that Bergelson never entirely conformed to the Socialist Realist dogma, distancing himself from its monolithic utopian narrative in a number of ways.  File: In shpan.pdf  *In shpan* (In Harness), 2 May 1926, Vilna. This issue features an article by Bergelson, who was a regular contributor. The cover is an example of Constructivist graphic design. <http://www.kedem-auctions.com/sites/default/files/383_6.jpg> Copyright holder: Photograph: Kedem auctions (work: YIVO Archive, New York?) Selected List of Works:Major works *Arum vokzal* [*At the Depot*] (1909)  *Nokh alemen* [*The End of Everything*] (1913)  *Dikhtung un gezelshaftlekhkayt* [*Belles-lettres and the Social Order*] (1919)  *Opgang* [*Descent*] (1921)  *Dray tsentren* [*Three Centers*] (1926)  *Bam Dnyepr* [*At the Dniepr*] (1932)  *Birobidzhaner* [*People of Birobidzhan*] (1934) Selected Works in English translation *Descent* (1999)  *The End of Everything* (2009)  The Shadows of Berlin: The Berlin Stories of Dovid Bergelson (2005)  The Stories of Dovid Bergelson: Yiddish Short Fiction from Russia (1996) |
| Further reading:  (Estraikh)  (Krutikov)  (Murav)  (Novershtern)  (Rubenstein)  (Schachter)  (Sherman)  (J. Sherman)  (Wisse) |