**Manger, Itsik (1901-1969)**

Itsik Manger was a prominent Yiddish poet, playwright, prose writer, a ‘master tailor’ of the written word. He entered into the field of Jewish literature as the ‘Duke of the Jewish Ballad’. Manger drew his inspiration from traditional troubadour poetry, recreating the past and interpreting it with modernist sensibilities. In his works he referred to folk poetry and adapted biblical themes, writing about the fate of the Jews in Eastern Europe.

Born Isidor Helfer on 30 May, 1901, in a taylor's family in Czernovitz, he grew up in poverty in Jassy. He attented a German school and began writing first poems in German, but was soon reaching back to the roots of Yiddish poetry. In the 1920s he frequently travelled to Bucharest, Warsaw and Bukovina, leading the life of a vagabond. He then settled in Warsaw for the next decade, which became his most productive period. His poems have been published in the most important Yiddish literary journals, as well as for the Yiddish press in Poland. He issued his own literary journal called *Getseylte verter* (Counted Words), filled with his poetry, fiction and artistic manifestos.

Manger published his debut volume of poetry in 1929, and shot to fame after the publication of his *Khumesh-lider* (Bible Songs), later expanded into *Medresh Itsik* (Itsik's Midrash), a collection of poems, in which he portrayed patriarchal heroes as his contemporary Jews from a small town – shtetl. His second most famous work, *Megile-lider*, transmitted the tradition of Purim performances (purimshpil), in the form of lyrical dramas, thus rewriting the Purim Megilah.

More than any other Yiddish poet Itsik Manger concentrated on the ballad. He wrote around ninety ballads and it was by far his favorite genre. His programmatic essay *Di balade—di vizye fun blut* (The Ballad: The Vision of Blood; 1929), an attempt to articulate a modernist poetic vision, reveals his ballads concept with its proximity to the tragedy.

Manger regarded himself as a Yiddish troubador. He became the Yiddish poet for all seasons who creativelly synthesized a host of styles and genres. His poetry, full of fantasy, musical elements, biblical themes and folk motives places him among the most prominent Jewish lyricists.

He achieved great success, gaining fame and popularity, at home and also in Israel, where he emigrated and spent the last years of his life. A prestigious literary award was named after him in 1968.

He died on 21 February, 1969, in Gedera in Israel.

**List of works**

Manger, I.(1961) *Noente geshtaltn un andere shriftn - gezamlte shriftn* (collected works) New York: Itsik Manger Yoyvl-komitet.

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*------* (1929) *Shtern oyfn dakh,* Bukaresht: farlag Sholem Aleykhem.

*------* (1933) *Lamtern in vint,* Warsaw: farlag Turem.

*------* (1935) *Khumesh-lider,* Warsaw: farlag Aleynenyu.

*------* (1936) *Megile-lider,* Warsaw: Aleynenyu.

*------* (1939) *Di vunderlekhe lebensbashraybung fun Shmuel Aba Abervo – dos bukh fun ganeydn,*

Warsaw: farlag H. Bzshoza.

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*------* (1948) *Der shnayder-gezeln note Manger zingt*, London: Ararat.

*------* (1952) *Medresh Itsik,* Pariz/Geneva: Itsik Manger Yoyvl Komitet.

**Bibliographies, references and further reading**

Jeshurin, E. H. (1961) *Itsik Manger biblyografye* in: Manger, I. *Noente geshtaltn un andere shriftn*, New York: Itsik Manger Yoyvl-Komitet.

Kazdan, H. S. (1968) *Itsik Manger*, New York: CYCO Bikher-Farlag.

Roskies D. G., and Wolf, L. (2002) *The World According to Itzik: Selected Poetry and Prose of Itzik Manger,* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shmeruk, Ch. (1984), *Medresh Itsik* *and the Problem of Its Literary Traditions,* [Introductionto Manger, I. *Medresh Itsik*, 3rd rev. ed.], Jerusalem: Magnes.

Shpiglblat A. (2002) *Bloe Vinklen: Itsik Manger* – *Lebn, Lid un Balade,* Tel Aviv: Y.L. Perets.

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