



Beautiful as the Moon, Radiant as the Stars: Jewish Women in Yiddish Stories - An Anthology

By Sandra Bark

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- This book is certain to appeal to the millions of Jewish women interested in Jewish literature and the writings of Cynthia Ozick, Francine Prose, and Grace Paley. Beautifully packaged, it is an ideal Mother's Day or Bat-Mitzvah gift.- This volume contains translations of Yiddish stories from eminent scholars--including an Isaac Bashevis Singer story that has never before been published in English--and well-known tales that Jewish readers everywhere love.- As bestsellers such as "Everything is Illuminated" by Jonathan Safran Foer (Houghton Mifflin, 4/02) and "For the Relief of Unbearable Urges" by Nathan Englander (Knopf, 1999) have demonstrated, there is a strong interest in Jewish stories.- Yiddish culture and music have seen a resurgence in recent years. NPR's "All Things Considered" aired a series of highly acclaimed documentaries about the Yiddish Radio Project and Klezmer musicians regularly play at top alternative venues.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Bark's appealing anthology gathers 22 stories chronicling Jewish women's lives in late 19th- and early 20th-century Europe, Russia, the United States and Israel. Though most of the stories were published in the 1920s and '30s, many in Yiddish newspapers and magazines, their themes—love, thwarted ambition, identity, assimilation—still resonate. The heroines, who are of all ages and classes, find themselves struggling for education, autonomy, equality—just as many of their real-life contemporaries did. In a collection emphasizing female experience, some of the best stories are written by men. David Bergelson's newly translated "Spring," for example, is a bittersweet story of two sisters' desire for the same impassioned artist. Isaac Bashevis Singer makes two memorable appearances, with his enduring "Yentl the Yeshiva Boy" and his gender-bending "Androgynous," which recently appeared for the first time in English in the *New Yorker*. (Bark posits that "Yentl" was inspired by the unrealized educational aspirations of Singer's sister, Esther Singer Kreitman, whose own short story in this collection, sandwiched between two of her brother's, pales somewhat in comparison.) The writers offer intriguing glimpses into a rich and complex world, and together their stories create a moving testament to the intelligence and resilience of turn-of-the-century Jewish women. As Francine Prose writes in her succinct introduction, the book "makes us grateful to these heroines for having had the courage and resolve to help prepare the way for us to insist upon—and even to take for granted—the ordinary, everyday, absolutely essential freedoms that we enjoy today."

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From [Booklist](#)

These 23 stories by both male and female writers all center on female Ashkenazi in twentieth-century Europe, Russia, Israel, and the U.S. Three of the writers are well-known: Isaac Bashevis Singer ("Yentl, the Yeshiva Boy" and "Androgynous"), Sholem Aleichem ("Hodel"), and I. L. Peretz ("Bryna's Mendl"); but others are not so well known. (One of the stories, "A Satin Coat," is by Esther Singer Kreitman, the sister of I. B. Singer and I. J. Singer.) The stories concern thwarted lovers, unwilling brides, poor immigrants, and rebellious daughters. The range of themes includes anti-Semitism, assimilation, the obstacles that young women faced if they sought an education, the survival strategies they had to adopt in order to realize their ambitions, and the challenges and difficulties they encountered after establishing independent lives. In her perceptive introduction, Francine Prose points out that many of these stories concern women who must fight just to express an opinion of their own or to exert the slightest influence on the shape of their own destinies.

Translated from Yiddish, these stories are a definite pleasure. *George Cohen*

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About the Author

Sandra Bark is an editor at Warner Books.

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Guadalupe Marshall:

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