

## **Yiddish and the Woman Writer in the Post-Holocaust World**

Goldie Morgentaler

My paper will address the reasons for the relative obscurity of the Canadian Yiddish-language novelist, Chava Rosenfarb. Rosenfarb has remained relatively unknown among Holocaust scholars even though she has written extensively about the Holocaust, and her epic novel, *The Tree of Life: A Trilogy of Life in the Lodz Ghetto*, is arguably one of the major fictional works about the Jews of Poland during the war period. Rosenfarb, who survived the Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen is one of the few Holocaust survivors who transmuted their experiences into fiction rather than into memoirs, autobiographies, or diaries. But she wrote primarily in Yiddish and I will argue that this is one of the major reasons why her work is not more widely known, even though the three volumes of *The Tree of Life* were published in English translation in 2004-6; and her stunning novella, "Edgia's Revenge," the story of a kapo, has been anthologized in English. While Yiddish was the language of the majority of Polish Jews before the Holocaust, it suffered a precipitous decline in speakers and readers after the war. My paper will address the problems of Yiddish-language Holocaust writers in making their work more widely known, as well as the importance for scholarship of resources in this language.

The second reason that I believe that Rosenfarb's work is not better known is that she was a woman writing at a time—the 1950s, 60s, and 70s—when women's literary work was in general undervalued. And this is precisely why she should be better known, given that her work provides the perspective of a female point of view on the literary depiction of the Holocaust, a perspective that, with the exception of Anne Frank's diary, has not really been highlighted in literary discussions of the Holocaust.