that looks back, while acknowledging that life goes on. Norman calls up the inevitability of death, poetically reminding us that people die while life goes on: *they die in the middle of heat waves/ snowstorms/ … during the hour we set the clock back every fall.*

In the final section, *Giving Thanks*, Norman tells the story of how one generation grows into the next. To emphasize the circle of life, Norman's collection ends as it begins, with her mother cooking. Norman calls up the taste of mashed potatoes and crisp coleslaw, and she is gentle with her mother's spirit, wondering who at her mother's thanksgiving table *will love/ my mother's grace and endurance/ who will give thanks/ for that.*

Academically, I would recommend this book as required reading for courses that examine gender and society, as well as for courses in women's studies and creative writing. Personally, I would recommend *True Confessions* as required reading for women who can't quite articulate the feelings/knowings that are accumulating regarding their experiences as women aging in a patriarchal society; Norman manages to articulate this with tact, poignancy, a healthy measure of anger, and true poetic craft. At one point Norman muses*: i wonder how i will ever get used to moving/ in the world like a ghost/ people no longer glancing my way.…* In this first collection of poetry, which received the 2006 Helen and Stan Vine Canadian Jewish Book Award, Renee Norman is anything but ghostlike.

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ARGUING WITH THE STORM: STORIES BY YIDDISH WOMEN WRITERS

Rhea Tregebov, Ed.
Toronto: Sumach Press, 2007

REVIEWED BY SHARON POWER

As a humble collection of 14 newly translated stories by nine twentieth-century mostly North American Yiddish women writers, Arguing with the Storm provides an invaluable glimpse into the work of a talented group of writers who have been largely overlooked within the male-oriented field of Yiddish literary scholarship. It follows up on the groundbreaking first anthology of translated works by Yiddish women writers, *Found Treasures* (Second Story Press, 1994). These anthologies go beyond the academic—they are an important part of the Yiddish revival movement. As the last native Yiddish speakers are being lost, enthusiastic Yiddishists around the world regularly gather to discuss Yiddish literature and culture, ensuring that the language itself and the great literary legacy of 19th and 20th-century Yiddish writers lives on. It was out of one such group, the Winnipeg Yiddish Women's Reading Circle, inspired by *Found Treasures*, that this collection was born. In her preface outlining the anthology's evolution, Rhea Tregebov writes that their primary concern was to make the stories as broadly accessible as possible, in the hopes that other Yiddishist groups might in turn be inspired.

The anthology's title refers to a poem by Yiddish poet Rachel Korn about a mother's defiant defense of her family from an impending storm, serving as a "paradigm of courage and resistance" for the lives of the Jewish women who wrote and inhabit these stories. Many of them portray the bitter suffering of poverty, and the ways poor Jewish women struggled to sustain themselves and their children. Especially moving are "The Apple of Her Eye" by Malka Lee, set in the slums of 1920s New York, and "Little Abrahams" by Rochel Broches, set in pre-revolutionary Tsarist Russia, in which we see the hunger, isolation and bleakness of poverty through the eyes of a young child. Winding its way through these stories is the theme of a hunger which cannot be appeased. Anne Viderman's "A Fiddle" tells the tragic tale of a young Ukrainian musician's frustrated appetite for the wider world. Bryna Bercovitch's memoir recounts how she became a revolutionary in response to growing up always hungry in turn-of-the-century Ukraine. Hunger is laid bare most painfully in "A Natural Death," Paula Frankel-Zaltzman's stark portrayal of a father and daughter slowly starving to death in Latvia's Dvinsk Ghetto during World War II.

A surprising diversity of themes is represented in this small collection. Family plays a central role, especially the challenging relationships between parents and adult children. Like their more famous male counterparts, these female Yiddish authors explore the transition and incongruity between the Old World and the New, often exemplified in the vast divide which springs up between older parents and their modern, American-born children (e.g. "A Guest" by Sarah Hamer-Jacklyn). In stories written by survivors, the physical and psychological suffering of the Holocaust is a potent, devastating presence, the trauma bleeding through into the characters' lives long after the war. The strong socialist emphasis in Yiddish writing comes through in pieces with both literary and historical value, such as Frume Halpern's moralist parables portraying the costs for women who fail to live their lives by Leftist revolutionary ideals. Rounding out the collection, Rikuda Potash in "Rumiyah and the Shofar" and Sarah Hamer-Jacklyn in "No More Rabbi" also touch on religion, how Jewish women sometimes found themselves at odds with

religious traditions that conflicted with their desires.

A highlight of the anthology is "Letters to God," contributed by Chana Rosenfarb, one of Canada's most celebrated Yiddish authors. This story about a middle-class Holocaust survivor caring for his dying father stands out with a brilliant translation by Goldie Morgentaler and captivating writing, replete with rich imagery and complex structure and emotionality. Originally published almost 30 years after the other stories, "Letters to God" at first seems to break up the coherence of the collection, but ultimately its inclusion is a strength, contributing to the anthology's diversity and refusing the condensation of all Yiddish women's writing into one type of story.

Perhaps one weakness of this collection is that the stories included tend overly to the darkly tragic, and there are too few glimpses of the wry humour for which Yiddish is so famous. Nonetheless, *Arguing with the Storm* gives us a tantalizing taste of the variety and talent within Yiddish women's writing, and in so doing, accomplishes its goal of inspiring readers to delve further into this little-known wealth of Yiddish literature.

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MY WEDDING DRESS: TRUE-LIFE TALES OF LACE, LAUGHTER, TEARS AND TULLE

Susan Whelehan and Anne Laurel Carter, Eds.
Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007

REVIEWED BY CLARA THOMAS

Do not be put off by this title, fearing a hearts and flowers bath in sentiment. This time the blurbs are right: the book is "enchanting," as June Callwood testifies, "thoughtful" in Leah Mclaren's opinion and you will join with Heather Mallick in "a toast to the editors and their tribe of brides." Twenty-six brides of widely differing ages, races, and circumstances have told their stories, the all-important dress, the ceremony, its background and most important, how it all worked out. Every one of them is a satisfying narrative; every one of them will add to your understanding of the myriad complexities that attend a wedding and its aftermath. The book is divided into four parts, according to the ages-old advice: "Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue." In each category the stories cluster around these separate themes which provide convenient take-off points for their widely divergent tales. They are all framed by the contributions of Stevie Cameron and her daughter Amy, who provide a satisfying note of unity in the striking diversity of the whole collection.

In the first, the "Old" section, Anita Rau Badami tells of the catastrophe of her family heirloom sari whose dye ran and stained her body shocking pink: "A few hours after my wedding I was locked in the bathroom of the honeymoon suite of our hotel. I had been there for more than an hour.… Our wedding night would end as one that was literally and figuratively written into my skin." The poet, Joanne Arnott, tells of her traditional Métis wedding, climaxing in the wrapping of the couple in a traditional Marriage Blanket: "Treat this blanket with reverence … Treat it with respect, because it is your marriage. You were two, with two different lives … now you are one."

In "Something Borrowed," Edeet Ravel, a Canadian living in Israel and conscripted into the army, had to fulfill the requirements of a proper Jewish wedding which took only a few minutes but was rigorous in its various pre-wedding requirements: "The day before the wedding Yaron's father appeared at our door with two head coverings: Yaron's creased but still shiny bar mitzpah kippah, and a white veil for me.… Apart from the veil, I had to wear either a skirt or dress." The only way Jews can marry in Israel is through the rabbinate. Accordingly, they had two rabbis as witnesses and the janitorial staff provided the required number of ten males: "The shtetl-like atmosphere of burlesque and improvisation suited me perfectly.… Judaism, I have always felt, is far more flexible than some of its practitioners would have us think." Eight years later, back in Montreal, they divorced. Yaron didn't want a child, Edeet did—so they parted. "It was the right thing to do, but I would never be loved again as I was loved then, and parting was agony. We both wore jeans."

"Something Blue" becomes … "or Peach or Striped or Floral" in the final section led by Michele Lansberg's testimony to colour—"The most important thing about the dress was that it wasn't white, it wasn't long and it had not a whisper of tradition clinging to it." The whole idea of marriage was, to her, a construct of patriarchy which she despised. Her wedding dress, simple, patterned and splashed with pink and green, signified her rejection of the traditional woman's role