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Chava Rosenfarb papers  
Gift of Goldie Morgentaler 2011

Chava Rosenfarb papers [also known as 'Eva', Chava Rosenfarb-Morgentaler]

Includes drafts and proofs of *The Tree of Life [Der Boym Fun Lebn]*; *Bociany* [a novel about life in a Polish shtetl] and *Of Lodz and Love; Survivors* [translated from the Yiddish by Goldie Morgentaler]; address and daybooks; most of the printed manuscript of *Briv tsu Abrashn; Bird of the Ghetto*; correspondence with family, friends, authors, editors and publishers, including Isaac Bashevis Singer, printer and publisher Israel London, Elaine Kalman Naves, and other material related to the life and work of author Chava Rosenfarb.

Extent: 12 boxes (2.5 metres)

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#### ABOUT CHAVA ROSENFARB

Chava Rosenfarb was born on Feb. 9, 1923 in Lodz, Poland, the elder of two daughters of Abraham Rosenfarb, a restaurant waiter, and his wife Simma. Her parents belonged to the Jewish Socialist Bund, a left-leaning political movement with an enormous following among working-class Jews in Poland. While Bundist ideology encouraged agitation for equal rights for Jews in Poland, but it also incorporated a strong cultural element that privileged Yiddish as the language of the Jewish masses.

Rosenfarb's parents sent her to the Bundist Medem School, where all instruction was in Yiddish. This grounding in Yiddish secular studies had an enormous influence on Rosenfarb's intellectual development, even though her secondary school education was in Polish. But her schooling was cut short by the war. By the time she was ready to graduate high school, Rosenfarb and her family had been incarcerated in the Lodz ghetto, and it was in the ghetto in 1941 that she received her high school diploma. This marked the end of her formal education.

In the ghetto she began to write poetry, waking up at dawn from her bed of chairs to compose her poems in bookkeeping registers in the hours before going to work at her various ghetto jobs. Despite her modest appraisal of herself as "just a girl who wrote poems," Rosenfarb's talent brought her to the attention of Simcha-Bunim Shayevitch, the great ghetto poet and author of the epic poem "Lekh Lekho." She became Shayevitch's protégée and it was he who introduced her to the writers' group of the Lodz ghetto, who quickly recognized her talent and accepted her, at age seventeen, as their youngest member.

When it became clear that the Lodz ghetto was to be liquidated in August of 1944, Rosenfarb and her family, as well as Shayevitch and the family of Henekh (later anglicized to Henry) Morgentaler, the man who would become her husband, as well as

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the family of Chava's best friend, who would later become the Swedish writer, Zenia Larsson, all hid in the second room of the Rosenfarbs' ghetto apartment behind a door that was hidden by a wardrobe. They were discovered by the Nazis two days later, on August 23, 1944, and deported to Auschwitz. At Auschwitz the knapsack containing Rosenfarb's poems was ripped out of her hands and thrown on a pile to be discarded. During the selection for life or death, Rosenfarb claimed that her mother was in reality her elder sister and in this way she managed to save her mother's life. From Auschwitz, Rosenfarb, her mother and sister were sent to a labour camp at Sasel where they were put to work building houses for the bombed out Germans of Hamburg.

From Sasel, the three women were sent to Bergen Belsen. There Rosenfarb contracted typhus and on the very day when the British army liberated the camp in 1945, she was lying near death. The British transported her to a lazaret outside the camp, where she slowly recovered. Once she regained her strength, Rosenfarb and her sister traveled the German countryside seeking news of their father, whom they had last seen at the train station in Auschwitz. After weeks of fruitless searching, Rosenfarb learned that her father had died in the last transport out of Dachau, when the train on which he and the other inmates had been riding was bombed by the Americans. In 1945, Rosenfarb, her mother and sister crossed the border illegally into Belgium, where she lived as a Displaced Person, supporting herself as a teacher at the Workman's Circle Yiddish school. It was in Brussels too that she began to write *The Tree of Life*. Because she had no legal standing in Belgium she was required to emigrate. In 1949, she married Heniek Morgentaler and the two emigrated to Canada, landing in Montreal in February 1950. There she gave birth to her first child, a daughter Goldie, several months after her arrival in the New World.

In Canada, Rosenfarb quickly settled down to write. She began as a poet, publishing her first collection of poetry, *Di balade fun nekhtikn vald* [The ballad of yesterday's forest] in London in 1947. This was followed by a book-length poem about her father, *Dos lid fun yidishn kelner Abram* [The song of the Jewish waiter Abram]; and the poetry collections *Geto un andere lider* [Ghetto and other poems] and *Aroys fun gan-eydn* [Out of Paradise]. Her play *Der foigl fun geto* [The bird of the ghetto], about the martyrdom of the Vilna ghetto partisan leader, Isaac Wittenberg, was translated into Hebrew and performed by the Habimah, Israel's National Theatre, in 1966.

Finding that neither poetry nor drama could begin to express the range and depth of her feelings about the Holocaust, Rosenfarb turned to fiction. In 1972, she published in Yiddish *Der boim fun lebn* [The Tree of Life]. This monumental three-volume epic chronicles the destruction of the Jewish community of Lodz during the Second World War. It is one of the few novels—as opposed to memoirs or autobiographies—to be written by an actual survivor of the Holocaust.

*The Tree of Life* follows the fates of ten Jewish inhabitants of Lodz who live through the terrible events of the years 1939-44, that is, from before the beginning of the war, when life was still “normal,” until the liquidation of the ghetto in August and September 1944. While most of Rosenfarb's characters are fictitious, some are based on actual people, like the poet Shayevitch and Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the “eldest” of the Jews in the

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Lodz ghetto, put in place by the Nazis as the ghetto's puppet leader.

*The Tree of Life* was immediately hailed as a masterpiece by the Yiddish press, which repeatedly emphasizing its unique place in the literature of the Holocaust. It earned Rosenfarb prizes and kudos in lands as diverse as Argentina, Mexico and Australia, to say nothing of the US, Canada and Israel. These included the Niger Prize from Argentina, the Atran Prize from the United States and the Canadian Segal Prize, which she won twice. In 1979, Rosenfarb was unanimously awarded one of Israel's highest literary honours, the Manger Prize for 1979. The jury wrote: "[*The Tree of Life*] is a work that rises to the heights of the great creations in world literature and towers powerfully over the Jewish literature of the Holocaust, the literature which deals with the annihilation of European Jewry, in particular Polish Jewry."

*The Tree of Life* was translated into Hebrew as *Ets Hahayim* and a one-volume edition appeared in English in Melbourne, Australia in 1985 and was later re-issued in its original three volumes by the The University of Wisconsin Press, (2004-6).

Rosenfarb followed *The Tree of Life* with the two-volume novel *Bociany* in 1982, named after an imaginary Polish village. *Bociany*, based loosely on the lives of Rosenfarb's parents, follows the intertwined fates of a young boy and girl from the shtetl of Bociany who meet again as young adults in the city of Lodz, where they marry. *Bociany* was translated into English by the author herself and published in two volumes as *Bociany* and *Of Lodz and Love*. The translations won for Rosenfarb the John Glassco Prize of the Literary Translation Association of Canada in Sept. 2000. While these novels do not deal directly with the Holocaust, they actually constitute a prequel to *The Tree of Life*, giving the early history of some of the characters who appear in that novel.

Rosenfarb had always been reluctant to write about the horrors of the concentration camp in her fiction. She purposely ended *The Tree of Life* at the point where her characters were deported from the ghetto. The last few pages of *The Tree of Life* are thus purposely left blank. It was not until 1992 that Rosenfarb attempted to write a description of the camps in her novel *Briv tsu Abrashn* [Letters to Abrasha], which is, as yet, unpublished in English. The story is told through a series of letters written after the war by Miriam, a Holocaust survivor, to a man (Abrasha) who is lying in a sanatorium in Germany recovering from tuberculosis. In the letters Miriam recounts the events of her incarceration in Auschwitz, Sasel and Bergen Belsen where she was liberated.

Rosenfarb was a frequent contributor of essays, travelogues and stories to the Yiddish literary journal *Di goldene keyt* [The golden chain]. During the 1980s, she published there a series of short stories that explored the afterlife of Holocaust survivors in Canada. Several of these stories were translated into English by Goldie Morgentaler and published by Cormorant Press in 2004 in a single volume called *Survivors: Seven Short Stories*. This volume won the Helen and Stan Vine Canadian Jewish Book Award in 2005 and, in 2006, the Fenia and Yaakov Leviant Memorial Prize in Yiddish Studies, an Modern Language Association Book Award.

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As long as the number of Yiddish readers world-wide remained relatively strong, the reception for Rosenfarb's work was extremely favourable. But with the slow demise of a Yiddish readership, the imperative to publish in translation grew stronger. And this has proved much more difficult. Respected and lauded as she was among the international community of Yiddish readers and writers, in the rest of the world, Rosenfarb's work is not well known. With the exception of the occasional poem or story published in translation in a literary journal, Rosenfarb's work was not available in English in North America until 2000 when Syracuse University Press, published *Bociany* as two separate novels *Bociany* and *Of Lodz and Love*. Interest in Rosenfarb's work got another boost thanks to a two-part documentary hosted by the journalist Elaine Kalman Naves for the CBC radio program "Ideas." The program, which first aired in November 2000, was rebroadcast several times.

Rosenfarb had two children with Henry Morgentaler, a daughter Goldie and a son, Abraham. When her marriage to him ended in divorce, she became the common-law wife of Simkha-Binem (Bono) Wiener, whom she had known from her school days in Lodz. After the war, Wiener had settled in Melbourne, Australia and become part-owner of the Astronaut Travel Agency there. From the mid-1970s until Wiener's death in Montreal in 1995, Rosenfarb and Wiener lived part of the year in Montreal and the other part in Melbourne. In 1998, she moved to Toronto and in 2003 she moved to Lethbridge, Alberta, to be near her daughter Goldie. In 2006, the University of Lethbridge bestowed on Rosenfarb her first university degree, a doctor of laws honoris causa, making her the first Yiddish writer to be honoured in this way by a Canadian university.

Chava Rosenfarb died January 30, 2011.

Goldie Morgentaler

<http://chavarosenfarb.com/biography>

Box 1 25 folders	<i>Der Boym fun Lebn [The Tree of Life]</i> proofs
Folders 1-15	<i>Der Boym fun Lebn [The Tree of Life]</i> proofs, p. 1-617
Folders 16-25	<i>Der Boym fun Lebn [The Tree of Life]</i> other proofs set, p. 1-496
Box 2 32 folders	<i>Der Boym fun Lebn [The Tree of Life]</i> other proofs set continued <i>Survivors</i> original manuscript
Folders 1-4	<i>Der Boym fun Lebn [The Tree of Life]</i>

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	other proofs set, p. 497-683
Folders 5-32	<i>Survivors</i> original word processed manuscript
Box 3 28 folders	<i>Survivors</i> original word processed manuscript continued <i>Bociany</i> manuscript
Folders 1-8	<i>Survivors</i> original word processed manuscript
Folders 9-28	<i>Bociany</i> first complete word processed draft
Box 4 30 folders	<i>Bociany I</i> <i>Bociany II</i>
Folder 1	<i>Bociany I</i> word processed with some revision 1 TLS Syracuse University Press TLS from Chava Rosenfarb
Folder 2	<i>Bociany I</i> glossary
Folders 3-21	<i>Bociany I</i> Word processed draft
Folders 22-30	<i>Bociany II</i> Word processed draft
Box 5 28 folders	<i>Bociany II</i> continued <i>Bird of the Ghetto</i> Short pieces Letter drafts
Folders 1-11	<i>Bociany II</i> word processed draft
Folders 12-18	<i>Bird of the Ghetto</i> or “Der Foygl fun <i>Geto</i> ” (“The <i>Ghetto Bird</i> ”), draft of play Word processed with holograph revisions Translated from the Yiddish by Goldie Morgentaler

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Folder 19	'Confessions of a Yiddish Writer' early draft of talk
Folder 20	Holograph notepad, including 'Bono's favourite expressions'
Folder 21	'The Last Great Yiddish Novel?' review of <i>Bociany</i> and <i>Of Lodz and Love in Judaism</i>
Folder 22	Syracuse University Press royalty statements German renten statement Glassco Prize announcement
Folder 23	Holograph draft of letter requesting Canadian funds to publish <i>Letters to Abracha</i>
Folder 24	Holograph draft of story 'April 19 <sup>th</sup> ', published on JewishAction.net Holograph draft of 'Sarah Lonabend', published in <i>Survivors</i>
Folder 25	ALS to Marie Wright of Oxford Yiddish Program
Folder 26	Draft translation of poem 'Vig lid' Holograph draft of letter to Nokhem re: Bono Wiener book
Folder 27	Holograph notebook containing poems and lists of household record albums
Folder 28	Listings for <i>Bociany</i> and <i>Of Lodz and Love</i> in Syracuse University Press 1999 catalogue
Box 6 30 folders	<i>Survivors</i> Original holograph draft Other draft <i>Bociany Vol. II</i> Yiddish typescript
Folders 1-7	<i>Survivors</i> original English word processed

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	draft
Folders 8-20	<i>Survivors</i> Word processed draft in English
Folders 21-30	<i>Bociany, Vol. 2</i> Yiddish typescript
Box 7 28 folders	<i>Briv tsu Abrashn [letters to Abrasha]</i> Yiddish printed manuscript (missing beginning) <i>Girl with Two Landscapes</i> by Lena Rozenberg, proof [Chava Rosenfarb wrote a blurb for this book] Conferences Other publishing
Folders 1-12	<i>Briv tsu Adashn</i> Yiddish print version, from p. 49 on
Folder 13	Holmes and Meier catalogue 2002/2003
Folder 14	TLS Holmes and Meier
Folders 15-18	<i>Girl with Two Landscapes</i> Lena Rozenberg Proofs
Folder 19	Syracuse University Press catalogue Spring and Summer 2000
Folder 20	<i>Bociany and Of Lodz and Love</i> Cover designs and TLS
Folder 21	<i>Bociany and Of Lodz and Love</i> Contracts with Syracuse University Press July 1997
Folder 22	<i>The Tree of Life</i> Contracts, December 2001 and publication correspondence
Folder 23	Re: reading at the 92 <sup>nd</sup> Street Y Poetry Center, New York City, 1968
Folder 24	Email 2002 re: <i>The Tree of Life</i>

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Folder 25	Colour printout photo of Chava Rosenfarb and Shulamis Yellin, ca. 1990s
Folder 26	Leah Zazulyer TLS and poems 2002
Folder 27	Second National Conference on Yiddish October 19-21, 1979 Shaar Hashomayim, Montreal 1 black and white photograph
Folder 28	Gender and Text Conference 1990 Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York
Box 8 32 folders	Personal correspondence Condolences on the death of Bono Wiener [Chava Rosenfarb's common-law husband]
Folder 1	ALS 'Henry' to 'Eva' [likely former husband Henry Morgentaler to Chava Rosenfarb] September 17, 1999
Folder 2	Manuscript notes in Yiddish, possibly by Chava, sent by Henry
Folder 3	AL in Yiddish, from Buenos Aires, 1959 Sent by Henry
Folder 4	<i>Jewish Daily Eagle</i> Montreal, Monday, May 3, 1954 Sent by Henry
Folders 5-12	Condolences on death of Bono Wiener
Folders 13-14	Bono Wiener clippings
Folders 15-17	Bono Wiener print material (& stamps collected by Bono)
Folder 18	Fay Mokotow tribute and clippings
Folder 19	Holograph drafts in Yiddish and English Book review of Herman Wouk

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Folder 20	'Work and Remembrance' review by Chava Rosenfarb
Folder 21	Personal correspondence Including from Elaine Kalman Naves
Folder 22	Holograph draft of remarks for launch of <i>Bociany</i> and <i>Of Lodz, and Love</i>
Folder 23	Clippings re: York University appearances 2000
Folder 24	ALS by Chava Rosenfarb requesting official correction of birth date ANS daughter Goldie Morgentaler
Folder 25	Eva [Chava] Rosenfarb international Driving permit
Folder 26	Agent contract with Shelley Roth of The Roth Agency, March 21, 1994
Folder 27	2 TLS re: appearances at Jewish Public Library, 1993 and 1995
Folder 28	National Committee on Yiddish certification of Chava Rosenfarb as writer and teacher
Folder 29	Correspondence with Mrs. Shifra Stefa Knobel
Folder 30	TLS from University of Lethbridge inviting Chava Rosenfarb to speak March 16, 2001
Folder 31	Birthday cards and Mother's Day wishes
Folder 32	Birthday cards and Mother's Day wishes
Box 9 18 folders	Personal correspondence 1990s – 2000s
Folders 1-2	Correspondence, 1990s-2000s

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Folder 3	Correspondence, including Jill Krementz [photographer and wife of Kurt Vonnegut]
Folder 4	Correspondence from Alexander Spiegelblatt, 1998-2003
Folder 5	Chava Rosenfarb last will and testament Holograph
Folders 6-7	Correspondence Claims Conference, Article 2 Fund
Folder 8	Copy of Belgian identification card and signed personal statement re: incarceration in Lodz ghetto and Auschwitz, Sasel and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps
Folder 9	Correspondence 1998-1999
Folders 10-13	Correspondence, 1990s-2000
Folder 14	Re: Nachman Libeskind [father of architect Daniel Libeskind] 90 <sup>th</sup> birthday party invitation 1 colour photograph of painting by Nachman Libeskind
Folder 15	Correspondence, 1990s-2000s
Folder 16	Correspondence, 1990s-2000s Reviews of <i>Bociany</i> and <i>Of Lodz and Love</i>
Folder 17	Correspondence, 1990s-2000s Holograph notes 1 colour photograph [Maya Morgentaler, granddaughter]
Folder 18	Correspondence, 1990s-2000s
Box 10 23 folders	Correspondence 1990s-2000s, including Nachman Libeskind Older correspondence 1950s-1960s Including Isaac Bashevis Singer, publishers, other writers, appearances, Shea Tenenbaum, Israel Emiot

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Folders 1-9	Correspondence, 1990s-2000s Including from former British soldier Douglas Jenson who befriended Chava during the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and stayed in touch until her death
Folders 10-11	Correspondence, 1990s-2000s Including Nachman Libeskind
Folder 12	Isaac Bashevis Singer, 1965-1966 3 ALS in Yiddish
Folder 13	Professional correspondence 1960s English and Yiddish
Folder 14	Holograph draft of Chaim Grade talk by Chava Rosenfarb
Folder 15	Professional correspondence 1960s English and Yiddish
Folder 16	Professional correspondence 1960s English and Yiddish, including Earle Birney
Folder 17	Professional correspondence 1950s English and Yiddish
Folder 18	Professional correspondence 1950s English and Yiddish, including Sheindl and Yehuda Elberg
Folder 19	Professional correspondence 1950s-1960s English and Yiddish
Folder 20	Professional correspondence, 1949-1960s English and Yiddish
Folders 21-22	Shea Tenenbaum, 1940s-1950s Yiddish, Long Island, New York
Folder 23	Israel Emiot, 1960s-1970s, Yiddish

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Box 11 16 folders	Correspondence, 1950s-1960s Including Yehoshua O. Rapaport, Emanuel Patt, Israel London
Folders 1-2	Yehoshua O. Rapaport Melbourne, Australia 1960s, Yiddish
Folder 3	Emanuel Patt, 1950s Bronx, New York, Yiddish
Folder 4	Israel London, printer and publisher New York, 1960s, Yiddish
Folder 5	Zandberg, 1950s Brussels, 1950s, Yiddish
Folders 6-7	Hamenorah, publisher 1970s, Yiddish
Folder 8	M. Kligberg, 1950s New York, Yiddish
Folders 9-12	Various literary correspondents 1950s-1960s, Yiddish
Folder 13	Holograph notebook, early poem drafts of 'Oy Tolchter', addresses, etc.
Folder 14	Cancelled passport 1994
Folder 15	Cancelled passport 1999
Folder 16	Jewish Writers Association of Montreal member card, in tooled leather wallet
Box 12 9 items in box	Agendas and address books 1950s address book, 1967, 1982-1984, 1986, 1993-1994, 1999