

Irena Klepfisz's work is an essential part of this poetry of cultural re-creation. It begins with a devastating exterior event, the destruction of European Jewry in the Nazi period through the technologically organized genocide known as the Holocaust, or, in Yiddish, *der khurbn*. (Klepfisz has written: "The Yiddish word was important, for, unlike the term Holocaust, it resonated with *yidishe geshikhte*, Jewish history, linking the events of World War II with *der ershter un tsveyter khurbn*, the First and Second Destruction (of the Temple).") Born in 1941 in the Warsaw Ghetto, this poet is unequivocally rooted in the matrix of history. Beginning with almost total disintegrative loss—of family, community, culture, country and language—she has taken up the task of recreating herself as Jew, woman, and writer, by facing and learning to articulate that destruction. If she had stopped there, had become only the author of her early poems and of "*Bashert*," she would be recognizably one of the most powerful poets to have addressed those events.