Abstract

The committee organized to posthumously publish Natan Alterman’s literary

work put out *For Children* two years after his death. Apparently, its members wanted to anthologize all the children’s poetry that Alterman wrote in one volume. Practically all of the poems had previously appeared in poetry collections and periodicals. *For Children* was divided into two sections. Original poetry was placed in the first part and translations from Yiddish and Russian were assigned to the second part. The only children’s poems that the committee decided not to publish in *For Children* were those that had appeared in *Sefer ha-tevah ha-mezameret* [The Music Box Book], a collection whose structure Alterman carefully organized and whose poems he ordered prior to its publication.

Four editions of *For Children* were published; prior to the publication of the second edition, extensive changes were made and numerous corrections introduced that have until now not been the subject of scholarly attention. These changes appear to have come in response to a review article that the scholar of children’s literature Uriel Ofek wrote shortly after the first edition’s publication. Since many people today are not aware of the first edition’s many errors, it is still in wide use today. This article’s ability to make this fact known to readers constitutes one of the many reasons that its findings prove significant.

Furthermore, comparison of the different editions enables one to track how one of the canonical texts of Israeli children’s literature took shape and criteria for its design were constructed through a form of dialogue that took place between the members of the public committee for publication of Natan Alterman’s work and the scholar Uriel Ofek.