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ABSTRACTS

Mendele Moykher-Sforim

Reb Faytl [Yiddish original and Hebrew translation]

This fragment may show us an unfamiliar side of Mendele. It is a thoroughly realistic account of an impoverished Jewish shtetl family whose only son is presumed to have been killed at the front in distant Bulgaria. Reb Faytl, the unfortunate father, is without means, and must rise early to go to St. Peterburg in search of a livelihood for his destitute family.

Avidov Lipsker

The Mirror in Which Rabbi Simon the Great of Mainz Did Not See Clearly

At the core of this article is a close analysis of Story No. 187 in the Basel *Mayse Bukh* of 1602, popularly known as "Elchanan the Jewish Pope". The story tells of a Christian maid who kidnaps Elchanan, son of Rabbi Simon the Great, and hands him over to monastic teacher. The latter give him a sound Christian education and he becomes a priest, later a monk, then a cardinal and finally the Pope. However, he knows he is Jewish. One day he summons his father, reveals himself to him and after sharply criticizing the Christian faith, he leaps from a tower and becomes a martyr. The tale is closely related to the international motif index AaTh 671 ('A Boy Pope' or 'The Three Languages'). A comparison of the Jewish story with the version in Christian folklore tells us a great deal about the specific intentions of the *Mayse Bukh* story. Outstanding in the Jewish version is the exposition where we learn that the father possessed a wonder mirror, one which in this instance,

however, did not reflect light and did not help him find his son. This surely hints at the limitations of the father's magical power, and also at the inner contradictions in Ashkenazic Jewish culture – magical wisdom versus the values of traditional scholarship.

Shmuel Werses

From Language to Language: Characteristic Traits of the
Yiddish Version of Yosef Perl's *Megale Tmirin*
(‘Revealer of Secrets’)

In this detailed textual comparison of the Hebrew and Yiddish versions of Yosef Perl's anti-chasidic satire, *Megale Tmirin*, the author finds in the vernacular version, with its rich idiomaticity, a more pronounced emotional tone and more colorfully presented characters. The chasidim are highly sensitive to the matter of "the book" – a disturbing foreign-language composition. It is full of enmity towards them and their ways, and is examined in order to tear it apart. The hunt after "the book" is the central action around which *Megale Tmirin* revolves.

The Yiddish translation contains textual additions which introduce more details than are found in the Hebrew original, as well as an expanded realism. Moreover, many details are altered and the satiric-parodic direction is much less pointed. Direct dialogue is more prominent in the Yiddish version; in the Hebrew, on the other hand, there are rich fragments in which the author gives detailed summaries of lively conversations in his very own words. The comparison fully confirms that Yosef Perl was both the author and the translator. His bilingualism is also confirmed in other works of his which have recently been identified.

Avraham Lis

Sholem-Aleykhem's Epistolary Estate

This is a brief introduction to an extensive work (716 pages) containing 713 letters from Sholem-Aleykhem's correspondence, as well as vital bio-bibliographical data. The book was published in 1995 by the Y.-L. Perets Farlag in cooperation with the Beyt Shalom Aleykhem in Tel Aviv.

Ilanit Yaakov

The Plan for Publicatin of Sholem-Aleykhem's Works by the Moriah Publishing Co.

The author places a magnifying glass over an episode in the relationship of Sholem-Aleykhem with Chayim Nachman Bialik. She uncovers a latter by Bialik to Sholem-Aleykhem written in the style of the Menachem-Mendel's Sheyne-Sheyndl correspondence and in which he upbraids Sholem-Aleykhem for assigning the rights to a volume of his writings in Hebrew to, of all people, the Warsaw publisher Lidski. The course of this embarassing incident is explored in detail.

Jacob Weitzner

Women in Sholem-Aleykhem's *Tevye the Dairyman*

This essay deals with Sholem-Aleykhem's artistic approach to the fundamental crisis which shook traditional Jewish life in Russia and led to the collapse of the patriarchal family. It is no accident that Sholem-Aleykhem chose a woman to represent the new generation and its rebellious ways. The author clearly shows the difference between the dramatic treatment in

Tsezeyt un Tseshpreyt and the artistic conception underlying *Tevye the Dairyman*. At the center of the latter is the tragic figure of Chava, who falls in love with a "Gorki" and finds herself in a circle of antisemites.

David G. Roskies

S. Ansky and the Paradigm of Return

In his own day, S. Ansky was not renowned for his play, *Between Two Worlds, or The Dybuk*, as for his life, at the center of which lay his dramatic turn from Russian revolutionary politics to Jewish life and letters. Many competing explanations were given for this public act of penance, beginning with his own, at the banquet honoring him in January, 1910. By carefully examining other biographical evidence, however, such as his autobiographical writings, his correspondence, contemporary memories, and most importantly, Ansky's 16-year-long career as a Narodnik, or Russian Populist, a more complex picture emerges.

The 4-act drama proceeded as follows. Shloyme-Zanvel Rappoport, the talmudic prodigy-turned-maskilic-agitator from Vitebsk threw in his lot with the Russian peasantry of the Donets Basin (near Yekaterinoslav) and adopted their name for him, Semyon Akimovitch. In Act II, the 28-year-old Narodnik adopted the pen-name S. Ansky and left for Paris. There, through a convergence of influences – his personal ties with Khayim Zhitlovsky; reading the collected works of I.L.Peretz; meeting the controversial Father Gapon; visits with Zionist students in Geneva; and the overall shift toward nationalist politics among Russian radicals of every stripe – Ansky returned to writing in Yiddish. Topping his linguistic return was the political amnesty of 1905, which allowed Ansky to settle in and around St. Petersburg and to earn his living as a Russian-Jewish journalist and lecturer. Thus far, the typical tale of rebellion-loss-and-penitent-return. (Some sources even speak of a religious conversion experience). But only in Act IV, when Rappoport discovered the untold riches of the Yiddish-speaking hinterland, becoming the prophet of a folk-based renaissance, did a synthesis occur between Symon

Akimovitch's revolutionary ideals S. Ansky's blueprint for a modern Jewish culture.

Rather than adopt a simplified model of a life that is bifurcated between Before and After, innocence and knowledge, skepticism and faith, the untold story of Ansky's life suggests a more dialectical paradigm of Jewish "return" in modern times.

Avraham Greenbaum

Bergelson's "Witness" as a Parable on the Fate of Soviet Jewry

The leading Soviet Yiddish writer Dovid Bergelson published his last collection of stories, *Naye Dertseylungen* ("New Stories") in 1947. The following year he was arrested in the Stalin purge of Yiddish culture.

One of the stories in the collection, called "An eydes" ("A Witness"), depicts an old Holocaust survivor, symbolically nameless, who, soon after liberation, relates his experiences in a Nazi extermination camp to a Jewish girl. The "witness" insists on dictating in Yiddish, while the girl – herself no longer young – agrees to his demands to write down the tales of horror in Russian. They are joined by a young Russian friend of the girl, who, like her, has lost his entire family in the war.

The story is seen as a parable on the fate of Soviet Jewry. The distinct Jewish wartime experience has made the relations with the surrounding population problematic, thereby guaranteeing the future existence of Jews in the country as a separate nationality, the language of which will be Russian and not Yiddish.

Khone Shmeruk

Issac Bashevis Singer as Children's Storyteller

Though he himself long regarded writing for children as less than serious, Issac Bashevis Singer is today seen by scholars as a marvelous writer for children as well as for adults. This essay discusses not only the 36 stories in the representative anthology of his children's tales in English translation, but explore their place in his artistic world generally. the Yiddish original of this essay appeared in *Oksforder Yidish* 3 (1995) 233-279.

Michael Astour

Leyzer Volf [Lazar Wolf]

Leyzer Volf (1910-1943), a founder and leading member of the "Young Vilna" group of writers and artists, was a personal friend of the author. The article sketches Volf's life and discusses his personality, his multifaceted creativity, his activity in "Bin" (the Yiddishist scout organization), his ideological road to Territorialism, and his role in its youth association "Shparber". This article first appeared in Yiddish in *Afn Shvel* (October/November 1960) on the fiftieth anniversary of Leyzer Volf's birth.

Avrom Autskever

To Leyzer Volf [Yiddish original and Hebrew translation]

Leyzer Volf

Evigingo [Yiddish original and Hebrew translation]

Leyzer Volf's first poem, published in 1936 (by the apparently fictitious publisher named "Gerangl" ("Struggle")) is given here. It was printed Latin letters in a slim notebook of sixteen pages. The pink-covered little booklet with newspaper-quality paper has not been preserved. Nor has a xerox or other exact copy remained extant. The late historian and master-archivist Leyzer Ran, redeemer of so many Vilna manuscripts and books, sent us from New York a Yiddish text in Yiddish letters. The poem "Evigingo", over 400 lines long, is given in its original Yiddish form and in Hebrew translation.

Kathryn Hellerstein

A Yiddish Poet's Response to the *Khurban*: Kadya Molodowsky in America

This essay analyzes four poems from Kadya Molodowsky's 1946 book *Der Melekh Dovid Aleyh iz Geblibn* (Only King David Remained) in which a Yiddish poet in America responds to the *Khurban*, the Nazi destruction of Europe's Jews. Through reading of these four poems, *Briv fun geto* (Letters from the Ghetto) *Gezegehung* (Leavetaking), *Khad gadye* and *Eyl Khanun* (Merciful God), this essay argues that Molodowsky's *Khurban-lider* (destruction poems) are of two kinds: the traditional sacred parody that descends from the Book of Lamentation (as argued by Alan Mintz and David Roskies) and Molodowsky's own form, poems of unravelling. Transitional or modern, these forms complement each other. Linked by the trope of scripting (written language), Molodowsky's poems repeat the essential crisis of faith expressed by Jews who, facing destruction throughout the ages, continues to write.

David E. Fishman

The Politics of Yiddish in Tsarist Russia

This study demonstrates that the development of modern Yiddish culture in Russia was hampered and delayed by the Tsarist regime. The Russian Ministry of Interior refused to permit publication of Yiddish newspapers during the 1870s and 1890s, and banned Yiddish theatre performances throughout the Empire between 1883 and 1900. Modern schools using Yiddish as language of instruction were also prohibited by law. These state actions were motivated in part by the policy of Russifying ethnic minorities, and in part by the specific suspicion of Jews as a politically disloyal element, who would use the press and theatre to spread revolutionary propaganda. Yiddish press and theatre flourished in Russia only once the policy of cultural repression was lifted, in 1905; the ban on schools lasted until the outburst of World War I. The suppression of Yiddish should be viewed as one of the anti-Jewish policies of the Tsarist regime.

Avraham Greenbaum

Yevgeni Kagarov – A Forgotten Soviet Yiddishist

Yavgeni Kagarov (1882-1942) was a Russian scholar who had been chairman of the Ethnographic Division of Leningrad University and whose first interest had been Greek culture. In the course of Subsequent research on German civilization he came into contact with Yiddish, with which he fell in love. Starting in 1921, when he joined the Philosophical Commission of Yiddish researchers in Kharkov headed by Issac Zaretski, he frequently lectured on Yiddish and wrote articles on Yiddish etymology. He published articles in *Tsaytshrift* (Minsk 1928, 1929), as well as in all three volumes of the Vilna Yivo's *Filologishe Shriftn* (1926, 1928, 1929). Zalmen Reyzen translated his work from Russian.

The Underground "Bund" Press in Warsaw

The following article deals with the underground press of one of the nineteen political organizations which published underground periodical publications in the Warsaw ghetto. The few studies on the Jewish underground press in Warsaw deal mainly with the rescued periodicals. The present study includes periodicals and single issues which did not reach us but details about which have been gathered from various sources.

Under the Nazi regime in occupied Warsaw and in the ghetto, the Bund (including its youth movement "Tsukunft") published various underground periodicals. Twelve such publications, comprising 23% of the entire Jewish underground press in Warsaw, were known to us till now. Of all the Bundist underground publication, sixty-two different issues remain and these alone were known to us.

In the ghetto the Bundist periodicals were prepared and printed in illegal and provisional printing shops which had to move constantly to survive. This study also describes how the Bund underground press was secretly prepared, printed and, most importantly, distributed in and outside of Warsaw by couriers. A list of these couriers is given together with an account of their work and fate. Also noted are the efforts to cooperate with the Polish socialist underground.

The author tries to substantiate the claim that the Bund underground press was not only a cultural force in the life of the Warsaw ghetto, but constitutes an active form of resistance in the struggle against the Nazi occupation and terror.

The article has two appendices, 1) a list of the periodical publications and single issues of the Bund underground press hitherto known; 2) a list of missing Bund periodical publications and single issues.

Collection of the two lists shows that the scope of the Bund underground press in the Warsaw ghetto was substantially greater and more diverse than has been thought until now.

Pages Torn from an Essay

These four pages have somehow been retrieved from the treasures of the *Lithuanian* Archive in Vilna. They are formally classified: Lietuvos Centrius Valstibes Archyvas F.R-1390, Ap. 1: B.25: L.109. Zelik Kalmanovitsh probably wrote the essay in the Vilna ghetto in 1942. Even these four pages tell us something of the author's approach to ghetto existence. Thus: "In the ten years that the enemy is in power we have *wanted* war, prayed for war. But we are embarrassed that the *other* have dallied – May we try to convince ourselves that *we* didn't want the war, that we stand on the sidelines? We are not the innocent lamb that the butcher slaughters. No: we are the vanquished side, the defeated, or temporarily defeated. – But as a *people* we should prefer to be regarded as a terrible enemy rather than be pitied".

A facsimile of the four pages of the Yiddish manuscript is followed by a Hebrew translation.

Y.-L. Perets

Hebrew and Yiddish

This is a short essay which Perets wrote for the Warsaw *Yiddishe Vokhenshrift* [No. 1-2, 28 January [10 February], 1909, 1-2), of which he was the editor. Like many bilingual writers of his generation, Perets sought a common denominator to conciliate the Hebraist and Yiddish zealots respectively.

He writes: "Hebrew ties us to the past: *Pesik reysho velo yomus* – 'One cannot live without a head'. But Yiddish unites us in the present. There can be no Jewish life without Yiddish!"

Perets Markish

The Esthetics of Struggle in Modern Poetry

In honor of the centennial of Perets Markish's birth, we present a Hebrew translation of one of his famous essays, first published in 1922 in the Warsaw Yiddish journal *Ringen* (No. 10, pp. 35-42). Markish (1895-1952) here resoundingly echoes the engaged expressionism of his day. Thus:

"There are no muses who descend from Mount Parnassus to flirt with the artist and bore him. And the artist is not a shopkeeper who sits waiting for customers with concealed expectation.

The muses are the blood circulating in his arteries, swollen snakes yearning to escape from the smallest aperture of his body, pulsating in his nerves like thousands of crazed orchestras bursting out of and into the heart. He is not man apart or artist apart. He has no separate Sabbath blood and weekday blood. He is constantly flowing stream of mingled pains and joys, and he concerns himself with everything that he meets".

Shifra Epstein

The First *Purimshpil* of the Bobover Chasidim in New York after the Shoa

This paper deals with the first *purimshpil* stages by the Bobover chasidim in the United States: *In tsayt fun farnumenem poyln* ('In the Days of Occupied Poland') enacted on Purim 1948, three years after World War Two. Written and performed by Shoa survivors for an audience of Shoa survivors, its plots and images were taken directly from life in the ghetto under Nazi occupation, the concentration camps, the liberation and the search for survivors. It was probably one of the earliest dramas ever written on the subject of the Shoa. The author explores how, by drawing upon the form and performance style of the traditional Eastern European Jewish *purimshpil* and redefining and

reshaping it to fit specific needs, the Bobover chasidim were able to create a unique psychodrama in which they as community confront the most catastrophic event in Jewish life. The origin text of *In tsayt fun farnumenem poyln* did not survive. To illustrate the uniqueness of this folk drama, a summary of the play in Yiddish is provided. It was written from memory, in 1987, by R. Moses Aftergute, who wrote and directed the play and also played the leading role of the mother.

Dov Noy

Proverb Spoken by Shalom Katz of Toronto

Professor Dov Noy introduces the book briefly, with particular attention to its sources.

Abraham Keren

Hebrew Elements in Shalom Katz's Yiddish Proverb Collection

The author discusses the Hebraisms he finds in 650 of the 1146 proverbs in Shalom Katz's collection. He classifies them according to theme, emphasizing Hebraic sources and the relatively weighty role of the Hebraic elements in the proverbs. He provides a bibliography and an additional body of 142 proverb.

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The editors thank Leonard Prager for his help in translating and editing the above abstracts.