A Club of Their Own

Jewish Humorists and the Contemporary World

Edited by Eli Lederhendler

Guest symposium editor: Gabriel N. Finder

STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY JEWRY

Institute of Contemporary Jewry
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Volume XXIX

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Preface

The symposium in this volume, dealing with the Jewish cultural dimensions attached to the notion of humor (in its widest sense), follows upon a number of prior academic forays into this field. As has been the case with earlier volumes of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, our purpose is not so much to cap an emergent trend with a definitive round-table assessment, but rather to continue the discussion and perhaps advance it by bringing a host of new angles under consideration.

Why should humor, in its various manifestations, matter to students of modern Jewish culture and social history? For one thing, humor may be seen as a counterpoint to "real" or observed reality—an improvised reflection upon something that exists, more than a representation of the "thing" itself. Humor is related to incongruity; almost by definition, it is an awareness of something being amiss. That would make of humor a secondary phenomenon, and although such things contribute to the social construction of the world as we see it, we might still be apt to relegate it to some marginal sector of the study of cultural consciousness.

As post-Freudians, however, we cannot but be impressed by the logic of the sublimated aggression and other properties of cultural encoding that jokes are apt to embody and express. The artfulness and the usefulness of an ulterior weapon, deployed by those engaged in outmaneuvering their fate, is not to be underestimated. It is, indeed, in this regard that we accept, at least as an initial proposition, the very real significance of the marginal, the out-of-tune, the off-kilter, the mocking and casual warping of harmonious ("congruous") perception as a matter worthy of serious consideration.

Modern Jews have been known to claim this unhappy virtue, this belief in the rhetoric of comeuppance, almost as a rite of membership. This axiom brings to mind Groucho Marx's most famous quip, from which this volume's symposium takes its title. In his 1959 autobiography, *Groucho and Me*, Groucho recounts that he was invited to join a prominent theatrical organization. Harboring pretensions since his youth to high culture, he hoped to be able to talk about the giants of great literature with the other members. Instead, on his first visit he discovered that they were interested only in playing cards or philandering. He went again a few nights later and found himself seated next to a man who disparaged the organization's newest inductees. When Groucho tried to engage him in a discussion about literature, the man changed the topic, denouncing barbers' newfangled use of the electric razor. "The following morning," Groucho writes, "I sent the club a wire stating, PLEASE ACCEPT MY RESIGNATION. I DON'T WANT TO BELONG TO ANY CLUB THAT WILL ACCEPT ME AS A MEMBER."[1] As Lee Siegel observes in his biography of Groucho, this witticism is not inspired by Jewish self-loathing, as others have interpreted it.

Rather, what Groucho is doing is raining contempt on the façade of respectability from the position of a "Jewish aristocrat." "If there is anything characteristically Jewish in Groucho's famous line," Siegel notes, "it is…in the way he negates the world around him to carve out a private freedom." In this Groucho is in good company. "From Heine, to Freud, to Larry David and Sacha Baron Cohen, Jewish humor has broken new ground in the realm of subjectivity."[2] This is the club to which Groucho rightly belongs.

To underscore how crucial this notion—the Jewish jokester's desire to distance himself from a group to which he feels superior and in this way to forge a path to emotional freedom—can sometimes appear to be, people often point out that Jews made jokes even under Nazi occupation—from Germany in the 1930s, to ghettos in Poland, to labor and concentration camps—mocking Nazi leaders, criticizing Jewish councils, and looking for momentary solace in humor from their terrible ordeals. Particularly telling is the discovery in the recovered Ringelblum archives of two prewar sketches by Shimen Dzigan and Yisroel Shumacher. Although the main objective of the clandestine archive was to record Jewish life in the Warsaw ghetto and to collect evidence of Nazi crimes, it was deemed important as well to preserve artifacts of prewar Jewish life, including examples from the repertoire of this well-known comic duo.[3]

Yet these preliminary remarks do not really do justice to the conceptual breadth required for this topic. Although a number of the essays in this volume are rooted in the proverbial semantics of "laughter through tears," it makes more sense to us to see this as only one filtering paradigm for the study of humor in Jewish life and culture. Fortune also smiles, so we are told; and, that being so, we might wonder whether Jews find comic flaws even in decent life circumstances. Are Jews funny only when in distress, only when they are marginal, "diasporic," visibly and unsettlingly "other"? Or are parody, irony, and satire such irresistible devices for playing up any form of idiosyncrasy that even when being "Jewish" is not what is at stake, Jews, donning the role of jester, often desire to be and are funny?

Here, we might point to the recent findings that about four in ten of all American Jews surveyed (42 percent) felt that "having a good sense of humor" was "an essential part of what being Jewish means to them," on a par with caring for Israel (43 percent), and quite a good deal in excess of the importance to them of observing Jewish law (19 percent) and eating traditional Jewish foods (14 percent).[4] There is little way of knowing what those respondents really had in mind: whether a "good sense of humor" is, for some of them, a mannerism that lends character and panache to a positive self-image, a humanizing trait that (hopefully) comes across as benign and attractive, or whether the fact that humor outranks religious practice simply means that the majority of respondents view Jewishness as a secular category.

In this vein, we might consider what William Novak and Moshe Waldoks have written: "Jewish humor…has in some ways come to replace the standard sacred texts as a touchstone for the entire Jewish community. Not all Jews can read and understand a page of Talmud, but even the most assimilated tend to have a special affection for Jewish jokes."[5] Although Novak and Waldoks are describing Jewish humor in America, what they write here is probably relevant at least to all of the Jewish diaspora.

The young Gershom Scholem was alert to this element, though from a different angle, when he confided in his diary: "Could it be that the Jewish joke developed through the systematic mix-up between the canon and the transmission of tradition? In which case the Jewish joke would conceal within itself an unmistakable symbolic reference to the deepest danger of what is Jewish, namely, the deep strata of self-accusation.... What is certain, however, is that everyone who makes a joke puts himself in the dock."[6]

Of course, Jews—like everyone else—have been producing and consuming humor forever. But Ruth Wisse makes a cogent historiographical point in *No Joke: Making Jewish Humor*: "Jews became known for their humor only starting with the Enlightenment.... [I]t [humor] responds to conditions of Jewish life, but only where it becomes the response of choice."[7] John Efron has made a similar point: "While the emergence of happiness as a conscious state of being is an eighteenth-century invention, the virtue of being humorous is of more recent vintage.... Jewish humor, then, should be linked to modernity and as modernity was seen to represent the triumph of civilization, humor and wit were deemed its hallmarks. To master humor was, in other words, to be regarded as urbane and civilized."[8]

Jewish humor has served many functions in terms of "insider" speech. It has, inter alia, been used to ridicule certain Jews or types of Jews, such as Jewish overreachers for their pretensions, or Jews who try unsuccessfully to hide their Jewishness; to deflate the inflated piety of Jews who claim to be religious; to unite Jews (and occasionally Jews and non-Jews) in the face of their enemies; to challenge authority (in both the Gentile and the Jewish world); to deride Jewish politics and politicians and their wrongheaded policies; to turn warring elements in the Jewish performance of modernity into funniness; to pit Jews' expectations of God against God's expectation of Jews with no clear outcome, positing human beings as God's equal rather than His subjects; in America, to ridicule conspicuous consumption, blatant and hasty Americanization, and putatively diminished American Jewish masculinity and masculine Jewish women; in Israel, to contrast expectations of political normalcy and bitter reality.[9]

It is noteworthy, however, that much of contemporary Jewish humor is not designed only or even primarily as insider speech, opaque except for Jews who are well versed in the intricacies of arcane topics. Rather, it is accessible to many non-Jews as well as Jews; it rewards all those who get the punch line. Jews may be the implicit basis of the comedy, but the Gentile audience is seldom confronted with any particularity that might impede an appreciation of the humor.

The point of departure for several essays in our symposium (Patt, Slucki, Steitz, and Dardan) is the steady contemporary stream of attempts to inject humor into representations of the Holocaust. We would cite here Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi's insightful remark: "Yes, life is beautiful. No, the Shoah cannot be funny. What is at stake in the reinstatement of laughter…*after* Auschwitz is not the fidelity of a comic representation *of* the Shoah but the reinstatement of the comic as building block of a post-Shoah universe."[10]

Other essays in the symposium highlight the following functions in Jewish humor: in fin-de-siècle Vienna, to lay claim to common cultural capital while subverting cultural mores (Beller); to present the world and the precarious position of Jews in it through a politically, socially, and culturally charged prism (Whitfield); to turn

contemporary Jewish tropes into general funniness while using a Jewish (or talmudic) discursive style detectable only to insiders (Tanny); to affirm the inclusion of Jews in the (British) nation, warts and all (Berkowitz); to exploit religious tradition for social satire (Portnoy); to express through whispered jokes certain truths in symbolic subversion of a repressive (Soviet) political system constructed on a web of lies and deceit—but even then with great discretion and caution (Shternshis); to challenge the premises of political, social, and cultural hegemony or to puncture the pretensions of certain Israeli political leaders while humanizing others (Shifman, Rotman); to challenge Jewish tradition through funny, unconventional images (Zemel); and to let non-Jews (Germans!) in on the joke, while turning the tables on history (Finder). By contrast, one essay (Slucki) demonstrates the adverse reaction of a Jewish community when dark humor whose theme is the Holocaust stumbles and offends.

Whatever its various functions, Jewish humor attests to what Wisse calls "folk creativity."[11] Humor is probably the most prolific and most democratic manifestation of popular or mass culture among Jews across the globe—created, told, and retold both from below and by intellectuals and literati.

Martina Kessel writes: "Using humor as a category of historical analysis allows us to see not only how humour entertained, but also how it worked as a cultural practice that both organized social order and revealed shared assumptions about society and politics."[12] This is the broader mandate we wish to bring to bear on the subject of Jewish humor—a genre that has already enjoyed a good deal of public notice and scholarly attention. We want to move beyond general theorizing about the nature of Jewish humor by serving a smorgasbord of finely grained, historically situated, and contextualized interdisciplinary studies of humorous performance and its consumption in Jewish life in the modern world.

Although transnational in its intentions, the symposium is admittedly Euro- or America-centric in many ways. In part, we have attempted to cover our bases somewhat more inclusively by drawing attention to Israel, including the interethnic genre of humor associated in Israel with Mizrahi Jews and their social status. Yet we would be the first to admit that this is an initial gesture that requires a good deal more attention in future studies. As for now, we are mindful of Ruth Wisse's suggestion that wit, though undoubtedly universal—and universally Jewish—has had a distinctive historical "career" as a peculiarity of Jewish stereotypes that germinated in Europe.[13] At one remove from the European origins of this particularity stand all the other subcultures of the Jewish world, in which the immigrant experience and intergenerational dilemmas have provided further grist for the mill of Jewish humor in various guises. Contemporary appearances of Iranian Jewish comics in Los Angeles, for example, reiterate in a new key all the themes that are already in play, though clearly the coding of humor requires intimacy with a whole new palette of cultural recall and innuendo. This collection of essays, taken together, provides a comprehensive descriptive map of the most salient geographical foci and media in which Jewish humor flourished once, still thrives, and, in addition, is assuming new forms.

* * *

As always, with the appearance of every new volume of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, it is our pleasant task to acknowledge the help and support from those who

made this publication possible. We thank the Samuel and Althea Stroum Philanthropic Fund, the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, and the Nachum Ben-Eli Honig Fund for their continued generous support. In this digital age, it is no small matter to conceive of the lasting and real value of a volume on a bookshelf where readers, students, and future scholars may peruse some or all of it at will.

In this volume we include a moving tribute to Ezra Mendelsohn, one of the founding triumvirate of editors who shepherded *Studies* throughout its first decades, and who would surely have enjoyed reading this volume, given his own characteristically sardonic sense of humor.

It is always a pleasure to thank Richard I. Cohen, Anat Helman, and Uzi Rebhun, co-editors of *Studies*, for their advice, friendship, and team spirit.

The editors of the journal owe a huge debt of gratitude to Hannah Levinsky-Koevary, a member of the team since Volume II (1986), who has reached her greatly merited retirement. Unsatisfied to allow the manuscript of this volume to go to press without first making sure she had done all that she had on her desk, Hannah soldiered on for several extra months, at no small sacrifice of time and energy. All of the authors, the volume's academic editors, and most certainly Hannah's stalwart colleague, Laurie Fialkoff, have reaped the benefit of Hannah's dedicated work. To Laurie, of course, we owe not just the expected thanks for a job well done (again!), but also our heartfelt wish for continued satisfaction from her work with us, as we move ahead toward the production of future volumes.

Gabriel N. Finder and Eli Lederhendler

Notes

1. Groucho Marx, *Groucho and Me* (New York: 1959), 321 (emphasis in original).
2. Lee Siegel, *Groucho Marx: The Comedy of Existence* (New Haven: 2015), 120. The chapter in which Siegel incisively examines Groucho's famous quip is titled "Groucho the Jewish Aristocrat."
3. For examples, see "Akhdut [Akhdus]," Ringelblum Archives [Ring.] I/649; "A klang zum gelekhter," Ring. I/1162, Yad Vashem Archives, Record Group M10.
4. Pew Research Center, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans" (1 October 2013), online at www.pewforum.org.
5. William Novak and Moshe Waldoks (eds.), *The Big Book of Jewish Humor: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary* (New York: 2006), xlv.
6. Anthony David Skinner (ed. and trans.), *Lamentations of Youth: The Diaries of Gershom Scholem, 1913–1919* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2007), 286–287.
7. Ruth R. Wisse *No Joke: Making Jewish Humor* (Princeton: 2013), 19–20.
8. John Efron, "From Łódź to Tel Aviv: The Yiddish Political Satire of Shimen Dzigan and Yisroel Shumacher," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 102, no. 1 (2012), 50–79, quote on 52.
9. Wisse, *No Joke*, 116, 187.
10. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "After Such Knowledge, What Laughter?" *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001), 287–313 (quote at 287).
11. Wisse, *No Joke*, 13.
12. Martina Kessel, "Introduction. Landscapes of Humour: The History and Politics of the Comical in the Twentieth Century," in *The Politics of Humor: Laughter, Inclusion, and Exclusion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Martina Kessel and Patrick Merziger (Toronto: 2012), 3.
13. Wisse, *No Joke*, 20.

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Symposium

A Club of Their Own: Jewish Humorists and the Contemporary World

"The Right Mélange": Viennese Operetta as a Stage for Jewish Humor

Steven Beller
(WASHINGTON, D.C.)

In the aftermath of the *Anschluss* of March 1938, Anna Freud turned to her father with a question. Given the desperate circumstances, she asked, should members of the family do what many other Viennese Jews had done and commit suicide? Sigmund replied: "Why? Because they would like us to?"[1]

It might seem surprising that such a serious figure, at such a tragic point, would make a joke. And yet Freud had authored a book devoted entirely to the subject of jokes. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) is known as one of the least funny books about jokes ever written, but it does have some good jokes in it. One of the best ones concerns "Herr N.'s" opinion of someone who was both praiseworthy and yet had many faults: "Yes, vanity is one of his four Achilles heels."[2]

It is also notable that Freud's book contains a large number of jokes about Jews, a fact that the author readily discusses in the volume.[3] Even many of the jokes that are not obviously about Jews are jokes by Jews, or by individuals with a Jewish background. For instance, the "Herr N." of the Achilles heels joke, one of Freud's favorite sources for witticisms, was in all likelihood Josef Unger, one of Austria's most prominent jurists, who served as president of the Austrian Supreme Court beginning in 1881. One might think that Freud would have had some objections to a Jew who had converted to enter public office, but in fact Unger was a political hero of Freud's, regarded by him as a Jew who had achieved political prominence. In 1912, a note was added to the new edition of *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* that qualified "Herr N.'s" originality, attributing the same joke as a quip about Alfred de Musset by another hero of Freud's, Heinrich Heine—but as Heine was another Jew who had converted to Christianity for career purposes, the point remains: even the jokes that are not about Jews are by them.

Freud was not a great admirer of Viennese operetta. When it comes to Jews and Jewish humor in the world of operetta, however, there are similarities with Freud's book. Not all the humor in operettas was Jewish, but much was—some even about Jews—because many of operetta's composers, and most of the people who wrote the texts of operettas, came from the same background as Freud's Jewish humorists, and Freud himself. That so many of the writers of the operetta world were of Jewish

descent was largely a product of cultural and social factors; they did not think they were creating an explicitly Jewish artistic form, but their Jewish background did have a large influence on the character and content of this most characteristic of Viennese mass-popular cultural forms, especially with regard to its humor. Arguably, it shared the same Jewish humor as Freud, and it was also part of the pluralistic, critical modernity that we have come to know as "Vienna 1900."

Better than Its Reputation?

Many cultural historians and theorists have not found much to praise about operetta, and Viennese operetta, in particular, has rarely been taken seriously—more precisely, it has itself been accused of taking nothing seriously. Karl Kraus (quoted in Freud's book), who was both Jewish and one of the most notorious wits of Vienna 1900, was one of those who detested Viennese operetta. Although he was an admirer of Jacques Offenbach, whose operettas satirized the hypocrisies of the French Second Empire, Viennese operettas, in his view, lacked a critical edge and were essentially supportive of the status quo. Thus, he dismissed them as frivolous entertainment, a commercial enterprise for making money rather than being a vehicle for artistic truth.[4]

In recent decades, however, operetta in general, and also its Viennese version, has received scholarly rehabilitation. Volker Klotz's *Operette: Porträt und Handbuch einer unerhörten Kunst* (Operetta: Portrait and Handbook of an Unheard-of Art), first published in 1991, took an inclusive approach, with Parisian operetta, Viennese operetta, the "Savoy Operas" of Gilbert and Sullivan, and Spanish *zarzuelas* all placed under the same rubric. Klotz sees operetta as a critical, rebellious force in modern culture, much as Kraus regarded Offenbach's works, and he stresses the ways in which the strategy of "inversion"—what W.S. Gilbert called the world of "topsy-turvydom" and others have called the "carnivalesque"—provided an upending of social hierarchies in which social norms and conventions could be (fleetingly) challenged. Klotz also distinguishes between "good" and "bad" operettas: his description of the latter as smug purveyors of "substitute happiness" that uphold the establishment and encourage "hurrah patriotism" echoes Kraus' critique. His prime example of a bad operetta is Johann Strauss' *Der Zigeunerbaron* (The Gypsy Baron; 1885), a classic Viennese operetta.[5]

Der Zigeunerbaron happens to be one of the operettas that the other prime revitalizer of interest in operetta, Moritz Csáky, showcases in *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne* (The Ideology of Operetta and Viennese Modernism). For Csáky, Strauss' operetta is not so much a call to chauvinism as a plea both for national reconciliation between the German and Magyar parts of the Dual Monarchy and for an inclusive approach to ethnic diversity (in this case, for the Gypsies). Csáky acknowledges that Viennese operetta tended to be softer in its social critique than its Parisian counterpart. This, however, was partly due to its other cultural-political function, as Csáky sees it: that of offering a vision of the ethnically diverse Habsburg monarchy, which could be kept united through the very richness of its diverse cultural traditions. The fact that the classic Viennese operetta came to include not only waltzes but also polkas and czardases was itself a form of supra-nationalist cultural politics.[6]

Csáky was also one of the first scholars of operetta to discuss the art form's Jewish aspect, specifically as related to Jewish humor. His starting point is the traditional Jewish educational method of *pilpul*, a form of scholarly argument characterized by incisive and witty give-and-take. Transferred to the secular world, the Jewish tradition of witty response helped to shape Viennese literary humor, and hence the texts of operetta. In Csáky's view, humor-by-response was one of the Jewish "cultural codes" of the Austrian cultural tradition.[7] While this is an intriguing speculation, there are other, more concrete questions that can be asked about the Jewish aspect of Viennese operetta. How large was the Jewish presence in Viennese operetta in terms of the people composing the music, writing the texts, and making sure the resulting works were performed? Somewhat less concrete: what influence did the Jewish background of those individuals, whether grounded in Jewish religious tradition, the ideology of emancipation, or just the experience of being Jewish in a largely non-Jewish, Catholic, and antisemitic society, have on their artistic and cultural output in Viennese operetta?[8] Then again, how did this Jewish background interact with operetta's role as social critique, its "topsy-turvydom," or its function of offering an inclusive vision of a diverse society? In other words: in what way was the humor of Viennese operetta specifically "Jewish" humor?

A Jewish Script

Operettas are usually seen as primarily the creations of their composers, and on that score the Jewish presence in Viennese operetta's "golden age" from the 1860s to the turn of the 20th century was not particularly noteworthy. Jacques Offenbach, operetta's French (Alsatian) Jewish progenitor, did not have many contemporary Viennese Jewish counterparts.

The greatest Viennese operetta composer, Johann Strauss the Younger, was, admittedly, of partial Jewish descent, and many of his close acquaintances, including his third wife, Adele, were Jewish. Strauss' decision formally to marry Adele resulted in his ceasing to be either Catholic or Austrian; from 1887 to 1900, the great Austrian "Waltz King" was officially a German Protestant. This paradoxical situation is a comment on the nature of the liberal cultural circles in which Strauss moved, and on his (eventually) relaxed, "cosmopolitan" attitudes toward religious and patriotic norms. One might speculate whether such openness to changes in his formal identity regarding nation and faith was encouraged by his knowledge that he was part-Jewish. Beyond this, it is hard to read much more into Strauss' "Jewish background." It was a fact that the Nazi authorities did their utmost to cover up after 1938, but any significance for Strauss' life and work is difficult to pin down.[9]

It was in the silver age of Viennese operetta, from the turn of the 20th century into the 1930s, that Jewish composers made their mark. To be sure, Franz Lehár was not Jewish (though his wife was), nor were other well-known composers such as Robert Stolz and Ralph Benatzky.[10] However, many others were, among them Leo Fall, Emmerich Kálmán, Leo Ascher, Edmund Eysler, Paul Abraham, Bruno Granichstädten, and Oscar Straus. There was a similar preponderance of Jews among impresarios and theater managers, as, for instance, Wilhelm Karczag and Gabor

Steiner, and among performers, including Louis Treumann (the first Danilo in *The Merry Widow*), Richard Tauber (of partial Jewish descent, but widely regarded as Jewish), and Karl Farkas. This impressive Jewish presence can be explained by the fact that the world of operetta was that of commercial theater—the closest that Central Europe came to a form of Broadway-style show business. Just as Jews were attracted to Broadway as a relatively open market for their talent, compared with more official and formal cultural institutions in which Jews were less "welcome," so they were increasingly drawn to the opportunities presented by the "operetta industry."

The Jewish presence was most pronounced among the librettists and lyricists who wrote operetta's words. Jews in Central Europe were, on average, more literate and better-educated than non-Jews, and there were many Jews on the Viennese literary scene. Indeed, a good number of librettists were journalists, writers, or even poets (such as Felix Dörmann); the derisive description in the pages of Kraus' satirical journal *Die Fackel* of literary coffeehouses in Vienna as nothing more than an "Operettenbörse" (operetta [stock] exchange), where writers got their jobs as librettists, was not entirely false.[11]

The tradition of the Jewish librettist goes back to the golden age of operetta: Ludovic Halévy, one of Offenbach's favorite librettists, co-wrote the play on which Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat; 1874) was based, and Strauss' *Der Zigeunerbaron* had a text written by Ignatz Schnitzer. In the silver age, the Jewish presence became more noticeable. Victor Léon and Leo Stein, the two leading librettists of the turn of the 20th century, teamed up to write the first great hit of the silver age, Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe* (The Merry Widow; 1905). Other prominent librettists of the age were Dörmann, Rideamus (the penname of Fritz Oliven), Fritz Löhner-Beda (the penname of Fritz Löwy, who, to add more confusion, also wrote under the name Beda), Robert Bodanzky, and Hans Müller. The leading librettist team of the interwar period was Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald, who wrote, among many other hits, *Gräfin Maritza* (Countess Maritza; 1924) and *Die Zirkusprinzessin* (The Circus Princess; 1926). By the interwar period, Jewish librettists were the norm: so large was the reliance of operetta on Jewish talent that the Nazi ban in Germany on performing works by Jews to non-Jewish audiences had, by the mid-1930s, effectively destroyed the business model of Viennese operetta.[12] "Operettas" went on being performed under the Nazis, but the authentic world of operetta was destroyed by the silencing of its (mostly) Jewish creators.

Jews on Stage

Given the large Jewish presence among their creators, the absence of explicitly Jewish characters in Viennese operetta is noteworthy. Claims have been made that the figure of Zsupán in *Der Zigeunerbaron* is a covertly negative antisemitic stereotype of the Jewish peddler, but there seems to be little actual evidence for this.[13] It appears that, much as in American television, there was a certain reluctance among Jewish writers to include explicitly Jewish figures.[14] In operetta, it was just after the turn of the century, in one of Lehár's earliest hits, *Der Rastelbinder* (The Tinker; 1902), that a clearly Jewish figure had a leading role, in a text authored by Victor Léon. What is quite surprising, given the conventional wisdom about Jews and Jewish humor in

Vienna 1900, is that the character, Wolf Bär Pfefferkorn, is presented very positively. The Jewish humor that Freud discusses has been seen in terms of Jewish self-deprecation, even deflected anti-Jewish aggression against traditionalist East European Jews—almost a form of internalized antisemitism. Pfefferkorn, however, is depicted as both an urban sophisticate (in comparison with the Slovak peasants around him) and as a morally upright, God-fearing man.[15]

In addition, Pfefferkorn is a comic figure. He "yiddels," that is, he has the accent and patter of a comic Jewish stereotype. This is made quite clear from the text of his "entrance song": "Ä jeder Mensch, was handeln thut . . . ä Geschäft . . . Ich bin ä armer Jud!" (Any man who plies a trade . . . a business . . . I am a poor Jew).[16] He also causes the plot complication that serves to part the lovers at the end of Act I, though even here, it is not as though he does anything wrong. Pfefferkorn merely takes seriously the traditional betrothal of two children in the Slovak village where he trades. When the children grow up, the boy, Janku, moves to Vienna, takes on all the accoutrements of Viennese culture (including its characteristic style of patter), and falls in love with a Viennese girl, forgetting about his earlier betrothal. Pfefferkorn is the one who brings Janku's childhood betrothed, Suza, to Vienna, employing her as a domestic servant.

Pfefferkorn, the Jew with the Viennese polish, teaches the Slovak peasant girl the ways of Vienna, including how to waltz: "The main thing at a ball / Is noble demeanor in the dance hall! / You have to be graceful /And aesthetically fine!"[17] When he visits the house of the Viennese smith, Glöppler, he shows how Viennese he is by yodeling, not yiddeling (even though yodeling is Tyrolean, and *not* Viennese.). This is after he had pointedly introduced himself to Glöppler with the words: "I was born in Vienna / You can tell from my face."[18] Who, after all, was more emblematic of Viennese urban culture, this joke seems to be suggesting, than the city's Jews, even the yodeling ones?

Pfefferkorn tries to reunite Suza with Janku, but Suza, too, has forgotten her childhood betrothal and is now engaged to Milosch, another boy from the village, who is in Vienna at the end of his military service. Pfefferkorn's error is to take the traditional ceremonies of Slovak society seriously, reminding the rapidly assimilated Slovak Viennese of their origins. For this he is beaten up and then, in the process of helping to resolve the crisis that he has innocently caused, he is mistaken for a member of the army reserve and has his head shaven—an act that could be seen as a symbolic punishment of the Jew for interrupting Slovak assimilation into Viennese society. Nonetheless, Pfefferkorn is welcomed back by his Slovak friends, and he gets the last word in the operetta. The plea with which he started, namely, that trust in God and benevolence brings "the right profit," is also how the operetta ends.[19]

This was in 1902, when the antisemitic Christian Socials were the (municipal) rulers of Vienna. They were highly popular with the lower-middle classes who comprised much of operetta's public, and Christian Social rhetoric assailed the "Jewish" worship of money—and profit. One might think that this context of political antisemitism would adversely affect the chances of an operetta in which a main character was a Jew praising profit, but this was not the case. There was some outrage in the press, with the liberal *Neue Freie Presse* highlighting the "surfeit of tastelessness" in Louis Treumann's caricature-like (if sympathetic) portrayal of Pfefferkorn. This,

however, did not damage box office returns, and *Der Rastelbinder* became Lehár's first big hit.[20]

Lehár also wrote the music for *Rosenstock und Edelweiss*, from 1910.[21] This piece is more of a cabaret act than a full operetta, although one song title, "Wer kommt heut' in jedem Theaterstück vor? A Jud!" (Who Appears in Every Play Today? A Jew!) is noteworthy.[22]

The next operetta to feature a Jew in a leading role premiered in 1914. Edmund Eysler's *Frühling am Rhein* (Spring/Frühling on the Rhine) (text by Carl Lindau, Beda [Fritz Löwy] and Oskar Fronz) was first performed in October, just after the start of the Great War, and its ostensible title, "Spring on the Rhine," would suggest a tale of chauvinistic military derring-do.[23] There are humorous songs aimed at, among other things, the perfidious British and the effete French, but the operetta is actually about a Jewish merchant, Moritz Frühling, who lives in a small town on the Rhine: hence the actual title *is* "Frühling on the Rhine." The operetta presents the spectacle of a Jew deliberately deceiving others into thinking he is indeed the personification of the money-grubbing Jew, although this self-denigrating deception is all for the eventual triumph of good.

At the heart of the plot is a relationship that might sound familiar to students of German literature: that between a Jewish merchant, Frühling, and his step-daughter, Therese, called Trendl by Frühling, who is actually the daughter of a German (Christian) nobleman, Baron Hartenstein. Her actual father gave Therese to Frühling to raise before he died, and one of his brothers had also left Therese a large inheritance—a million marks—that she will come into only upon her reaching her majority.[24] Meanwhile, Frühling has raised Trendl as his own daughter—as a Jew—so that she appears as such, dressed in unfashionable clothes and speaking in the same "Jewish" accent and speech patterns as her "father." A German *Landrat* (official) comments on her manner of speech: "That is like something from the Old Testament."[25] The servant of her uncle, the new Baron Hartenstein, criticizes her lack of refinement, which is easily discerned despite her beauty and education.

Baron Hartenstein shares his servant's aesthetic contempt for the "Jewish" niece, but he is prepared to overlook this and become her guardian—because of her money. He is broke, having followed an aristocrat's usual spendthrift ways; by claiming Therese as his ward and then marrying her off to his son (her cousin), he plans to gain control of her fortune. By a trick, Frühling finds out about the baron's dastardly intentions and, loving his foster daughter as he does, he is shocked that she might be forced to marry someone she does not love.[26] So he has a "typically" Jewish response to the baron's plan: he lies. He "admits," untruthfully, that Therese is actually his own daughter. The nobleman's daughter, he explains, died soon after she entered his care; in order to keep the inheritance, Frühling had substituted his own daughter, Trendl, in Therese's place. With this revelation, Act II ends in a storm of social opprobrium heaped by the chorus on the Mammon-worshipping, mendacious Jew and his undeserving daughter. There is a celebration of the power of Jewish family love, but it is deeply sarcastic, full of antisemitic contempt for the pernicious lengths to which Jews will go in order to make life better for their children.[27]

In Act III, Therese has now reached her majority. After Frühling's revelation, her uncle had ceased any attempt to become her guardian, but now that she has reached her majority, Frühling changes his story once more and proves that Trendl is indeed Therese,

his noble friend's daughter. Frühling admits that he had lied before, justifying his action by noting that, nowadays (in 1914), military deceptions are allowed.[28] Baroness Hartenstein can now use her fortune as she wishes, and she can marry the man she loves, Heinrich Müller. "Heini" is the captain of the Rhine steamer *Loreley*, and the grand finale of the operetta occurs on board his boat. Frühling, basking in his success, his foster daughter's love, and the praises of all, notes the obvious irony of all these names:

> Das haben wir fein gemacht! Wir fahren doch auf der Loreley, von der Heine sagt "halb zog sie ihn—halb sank er hin"!
>
> (This is fine! We are aboard the *Loreley*, of whom Heine says: "she half pulled him—and he half sank!").

Therese replies to this shocking example of misattribution with a correction:

> Erstens ist das nicht die Loreley und zweitens ist das von Goethe!
>
> (First: that is not the *Loreley*; and second: that is by Goethe!).

Frühling, astonished, replies:

> Das ist auch von Goethe? Grossartig! Ich hab' geglaubt, von dem ist nur "Nathan der Weise"!
>
> (That is also by Goethe? Remarkable! I thought he only wrote *Nathan the Wise*!).[29]

Freud would have appreciated this joke, because the parapraxis of mistaking Goethe for Heine is then compounded by mistaking Goethe for G.E. Lessing. The supposed mistake reveals the meaning of the operetta: it is an operetta version of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, with Frühling standing in for Nathan, a Jewish merchant with a Christian girl as a foster daughter.

There would, in all likelihood, have been many Jews in the Bürgertheater's audience, as Jews in the lower-middle and middle classes also comprised a large share of Vienna's operetta-going public (although it is unclear just how large) and would have been attracted to the positive Jewish theme of this particular production. They would have likely guffawed at this sly reference to a classic of Enlightenment and emancipation. *Frühling am Rhein* combines this Enlightenment reference with the contrast between the aestheticist immorality of a German aristocrat and the ethical, if unrefined, intelligence of a Jewish merchant—and it is the Jew who justly triumphs.

In contrast, several operettas featured a Jewish figure who was comic but not of such a positive cast. In Oscar Straus' *Nachtfalter* (The Moth; text by Leopold Jacobson and Robert Bodanzky), from 1917, the impresario, Adolf Schmelkes, plays a central but quite negative role as the person pulling the lovers apart.[30] Schmelkes represents the path to commercial success and fame that will take the female lead, Lona, away from her love, Gustl. Schmelkes is a figure of fun, but with a dark edge. The description of the character in the director's book is indicative of the authors' attitude toward him:

> Jobbertypus, übertriebene Eleganz, grosse Brillantnadel in der Krawatte, rotes Bändchen im Knopfloch. Bemüht sich schriftdeutsch zu reden, wobei ihm jedoch immer einige Entgleisungen passieren. Jargon ist nur im Klang erkennbar.
>
> (Jobber type, overdone elegance, a big diamond tie-pin in the tie, a red riband in the buttonhole. Tries to speak proper German, but keeps making slips. Recognizably Jewish only in the accent).[31]

Schmelkes occasionally slips back into Jewish vocabulary, and when he presses Lona to make a decision, he claims: "Morgen habe ich ka Zeit! Morgen lass ich mich taufen" (Tomorrow I don't have the time! Tomorrow I am getting baptized). But the humor has its limits, as does Schmelkes' sense of security in the world of the "petty bourgeois" Viennese dance hall. Looking around the joint, he remarks: "It seems to me that here I am the only—" [breaks off; makes a hand gesture]: "Na!…"[32] Here, as a Jew, he is in enemy territory, whereas he is absolutely at home in the commercial theater: "Sold out!—Those are the most poetic words that our business possesses."[33]

At the same time, he is not exactly at the height of his profession. When he triumphantly announces that he has signed up Lona for a tour, the list of venues serves as an occasion for bathetic humor: "We have offers the world over. From here to Buenos Aires, from Buenos Aires to Warsaw, from Warsaw to Philadelphia, from Philadelphia to Amsterdam, and in between we have a matinee in Lemberg—that's Schmelkes!"[34] This is a secondary or even tertiary tour, with a definitely Jewish tint—as Lemberg (modern-day Lviv) and Warsaw had two of the largest Jewish communities in East Central Europe. Yet it is a big enough opportunity for Lona. The operetta has a bittersweet ending, unusual for its time: the lure of modern show business—and Schmelkes—succeeds in parting Lona from her true love, Gustl, who remains both true to his art and stuck in the genteel poverty of the lower-middle-class dance hall.

Although the Jewish theme in *Dichterliebe* (The Poet's Love), first performed in late 1919, was more positive, the plot was similarly ambivalent.[35] Although written by two of the most popular operetta librettists, Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald, this was a departure for them into more serious territory, a bio-drama of the life of Heinrich Heine, set to the music of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Why Brammer and Grünwald would take this detour (they later returned to their stock-in-trade of operetta libretti) is an intriguing question. It may be that they regarded it as a progression to something more serious, or else it was an attempt at emulating the success of other popular bio-dramas of cultural heroes such as Schubert. However, the combination of Heine with Felix Mendelssohn, both "non-Jewish Jews" who were nevertheless claimed by German Jews as cultural heroes, and the theme of Heine's unrequited love for a potentially liberal Germany at a time when antisemitism had resurfaced but was counterbalanced by hopes for a new, democratic Germany, suggest a more ideological agenda.

The plot consists of three scenes from Heine's life: Act I, in which he is a young man in his uncle's house; Act II, when Heine, a famous but persecuted German author, is about to be hounded into exile; and Act III, taking place in Parisian exile in 1849, with Heine on his deathbed. At each stage, Heine's genius has to battle his oppressors: first, his uncle the Jewish banker, who has forbidden him to write; and later, the German authorities who want to arrest him for "state-endangering tendencies in his works."[36] Yet his genius is not left unrecognized. Act II is an idyll taking place in a small university town on the Rhine, where Heine, though pursued by the authorities, is beloved by students—and princesses. One such princess, Heine's "blonde dream" (though she speaks in broad Swabian dialect to Heine's High German), even protects him from the authorities. She predicts glory for him:

> Fahr wohl in den Exil! Das, was du schufest, bleibt bei uns, wird wurzeln, wachsen und ewig bleiben.
>
> (Farewell into exile! What you created will remain with us, will take root, grow and stay for eternity).

Heine is a national treasure: when a student, Silcher, sets Heine's "Die Lorelei" to music, this is so successful that Silcher gains employment as a result. Yet none of this fame is recognized by the authorities for Heine himself; he is not given the position in Munich he deserves.[37] The pathos of unjust persecution is heightened by his obvious, and unrequited, love for Germany, "my fatherland, that I should really call my step-fatherland." Addressing the students who have restored him to their *Burschenschaft* (dueling fraternity), Heine exhorts them:

> Pflanzt die Fahne der Freiheit auf der Höhe des deutschen Gedankens; macht sie zur Standarte des freien Menschentums, und ich will mein bestes Herzblut hingeben für sie! 'Westphalia' heil!
>
> (Plant the flag of freedom at the summit of German thought; make it the standard of a free humanity, and I will sacrifice my best heart's blood for her! Hail to Westphalia!).[38]

The pathos of this wish for a free, tolerant Germany is heightened to excess in Act III, where the bedridden Heine sets a caged bird free and then says: "Fly to the German homeland!" A stage direction states: "He has his arms spread wide, and in his voice trembles all of his desire for beloved Germany."[39]

The characterization of Heine as emancipatory, liberal democratic hero for the new Germany (the first premiere was in Berlin, in December 1919) is clear. But the sense of this being part of German *Jewish* history might be questioned, were it not for two things: Heine's story is paired with Mendelssohn's music; and Heine is constantly tied back to his Jewish roots by having a chorus figure, Hirsch, a Jewish lottery ticket-seller and moneylender, periodically appear and comment on Heine's life. Hirsch is the agent of fate, bringing Heine's letter of rejection for the Munich position, and also bringing him the news, at the end, that Nathaniel Rothschild and Karl Heine have settled his debts and that Karl, his cousin, seeks reconciliation. It is thanks to Hirsch, along with Mouche, a young woman who is Heine's Parisian muse, that the poet's spirits revive at the very end, in a highly sentimental happy ending: "He raises himself transfigured, almost rejuvenated by her [Mouche's] blooming youth, and slowly the curtain falls."[40]

As a reminder of Heine's Jewishness, Hirsch provides comic relief from the nationalist-liberal pathos of the play while at the same time delivering a pointed commentary on the German-Jewish symbiosis that Heine symbolizes. He is actually based on a famous comic character, Hirsch-Hyacinth, from Heine's "Die Bäder von Lucca" (The Baths of Lucca). This character makes several appearances in Freud's *Jokes*, most notably, perhaps, for the famous "Famillionairely" word-play.[41] One might speculate that Brammer and Grünwald chose the Hirsch figure as Heine's reminder of his Jewishness precisely as a result of his being highlighted in Freud's book.

Hirsch speaks in grammatically flawed Jewish German, and though he likes to display his *Bildung* by using Latin phrases, he invariably gets them wrong, often with quite acerbic humor. In Act I, he describes a figure in Hamburg society: "From the young, handsome, elegant, discerning Mr. John Friedland, *vulgo recte* formerly

known as Jossele Friedländer. A fine man—a distinguished man—a gentleman cavalier!"[42] So much for assimilation through name changes. In Act II, in the idyllic setting overlooking the Rhine, Hirsch is asked for a loan by a young German woman, Lorle, who assures him: "O Herr Hirsch, unser Lieb's Herrgöttle von Biberach soll's Ihnen zahle" (O Mr. Hirsch, our dear Lord Godkin of Biberach will pay you). Hirsch's reply is quite abrupt, and revealing: "Ich will Ihnen was sagen—mein Herrgötten ist nicht aus Biberach." (I will tell you something—my little Lord God is not from Biberach). Nevertheless, he makes the loan, and when Lorle and her love, Silcher, celebrate by kissing, Hirsch makes a hand gesture of blessing: "Massel und Broche, die ganze Mischpoche."[43] He may be comic, but like Pfefferkorn before him, he is honest: he charges the pair a reasonable five percent interest and explains: "Now, what do I get for this? / Only he who stays honest his whole life long / Only him does God reward."[44]

Hirsch gives Heine the bad news about his rejection from Munich at the very moment he is being fêted by German students and princesses; this meeting occurs when Heine is on his way to see Ludwig Börne, another German Jewish literary hero. Speaking with "Harry" (Hirsch uses the name Heine was called by his Jewish family), Hirsch opines that "wise is sufficient" but misstates the Latin as "Sapienti salat est." Heine corrects him: "Sat est, Herr Kandidat!" (*Sat est*, Mr. Candidate!) Hirsch's response is a classic Jewish joke: "Sagt man jetzt so? Nu, ob Salat oder Spinat ist ja ganz gleich" (Is that how one says it now? Nu, whether salad or spinach, it's all the same). Even when reassuring Heine, Hirsch cannot get it quite right: "you will become a genius of fame," he insists, by virtue of Heine's "Liederbuch"—by which is meant the immensely popular *Buch der Lieder*; the misspeaking is a deliberate indication by the authors of Hirsch's faulty (Jewish) German grammar.[45] Hirsch's malapropisms show that Heine cannot escape his Jewish past, and the implication is that this is what lies behind his rejection by the authorities in his "step-fatherland."

Yet it is also Hirsch who brings the exiled Heine the good news of the payment of his debts and familial reconciliation. Hirsch still wants a small debt that Heine owes him repaid, and there is more disemboweling of Latin grammar: "oder, wie wir Lateiner sagen: Sit venia verbo mit Tachlis" (or, as we Latin-speakers say, *sit venia verbo* [pardon the expression]: with *tachles*). To which Heine replies: "Weniger Latein, alter Freund!"[46] (Less Latin, old friend!). "Old friend" might be a sardonic expression, but it might also be truly felt, because Hirsch, Heine's Jewish conscience, is with him at the end, when he is still banished from Germany. Heine is celebrated at his moment of transfiguration as a great German poet, but his fate is always tied to his Jewishness.

Brammer and Grünwald never returned to such a direct discussion of the Jewish role in German culture. Instead they became the house librettists for Emmerich Kálmán, also writing for, among others, Lehár. The closest they came to a Jewish character was James Bondy, a millionaire's secretary, in *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (The Duchess of Chicago) from 1928.[47] Brammer and Grünwald did, however, employ *indirect* approaches to the questions they raised in *Dichterliebe*, as we shall see.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Jewish characters re-emerged in two major operetta hits: *Im weissen Rössl* (The White Horse Inn) and *Die Blume von Hawaii* (The Flower of Hawaii) (both from 1931). In these two cases the Jewish figure represented a

modernity that could both emancipate and rescue more traditional societies. The main composer of *Im weissen Rössl*, Ralph Benatzky, was not Jewish, but most of the others involved in the operetta were: Hans Müller and Erik Charell adapted the original comedy from Oscar Blumenthal and Gustav Kadelburg, and several songs were from Robert Gilbert.[48] The operetta became one of the most famous *Heimatoperetten*—homeland operettas that abetted Austria's image as a tourist destination—though the inspiration for the operetta came from Berlin, where it premiered.

Much of the operetta's humor stems from the culture clash between the Austrian schmaltz of the Viennarized Salzkammergut in central Austria and its visitors from northern, Prussified Germany, represented by the family of the industrialist, Wilhelm Giesecke. In this Austro-German standoff, any Jewish aspect is secondary, and yet vestiges of Jewishness do appear. One of the comic foils to Giesecke is the son of a rival clothes manufacturer, Sigismund Sülzheimer. "Siggi" is comic: he is vain, and he lisps.[49] Apart from these particular quirks, Siggi's apparent Jewishness is suggested by his name (containing one *umlaut* too many) and the fact that he was played in the Viennese premiere by Karl Farkas, one half, with Fritz Grünbaum, of the most famous Jewish comedy duo in interwar Vienna.[50] The main indication of Siggi's implicitly Jewish identity, however, is his role in delivering the operetta's punch line. Siggi's father gives up the legal suit against Giesecke because the Sülzheimers have moved on from their current clothing item, a "union suit," to something for ladies that is much more modern and likely to be very popular, a "Brautkleid mit Reissverschluss" (a bridal gown with a zipper).[51] The combination of sexual innuendo with technological innovation would have confirmed Sülzheimer's Jewishness to the Viennese and Berlin audiences.

The character of another "modernizer," Jim Boy in Paul Abraham's *Die Blume von Hawaii* (text by Alfred Grünwald, Fritz Löhner-Beda, and Emmerich Földes) from 1931, was explicitly based on Al Jolson, the era's most famous modern Jewish entertainer. Jim Boy is a jazz singer who portrays "Negroes" in blackface and who sings Negro songs. According to the stage directions, he is "a very *sympathique*, extremely elegant artiste.…Always in the best of moods, a heap of fun, with a healthy sense of humor."[52] He is a Hollywood star and a performer at the Folies Bergère in Paris; lover of the star Susanne Provence; very enterprising; and also a promoter and advocate of technology—for instance, he uses an "amoroscope" to tell him whether Susanne is being unfaithful to him back in France (she is, frequently). But he does not take umbrage, for he is on top of the world, always ready for new adventure and new ways to help his friends. He is also, deep down, still a Jewish momma's boy: when his Hawaiian lover insists on their being married, Jim Boy says to her: "you talk with my mother—everything else will work itself out."[53] He is the ideal modern Jew—in operetta.

The *Showboat* Stratagem

As will later be seen, *Die Blume von Hawaii* is not primarily about Jim Boy or his Jewishness. Indirectly, however, his falling for a dusky Hawaiian maiden, his helping a Hawaiian princess return to her islands, and his very career as a performer representing another oppressed race, African Americans, indicate that *Die Blume von*

Hawaii, as with many operettas, was strongly influenced by the Jewish background of its creators. There was a basic affinity between the universalist pluralism of the ideology of Jewish emancipation in Central Europe and the structure and values of the operetta world. At the core of emancipation was the belief that Jewish individuals should *both* be able to remain Jews *and* be equal under the law with their fellow citizens of other faiths. In Central Europe, Jews might conclude that they had to earn their right to equality by proving they were worthy of it, reforming their religion and moral behavior, and acculturating to the German educational norm of *Bildung*; but they also thought they should be included as equal members of the nation (Germany) or state (Austria). At the base of emancipation lay the liberal model of the free individual in a society of "careers open to talent" in which anyone could progress. States that defended traditional order and hierarchies were deemed worthy of criticism by Jewish emancipationists, who saw their own battle for equal rights as part of the general cause of equality, freedom, and justice for all.[54] Those previously shunned by society should be included, their humanity put before whatever had excluded them—whether religion, ethnicity, race, class, or gender. This was the liberal ideal that Jewish emancipationists shared.

The world of operetta was fertile territory for this Jewish emancipatory worldview. Offenbach's original social satires had embraced a critical approach toward (French) bourgeois society's own fecklessness in supporting its liberal values. This critical attitude toward society was also present in Viennese operetta. For instance, Oscar Straus' *Die lustigen Nibelungen* (The Merry Nibelungs), from 1904 (text by Rideamus [Fritz Oliven]), was a cutting satire of the Wagnerian pomposity and nationalist philistinism of Wilhelmine German society, very much in the spirit of Offenbach.[55]

The most significant way in which operetta showed an affinity to the values of Jewish emancipation was its "topsy-turvydom," the traditional comic device of the world turned upside down, the "carnivalesque" situation in which traditional hierarchies and divisions were upended, with society transformed into a relationship between equal, often anonymous individuals—where the ultimate operetta relationship, love between a boy and a girl, could flourish unhindered by convention, prejudice, or economic calculation. One of operetta's favorite plot devices, the "masked ball," was akin to a Rawlsian "original position," in which the anonymous protagonists do not know each other's social rank and are thus free to transgress social rules and boundaries.

The very structure of the operetta business, open and results-oriented, generated a sense that anyone with talent could make it, regardless of who he was or where he came from. At the core of Viennese operetta lay a prototype of what could be called the "ideology of show business," and this often expressed itself in what went on in the "original position" of anonymity, whether a masked ball or an anonymous love letter. If a gypsy, a Muslim girl, a chambermaid, a lowly, poor lieutenant, an African American, a Chinese prince, or a Hawaiian dancing girl could "make it" and marry the person he or she loved, then everything was possible, also for Jews.

Operettas have been deemed "good" or "bad" based on how critical their approach to the social status quo was, but as Csáky suggests, an equally significant criterion is whether the operetta includes or excludes: does it embrace diversity and bring different groups together, enabling lovers to bridge group divides, or does it do so only to drive them apart in the end? *Die Fledermaus*, for all its social satire and temporary

embrace of the carnivalesque, has a conservative resolution in that all transgressive relationships are broken off and social order is restored. *Die Zigeunerbaron* has the more radical resolution, despite its pro-Habsburg chauvinism, because it includes the Gypsies within the family of Habsburg nationalities and validates the marriage of its Hungarian hero, Barinkay, to Saffi, an Ottoman pasha's (Muslim) daughter.[56] The oft-criticized softness of Viennese operettas concerning the established order, and their reveling in a lack of seriousness, appear in a different light if the result of all this lightheartedness is slyly, or not so slyly, to overcome the conceptual barriers to greater human inclusiveness. If, at the end of the drunken masked ball, the "unsuitable" couple are still together, and with the full sympathy of authors and audience alike, is that not a blow against exclusion—a triumph for the goals of Jewish emancipation and integration, if only obliquely?

One operetta to raise such questions directly was Leo Ascher's *Bruder Leichtsinn* (Brother Lightheartedness) from 1917–1918 (it premiered on New Year's Eve 1917, at the Bürgertheater).[57] Its librettists were Brammer and Grünwald, who had just had a major hit with Leo Fall's *Die Rose von Stambul* (The Rose of Istanbul). In that operetta they had discussed women's rights in Turkey; the main plot involved a progressive Turk courting his future wife with love letters purportedly from a Swiss author, but the secondary pairing had been between another Muslim girl and her German Christian lover.[58] In *Bruder Leichtsinn*, Brammer and Grünwald went even further along the same lines, using the same plot device of a mystery love-letter writer and a *main* plot line that crossed racial boundaries in spectacular fashion.

Bruder Leichtsinn is an operetta that serves as an ideological defense of operetta. In the depths of the First World War, it asserts that operetta's frivolity is its strongest point. In its prologue, a dying French singer gives Musotte, her baby girl, over to the girl's father, Count Fabrice Dunoir. She makes him promise that he will allow their child to marry whomever she loves, no matter how lighthearted ("leichtsinnig") her choice appears to be. In order to keep him to his promise, she evokes the spirit of frivolity, Sylvester (New Year's Eve in German), who appears in person. Frivolity is what had inspired the relationship between the couple, resulting in a love child, and now Sylvester, "brother lightheartedness" himself, will ensure that their daughter will be allowed to continue the tradition:

> If you love lightheartedness, give me your hand!
> And if you love cheerfulness, give me your hand!
> And if you give me your hand,
> Then the living will be easy,
> Joy will hand you her golden cup,
> Life will be like a dance café."[59]

This point is drummed home repeatedly, there even being an appeal to local Viennese patriotism when Sylvester tells Nelly, a young Viennese woman visiting Brussels, "that you need a bit of frivolity for happiness—as a Viennese you should already know that."[60] Sylvester's task here is to encourage Nelly to defy her father's objections to her marrying Ernst Wondraschek, a lawyer with prospects who is unacceptable because he is Czech. This plays on a fairly common ethnic-national discrimination within contemporary Viennese society. Dealing with this anti-Czech prejudice is,

however, easy compared to Sylvester's task in overcoming another, much greater barrier.

This more difficult task arises from the choice Musotte, the count's "love child," makes for the man she wishes to marry. She falls in love with an anonymous love-letter writer. Unbeknownst to her, but revealed to the audience in Act II, this is Jimmy Wells, who is described as follows in the director's book:

> [E]r ist ein tadellos eleganter junger Mann—aber von schokolade brauner Gesichtsfarbe. Er ist Amerikaner, der Sohn einer Mischehe—spricht gebrochenen Akzent, zeigt gerne seine blendend weissen Zähne; hat absolut nichts "niggerartiges" an sich, sondern ist ein durchaus intelligenter, überaus liebenswürdiger Gentleman, Europäern gegenüber immer voll leiser Ironie—kurz ein Mann, der seinen Wert kennt. Bewegt sich als vollendeter Weltmann.
>
> ([H]e is a perfectly elegant young man—but with a chocolate brown colored face. He is an American, the son of a mixed marriage—speaks with a broken accent, readily flashes his dazzlingly white teeth; has absolutely nothing "nigger-like" about him, but is rather a completely intelligent, exceptionally charming gentleman, always full of a light irony around Europeans—in short, a man who knows his worth. He handles himself as a man of the world).[61]

In other words, despite appearances and racial prejudice, Jimmy is an exemplary human being, and the perfect match for Musotte. Jimmy himself is unsure whether he should pursue Musotte; his mother warned him not to fall in love with white girls, "Aber ich können nix für mein Herz" (but I can do nothin' 'bout my heart).

Again it is the spirit of frivolity, Sylvester, who steps in to encourage Jimmy to woo Musotte: "ein bisschen noire—ein bisschen blanche—das ist die richtige Melange" (A little *noire*—a little *blanche*—that is the right *mélange*).[62] This is a humorous wordplay on a favorite Viennese coffee concoction, but the notion of racial miscegenation that it promotes is meant to be taken seriously. The authors are using it as an example to show that operetta's frivolity, by defying prejudice, can produce results that are far superior to what appears to be socially sensible. The message is again driven home in the finale: Jimmy, having met Musotte and having "step-danced" with her, reveals to her that he wrote the love letters she cherishes so much. They kiss, and it is clear that she has chosen Jimmy as her spouse. Her father, Count Dunoir, is aghast that his daughter would marry a black man, but Sylvester appears and holds him to his promise, forcing him to accept the pair's union, so that the operetta ends happily. Sylvester/Leichtsinn predicts that Jimmy will be good for Musotte: "Jimmy wird sie hüten wie ein Juwel—er ist eine Perle" (Jimmy will guard her like a jewel—he is a pearl). Dunoir responds: "Muss es denn gerade eine schwarze Perle sein?" (Does it have to be a black pearl?). To this Sylvester responds, quick-witted as ever: "Das sind die teuersten!"[63] (Those are the most valuable!). It might be seen as a piece of ironic Jewish humor that commercial considerations of the jewel trade are used to seal the happiness of the cosmopolitan, multi-racial pair of lovers.

How a Yellow Jacket Became a Land of Smiles

The transgression of racial barriers was at the heart of Kálmán's *Die Bajadere* (The Bayadere; 1921), another interwar operetta for which Brammer and Grünwald wrote

the libretto. In this operetta, the cross-racial liaison is between a French singer and an Indian prince, and the happy ending has the Frenchwoman falling into her prince's arms.[64] A couple of years later, a similar cross-cultural relationship was the subject of Franz Lehár's *Die gelbe Jacke* (The Yellow Jacket) from 1923 (text by Victor Léon), featuring a Viennese woman and her lover, a Chinese prince. In this production, the coming together of two imperial cultures is marked by two marriages: that of Sou-Chong, the Chinese diplomat-prince and his Viennese lover, Lea; and that of Sou-Chong's sister, Mi, and her aristocratic Viennese lover (and friend of Lea), Claudius. The operetta took the opportunity of its exotic locale (Act II is set in China) to stage lavish spectacles of supposed Chinese ceremonies. At the same time, the exotic is domesticated, in the sense that Lea goes back to Vienna at the end of Act II (she gets homesick, alienated by the strange customs in the "land of smiles"). All ends happily, however, as Sou-Chong cannot live without his love and so decides to return as well to Vienna, where all are reunited in the triumph of cosmopolitan, cross-racial love.[65]

The operetta was not the big hit that Lehár had expected. Partly this was because Léon and Lehár had overindulged in spectacle. The lavishness and length of the "Yellow Jacket" ceremony, in which Sou-Chong is rewarded for services to China with said garment, drove one critic to write: "Operettas that last as long as *Götterdämmerung* should be banned by the police."[66] Yet there was another, more troubling aspect: the Viennese audiences' resistance to one of their own women marrying a Chinese man. The text itself had anticipated this. At one point, Sou-Chong complains of Viennese prejudices against the Chinese and avers: "We are quite civilized!"[67] But such protestations were to no avail. As Lehár said in 1930 about the controversy surrounding the operetta: "At the time . . . it aroused disquiet in some circles that it could come to a marriage union between a yellow and a white person. I cannot agree with this attitude, for I have gotten to know many Chinese, who are exceptionally worthy human beings."[68]

In 1929, another Lehár operetta about a Chinese-Viennese liaison premiered, this time in Berlin. *Das Land des Lächelns* (The Land of Smiles; text by Ludwig Herzer and Fritz Löhner-Beda) differed markedly from its predecessor, and set a new trend in operetta, by having an *unhappy* ending. The hero was still Sou-Chong, though his Viennese love was now called Lisa; his sister was still called Mi, but her love interest was now Gustl. The librettists had taken Léon's original plot from *Die gelbe Jacke* and given it a tragic twist: instead of Sou-Chong and Lisa reuniting, the operetta ended with Lisa leaving both China and Sou-Chong for Vienna. Karl Kraus summed up what had happened:

> Viktor Leon (. . .) lässt die Liebesgeschichte mit einem Happy end enden! Das geht nicht, das ist seit 'Friederike' altmodisch geworden. Da müssen die Schöpfer Beda und Herzer heran, denen es schon gelungen ist, Goethe dem deutschen Volk nahe zu bringen.
>
> (Victor Léon . . . gives the love story a happy ending! That cannot be, that has become old-fashioned since 'Friederike' [Lehár's previous operetta, from 1928, with text by Herzer and Löhner-Beda, about the young Goethe]. So the creators Beda and Herzer have to be brought in, after their success in bringing Goethe closer to the German people.)[69]

Kraus explained the change from comic to tragic ending as a change in fashion, but it was more an accommodation with contemporary racial politics. As one reviewer

put it: "Love can no longer plaster over the chasm between East and West. . . . the exotic attraction of this connection does not withstand the alien law in a foreign land. That makes sense, one can go along with that."[70] As Martin Lichtfuss writes, Lehár and his new collaborators effectively gave in to their audience's prejudices. In the process they created a classic of the new genre of tragic operetta, which reviewers saw as a radical break with Viennese traditions: "Gaiety, high spirits, and lightheartedness, all the fun-loving spirits of good, old operetta, appear to have been thoroughly banished from the sphere of this west-eastern play cloaked in tragedy."[71] *Das Land des Lächelns* became world-famous for the aria that Sou-Chong, played by Richard Tauber, sings to Lisa at the climax of the operetta: "Dein ist mein ganzes Herz" (My Heart Is Yours Completely). Known as the "Tauber-Lied," this was a heart-rending song of complete devotion, tragic in its foreshadowing of Lisa's leaving her lover bereft.

The odd thing was that not only did *Land des Lächelns* have the same basic plot as the comic *Die gelbe Jacke*; it was substantially the *same operetta*, only shortened. The new name of the operetta had been taken from the Spanish title for *Die gelbe Jacke*, *El pais de la sonrisa*. In order to change Léon's comedy into a tragedy, Herzer and Löhner-Beda had simply left out Act III, leaving Act II's finale as the new ending. Although they had also removed much of the spectacle and comedy, it was still largely Léon's text and plot. Even stranger, most of the music was still the same. Lichtfuss relates how the librettists had recognized that Lehár's music had not suited the comic text, so they reworked the text to fit the tragic music.[72]

As noted, the "Tauber-Lied" became a huge hit in the context of *Das Land des Lächelns*' tragic ending; the same melody had been used by Lehár in *Die gelbe Jacke* in the aria "Duft lag in Deinem Wort" (There Was Fragrance in Your Words) but had not had the same impact with audiences.[73] One verse from the original version of the aria, rediscovered by Lichtfuss, suggests the original message that Léon had intended to convey:

> Lebt in der Seele uns
> nicht Gottes Hauch?
> Fühl'n wir nicht auch?
> Lebt nicht in uns ein Herz,
> das freudig schlägt
> und schmerzbewegt?
> Wann hört das Unrecht auf? Sagt doch, wo ist eure Menschlichkeit
> wenn gegen andre ihr nicht Menschen seid!"
>
> (Does not in our soul live / The breath of God? / Don't we also have feelings? / Does not in us live a heart, / That beats with joy / and is moved by pain? / When will the injustice end? / Tell me, where is your humanity / if you in your treatment of others are not humans, too?).[74]

This message, redolent with the pathos of humanity and universalist pluralism of the Jewish ideology of emancipation, which librettists such as Léon shared, had not been well received in 1923; consequently, in the 1929 version of the operetta, it was dropped.

The *South Pacific* Syndrome

This did not mean that the pluralist message was dropped for all operettas. In 1931, Paul Abraham's *Die Blume von Hawaii* once again explored the terrain of cross-racial and cross-cultural love affairs, and it was made obvious where the sympathies of the authors lay. The text was written by none other than Alfred Grünwald, co-author of *Bruder Leichtsinn*, and Fritz Löhner-Beda, co-author of *Das Land des Lächelns* and also of *Frühling am Rhein*, along with a Hungarian librettist, Emmerich Földes. The story, replete with comic twists, centers on the near-rebellion of Hawaiian natives against American oppressors, with the love story involving a Hawaiian princess who is distracted at the last minute from leading the revolt. The plot's complexities allow the authors to make a mockery of racism. Despite the supposed racial disparity, the Hawaiian princess, Laya, is the spitting image of a white French singer; and racial considerations do not stop a white American, Captain Stone, from falling in love with Laya. It is true that by the end of the operetta the Hawaiian princess is paired with Lilo-Taro, the Hawaiian prince; Captain Stone with the French singer (and Laya's double), Susanne Provence; and the governor's daughter, Bessie, with his secretary, Buffy. Yet the comic confusions during the plot do result in one transgressive relationship remaining, that of Jim Boy, the Hollywood star, with Raka, the Hawaiian dancer.

As with the Musotte/Jimmy Wells relationship in *Bruder Leichtsinn*, the white-black relationship is clearly meant to be regarded in a positive light. Initially this might not be obvious. That Jim Boy, the star who has made his name singing Negro songs in blackface, falls for a dark-skinned Hawaiian dancer could appear as an ironic joke at Jim Boy's expense. The relationship initially appears to be based solely on lust and the attraction of the primitive—at least, so far as Jim Boy is concerned. In an early scene, Jim Boy calls to Raka: "Come here, you sweet chocolate bonbon. I want to get to know the inhabitants of this land better." And when Raka asks him whether she should wear American women's fashions, Jim Boy is horrified. With a possible allusion to the most famous black female dancer of the interwar years, Josephine Baker, he exclaims: "No! Oh God, no! You get a banana and that is it! Hawaii is in. Hawaii is the big fashion. That is what is beautiful about you!"[75]

Yet Jim Boy is not allowed to have his primitivist idyll of naked sensuality without the price of marriage; once married, Raka turns out to be quite different from her native image. She explains to Jim Boy that she had just pretended to be a primitive in order to snag a Western husband. Hawaiian girls, she avers, are just as civilized as Westerners, but they "pretend to be primitive children of Nature" to Americans in order to entice them. "Something exotic is what you want, mysteriously primitive, something that stirs your fantasy." Jim Boy replies that it does not matter that her primitivist allure is just an act: "I would love you, no matter how cultured [*gebildet*] you are." This is just as well, since, in reality, Raka, apart from adoring French fashion, is well-educated and speaks three languages—the very epitome of emancipation through *Bildung*. In other words, she is just the kind of woman that Jim Boy needs. He might call her "you sweet little chocolate piglet" but it is made clear that they are in love with each other.[76]

That Jim Boy should marry a dark-skinned woman is not rough justice but rather poetic justice, as this Al Jolson surrogate is also the voice of anti-racism. At the beginning of Act III, which is set in a bar in Monte Carlo, Jim Boy gets to sing his signature hit, "Lied vom schwarzen Jonny" (Song of Black Jonny) which deserves being quoted in full in order to show the authors' views on racism:

Schwarzes Gesicht,
Wolliges Haar,
Grosses Saxophon;
Kennt ihr mich nicht
Dort aus der Bar?
Applaus ist mein Lohn,
Doch im Salon
Oder beim Lunch
Weicht mir jeder aus.
Zähl' ja nicht voll,
Bin ja kein Mensch,
Ich bin nur ein Nigger!
Bin nur ein Jonny,
Zieh' durch die Welt,
Singe für Monney,
Tanze für Geld.
Heimat, Dich werd' ich niemals mehr sehn! Nimmermehr sehn!
Dort in Kentucky
Kenn' ich ein Haus,
Nachtschwarze Augen
Schauen heraus.
Bimba! Wann werd' ich wieder dich sehn? Endlich dich sehn?
Bin nur ein Nigger,
Und kein weisser Mann
Reicht mir die Hand;
Aber die Ladys,
Finden mich pikant!
Sehr interessant!
Bin ja der Jonny!
Zieh' durch die Welt
Singe für Monney
Tanze für Geld.
Heimat! Dich werd' ich niemals mehr sehn! Do-do-do-do.

(Black face / Woolly hair / Large Saxophone / Don't you recognize me / There from the bar? / Applause is my reward / But in the salon / Or at lunch / Everyone avoids me / After all, I don't fully count / After all I'm no person [*Mensch*] / I'm just a Nigger! / Just a Jonny / I travel the world / Sing for cash / Dance for money. / Homeland [*Heimat*] that I shall never see again! Never again! / There in Kentucky / I know a house / Eyes as black as night look out. Bimba! When shall I see you again? Once more again? / I'm just a nigger, / And no white man /

> Reaches out his hand to me. / But the ladies / Find me piquant / And so interesting! / I am *the* Jonny. / I travel the world / Sing for cash / Dance for money. / Home[land]! I shall never see you again!)[77]

Set against this searing indictment, Jim Boy's marriage with his "chocolate bonbon" Raka takes on added significance, as a challenge to racism not only in America, but also the world over—including Berlin and Vienna. The "white" man who throws down this anti-racist gauntlet is an avatar for Al Jolson, the greatest *Jewish* star of his time. Jews are not only preaching the overturning of social and racial barriers represented in "frivolous" operetta, they appear to be practicing it too, at least on stage.

From the *Buchenwaldlied* to *The Sound of Music*: The Jewish Legacy of Viennese Operetta

Freud was ready with a mordant joke when the Nazis invaded Austria. I do not know if Alfred Grünwald or Fritz Löhner-Beda, the main authors of *Die Blume von Hawaii*, had a quip in hand when the Nazis arrived. Grünwald, after a brief detention by the Gestapo, fled Austria for Paris, Casablanca, Lisbon, and the United States. He died in New York in 1951. Löhner-Beda was not so lucky. He was arrested and sent first to Dachau, then to Buchenwald, where he co-wrote the *Buchenwaldlied* with the great *Wienerlied* writer, Hermann Leopoldi (who was also Jewish). Leopoldi was bought out by his wife, and spent the war in America. Löhner-Beda thought his friend Franz Lehár, one of Hitler's favorite composers, would get him released, but this did not happen. (Lehár later insisted he "had not known" of his friend's incarceration.) Instead Löhner-Beda was sent to a sub-camp of Auschwitz and beaten to death in December 1942.

His world of Viennese operetta had already suffered severe body blows in the mid-1930s from Nazi policies, specifically by the works created or co-created by Jews (most Viennese operettas) being banned from performance in the Third Reich. Löhner-Beda himself had continued writing libretti up until 1938, but his world of Viennese operetta effectively came to an end in March 1938. Although Nazi-approved operettas were staged during the war and some of those involved in operetta returned to postwar Vienna, what was left was a mere shadow of its former self. The real heir and successor to the world of operetta discussed here was that other form of light musical theater: the Broadway musical. Especially in the great musicals of Oscar Hammerstein II, *Showboat*, *Oklahoma*, *South Pacific*, and *The King and I*, the tradition of emancipation, the criticism of racism, and the transgressing of invalid boundaries found a very strong continuation, with sources of inspiration similar to that of Viennese operetta.

In Vienna and on Broadway, the ideology of show business enabled Jewish individuals to take full part in commercial light theater, and that ideology was also greatly shaped by them, above all as librettists. In Vienna, operetta was never quite able to withstand the forces of prejudice, antisemitism, and xenophobia that swept over Central Europe in the 1930s; but in the United States and the West the spirit of the musical helped to further the cause of liberal, universalist pluralism in mass popular culture. A pair of New York Jews, Richard Rogers and the (half-Jewish) Oscar

Hammerstein II, wrote the songs of *The Sound of Music*, including "Edelweiss." This perhaps indicates who got the last laugh.

Notes

1. Quoted in Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe before the Second World War* (London: 2012), 362.
2. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: 1976), 57.
3. Ibid., 157.
4. Martin Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf* (Vienna: 1989), 58.
5. Volker Klotz, *Operette: Porträt und Handbuch einer unerhörten Kunst* (Kassel: 2004), 15–57.
6. Moritz Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne: Ein kulturhistorischer Essay zur österreichischen Identität* (Vienna: 1996), 78–88, 100–104; Ignatz Schnitzer, *Der Zigeunerbaron* (libretto) (Hamburg: 2012).
7. Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne*, 112–118 (esp. 115), 211–213.
8. Cf. Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: 1989), esp. 73–121.
9. Kurt Pahlen, *Johann Strauss: Die Walzerdynastie* (Munich: 1975), 33–34, 224–225, 245.
10. Benatzky was not of Jewish descent, despite the assumptions of many to the contrary.
11. Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf*, 52; Karl Kraus, *Die Fackel*, no. 148 (2 December 1903), 24.
12. Kevin Clarke, "Jüdische Dudelei," in *Welt der Operette: Glamour, Stars und Showbusiness*, ed. Marie-Theres Arnbom, Kevin Clarke, and Thomas Trabitsch (Vienna: 2011), 164.
13. Camille Crittenden, "Whose Patriotism? Austro-Hungarian Relations and *Der Zigeunerbaron*," *The Musical Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (Summer 1998), 251–278.
14. On this topic, see Jarrod Tanny's essay in this volume, esp. 55–57.
15. Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette*, 119, 219–220.
16. Franz Lehár, *Der Rastelbinder* (libretto) (Vienna: 1902), 7–8.
17. Ibid., 24.
18. Ibid., 28.
19. Ibid., 10, 41.
20. Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette*, 218–219.
21. Ibid., 219.
22. Online at www.allmusic.com/composition/rosenstock-und-edelweiss-singspiel-in-1-act-mc0002602041 (accessed 13 March 2016).
23. Edmund Eysler, *Frühling am Rhein* (director's book) (Vienna: 1914). Director's books included stage directions and dialogue, as opposed to the usually much shorter libretti, which contained only song lyrics. Wherever possible I have referenced the director's books. In instances in which a libretto is referenced, this was the only document available.
24. Ibid., 42.
25. Ibid., 46–51.
26. Ibid., 41–42, 68.
27. Ibid., 91–93.
28. Ibid., 119.
29. Ibid., 104.
30. Oscar Straus, *Nachtfalter* (director's book) (Vienna: 1917).
31. Ibid., 42.
32. Ibid., 43, 51, 57.
33. Ibid., 71.
34. Ibid., 72.
35. Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald, *Dichterliebe* (director's book) (Vienna: 1920).
36. Ibid., 57–58.

37. Ibid., 57–59.
38. Ibid., 44.
39. Ibid., 69.
40. Ibid., 73.
41. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, 47–53.
42. Brammer and Grünwald, *Dichterliebe*, 18.
43. Lit., good luck and blessings [for] the entire family.
44. Ibid., 39.
45. Ibid., 47.
46. Ibid., 72–73.
47. Emmerich Kálmán, *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (libretto) (Vienna: 1928), 27–28.
48. Ralph Benatzky, *Im weissen Rössl* (director's book) (Berlin: 1931).
49. Ibid., 46–47.
50. Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf*, 201–203. From 1926, Farkas and Grünbaum were the stars at the same Bürgertheater where *Frühling am Rhein* had played. Farkas was also the director of the Austrian premiere of *Im weissen Rössl*, which was so excessive in its boosting of the new, touristic Austria that it was suspected of parodying it (this was probably the intention).
51. Benatzky, *Im weissen Rössl*, 89.
52. Paul Abraham, *Die Blume von Hawaii* (director's book) (Berlin: 1931), 36.
53. Ibid., 83.
54. David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780–1840* (Oxford: 1987); Beller, *Vienna and the Jews*, 122–143.
55. Oscar Straus, *Die lustigen Nibleungen* (director's book) (Berlin: 1904); Klotz, *Operette*, 158–161.
56. Schnitzer, *Die Zigeunerbaron*, 76.
57. Leo Ascher, *Bruder Leichtsinn* (director's book) (Vienna: 1918).
58. Leo Fall, *Die Rose von Stambul* (director's book) (Vienna: 1916), 14–20, 28–33.
59. Ascher, *Bruder Leichtsinn*, 10–14.
60. Ibid., 65.
61. Ibid., 55.
62. Ibid., 57–59.
63. Ibid., 59, 72–73.
64. Jessie Wright Martin, "A Survey of the Operettas of Emmerich Kálmán" (Ph.D. thesis, Louisiana State University, 2005), 107–108, available online at http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-06142005-160600/unrestricted/Martin_thesis.pdf (accessed 13 March 2016).
65. Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf*, 210–211.
66. Review in *Wiener Mittagszeitung* (10 February 1923), quoted in ibid., 218.
67. Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf*, 220.
68. *Neue Freie Presse* (21 September 1930), quoted in ibid., 212.
69. Karl Kraus, *Die Fackel*, no. 820 (October 1929), 47, quoted in ibid. Lehár's previous operetta, *Friederike*, from 1928, with text by Herzer and Löhner-Beda, was about the young Goethe.
70. Fred Heller review in *Der Wiener Tag* (28 September 1930), quoted in ibid.
71. Review in *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (28 September 1930), quoted in ibid., 214.
72. Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf*, 218.
73. Franz Lehár, *Die gelbe Jacke* (arrangement for piano, with text) (Vienna: 1923), 120.
74. Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf*, 217.
75. Abraham, *Blume von Hawaii*, 65, 79, 83.
76. Ibid., 159, 167–171.
77. Ibid., 141–143.

Purim on Pesach: The Invented Tradition of Passover *Yontef-bletlekh* in the Warsaw Yiddish Press

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When the Yiddish writer Y.L. Peretz began publishing *yontef-bletlekh* (holiday pages) during the mid-1890s, he could not have anticipated that he would be initiating a publishing tradition in the Yiddish periodical trade in the Russian-ruled Pale of Settlement (and later, in independent Poland). *Yontef-bletlekh* were conceived as a means of circumventing the Russian censor's ban on Yiddish periodicals. The ruse, which took advantage of looser regulations on "one-time journals" (*odnodnyevnye gazety*), was premised on the fact that almost every month in the Hebrew calendar has a Jewish holiday. Hence, by publishing a one-time journal in relation to each holiday—each with a unique title—one could create a de facto periodical.

Accordingly, from 1894 to 1896, Peretz and his colleagues published a small monthly magazine with a different title for each issue, each under the guise of being connected to a specific holiday. (This idea was not, in fact, their own, but rather that of a little-known publisher of annual, almanac-style calendars named Heshl Eplberg.)[1] In spite of their religiously referential titles, Peretz's *yontef-bletlekh* did not contain religiously oriented texts.[2] Instead, these small-format, 16-page magazines contained mainly didactic material, short stories, and poems, some of which were both slightly satirical and slightly socialistic. Peretz's *yontef-bletlekh* were recalled as being inspirational to a number of young radicals who were seeking new forms of national and political expression. As a result, they were regarded as an important phenomenon in Yiddish publishing at the time.[3]

According to Dovid Pinski, one of his colleagues on the project, Peretz ceased publishing his monthly *bletlekh* after a two-year run, in part because he was under the impression that he was about to receive permission to publish the first Yiddish daily in the empire, a plan that ultimately fell through.[4] Publication of the *yontef-bletlekh* was never resumed; after an unexpected but brief stint in jail (on charges of "promoting socialism") near the end of the century, Peretz went to work writing for *Der yid*, a new Yiddish weekly that was written mainly in Warsaw but was printed in Galicia, just outside of the Russian Empire's borders—yet another method by which publishers were able to avoid the Russian censor. Neither Pinski nor Peretz's other collaborator,

Mordkhe Spektor, took up the mantle of the publications, and Eplberg never reclaimed his idea.

Notwithstanding, the idea of publishing *yontef-bletlekh* did not die. This concept—namely, the creation of a one-time journal filled with secular content but labeled with a holiday-related title and published during holidays—would subsequently be appropriated by Yiddish humorists, who would begin publishing satire magazines on Jewish holidays on an annual basis. Submitted to Russian and, later, Polish government administrators as *odnodnyevnye gazety* and *jednodniowki*, respectively, this mainly Warsaw-based humoristic-journalistic subgenre included hundreds of publications and comprised nearly a quarter of all Yiddish journalistic endeavors in the Pale and in Poland from the turn of the 20th century until the Second World War. Indeed, it accounted for a significant proportion of Yiddish periodical titles as a whole. Although Peretz's intended audience was secular, Yiddish satire magazines generally appealed to a very wide audience, not just secular Jews. In fact, traditional texts were referenced so regularly that readers had to be knowledgeable in order to understand the material.

While there were a few early 20th-century attempts to publish literary-oriented *yontef-bletlekh*, these did not last. It was only in the realm of humor and satire that this invented tradition gained traction.[5] One may ask why. For one thing, humor publications in general were popular among Yiddish readers in the Russian Empire: one can count, for example, at least a dozen joke books among the dozens of publications put out by the popular Yiddish writer Isaac Meyer Dik during the 1880s. Moreover, the general tenor of Yiddish literature during this period was satirical in nature. This tendency, which was especially noticeable among maskilic writers, could be found in the stories of Y.Y. Linetsky, Mendele Moykher-Sforim (Sholem Abramovitsh), and Sholem Aleichem (Sholem Rabinovitsh), among others. It heavily influenced the growing field of fiction and, ultimately, Jewish journalism as a whole.

Because of the aforementioned ban on Yiddish periodicals, fewer than half a dozen Yiddish humor magazines appeared during the second half of the 19th century (though this was not for want of trying). Their later success as a genre had much to do with the explosion of satire journals that appeared throughout the Russian Empire in the wake of the 1905 revolution. From the end of 1905 through 1907, more than 400 humor and satire journals were published in a variety of languages throughout the empire, during a period in which press restrictions were at first ignored and then officially relaxed. These journals contained acerbically satirical poems, stories, parodic news reports and—their most recognizable feature—caricatures, all of which bitterly mocked the tsarist regime. This period marks the beginning of a serious Yiddish satire press in the Russian Empire and the point at which the concept of humorous *yontef-bletlekh* begins to take shape.[6]

Although Yiddish satire journals appeared at about the same time as similar magazines in Russian and Polish, the Yiddish variant had some distinct differences. One of the more obvious differences concerned the titles of the magazines. The names of Russian- and Polish-language journals of this period are clearly reflective of the horrific violence that was occurring in the streets. Some examples of the Russian titles include *Bombi* (Bombs), *Bortsy* (Fighters), *Dikar'* (Savage), *Iad* (Venom), *Molot* (Hammer), *Puli* (Bullets), *Shershen'* (Hornet), *Shtyk* (Bayonet), *Taran* (Battering

ram), and *Vampir* (Vampire). The names of the Polish magazines—among them, *Lucyper* (Lucifer), *Piekło* (Hell), *Rabus* (Marauder), *Satyr*, and *Szczutek* (Flick)—similarly evoke violent imagery, and they were frequently accompanied by equally violent cartoon images. In contrast, only a small number of Yiddish satire journals have titles that evoke violent themes. Instead of embracing the violent turn in co-territorial satire, Yiddish humorists turned to the recently invented tradition of *yontef-bletlekh* and published holiday-related magazines with titles such as *Der shoyfer* (for the holiday of Rosh Hashanah), *Kapores* (Yom Kippur), *Der esreg* (Sukkot), *Di likhtelekh* (Hanukah), *Homentashn* (Purim), and *Der afikoymen* (Passover). Some of these titles are lifted directly from those Peretz gave to his own *yontef-bletlekh*.[7] Even those Yiddish satire periodicals of the post-1905 era that did not have holiday-related names published liturgical parodies and cartoons that used holiday themes as metaphors, all of which points to the enormous significance of holidays as calendrical and cultural markers in Jewish life.

As the Yiddish press continued to grow during the early 20th century, the publication cycle would be repeated annually, and liturgical parodies and cartoons would be replenished with the current news of the day. Within these humorous *yontef-bletlekh*, Yiddish humorists repurposed the liturgy of each holiday and created parodies that targeted contemporary political events and social matters. Although co-territorial satire magazines in Russian and Polish were similar in form and in content, neither relied on holidays and liturgy as a comic foil as did the Yiddish journals—a clear indication that this was a uniquely Jewish cultural phenomenon. Moreover, these parodies point to the significance of traditional texts in Jewish culture, even for so-called secular Jews. Many of the newly secular writers of the Yiddish press made brilliant use of their yeshiva background, exploiting the framework of traditional texts in order to present satirical commentary on contemporary issues.

The popularity of Yiddish satire magazines found expression in *Karikaturn*, a play written in 1909 by a young writer named Yitshak Katzenelson, which featured a secondary school student who refused normative reading material and instead collected and read only satire magazines. "In my library you won't find one novel, not one story.... I hate poetry!... My entire book shelf is made up only of humor magazines, just comics!" he explains to another character in the play.[8] Another indication of their popularity was a critique offered by Aleksander Mukdoyni, a prominent advocate of Yiddish culture. "*Beys-medresh* jokes of the past were far bolder, more skeptical and had more bite than jokes today," he wrote in a 1913 review. "Today's jokes have only a *beys-medresh*-like form, but they are frightened, meager, and dumb. Our caricatures look the same way."[9] Mukdoyni's criticism points to the fact that a core of clever and distinctly Jewish humor could be found in the traditional study hall (*beys-medresh*)—a matter that undoubtedly played a role in the widespread exploitation of traditional material in Yiddish humor.

Yontef-bletlekh were not the only humoristic publications to contain material related to Jewish holidays. This was true as well of a small number of weekly humor magazines that came into existence during the interwar period in Poland, which typically published special holiday issues. Such material also appeared in the pre-holiday Friday humor sections of the Yiddish dailies. Indeed, by the first decade of the 20th

century, engagement with Jewish holidays as a foil for contemporary humor and satire had become a standard and significant feature of the Yiddish press of Poland. This situation prevailed until 1939 and the wartime years that followed, which marked the destruction of the Polish Yiddish press.

It is noteworthy that satire magazines were published for every major Jewish holiday—even Yom Kippur, which, due to its solemn nature, would seem to have been an unlikely candidate for a humor publication. At the same time, there was a fair amount of variance in the frequency of publications for specific holidays. One might assume that Purim would have been the most popular candidate for such publications, as the carnivalesque nature of the holiday lends itself perfectly to the kind of raw mockery proffered by the Yiddish satire journals. Moreover, as Marion Aptroot has shown, there was a precedent of Western Yiddish *yontef-bletlekh* published during Purim during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[10] Notwithstanding, while there were certainly a fair number of Purim-related *yontef-bletlekh* that appeared in Russian-ruled (and later, independent) Poland, a large majority of *yontef-bletlekh* were published in connection with Passover. In fact, according to Abram Kirzhnits' and Yechiel Szeintuch's bibliographic monographs on Yiddish periodicals in Russian-ruled and in interwar Poland, of the approximately 200 satirical *yontef-bletlekh* published between 1901 and 1939, more than two-thirds were specific to Passover.[11] The large number of Passover-related humor magazines resulted in the production of a huge number of Hagadah parodies and other Passover-related comic works. In fact, the significant number of Passover humor publications, combined with the parodies that appeared annually in the humor sections of Yiddish daily newspapers, renders the Hagadah the most parodied Jewish liturgical text in history.

The reason for the surfeit of Passover *yontef-bletlekh* and their Hagadah parodies is relatively straightforward. Publishers knew that most Jews took time off from work during the holiday, and since print was the dominant medium of this period, newspapers and magazines published bulked-up holiday issues in order to provide enough reading material for a week's worth of leisure, just as the Friday Yiddish paper provided extra sections for Shabbos reading. In addition, the text of the Hagadah, read each year in the course of a mealtime ceremony in which the entire family was involved, was familiar to a much wider swath of Jews than other holiday-specific liturgical material. The text of the Hagadah thus lent itself to parody in a way that other holiday texts did not. Moreover, liturgical structures such as the Four Questions, the Four Sons, and the Ten Plagues could be used each year, with the parody offering new questions, new sons, and new plagues in accordance with current events and issues.

Notably, the liturgical parodies produced by the Yiddish press were not parasitic, meaning they did not attack the text they exploited for their humor. Instead, they engaged liturgical texts as literary structures. The question comes to mind as to whether using liturgical text for humorous purposes was potentially offensive to the broad Jewish audience, and, more especially, to religiously observant Jews. Apparently not, as no criticism of the phenomenon of liturgical parody appears in the Yiddish press. If anything, the numerous Hagadah parodies reified the significance of the original text, particularly in light of the secularization that was taking place during that period.

As indicated, more Hagadah parodies appeared in Congress (and later, interwar) Poland than anywhere else. While North American Yiddish humor journals also published Hagadah parodies, these were mainly subsumed by the daily and weekly press; there were no *yontef-bletlekh*, apart from a small number of anti-religious Passover magazines published by those affiliated with the Communist movement. Similarly, in the Soviet Union, a small number of Hagadah parodies of the 1920s were relegated to the realm of anti-religious propaganda. In addition, Hagadah parodies were published in many other Yiddish centers, from Buenos Aires to Johannesburg, making them a truly worldwide phenomenon. In Poland, Passover *yontef-bletlekh* were mainly the products of major press centers such as Warsaw, Vilna, and Lodz, though they also appeared at times in smaller localities such as Bialystok and Grodno.

Indeed, many hundreds—possibly thousands—of such parodies exist. It is of course impossible to deal with them all in the space of a single essay, and because they address such a wide variety of issues, it is difficult to provide a representative selection. There may be, in fact, no such thing, as examples come in all shapes and sizes. Some parody the entire Hagadah, though most tend to parody select sections of the text. Some comprise entire magazines, while others take up far less space, sometimes amounting to no more than a newspaper column. Finally, many Hagadah parodies contain cartoons. Following the failed revolution of 1905, cartoons became a visual mainstay in humoristic *yontef-bletlekh* and in Yiddish humor journals in general. In particular, the Four Sons and the Ten Plagues were commonly parodied Hagadah images.

Although examples of Hagadah parody are known to exist as early as the 13th century,[12] it was the *maskilim* who produced the first modern variants—those that engage the structure of the Hagadah liturgy in order to create critical commentary on a contemporary matter. Many of these appeared in the 19th-century Hebrew press and influenced members of the nascent Jewish labor movement of the 1880s to create their own parodies in Yiddish. The first of these appeared in Morris Vintshevsky's *Arbeter fraynd* in London in 1887. A number of variations on it, including one by the Bund, were eventually published and republished as *The Socialist Hagadah*, and its anti-capitalist, revolutionary text remained virtually the same over a period of decades. Vintshevsky's parody of the Four Questions, for example, begins as follows:

> *Ma nishtane*—why are we different from Shmuel the manufacturer, from Meyer the banker, from Zorach the moneylender, from Reb Todros the rabbi? They don't work yet they have food and drink during the day and also at night at least a hundred times over, [while] we toil with all our strength the whole day, and at night we have nothing at all to eat.[13]

Here, the Hagadah becomes a revolutionary tract, the purpose of which is to awaken the working class to a recognition of its subordinate economic and societal status. At the same time, unlike much of the socialist propaganda of the same period, it places the ideals of the movement firmly within Jewish tradition, exploiting the familiarity and power of the text to promote its concepts to a specifically Jewish audience.

In contrast to the tendentious proletarian Hagadahs, parodies produced in interwar Poland address a broad variety of topics, relying on the maskilic policy of inserting contemporary issues into the liturgy. Examples include the following:

- The tax burden levied on Jewish merchants in Warsaw ("The Gensha Street Hagadah," 1924)
- The trials and tribulations of those seeking to rent apartments in Warsaw ("The Renter's Hagadah," 1924)
- Internal Jewish political activity ("The Kehile Hagadah," 1927)
- Jewish communal elections ("The Up-to-the-Minute Hagadah," 1928, subtitled: "Seder for Running an Election Campaign")
- The phenomenon of borrowing at high interest rates ("The Little Hagadah," 1928)
- The "Miss Judea" beauty pageant ("Hagadah of Miss Judea," 1929) (the subject of four different Passover *yontef-bletlekh*)
- Unsavory business practices of Warsaw's Jewish businessmen ("The Merchant's Hagadah," 1930)
- The rise of the Nazi regime in Germany ("The Hitler Hagadah," 1933)

In sum, nearly every political and social aspect of Jewish society was subject to satirical barbs—Bundism, socialism, Communism, Zionism (in all its forms and factions), Folkism, Orthodoxy and, especially, assimilationism—so, too, were the leaders or perceived proponents of all of these movements. The satires reflect the vitality and intensity of a society in deep political, religious, and cultural flux. As such, they serve as valuable fragments of humorous social commentary on a wide array of issues meaningful to Polish Jewry in the first few decades of the 20th century, in addition to offering choice examples of current slang and the intermingling of multiple languages within a single text.

Examples of Interwar Hagadah Parodies

The Peysekh-blat *(Lublin)*

With its faux rabbinical authorization declaring it to be "kosher lemahadrin minhamadrin," the *Peysekh-blat* of Lublin, circa 1925,[14] has a cover that, at first glance, resembles a religious tract. The reader, however, quickly sees a notice below indicating that the booklet is actually a humor magazine: "This paper brings forth laughter by all." Driving the point home even further is the subsequent notice that the Lodz-born Jewish strongman, Zishe Breitbart, will be "carrying the Yeshiva of Lublin to Jerusalem, and will bring the Hebrew University back to Warsaw." Breitbart, an enormously popular circus performer who was in the midst of a major tour of Poland in early 1925, was an indisputably newsworthy figure during this period. The inclusion of his name bears no relation to the interior text of the magazine; it is rather a tip-off to readers that the anonymous author of the satire was up to date with current cultural matters in Poland.

The target of the Hagadah parody comprising the booklet is bourgeois religious Jewry, and the framing device is Beys Yankev (Beis Yaakov), the network of schools providing religious and secular education for girls, as indicated by its title, "Do fregt di fir kashes a fraylayn fun beys-yankev-shule, frantsishkaner 6" (The Four Questions

Asked Here by a Young Lady from the Beys Yankev School, Frantsishkaner [Street] 6). The piece begins with the Four Questions as asked by a student at the school. Upending the traditional Yiddish rendition in which the youngest son tells his father that he has four questions to ask him, here we have a gendered twist: "Mameshe, ikh vel dir fregn fir kashes" (Mama, I'm going to ask you four questions).

The daughter's subsequent query is a long, run-on question—it takes up an entire page. The subject at hand is the girl's aunt. Why, the daughter wonders, does her aunt show her cleavage, put on makeup, wear stockings, and have long fingernails? The mother first responds with the traditional response ("'Avadim hayinu" [We were slaves]) but then adds her own commentary: "We women have been enslaved by the men, and what they demand must be fulfilled." What follows is a satirical consideration of matters pertaining to the laws of family purity (*taharas mishpokhe*), in particular the obligation for a married woman to go to the ritual bath (*mikve*) a week after the end of her menstrual period, before resuming sexual relations with her husband. Instead of replies from four sons, there are responses by four daughters. The wise (married) daughter, able to deal with matters of family purity on her own, goes to the *mikve* without being prompted. The wicked daughter, ostensibly a secular girl who promotes modernity over tradition, argues that a modern bath is more hygienic than the *mikve*. The simple (naïve) daughter wonders what all the fuss about hygiene is—after all, her *bobe* (grandma) went to the *mikve* "under ice" and it was fine with her. Finally, the daughter who doesn't even know how to ask a question is the one who gets seduced by young men. Her father has to explain to her that if "one takes another [as a mate], he'll soon have two [that is, the two will become three]." Echoing the variety of responses in the original, these replies consider contemporary issues through the lens of a community in transition that must consider how tradition and modernity can co-exist.

Like most Hagadah parodies, that which appears in the *Peysekh-blat* of Lublin contains only key portions of the text. Among these are the "Dayenu" ("It would be enough for us") recitation, a portion of which reads:

> If women would wear wigs and men would wear a beard and *peyes*, *dayenu*.
> If women and men would dance together but not at Jewish weddings, *dayenu*.
> If Jewish daughters went naked but cut their nails, *dayenu*.
> If our aristocrats would put up a *mezuza* and not lay *tfilin*,* *dayenu*.
>
> * We gave out special pamphlets explaining the requirements regarding *tfilin* and *mezuzes*.

This particular text was produced by and for the Orthodox community, which makes it something of a rarity among the Hagadah parodies. The parody is well wrought. There is much humor and, as indicated by some of the "Dayenu" lines, great exaggeration and incongruity, all of which are typical components of satirical parody. At the same time, it addresses serious issues facing the Orthodox community—most significantly, the challenge of growing indifference to, and ignorance of, Jewish law (denoted by the explanation by the authors that they had disseminated a pamphlet regarding ritual use of *tfilin* and *mezuzes*). Such an explanation serves to temper the potential frivolity of the text and render it acceptable (even without rabbinic authorization) to an Orthodox audience.

The Gensha Street Hagadah

"An'hagode far gensha gas" (1924)[15] is told from the point of view of an aspiring Gensha Street businessman (Gensha was considered the Fifth Avenue of Warsaw Jewry). It begins with a takeoff on the traditional search for leaven in which embezzlers and crooks are the ones being sought: "kol khamire vekhamiye—ale harbe 'likhve'—breklekh, daykhe breshese—vos gefinin zikh in mayn gesheft" (All leaven—all the tough usurers—in my possession, who can be found in my business place). As is typical of most Hagadah parodies, it then makes use of the *kadesh, urkhats*, *karpas*, *yakhets* . . . mnemonic, applying each heading to what is occurring in the text. The kadesh, which normally refers to the *kiddush* (blessing) over wine, now pertains to someone who made deals before the currency revaluation (the blessing presumably refers to the profits he made). *Urkhats* (washing) becomes a slang term for Gensha Street shop owners cozying up to provincial businessmen visiting the street, who are pushed into the stores with a stalk of parsley (*karpas*) and then divided (*yakhats*) into those who can pay cash and those who leave an IOU. One such hapless businessman is then made "to sing and to say" (*magid*), a play on both magid—the "telling" of the Hagadah story and the old Yiddish folk expression "tsu zingn un tsu zogn" (the implication of which is that he will cause some sort of trouble); this is followed by a sale (*moytsi*), which is connected with the blessing of the matzo (since "bread" was a common slang term for money), and at the conclusion is taxes (*maror*), the bitter part of the transaction.

The Hagadah continues with a discussion about how the Jews conduct commerce in Poland. The Four Questions ask why taxes are so high, while the section on the Four Sons elaborates on the onerous laws relating to commerce. In this case, the four sons represent Poles of various gradations: the wise son is a "patriot," who informs the *yidelekh* (little Jews) that the laws are *for* them. The wicked son is a "*Rozvoynik*,"[16] who asks the *zhides* (kikes), "how is it that you (Jews) arrive at commerce?" (The response is that "commerce is a decent thing, not for his potato-head.") The simple son is the official in charge of the price list (*cennik*), and the son who is unable to ask a question is the tax collector.

In addition to the commentary on the current economic and political situation of the Jews, there is, as is typical with humor and parody, a great deal of wordplay and bending of language. "An'hagode far gensha gas" is, in fact, an excellent example of what Chone Shmeruk termed the "Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish polysystem" in that it was written with the expectation that the reader would be able to understand all three languages (this expectation does not hold for most of the parodies).[17] Take, for example, the parodic recitation of *dover akher*, "another explanation," followed by the Ten Plagues, which are transformed here, in the mind of the Gensha Street businessman, into different kinds of taxes (in the text that follows, Hebrew is underlined, Yiddish is italicized, and Polish—transliterated as it appeared within the Yiddish text—is in boldface):

> Dover akher—*men ken keyn khazer nisht zayn un men muz voynen un tsoln*;
> Beyad khazoke—*az nisht nemt men mit gvald*. Shtayim—*un men muz moykhl zayn tsoln* **kara** *tsvey mol azoy fil*.
> Eylu eser **podatkes** she'hevi **grabski** aleynu, vilu heyn:

Mayantkove, dokhodove, miyeshkanyove, odekhove, spatserove, vodotsionove, ***esregove, shalekh-monesove, kneydlekhove*** . . .

(Another explanation [this is a Hebrew/Yiddish pun: *Dover akher,* literally "something else," is a euphemistic term for pig]—one cannot be a pig and one must pay for where one lives; With a strong hand—if not, they take you brutally. Two—and one must apologize and pay a penalty that is twice as much.
These are the ten taxes that Grabski brought upon us:
Property tax, capital gains tax, apartment tax, breathing tax, walking tax, plumbing tax, etrog tax, Purim-gift tax, matzo-ball tax . . .).

It seems clear that the purpose of this section is both to criticize and to render absurd the heavy taxation and revaluation of currency that occurred during the Grabski administration, which was to collapse and be replaced the following year.[18] The Hagadah continues with a hopeful version of "Ehad mi yodeye," (Who Knows One?) a counting song of significant Jewish terms and objects, which in this case counts customers ("Who knows how much money one might make if five or six customers come into the store?"). It closes with the traditional "Khad gadye," though instead of a little kid, the father buys a "pekele" (little package). A blessing is made on the forthcoming *sfire,*[19] and the counting (of money) begins.

One of the more well-thought-out and intricate of the Hagadah parodies, "An'hagode far gensha gas" successfully presents the point of view of a Jewish businessman seeking to ply his trade under the onerous burden of taxes and government regulations. The piece is signed by "Der koter" (The Tomcat), who was likely Pinkhes Katz, the editor of *A malke oyf peysekh*, the *jednodniowka* in which the parody appeared.[20]

The "Miss Judea" Hagadahs

The year 1929 was particularly significant in terms of Hagadah parody in Warsaw. Whereas one or two Passover *yontef-bletlekh* were usually published annually, four separate satire journals were published for Passover of 1929, all of which were dedicated to two interconnected scandals that occurred during a three-week period prior to the holiday.

The first scandal concerned the Miss Judea beauty pageant, a contest sponsored that year by the Polish-language Jewish daily, *Nasz Przegląd*, to crown the most beautiful Jewish girl in Poland. The pageant attracted a great deal of publicity but was also roundly criticized by some as an imitation of the quasi-Catholic tradition of choosing a Mardi Gras queen. Notwithstanding, it was a popular success. As part of her tour of Jewish institutions in Warsaw, the winner of the pageant, Zofja Oldak, attended an official reception at the Kehile (Kehilla: communal board) building hosted by its president, Heshl Farbshteyn, leader of the religious-Zionist Mizrachi party. At the reception, Farbshteyn, evidently enamored of Ms. Oldak, praised her beauty and read from the Song of Songs in her honor. This act provoked much ire and outrage among the Agudas yisroel (Agudat Israel) members of the Kehile, who mounted a vigorous protest outside the Kehile building on Grzybowska Street, accusing Farbshteyn of both degrading the Kehile and of desecrating the Song of Songs.

The following week, as the scandal was dissipating, Yeshaye Rozenboym, the vice president of the Kehile and leader of the Aguda, died. At the funeral, Farbshteyn—