Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, European Jewry began to experience a sea change. Beginning with the activities of a handful of German Jewish intellectuals, the Haskala, or Jewish Enlightenment, transformed the way that Central and Western European Jews identified as Jews, practiced their religion, and interacted with the wider society. Within a matter of decades, the Haskala made its way eastward into Poland and the Russian empire, bringing its secular ideals to a deeply traditional population. There was much resistance, to be sure, and a substantial part of the Eastern European Jewish population would carry on their traditional practices, or reinvent such practices in response to the Haskala and other new social and political movements. Yet the Haskala also effected profound changes in various facets of Jewish life, one of which in particular concerns us here. By successfully calling upon a portion of the Jewish population to embrace the intellectual and cultural achievements of the secular world, the Haskala opened up new areas of activity, including the writing and production of drama. A small number of *maskilim* (singular: *maskil*), or advocates of the Haskala, wrote plays that articulated their vision in dramatic form. After the middle of the nineteenth century, as the idea of Jews producing and consuming secular literature gained greater acceptance and an infrastructure of writers, journals, and publishers established itself, modern Yiddish literature began to flourish. It was in this atmosphere that the professional Yiddish theatre was born—a phenomenon that would quickly expand to become a lively medium for both entertainment and the exchange of ideas among Yiddish-speaking Jews everywhere, and one of the most dynamic and popular forms of Jewish expression in the modern world.

The five plays in this anthology represent highlights in the development of modern Yiddish drama, from its beginnings in late eighteenth-century Germany to the remarkable professional scene that thrived in interwar Poland. In between, we encounter satires written and performed in Poland and Russia. Some of the plays in this volume were little known

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outside a circle of intellectuals, but exerted an enormous influence on later Yiddish drama. Others became part of an international repertoire that extended to Western Europe, the Americas, and Jewish communities in more distant locales, like South Africa and Australia. And still others, though performed infrequently, were given noteworthy productions at pivotal moments in the development of the Yiddish theatre.

All of these plays, in other words, are historically important. They will be of particular interest to anyone interested in Yiddish drama and theatre, but also to other readers and audiences, because of the remarkable degree of cross-fertilization that informed the creation of Yiddish drama, which transcended genre, language, and national borders. That is, Yiddish playwrights were rarely only playwrights, but also accomplished and popular writers of fiction, poetry, journalism, literary criticism, travelogues, and other forms of literature; they often wrote in other languages—particularly Hebrew—as well; they were influenced by, and exerted their own influence upon, theatre artists writing and performing in other languages; and their plays entered into the repertoires of troupes that traveled widely, creating an international exchange of performers, playwrights, and plays. The plays in this anthology, therefore, are the fruits of modern European Jewish writers, and can be placed simultaneously in a number of different artistic and historical categories.

While each of these works belongs to a specific time and place, we hope that readers, directors, performers, and audiences will come to share our belief that each also deserves to be revisited, to be read and performed from the perspective of a generation eager to learn more about the cultural legacy handed down to us by Yiddish playwrights from earlier times. There are many plays we could have chosen to reflect the development of modern Yiddish drama, and many considerations helped dictate the final selection of these five works. We wanted to include plays that would represent distinct moments in the history of Yiddish theatre and drama, and which reflect the changing nature of the modern Yiddish theatre from its earliest beginnings to the height of its popularity to its ultimate decline. We have chosen plays written in different genres, moods, and styles: satire, sentimental comedy, farce, naturalism, and grand historical drama. All of these works were written by writers who have been esteemed by literary and theatrical critics, and in some cases embraced by large and enthusiastic audiences. And just as important as any of the above considerations, we have included these plays because each is a masterpiece. They are by turns hilarious, thought provoking, startling, and moving. They spark lively discussion in the classroom. With effective productions, they can be just as stimulating in the theatre.

Despite their historical importance and artistic merits, none of the plays in this volume has ever been translated into English before;

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indeed, most of their authors are completely unknown to English readers.[1] This sort of gap is familiar to teachers, students, and readers of Yiddish literature in any genre who are looking for worthwhile translations into English for themselves or their students, for only a handful of the many treasures of Yiddish literature are available in English. The dearth is even more pronounced for those interested specifically in drama. A number of major Yiddish playwrights have yet to have any of their work translated into English,[2] and only a handful of English translations of Yiddish drama have been translated in the past generation.[3] We hope that our anthology will

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1. *The Two Kuni Lemls* has been freely adapted into English (*Kuni Leml*, Samuel French, 1985) by Nahma Sandrow, Richard Engquist, and Raphael Crystal, but ours is the first straight English translation of the play. The only other playwright from this collection whose work has been published in English before is Peretz Hirschbein, whose *Grine felder* (Green Fields) has been translated by both Joseph Landis and Nahma Sandrow, and several of whose other plays have appeared in English versions by Etta Block, Isaac Goldberg, and David Lifson. For further details, see note 3 below.

2. A few Yiddish plays are fairly familiar to English theatregoers, with two in particular receiving extensive attention in both published and staged versions. S. Ansky's *Der dibek* (The Dybbuk), arguably the most popular of all Yiddish plays and an absolute sensation when it debuted in 1920, has been translated, adapted, and performed in many languages, and English has produced its fair share of *Dybbuks*. For published versions, see S. Morris Engel (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1974); Joachim Neugroschel, in *The Dybbuk and the Yiddish Imagination: A Haunted Reader,* ed. Neugroschel (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000); and Golda Werman, in *The Dybbuk and Other Writings*, by S. Ansley, ed. David G. Roskies (New York: Schocken, 1992). Neugroschel's translation was adapted by Tony Kushner as *A Dybbuk* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1998). *The Dybbuk* has also inspired music by Aaron Copland, a ballet by Leonard Bernstein, an opera by David and Alex Tamkin, and Paddy Chayefsky's popular play *The Tenth Man* (1959), which moves the story from Eastern Europe to a synagogue on Long Island in the 1950s. *The Dybbuk*'s nearest rival for popularity in English is Sholem Asch's *Got fun nekome* (God of Vengeance). See translations by Isaac Goldberg (Boston: Stratford, 1918); Joseph Landis, in *The Dybbuk and Other Great Yiddish Plays,* ed. Landis (New York: Bantam, 1966; repr. 1972); and in *3 Great Yiddish Plays*, ed. Landis (New York: Applause, 1986); and Joachim Neugroschel, *Pakn-Treger* 23 (Winter 1996): 16–39. An adaptation by Donald Margulies (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2004) premiered at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in 2002. Numerous other translations and adaptations of the play have been performed in both professional and university settings.

3. Translations and adaptations of other works by individual playwrights include Morris Freed, *The Survivors: Six One-act Dramas*, trans. A. D. Mankoff (Cambridge, MA: Sci-Art Publishers, 1956); Jacob Gordin, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, adapted by Langdon Mitchell (New York: H. Fiske, 1907); Sh. Harendorf, *Der kenig fun lampeduze / The King of Lampedusa* (bilingual edition), ed. and trans. Heather Valencia (London: Jewish Music Institute / International Forum for Yiddish Culture, 2003); Peretz Hirshbein, *The Haunted Inn*, trans. Isaac Goldberg (Boston: John W. Luce, 1921); Ari Ibn-Zahav, *Shylock and his Daughter*, adapted by Maurice Schwartz, trans. Abraham Regelson (New York: Yiddish Art Theatre, 1947); Kh. Y. Minikes, "Among the Indians or, The Country Peddler," trans. Mark Slobin, *Drama Review* 24 (September 1980): 17–26; I. L. Peretz, *The Golden Chain*, in Marvin Zuckerman and Marion Herbst, eds., *The Three Great Classic Writers of Modern*

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help accomplish several overlapping goals: to introduce a new readership to some of the greatest achievements of Yiddish dramatists, in both comedy and tragedy; to help illustrate, through the combination of the plays and the historical introduction below, key trends in the development of modern Yiddish drama; and to offer new material to teachers, students, theatre directors, and audiences hungry to learn more about Yiddish theatre and drama. The rest of this introduction is designed primarily to provide background information on the five plays translated here: their authors, their textual history, and some analysis of the main themes. In that light, though this essay will not be able to serve as a full history of the Yiddish theatre, it will strive to treat many of the main issues surrounding not just these particular plays, but Yiddish drama more broadly.

Medieval Roots

Though theatrical performance was frowned upon by traditional Jewish authorities in late antiquity and the medieval period, in part due to its original connection with pagan religious festivals and a prohibition against male cross-dressing, this hardly meant that the concept of theatre was unknown to medieval and early modern Jewry.[4] On the holiday

3. (continued) *Yiddish Literature*, vol. 3: Peretz (Malibu, CA: Joseph Simon/Pangloss Press, 1996), 398–468; Peretz, *A Night in the Old Marketplace*, trans. Hillel Halkin, *Prooftexts* 12 (Jan. 1992): 1–71, and reprinted in *The I. L. Peretz Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Ruth R. Wisse (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 361–432; David Pinski, *King David and His Wives*, trans. Isaac Goldberg (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923); Pinski, *Ten Plays*, trans. Isaac Goldberg (New York, 1920; repr. Great Neck, NY: Core Collection Books, 1977); Pinski, *Three Plays*, trans. Isaac Goldberg (New York, 1918; repr. Arno Press, 1975); Sholem Aleichem, *The Jackpot: A Folk-Play in Four Acts*, trans. Kobi Weitzner and Barnett Zumoff (New York: Workmen's Circle Education Department, 1989); and Sholem Aleichem, *Heaven*, *She Must Marry a Doctor*, and *It's Hard to be a Jew*, trans. Mark Schweid, in *Sholom Aleichem Panorama*, ed. Melech Grafstein (London, ON: Jewish Observer, 1948). For plays in anthologies, see Etta Block, ed., *One-Act Plays from the Yiddish*, 1st and 2nd series (Cincinnati: Stewart Kidd, 1923 and New York Bloch, 1929); Isaac Goldberg, ed., *Six Plays of the Yiddish Theatre*, 1st and 2nd series (Boston: J. W. Luce, 1916 and 1918); Joseph Leftwich, ed., *An Anthology of Modern Yiddish Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974); David Lifson, ed., *Epic and Folk Plays of the Yiddish Theatre* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975); Nahma Sandrow, ed., *God, Man, and Devil: Yiddish Plays in Translation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999); and Bessie White, ed., *Nine One-Act Plays from the Yiddish* (Boston: J. W. Luce, 1932). For Yiddish plays in general drama anthologies, see Sholem Asch, *Night*, trans. Jack Robbins, in Constance M. Martin, ed., *Fifty One-Act Plays* (London: V. Gollancz, 1934), 769–781; and David Pinski, *Laid Off*, trans. Anna K. Pinski, in *One-Act Plays for Stage and Study*, 7th series (New York: Samuel French, 1932).

4. On early Jewish and Yiddish theatre, see Shmuel Avisar, *Ha-makhaze ve-ha-te'atron ha-ivri ve-ha-yidi* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1996), 1–9; B. Gorin, *Di geshikhte fun idishn teater,* 2 vols. (New York: Literarisher Farlag, 1918), 1:7–63; Sh. Ernst, "Tekstn un kveln tsu der geshikhte fun teatr, farvaylungn, un maskeradn bay yidn," in *Akhiv far der geshikhte fun yidishn teatr un drame,* ed. Y. Shatzky (New York: YIVO, 1930); and Y. Shiper, *Geshikhte fun yidisher teater-kunst un drame fun di eltste tsaytn biz 1750,* 3 vols. (Warsaw, 1923–1928).

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of Purim, the celebration of the salvation of Persian Jewry from the depredations of the evil vizier Haman through the heroic intercession of Mordechai and Esther, the public reading of the book of Esther and the commandment to celebrate joyously allowed Jews to take their first steps towards the incorporation of a theatrical tradition.

The dictum in Esther 9:1, "venahafoch hu" (lit. "and the matter was turned upside down"), allowed for the Judaization of the carnivalesque "king for a day" experience of medieval Christendom. Students of the rabbinical seminaries (yeshivas) performed parodic versions of Talmudic lectures, or *purim-toyre,* which showcased verbal dexterity. More important, however, was the development of the institution known as the *purimshpil* (plural: purimshpiln) or "Purim play."[5] This institution, certainly influenced both by the "high" Christian tradition of biblical miracle and mystery plays and the "low" tradition of the German *Fastnachtspiel* and the Italian commedia dell'arte, at first probably consisted of the performance of biblical stories both thematically related to the holiday (the story of the book of Esther) and unrelated (we know that the Joseph story was very popular, as was that of Jonah and the whale).[6] However, the performances were not limited to simple dramatization of religious fare. Aside from the improvisational nature of the performances, performers of the purimshpiln (believed, generally, to be yeshiva students boarding in the major Jewish cities of Western and Central Europe, notably what would become Germany and Italy) would also include anachronistic material, generally information related to local politics or personalities. Given the limitation of theatrical activity to the holiday of Purim (and, perhaps, the period immediately around it), it is unsurprising that the performances would generally occur after the holiday feast in the homes of wealthy Jews, who not only had the space in their houses to allow for a performance but also the means to provide a bit of charity to the impoverished student performers after the play was done. (One might add that there is a commandment on Purim to give gifts to the poor, a commandment that these players would certainly not have let their hosts forget.)

Though most of these plays were composed in Yiddish, the primary language of European Jewry in the premodern era, that was

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5. For a recent in-depth study of the *purimshpil,* see Evi Bützer, *Die Anfänge der jiddischen purim shpiln in ihrem literarischen und kulturgeschichtlichen Kontext* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2003), and the extensive bibliography there. See also Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction à la littérature yiddish ancienne* (Paris, 1993), 443–473; Ahuva Belkin, *Ha-purim-shpil: iyunim ba'teatron ha-yehudi ha-amami* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 2002); and Khone Shmeruk, introduction to *Makhazot mikraiim be-yidish, 1697–1750,* ed. Shmeruk (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1979).

6. Compare Bützer, esp. 23–30 and 153–201.

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not universally the case. In fact, the first extant play to be performed on Purim, written by Judah b. Leone Somo (Leone de' Sommi) in 1515, is written in Hebrew.[7] Somo's play, *Tzakhut bedikhuta dekidushin* (An Eloquent Marriage Farce), is exceptional in many ways, not limited to its language of composition. The play is not based on a traditional Jewish story, and indeed superficially has little to do with Purim, though its plot, which turns on a series of complex and twisted interpretations of Jewish marriage law, may well have reminded the viewer of *purim-toyre* theatricalized, and upon closer examination of the play, the characters can be seen as representations of characters from the Esther story.

However, the main influences on the characters are clearly from commedia dell'arte, and many of the play's dramatic and theatrical motifs are borrowed directly from the theatre of the Renaissance. This is hardly surprising, given the author's prominent position as a theorist of theatre in Mantua: an intellectual who felt as much at home among the works of secular literature in European languages as in traditional Jewish texts. In this way, we see the first evidence of a theme which will become more and more apparent as the story of Yiddish theatre continues: the adaptation and Judaization of non-Jewish theatrical traditions, motifs, technologies, and even particular theatrical works. Somo, by dint of his own background and training, was an exceptional individual, but in fact much of the story of Jewish theatre—and, more specifically, Yiddish theatre—is the story of extraordinary individuals who attempt to transpose general theatre into a Jewish key for a Jewish audience, for both polemic and aesthetic purposes, as we will see.

Audience may well have been the reason for the failure of *An Eloquent Marriage Farce* to become a major influence on the lived history of Jewish theatre; the play's recondite Hebrew meant that few members of the general Mantuan population would have been able to understand it. In many ways, the fate of the play serves as an introduction to another of the major issues surrounding the development of Yiddish theatre: the linguistic knowledge of the playwrights' audiences. Though Jews in Eastern Europe were undoubtedly members of what scholars have referred to as a "linguistic polysystem"—a society in which many

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7. See J. H. Schirmann, ed. *Tsakhut be-dikhuta de-kidushin: komediya be-khamesh ma'arakhot*, by Judah b. Leone Somo (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1965), and his introductory essay there. See also Alfred S. Golding's extensive introduction and notes to his English translation of the work, *A Comedy of Betrothal* (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions Canada, 1988); Ahuva Belkin, ed., *Leone de' Sommi and the Performing Arts* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1997); and Avisar.

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languages coexisted and were spoken and understood at various levels—a number of essential facts seem clear.[8]

First, in most of Europe, until the middle of the eighteenth century, the basic lingua franca of Jewry was Yiddish, though by this period significant divergences had developed between Jews living in Western Europe (the various German principalities, Italy, Amsterdam), and Eastern Europe (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). Second, Hebrew was the main liturgical language of all of Jewish society, as widely used for prayer as it was little understood by the general populace. Mostly used by educated elites, Hebrew also played a major role in the complicated mixture of rapprochement and alienation that marked the revival of Christian interest in Jewish texts and the Jewish religion that developed in the Renaissance and early-modern era (generally known as Christian Hebraism).[9] Third, Jewish knowledge of the coterritorial Western languages (German, Russian, Polish, and so on) varied widely, but roughly corresponded to the level of cosmopolitanism and urbanization of the Jewish community. With knowledge of Western languages came also knowledge of the culture and literature written in that language. Yiddish literature published in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, which includes a significant amount of material translated from other literatures (though often Judaized and censored to remove obscene or Christian elements), illustrates both the interest that readers of Yiddish literature had in these stories and, presumably, their inability or difficulty with reading them in the original.[10]

The complex linguistic situation would become particularly important to the history of the Yiddish theatre as the Jewish community of Europe began its uneasy encounter with modernity. Though many historians differ on the definition of "modernity" and its dating, it seems fair to date the changes in Western Europe to a period after the end of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), where an increasing philosophical interest in religious toleration combined with an improvement

8. There is a significant and fractious literature on the history of the Yiddish language. For two of the classic treatments, see Max Weinreich, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh: bagrifn, faktn, metodn* (New York: YIVO, 1973), trans. as *History of the Yiddish Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), and Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

9. On Hebrew and Christian Hebraism, see Frank Manuel, *The Broken Staff* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

10. This said, it is difficult to tell precisely where these books and pamphlets were intended to be sold and disseminated. For extensive discussion, see Sara Zfatman-Biller, "Ha-siporet be-yidish me-reshita ad 'shivkhei ha-besht,'" 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1983).

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in the economic circumstances of a class of Western European Jewish bourgeoisie to provide new opportunities for Jewish acculturation. These opportunities were particularly visible in new "boom town" cities like Berlin, which saw an influx of Jewish settlement.[11]

During the next century, the trends towards acculturation continued and intensified. Jews became increasingly involved in and aware of Western culture, and began to develop the sense that real possibilities for social and political emancipation were available. The historical figure most symbolic of these possibilities was Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), the Prussian Jewish philosopher whose writings and personal experience suggested a new model of Jewish existence in the Diaspora: one based on a strong commitment to Jewish belief and action while simultaneously affirming the value of Western cultural values and ideals, particularly the rationalism highly prized by the proponents of the Enlightenment.[12] In his works, most notably *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn attempted to illustrate not only how Judaism deserved toleration under the rules and values that enlightened Western society had set for itself, but also how Judaism was an excellent (perhaps the best) demonstration of those rules and values.[13]

In *Jerusalem*—written in German and addressed to a non-Jewish audience—Mendelssohn also demonstrates another idea: the way in which proof of Jewish suitability for being emancipated and given equal rights is contingent on the Jewish writer's mastery of contemporary Western cultural forms. Almost all of Mendelssohn's work, from his earliest *Kohelet Musar* to his *Philosophical Dialogues* to his *Jerusalem*, are modeled on contemporary Prussian genres: the "moral weekly," the

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11. The historical literature on this subject is vast. Selected treatments of the subject include Azriel Shohat, *Im khilufei tekufot: reyshit ha-haskala be-yahadut germania* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1960); Michael A. Meyer, ed., *German Jewish History in Modern Times, vol. 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749–1824* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1967); Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Steven Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

12. See, for example, Michael L. Morgan, "Mendelssohn," in *History of Jewish Philosophy,* ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman, (London: Routledge Press, 1997), 660–681, and Moshe Pelli, "Moshe Mendelson kidmut ha-yehudi ha-khadash be-moral biografi shel yitzkhak aykhl," *Bitzaron* 45–48 (1990–1991), 118–127.

13. Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem,* trans. and ed. Allan Arkush (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983), and Alexander Altmann's introduction there (3–29). See also Jeremy Dauber, *Antonio's Devils: Writers of the Jewish Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 138–163.

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philosophical dialogue, the polemical pamphlet.[14] The German concept of Bildung, a word which in this context means something between "education" and "culture," was a vital one to Mendelssohn and his successors: Jewish acceptance by the non-Jewish minority, the maskilim felt, was contingent on the sufficient internalization of *Bildung*.[15] It is hardly surprising that the two main projects of what became known as the Berlin Haskala—the Hebrew language journal known as *Ha-me'asef* (the Gatherer), and the German translation and commentary to the Bible, generally known as the *Biur*—themselves participate in broader cultural traditions, even as they were addressed to primarily Jewish audiences.

The fact that these projects did not include Yiddish was hardly coincidental. The maskilim felt that there was a strong linguistic dimension to their project, not merely a literary and cultural one. It was not sufficient merely to demonstrate Jewish facility and excellence in the genres prized by the non-Jewish community; because of an eighteenth-century linguistic theory which divided languages into "pure" and "corrupt," one had to do so in a "pure" language as well. Hebrew, by dint of its classical status and its role as the language of a shared Jewish and Christian holy text, was not merely pure but also a potential vehicle for rapprochement between proponents of the two religions. Yiddish, on the other hand, was seen as a corrupt version of German, caught up in a larger controversy of the time about various dialects of German. Many of the maskilim felt that social and cultural emancipation among German Jewry also necessitated emancipation from Yiddish.[16] This strong stigma against Yiddish—a stigma also connected to the influx of Eastern European Jews into Prussia, which we will discuss later—would be maintained over the next century and would follow the spread of the Jewish Enlightenment into Eastern Europe, where it would have radically different consequences for the development of Yiddish literature and drama as a whole.[17]

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14. See, for example, the discussion in Meir Gilon, *Kohelet musar le-Mendelson al reka tekufato* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of the Sciences and the Humanities, 1979), 37–53, and Sorkin, 15–16.

15. See Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 7–8.

16. For a full discussion, see Peter Freimark, "Language Behaviour and Assimilation: The Situation of the Jews in Modern Germany in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 24 (1979): 157–177; and Jeffrey A. Grossman, *The Discourse on Yiddish in Germany: From the Enlightenment to the Second Empire* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000), esp. 75–90, 110–111.

17. On the development of this stigma, see Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised,* 2nd ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), esp. 34–45; and Shmuel Werses, "Yad yamin dokhe yad smol mekarevet: al yakhasam shel sofrei ha-haskala le-lashon yidish," *Khulyot* 5 (1998), 9–49.

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One difficulty with Hebrew and German, however, was that they were not by and large the languages of the Jewish populace. Research has indicated that contrary to the conventional wisdom, Mendelssohn's translation and commentary to the Bible was not intended to teach Prussian Jews German, but rather to familiarize them with the increasingly unknown Hebrew language.[18] German, fairly close linguistically to Western Yiddish, was certainly apprehensible to the Yiddish speaker, but the "narcissism of minor differences" meant that it was still perceived as a differentiated mode of speech. These differences would have major consequences for the representation of dialogue within the Yiddish theatre, as we shall see.

All of these factors combine to create the conditions that gave rise to the first Yiddish plays of the modern era. During the last decade of the eighteenth century, two members of the Berlin Haskala each composed a play focusing on contemporary Jewish life in northern Prussia, each of which featured a main character named Reb Henokh. (Some scholars have suggested that the similarity of the two plays resulted from friendly competition, or perhaps even a wager, between the two authors; history has yet to fully illuminate the issue.) Isaac Euchel's (1756–1804) *Reb Henokh oder vos tut men damit* (Reb Henokh, or What Is to Be Done About It, ca. 1792) and Aaron Halle-Wolfssohn's *Laykhtzin un fremelay* (Silliness and Sanctimony, ca. 1794) can be considered the first advances in the modern Yiddish theatre. [19] Compared to Euchel's *Reb Henokh*, which has a tendency to meander and squander its dramatic and satiric effect, Wolfssohn's play is dramatically taut and still eminently stageable, our reason for including it here rather than its contemporary.

Aaron Halle Wolfssohn's *Silliness and Sanctimony*

Aaron Halle-Wolfssohn's name already reveals some important historical information: born in the Prussian city of Halle in 1754, he took a name which was the German version of his patronymic.[20] His father,

18. Werner Weinberg, "Language Questions Relating to Moses Mendelssohn's Pentateuch Translation," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1984): 197–242.

19. On the two plays as a unit and their role as a reflection of the period, the classic (though tendentious) treatment remains Max Erik, *Di komedyes fun der berliner oyfklerung* (Kiev: Melukhe-Farlag, 1933), 5–67. On Euchel's play, see the discussions in Meyer, 118–119; Aviezer, 166–170; and Gilman, 110–114. On the meaning and the antecedents of the phrase *vos tut men damit*, see Dov Sadan, *A vort bashteyt* (Tel Aviv: Y. L. Peretz Farlag, 1975), 194–201.

20. For a fuller treatment of Wolfssohn's life and work, see Dauber, 164–206 and the sources cited there, especially Jutta Strauss, "Aaron Halle-Wolfssohn: A Trilingual Life" (D.Phil. dissertation, University of Oxford, 1994).

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Wolf, the son of a merchant, had studied both Talmud and medicine, which illustrates the family's slow movement toward modernity. Wolfssohn himself grew up speaking German, not Yiddish, and may have already become familiar with secular works in his parents' home—affording him a kind of freedom from the necessity of a strong familial break which was to characterize so many of the later maskilim and have such powerful psychological consequences for their later work.[21]

Wolfssohn arrived in Berlin in 1785, joining the circle of Jewish intellectuals who were gathering around Moses Mendelssohn there. Like many of them, he participated in the main projects of the Berlin Haskala, including writing commentaries to the Song of Songs and translating the books of Lamentations, Ruth, Job, and Esther into German, as well as providing commentaries to them, and contributing numerous articles and notices to *Ha-me'asef,* most notably his dramatic dialogue from the mid-1790s, *Sikha be'eretz ha-khayim* (A Conversation in the Land of the Living). Wolfssohn became coeditor of the journal in the 1790s.

In keeping with the central position of *Bildung* in maskilic thought, Wolfssohn's interest in the dissemination of Enlightenment also expressed itself in pedagogical efforts; he wrote one of the first Jewish primers, *Avtalyon* (Berlin, 1790), which retold many of the biblical stories in simpler Hebrew and emphasized their universal moral lessons. Most important for our purposes, however, along with his fellow maskil, Joel Bril, he headed the Königliche Wilhelmsschule in Breslau, which taught Jewish and secular subjects according to new pedagogical principles and thus sparked controversy within the local Jewish community. As part of his work there, Wolfssohn composed plays for the students of the school to perform in the period around the holiday of Purim; whether *Silliness and Sanctimony* was one of those plays is a matter of speculation.[22] What is clear, though, is that both *Silliness and Sanctimony* and other plays by Wolfssohn exhibit polemic purposes beyond simple entertainment. In composing the play, Wolfssohn was attempting to create a replacement for traditional Purim plays which would accord with contemporary enlightened notions of appropriate Jewish dramatic creativity.

Though our previous discussion of the Purim plays ended in the early modern period, the plays themselves had continued—and had

21. See Alan Mintz, *"Banished from Their Father's Table": Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

22. A later play designed for this purpose, *Dovid der baziger fun Golies* ("David the Victor Over Goliath," 1802), seems to be a sign of the changing nature of Jewish linguistic patterns. Though the play is written in Hebrew script, it is composed entirely in German; see Strauss, 170–178. We also know that Wolfssohn composed a play, no longer extant, on the subject of early burial, a flashpoint for maskilic activity.

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thrived—through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[23] A few Purim plays, performed in the German cities and principalities and written in Yiddish, survive from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; looking at them, one can see why Wolfssohn would have thought the genre needed revising. The most striking characteristic, to modern eyes, is how the genre has not only continued its commedia dell'arte-inspired trends of improvisation and anachronism but has picked up on its ribaldry and obscenity as well. The 1720 *Akhashveyresh-shpil* is a case in point: its constant shift between high and low register, between the sacred biblical account and the profane interjections by the Mordechai character (who serves as a kind of outside commentator as well as a participant in the narrative action), provide exactly the kind of carnivalesque chaos anathema to the rationalist maskilim, hoping to show their refinement to their non-Jewish neighbors.[24]

Wolfssohn's own real affinities for traditional life (albeit a reformed and refined version of that tradition), as well as his canny sense of precisely how much transformation he could press on the Jewish community, certainly played a role in his maintaining the idea of the Purim story, not merely attempting to remove it entirely. Wolfssohn's own research and thinking on the book of Esther, done for his work on Mendelssohn's Bible translation project, must also have been extremely useful, for there are real continuities between the story of the book of Esther and *Silliness and Sanctimony*. Like the book of Esther, *Silliness and Sanctimony* features a hypocrite who has wormed his way into the good graces of the ruling authority and is finally unmasked due to the efforts of the main hero and heroine, in both cases at a place ostensibly designed for entertainment and pleasure (a feast or wine party in the Bible, and a bordello, where punch is regularly served, in *Silliness and Sanctimony*). Both works mix together comic and serious elements, and both attempt to depict Jewish existence in societies that seem to vacillate between tolerance and hostility. Wolfssohn's return to the biblical story as a template, rather than to its later expansion and transmuta-

23. Indeed, they remained popular well into the twentieth century, and can still be seen in many Hasidic communities today. For analyses of contemporary Hasidic *purimshpiln*, see Shifra Epstein, introduction to *"Daniel-shpil" ba-khasidut bobov: mi-makhazeh amami le-tekes purimi* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1998), 7–73; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Contraband: Performance, Text and Analysis of a *Purim-shpil*," *The Drama Review* 24 (September 1980): 5–16; and Shari Troy, "On the Play and the Playing: Theatricality as Leitmotif in the Purim Play of the Bobover Hasidim" (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 2001).

24. See Shmeruk, *Makhazot,* 20–44, and Shiper, 3:262–293.

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tion, accords well with the maskilic love of classicism and bibliophilia, a sentiment which itself had ideological roots and effects.[25]

Reading Wolfssohn's play itself, however, those familiar with the theatrical tradition can easily find a much more straightforward analogue than the Bible story. As was first noted by an anonymous reviewer, the play is a Jewish adaptation of Molière's *Tartuffe* (1664).[26] In Wolfssohn's version, the wealthy German Jewish merchant Reb Henokh Yoysefkhe has hired a Polish rabbi, Reb Yoysefkhe, as live-in tutor for his young son—whom, intriguingly, we never meet. Reb Henokh, successful in business but with little Jewish knowledge, clearly enjoys studying with Reb Yoysefkhe far more than his son does, and as the play begins the father is very much in Reb Yoysefkhe's sway—so much so that the opening scene features an argument between husband and wife over the proper way to raise their children (an argument we will see echoed in Goldfaden's *The Two Kuni-Lemls*). Reb Henokh's wife Teltse and her enlightened brother Markus worry about the tutor's growing influence over his master. Their fears turn out to be well founded. Reb Yoysefkhe manages to plant the idea in his master's head that he should marry Reb Henokh's daughter, and then feigns surprise—but also genuine delight—at the idea. It is an odd couple if ever there was one, for Yetkhen, the daughter, is thoroughly assimilated. Where Reb Yoysefkhe laces his speech with references to traditional Jewish texts and ideas (albeit for purely self-serving purposes), Yetkhen speaks of nothing but rendezvous with her gentile suitors, the latest offering at the opera, and the pulp fiction that fills her shelves. When she learns—from none other than Reb Yoysefkhe himself!—of the planned marriage, she flees her father's house, invoking notions of rebellion against tyranny that would not sound out of place in the mouth of a Goethe or Schiller hero. She takes refuge with one of her suitors, who immediately shows his true mettle by handing her over to a brothel keeper, and is rescued from the brothel by her uncle, who before taking

25. See Dauber, 178–187.

26. Wolfssohn would have been familiar with *Tartuffe* from its German translation, which went through at least five printings between 1721 and 1784 and was performed at the court of Frederick the Great by a French troupe in the summer of 1776. See Bernard Weinryb, "Aaron Halle-Wolfssohn's Dramatic Writings in Their Historical Setting," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 48 (1957–1958): 35–50, esp. 47, and Y. Shatzky, "Vegn Arn-hale Volfsons pyesn (naye materyaln)," in Shatzky, ed., *Arkhiv*, 147–150, where the review, taken from the *Schlessiche Provinzialnblätter,* appears. On the performance of *Tartuffe* and other French comedies at Frederick's court, see Jean-Jacques Olivier, *Les comédiens français dans les cours d'allemagne au xviiie siècle* (Paris: Société Français D'Imprimerie et de Librairie, 1901–1905), 2:27–63, esp. 59–60.

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her home fetches her father to show him the bitter fruits of excessive severity. Markus scores an added, unexpected victory when he and Reb Henokh find Reb Yoysefkhe in the brothel. The rabbi turns out to be a regular customer, who has been using the bordello's services on credit, based on his own vaunted prospects of marriage into a wealthy family. The end of the play finds him literally in the doghouse, while Yetkhen is reconciled with her father.

Aside from the inherent merits of Molière's satire as a model, Wolfssohn's attraction to *Tartuffe* was certainly based in part on his realization that its main plot device could be adapted to reflect a historical phenomenon then prevalent in certain German Jewish circles which neatly adumbrated his Enlightenment aims. At the time Wolfssohn wrote the play, a flood of Eastern European Jewish refugees was trying to make its way into German cities. Leaving the famine, instability, and poverty in their places of origin, many attempted to make a living by tutoring traditional Jewish subjects, particularly Talmud, in the houses of their wealthier but less traditionally educated counterparts.[27] In doing so, they hoped to win rare and valuable residence permits, optimally by marrying members of their host family. These Eastern European Jews became the flashpoint for a new shift in maskilic thinking at the end of the eighteenth century, which served as the root for attitudes between Western and Eastern European Jewry until the Holocaust. The maskilim, attempting to show to their non-Jewish neighbors their own fitness for adoption into general European culture and for political and social emancipation, hoped to demonstrate the difference between themselves and the Eastern European Jews, whose unfitness they attempted to portray in many ways: hygienic, cultural, moral, and linguistic. Currently, we may look at this approach and shudder, seeing in it the beginnings of a kind of Jewish self-hatred which has unfortunately flourished in the centuries since Wolfssohn wrote, but at the time the maskilim engaged in it with gusto, particularly after the death of the more restrained Moses Mendelssohn and in the political excitement of the time following the French Revolution.[28]

Wolfssohn, at the same time as he was composing *Silliness and Sanctimony*, was already thinking about the problem of the Eastern European Jew (or, as they were generally known at the time, the Polish Jew; Russia would gain a large Jewish community only with the various partitions of Poland in the last decades of the eighteenth century). His

27. See Meyer, *German-Jewish History*, 1:98.

28. See Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers,* and Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), esp. 124–132.

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long work *Sikha be'eretz ha-khayim*, written in Hebrew and published in *Ha-me'asef* between 1794 and 1797, is an Enlightenment tract in the form of a philosophical dialogue between the spirits of Maimonides, Mendelssohn, and an unnamed Polish Jew. There Wolfssohn attacks the Eastern Jews' irrational and superstitious approach to Jewish tradition, as well as their unwillingness to delve deeply into the moral and philosophical principles which for Wolfssohn and other early maskilim were the most powerful proofs of Jewish fitness for emancipation. Though the genre of the philosophical dialogue is not designed for significant dramatic action, nor, for that matter, for characterization, Wolfssohn does a much better job than his mentor Moses Mendelssohn in crafting characters who both express opinions and personalities. As such, *Sikha be'eretz ha-khayim* becomes an important way station in the development of Wolfssohn's dramatic talents, as well as his articulation of the inferiority of the Eastern European Jew. [29]

Tartuffe, then, that pious hypocrite, becomes not only an Eastern European Jew but a Haman of an Eastern European Jew to boot: someone who, in maskilic eyes, is not only morally retrograde but, if he is able to continue and to flourish, responsible for the eventual destruction of the Jewish people. Reb Yoysefkhe, who on the one hand seduces the paterfamilias of the household with pieties while on the other sexually seducing the maid, is the strongest threat in the play, the restraining presence on the German Jewish march toward Enlightenment who must be revealed as the danger he is. Only when he is removed from the household can Jewish survival be ensured. As such, Wolfssohn's play can be seen not only as a recapitulation of the themes of the book of Esther, but a take on a literary classic and, in the style of the contemporary German *familien gemelde*, a picture of family life.[30]

One may additionally argue that Reb Yoysefkhe is not merely a Tartuffe and a Haman but also an actor, and that *Silliness and Sanctimony*, with its themes of masking and unmasking, is a play very much about the theatre itself; that, as in so many other works of theatre, it is the villain who gets the best lines and scenes, because he represents the anarchic spirit present in the play, or play itself. It may not be

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29. *Sikha be'eretz ha-khayim* appeared in *Ha-me'asef* 7:54–67, 120–155, 203–228, 279–298. See Meyer, *German-Jewish History* 1:318–319; Aviezer 62, 80; Meir Gilon, "Ha-satira ha-ivrit bi-tkufat ha-haskala be-germania—anatomia shel mekhkar," *Zion* 52 (1987), 211–250, 246–250; and Yehudit Tsvik, "Reshit tsmikhato shel ha-sipur be-haskala ha-germanit: ha-takhbula ha-dialogit," *Kongres olami le-makhshevet yisrael* 11C3 (1994), 53–60.

30. On the "prose domestic drama" in contemporary German theatre of the period, see W. H. Bruford, *Theatre, Drama, and Audience in Goethe's Germany* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950), 163–202.

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insignificant to note that when Reb Yoysefkhe attempts to romance Yetkhen, he does so by complimenting her artistic endeavors, her playing; one performer recognizes the gifts of another. If the play operates on so many levels, then, it demands a closer look: how straightforward is the piece? Complicating the matter is that Wolfssohn wrote two versions of the play, an earlier version in Hebrew and a subsequent one in Yiddish; though there are many similarities between the two, there are significant differences as well, and these differences speak to the possibilities for both writing Jewish drama in these differing languages and developing a complex theory of the progress of German Jewry toward Enlightenment.[31]

Wolfssohn wrote his first, Hebrew version of the play in approximately 1794 under the title *Reb Henokh ve-Reb Yoysefkhe*, and wrote the Yiddish version at some point between his creation of the Hebrew version and 1796.[32] In the original version, the play is more schematic: on the one hand, we have the Hamanic Reb Yoysefkhe; on the other, we have Wolfssohn's attempt to rehabilitate the Mordechai figure, the maskilic Markus, who unmasks Reb Yoysefkhe for the hypocrite he is and wins the approval (and, one assumes, the ideological sympathies) of Reb Henokh, to say nothing of the hand of Henokh's daughter Yetkhen.[33] In his introduction to the Hebrew version, however, Wolfssohn writes of his attempt not only to replace the current Purim plays, but also to sketch the character types he sees in contemporary Prussian Jewish society. He mentions three types in particular: the well-meaning nonenlightened, the pious hypocrites, and the falsely enlightened. Though the first category is obvious and the second has been discussed, a bit more explanation is required for the third.

In the period of increasing liberalization following Mendelssohn's death and the French Revolution, some maskilim began to worry about the consequences of emancipation, not merely its prospects. These

31. For a fuller overview of this issue, see Jeremy Dauber, "The City, Sacred and Profane: Between Hebrew and Yiddish in the Fiction of the Early Jewish Enlightenment," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 12 (March 2005), 1–18.

32. See Bernard Weinryb, "An Unknown Hebrew Play of the German Haskalah," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 24 (1955), 165–170. The text of the play is included in the Hebrew section of the issue, 1–37.

33. For an excellent and extensive analysis of Wolfssohn's Hebrew play, see Dan Miron's introduction to the modern edition of the play, "Al Aharon Volfson ve-makhazehu 'kalut dat u'tseviut' (r' henokh ve-rav yosefkhe)," in Aaron Halle Wolfssohn, *Kalut Dat u'tseviut* (Israel: Seman Keriah, 1977), 5–55. On the figure of Markus as a rehabilitated Mordechai, see Khone Shmeruk, "Ha-shem ha-mashma'uti Mordekhai Markus—gilgulo ha-sifruti shel ideal khevrati," *Tarbiz* 29 (1959–1960), 76–98.

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maskilim, who themselves were still committed to Jewish tradition and Jewish identity, began to see how some individuals were taking the freedoms that were given them in this new situation, and using it to abandon Jewish tradition—and, in some cases, the Jewish religion—entirely. This movement culminated in a series of baptisms known to contemporaries as the *Taufepidemie*. These baptisms were of men and women alike; much of the attention, however, both by contemporaries and later historians, focused on the acts of a few upper-class Jewish women who headed a series of salons which served as central social gathering points for Jews and non-Jews alike, some of whom would later convert to marry non-Jews.[34] Wolfssohn, well aware of the way social and sexual tension were combining in contemporary society, was able to create a story in which a female character's lack of true enlightenment was concretized in her near-disastrous decision to throw herself, literally and metaphorically, into the arms of non-Jews. This sexualization of religious issues was hardly innovative: since biblical times, Israel's turning astray to worship other gods had been rhetorically framed in terms of wantonness and prostitution,[35] and so using the contemporary landscape of bordellos (which indeed counted Jews among their patrons at the time)[36] to reflect Yetkhen's fate was unsurprising.

It is, however, possible to argue that Wolfssohn looked further. Certainly, Yetkhen is the clearest example of the "false Enlightenment." But there may be another as well. Wolfssohn may well have been concerned that false enlightenment was not merely the province of the uneducated and the foolish, but also of the overly educated and the wise. Could it also be that those who have internalized the moral tenets of the Enlightenment may themselves be at risk for leaving behind Jewish tradition? It seems significant that in the Yiddish version of the play, Markus is significantly less traditional than in the Hebrew version, and never uses a single Hebraism of any sort. Though the Hebrew Markus is clearly Wolfssohn's ideal maskil, the Yiddish Markus is an uneasier version of that paradigm. Overbearing, somewhat cruel, prone to long speeches and oh so certain of his rightness, Markus—as a foil to the play's undoubted villain—seems less heroic than we might feel comfortable with. If Wolfssohn did indeed wish to warn

34. On these historical events and their significance, see Lowenstein, 120–176; Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 119–203; and Reuven Michael, "Ha-haskala bi-tkufat ha-mahapekha ha-tsarfatit–ha-ketz le'haskalat berlin'?" *Zion* 56, no. 3 (1991): 275–298.

35. See, for example, Hosea 1:2.

36. See Shohat, 166, and Hertz, 76.

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readers of the dangers of going too far in the opposite direction—leaving Reb Henokh as the play's true center, and, when he reforms at the end, the ideal model for the reading public—then perhaps it makes sense that he wished to include a more ambivalent Markus in addition to Yetkhen. It may also be that the difficulties of writing in the Hebrew language itself—a language which is constantly allusive, constantly reminiscent of classical Jewish texts—did not allow for the creation of a nuanced character halfway between the sacred and the profane. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that Wolfssohn turned from Hebrew to Yiddish: to more clearly express his ambivalence about the future of a wholesale adoption of the tenets of secularization.

One does not, however, need to go that far. Wolfssohn is clearly a dramatist, and is able to recognize how the Hebrew language, which affords far fewer possibilities for character differentiation, fails to provide the rich, multilingual environment he wishes to capture in his work. For *Silliness and Sanctimony*, in truth, is not a Yiddish play. It is a play which has Yiddish in it. Markus, the educated medical student, speaks a refined *Hochdeutsch*; Henokh and Teltse speak the Western Yiddish common among Prussian Jews of the period; and Reb Yoysefkhe, as befitting a hypocrite and an actor, is able to change his linguistic register depending on whom he is addressing, though his natural speech is an Eastern European Yiddish, studded with words from the Hebrew and Aramaic components of the language. In this rich mélange, which we have tried to preserve in our translation, the reader can begin to see Yiddish drama's realization that realism lies in differentiated language and its delight in the multiple possibilities of the Yiddish language to render that differentiation.

Wolfssohn's Successors

Though we have little detail about the performance history of *Silliness and Sanctimony*. Though it is reasonable to assume, given Wolfssohn's own biography, that there was some possibility for performance by members of the school he headed, the fact of the matter is that during Wolfssohn's lifetime—and indeed for the better part of the nineteenth century—theatrical pieces written in Yiddish had limited opportunities for performance. There were no professional actors to perform Wolfssohn's drama, nor were there professional spaces in which that drama would be performed. In fact, the chances are good that if there was any performance of the play at all, it would have consisted of a staged reading of what we might call a "salon drama," using the large rooms of bourgeois Jews as the performance space.

Even more likely, however, is the idea that Wolfssohn's play—as many other plays written by maskilim of the early nineteenth century,

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both extant and vanished—was rarely if ever performed even in this limited form, but merely circulated in manuscript and, at times, read aloud by both the authors and other like-minded individuals or groups.[37] There are a number of reasons for this lack of public performance and even more marked lack of theatrical publication, which, in turn, led to a lack of celebrity or notoriety among the writers of this period. In explicating them, we may begin to trace the development of Yiddish theatre as it moves eastward, from Prussia to Austria-Hungary and particularly the province of Galicia, and then from there to the massive Jewish population formerly of the Polish Lithuanian commonwealth.

Some of the reasons were economic: certainly the publication of theatrical material is often a financial risk, and this was more the case then than now, given the lack of theatrical venues for performance, as well as the lack of a traditional audience for printed theatrical material. Materials would have to be approved by censors. More important, though, were the limitations on maskilic printing in general: for most of the nineteenth century there were only two printing presses in Eastern Europe that would print Yiddish materials, both in the hands of Hasidim, who, naturally, were inimical to the maskilic project.[38]

The feeling was mutual: though Wolfssohn had had little good to say about the Hasidic Reb Yoysefkhe in *Silliness and Sanctimony*, the number of Eastern European Jews and Hasidim in Prussia was still comparatively small, enabling them to serve as much as symbol as actual phenomenon. Additionally, when Wolfssohn wrote in the 1790s, the Hasidic movement, while growing, had yet to reach the heights of population, influence, and power that it would in the nineteenth century. For all these reasons, it was unsurprising that among many of the nineteenth-century Eastern European maskilim, the war for enlightenment was often seen as a struggle against Hasidism.[39]

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37. Two examples were the 1839 play *Teater fun khsidim* (Theatre of Hasidim) and the play *Gedules Reb Volf* (The Greatness of Rabbi Wolf), probably written in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Authorship of the former, whose name also indicates the similarities between theatricality and Hasidism discussed below, is ascribed by Erik to Ettinger's student Efrayim-Fishel Fishelson [Erik, "Shloyme Etinger, 1800 [01?]–1856," in *Sh. Etinger: geklibene verk,* ed. Erik (Kiev: Farlag fun der Ukrainisher Visnshaft-akademye, 1935), 7–33]. *Gedules Reb Volf* was erroneously ascribed to Joseph Perl but actually written by Khayim Malaga. See Shmuel Werses, "Tsvishn dray shprakhn: vegn Yoysef Perls yidishe ksovim in likht fun naye materyaln," *Goldene keyt* 89 (1976): 150–177, as well as Khone Shmeruk, *Prokim fun der yidisher literature-geshikhte* (Tel Aviv: Farlag Y. L. Peretz, 1988), 291.

38. The maskil Joseph Perl also controlled a Galician printing press, but very briefly. On Yiddish printing presses in Eastern Europe during the period, see Khayim Liberman, "Legende un emes vegn khsidishe drukerayen," in *Ohel Rokhl* (New York: Empire Press, 1980), ed. Liberman 2:17–160.

39. See Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

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This was certainly the attitude of the author of the play *Di genarte velt* (The Deceived World), one of the most important transitional works between the plays of the Prussian Haskala and the rise of the Eastern European Yiddish theatre, and the first modern play written entirely in Yiddish.[40] In this play, probably written in the second decade of the nineteenth century in Galicia, Hasidic leaders are seen as actors par excellence: though they pretend to be pious, their religious activities are merely masks, put on to disguise their real agendas of cupidity and immorality. There are real continuities between this play and Wolfssohn's work: aside from the motif of the pious hypocrite, the play's setting—on Purim—reveals once more an attempt to fit a modern message within a traditional framework, and the play's odd reference to phylacteries as "the ten commandments," language used in Wolfssohn's play as well, may suggest some more direct lines of continuity.[41]

The full reasons that the author of *The Deceived World* remained anonymous may never be definitively known, but one possible factor may have been the inheritance of the embarrassment about Yiddish from the members of the Berlin Haskala and the resulting unwillingness to publicly present themselves as authors of texts in that language.[42] There were notable exceptions among maskilim (among them Shloyme Ettinger, the author of *Serkele*), but, at least rhetorically, such discomfort was the rule, only broken because of the necessities of speaking to the audience in a language they could understand. (Galicia and Poland were different from Prussia: there, the linguistic similarities to German meant that the writers could be emancipated from Yiddish; here, they were required to emancipate in Yiddish.) This may explain in part the fetish for anonymous production among the writers and dramatists of this early period. Also, many maskilim, who were generally poor educators reliant on communal positions, could not afford to risk public opposition by being revealed as antitraditionalists.[43]

This conventional narrative of the hidden nature of Yiddish literature (and Yiddish drama) in the early to mid-nineteenth century, cen-

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40. See Meir Viner, *Tsu der geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur in 19tn yorhundert* (New York: YKUF Farlag, 1945), 1:50–63; and Khone Shmeruk, "Nusakh bilti yadua shel ha-komediya ha-anonimit 'Di genarte velt,'" *Kiryat Sefer* 54 (1979): 802–816.

41. It is possible, of course, that this was just a common phrase. Still, the figuring of phylacteries in both plays seems odd.

42. See Miron, *Traveler.*

43. For one account of the dangers of being discovered as a maskil in a small town (though significantly later in the nineteenth century), see S. Ansky's novella *Behind a Mask*, translated in S. Ansky, *The Dybbuk and Other Writings*, ed. David G. Roskies (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 118–144. Ansky, one of Yiddish literature's major playwrights, was well aware of the theatrical and dramatic nature of the maskilic endeavor.

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