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Let it be Consumption!:

Modern Jewish Writing and the Literary Capital of Tuberculosis

A dissertation presented

by

Sunny Stern Yudkoff

to

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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Professor Ruth Wisse Sunny Stern Yudkoff

Abstract

Let it Be Consumption!: Modern Jewish Writing and the Literary Capital of Tuberculosis investigates the relationship between literary production and the cultural experience of illness. Focusing attention on the history of modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature, this study examines how a diagnosis of tuberculosis mobilized literary and financial support on behalf of the ailing writer. At the same time, the disease itself became a subject of concern in the writer's creative oeuvre and literary self-fashioning. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour, I argue that the role played by disease in these traditions is best understood through the paradox of *tubercular capital*. The debilitating and incurable illness proved a generative context for these writers to develop their literary identities, augment their reputations and join together in a variety of overlapping and intersecting genealogies of tubercular writing.

I map this transnational network of disease, opportunity and creativity over the course of four chapters. Chapter One turns to the life and legacy of the Yiddish humorist Sholem Aleichem, who grew his reputation and defined his literary persona while taking "the cure" in Italy, Switzerland and Germany. Moving from Central Europe to British Mandate Palestine, Chapter Two investigates the tubercular space of the sickroom as both setting and subject for the Hebrew poet Raḥel Bluvshtein, who generated a poetic legacy and literary support network from her garret apartment. Chapter Three directs attention back across the ocean to a cohort of Yiddish writers affiliated with the Denver Sanatorium. These writers, such as Yehoash, H. Leivick and Lune Mattes, would find that a tubercular diagnosis created new possibilities for them to see their work read, cited, translated and performed across the United States. Returning to Europe,

Chapter Four examines the life and writing of the tubercular modernist David Vogel. The Hebrew writer drew on his own sanatorium experience in Merano, Italy (formerly: Meran, Austria) to enter into an intertextual conversation with German writers, such as Arthur Schnitzler and Thomas Mann, if only to challenge precisely the possibility of that Hebrew-German exchange.

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Note on Transliteration

The problems of rendering Yiddish and Hebrew texts into Roman characters are well documented. For Yiddish, I have relied on the standardized YIVO transliteration system. For Hebrew, I have used a simplified version of the Library of Congress transliteration system. For the names of most Yiddish and Hebrew writers, I have relied on the naming practices of *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, except where that spelling diverges from one most commonly used by scholars (e.g. I.L. Peretz, when *The YIVO Encyclopedia* has Y.L. Peretz). In cases of lesser-known writers for whom standardized spelling of their names do not exist, I have rendered their names according to formal transliteration systems mentioned above.

The problems of identifying place names are also manifold. Whenever possible, I have recorded place names using the system employed by *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. In this system, major cities are spelled according to their common English variant (e.g. Warsaw, Jerusalem and Kiev). An exception is made for Vilnius, which I refer to as Vilna, as is customary among Yiddish literary scholars. Smaller cities are rendered in standardized transliteration and a footnote indicates where that place is located today.

Finally, unless otherwise noted, all dates follow the Gregorian calendar and all transliterations are my own.

Introduction

"Let it be consumption," exclaims the protagonist of a 1903 short story by the writer I.L. Peretz, "at least something should happen."[1] The man behind these words is neither eccentric nor prone to hyperbole. Among the variety of characters populating Yiddish belles-lettres of the turn of the century, he is decidedly typical. An aspiring writer, he is a recent urban transplant. He seesaws between moments of hopelessness and excitement, self-loathing and grandiose visions of his future. He is poor, hungry and desperately seeks the attention of the Christian object of his affection. Even his cough is decidedly average, neither phlegmy nor blood-flecked. In fact, nothing about the scene portends any grave illness. Yet the brief cough emerges as a moment of potential action. "*Zol zayn an optserung*," he charges, "Let it be consumption."

This study takes both its name and its subject from this suggestive comment. What would have motivated such a wish for a terminal disease? And what would such a diagnosis have afforded the ailing, secularizing, urbanizing Hebrew or Yiddish writer? The disease, of course, was far from physically ennobling. A diagnosis often accompanied brutal coughing fits, bloody hemorrhages, relentless fatigue and physical emaciation. These symptoms sometimes manifested in alternating patterns of exacerbation and remission for decades.[2] For Peretz's protagonist, however, the prospect of consumption resonates as a moment of unseen possibilities. As he exclaims, "at least something should happen," *abi zol epes geshen.* For him, a diagnosis of the

[1] I.L. Peretz, "Mayses," in *Di tsayt*, vol. 2, Ale verk fun Y.L. Perets (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt with the Permission of B. Kletzkin Farlag, Poland, 1920), 178.

[2] For a medical overview of tuberculosis, including basic facts about the disease, its pathology and treatment practices today, see Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Tuberculosis (TB)," accessed December 26, 2014, http://www.cdc.gov/tb/.

disease signals an interruption in his mundane life and, perhaps, the start of something consequential.

Yet Peretz's would-be patient would not come to experience consumption in his own medical history. His offhand remark is cut short by a highly evocative daydream. Readers quickly learn that it is the protagonist's capacity to transform his childhood memories into allegorical psychodramas, rather than disease, that will fuel his creative energy. For many of Peretz's own peers, in contrast, consumption was not simply an abstract idea that one could invoke during moments of existential crisis or routine boredom. Rather, for the Yiddish and Hebrew writers whose biographies and texts occupy this study, tuberculosis was part of their lived reality. The Yiddish humorist Sholem Aleichem was diagnosed in 1908 and would spend the next six years recuperating at health resorts in Italy, Germany and Switzerland. For over a decade, the Hebrew poet Raḥel suffered from the disease in places as distant as Baku and Tel Aviv. From the 1910s to 1930s, a cadre of Yiddish poets including Yehoash, Lune Mattes and H. Leivick, sought treatment in Denver, Colorado. And the modernist Hebrew writer David Vogel took "the cure" in the mountains of South Tyrol in the winters of 1925 and 1926.

At times, the disease would incapacitate these writers and even prevent them from putting pen to paper. Yet the stories of their lives and work also demonstrate that tuberculosis provided a generative context for the development of their writing and the fashioning of their literary reputations. The words of Peretz's protagonist will soon read less as the desperate outburst of a would-be lover than as the prescient and measured expression of a future author. Intentionally or otherwise, his words convey a strategic understanding of the role that tuberculosis played in the lives, careers and texts of the modern Jewish writer. It is a role, moreover, of critical significance for medical humanists and Jewish literary scholars, alike. For more than a bacterial infection or

multivalent metaphor, tuberculosis served as the condition of possibility for the ailing Jewish writer's literary career. Keeping in mind the plea, *abi zol epes geshen*, we will see that something did in fact happen following a terminal diagnosis. Tuberculosis came to function as a critical mediator in the creation, dissemination and reception of modern Yiddish and Hebrew writing. Constellating this series of disparate Hebrew and Yiddish writers, texts and geographies demonstrates the counterintuitive role played by disease in the construction of a robust, transnational and multilingual Jewish literary republic. And the cases of these modern Jewish writers, in turn, offer a comparative paradigm for interpreting the association of illness and literary production across traditions.

From Consumption to Tuberculosis

According to a recent report from the World Health Organization's Stop TB Partnership, nearly 1.3 million people worldwide died from tuberculosis in 2012. The majority of these victims lived and perished in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.[3] An estimated 8.6 million people became infected by the disease in 2012 alone and nearly 500,000 became infected with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) in 2013.[4] Rates of death and contagion, however, remain low in North America and Europe. Since the introduction of antibiotics in the mid-twentieth century, the number of infected Americans has dropped precipitously and stayed relatively stable. The result is that save the occasional media interest, tuberculosis does not

[3] World Health Organization, "TB: Reach the 3 Million" (WHO Document Production Services, 2014), 5, http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/resources/publications/acsm/WORLD_TB_DAY_BROCHURE_14March.pdf.

[4] Ibid., 3; World Health Organization, "Tuberculosis: WHO Global Tuberculosis Report," 2014, 1, http://www.who.int/tb/publications/factsheet_global.pdf?ua=1.

receive extensive attention in American or European news outlets.[5] The disease, accordingly, has generally been absent from the dominant cultural discourses of disease, infection and chronic illness in these geographic contexts.

Yet when Peretz sat down to write his story in 1903, tuberculosis loomed large in the public health imagination and reality of populations across the United States, Russia and Europe. In Warsaw, where he wrote his short story, two publications outlining the sources and threats of tuberculosis had appeared only a few years earlier. The works specifically addressed Jewish readerships in both the language of the elite, Hebrew, and the language of masses, Yiddish.[6] The first, Y.Ḥ. Zagorodski's *Our Lives and Longevity* (*Ḥayenu ve-'orekh yamenu*), warned its readers in 1898 against the threat of consumption (*razon*). The author cautioned his audience that the wasting disease spread through contact with the sick as well as by inhaling the air of a patient's room. Without mincing words, Zagorodski suggested that readers disinfect the clothing and personal belongings of a consumptive patient, refrain from drinking unboiled milk (to prevent contagion of bovine tuberculosis) and, if already coughing and feverish, to seek respite in the high mountains or near the seacoast where fresh air was readily available. Climatological therapies were common in this period and soon became standard selling points of sanatoria and health clinics around the world.[7] Two years later, Tsukerman's Folksbibliotek published *Zayt*

[5] Richard Luscombe, "Florida Closes Only Tuberculosis Hospital Amid Worst US Outbreak in 20 Years," *The Guardian*, July 9, 2012, US Edition edition, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/09/florida-closes-tuberculosis-hospital-outbreak?newsfeed=true.

[6] Recognizing that a modern medical vocabulary to describe various aspects of tuberculosis would not be available to his readers, Zagorodski at times translates his terminology into Yiddish. For example, he follows the Hebrew term *ha-shi'ul* with the parenthetical Yiddish *hustn*, both referring to coughing. See Y.Ḥ. Zagorodski, "Ḥayenu ve-'orekh yamenu: 'etsot ve-ḥukim li-shemor beri'ut ha-Guf" (Warsaw: Schuldberg & Co., 1898), 106.

[7] René J. Dubos and Jean Dubos, *The White Plague: Tuberculosis, Man, and Society* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 142–144.

gezunt (*Be Healthy*) by the physician Dr. M. Gotlieb.[8] The work, a general introduction to various diseases, devoted an entire volume to the subject of *Tuberculosis (Consumption)* [*Sukhote (shvindzukht)*]. After opening the volume with several biblical quotations and couching his health agenda within a Jewish textual frame, Gotlieb echoes Zagorodski, urging his readers to seek out living conditions with good airflow. He further suggests that they make sure to drink clean water and take care to nourish themselves heartily if they want to keep the disease at bay.

Similar health pamphlets and texts were common throughout Europe at the turn of the century. For across the continent and throughout the Russian Empire, tuberculosis claimed high exposure and mortality rates. In the United States from 1900-1910, it ranked as one of the top ten leading causes of death.[9] In Poland, as late as 1931, tuberculosis was measured as the leading cause of death nationwide.[10] As French historian David Barnes has written, "it is possible that a near-totality of the population of many large European cities in the nineteenth century technically 'had' tuberculosis—that is, would have tested positive for exposure to the tubercle bacillus."[11] Global awareness of the disease only grew after the German physician and scientist Robert Koch presented his research at the Physiological Society of Berlin in the spring of 1882.

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[8] M. Gotlieb, *Zayt gezund: sukhote (shvindzukht)*, vol. II (Warsaw: Tsukermans Folksbibliotek, 1899).

[9] David S. Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 4, 13; Michael Zdenek David, *The White Plague in the Red Capital: The Control of Tuberculosis in Russia, 1900-1941*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Chicago (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. Publication No. 3287026, 2007), 1; Dubos and Dubos, *The White Plague*, 10; "Ten Leading Causes of Death in the United States, 1900, 1940, 1976," in *From Consumption to Tuberculosis: A Documentary History*, by Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994), 3–4.

[10] As reported by Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1983), 191. As Marcus notes, however on p.493n17, the statistics he draws from are based on official death certificates and likely do not account for all death from tuberculosis. Regardless of statistical precision, we can conclude that tuberculosis was a common cause of death in independent Poland.

[11] Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 4; 258n9.

There, Koch attested to the discovery of tubercle bacillus, *M. Tuberculosis*.[12] Introducing his work to a scientific community already sympathetic to the germ theory of disease, his findings spread quickly. In 1909, the physician, writer and advocate of Yiddish literature Dr. Gershn Levin published an article in the Warsaw daily *Haynt* entitled "The Battle with Consumption" (*Der kampf mit shvindzukht*). There, like many before him, Levin pointed to Koch's discovery as the key moment in the history of the disease. Levin emphasized just how important the work "of the great scholar Koch" truly was. For the first time, tuberculosis had been rendered diagnosable in the laboratory and, by extension, potentially treatable.[13]

According to medical historians Jean and René Dubos, Koch's discovery also marked a semantic shift from a discourse of "consumption" to one of "tuberculosis." Prior to the discovery of the bacillus, diagnostic imprecision allowed a variety of so-called wasting diseases to be conflated as "consumption." Following the discovery, they explain, "certain types of nonpulmonary diseases [had been] been recognized as being caused by the tubercle bacilli," allowing a whole host of symptoms to be identified as "tuberculosis" that might have escaped such a diagnosis.[14] The importance of the shift for medical historians is further evident, for example, in such collections as *From Consumption to Tuberculosis: A Documentary History* by the scholar Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz, which includes a variety of statistical, scientific and historical accounts of the trajectory of the disease from the 1860s to 1990s.[15]

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[12] For narration of his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* as well as the near-simultaneous discovery by other scientists, see Dubos and Dubos, *The White Plague*, 101–104. The article first appeared in English in 1884 in the *American Veterinary Review* 13:54-59, 106-112, 202-204. For reprint, see Robert Koch, "Aetiology of Tuberculosis," in *From Consumption to Tuberculosis: A Documentary History*, by Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz, trans. Rev. F. Sause (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994), 197–224.

[13] Gershn Levin, "Der kamf mit der shvindzukht," *Der haynt*, February 20, 1909.

[14] The Dubos' identify the first printed record of the term "tuberculosis" in 1840 in their discussion of the differences between "consumption and tuberculosis." Dubos and Dubos, *The White Plague*, 6–7.

Nonetheless, the potential shift in naming practices following Koch's paper did not prevent physicians, patients or writers from calling on the language of both "consumption" and "tuberculosis" to refer to the condition. This was true even when laboratory tests and, later, x-rays were made regular parts of the diagnostic process. Similarly, when Peretz's protagonist exclaims "Let it be consumption!," he is not being willfully anachronistic. Rather, he draws on one of the many terms used in Yiddish to name a sickness that had only recently acquired a specific bacterial identity. Alongside Peretz's *optserung*, which derives from the German word meaning emaciation (*Abzehrung*), Yiddish possesses multiple terms to evoke the dreaded *vayse pest* ("white plague"). Some of the terms are akin to "consumption" and others more directly translate the name "tuberculosis." Besides the Latinate *tuberkuloze*, one may refer to the disease in Yiddish using words of Germanic origin, such as s*hvindzukht* ("consumption"), *di der* (alt. *di dar*; "the withering"), or *di gute krenk* ("the good disease"); words of Slavic linguistic origin, such as *sukhote* ("drying") or *tshakhotke* ("wasting"); or finally *katute*, a local term employed by patients at the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society of Denver, Colorado, alongside *te-be*, a Yiddish version of the English acronym.

By 1900, Hebrew boasted a similarly rich range of terms to refer to the disease, including the Latinate *tuberkulozah*, the biblical term *shaḥefet* (cf. Leviticus 26:16 and Deuteronomy 28:22), the Hebrew phrase *gniḥat dam* ("moan of blood") and the descriptive *razon* ("thinning") used by Zagorodski in the text mentioned above. The tubercular Hebrew poet Raḥel Bluvstein, known simply as Raḥel, also referred to the disease in her private correspondence by the more allusive expression, *maḥalat ha-sofrim*, the authors' disease.[16]

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[15] Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz, *From Consumption to Tuberculosis: A Documentary History*, vol. 1. (New York: Garland Pub., 1993).

While 1882 may mark the biological recognition of the disease called tuberculosis, it certainly did not precipitate the complete dismissal of all other terms that remained at the Yiddish or Hebrew writer's disposal. Even writers who were diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis using the most advanced scientific methods of the twentieth century continued to draw on a wide range of vocabulary to define their own as well their subject's ailments.[17] For despite the medical profession's ability to define the illness more precisely, tuberculosis retained for the rest of society its myriad associations. These connotations, in turn, were inflected by social, linguistic and aesthetic considerations. Throughout this study, I refer to the illness in question using a variety of site-specific names, paying close attention to the writer's word choice and the connotations attending it.[18]

Tuberculosis, Beauty and Romantic Genius

Beyond the connotation of the specific tubercular terminology, the disease itself bore with it a tradition of interpretation that had long associated the illness with elegance and refinement. Although it may seem surprising, the disease marked by bloody hemoptysis and emaciation was also considered a mark of beauty, delicacy and creative potential. The literary

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[16] As quoted in Muki Tsur, "Ke-ḥakot Raḥel: kavim biyografiyim," in *ha-Shirim*, by Raḥel (Bene Barak: ha-Kibuts ha-Meuḥad, 2011), 66.

[17] The French medical historian David Barnes has also recently shown that, in the case of France, "the redemptive-spiritual view persisted long after the sociomedical understanding arose that (far form being mutually exclusive) the two sets of meanings coexisted, at once complementing and contesting each other throughout the Belle Epoque." As he convincingly proves, the shift from an understanding of "consumption" to an understanding "tuberculosis" in France was not a decisive break. Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 51.

[18] Throughout this dissertation, I restrict my inquiry to those writers a) who self-identified as tubercular or consumptive, b) whom the biographical literature generally asserts suffered from tuberculosis or consumption, and c) who explicitly sought treatment for the disease. I leave the practice of diagnosing historical figures to medical historians and physicians. I also restrict my area of inquiry to those writers who suffered from pulmonary afflictions, although several subjects did have various infections. For example, in addition to pulmonary tuberculosis, Kafka also developed laryngeal tuberculosis. Daniel Charney also suffered from skin tuberculosis.

scholar Clark Lawlor has shown that consumption had already been aestheticized as a manifestation of lovesickness across European *belles-lettres* by the seventeenth century.[19] Melancholy gaunt lovers plagued by consumption—or *pthisis* as it was often called—filled the work of early modern writers and poets alike. It was a depiction that Lawlor shows drew upon and contributed to contemporary medical discourse on the subject.[20] By the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the illness had come to be seen as a mark of refinement, Christian spiritual grace and even bourgeois luxury, as consumptive victims took the so-called "cure" in port cities and mountain retreats around Europe. The grand health tour was so well-documented that the critic Susan Sontag has noted with evident disdain that "the Romantics invented invalidism as a pretext for leisure."[21]

The disease came additionally to be linked to ideals of beauty. The pale consumptive was modeled by such figures as the dying heroine of Alexandre Dumas' novel *La Dame aux camélias* (1848) and by portraits of Elizabeth Siddal, the consumptive muse of the poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rosetti.[22] Both came to exemplify the ailing female body, wasting away with genteel grace, burning eyes and red lips, all established tropes of European Romanticism. These female figures were deemed attractive in their suffering and their wan, emaciated faces came to exemplify erotic allure. The figure of pale tubercular beauty similarly appeared in fin-de-siècle

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[19] Clark Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 15–27.

[20] Ibid., 8. This is similarly a main goal of Katherine Byrne's work. Katherine Byrne, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4.

[21] Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor; And, AIDS and Its Metaphors*, 1st Picador USA ed (New York: Picador USA, 2001), 33.

[22] Byrne, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination*, 96–99.

German texts, such as Thomas Mann's novella *Tristan* (1903), in which the male hero finds the pale visage of the consumptive heroine Gabriel Klöterjahn intoxicating.[23]

More than an illness associated with sensuality, sensitivity and beauty, consumption also became known as both the source and manifestation of creativity. The prevalence of wasting poets in the English tradition, most notably John Keats, only served to cement a reputation for the illness as one intimately connected to literary genius. As the Duboses summarize: "Throughout medical history there runs this suggestion—that the intellectually gifted are the most likely to contract the disease, and furthermore that the same fire which wastes the body in consumption also makes the mind shine with a brighter light."[24] The idea extended far beyond the borders of the British Empire, as Russian Romantic poets, such as the late nineteenth-century writer Semyon Nadson, became known not only for their elegant sentimental verse but for the symbiotic relationship between disease and cultural production. As Robert Dietrich Wessling has argued, "Nadson inscribed his life into a larger cultural context, employing a dualistic approach in a cultural idiom that fused the medical physiology of bodily illness with the literariness of the poet's suffering."[25] In short, the poet's aesthetics were both understood and absorbed as inseparable from his physiological ailment.

This conflation between tuberculosis and literary creativity also flourished in the German sphere. As late as 1932, medical historian Erich Hugo Ebstein could still publish a collection of fifty-two sketches of consumptive figures. The collection, entitled *Tuberkulose als Schicksal*, asserts the pivotal role played by *Tuberculosis as Destiny* in the lives of such famous men as

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[23] Thomas Mann, "Tristan," in *Death in Venice and Other Stories*, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 320.

[24] Dubos and Dubos, *The White Plague*, 59.

[25] Robert Diedrich Wessling, *Semyon Nadson and the Cult of the Tubercular Poet.* PhD Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley. (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. Publication No. 9923103, 1988), 2.

Chopin, Goethe, Gorki, Keats, Klabund, Molière, Novalis, Paganini, Rousseau, Schiller and Spinoza.[26] One might convincingly add to this list Thoreau, Chekhov and, of course, Kafka. Less than a decade later, the American medical historian Lewis Moorman echoed Ebstein in his own work, *Tuberculosis and Genius* (1940), arguing that the feverish tubercular experience corresponds to an equally feverish burst of creativity. "Inescapable physical inactivity," wrote Moorman, "begets mental activity." That mental activity, in turn, was sparked as the tubercular patient suffered.[27] Tuberculosis was commonly accepted as a mark of literary chosenness and creative potential, even as the disease proved physically harrowing and incurable.

Tuberculosis and Capitalism

For Romantic writers, the tubercular visage was deemed beautiful, alluring and *interesting*. In what has now become almost legend, we are told of an occasion when the poet Lord Byron looked into the mirror and exclaimed, "How pale I look! I should like, I think, to die of a consumption." When Byron was asked why, he responded, "Because then the women would all say, 'See that poor Byron—how interesting he looks in dying!'"[28] His initial exclamation also foreshadows those of Peretz's protagonist—*zol zayn an optserung*. His words, in contrast to those of Byron, are recognizably tinged with irony. The possibility of ennobling illness is unavailable to the Yiddish protagonist who is poor, cold and beginning to cough. Indeed, the story as a whole works to undermine the Romantic impulse of the narrator. He may long to live a

[26] Erich Ebstein, *Tuberkulose als Schicksal: eine Sammlung pathographischer Skizzen von Calvin bis Klabund, 1509-1928* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1932).

[27] Lewis Jefferson Moorman, *Tuberculosis and Genius* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), xi.

[28] Thomas Moore, *The Life of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1844), 113. See also Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor; And, AIDS and Its Metaphors*, 31.

life of fairytale love but his Jewish identity and material circumstances prevent him from yielding to those urges.

As an impoverished urban writer, the protagonist would likely have been aware of the reputation of tuberculosis as a "social disease." Although the "perverted sentimentalism" of Romantic literary expression would continue well into the twentieth century, public health activists in Europe, Russia and the United States increasingly assessed the disease as an affliction of poverty and poor labor conditions.[29] David Barnes explains that tuberculosis was decried as a "social disease" that was "inherent in the lifestyle of the working classes" and "determined by the dictates of industrial capitalism and wage labor."[30] Unsanitary conditions and overcrowding only exacerbated contagion rates among the urban poor.[31] The physician and Russian medical historian Michael Zdenek David echoes Barnes, noting that in fin-de-siècle Moscow a scientific understanding of the causes of tuberculosis dovetailed with a social explanation. "Tuberculosis, as a social disease," writes David, "straddled the divisions among hygienists and bacteriologists because in the contemporary medical understanding, it was at once a bacterial disease and the result of poverty, poor social policy, and ignorance."[32]

For many Yiddish public health activists and writers, the idea of tuberculosis as a "social disease" also translated into a direct association of *di vayse pest* with the poor working conditions of the Jewish laborer. As critic Irving Howe later recalled, tuberculosis was known among Jews on the Lower East Side as "the tailors' disease."[33] Writing in Warsaw in 1925, Dr.

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[29] Dubos and Dubos, *The White Plague*, 65.

[30] Barnes, The Making of a Social Disease, 31.

[31] Ibid., 36.

[32] David, *The White Plague in the Red Capital*, 59.

Gershn Levin warned his Polish Jewish readership in words both sympathetic and authoritative to be aware the relationship between a chosen vocation and a propensity for tuberculosisis. He wrote:

> There are many jobs that incline towards tuberculosis, those that are not conducted in the fresh air, in poorly ventilated apartments, in smoke, or in small rooms. That is why there is a lot of tuberculosis among printers, lithographers, waiters, painters, bookbinders, joiners, upholsterers, hat makers, bakers, and others similar…. I know it's not easy to change jobs, but if it's an issue of tuberculosis, one needs to figure it out.[34]

In this text, Levin calls on Jewish workers to advocate for themselves and to endeavor, to the best of their ability, to change their life circumstances. Of course to do so, as Levin admits, would likely have been difficult if not impossible.

Other voices participating in the discussion were less instructive and far more strident than Levin's. For example, the Yiddish novelist Sholem Asch describes one of the many Jewish types populating his family saga *East River* (1946) as "the victim [*der korbn*] of the capitalist system."[35] It was an idea that had been reinforced in Yiddish writing and reportage for nearly fifty years, where coughing sweatshop laborers appeared ever more gaunt in publication after publication. We might consider, for example, the poem "A Teardrop on the Iron" by the so-called "sweatshop poet," Morris Rosenfeld. In the poem, Rosenfeld immortalizes the figure of the consumptive Yiddish laborer. The speaker is a typical garment worker. In the dank, dark space of the shop, he holds an iron in his hand and exclaims:

> My heart is weak, I groan and cough,
> my sick chest barely rises.

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[33] Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to American and the Life They Found and Made* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976), 149.

[34] G[ershn] Levin, *Lungen-shvindukht iz heylbar!* (Warsaw: TOZ, 1925), 32–33.

[35] Sholem Asch, *Ist river: roman* (New York: Elias Laub Publishing Co., 1946), 39.

I groan and cough and press and think,
my eye grows moist, a tear falls,
the iron glows: my little tear
it seethes and seethes and does not boil away.

Mayn harts iz shvakh, ikh krekhts un hust;
es heybt zikh koym mayn kranke brust.

Ikh krekhts un hust un pres un kler,
mayn oyg vert faykht, es falt a trer,
der ayzn glit: dos trerl mayn
dos kokht un kokht un zidt nit ayn.[36]

The teardrop, presumably ephemeral but evidently persistent, remains the lone physical remnant of the worker otherwise consumed by his wasting disease. In the German collection of Rosenfeld's poems published in 1903, "A Teardrop On the Iron" appears several pages after a woodcut by E.M. Lillien of a pot-bellied vampiric capitalist sucking the life from an emaciated tubercular tailor slumped over his work.[37] Tuberculosis, as writers, artists and health advocates contended, was the symptom of a global economic system that exploited the worker, rendering them sickly, weak and helpless.

Tuberculosis, Racial Difference and Zionism

The specifically Jewish profile of the tubercular victim would also have been of concern to Peretz and his colleagues. During the first decades of the twentieth century, like syphilis and neurasthenia, tuberculosis was frequently coded as an illness with a particularly Jewish racialized visage. One might think here of Leo Naphta, the Jewish-born Jesuit whose religious past is evident in *The Magic Mountain* (1924) when Hans Castorp takes one look at the argumentative

[36] I have drawn on Marc Miller's translation and modified it slightly. Miller has done the most to advance Rosenfeld studies. Marc Miller, *Representing the Immigrant Experience: Morris Rosenfeld and the Emergence of Yiddish Literature in America* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 123; Morris Rosenfeld, "A trer afn ayzn," in *Gezamelte lider* (New York: International Library Publishing Company, 1906), 14–15.

[37] Morris Rosenfeld, *Lieder des Ghetto*, trans. Berthold Feiwel (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1903), 36.

priest's nose. In Peretz's text, the protagonist's identity is similarly legible on his face. When he asks his Christian love interest how she had known that he was Jewish, she giggles and acknowledges his profile.

In *The Magic Mountain*, Naphta is only one tuberculosis sufferer among many. Yet he becomes the ailing voice that alternatively advocates for authoritarianism, communism, illiteracy and disease. According to cultural historian Sander Gilman, Naphta "represents the unhealthy Jewish presence in the world," in the landscape both of Mann's novel and in Europe, more broadly.[38]According to Gilman's influential work, *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient*, the tubercular condition was a critical feature in the European project to pathologize the Jewish body, rendering it visible, legible and categorizable. Kafka lived, writes Gilman, when "Jewish biological difference came to be understood as immutable and inscribed on the Jew's imagined body."[39] The Czech-Jewish modernist wrote, moreover, at a time when "a Jewish *fin de siècle* writer's modernity [was] inseparable from his allegedly diseased nature."[40] In Gilman's study, Kafka's entire corporeal being—from his lungs to his voice—becomes implicated in a discourse of the Jewish male body "predestined" to be effeminate, weak and sickly.[41]

Paradigmatic for Gilman is, of course, Kafka's tuberculosis. Diagnosed in 1917, Kafka would spend his final years in various sanatoria around central Europe. Like the Hebrew writer David Vogel whom we will meet in Chapter Four, Kafka also sought the cure in Meran, Austria under the supervision of Dr. Josef Kohn. According to Gilman, the key to understanding Kafka's writings, including his fiction, diary entries and correspondence, is by attending to this diagnosis.

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[38] Sander L. Gilman, *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 173.

[39] Ibid., 7–8.

[40] Ibid., 12.

[41] Ibid., 51; 212–213.

As *The Jewish Patient* contends, all the positive cultural associations of consumptive beauty—pallor, delicacy and refinement that had been so glamorized in the Romantic period—were resignified on the tubercular Jewish male body as indicative of corporeal and racial inferiority. The tubercular Jewish male was not genteel but weak, he was not delicate but emasculated, and he was not enflamed by the fever of tuberculosis so much as snuffed out by it. For Gilman, Kafka's tubercular diagnosis was above all over-determined. Kafka, as *The Jewish Patient* maintains, was always already tubercular—physiologically, psychologically and literarily. He could be nothing other than sick and, as Gilman argues, his texts should therefore be read as psychologically fraught elaborations on his inherently sickly state, specifically, and his racialized tubercular Jewish frailty, more generally.[42]

Gilman's argument is certainly strong, yet to interpret the lives and writing of these Yiddish and Hebrew writers as similarly overdetermined homogenizes the multiple symbolic systems in which these writers developed. It similarly glosses over competing connotations of the disease available to the Jewish writer. Yet, as Gilman and others convincingly demonstrate, many Jewish figures were concerned that the disease pointed to a racialized constitution that was inescapable. Indeed, in the early twentieth century there is no dearth of voices—medical, scientific, political or literary—that categorize the Jewish body in similarly reductive terms.[43] Scholars such as John Efron, Michael Gluzman and Todd Presner have also investigated how this diminishment of the Jewish body (particularly the male Jewish body) was one background

[42] See also John M. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 126–132.

[43] Of particular importance here is the contribution of historian Mitchell Hart. Hart's research shows that, at the same time as Jews were considered categorically tubercular, they were also being studied for their statistically lower rate of tubercular infection. These low rates were explained at different times using different reasons. Some physicians posited kosher food practices as having limited tubercular infection. Others, drawing on social Darwinist theories, concluded that centuries of urban living rendered the Jews less susceptible to the disease. Mitchell Bryan Hart, *The Healthy Jew: The Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 143–172.

against which multiple Zionist efforts to "regenerate" the diasporic Jew were initiated.[44] "Jews," writes Presner, "participated in, extended, and variously adopted…strategies of 'biopower' for reforming the Jewish body and conceiving of the regeneration of the Jewish state."[45] In the words of the Zionist physician Max Nordau, the turn of the century was the time when a rejuvenation of Jewish strength was most necessary—when "muscular Judaism" was most required. For Nordau and other Zionist activists, a vision of Jewish national reconstruction would not include room for a glorification of tuberculosis.

If socialist and communist activists critiqued tuberculosis as a symbol of capitalist oppression, Zionist activists lambasted the illness as the manifestation of Jewish diasporic weakness. The dream of territorial Zionists of the *yishuv* (the Jewish settlement in Palestine during the British mandate period) was to rebuild the physical Jewish body through working the land. What room could be made, then, to accommodate tuberculosis? A disease of indoor spaces, shortness of breath, and urban life? Indeed, tuberculosis was repeatedly diminished within Zionist cultural discourse. In 1927, for example the Yiddish writers Sholem Asch (whose tubercular character was a "victim of capitalist oppression") and Peretz Hirschbein visited Palestine. Despite the protestations of many Hebrew activists, the Yiddish writers were invited to a reception in their honor at the Hebrew Writers' Union. The "Father of Hebrew Poetry," Chaim Nahman Bialik, famously greeted the writers by describing the relationship between the two languages as a "marriage made in heaven," a complicated dynamic with explicitly gendered and

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[44] Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews*; Michael. Gluzman, *ha-Guf ha-tsiyoni: le'umiyut, migdar u-miniyut ba-sifrut ha-'Ivrit ha-ḥadashah* (Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-Me'uḥad, 2007); Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*, Routledge Jewish Studies Series (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[45] Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*, 16.

sexual connotations that Naomi Seidman has explored at length.[46] Not all the Hebrew poets, however, were equally gracious. The modernist Hebrew poet Avraham Shlonsky, for example, lambasted the idea of Hebrew and Yiddish bilingualism, writing:

> We see this calamity of bilingualism as we see tuberculosis, which gnaws at the lungs of the nation. We want Israeli breathing to be *completely Hebrew*, with two lungs. A Hebrew Land of Israel, working for the nation, loving its producers and its culture—this is the 'Society of the War Against Tuberculosis.'[47]

Hebrew cultural activism, according to Shlonsky, could rhetorically function in lieu of the Anti-TB league. In other words, the Hebrew language nationalist was the ultimate health activist. Most important, for the purposes of the present discussion, tuberculosis was metaphorized as the illness of exile, as the language of diaspora and as a disease that could be "cured" through Hebrew breathing—linguistically and physiologically.[48]

Tuberculosis and Literature: A Methodological Intervention

When Peretz's protagonist exclaims, "Let it be consumption!," therefore, he invokes a multitude of positive and negative, political and aesthetic, ideological and biological connotations attending tuberculosis; it was a sign of beauty and genius, of industrial poverty, of racial distinction and of Jewish language politics. The symbolic range of the disease was also mobilized in texts across modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature. Well into the twentieth century,

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[46] For Seidman's discussion of this event, see Naomi Seidman, *A Marriage Made in Heaven* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 124–131.

[47] A[vraham] Shlonsky, "Al 'ha-shalom,'" *Ketuvim*, May 11, 1927, 1. Also quoted by Naomi Rebecca Brenner, *Authorial Fictions: Literary and Public Personas in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature.* PhD Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley. (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. Publication No. AAT3331524), 2008), 122.

[48] Shlonsky's formulation is also clearly a jab at Mendele's oft-cited anecdote that Hebrew/Yiddish bilingualism was as natural to Jewish writing as breathing through both nostrils. Here, Shlonsky disagrees with Mendele's assessment. Yiddish for Shlonsky represents the diasporic language of confinement and disease in contrast to the thriving and healthy-lunged language of the Zionist laborer. The story is reported in memoiristic recollections and has become an oft-cited anecdote. See Dan Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 496.

characters coughed their way through various texts. A Romantic pallor characterizes the languishing sisters in Uri Nissan Genessin's modernist Hebrew novella *Beside* (1913), Gaunt ailing lovers similarly show themselves in Isaac Bashevis Singer's family saga *The Manor* (1953-1955) and tubercular figures more dead than alive accompany corpses in Devorah Baron's Hebrew short story, "At the End of the Summer" (c.1920).[49] Consumptive clowns speak loudly and clearly in Israel Rabon's Yiddish novella *The Street* (1928) and a tubercular patient lies ill in an integrated American hospital in Shlomo Damesek's Hebrew novel *My Fate* (1945).[50] And while *nouveau riche* Jews take the baths in the fictional Ukrainian village of Boyberik in Sholem Aleichem's story "To the Hot Springs" (1903), an ailing father is sent to "the Davos of the American West"—Denver, Colorado—in the American film, *Two Sisters* (1938).[51] From New York to Łódź, Vienna to Tel Aviv, the Ukrainian countryside to the American West, the ailing men and women of Yiddish and Hebrew literature and film occupy various roles as parents, patients, lovers, joke tellers, socialites, soldiers and critics.

This study, however, moves beyond an exploration of the literary affect of these metaphors. I heed here the words of Susan Sontag who writes in the opening pages of *Illness as Metaphor* that "my point is that illness is *not* a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiest way of being ill—is one most purified of, most resistant to,

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[49] Bashevis Singer's text, *Der hoyf*, appeared in the Yiddish daily *Forverts* from January 10, 1953 to February 12, 1955. The serialized novel was translated into English as two novels, *The Manor* (1967) and *The Estate* (1969). For a translation of the text in one volume, see Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Manor and The Estate*, trans. Joseph Singer, Elizabeth Gottlieb, and Herman Eichenthal (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004). For Baron's text, see Devorah Baron, "Be-sof kayits," in *parashiyot: sipurim meḳubatsim*, ed. Nurit Govrin and Avner Holtzman (Jerusalem: Mosad Byaliḳ, 2000), 631–35. For Genesin's see Uri Nissan Gnessin, *Etsel* (Tel Aviv: Yaḥdav, 1965).

[50] Solomon Damesek, *Be-gorali* (New York: Hotsaʾat Bitsaron, 1945); Yisroel Rabon, *Di gas: roman* (Warsaw: L. Goldfarb, 1928).

[51] Sholem Aleichem, "In di varembeder," in *zumer-lebn*, vol. 11, 28 vols., Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 73–118; Ben K. Blake, *Tsvey shvester (Two Sisters)*, 1938.

metaphoric thinking."[52] According to Sontag, metaphors obscure the pain of the actual sufferer. They furthermore enable a hierarchy of diseases. Particularly egregious in Sontag's view is the manner in which cancer and AIDS patients have been symbolically diminished by the negative metaphoric frames structuring their illnesses.[53] This is contrast to the metaphoric valence of beauty and refinement often, though we have seen not always, assigned to tuberculosis.

Sontag's powerful work demands that a patient's suffering not be lost or forgotten in a symbolic system. Her insistence that critics look beyond the metaphor to perceive the patient in pain, aestheticized neither as beautiful nor as grotesque, is one starting point for the project at hand. The reality of tuberculosis in the Jewish writer's biography is of critical importance and the biography of that writer must not be overlooked. At the same time, the cultural experience of illness, treatment and support were also intimately connected to the metaphorics of illness, including those employed by the tubercular Jewish writers, themselves. Accordingly, my work aims to take into account both the lived reality of the tubercular Yiddish and Hebrew writer as well as the figurative language at their disposal. Reading archival sources alongside creative texts, considering both the biography of the writers and their literary output, and investigating the spaces of treatment as well as the figurative representations of those sites, I posit a new model for understanding the relationship between writing and disease.

To embark on this investigation into the intersection of literature and illness, I draw on the methodological interventions of sociologists Bruno Latour and Pierre Bourdieu. Their respective analytical paradigms of actor-network theory (ANT) and symbolic capital, when invoked in tandem, allow us to account for the lived reality of a tubercular patient alongside the

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[52] Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor; And, AIDS and Its Metaphors*, 3.

[53] Cancer, demonstrates Sontag, has been defined by the metaphoric language of war (i.e. cancer "invades") and AIDS has been stigmatized through the language of delinquency (i.e. in AIDS discourse, the victim is blamed for sexual impropriety).

cultural experience of illness and the metaphorics of disease. Since the 1980s, Latour and his fellow ANT practitioners, such as Michel Callon and John Law, have investigated how scientific knowledge is produced and disseminated within the context of the scientific laboratory.[54] They have come to understand that answers to this question may only be articulated when sociologists take seriously all actors present in the laboratory, be they human (e.g. scientists, lab technicians, lab managers) or non-human (e.g. texts, bacteria, resources). One of ANT's most important methodological contributions has been that it insists on reconstructing networks. A network is a "string of actions where each participant is treated as a full-blown mediator," and a mediator is that which "render[s] the movement of the social visible to the reader."[55] Put somewhat more simply, a network is a chain of associations that can be traced.[56] Something works on something else, *mediates* it, transforms it, causes it to change. That object, in turn, performs an action on another object and a link in the associative chain is generated. This network may only be identified as the various actants associate with each other, impinge on each other, and effect change in the other's presence.

Most important for Latour, the network considers both human and non-humans as mutually affective actants constituted in relation to each other. One of the most famous examples that Latour describes recalls Callon's study of scallops, fishermen and nets. As Latour summarizes, not only do fishermen catch scallops but "scallops *make* the fisherman *do* things."

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[54] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, 1st ppbk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93–99. See also Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[55] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 128.

[56] Ibid., 108.

Similarly, "nets placed in the ocean lure the scallops."[57] In other words, humans, animals and inanimate objects are all part of a social network that is mutually affective. Another example Latour gives that is of direct consequence to this chapter, is the example of bacteria. Tracing contagion patterns, notes Latour, allows sociologists to "redraw the social map."[58] Bacteria cause a change to occur in their host. If the human is that host, then bacteria become traceable in the human social network. Contagion, infection, and disease can all generate associations between humans as well as between humans and non-humans.

Just as Latour looks to the field of science to refine sociological inquiry, I want to import the lesson of his sociological method into this study situated at the intersection of literature and disease.[59] Another name for this project could potentially have been, "The Bacterial Turn in Modern Jewish Literature." My research takes as its agenda the process of making visible the association of tuberculosis (non-human), literary institutions (non-human) and the Yiddish or Hebrew writer (human).[60] By tracing these associations, the bio-literary network becomes observable and links together authors, poets, editors, readers, philanthropists, sanatoria and, of course, illness. Chronicling Sholem Aleichem's moves from one *Kurort* to another, for example, allows an entire community of supporters, readers, benefactors and literary opportunities to be

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[57] Ibid., 107. See also Michel Callon, "Some Elements of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fisherman of St. Brieuc Bay," in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. John Law (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 196–223.

[58] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 107.

[59] Latour's relevance to literary analysis is now gaining traction. For recent inquiries into the applicability and relevance of the Latourian network model for literary scholarship, see *New Literary History* 41:2 (2010). Of particular interest is David J. Alworth's article, "Supermarket Sociology." Alworth reads the place and literary incarnation of the supermarket as a helpful and additive explanatory metaphor for Latour's actor-network theory. David Alworth, "Supermarket Sociology," *New Literary History* 41, no. 2 (2010): 301–27.

[60] I recognize here that it is very difficult to step out of an anthropocentric frame. Humans, of course, create institutions (non-humans). Latour's insight, however, is to understand that often humans are then affected by non-human institutions in traceable if unforeseen manners. His work compels us to consider the possibility (and, indeed, likelihood) that a human will be modified through an association with a non-human actor, be it bacteria or a sanatorium.

identified within the Yiddish writer's bio-literary network. Indeed, tuberculosis will appear as a new variable linking reading audiences, literary advocates, health centers and writers alike in the history of modern Jewish literature. The cultural currency of illness, in turn, will be modified by its association with this set of literary and historical actors and events.

Latourian methodology, oriented toward the observable, resists invoking ideas of unquantifiable cultural forces or ideas of social prestige into its system. To interpret the wide-ranging fields of power and action mobilized by a tubercular diagnosis, therefore, I complement my ANT approach with recourse to Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural capital. Bourdieu categorizes how, in different fields of production, different producers and players consecrate a work as possessing value. The value of that work of art takes into account the circumstances of its material production and those of its symbolic production. Not only is it important which materials comprise the object (e.g. gold, hours of labor, etc.) but how prestige is bestowed on the object (i.e. who promotes the art, buys the art, names the art, etc.). The value of that symbolic production is transferable to economic capital.[61]

A primary concern of this study is just how tuberculosis comes to feature in the production of value, both symbolic and economic, in the life and work of the ailing Jewish writer. How does a diagnosis grow or diminish an author's reputation? How might a public episode of coughing generate attention and fundraising on behalf of the writer? And how would invoking the names of other tubercular Jewish figures or tuberculosis-themed texts structure genealogies of illness resonant with symbolic capital? While the Hebrew poet Raḥel, certainly did not become wealthy as a result of her diagnosis, she generated literary capital through the

[61] For Bourdieu's analysis of capital, see, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1996), 241–58.

public display of her ailing body and through the creation of her sickroom as a salon. Posthumously, that symbolic value translated into what can only be described as the business of Raḥel tourism extant in the State of Israel today.

Of special concern will also be how various philanthropies, health institutions, editors and audiences responded to the needs of tubercular writers, generating support networks that augmented both the finances of these figures as well as their literary exposure. How was tuberculosis mobilized to elicit the sympathetic support of a reading audience? How was the tubercular body figured in a manner that would raise funds as well as awareness of the plight of the ailing patient-writer? Was there a perceptible value in publicly acknowledging one's disease above and against the social stigma with which a contagious illness might otherwise be met?

Combining the methods and language of Latour and Bourdieu allows us to answer these questions. But bringing the work of these two scholars together is certainly not without its vocal opponents. Recent work among scholars of translation studies, however, productively combines these two analytical systems.[62] For these translation scholars, both the concept of the network and cultural capital are critical tools for evaluating which texts are translated, by whom, for whom and why. For example, to analyze the translation of Taiwanese novels into English, Szu-Wen Cindy Kung has used the ANT model to trace the various actors, institutions, and materials involved in the publication network. Drawing on Bourdieusian methodology, she has analyzed how the traceable connections in the network were first made possible by virtue of the involved actors' social capital; in her study, it is found in the reputation of a professor who secured

[62] Hélène Buzelin, "Unexpected Allies: How Latour's Network Theory Could Complement Bourdieusian Analyses in Translation Studies," *The Translator* 11, no. 2 (2005): 193–218; Raila Hekkanen, "Fields, Networks and Finnish Prose: A Comparison of Bourdieusian Field Theory and Actor-Network Theory in Translation Sociology," in *Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminar in Translation Studies*, ed. Dries De Crom, 2009, http://www2.arts.kuleuven.be/info/bestanden-div/Hekkanen.pdf; Szu-Wen Cindy Kung, "Translation Agents and Networks, with Reference to the Translation of Contemporary Taiwanese Novels," in *Translation Research Projects 2*, ed. Anthony Pym and Alexander Perekrestenko, 2009, 123–38, http://isg.urv.es/publicity/isg/publications/trp_2_2009/chapters/kung.pdf.

financial support for a large-scale translation project. Only by combining the methods of these two thinkers does Kung acquire the language to evaluate not only the visible network but the value assumptions that allow it to become visible.

Similarly, it is only by bridging Latourian and Bourdieusian methodology that I am able to articulate the methodological category that guides my research, what I call *tubercular capital*. This is the symbolic value that is made visible by and that makes itself visible in a network in which disease, writer and text are all imbricated. It is cultural capital mediated by a non-human actor (tuberculosis), by the cultural experience of illness and by the diagnosis of disease. It is a value determined by health and literary institutions, by doctors and readers, by public health advocates and literary critics. And it is a category driven, inflected and negotiated by the history and texts of modern Hebrew and Yiddish writing in which the health and stability of a literary tradition is constantly being called into question. *Tubercular capital* serves as a methodological intervention into the study of literature and disease that will allow us to re-think and re-plot the relationship between writer and ailment, between literary reputation and medical institution, even between Romantic notions of feverish creativity and the historical conditions of cultural production.

Modern Jewish Writing and the Literary Capital of Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis was more than a multivalent cultural symbol. It was a catalyst of literary opportunity. It was a biographical feature to be made public, performed and mobilized. And it launched the careers and increased the reputation of those Yiddish and Hebrew writers who sought not to hide their contagious disease but to render it an integral part of their literary self-fashioning and creative oeuvre. It would further come to negotiate the perception of anxieties

surrounding the development of Yiddish and Hebrew as languages of cultural expression. We must, accordingly, recuperate tuberculosis as a critical variable in the history of modern Jewish writing.

Following this introduction, we turn our attention in the opening chapter to Sholem Aleichem, one of the three classic Yiddish writers. Today, Sholem Aleichem is perhaps most famous as the author whose work inspired the play and movie *Fiddler on the Roof*. Yet decades before Sheldon Harnick penned the earworm, "If I were a Rich Man," Sholem Aleichem was already the object of international attention—albeit far from rich, himself. After being diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1908, a global campaign was initiated to help the destitute writer finance his travels to "take the cure" in Nervi, Italy. As a result of the jubilee, Sholem Aleichem's reputation ballooned, his assets stabilized and he used his literature to develop a fictional persona whose health was made dependent on the reading practices of his audience. Analyzing news reports, promotional material and Sholem Aleichem's personal correspondence, it becomes clear how tuberculosis came to mediate the relationship between author, reader and publisher. This is especially important in the short story that Sholem Aleichem wrote to be read at jubilee celebrations around the world. Entitled "Shmuel Shmelkes and His Jubilee," the story offers its own fictionalized account of Sholem Aleichem's illness as well as an argument for tubercular capital.

Sholem Aleichem's personal history also begins to sketch out a concern for the nature of Jewish charitable giving that will occupy each of the subsequent chapters. As will become clear, the tubercular Jewish writer often sought financial aid from a variety of sources and individuals. In other cases, the ailing writer specifically dismissed such charitable gestures. Yet how the question of money was mobilized, by whom and for whom, will be of immediate concern and

literary consequence. To understand the nature of tubercular capital, as will become clear, is to attend to the variety of financial and other supports offered conditionally or otherwise to the sick writer.

Chapter Two leaves behind the Italian coast as well as the various German and Swiss health resorts where Sholem Aleichem would spend years recovering. Turning away from Europe, I look to Palestine. There, the Hebrew poet Raḥel suffered from tuberculosis throughout the 1920s. Much of her poetry has been read as the aestheticized longing of a would-be *ḥalutsah* (pioneer) forced to fulfill her duty to labor Zionism from the confines of an urban dwelling place. Indeed, in a variety of hospital rooms and garret apartments, she negotiated the competing cultural perceptions of tuberculosis as the Romantic *authors' disease* and as a symbol of diasporic weakness. Yet this chapter reveals that Raḥel transformed her domestic space—her sickroom—into a salon of literary exchange and creativity. With the support of her friends and editors, the sickroom became the location of Raḥel's public self-fashioning and today serves as the hermeneutic key to the poeticization of space in Raḥel's earliest Russian texts and final efforts at Hebrew verse. Tuberculosis provides the context for adjudicating the poet's aesthetic agenda and public self-fashioning.

Crossing the Atlantic and heading further west, Chapter Three investigates the literary scene of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society, a Coloradan sanatorium for indigent Jews. There, a cohort of Yiddish tubercular writers would engage in a reciprocal relationship with the institution, becoming the public faces of the sanatorium and, in turn, being offered new venues to see their work published and translated. These writers include the lyric poet and bible translator Yehoash, the epic poet and dramatist H. Leivick, the amateur poet Lune Mattes and the prose stylist Shea Tenenbaum. If Sholem Aleichem and Raḥel were singular personalities, this chapter

addresses the phenomenon of a tubercular Yiddish literary group. This tubercular literary genealogy was born out of, nurtured and went on to be referenced by a variety of ailing writers, both those in and those beyond the walls of the Denver hospital.

From Colorado, my research then returns in the final chapter to central Europe and to another sanatorium for indigent Jews. Unlike the JCRS, this hospital built in the South Tyrolean town of Merano (formerly: Meran) would not function as an ersatz writers' colony. Yet it too would foster the creative energies of its literary clients. The Hebrew modernist David Vogel, for example, sought the rest treatment for his infected lungs in the winters of 1925 and 1926. His experiences influenced his first novella, *In the Sanatorium* (1927), which brought him into intertextual dialogue with the work of Arthur Schnitzler and Thomas Mann. Engaging these German-language texts, Vogel's Hebrew novella challenges precisely the possibility of such a Hebrew-German literary conversation. Functioning both as a key feature in Vogel's life and his literature, tuberculosis works in this fourth chapter as the physiological pivot which Vogel turns to, turns from and reorients his vision of modern Hebrew prose.

The Conclusion follows Vogel as he makes his way from South Tyrol to eastern France. There, he would write a fictionalized chronicle of a painter who, like himself, is imprisoned in internment camps following the outbreak of WWII. Once again, Vogel mobilizes the metaphors of tuberculosis to examine the limitations of Jewish life and creativity in a European context. Unlike *In the Sanatorium*, however, this final text would be written in Yiddish. The conclusion of this study, accordingly, reads Vogel's late work alongside the writing of Aharon Appelfeld in order to investigate how tubercular capital was mobilized both during the Holocaust and in Israeli literature produced in its wake. My reading of Appelfeld's work further considers the shifting metaphors of tuberculosis that arise in the wake of the introduction of antibiotic

treatments in the 1950s. Appelfeld, in fact, is the only writer examined in this study who did not suffer from tuberculosis himself.

As the case studies above will reveal, a tubercular diagnosis was not just a physiological state but a site of literary opportunity that afforded writers with new reading audiences, collaborative possibilities and literary landscapes. Jewish writers entered into a literary-historical conversation by virtue of their illness that affected their public reputations and influenced the content of their creative experimentation. Tuberculosis, moreover, also exposed a set of cultural anxieties germane to the lives and work of Sholem Aleichem, Raḥel, the JCRS poets, and Vogel, alike. The differences between these writers' personal stories, creative output, and treatment histories are admittedly substantial and will be discussed in detail. Yet they are united in experiencing tuberculosis as an illness of specific concern to their identities as modern Jewish writers. In addition to the range of symbolic possibilities attending tuberculosis, these writers demonstrate how the disease came to manage a concern for the stability of their chosen literary traditions. What would a diagnosis of tuberculosis mean, they each ask in turn, not simply for the patient but for Yiddish and Hebrew literature? How might the disease, accordingly, come to metaphorize the health and stability of a readership, literary market or the flexibility of Hebrew and Yiddish as literary languages? Indeed, the health of the Yiddish and Hebrew writer was not only a question of personal concern to the authors and poets of this study. Rather, it bore with it broad consequences for the construction and critique of Jewish literature well into the twentieth century and even for non-tubercular writers, such as Appelfeld.

The Paradox of Tubercular Capital

Before concluding this introduction, it must be made clear that it is not the intention of this research to validate notions of consumptive beauty and quiet death. Similarly, these four case studies in tubercular Jewish writer are not an extended exercise in retrospective *Schadenfreude* as the list of sick authors and poets seems to grow with each chapter. Tuberculosis, as indicated earlier, is nothing if not a devastating disease. During the lifetime of the majority of writers under discussion in this work, it was also medically incurable. The disease often precipitated pain, poverty and the devastating separation of family members. It cut short many lives and inflicted many with years of painful treatment. In the case of the Yiddish author Daniel Charney, it even prevented him from entering New York alongside other would-be immigrants during his first attempt to enter the United States in 1925.[63]

Tuberculosis was and remains a disease that should neither be glorified nor underestimated. Rather than romanticize the illness, I examine the role played by tuberculosis in the life and writing of a host of Yiddish and Hebrew authors and poets. It is a role that, at times, resulted in positive outcomes. But it would be callous not to assert that patients likely would have preferred not to have fallen ill in the first place. While Peretz's protagonist perhaps unwittingly betrays a strategic understanding of tubercular capital when he exclaims, "Let it be consumption!," he most probably did not want to experience tubercular symptoms firsthand. It

[63] Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 1)," *Der tog*, November 15, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun E Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 2)," *Der tog*, November 22, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 3)," *Der tog*, November 29, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 4)," *Der tog*, December 6, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 5)," *Der tog*, December 14, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun v (Part 6)," *Der tog*, December 21, 1925. For an overview of the politics and rhetoric of border control at Ellis Island, see Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace"* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), Chapter 2 and 3.

would be similarly shortsighted not to hope that there might have been another way for literary opportunity to accrue to writers regardless of their physical conditions.

The work of anthropologist Didier Fassin is particularly helpful in thinking through the politics and moral questions raised by this dilemma. In his recent investigations into the "politics of life," Fassin examines multiple cases in which disease is mobilized as a political resource, lending what he calls "biolegitimacy" to a suffering patient. For example, he presents the example of a Kenyan man who had lived for years in France and Germany illegally. He "finally received his documents," explains Fassin, "when he was discovered to be suffering from AIDS."[64] Fassin elsewhere writes of another AIDS patient living in South Africa whose diseased status functioned as a "social resource." "The disability grant he received from the state as a right because of his illness," writes Fassin, "gave him for the first time the opportunity to have a decent and independent existence."[65] These examples allow Fassin to analyze what meaning and value various governments assign to the lives of individuals under different circumstances. To that end, Fassin also investigates cases in which disease releases convicted criminals from serving a full sentence, such as those of Augusto Pinochet or Maurice Papon. He also examines the cases of various asylum seekers who "express despair when told that their case is not serious enough to be considered relevant with respect to the humanitarian clause."[66] For Fassin, the question of disease is not merely one of personal suffering but one resonant with ethical implications for immigrants, patients and government institutions.

Of course, Fassin concerns himself with patients who live decades after the Yiddish and Hebrew writers mentioned above sought treatment for acute pulmonary tuberculosis. Yet his

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[64] Didier Fassin, "Another Politics of Life Is Possible," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26 (2009): 51.

[65] Ibid., 91.

[66] Ibid., 51.

work reminds us to be alert to the systems of power at play in the present literary-historical inquiry. The Yiddish and Hebrew writers under examination garnered support when they were in a most desperate state. They received help from philanthropies when they could no longer rely on their own resources for financial or medical support. The story this dissertation tells may at times seem triumphant in its description of how a disease benefited a patient, how a readership rallied around an ailing writer or how a stay at a sanatorium offered the patient-writer new literary vistas. Yet, at the same moment, we should remember to keep in mind the troubling paradox of tubercular capital.

Chapter One

Sholem Aleichem's Jubilant Cough

Di krankhayt iz im zeyer tsu nits gekumen; er iz gevorn populerer un er leyent beser.
The disease has been of good use to him; he has become more popular and he reads better.
—I.L. Peretz[1]

"A cough is your card; a hemorrhage a letter of credit"
—O. Henry[2]

Introduction

The Yiddish author Solomon Rabinovitsh passed away in New York City on May 13, 1916. Rabinovitsh is perhaps best known today as the author whose work would be adapted into *Fiddler on the Roof*. Yet at the time of his death, he was famous worldwide as the classic Yiddish writer known by the name, "Sholem Aleichem." At his funeral in 1916, over 100,000 mourners lined the city streets and his memory would loom large in Yiddish literary circles for decades to come.[3] Twelve years after his death, in fact, his literary persona, "Sholem Aleichem," reappeared under a circus tent in the Polish industrial city of Łódź. No longer the dapper, blond, Russified gentleman boasting a pince-nez, this deliberately caricatured Sholem Aleichem performed as an impoverished, hunchbacked dwarf named "Dolly." He took center stage alongside a gallery of grotesque male characters in Yisroel Rabon's 1928 novel of alienation and

[1] As quoted by Gershn Levin. Gershn Levin, "Mayne zikhroynes vegn Sholem-Aleykhem," in *Dos Sholem-Aleykhem-bukh*, ed. Yitsḥak Dov Berkowitz, 2nd ed. (New York: Ikuf, 1958), 280.

[2] O. Henry, "A Fog in Santone," in *The Complete Works of O. Henry* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1953), 992–97.

[3] "Vast Crowds Honor Sholem Aleichem," *The New York Times*, May 16, 1916, 13. For a historical analysis, see Ellen D. Kellman, "Sholem Aleichem's Funeral (New York, 1916): The Making of a National Pageant," *YIVO Annual* 20 (1991): 277–304.

despair, *The Street*.[4] And he appeared in a literary text marked not by the influence of Nikolai Gogol or Mendele Moykher-Sforim but by Jack London and Knut Hamsun.[5]

Yet despite the new name, body and artistic milieu, the similarities between Dolly and a parodied Sholem Aleichem are unmistakable.[6] Dolly, after all, is also a Jewish artist whose primary skill is his ability to make his audience laugh. During each performance, he appears in the circus hall standing on a pole. He crinkles his face and begins to cry violently. The tears flow quickly and strongly. Suddenly, without warning, he begins to laugh wildly. He laughs and laughs, but the tears do not stop. He continues to cry as the tears stream down his face. "He laughed through the tears," recalls the narrator, "and cried through the laughter." [7] For Dolly, a poverty-stricken itinerant performer, the key to his success is his ability to laugh through the tears that define his tragic life.

It has by now become nearly aphoristic to describe Sholem Aleichem as a humorist whose work exemplified the literary ethic of *laughter through tears*, a concept famously named in Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842).[8] The idea would come to serve as one of Sholem Aleichem's recognizable stylistic signatures. The Yiddish author kept the Gogolian passage on his desk and a

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[4] Yisroel Rabon, *Di gas: roman* (Warsaw: L. Goldfarb, 1928). All subsequent references to *Di gas* refer to the following edition: Chone Shmeruk, ed., "Yisroel Rabon and His Book *Di Gas* ('The Street')," in *The Street*, by Israel Rabon (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1986), v – l.

[5] Sh. Zaromb, "Yisroel Rabon--di gas, roman," *Literarishe bleter* 49 (December 7, 1928): 971. For a review of Rabon's life and work, see Delphine Bechtel, "Urbanization, Capitalism, and Cosmopolitanism: Four Novels and a Film on Jews in the Polish City of Łódź," *Prooftexts* 26, no. 1–2 (2006): 79–106; Shmeruk, "Yisroel Rabon and His Book *Di Gas* ('The Street')."

[6] I am grateful to Saul Zaritt for directing me to the relationship between Sholem Aleichem and Dolly.

[7] Yisroel Rabon, *Di gas*, Yiddish Literature (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1986), 77.

[8] The passage from *Dead Souls* reads, in George Reavey's translation: "For a long time to come I am destined by the magic powers to wander together with my strange heroes and to observe the whole vast movement of life—to observe it through laughter which can be shared by all and through tears which are unknown and unseen!" See Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol, "Dead Souls," in *Dead Souls: The Reavey Translation, Backgrounds and Sources, Essays in Criticism*, trans. George Reavey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 141.

version of the phrase would even be featured on his gravestone.[9] Sholem Aleichem's contemporary and posthumous critics, popular and academic interpreters alike, have continued to use the term to summarize the force of the author's technique.[10]

Yet there is something beyond a tragic-comic style that binds Dolly to Sholem Aleichem for, like the Yiddish author, the coughing clown suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis. "I lie in bed the whole day," Dolly reports, "and I can't feel a bone in my body. Everything feels like it's breaking and aches. The wind whistles through my lungs. I spit my heart and lungs out with blood. My head aches, and I feel like I'm losing my mind."[11] Yet despite the debilitating illness, Dolly is the consummate performer. He never misses a show. He suffers all day and then gets dressed to take the stage at night. In a revealing moment, Dolly discloses what might be called the secret to his success. "My illness," he reveals, "allows me to tell jokes to the audience and to make them laugh and cry."[12] The clown's recognizably terrible disease is also that which allows him to ingratiate himself to the audience, to tug on his viewers' emotions and to let them

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[9] For a record of the translated passage kept of Sholem Aleichem's desk, see Y.D. Berkowitz's recollections. Berkowitz writes that Sholem Aleichem kept a translation of this passage, which he wrote himself, on an envelope on his desk as a type of talisman. See Yitsḥak Dov Berkowitz, "Mit der mishpokhe fun shriftshteler," in *Dos Sholem-Aleykhem-bukh*, 2nd ed. (New York: Ikuf, 1958), 188–189. On Sholem Aleichem's literary relationship to Gogol, see Amelia Glaser, *Jews and Ukrainians in Russia's Literary Borderlands: From the Shtetl Fair to the Petersburg Bookshop* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 107–108; David G. Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing: The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 154. Sholem Aleichem's epitaph will be discussed in the conclusion to this chapter in more detail.

[10] Contemporaraneous: For example, the day after a public reading in Łódź in 1908, a reviewer for the local Yiddish paper recalled seeing the writer on stage. He writes: "I saw how he stood far away, and he laughed through tears over the great tragedy of the [Jewish] diaspora, and when he laughed, the whole audience laughed with him [*un ikh hob gezen, vi er aleyn iz geshtanen fun vayten un hot gelakht durkh trern iber di groyse goles-tragediye, ober gelakht hot er un mit im der gantser oylem*]." Yud-Alef, "Sholem-Aleykhem in Lodzh," *Lodzher tageblat*, June 29, 1938, 2. Posthumous: Theodor Bikel's 2009 one-man theatrical review of Sholom Aleichem's legacy (and that of Yiddish literature in general) was entitled, "Sholem Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears." Joseph Dorman's 2011 documentary about Sholem Aleichem's life is also entitled, *Sholem Aleichem: Laughing in the Darkness*. Academic: For just one example, see Ken Frieden, *Classic Yiddish Fiction: Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, and Peretz*, SUNY Series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 109.

[11] Rabon, *Di gas*, 156.

[12] Ibid.

perceive the comic and tragic simultaneously. Tuberculosis, Dolly acknowledges, is one source of his creative power and public appeal.

In this chapter, I investigate how tuberculosis would come to function as a similarly productive tool in the life and career of Dolly's parodied predecessor. How did Sholem Aleichem perform his illness to the advantage of his public reputation and material circumstances? How did he invest his disease in his literary output and creative self-fashioning? Indeed, this line of questioning would not have been foreign to Sholem Aleichem's readers and critics during his lifetime. In 1914, for example, the writer I.L. Peretz attended a public reading by his colleague in Warsaw. It was Sholem Aleichem's first performance in Poland after having spent six years abroad, "taking the cure." During that time, he had recuperated in the coastal town of Nervi, Italy, at the St. Blasien and the Badenweiler health resort in the Black Forest region of Germany, and at the Swiss spa sites of Lausanne, Lucerne, Lugano, and Montreux. He returned to Warsaw amidst great fanfare and Peretz confided to the physician and writer Gershn Levin that he had observed a change in his colleague's performance. "The disease has been of good use to him," he remarked with perceptible bitterness, "he has become more popular and reads better." *Di krankhayt iz im zeyer tsu nits gekumen*; *er iz gevorn populerer un er leyent beser*.[13]

Like Dolly the clown, Sholem Aleichem appears not only to have suffered from tuberculosis but to have used the disease to augment his reputation and authorial mystique. Even Peretz, whose relationship with Sholem Aleichem was notoriously fickle, begrudgingly admitted that the disease had enriched his fellow Yiddish writer's artistic profile and public presentation.[14]

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[13] As quoted by Gershn Levin. Levin, "Mayne zikhroynes vegn Sholem-Aleykhem," 280.

[14] For an account of Peretz's attempt to usurp Sholem Aleichem's position in Yiddish literature, see Ruth R. Wisse, *I.L. Peretz and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 28–29. Gershn Levin also recounts his surprise that Peretz attended the Warsaw celebration of Sholem Aleichem's jubilee

The goal of this chapter, accordingly, is to analyze and account for precisely that "good use" generated by *di krankhayt*, named by Peretz and exploited by Sholem Aleichem. To that end, this chapter devotes itself to reconstructing the history of Sholem Aleichem's tubercular experience. When did he fall sick? Where did he recuperate? And what role did his disease play in attracting and maintaining a large literary support network? How, moreover, did his readers respond to Sholem Aleichem's illness both as a particular event and as representative of larger trends of Yiddish literary politics? What cultural anxieties become apparent when a tubercular Sholem Aleichem takes center stage? Of particular importance will be an examination of the 1908 jubilee celebrations held worldwide to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sholem Aleichem's entrance onto the Yiddish literary stage. As an examination of the texts and history of this event demonstrates, tuberculosis was not solely a debilitating illness that left the Yiddish writer bedridden and in pain. Rather, it mediated the history of Sholem Aleichem's reception, global reputation and literary output. Indeed, Solomon Rabinovitsh's life circumstances would be directly tied to the health and tubercular capital of his creation, Sholem Aleichem.

Tuberculosis: Between Author and Persona

As the following chapter argues, tuberculosis functioned as a critical if unrecognized joint in the apparatus of Sholem Aleichem's authorial persona. Yet before advancing that thesis, it must be stated from the outset that Sholem Aleichem was not a *real* person. Rather, the byline was employed by the man known throughout his adult life by the Russified moniker, Solomon

in 1908, as Peretz has previously refused to include Sholem Aleichem's work in a Hanukkah performance under Peretz's supervision. In response to Levin's surprise, Peretz explained: "Sholem Aleichem is still Sholem Aleichem" and apparently was still deemed worthy of Peretz's attention. See Gershn Levin, "Sholem-Aleykhems krankhayt un zayn 25-yeriker yoyvl: fun der seriye, 'Varshe far der milkhome,'" *Haynt*, September 11, 1938, 6.

Naumovitsh Rabinovitsh.[15] Rabinovitsh, like many Yiddish writers, had assumed a pseudonym when he first began to publish his short sketches. Doing so, he followed the model chosen by Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh. Abramovitsh became known as "the grandather of Yiddish literature" under the disguise of Mendele Mocher Sforim (lit. "Mendele the book seller").[16] In the 1880s, when Rabinovitsh penned his first Yiddish feuilleton, Yiddish literature had not yet acquired the prestige or the readership to encourage authors to take pride in their literary output.[17] The low status of Yiddish literature along with a desire not to be implicated in a transparently autobiographical story may have prompted the young Rabinovitsh to hide behind a pseudonymous mask.[18]

Like Abramovitsh's Mendele, the mask that Rabinovitsh chose for himself did more to place a playful curtain in front of his identity than hide it. The talented humorist chose the evocative name, *Sholem Aleichem*. The name, more accurately a phrase, translates into the salutation, "Peace be upon you." To the greeting "*Sholem-aleichem*," a Yiddish speaker responds, "*Aleichem-sholem.*" Choosing this name had the clever effect of eliciting a figurative call-and-response between author and reader. The author would greet his readers with every byline, *Sholem-aleichem* (Peace be upon you), and his readers would reply rhetorically if not verbally, *Aleichem-sholem* (Upon you may peace be). As his work gained in prominence, the

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[15] Rabinovitsh also had the additional Yiddish name, "Sholem Nakhum Veviks," that is to say: Sholem, the son of Nakhum Vevik. This is the name of the protagonist in his fictionalized autobiography, *Funem yarid* [*From the Fair*]. See, for example, Sholem Aleichem, *Funem yarid: geshribn in di Yorn 1913-1916* (New York: Yidish Bukh, 1966), 19.

[16] Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

[17] For an elaboration of the reputation of Yiddish belles-lettres in the 1880s and 1890s and the so-called "aesthetic of ugliness," see Ibid., 49–50.

[18] Dan Miron, "Sholem Aleichem: Person, Persona, Presence," in *The Image of the Shtetl and Other Studies of Modern Jewish Literary Imagination* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 128–130.

name Rabinovitsh faded into the background. Critics and readers alike began to refer to the author by his chosen pseudonym and the distance between author and penname was functionally erased. Like Mark Twain (real name: Samuel Langhorne Clemens) and George Eliot (real name: Mary Anne Evans), Sholem Aleichem was the name by which Rabinovitsh became famous.

Over forty years ago, the literary scholar Dan Miron famously critiqued the equation of author and literary figure in his monumental essay, "Sholem Aleichem: Person, Persona, Presence."[19] Miron argued that the majority of interpretations of Rabinovitsh's life and work are flawed as they do not differentiate between the historical author Rabinovitsh and the hard-to-define figure of Sholem Aleichem.[20] In his study, Miron demonstrates that Rabinovitsh himself wished for the fictional nature of Sholem Aleichem to be recognized by his more astute readers, as evidenced in a handful of stories.[21] He also argues that Sholem Aleichem, as a literary creation, defies a simple characterization as a "character-narrator" or an authorial persona. Rather, in Miron's analysis, the most accurate way to label Sholem Aleichem is as a "presence." The figure itself occupies a variety of roles in Rabinovitsh's oeuvre but ultimately serves to unify what is otherwise a diverse collection of texts by a single author, Rabinovitsh. Most important for our purposes, Miron is primarily interested in the literary role and development of the Sholem Aleichem persona. "Assuming new faces and rhetorical functions as freely as a skilled and versatile actor," writes Miron, "it"—that is to say, the presence called *Sholem Aleichem*—"nevertheless conditions the vast, variegated fictional world the author has created, unifies it and

[19] For full citation, see previous note.

[20] Miron, "Sholem Aleichem: Person, Persona, Presence," 134–135.

[21] Ibid., 136–139.

actually serves as an axis around which everything turns."[22] The figure of "Sholem Aleichem," according to Miron, is at the center of Rabinovitsh's literary universe. Miron briefly mentions that Rabinovitsh was aware of "how valuable an asset the nonfictional 'reality' of his Sholem Aleichem was both for the artistic and nonartistic advancement of his career."[23] However, Miron does not expand on this comment and instead focuses his attention on mapping the literary portrait of "Sholem Aleichem" and its variations.

Recently, the Hebrew and Yiddish literary scholar Naomi Brenner has expanded on Miron's argument. While she agrees with Miron's contention that there exists an "ontological difference between author and persona," she adds that "Rabinovitsh/Sholem Aleykhem makes this distinction difficult to recognize and sustain."[24] Similarly, Brenner acknowledges that "Sholem-aleykhem's near-constant literary *presence* unifies Rabinovitsh's vast fictional world," yet she adds that the Yiddish writer's literary style changes throughout his career.[25] In Brenner's understanding, Miron is not wrong so much as he does not allow Sholem Aleichem as persona the requisite agency to displace Rabinovitsh from the authorial position and to define his own literary technique. She reads Rabinovitsh as an author who created a new author, who created a "canonical fictional [being]" who was a "stylized spokesm[a]n for the Jewish folk and Jewish tradition."[26] In other words, the distance between author and persona may be *true* in the sense

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[22] Ibid., 154–155.

[23] Ibid., 137.

[24] Naomi Rebecca Brenner, *Authorial Fictions: Literary and Public Personas in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature.* PhD Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley. (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. Publication No. AAT3331524, 2008), 47. Brenner quotes from Miron as to the "ontological difference between author and persona." See Miron, "Sholem Aleichem: Person, Persona, Presence," 136.

[25] My emphasis. I mean to draw attention to Brenner's reliance on Miron's terminology. Brenner, *Authorial Fictions*, 47.

[26] Ibid., 26.

that the author is not the persona, but Sholem Aleichem as persona has his own authorial authority.

Brenner works to re-blur the line between author and persona that Miron wished to clarify. I choose to push Brenner's impulse further. Brenner restricts her discussion of the relationship between Rabinovitsh and Sholem Aleichem to the context of their respective authorial functions. She, like Miron, is still primarily motivated by the question: How does Sholem Aleichem function as a literary figure? Putting that question aside, the following chapter asks: What did the persona of Sholem Aleichem do *for* and *to* Rabinovitsh when the latter fell ill? How was tubercular capital mobilized on Rabinovitsh's behalf by Sholem Aleichem? How did the existence of this persona mediate the physical and material well being of the author? Is it, perhaps, possible or productive to speak of Sholem Aleichem's disease rather than Rabinovitsh's? Indeed, the purpose of this line of questioning is to reexamine the role of the persona in the Yiddish literary tradition not as a mischievous mask but as a value-laden symbol employed by the author and energized by a public relations machine at a time when Yiddish mass media was reaching new heights and ever-expanding readerships.

In the opening paragraphs of this chapter and throughout much of the remaining text, I often refer to the sick writer as "Sholem Aleichem" rather than Rabinovitsh. I hope to prove that to do so can be both rigorous from a scholarly perspective and particularly respectful of the language used by Rabinovitsh's vast literary support network during and after his tubercular diagnosis. The event of the jubilee marks an occasion in Rabinovitsh's biography where the lack of distinction between author and persona not only is at play but is actively being deployed by both Rabinovitsh and his readership. In the wake of Rabinovitsh falling ill, it would not have been farfetched to assume that attention would have been directed at the living, breathing,

coughing author himself. Yet Sholem Aleichem did not recede from view. Instead, Rabinovitsh's disease became Sholem Aleichem's problem first to embody and then to fix. I thus consider the persona "Sholem Aleichem" as a Latourian non-human mediator. This persona acts on Rabinovitsh, transforms his reality, and in doing so augments its own personified status. As Latour insists on starting with the small and knowable, we will begin by slowly introducing Sholem Aleichem's twenty-fifth jubilee: How have scholars generally understood it? What precipitated it? Whom did it celebrate? And what happened that late summer night in 1908 when Sholem Rabinovitsh first coughed up blood?

Tuberculosis and the Jubilee

In 1883, Solomon Rabinovitsh published a Yiddish short story entitled, "The Elections" under the byline, Sholem Aleichem. Twenty-five years later, in the fall of 1908, celebrations were held to mark the silver anniversary of the great author's appearance on the Yiddish literary stage. Such celebrations were not unheard of among Yiddish or Hebrew readerships. In 1906, celebrations were organized to mark Mendele's fiftieth year of literary activity alongside his seventieth birthday, yet the scale paled in comparison to those arranged on Sholem Aleichem's behalf two years later. In 1908, events for Sholem Aleichem were organized across the globe, in places as distant as Warsaw, London, St. Louis, Riga, and Jerusalem. The jubilee was a major spectacle in the history of Yiddish literature, in general, and in the history of Sholem Aleichem criticism, specifically. As Yiddish literary scholars Shmuel Werses and David Roskies have argued, these celebrations occasioned the first formal stage in the general criticism of Sholem Aleichem's oeuvre.[27]

[27] Shmuel Werses, "Sholem-Alekhem: ḥamishim shanot bikoret," in *Bikoret ha-bikoret: ha'arakhot ve-gilgulehen* (Tel Aviv: Hotsaʾat Yaḥdaw, Iḥud Motsiʾim la-Or, 1982), 169. Werses's article first appeared as Shmuel Werses,

Both Werses and Roskies are correct in their chronology. Perceptive analyses by the now well-known Yiddish literary critics Shmuel Niger and Bal-Dimyen appeared in conjunction with the jubilee and remain pertinent to Sholem Aleichem scholarship until today.[28] An article by Bal-Makhshoves was also printed in order to delineate a paradigm of Sholem Aleichem's literary "types," a key for future works of criticism.[29] Most pertinent to this chapter is the reason why the 1908 jubilee came to be celebrated at all. It is true that 1908 marked the twenty-fifth year since Rabinovitsh had published "The Elections" under the name "Sholem Aleichem" in *Yudishes folks-blat*.[30] But the immediate occasion of the silver jubilee was less literary and more physical: a diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis. This event set into motion a web of movements, decisions, and events that would lead to and be mediated by the 1908 jubilee.

"Shalom Alekhem: ha'arakhot ve-gilgulehen: be-asplaklariyah shel ḥamishim shanot bikoret," *Molad* 17, no. 133–134 (1959): 404–21. All citations refer to the 1982 version in Werses' collected essays. Roskies pairs the phenomenon of Sholem Aleichem criticism of 1908 with the occasional essays produced in the wake of Sholem Aleichem's death in 1916. David G. Roskies, "Introduction," *Prooftexts* 6, no. 1 (1986): 2.

[28] Shmuel Niger (penname: Shmuel Tsharni; 1883-1955) writes of Sholem Aleichem as a "happy pessimist." He writes with a humorous style but is not satiric. See Sh. Niger, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems yubiley (Part 1)," *Der tog*, October 9, 1908, 6–7; Sh. Niger, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems yubiley (Part 2)," *Der tog*, October 16, 1908, 7; Bal-Dimyen (penname: Nokhem Shtif; 1879-1933) compares Sholem Aleichem both to Mendele and to Chekhov and describes Sholem Aleichem as a "democrat." He attends to a plurality of subject matter and includes a wide swath of the Jewish people in his literary purview. See Bal-Dimyen, "Sholem-Aleykhem, der folks-shrayber," *Dos Naye Lebn*, December 1, 1908, 38–49.

[29] Bal-Makhshoves (penname of: Yisroel Elyashev; 1873-1924). Bal-Makhshoves produces a "typology" of Sholem Aleichem's characters, whom he describes as modeling national types. For an English translation of the article, see Bal-Makhshoves, "Sholem Aleichem [A Typology of His Characters] (1908)," *Prooftexts* 6, no. 1 (1986): 7–15. For Yiddish, see Bal-Makhshoves, "Sholem Aleykhem," in *Geklibene shriftn*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Farlag Sh. Shreberk, 1929), 91–109. The original publication appeared in the Warsaw newspaper, *Der fraynd*. All references to articles in this paper in 1908 include the Julian and Gregorian dates. At the time, the newspaper masthead listed both. See Bal-Makhshoves, "Notitsn fun a kritiker: Sholem-Aleykhem, I," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, December 19 [January 1], 1908 [1909]), 2–3; Bal-Makhshoves, "Notitsn fun a kritiker: Sholem-Aleykhem, II(a)," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, January 23 [February 5], 1909), 2; Bal-Makhshoves, "Notitsn fun a kritiker: Sholem-Aleykhem, II(b)," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, January 25 [February 7] 1909), 2; Bal-Makhshoves, "Notitsn fun a kritiker: Sholem-Aleykhem, III," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, February 16 [March 1], 1909), 2.

[30] Throughout this chapter, I include both the Julian and Gregorian dates when both are listed on the newspaper or journal. The [Gregorian date] is in brackets. Sholem Aleichem, "Di vibores," *Yudishes folks-blat* (St. Petersburg, October 19 [31], 1883), 623–626.

In late July 1908, Sholem Aleichem found himself in the small town of Baranovitsh.[31] I use the name "Sholem Aleichem" here for it was under that name that Rabinovitsh had been invited and would appear on the local stage. Months before his reading, Rabinovitsh had been living in Geneva, Switzerland with his family, having returned to Western Europe in 1907 after an unsuccessful attempt to make a living as a playwright in America.[32] Poor and unable to support his family on his writing, he had set off from Geneva on a months-long reading tour in the small towns and cities of the Pale of Settlement. This was not his first attempt to raise money through readings. In 1906, he had traveled throughout western Europe giving readings with general success albeit encountering some public diminishment of Yiddish.[33] Like other Yiddish writers, public readings were part of Sholem Aleichem's position as a writer. In 1908, for example, Peretz also performed his work aloud and, quite famously, improvised a tale at an evening reading in St. Petersburg.[34] Yet, as Ken Frieden has noted, Sholem Aleichem was particularly keen as a public reader of his own work. His performances, notes Frieden, "suited his literary style, with its emphasis on the oral intonations of Yiddish speech."[35]

In 1908, many local towns and literary societies sent letters to the literary icon Sholem Aleichem, eagerly inviting him to read for them. One postcard from the tubercular patients at the Otwock Sanatorium begged Sholem Aleichem to visit them, noting that his performance would

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[31] Now, Baranavichy, Belarus.

[32] For an account of Sholem Aleichem's lack of success in America, see Nina Warnke, "Of Plays and Politics: Sholem Aleichem's First Visit to America," *YIVO Annual* 20 (1991): 239–76.

[33] Jeremy Dauber, *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem* (New York: Nextbook and Schocken Books, 2013), 179. Dauber's work was published after I had written a nearly-final version of this chapter. I have incorporated his findings into the present draft and will expand on my engagement with his work in revisions to come after the submission of this dissertation

[34] Frieden, *Classic Yiddish Fiction*, 253.

[35] Ibid., 130.

surely cure their illness![36] According to contemporary newspaper reports, Sholem Aleichem was greeted enthusiastically wherever he went, often being crowded as soon as he disembarked from the train.[37] His public readings also quickly sold out.[38] One writer noted that a public reading in Łódź was met with fifteen minutes of applause and enthusiastic cries of "Encore!"[39] According to Rabinovitsh's daughter, the pace of the tour was grueling; every night brought new performances in new cities with few breaks in between events.[40]

On July 26 (August 8), 1908, Rabinovitsh performed as "Sholem Aleichem" in the town of Baranovitsh. He had been invited by the local youth of the town, who had organized a Yiddish literary-artistic society.[41] That night, the hall was packed. Audience members had travelled from

[36] The author describes himself and fellow patients as "half-men, (simply tuberculars) [*halbe mentshn (poshet sukhotnikes)*]." Otwock Sanatorium Patients, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem," May 30, 1908, Box 10, Folder lamed-alef 18/1, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive. Otwock was home to both Jewish sanatoria for tubercular patients as well as the mentally ill. In 1890, the first sanatorium was established in the town, which boasted an attractive climate in the neighboring pine forest. For information on the establishment of the sanatorium, see Shimen Kants, "Di geshikhte fun alt-un nay Otvotsk," in *Yizker-bukh tsu fareybiken dem ondenk fun di khorev-gevorene yidishe Kehiles Otvotsk, Kartshev* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotse Otvotsk be-Yisrael, 1968), 86–87.For general information on the city, see also Binyomen Orenshteyn, *Khurbn: Otvotsk, Falenits, Kartshev* (Bamberg: Farvaltung fun otvotsker, falenitser un kartshever landslayt in der amerikaner zone in daytshland, Published under EUCOM Civil Affairs Division Authorization Number UNDP 219, 1948).

[37] "Fun varshever lebn: Sholem-Aleykhem in Varshe," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, May 18 [31], 1908), 3.

[38] In Minsk, an additional reading was planned after the first sold out. See Tsvey-un-nayntsik, "Provints (fun unzere korispondenten): Minsk: davke af yudish," *Der fraynd* (Petersburg, July 7 [20], 1908), 4. In Łódź, tickets sold quickly and the theater where the reading occurred was packed. The three evenings in Warsaw were also sold out. See "Fun Varshever lebn: yudishes," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, May 30 [June 12] 1908), 4.

[39] For additional records of the Łódź reading, see "Lodzher kronik: Sholem-Aleykhem in Lodzh," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, May 18 [31], 1908), 3; "Lodzher kronik: tsum Sholem-Aleykhem," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, May 26 [June 8], 1908), 3; "Der ershter Sholem-Aleykhem ovnt in lodzh," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, May 29 [June 11], 1908), 3. For an exuberant first-person account of the reading, see Yud-Alef, "Sholem-Aleykhem in Lodzh," 2.

[40] Marie Waife Goldberg, *My Father, Sholom Aleichem* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 237.

[41] Yankev Tsernikhov, "Vos makht Sholem-Aleykhem? a brif in redaktsiye," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, September 3 [16], 1908), 2.

the surrounding towns, both large and small, to hear Sholem Aleichem read his work aloud.[42] One newspaper claimed that over a thousand people had been in attendance, including the local Count Rozvadovski.[43] Yankev Tsernikhov, who had helped found the town's society for arts and letters, recalled that the evening had been such a success and so uproarious that it had felt as though an earthquake had struck the theater.[44] His words, written about a month after the performance, seem purposely ominous. He mentions that there is a dangerous element to the overwhelmingly joyous atmosphere. He then adds that it had been "noticeable how [Sholem Aleichem] had occasionally coughed that evening, had held his chest, and looked rather pale, though as always he had looked happy and full of life." Tsernikhov speaks in the language of seismic shifts and recalls an ailing writer standing on shaky ground.

After the reading ended, the performer returned to his hotel. Soon afterward, he began to cough more violently, his temperature rose and he had his first episode of hemoptysis.[45] A local doctor named Stsepurzinski arrived and managed to stop the hemorrhage. Soon, a committee comprising young Baranovitsh men and women was formed to keep constant watch over the beloved writer.[46] After several days, Sholem Aleichem's condition had not improved and a Dr.

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[42] "be-Rusiyah," *Hashkafah* (Jerusalem, September 4, 1908), 3; "Baranovitshi," *Hed ha-zeman* (Vilna, August 17, 1908), 3.

[43] "Telegramen: spetsiel tsu 'unzer lebn'," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, 30 July [12 August], 1908), 1.

[44] Tsernikhov, "Vos makht Sholem-Aleykhem? a brif in redaktsiye," 2.

[45] The exact timing is hard to determine as there exist conflicting reports. Tsernikhov maintains that he fell ill three days after the performance. Waife-Goldberg recalls that he fell ill immediately after the performance. Goldberg, *My Father, Sholom Aleichem*, 237.

[46] For an account of the doctor's first arrival, see Tsernikhov, "Vos makht Sholem-Aleykhem? a brif in redaktsiye," 2. For an account of the Sholem Aleichem's protective young guards and nurses, see Vilnai, "Al-yad mitato shel Shalom Alekhem," *Hed ha-zeman*, September 2, 1908, 1. For a description of the youth's diligient watch over Sholem Aleichem, see "Telegramen: Baranovitsh (spetsiel tsu 'unzer lebn')," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, August 7 [20], 1908), 1.

Rozenkrants was summoned from Vilna.[47] The diagnosis, of course, was pulmonary tuberculosis.[48] Sholem Aleichem was advised, as was customary in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to recuperate in Italy.[49] As Sholem Aleichem would poetically write to the Yiddish press and his admirers: "Doctors say that…I must go to 'where the citrons blossom."[50] Like many of his Yiddish letters, Rabinovitsh signed this public missive "Sholem Aleichem." Accordingly, it is Sholem Aleichem who writes to his loyal readership that he has received advice from doctors and must take the cure in a warm locale. Sholem Aleichem here assumes the face of his creator's illness.

And here is where the jubilee begins. How was Rabinovitsh to pay for his recuperation? Like nearly every tubercular literary figure in this current study, Rabinovitsh was impoverished. He had spent six weeks in Baranovitsh, presumably supported by the "love, loyalty, and generosity" shown to "Sholem Aleichem" by the local intelligentsia; still, he was no wealthier

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[47] Binyomen Rabinovitsh, "Vegn Sholem-Aleykhems krankhayt," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, August 11 [24], 1908), 3; Tshernikhov, "Fun der letster minut: Sholem Aleykhems krankyaht," *Haynt* (Warsaw, August 3 [16], 1908), 1. An alternative account was later recorded in 1930 in Soviet journal, *Di royte velt*. The anti-bourgeois and pro-Soviet ideological agenda of the article is clear. The author claims that the Russian police provided "protektsiye" for Sholem Aleichem and that it was a Dr. Lunts from Minsk who attended to the sick writer. Shloyme-Yankev Nepomniashtshi, "Naye materialn vegn Sholem Aleykhem (1908-1909)," *Di royte velt* 6, no. 1–2 (February 1930): 181.

[48] Yitsḥak Dov Berkowitz, *ha-Rishonim ki-vene adam: sipure zikhronot al Shalom Alekhem u-vene doro* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1975), 605; Goldberg, *My Father, Sholom Aleichem*, 238.

[49] Italy and the Mediterranean Coast were common destinations for consumptive patients in the nineteenth century. In 1852, Thomas Henry Burgess wrote extensively on the subject of climatology and attempted to debunk the myth that all locations in Italy were necessarily salubrious for consumptives. See Thomas Henry Burgess, *Climate of Italy in Relation to Pulmonary Consumption with Remarks on the Influence of Foreign Climates Upon Invalids* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1852). Clark Lawlor has also written about the equation of La Grande Tour with health tourism in and around Italy, paying specific attention to Tobias Smollett's *Travels Through France and Italy* of 1766. Lawlor also notes that Keats also sought health in Italy. See Clark Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4; 143.

[50] The public letter was reprinted in multiple newspapers. Sholem Aleichem, "A brif in redaktsiye," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 9 [22], 1908), 3; Sholem Aleichem, "A brif in redaktsiye," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, September 12 [25], 1908), 3; Sholem Aleichem, "A brif fun Sholem-Aleykhem," *D"r Birnboyms vokhenblat* (Czernowitz, September 25, 1908), 16–17.

than when he had arrived in the town.[51] Recall that he had embarked on the reading tour of the Pale precisely because he did not have the funds to support himself and his family. After some two months of reading, he still did not have the means to pay for an extended convalescence. Letters from this period of infirmity underscore just how desperate his financial situation was. For example, while lying ill in Baranovitsh, he still occupied himself with trying to remedy his financial ruin. He received a letter from his colleague and confidant, Yankev Dinezon, who wrote the Yiddish master in response to his request for help in claiming unpaid dues owed him from material published years earlier.[52] And, when he arrived in Italy several weeks later, he sent additional letters to Dinezon, complaining to him about his desperate need for the funds to sustain his cure regimen.[53]

Also like many of the tubercular Jewish writers, Sholem Aleichem was not without his supporters. One solution to the writer's dire financial situation was offered by Dr. Moshe Weizmann, a Geneva-based physician whom Rabinovitsh had known when they both had lived in Kiev.[54] In the summer of 1908, Moshe Weizmann was living in Geneva. Rabinovitsh's children had also remained in the Swiss city when their father had returned to the Pale. After he fell ill, Weizmann received a letter from the writer's wife Olga Rabinovitsh who asked the physician to inform her family of her husband's illness.[55] Weizmann did so and then went on to

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[51] Repeated in postscript of Sholem Aleichem's letter to the editor. See previous note.

[52] Yankev Dinezon, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem", August 12, 1908, Box 10, Folder lamed-dalet 10/52, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive. Jeremy Dauber has done the most in English to summarize the various financial crises that occurred through Sholem Aleichem's life and career. Dauber, *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem*.

[53] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Yankev Dinezon (Oct-Nov 1908)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 474.

[54] Weizmann was also the brother of Chaim Weizmann, who would become the first president of the State of Israel.

[55] Berkowitz, *ha-Rishonim ki-vene adam*, 605; Goldberg, *My Father, Sholom Aleichem*, 239.

play a major role in initiating the first efforts to raise money on the writer's behalf—specifically, on behalf of Sholem Aleichem.

Nearly a continent away, fundraisers of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society (JCRS) of Denver, Colorado were beginning to raise public awareness about the plight of the Jewish tubercular in America. The institution, as will be described in Chapter Three, looked to one of its founding members, the Yiddish poet Yehoash, to agitate on its behalf. An ailing Yehoash took up the task of crisscrossing the country, performing poetry readings and raising funds for the nascent JCRS. Back in Europe, Weizmann had an idea that would similarly exploit the tubercular condition of Sholem Aleichem. Rather than send the sick writer on tour, however, Weizmann would mobilize the image of the ailing humorist. Soon after hearing that the writer had fallen ill, Weizmann had the idea to organize a fundraising effort around the event of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the appearance of Sholem Aleichem on the Yiddish literary scene.[56] In consultation with Rabinovtish, the formal date of the celebration was set for the Sabbath known as *Shabes breyshis* in the upcoming month of October.[57] On that Saturday and throughout the preceding week, the portion that would be read from the Torah would include the opening chapters of Genesis, including the story of the Creation of the World. Just as the world was created anew, so too would Sholem Aleichem be revived. Moreover, such a momentous Torah portion rhetorically befitted such a significant writer who, like God himself, could create a new world in his stories. Sholem Aleichem, after all, was already a beloved—likely the most widely-read and admired—literary star in the constellation of Yiddish literature of the time. No other

[56] Berkowitz, *ha-Rishonim ki-vene adam*, 606; Goldberg, *My Father, Sholom Aleichem*, 240. Berkowitz claims that Weizmann maintained that he and Sholem and Aleichem had spoken of the idea. I have not been able to corroborate this.

[57] The date: October 11 [24], 1908. Berkowitz, *ha-Rishonim ki-vene adam*, 608.

tubercular writer's illness could be presented as being so vital a part of the Jewish litrugrical cycle as Sholem Aleichem's. He was a major figure and his twenty-fifth anniversary celebration had the potential to be large and international.

Weizmann announced his plan through two letters sent to various Yiddish newspapers around the world.[58] He opened the first letter strategically, writing:

> The 11th of October will be exactly twenty-five years since Sh.N. Rabinovitsh (Sholem Aleichem) appeared in Yiddish literature. I don't know whether Yiddish society is preparing to celebrate this jubilee. I know, though, that Sholem Aleichem is now seriously sick (in Baranovitsh) and he must travel to warmer lands to recuperate.
>
> *Dem 11-tn oktober hayor vert punkt finf un tsvantsik yor zayt Sh.N. Rabinovits (Sholem-Aleykhem) iz aroysgetreten in der yidisher literatur. Ikh veys nit, tsi di yidishe gezelshaft greyt zikh fayren dem dozikn yoyvel. Ikh veys ober, az itst ligt Sholem-Aleykhem ernst krank (in Baranovits), un er muz opforen in di varime lender zikh kuriren*.[59]

Weizmann serves his readers three points of fact: First, it is Sholem Aleichem's 25th anniversary as a Yiddish writer; second, he is sick; and third, he must seek care in warmer climes. He follows this list of facts with a description of the terrible and impoverished state of Sholem Aleichem's family. Lest he leave his intentions to any doubt, Weizmann concludes the letter with an extended paragraph demanding that help be provided, quickly and in organized fashion, and that the press involve itself efficiently. In Weizmann's second letter, it becomes clear that his clarion call has begun to be heard. There, he does not simply mention a jubilee celebration in passing but calls for such celebrations to be held wherever "the Yiddish word is known and held dear." After an extended description of the greatness of Sholem Aleichem as a writer and the "power of his

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[58] For the first letter, see Moshe Weizmann, "A brif in redaktsiye," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 3 [16], 1908), 2; Moshe Weizmann, "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Haynt* (Warsaw, September 5 [18], 1908), 4. For the second letter, see, for example: Moshe Weizmann, "A brif vegn 'Sholem Aleykhem'," *D"r Birnboyms vokhenblat* 1, no. 6 (October 9, 1908): 15–16; Moshe Weizmann, "Sholem Aleykhems yubileum," *Der morgn-zhurnal* (New York, October 15, 1908), 5. For mention of the letter, see "Yubileum far Sholem Aleykhem," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, September 30, 1908, 1.

[59] Weizmann, "A brif in redaktsiye," 21.

pen to reach the greatness of our pure, clear folk-humor [and] the depth of deepest tragedy of the true, Jewish laughter, which sparkles through tears," Weizmann once again describes the terrible sickness now affecting the *yubilar* and his growing material needs. Once again, there is no way to disassociate the writer's illness from his jubilee. The latter is in the service of the former.

Returning to the first letter for a moment, of particular interest is Weizmann's brief reference to Sholem Aleichem's *real* name. "The 11th of October," writes Weizmann, "will be exactly twenty-five years since Sh. N. Rabinovitsh (Sholem Aleichem) appeared in Yiddish literature."[60] However, Weizmann continues, "Sholem Aleichem is now seriously sick." First, Weizmann introduces the author under his legal, formal name "Sh.N. Rabinovitsh." Then, Weizmann includes the name "Sholem Aleichem" in parenthesis, typographically acknowledging that it is both a secondary title and that it is the name by which Rabinovitsh was most recognizable and therefore necessary. Rabinovitsh's name cannot stand alone without its parenthetical aside. Evidenced here is the explicit acknowledgment that Rabinovitsh's name would not carry the same symbolic capital among readers as could his persona. Regarding the accumulation of symbolic capital, Bourdieu writes:

> For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a *name* for oneself, a known recognized *name*, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits of this operation.[61]

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[60] Similar brief mention is made to Rabinovitsh in the second letter. There, Weizmann first introduces Sholem Aleichem and then puts Rabinovitsh's name in parenthesis. Later, he makes clear that the jubilee will celebrate twenty-five years since "Rabinovitsh has become for us 'Sholem-Aleykhem' [*Rabinovitsh iz gevorn far unz 'Sholem-Aleykhem'*]." The emphasis, as in the first letter, to show a progression from Rabinovitsh to Sholem Aleichem.

[61] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 75. My emphasis.

Weizmann's language demonstrates an awareness that the name and persona "Sholem Aleichem" boasted the symbolic capital necessary to catalyze an international response. Yes, the actual author is sick but it is the name of his persona that will garner his readers' sympathy. Indeed, after the parenthetical aside, all references to Rabinovitsh fall away and Weizmann accords Sholem Aleichem all the biographical features and authorial functions that belong to Rabinovitsh. It is not *Rabinovitsh* but rather *Sholem Aleichem* who is sick. Similarly, it is *Sholem Aleichem* and *his* family who are in critical need of monetary support. In Weizmann's letter, the differentiation between a sick author and his created persona is first recognized only to immediately recede. What remains is the figure of Sholem Aleichem who stands as a life-or-death variable in his creator's existence. The non-human, constructed persona falls ill and becomes the conduit for Rabinovitsh's recovery and the fictional interlocutor in his bio-literary network. Rabinovitsh's life, accordingly, becomes dependent on the health of Sholem Aleichem.

The language of Weizman's letter also is representative of the general discourse surrounding the jubilee. In many of the jubilee articles, we see a similar brief reference to Rabinovitsh's name only to have it be immediately replaced by "Sholem Aleichem" or, alternatively, articles that report on Sholem Aleichem make a brief, often parenthetical reference to Rabinovitsh's identity.[62] These articles' authors seem aware of the artifice they manipulate and, accordingly, they know that they must speak of Sholem Aleichem's illness rather than that of Rabinovitsh in order to rouse their readers' interest. Again, there is an anachronistic nod to Miron at play here. These articles know that there is a man named Rabinovitsh and that he is

[62] "Groyser oylem bay'm Sholem Aleykhem ovent," *Der morgn-zhurnal* (New York, December 29, 1908), 7; "Literatur un kunst: dem 11tn Oktober," *D"r Birnboyms vokhenblat* (Czernowitz, September 18, 1908), 16; "'Sholem-Aleykhem' darf hilf fun Amerike," *Der morgn-zhurnal* (New York, December 9, 1908), 4; "Sholem Aleykhem: oyser gefer," *Der morgn-zhurnal* (New York, September 2, 1908), 8; "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Haynt* (Warsaw, September 5 [18], 1908), 4; "A Yiddish Literary Anniversary: A Character Sketch of 'Shalom Alechem'," *The Jewish Chronicle* (London, October 23, 1908), 14; Israel Cohen, "Shalom Aleichem: Letter from Israel Cohen," *The Jewish Chronicle* (London, November 20, 1908), 26; Gershn Levin and Avrom Podlishevski, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems fererer," *Haynt* (Warsaw, September 25 [October 8], 1908), 1.

sick, but the authors choose to mention Rabinovitsh only to call on Sholem Aleichem to intercede and supersede his creator. *Sholem Aleichem* is the name by which Rabinovitsh is known and it is the image of a sick and needy *Sholem Aleichem* that will garner attention. This is a seminal moment when the switch is made from Rabinovitsh to Sholem Aleichem, when the biological reality of Rabinovitsh becomes the disease of his persona, when the parenthesis names the subject. It is a position of value where the non-human figure mediates human, physiological reality.

Tuberculosis and the Yiddish Reader

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Sholem and Aleichem and his readers were certainly not strangers to tuberculosis or, for that matter, to the common linkage asserted between the disease and the Jewish body. Sholem Aleichem, himself, had struck up a correspondence with the physician Maurice Fishberg in 1905, as the Yiddish writer began to make plans for his dramatic work to be produced in America.[63] Fishberg is perhaps best known among Jewish medical historians for his various hypotheses regarding Jewish susceptibility to tuberculosis as well as his 1911 work, *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment*. As Mitchell Hart has shown, Fishberg himself gave various accounts for the lower tuberculosis rates demonstrable in Jewish communities, ranging first from Jewish dietary laws and later to various economic and environmental reasons informed by a social Darwinism.[64]

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[63] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Maurice Fishberg (13 Sept 1905)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 444. The correspondance began in September 1905 and continued through Feruary 1906.

[64] Mitchell Bryan Hart, *The Healthy Jew: The Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 160–163.

For Sholem Aleichem's critics and advocates, however, it was not a racialized etiology of the disease that was being called into question. Rather, at stake for many of these interlocutors was the supposed cultural illness of the Jewish readership evidenced by Sholem Aleichem's illness. In the first decades of the twentieth century, various attempts to modernize Russian Jewry often had the dual goal of improving Jewish living standards as well as normalizing Jewish behavior to correspond to that an idealized co-territorial society. Attention was paid to nearly all facets of Jewish society, from ritual observance to language acquisition, from political affiliation to educational goals, and from literary practices to medical standards.[65] Lisa Rae Epstein, for example, has examined the shift in medical practices and institutions over the long nineteenth century among Russian Jewry.[66] She examines the "changes in health care practices…as a window on to the fluctuations and transformations in the traditional Jewish authority structure in Russia."[67] Of particular importance to Epstein are the efforts made among bourgeois and Russifying Jews to advocate for hygiene education and medical reform to publicly demonstrate efforts to modernize Jewish life. As Epstein argues, these activists were motivated

[65] For an overview of the history of medicine, Jewish culture, and Jewish health activists and reformers in Germany, see John M Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin- de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); John M Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Hart, *The Healthy Jew*. For particular inquiry into the gendered component of German-Jewish philanthropy, see Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Esp. Ch. 7. For an overview of the history of medicine, Jewish culture, and Jewish health activists and reformers in the Russian context, see Natan M. Meir, *Kiev: Jewish Metropolis, A History, 1859-1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Lisa Rae Epstein, *Caring for the Soul's House: The Jews of Russia and Health Care, 1860-1914. Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University* (New Haven: ProQuest/UMI. (Publication No. AAT9615222), 1995). For historical work on the nature of Jewish philanthropy in the Russian context in general, see Brian Horowitz, *Jewish Philanthropy and Enlightenment in Late-Tsarist Russia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009). Of future interest will be the dissertation in progress of Sofiya Grachova of Harvard University entitled, *The Politics of Jewish Life: Medicine and Russian Jews (1881-1930)*.

[66] Epstein refers here to those Jews living within the Russian Empire, particularly Russified-Jews and those living in Russian-speaking areas. Less attention is paid to Polonized Jewry.

[67] Epstein, *Caring for the Soul's House: The Jews of Russia and Health Care, 1860-1914. Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University*, 1.

"both by altruistic and self-serving goals to improve the health of Jews but also to improve their image and status within modern society, in order to render them worthy of acceptance as equals in the eyes of other peoples."[68] The historian of Kiev Natan Meir has echoed Epstein to demonstrate that large-scale philanthropic efforts by Russian Jewry, such as hospitals, were often also initiated with the hope not simply of improving the health of the Jewish body politic but of enhancing its public image.[69] Dr. Gershn Levin, confidant of both Peretz and Sholem Aleichem, would also go on to write several public health pamphlets published by the TOZ, the Society for Safeguarding the Health of the Jewish Population (Polish: Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej). The organziation worked to educate and provide health care to the Jewish population of Poland, particularly recognizing the growing need for such care in the wake of WWI.[70] Levin, in turn, published a volume in 1925 entitled, *Hygiene Among Jews: In the Past and Today*, in which he implored his readers to reform their health practices and to return to the hygienic ways of their ancestors.[71] In the introduction, a Dr. Z. Bikhovksy asks Levin's readers to understand the need for cleanliness and hygiene," which, he claims, they have forgotten by living in exile. "And one of the most important remedies," he notes, "is propaganda for cleanliness in word and writing."[72]

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[68] Ibid., 6.

[69] Meir, *Kiev: Jewish Metropolis, A History, 1859-1914*, 212; 219.

[70] It was a branch of the Saint-Petersburg based OZE, Society for the Protection of Jewish Health (Russian: Obshchestvo Zdravookhraneniia Evreev).

[71] Gershn Levin, *Higieniye bay iden: amol un atsind* (Warsaw: TOZ, 1925).

[72] Z. Bikhovsky, "Forvort," in *Higeniye bay iden amol un atsind*, by Gershn Levin (Warsaw: TOZ, 1925), 6.

Similar rhetoric that would occupy the publications of TOZ had already found its way into editorial columns and literary critiques concerning the ailing Sholem Aleichem. Of particular concern to many writers was the clear link between the 1908 jubilee and the writer's tubercular condition. In October 1908, the Yiddish playwright Dovid Pinski, head of the Sholem Aleichem Jubilee Committee in New York City, wrote a screed against the "slave-psychology" of the Jewish readership. He scolded these readers for not recognizing their great writers until tragedy struck. "Would [Sholem Aleichem] have been remembered," asks Pinski, "had he not become sick and did not need help?"[73] After all, the readership had not recognized other literary greats' twenty-fifth literary anniversaries, such as that of the Yiddish writer Mordkhe Spektor.

Pinski's message would be repeated the next month in the Vilna-based Hebrew newspaper, *Hed ha-zeman*. The anonymous author laments that "in order to merit a jubilee…Sholem Aleichem had to become sick with a dangerous illness [*maḥalah mesukanah*]. He had to be very poor in order to earn this 'honor.'"[74] And, lest this be considered shocking to his readers, the author of this article writes: "Everyone who knows how the idea of the jubilee first came into being knows this." Just as Pinski looks to Spektor's obsolescence, this unnamed Hebrew writer proves the truth of his statement by admitting how the seventieth birthday of the great Yiddish and Hebrew writer Mendele Moykher-Sforim had gone basically unnoticed in the community. This is because, the writer explains, Mendele "had not been dangerously ill [*ḥole mesukan*] then and didn't need the money to recuperate." These two articles, one in New York and one in Vilna, model the disgust present throughout the jubilee literature with how the Jewish reading public related to its writers. Why, these articles ask, does it take a deadly disease to get

[73] Dovid Pinski, "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Der arbayter*, October 3, 1908, 5.

[74] "Siḥot," *Hed ha-zeman*, November 11, 1908, 2.

the wheels of the jubilee in motion? Should Sholem Aleichem's popularity and skill not have merited such attention independent of his illness?

This feeling of embarrassment tinged with incredulity was echoed by multiple jubilee-related articles that posed the question: Who was to blame for the writer's illness? Ostensibly, the cause of Rabinovitsh's disease was simple: mycobacterium tuberculosis. This would not have been a particularly extraordinary fact for Rabinovitsh's contemporaries. After all, the tubercle bacillus had been isolated in 1882 by Robert Koch.[75] Newspaper articles on innovations in the treatment and understanding of the disease appeared in the same editions as announcements for Sholem Aleichem's jubilee.[76] And, as mentioned above, Rabinovitsh's literary confidant Dr. Gershn Levin would himself write several pamphlets about tuberculosis for distribution among Polish Jewry.[77] But the source of Sholem Aleichem's illness would not be described as having been organically-determined. Rather, there emerges in the jubilee literature a curious discourse of blame. According to many in the Yiddish and Hebrew press, the Jewish reading audience was responsible for the *klasiker's* disease. As one Hebrew writer phrased it, "How bitter the irony: the nation of Israel honor its writers with a different present: the disease of tuberculosis."[78]

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[75] For a succinct and classic narration of Koch's discovery, see René J. Dubos and Jean Dubos, *The White Plague: Tuberculosis, Man, and Society* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 100–110. For an English-language biography of Koch, see Thomas D. Brock, *Robert Koch: A Life in Medicine and Bacteriology* (Madison, WI: Science Tech Publishers, 1988).

[76] For just one example, see the 30 September 1908 edition of *Der morgn-zhurnal* (New York). The edition features an article about the implications of the World Tuberculosis Congress, Weizmann's letter, and an article about the number of deaths reported that were caused by tuberculosis. "Yubileum far Sholem Aleykhem," 1; "Der alveltlikher kampf gegn shvindzukht," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, September 30, 1908, 4; "Shvindzukht toytet milyonen mentshn," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, September 30, 1908, 1.

[77] Gershn Levin, "Der kamf mit der shvindzukht," *Haynt*, February 20, 1909; Z. Bikhovski and Gershn Levin, *Higeniye bay iden amol un atsind* (Warsaw: TOZ, 1925); G[ershn] Levin, *Lungen-shvindukht iz heylbar!* (Warsaw: TOZ, 1925). Levin also contributed to a Hebrew volume concerning health and hygiene. See Y.Ḥ. Zagorodski, *Ḥayenu ve-orekh yamenu: etsot ve- ḥukim li-shemor beriʾut ha-guf...* (Warsaw: Bi-defus Shuldberg ṿe-Shatufo, 1898).

[78] Sh. Tshernovitsh, "Le-yovel ha-sifruti shel Shalom-Alekhem," *Hed ha-zeman*, September 20, 1908, 1.

Sholem Aleichem had spent twenty-five years writing for his audience, so the author claimed, and his only return was a debilitating disease. His was a literary life in which the writer had relinquished himself not only of his creativity and talent but his health and blood.[79]

One writer even expressed sarcastic surprise that it had taken so long for Sholem Aleichem to show signs of the disease. "Other Yiddish writers," he explained, "didn't have to wait until their twenty-fifth anniversary; they left the world and spit blood nearly as soon as they started writing for Jews."[80] In a particularly caustic article, the Yiddish writer Hillel Zeitlin tells of an anecdote he had heard from the Hebrew writer, Perets Smolenskin—who had himself died of tuberculosis in 1885. In the anecdote, Smolenskin approaches a *melamed*, a typical Hebrew teacher for young children who has a very low social status. "You've been working for twenty-five years," says Smolenskin to the *melamed*, "and you don't spit blood? You must not be a very good *melamed*."[81] Here, the *melamed*, is a stand-in for the Jewish writer in the employ of the community. Smolenskin's message is extremely bitter. The wages earned by the *melamed*/writer are to be doled out by tuberculosis. Zeitlin interrupts the anecdote at this point to comment that Smolenskin was such a good *melamed* that he was brought to an early grave. Building on Smolenskin's anecdote, Zeitlin notes that Sholem Aleichem was a similarly good *melamed.* His pedagogical method of choice was laughter [*gelekhter*] and in Sholem Aleichem's case, that landed him in a pool of bloody laughter. Here, Zeitlin's words echo the terminology of the writer Sh. Frug. Almost immediately after Sholem Aleichem fell sick, Frug wrote a satiric article

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[79] Talent: "Azav Ha-Yehudi," *ha-Tsevi*, February 19, 1909, 1.; Health: Y. Ug, "Tsu Sholem-Alekhems yubileum," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, October 8 [21], 1908), 2.; Blood: Y. Ug, "Tsu Sholem-Alekhems yubileum," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, October 8 [21], 1908), 2.

[80] Y. Unger, "Dos Sholem-Aleykhem ovent," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, November 9 [22], 1908), 2.

[81] Hillel Zeitlin, "Sholem-Aleykhem: etlekhe verter fun zayn yubileum," *Haynt* (Warsaw, September 11 [24], 1908), 2.

entitled, "Red Laughter" [*Royte gelekhter*]. [82] The article, frequently re-published, declared that after twenty-five years of laughing and inducing laughter, Sholem Aleichem had manifested the "true, authentically-Jewish red laughter." The cost of writing for a Jewish reading audience, it would seem, was the tubercular hemorrhage. "I am convinced," Zeitlin would go on to write in Frug's wake, "that should geniuses the likes of Shakespeare or Goethe appear among us Jews, then they too would be spitting blood somewhere in Baranovitsh."[83]

The importance of this statement is not whether or not Zeitlin knew that Goethe had, in fact, fallen ill from consumption nor that others would one day interpret the illness as coterminous with creativity.[84] Indeed, the language of genius and talent as contingent on tuberculosis are utterly absent from Zeitlin's admonition. Rather, his words communicate the censorious message: Sholem's Aleichem's tuberculosis was caused by his unsupportive and defective readers. His audience had reduced him, as well as others before him, into a pool of bloody laughter. As we continue to explore the rhetorical web surrounding Sholem Aleichem, his name and his illness, we might keep in mind this discursive context into which the sick figure was written. This is a context dominated by self-critical voices that accuse readers of criminal neglect. Tuberculosis here is more than a pulmonary disease. It is a symbol that marks the absence of an audience's attention and financial support. It is a condition that readers activate through their behavioral practices. And it is an object, moreover, in Rabinovitsh/Sholem-

[82] Frug's piece was reprinted in many Yiddish newspapers. For three instantiations, see Sh. Frug, "Der royter gelekhter," *Der arbayter* (New York, October 10, 1908), 6; Sh. Frug, "Der royter gelekhter," *Haynt* (Warsaw, September 7 [20], 1908), 2; Sh. Frug, "Der royter gelekhter," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 4 [17], 1908), 1.

[83] Zeitlin, "Sholem-Aleykhem: etlekhe verter fun zayn yubileum," 2.

[84] Goethe is one of many cases explored by Ebstein in his sketches of tubercular geniuses. Erich Ebstein, *Tuberkulose als Schicksal: Eine Sammling pathographischer Skizzen von Calvin bis Klabund, 1509-1928* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1932), 74–76.

Aleichem's bio-literary network that makes the author dependent on his reader—both financially and physiologically.

Tubercular Sources

For Zeitlen and others, there was to be no romanticization of tuberculosis. This was not the inspirational, ennobling consumption that had taken Keats from the world nor the beautifying disease that had left in its wake scores of pale, languishing female beauties.[85] The representation of consumption in nineteenth century Western European arts and letters was a far cry from twentieth-century tuberculosis in Yiddish and Hebrew literary circles. Here, tuberculosis was the symbol of all that was wrong with the indigent Jewish literary community. Articles such as Zeitlin's endeavored to serve as sharp critiques of the nascent field of Jewish belles-lettres. Yet we would be remiss to ignore that such critique was harnessed to the larger agenda of raising money for the infirmed Sholem Aleichem. Within these critiques was the suggestion that the actions of readers have a direct impact on the health and well being of the writer. Just as Sholem Aleichem reduces his readers to fits of laughter so do his readers reduce him to fits of bloody coughs. Moreover, a diseased Sholem Aleichem, put cynically, was a sympathetic Sholem Aleichem. Recall here Dolly, the tubercular clown, who performed his illness on stage, engendering the laughter and tears of audience members. In 1908, the shame and guilt induced in Sholem Aleicem's reader would similarly be deployed as a fundraising technique. This is explicit

[85] For a discussion of Keats' tubercular history and legacy, see Dubos and Dubos, *The White Plague*, 11–17; Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature*, Esp. Chs. 5 and 7. For a discussion of the aesthetic idealization of the female consumptive in the English context, see Katherine Byrne, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination*, 74 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Esp. Ch. 4; Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature*, Esp. Ch. 6. For a discussion of the aesthetic idealization of the female consumptive in the French context, see David S. Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 50. For a discussion of the aestheticization of the female consumptive as it relates to the feminized image of the Jewish male, see Sander L. Gilman, *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 54.

in the above-cited articles. For example, Dovid Pinski concludes his article by rehashing his thesis: "if it weren't for [Sholem Aleichem's] illness, the holiday would have passed by without a word." He then scolds his readers, saying, "Jews, you are a nation of slaves…. But mercy, sons of mercy you are. Have mercy, give a donation to your poor, sick writer!"[86] Pinski's harsh critique of the relationship between Jewish society and Jewish artists is distilled into this final line—a call for charity on behalf of Sholem Aleichem.

The question we might ask is whether the Jewish reading public would answer that call. According to much of the popular jubilee literature, to do so was the readers' primary obligation. One article in the New York-based *Der Amerikaner* declared it the "holy duty" [*heylige flikht*][87] of each reader to do his part for the fate of the writer and humorist. After all, the writer explained, Sholem Aleichem was the most popular Yiddish writer and he possessed a "truly Yiddish" approach to his writing. More important, the writer noted that the jubilee was not simply being celebrated for its own sake but because the honoree now lies on a sickbed somewhere in an Italian city. Writing for the Warsaw daily, *Haynt*, Levin echoed his New York colleague. The physician declared that every town should form its own, local jubilee committee in order to collect money on behalf of Sholem Aleichem. To do so, he declared was also a "holy duty" [*a heyliker khov*], here drawing on the Yiddish term from the Hebraic component, *khov,* meaning "duty" or "debt."[88] And, writing from the Polish industrial town of Łódź, Y. Lazar emphasized his point, using both *khov* and *flikht* to declare: "Repaying our debt [*khov*] to Sholem

[86] Pinski, "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum (Pinski)," 5.

[87] Ployni ve-koyen, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum: eynige algemeyne shtrikhen vegn dem literarishn verte fun dem grestn yidishn humorist," *Der amerikaner*, November 20, 1908, 5.

[88] Gershn Levin, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Haynt* (Warsaw, September 10 [23], 1908), 1.

Aleichem—that is our holiest duty [*heylikste flikht*] at the moment."[89] From New York to Warsaw to Łódź, it was deemed the obligation of all of Sholem Aleichem's readers to fundraise and donate. These readers owed their writer tubercular blood money.

Why, though, was this repayment of a debt such an imperative? Why did Sholem Aleichem's illness elicit such a response? Countless known and unknown Yiddish and Hebrew writers had suffered from tuberculosis without a jubilee ever being organized. As we will see in Chapter Four, Perets Smolenskin, source of the *melamed* anecdote above, suffered and eventually died from tuberculosis while taking the cure in Meran, Austria. The only effort to supplement his income occurred posthumously when a collection was taken up for his impoverished wife.[90] When Sholem Aleichem became sick, the response was different. Aid came on an international scale and from all levels of society. A general discourse of blame emerged as critics drew links between the habits of a readership and the inevitability of a Jewish writer spitting up blood. Alongside blame, support for Sholem Aleichem was mobilized through the rhetoric of love and pride.

Sholem Aleichem was, simply put, a beloved, popular author. His authorial reputation far overshadowed that of his creator, Rabinovitsh. Sholem Aleichem was both extremely popular and enjoyed by wide swaths of the Yiddish and Hebrew-reading communities.[91] As Yiddish

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[89] Y. Lazar, "Sholem-Aleykhems 25 yoriker yubileum," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, October 10 [23], 1908), 2.

[90] Meir, *Kiev: Jewish Metropolis, A History, 1859-1914*, 156. The call for funds was made in the St. Petersburg-based Hebrew newspaper, *ha-Melits*. See "la-Tmikhat bet Smolenskin," *ha-Melits*, May 29, 1885, 513–514.

[91] There were some exceptions. At the time, some self-proclaimed serious critics and readers regarded his work as silly or simple. This fact is lamented by Nokhem Shtif, writing under the pseudonym Bal-Dimyen. There, he reflects that the Jewish intellegentsia has overlooked him for he seems too simple and not serious enough. Shtif, however, rejects this formulation and analyzes Sholem Aleichem's skills and his particular humor. In particular, Shtif is very interested in Sholem Aleichem's language and his ability to distill realistic speech into a fictional literary world. See Bal-Dimyen, "Sholem-Aleykhem, der folks-shrayber." The idea that Sholem Aleichem was considered too simple was also later recalled by the Yiddish poet, Jacob Glatstein. See Jacob Glatstein, "Menakhem-Mendl," in *In tokh genumen: eseyen 1945-1947* (New York: Matones, 1947), 474–476.

literary scholar Jeremy Dauber has recently shown, at the time he fell ill Sholem Aleichem was selling "thousands of copies of his work" and his name loomed large in newspaers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.[92] Superlatives abound in the jubilee literature and there is no dearth of expressions of love for Sholem Aleichem. We read repeatedly about the wonder of his humor and his ability to free the Jewish reader from his reality through laughter.[93] Over and over again we are told that he is one of the few writers who is able to reach all levels of society, all classes, people of all educational backgrounds, and all genders. He is declared a true, Yiddish folkwriter, the greatest *folksshrayber*, who writes "*from* the *people*, *for* the people" [*fun* folk, *farn* folk].[94] The rhetoric in the articles above is emotional and proprietary. Sholem Aleichem occupies an intimate space in the imagined socio-literary landscape of these writers. In the words of one writer: "Sholem Aleichem lives *with* us and *in* us."[95] Or, in the words of another, "[his] name alone is so Yiddish, so *heymish*."[96] Again, Sholem Aleichem's name resonates with symbolic capital. It, rather than "Rabinovitsh," offers the reader a sense of intimacy and point of connection around which to build a community of readers. Consider the words of a third writer: "Sholem-Aleykhem is *ours*. He belongs to us with his lively language, with his Jewish joke, with

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[92] Dauber, *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem*, 214.

[93] "Sholem-Aleykhem: algemeyne betrakhtungen," *Yidishe arbayter Velt* (New York, January 8, 1909), 4; R. Rapaport, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 3 [16], 1908), 1; Tshernovitsh, "le-Yovel ha-sifruti shel Shalom-Alekhem," 1. In the words of one write, "He laughs because he can do nothing else." See Niser-azl, "Sholem-Aleykhem (tsu zayn yubileum)," *Di tsukunft* 8, no. 12 (December 12, 1908): 5.

[94] Folkwriter: H. Epelberg, "A yontef vokh: tsu Sholem Aleykhems 25 yorikn yubileum," *Teatr velt* 3 (October 16, 1908): 4; Ployni ve-koyen, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," 1; Sh., "le-Yovelo shel Shalom Alekhem," *Hed ha-zeman*, October 7, 1908, 1.; Folksshrayber: Ug, "Tsu Sholem-Alekhems Yubileum," 2.; From the people: Emphasis in original. "Yubileums: Sholem-Aleykhem," *Lidskis familiyen kalender: almanakh* (1909-1910): 52.

[95] Y. Ug, "Sholem-Aleykhem (tsu zayn 25-yeriken yubileum): I," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, October 13, 1908), 2. Noah Pryłucki wrote that "there are names that symbolize the folk to which they belong. Such a symbol is the dear name—Sholem Aleichem. The whole epoch of modern Jewish life is associated with him." Pryłucki, "Sholem-Aleykhem (Part 1)," 5.

[96] Niser-azl, "Sholem-Aleykhem (tsu zayn yubileum)," 6. Italics in original. Bold is mine.

his poverty and *with his sickness*."[97] The writer's illness falls within the domain of responsibility of the Jewish readership. It is what binds him to them. Accordingly, it is their task to help him recover.

The need for proper, successful, lucrative and widespread jubilee celebrations appears to be the result not only of love for Sholem Aleichem but also of its corollary, pride. Previously, we saw how the jubilee reporters expressed their shame as to the state of Hebrew and Yiddish belles-lettres, which they declared led its practitioners to the sick bed. Again, we find the rhetoric of deep embarrassment among these writers who, after extolling Sholem Aleichem, admit that the Jewish readers do not support their writers in the same manner as do their coterritorial Russian and Polish nations with respect to their literary greats. Specifically, they compare the Jewish audience's support for Sholem Aleichem with Russian (and Russian Jewish) support for Tolstoy and Polish (and Polish Jewish) support for the Polish writer, Henryk Sienkiewicz. Sienkiewicz's silver jubilee had been held in 1901, four years before he was to win the Nobel Prize. According to the articles of 1908/1909, there were so many people who donated to the jubilee, among whom were many Jews, that a large property was purchased on his behalf. Why can't a similar estate, ask these articles, be purchased for the bedraggled Sholem Aleichem?[98]

More than Sienkiewicz, the comparative literary touchstone for the majority of these writers professing to be both ashamed and appalled was the Russian graet Count Leo Tolstoy. In

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[97] Italicization of "ours" in original. Italicization of "with his sickness" is mine. R., "Ekspropri'irt Sholem-Aleykhemen!," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 18/October 1, 1908), 1.

[98] For this line of argument, see "Ḥogege-ha-yovelim shelanu," *Hed ha-zeman* (Vilna, November 5, 1908), 1; Yitsḥak Dov Berkowitz, "Sholem Aleykhems yubileum," *Der morgn-zhurnal* (New York, November 16, 1908), 4; B"N [Re'uven Brainen], "Tsum yubileum fun Sholem-Aleykhem," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, October 12 [25], 1908), 2. This is also a point of reference in hindsight for Sholem Aleichem's daughter. See Goldberg, *My Father, Sholom Aleichem*, 240. Specifically, there is interest in purchasing Sholem Aleichem a property in Palestine. SA mentions this in a letter to Gershn Levin. It also was publicly mentioned in the press. See Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Gershn Levin (15 Jan 1909)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 489; "Shalom Alekhem be-erets Yisrael," *ha-Tsevi*, January 31, 1909, 2.

1908, Tolstoy was being celebrated throughout the world on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Like Sholem Aleichem, the Russian writer was ill during this jubilee and his health became a topic in many news dispatches. Although the celebrations in honor of Tolstoy's 80th had been banned by the Czar, articles glorifying him and celebrating his ideology and his status within Russian literary culture proliferated.[99] The Yiddish and Hebrew presses printed numerous news briefs on the ban and his health along with countless articles on the jubilee, the art of Tolstoy's literature, his ideology, and his importance for humanity at large.[100] These articles even appeared in the same editions as those announcing Sholem Aleichem's jubilee, sometimes on the same page.[101] As Barbara Henry has shown, Tolstoy held a particularly revered place in the creative cultural aspirations of Yiddish writers and dramaturges.[102] This is evidenced in the

[99] The majority of Yiddish articles concerned with Tolstoy's jubilee mention this ban. For one example, see Yankl Gelm, "Tolstoys yubileum un di rusishe regirung," *Der amerikaner*, September 18, 1908, 7.

[100] Ban: "Gzeyres af Tolstoy," *Varhayt* (New York, August 5, 1908), 1; "The Tolstoi Celebration," *The Jewish Chronicle* (London, September 25, 1908), 11; "Yidn af der ufname bay shvartsn: Tolstoys hayntiker yubileum," *Haynt* (Warsaw, August 28 [September 10], 1908), 1; Yankl Gelm, "Tolstoys yubileum un di rusishe regirung," *Der amerikaner* (New York, September 18, 1908), 7.; Health: "Di Krankhayt fun L. Tostoy," *Haynt* (Warsaw, August 15 [28], 1908), 1; "Graf Tolstoy baym shtarbn," *Der morgn-zhurnal* (New York, August 27, 1908), 1; "Liyev Tolstoy 80 yor alt," *Fraye arbayter shtime* (New York and Philadelphia, August 29, 1908), 1.; Jubilee: "Fun der letster minut: Graf Tolstoys yubiley," *Haynt* (Warsaw, August 26 [September 8], 1908), 1; "Gantse velt git koved Tolstoyen," *Varhayt* (New York, September 11, 1908), 1; "Leo Tolstoy: zayn lebn, shriftn un tetikayten (tsum hayntikn yubileum)," *Varhayt* (New York, September 10, 1908), 1; B"N [Re'uven Brainen], "Tsum yubileum fun Sholem-Aleykhem," 2.; Literature: "Yidn af der ufname bay shvartsn: Tolstoys hayntiker yubileum," 1; V. Edlin, "Tolstoy iber kunst," *Der amerikaner* (New York, September 18, 1908), 13; Izidor Lazar, "Kinstler un verk: Tolstoy in poeziye un filosofiye," *Roman-tsaytung* 32 (September 4 [17], 1908): 1059–1066.; Ideology: M.L.R., "Tu akhtsikyoriken yubileum fun'm Graf Leo Tolstoy, 1828-1908," *Di naye tsayt: Zamlbukh* 4 (1908): 65–76; A. Tanenboym, "Lev Tolstoy: zayn lebn un zayn virkn," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, September 13, 1908, 4; H. Zolotarov, "Tolstoy," *Di tsukunft* 13, no. 10 (November 1908): 3–8.; Importance for Humanity: "Graf Tolstoy: tsu zayn akhtsikn yubileum," *Der arbayter* (New York, September 5, 1908), 5; "Tsu Lev Tolstoys akhtsikyerikes yubileum," *Roman-tsaytung* 33 (August 28 [Septmeber 10], 1908): 1027–1028; "Liyev Tolstoy," *D"r Birnboyms vokhenblat* (Czernowitz, September 13, 1908), 1–4.

[101] This occurred in *The Jewish Chronicle*. See: "Help Needed for 'Shalom Aleichem,'" *The Jewish Chronicle*, September 25, 1908, 11; "The Tolstoi Celebration," 11. It also occurred in the Warsaw-based *Unzer lebn*. See B"N [Re'uven Brainen], "Tsum yubileum fun Sholem-Aleykhem," 2; Mordkhe Spektor, "Sholem-Aleykhem (tsu zayn 25-yerign yubileum)," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, October 12 [25], 1908), 2.

[102] Barbara Henry, "Tolstoy on the Lower East Side: *Di Kreytster Sonata*," *Tolstoy Studies Journal* 17 (2005): 1–19. For an expansion of this essay, see Barbara Henry, *Rewriting Russia: Jacob Gordin's Yiddish Drama* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

articles concerning Tolstoy's eightieth birthday where reverence for the Russian master borders on the hagiographic. Mention is also made of the physical gifts that Tolstoy's admirers bestow on him. Again, this becomes a source of embarrassment for champions of Sholem Aleichem who wish for a similar material support for the Yiddish writer.[103] That Tolstoy should receive so much more attention from the Jewish press than Sholem Aleichem, report the Yiddish writer's advocates, is scandalous.[104] Knowing how to honor Sholem Aleichem and how to thank him properly becomes a point of pride. As one writer insists, it is a means of increasing the honor of Jewish society by demonstrating that Jews understand the value of their own cultural production.[105] In mapping the bio-literary network of Rabinovitsh, therefore, we find not only his persona and his disease but the self-consciousness and self-censure of the Jewish reading public. The jubilee becomes not only an event to celebrate twenty-five years of Sholem Aleichem's Yiddish literary activity but an occasion that harnesses the author's illness to a larger agenda of normalizing the behavior of the Jewish readership.

Sholem Aleichem's Jubilee Story

As the above sections demonstrate, Rabinovitsh's first bloody cough did more than confine the ailing author to several weeks of bed rest. Rather, it mediated a global response to a beloved literary icon, Sholem Aleichem. This response featured a vigorous discussion in print as to the proper relationship between a reading audience and an adored author. The Jewish reading audience, it would seem, had failed to bring its author anything other than disease and poverty. The lucrative jubilees of Sienkiewicz and Tolstoy in these articles served as embarrassing

[103] B"N [Re'uven Brainen], "Tsum yubileum fun Sholem-Aleykhem," 2.

[104] "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Der arbayter*, November 21, 1908, 5.

[105] R., "Ekspropri'irt Sholem-Aleykhemen!," 1.

counterpoints to the gift of illness offered by the Yiddish and Hebrew audiences to Sholem Aleichem. Sholem Aleichem's illness became part of a larger discussion pertaining to the health of Jewish social norms. Additionally, the above sections have also emphasized that any analysis of the jubilee as an event must take into consideration the name by which its celebrant is heralded. "Sholem Aleichem" is at the center of the celebration and all fundraising efforts on behalf of the sick author are initiated in that name.

The jubilee, moreover, was not only an historical event in the life of Sholem Aleichem and his readers. It was also a literary event marked in Sholem Aleichem's oeuvre by the story "Shmuel Shmelkes and His Jubilee" [*Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileyum*].[106] In 1908, shortly after arriving in Nervi, Italy, Rabinovitsh penned the short story under the byline "Sholem Aleichem."[107] Like many of Sholem Aleichem's short works, this story has remained nearly completely absent from scholarly or popular discussion. I propose that this story must be recuperated not as a model of literary greatness but as a testimony to Sholem Aleichem's literary production at a specific historical moment and with a particular tubercular concern.

Indeed, Sholem Aleichem was no stranger to incorporating the rhetoric of illness, in general, and tuberculosis, specifically, into his creative output. In his 1909 short story, "The Happiest Man in Kodne," he described the pathetic joy of a father who succeeds in securing a doctor's visit for his son who is spitting up blood. He followed this in 1911 with the short story "Call me a Nutcracker!" There the protagonist has difficulty procuring a residence permit in the city of Yehupetz, the fictional stand-in of Kiev. He has come to Yehupetz, as we later learn, to

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[106] There is very little critical writing on this story. For a brief summary of the text, see Dauber, *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem*, 216–217.

[107] For an account of Sholem Aleichem's daily activities in Nervi, see Ibid., 214–215.

seek treatment for his cough, his asthma, and what is later declared "a touch of tuberculosis."[108] Following his own diagnosis, Sholem Aleichem completed his serialized novel *Wandering Stars* (1909-1910), which features his most fully-articulated tubercular character, Hotsmakh.[109] He is a miserable actor and manipulative leader of a Yiddish acting troupe who is told, as Sholem Aleichem himself was told, to travel to Italy to recuperate. Hotsmakh refuses to do so and ultimately dies alone and sick in London.

The space of recuperation would also commonly feature in Sholem Aleichem's work. In 1909, for example, he published the short sketch, "From the Riviera," which narrates the experiences of the patients recuperating on the Italian coast. Despite the exorbitant cost, the patients stay for they believe that the warm air will help soothe their coughs.[110] In 1911, Sholem Aleichem published his epistolary novel, *Marienbad*, which narrates the antics of bourgeois Polish Jewish men and women, who jump from one European spa to another in search of a variety of flings, suitors and romantic dalliances all while supposedly "taking the cure" either for

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[108] Sholem Aleichem, "Ruf mikh knaknisl," in *Ayznban-geshikhtes*, vol. 26, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 277. For an English translation, see Sholem Aleichem, "Go Climb a Tree If You Don't Like It," in *Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories*, trans. Hillel Halkin (New York: Schocken Books, 1987), 269–74. Tuberculosis also features in various asides made by characters in stories included in *The Railroad Stories*, alongside those in the previous two stories. For example, the father whose daughter has committed suicide in the short story "Elul" of 1909 assures his companion that she didn't die of "consumption [*tshakhotke*] or anything like that." See Sholem Aleichem, "Keyver-oves," in *Ayznban-geshikhtes*, vol. 26, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 92; Sholem Aleichem, "Elul," in *Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories*, trans. Hillel Halkin (New York: Schocken Books, 1987), 177.

[109] Sholem Aleichem, *Blondzhende shtern, I*, vol. 10, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (Warsaw: Tsentral, 1914); Sholem Aleichem, *Blondzhende shtern, II*, vol. 11, A *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (Warsaw: Tsentral, 1914). For an English translation of the text, see Sholem Aleichem, *Wandering Stars*, trans. Aliza Shevrin (New York: Viking, 2009).

[110] Sholem Aleichem, "Fun der Rivyere," in *Monologn*, vol. 25, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 215. For an English translation, see Sholem Aleichem, "From the Riviera," in *My First Love Affair and Other Stories*, trans. Curt Leviant (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), 303.

medicinal or social reasons.[111] *Marienbad* also builds on two earlier short stories, the 1901 "In Boyberik" and the 1903 "To the Hot Springs."[112] Both describe the adventures of a bourgeois family that spends the summer in Boyberik, a hot summer destination outside of Kiev. The town is populated by the usual mix of social climbers and consumptives. The fictional town of Boyberik was, in fact, based on the Kiev suburb Boiarka, where a free sanatorium for destitute consumptives had been established in 1899 by A.P. Tul'chinskaia.[113] Rabinovitsh and his family, moreover, spent several summers at their dacha in Boiarka.[114]

Through Sholem Aleichem's work, tuberculosis and "the cure" would come to signify a variety of social and physiological ailments. It was a disease of the shtetl and of the bourgeois social climbers, of would-be urban transplants and holidaying Ukrainian Jewry, of ambitious brokers of the Yiddish theater and of patients like himself who found themselves on the Italian

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[111] Sholem Aleichem, *Maryenbad*, in *Zumer-lebn*, vol. 11, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 119–292. For an English translation, Sholem Aleichem, *Marienbad*, trans. Aliza Shevrin (New York: Putnam, 1982).

[112] "In Boyberik" was later renamed "Goles datshe [Diaspora Summer Hut]." There are multiple passages about the air quality, local sanatoria, and the kefir that the patients are forced to imbibe—an experience Sholem Aleichem would one day share. Sholem Aleichem, "Goles datshe," in *Zumer-lebn*, vol. 11, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 7–72. For an English translation, see Sholem Aleichem, "Home Away from Home," in *Stories and Satires*, trans. Curt Leviant (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1959), 308–49. In "To the Hot Springs," readers encounter guests seeking all types of therapy in Boyberik (hydrotherapy, massages, etc.) as well as other characters on their way to the more fashionable West European spas of Marienbad and Baden-Baden. Sholem Aleichem, "In di varembeder," in *Zumer-lebn*, vol. 11, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 73–118. For an English translation, see Sholem Aleichem, "To the Hot Springs," in *Stories and Satires*, trans. Curt Leviant (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1959), 350–78.

[113] Meir, *Kiev: Jewish Metropolis, A History, 1859-1914*, 237.

[114] One could also add here the consumptive references in two of Sholem Aleichem's most famous monologues, "The Pot" of 1901 and "Geese" of 1902. In the former, though consumption is never named, it is the ominous health threat that hovers over the widow who narrates the story. Her husband coughed himself into the grave and her son, dangerously flirting with secular studies, is currently sick with that very same ominous cough. We find another educated, consumptive son of an impoverished market woman who coughs and coughs throughout the monologue, "Geese." From the turn of the century, pesky coughs appear as a frivolous complaint of the bourgeoisie or the fatal sickness of an impoverished student. Sholem Aleichem, "Dos tepl," in *Monologn*, vol. 25, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 7–26; Sholem Aleichem, "Genz," in *Monologn*, vol. 25, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 27–44.

coast. Indeed in 1908, shortly after arriving in Nervi, he penned a story where tuberculosis was also ever present if, in fact, never named.[115] He drafted the text in order to provide newspapers and jubilee committees around the world with a new work to honor his twenty-five years of literary production. This was the text chosen by Rabinovitsh/Sholem-Aleichem to be read at fundraising events around the world. And, at celebrations across the globe, the story was read aloud, printed in local newspapers and even published as a separate booklet in a Hebrew translation.[116]

The story was also the first of Sholem Aleichem's works to appear nearly simultaneously in several languages. The text appeared in its entirety in multiple Yiddish newspapers, it featured as a booklet in a Hebrew translation and a selection appeared in English in the London-based newspaper, *The Jewish Chronicle*.[117] Additionally, the Russian Jewish historian Simon Dubnow himself made plans to have it translated into Russian for Sh. Anski's Russian-Jewish journal,

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[115] He continued to write despite being explicitly prohibited from doing so by his doctors and the protestations of his family. Sholem Aleichem mentions the doctor's prohibition in "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileum." Sholem Aleichem, "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileum," in *Fun Kasrilevke*, vol. 19, *Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleykhem* (New York: Morgn-Frayhayt, 1937), 204. Doctors at the time emphasized that rest was necessary for recuperation and over-stimulation by any means was deleterious to one's condition. For a brief overview of the importance of rest in the healing process, see Dubos and Dubos, *The White Plague*, 146–153. For a Yiddish elaboration on the point, see M. Gotlieb, *Zayt gezund: sukhote (shvindzukht)*, vol. II (Warsaw: Tsukermans Folksbibliotek, 1899), 39. In a letter to Gershn Levin of August 1908, Sholem Aleichem writes. "My wife thanks you for your short letter. She won't let me write more. A wife is a censor [*Mayn vayb dankt aykh zeyer far ayer brivl. Zi lozt mikh mer nit shrayben. A vayb iz a tsenzor*]." Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Gershn Levin (August 1908)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 472.

[116] In New York, the story was read aloud by Dovid Pinski, head of the Sholem Aleichem Jubilee Committee in New York at the Thalia Theater on Monday, December 28, 1908. For a description, see "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Der arbayter* (New York, December 12, 1908), 1; "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Der arbayter* (New York, December 19, 1908), 1; "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Der arbayter* (New York, December 26, 1908), 1; "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Der arbayter* (New York, January 2, 1909), 1. The text was published in the New York Yiddish weekly, *Der amerikaner*, from 8 Jan 1909 to 15 Jan 1909; in the Vilna-based Hebrew weekly, *Hed ha-zeman,* from 14 Jan 1909 to 9 Feb 1909; and in the Warsaw-based Yiddish daily, *Der fraynd*, from 7 [20] December 1908 to 18 [31] December 1908. Sholem Aleichem, *Shmuel Shmelkis ve- ḥag-yovlo* (Vilna: Zaldaski Dfus, 1909).

[117] An English translation of the introduction appeared in *The Jewish Chronicle*. Sholem Aleichem, "Shmuel Shmelkess and His Jubilee," trans. Israel Cohen, *The Jewish Chronicle*, November 27, 1908, 34.

Evreĭskiĭ mir, although the plan was never realized.[118] Although his work had appeared in various translations by 1908, this jubilee celebration afforded Sholem Aleichem the opportunity to reach his readers throughout the world in multiple languages and at the same time.

Building on the work of Bourdieu, Pascale Casanova has written of the existence of a "world republic of letters," in which certain geographic spaces and languages acquire prestige and legitimacy due to historical circumstances. The process of entering this literary republic can take several forms, one of which she calls *littérisation*. This "literary transmutation," she writes, "is achieved by crossing a magic frontier that allows a text composed in an unprestigious language—or even a nonliterary language, which is to say one that either does not exist or is unrecognized in the verbal market place—to pass into a literary language."[119] Here, a story written in a language frequently dismissed as "jargon" is consecrated as it moves simultaneously into two languages with far more prestige! It is in this movement and with this story that Sholem Aleichem enters a Jewish world republic of letters. To clarify, at this moment Sholem Aleichem does not become an "international" writer in Casanova's definition. He does not become a denationalized practitioner of an autonomous conception of literature (like Joyce). Rather, he remains decidedly "national" in the Casanovan sense, remaining consistent in his popular literary style.[120] But, while remaining "national," he enters multiple Jewish literary spaces across the globe and experiences *littérisation* in the multi-lingual, transnational Jewish literary marketplace.

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[118] This is related in an unpublished letter from Dubnow to Sholem Aleichem. It appears that there were plans to have it translated into Russian for Sh. Anski's journal, *Evreĭskiĭ mir*. However, it was not printed in the journal. See Simon Dubnow, "Letter to S. Rabinovitsh," November 24, 1908, Box 10, Folder lamed-dalet 7/19, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive.

[119] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 136.

[120] Ibid., 108.

That "Shmuel Shmelkes" should afford Sholem Aleichem this extensive recognition is, however, curious. Jubilee committee members and editors hyperbolically praised the short story, no doubt in an effort to drum up support for the writer whose illness was never far from the reporter's pen.[121] Yet a more accurate assessment of the story was offered by Rabinovitsh's son-in-law, secretary and literary executor, Yitsḥak Dov Berkowitz. Berkowitz described the story as "almost like the cry of a wounded, sick man" and noted that "this satire came from the exhausted hand of an overly-sharp Sholem Aleichem, pathetic and tragic."[122] Sholem Aleichem himself wavered in his assessment of the story. In one letter he declared that "it came out better than I thought."[123] In another, he questioned "whether it did really come out weak."[124] The story that would mark Sholem Aleichem's jubilee was, in fact, no more than a rather weak, thinly-veiled autobiographical allegory of a writer abandoned by his readers. Yet its importance lies elsewhere. First, it participates in the language of the jubilee articles and attempts to garner support. Second, it involves Sholem Aleichem in the life and illness of Rabinovitsh. Once again, we may read the text as demonstrating the importance of Sholem Aleichem as a name and entity in soliciting help on Rabinovitsh's behalf.

We may begin by turning to the introduction, entitled "Apologies from the Author." Before readers are introduced to the eponymous character, "Shmuel Shmelkes," they are offered

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[121] In the New York newspaper, *Der morgn-zhurnal*, an anonymous author declared the story to the "gem of all that this great humorist has written until now." "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileum," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, January 4, 1909, 2.

[122] Berkowitz, *ha-Rishonim ki-vene adam*, 631.

[123] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Gershn Levin (12 Nov 1908)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 477.

[124] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Yitskhok Yampolski (no Date)," ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 486.

prefatory remarks signed by "Sholem Aleichem, October 25, 1908, Nervi, Italy."[125] Lest the reader miss the cues offered by this geographic and chronologic stamp, Sholem Aleichem as author explains that he is writing this introduction while taking the cure in Italy. He is, admittedly, sick. Accordingly, he asks his readers' forgiveness—hence the "Apologies" in the title—should any of "the scenes come out a bit pale at times, a bit short at times, and even a bit weak at times." In other words, he apologizes that the texts may have assumed the same tubercular affect that he now manifests as a pale, shrinking and weak invalid. On the one hand, we might read this as a typically self-deprecating gesture that merely serves to encourage the reader to see the beauty of the text. On the other, we may read here the hesitant voice of Sholem Aleichem from his letters, unsure whether his text has come out successfully or visibly weak.

The importance of this preface also should not be underestimated. The archival record makes clear that the Yiddish author gave explicit instructions for this introduction to accompany each publication of "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileyum."[126] As Gerard Genette reminds us, a preface serves as the forum in which an author "offer[s] the reader an advance commentary on a text the reader has not yet become familiar with."[127] It is a moment in the text when the author attempts "*to ensure the text is read properly*."[128] Accordingly, this introduction makes clear that this short story must be read in light of Sholem Aleichem's illness. If the story is weak, by extension, readers should consider the situation of its sickly author. The entire story is girded by the acknowledgment of its tubercular aesthetic.

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[125] Sholem Aleichem, "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileum," 1937, 205.

[126] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Y.D. Berkovits", October 14, 1908, Folder mem-bet 32/85, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive.

[127] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 237.

[128] Ibid., 197.

There is an additional message that runs throughout this introduction. Consider the opening line: "There is nothing in the world that is so bad that some good can't come of it [*nisht af der velt aza shlekhts, vos zol nit aroyskumen derfun keyn toyve*]." Sholem Aleichem explains that just as leeches are of use to a sick person, bees make honey, and Spanish flees are good for an ulcer, so too can all negative situations generate something positive.[129] Here is the laughter through tears ethos evoked through the prism of pests. More important, here is the silver lining to Sholem Aleichem's illness. Sholem Aleichem writes that he learned this lesson when he was recuperating in Baranovitsh for two months.[130] During that period, the doctors forbade him from speaking, reading or writing, which for him was the equivalent of asking a drunk not to drink. But, like the honey from a bee, Sholem Aleichem would go on to use this time to produce something sweet. He explains that he spent the time thinking and crafting stories and scenes in his head. As soon as he crossed the border into Italy he put ink to paper. It is now his desire, he writes in the introduction, to offer these works to his readers, who have had the patience to read his work for the past twenty-five years. Again, he maintains, "sometimes a person can make some use of the greatest misfortune [*a mol ken men funem gresten umglik oykh hobn a shtikl nutsn*]."[131] Perhaps, the reader is invited to respond, perhaps a jubilee?

The short story that follows does, of course, boast the title "Shmuel Shmelkes *un zayn yubileyum*." This is a story about a jubilee and, what's more, a twenty-fifth jubilee of a devoted, talented and under-appreciated Yiddish writer. The eponymous protagonist, Shmuel Shmelkes, is a hapless hero who lives in Sholem Aleichem's quintessential shtetl, Kasrilevke. The features of

[129] Sholem Aleichem, "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileum," 1937, 203.

[130] Ibid., 203–204.

[131] Ibid., 205.

his life share much in common with the biography of Rabinovitsh. Like Rabinovitsh, Shmuel Shmelkes marries the daughter of a wealthy man, loses all his father-in-law's money after the patriarch's death, and fails at making a living as a Yiddish writer. The protagonist writes and writes but receives neither payment nor critique. With great pathos, the narrator explains that Shmuel Shmelkes had expected neither but that did not stop him from writing diligently like a bee bringing forth honey.[132] The narrator repeats the phrase used in Sholem Aleichem's introduction. There, the bee's honey was seen as the positive outcome of a negative situation (i.e. sweet honey from a stinging bee). Here, it reads as a metaphor for industriousness. However, if we read this phrase against the introductory comment, a more nuanced critique emerges. Like those writers who lambasted the Jewish reading public for its treatment of its authors, Sholem Aleichem here appears to critique a literary milieu in which Shmuel Shmelkes (a bee) brings forth great literature (honey) and no one notices or seems to appreciate his efforts. His situation as a writer is terrible yet he sojourns forth in his literary pursuits.

Returning to the story, readers learn that Shmuel Shmelkes is about to be evicted. He has fallen into such penury that he cannot maintain the large apartment that he inherited from his father-in-law (again, the parallels to Rabinovitsh's life would have been obvious to his immediate circle). He was forced to sell the apartment to the local, unsympathetic rich man. While on the way to his landlord's house to ask for a reprieve, Shmuel Shmelkes opens up the latest Yiddish newspaper to learn that his twenty-five years of literary activity are to be celebrated. He begins to daydream and imagines grandiose celebrations in his honor. Yet at the end of the story, his daydream ends abruptly. He returns to his house, eager to tell his wife the good news only to discover that he has been evicted. The final scene finds him impoverished,

[132] Ibid., 217.

homeless, and helpless. He cannot revel in the jubilee for he is left desperate, exiled from his house, the sun beating down on his sweating brow. The allegory is heavy-handed. Similar to the experience of Sholem Aleichem, it is only at a moment of crisis that a jubilee in honor of Shmuel Shmelkes is proposed. And, like Shmuel Shmelkes, Sholem Aleichem is left exiled from his cultural homeland of the Pale of Settlement precisely at the moment when he is to be celebrated. Like the sweating, homeless Shmuel Shmelkes, Sholem Aleichem is relegated to the hot climes of the Mediterranean Coast. Berkowitz's understanding of the text as the product of a depressed writer appears accurate as we consider this upsetting conclusion of the short story.

The parallels between Shmuel Shmelkes and Sholem Aleichem are also more than anecdotal. The connection between the two characters is evidenced onomastically. Recall here that the name "Sholem Aleichem" was a productive choice for Rabinovitsh. As mentioned earlier, "Sholem Aleichem" is a typical Yiddish greeting derived from a Hebrew phrase meaning, "Peace be upon you." The friendly, everyman quality of the name is also evokes the common habit of explaining Sholem Aleichem's name in English as "Mr. How-Do-You-Do?"[133] And, just as that interrogative moniker would likely compel a stock response of "fine," "Sholem-Aleichem" as a greeting elicits the standard response, "Aleichem-Sholem." This call-and-response quality empowers the persona to initiate a sense of intimacy and camaraderie as soon as the reader recites the persona's name.

"Shmuel Shmelkes" shares this ability. His name immediately implies that the readers are on friendly terms with him. There exists in Yiddish a phrase, "*zayn mit emetsn a shmelke*" which might be translated, "to be intimate with someone," intimacy here referring to being on close terms with someone rather than connoting any sexual relation. A "*shmelke*" is an intimate, a

[133] For one example, see Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing*, 8.

friend, someone whom you know well.[134] Accordingly, Shmuel Shmelkes might be translated to "My buddy Sam."[135] Rabinovitsh has created here another friendly everyman for his reader to relate to. Each of his readers, no doubt, has a buddy named Shmuel—a very popular name—and, accordingly, Shmuel Shmelkes assumes the pal-next-door quality of relatability and intimacy. "*Shmelke*" also has a secondary meaning. The phrase "*er iz a gantser shmelke*" translates to, "he is quite a prominent figure." *Shmelke* in fact means both "your buddy Joe" and "big man on campus." Shmuel Shmelkes embodies these characteristics. He is both the average poor Kasrilevke resident, trying each day to avoid the muddy streets, and the Yiddish writer being celebrated from afar. He is both relatable and incomprehensible. In other words, Shmuel Shmelkes is Sholem Aleichem by another name—in fact, another name that begins with the same letter: shin.

One might interject here that Shmuel Shmelkes is not a code name for Sholem Aleichem but for Sholem Rabinovitsh. His name also begins with the letter "shin" and, as I have noted above, many of the facts of Shmuel Shmelkes' life parallel those of Rabinovitsh. However, even in a story with autobiographical elements, Rabinovitsh persistently deflects from his own identity. He will not talk about himself directly but relies on a character whose folksy, cartoonish name refers back to Rabinovitsh's famous persona, Sholem Aleichem. Shmuel Shmelkes is not simply a stand-in for Rabinovitsh but a second link in his chain of personas, referring back to Sholem Aleichem before broaching the actual author. Here is also where the effect of the introduction is felt most strongly. Sholem Aleichem has put his imprimatur on the text so even a character whose life profile mirrors Rabinovitsh must be understood through the presence of

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[134] Alexander Harkavy, "Shmelke," *Yiddish-English-Hebrew Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press in Cooperation with YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2006), 510.

[135] Another translation would take into account the patronymic implied by the name, *Shmuel Shmelkes*. The form suggests that *Shmuel* is the son of *Shmelke*. Both translation, however, imply an intimacy or familiarity.

Rabinovitsh's greatest literary mediator, Sholem Aleichem. Again, what is intriguing about the jubilee literature and this text is that precisely when Rabinovitsh falls sick and is diagnosed with tuberculosis, he does not present himself to his readers under his own name but rather continues to rely on a series of personas and authorial stand-ins to appeal to his audience. In this moment when the *real* author is suffering, it is his persona who presents his illness and advocates on his behalf. Rabinovitsh is pushed further into the background rendering his literary creation, Sholem Aleichem, all the more immediate and animated.

Two additional episodes in the text warrant our attention. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how this story functioned not just as an allegory of a Yiddish writer abandoned by his audience but how it manifests some of the same rhetorical techniques of those jubilee articles attempting to raise awareness and money on behalf of the sick Sholem Aleichem. The first incident of note concerns the Russian master, Lev Tolstoy. Recall here that the celebration of Tolstoy's 80th birthday, also called a "jubilee [*yoyvel*]," immediately preceded and overlapped with the jubilee celebrations in honor of Sholem Aleichem. The seventh section of the short story is entitled, "Shmuel Shmelkes and Count Tolstoy."[136] When the chapter opens, we find Shmuel Shmelkes happily hopping along the muddy streets of Kasrilevke, basking in the news of his jubilee, relishing in the word with its enervating, curative power as a "balsam to his bones."[137] When he glances in the newspaper a second time, he notices that there, on the same page, is an announcement for the jubilee of Count Lev Tolstoy. At first, he laughs and asks himself the rhetorical question: "How did he, the tiniest star, come to be next to the greatest flaming sun that illuminates the whole world?"[138] Then, his mood changes and he begins to ask: Why not? Isn't

[136] Sholem Aleichem, "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileum," 1937, 226–228.

[137] Ibid., 226.

he the same in the small town of Kasrilevke as Tolstoy is for the world at large? Didn't he, the little star, light his own small plot of land called Kasrilevke? Who but he showed that there were pearls in the muddy landscape of Kasrilevke? Why shouldn't the folks of Kasrilevke make their own hubbub in his honor as the "nations of the world [*umos haoylem*]" (i.e. non-Jews) do for their writers? The line of questioning leads Shmuel Shmelkes to imagine that just such a celebration is occurring around him. Moreover, this line of questioning echoes those contemporaneous writers in the Yiddish and Hebrew press who posed a similar question in relation to another author: Sholem Aleichem. If Tolstoy has been celebrated with such pomp, they asked, why not Sholem Aleichem? Shmuel Shmelkes, in other words, becomes an advocate for the same type of Jewish communal self-criticism as those writers drumming up support for Sholem Aleichem. Both make the celebration of the jubilee an issue of pride, poking the egos of their readers, and prompting them to ask the same self-critical questions.

This line of argumentation concerning comparisons with Tolstoy may have been of specific interest to Sholem Aleichem, who was keenly aware of the power and influence of Tolstoy. In 1903, after the Kishinev Pogrom, Sholem Aleichem helped organize the publication of the literary anthology, *Hilf* [*Help*], the profits of which were to go to help the families of those who lost loved ones and property during the attack.[139] As an organizer of the project, Sholem Aleichem solicited various writers to submit pieces for publication, including Tolstoy, whose work was sure to bring a sense of gravitas to the project. Tolstoy responded positively to the request to participate and Sholem Aleichem, himself, translated three short stories from Russian

[138] Ibid., 227.

[139] Editors of the *Yudishe folktsatung*, *hilf: a zamlbukh far literatur un kunst* (Warsaw: Folks-bildung, 1903).

into Yiddish for publication.[140] Their correspondence was also published in the Yiddish press.[141] Sholem Aleichem's history with Tolstoy also demonstrates that the Yiddish writer understood the potential fundraising power that Tolstoy's name carried with it and, as it would appear, he was not afraid to deploy that name, albeit in a different model, on his behalf in 1908.

Moreover, Sholem Aleichem had previously used the Russian master as a reference point for his own censure of the Jewish reading public as regards their relationship to Jewish writers. 1906 marked the seventieth birthday ("jubilee") and fiftieth year of literary activity of Mendele Moykher-Sforim. Writing in the Hebrew paper *Hed ha-zeman* in 1908, an anonymous writer reflected that no one had celebrated Mendele's jubilee because he, unlike Sholem Aleichem in 1908, had not been ill.[142] Generally speaking, the author of this article was correct. There had been celebrations among literati throughout the world, but there had been no corollary fundraising effort or massive events.[143] Certainly, there was nothing that appraoches the broad scope of Sholem Aleichem's jubilee of 1908. However, in 1906, Sholem Aleichem was one such

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[140] L.N. Tolstoy, "Dray mayses," in *Hilf: a zamlbukh far literatur un kunst*, ed. Editors of the *Yudishe folktsatung*, trans. Sholem Aleichem (Warsaw: Folks-bildung, 1903), 20–33.

[141] Sholem Aleichem, "Sholem-Aleykhem un Tolstoy," *Forverts*, July 19, 1903, 4; Lev Tolstoy, "A brif fun Graf Tolstoy tsu Sholem-Aleykhemen," *Yudishe folk-tsaytung*, June 3, 1903, 4; Lev Tolstoy, "Tsum zamlbukh 'hilf,'" *Yudishe folk-saytung*, September 23, 1903, 14–15.

[142] "Siḥot," 2.

[143] For a sample of reports regarding jubilee celebrations in Mendele's honor held in 1906 and 1907, see "Rebi Mendele Moḥer Sfarim (hirhurim u-maḥshavot le-yovel shenat ha-shiv'im shelo be-yom dalet tet"vav tevet), I," *Hashkafah* (Jerusalem, January 23, 1907), 6; "Rebi Mendele Moḥer Sfarim (hirhurim u-maḥshavot le-yovel shenat ha-shiv'im shelo be-yom dalet tet"vav tevet), II," *Hashkafah* (Jerusalem, January 25, 1907), 3; Kh. Aleksadrov, "Amerike un Mendeles yubileum (a brif fun Nu-York)," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, February 12 [25], 1906), 1; "A Mendele-ovnt in Peterburg," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, January 28 [February 10], 1911), 2; "Oysland: Berlin," *Di tsayt* (Vilna, February 2, 1906), 2; Yoysef Luria, "Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh," *Dos yudishe folk* (Warsaw, December 25, 1906), 1–2. Of particular interest are the multiple articles in the publication *Gut morgn* out of Mendele's own city, Odessa in the month of December. The series by Moyshe Kleynman is especially celebratory. See Moyshe Kleynman, "Di vokh fun Mendele Moykher Sforim: der Zeyde zol lebn, I," *Gut morgn*, December 22, 1910; Moyshe Kleynman, "Di vokh fun Mendele Moykher Sforim: der zeyde zol lebn, II," *Gut morgn*, December 23, 1910; Moyshe Kleynman, "Di vokh fun Mendele Moykher Sforim: der zeyde zol lebn, III," *Gut morgn*, December 24, 1908; Moyshe Kleynman, "Di vokh fun Mendele Moykher Sforim: der zeyde zol lebn, IV," *Gut morgn*, December 26, 1908.

writer who advocated for a public demonstration. Writing from New York in the Warsaw-based *Der veg*, Sholem Aleichem agitated on behalf of a Mendele jubilee, writing that Mendele would have been considered a jewel had he written for "the nations of the world [*umos haoylem*]." But, as he wrote for Jews in a Jewish language, "he had not anyhow expected to acquire from his work something like the Yasnaya Polyana of Count Tolstoy."[144] There was to be no palatial estate for Mendele. Nor, Sholem Aleichem continues, could Mendele expect even a home in Odessa. Once again, we find here an issue of literary competition that resonated with nationalist tensions. Sholem Aleichem laments that Mendele could not expect the same financial success as his Russian counterpart. Sholem Aleichem's words also presage Shmuel Shmelkes' own question: Why shouldn't the folks of Kasrilevke make their own hubbub in his honor as the "nations of the world [*umos haoylem*]" do for their writers? Clearly, this was a question that had been of concern for Sholem Aleichem for at least several years. At the time of Mendele's jubilee however, Sholem Aleichem was alone in voicing his complaint. In 1908, Shmuel Shmelkes' question joined the extant terms of the jubilee literature by diminishing readers' confidence in their ability to serve as a support network for their writers.

After Shmuel Shmelkes begins to compare himself to Tolstoy, as mentioned above, a jubilee celebration worthy of the Russian master appears around the protagonist. The text offers a rather prescriptive description of what such a jubilee should be like. Standing off to the side of the celebration, Shmuel Shmelkes sees the beginning of a great and luxurious evening. The commotion begins. Speeches are held in his honor. He is compared to Tolstoy! There is wine and gold all around him! People stand up and declare that they should buy Shmuel Shmelkes a business, an inn, even a mansion on a large property with beautiful grounds. And then one

[144] Yasnaya Polyana was Tolstoy's estate. Sholem Aleichem, "Tsu Mendele Moykher-Sforims yubileum," *Der veg* (Warsaw, January 19, 1906), 1.

person exclaims: "What does he need money for? Health—that is the most important!."[145] Money and health—these are the two values to be emphasized. Shmuel Shmelkes, who shares many aspects of Rabinovitsh's biography is not described as sick, rendering this reference to health almost a blinking arrow pointing towards Sholem Aleichem of the introduction. He is far away and sick on the Italian Coast. In a letter he wrote dated four days earlier than this short story, he described himself as "alone, sick, rejected, [and] torn from" from those celebrating his jubilee in his "beloved home."[146] Nor can one ignore the circumstances of this text's creation: Rabinovitsh needed money. A jubilee in honor of Sholem Aleichem was planned and all the profits were to go to the sick author.

The story here exceeds its function as entertaining fiction and serves as a rather blunt reminder of the funds and cure for which Sholem Aleichem was in desperate need. Here, we might also recall the message of the introduction that even the worst of situations can generate positive outcomes. Shmuel Shmelkes, evicted and destitute, is left with only an imaginary jubilee celebration. The task for this story's readers, I suggest, is to actualize that celebration and to ensure that the finances and health of Rabinovitsh's persona are the primary concern. The story stands as a warning to readers lest they render their beloved author homeless and destitute like Shmuel Shmelkes. The text accomplishes this goal by using the same fundraising rhetoric that the contemporaneous articles in the press deployed. Tolstoy is ever-present in the life of Sholem Aleichem and Shmuel Shmelkes. Perhaps this is the reason for Sholem Aleichem having written what, as Berkowitz suggested, was not his most optimistic or elaborate story. After all, it is a fundraising text filled with newspaper jargon that seems to question the ability of those to whom

[145] Sholem Aleichem, "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileum," 1937, 233.

[146] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Mordkhe Spektor (21 Oct 1908)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 473.

it appeals to orchestrate a jubilee. Recall that Shmuel Shmelkes' experienced the jubilee only in his head. He read about it in the papers but did not see any direct benefit from the supposed celebrations.

On the one hand, "Shmuel Shmelkes" may read more along the lines of a plaintive appeal for funds than an exemplar of Sholem Aleichem's literary aspirations. On the other hand, we see here Sholem Aleichem's reliance on the potential of fiction to determine the welfare of a real-life author. Like the figure Sholem Aleichem, this short story becomes the fictional vehicle that is meant to mediate the health and finances of Rabinovitsh. The story can be understood precisely within Rabinovitsh/Sholem-Aleichem's bio-literary network, where a fictional agent becomes the means by which the tubercular author approaches his readers and attempts to win their material support and affection. Rather than read this text as a disappointing moment in Sholem Aleichem's career, I would suggest that we understand the text as the ultimate indication of Rabinovitsh's belief in and/or dependence on the fictional mode to affect real-life change. It is through this short story that that Rabinovitsh addresses his readers and encourages them to render the fate of "Sholem Aleichem" different from that of Shmuel Shmelkes. The short story becomes Rabinovitsh's mouthpiece in Sholem Aleichem's jubilee.

The Jubilee's Financial Success

A noticable feature of "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileyum" is its finite effect. Following its initial publication, it virtually faded into oblivion and is not featured in any English-language collection of Sholem Aleichem. Yet the commercial impact of the text cannot be understated. Again, we must recall here that in the short story the protagonist dreams of a jubilee celebration in which attendants declare that the writer needs both money and health.

Without both, he cannot continue to write. The need for both was felt acutely by Rabinovitsh in Nervi, Italy. In a letter to his literary confidant Yankev Dinezon, written at the same time as the short story, Sholem Aleichem wrote that in order to continue writing as he wished to do, he needed his health. And in order to regain his full health, he needed "light, sun, and good food. And for these three things," he explained, "one needs money, money, and money, and at this point I have bad luck [*a gut oyg*], grief [*agmes-nefesh*] and a whole lot of nothing [*nekhtikn tog*]."[147] Sholem Aleichem then continues the letter by describing, in a more jocular manner, his terrible cough, headaches, and rising temperature. Beneath the rhetoric, the letter makes clear that he is ill and in desperate need of money, money, money.

The letter also stands in stark contrast to one written the following month to Dr. Gershn Levin. This letter boasts a curious second line: "No more money needs to be sent to me here."[148] What had happened since his desperate plea to Dinezon one month prior? How had his perspective changed in so short a period? Sholem Aleichem goes on to explain in this letter to Levin that, since the previous month, he had since received hundreds of rubles from supportive cities, including Vilna, Bialistok, and Irkutsk. He had also become acquainted with a potential patron from the Caucuses named Sh. Sharira. He had also learned that societies were being organized in honor of his jubilee being in London, Kiev, Warsaw, Odessa, and America. This is one of Sholem Aleichem's most genuinely positive and joyful letters in his vast body of correspondence. The letter lacks any undertone of pain or resentment. Rather, it projects an

[147] "A gut oyg:" Literally: "a good eye." This is an example of an antiphrasis in Yiddish. The phrase "a good eye" connotes "an evil eye" which I have rendered "bad luck."The letter is misattributed and misdated in the collected letters of Sholem Aleichem to Mordkhe Spektor. See Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Mordkhe Spektor (Oct-Nov 1908) (sic.)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 475. I have consulted with the original letter addressed to Yankev Dinezon in the Beit Sholem Aleichem Archive. See Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Yankev Dinezon", October 18 [31], 1908, Folder mem-dalet 4/45, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive.

[148] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Gershn Levin (23 Nov 1908)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 478.

image of a sick but energized author, excited at the immediate response of his devoted readership and possible patronage opportunities.

The following section reconstructs and analyzes the international response mobilized to help the Yiddish master, the beginnings of which we see described by an enthusiastic Sholem Aleichem in the letter above. We have already noted that much of the jubilee literature describes at length how beloved an author Sholem Aleichem was. This section will assess whether that love resulted in successful fundraising efforts. Was Sholem Aleichem's illness able to mobilize his readership into action? Were his readers able to meet their so-called "holy duty" to help the writer? Did Sholem Aleichem's diagnosis of tuberculosis, in fact, trigger a chain of events that augmented his literary and economic capital?

As noted above, one of the more interesting pieces in the literary history of "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileyum" is that the story was published in three major languages: Hebrew, Yiddish and English. While Sholem Aleichem was known to publish in multiple newspapers at once, unique to this incident is the nearly simultaneous appearance of this story in multiple languages in multiple cities. The history of the story mirrors the international character of the jubilee celebrations, in general. Between October 1908 and February 1909, events were planned, committees were established, and money was raised in the Pale of Settlement (Bialistok, Łódź, Odessa, Vilna, Warsaw) urban centers of the Russian Empire (Kiev, St. Petersburg), Western Europe (London, Geneva), South Africa, South America (Buenos Aires), the Middle East (Jerusalem, Alexandria, Egypt), and in North America (Toronto, New York, Philadelphia, Denver). Money was collected on Sholem Aleichem's behalf from Jersey City, New Jersey to South Bend, Indiana to Waco, Texas.[149]

[149] Bialistok: "Khronik: Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Teatr velt* 3 (October 16, 1908): 10. Łódź: "Der Sholem-Aleykhem-ovent," *Lodzher tageblat* (Łódź, November 9 [22], 1908), 3. Odessa: The events planned in Odessa had

The organizing committees and program participants included many public faces of Jewish communal, literary, and financial leadership. The New York scene may serve as a model. There, the Yiddish dramaturge Dovid Pinski organized a fundraising evening for the sick author's jubilee on December 28, 1908 in the Thalia Theater. That evening, Pinski read "Shmuel Shemlkes" aloud.[150] He was followed by speeches by the Yiddish socialist and linguist Chaim

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trouble getting official permission to be held. Despite these administrative difficulties, a letter was sent to Sholem Aleichem from the Hebrew literary elite of Odessa. See "Ḥogege-ha-yovelim shelanu," 1; "Khronikah Ivrit," *Hed ha-zeman*, November 8, 1908, 3; Salem, "Me-are ha-medinah: Odessa," *Hed ha-zeman*, December 28, 1908, 3. Vilna: "Le-Ḥag yovelo shel Shalom Alekhem," *Hed ha-zeman*, October 22, 1908, 3.Warsaw: For one article advertising an event in Warsaw, see "Sholem-Aleykhem ovent," *Haynt* (Warsaw, November 18 [December 1], 1908), 1. Kiev: The celebrations in Kiev had trouble acquiring the proper permission from the authorities to conduct the jubilee ceremonies in Yiddish. Eventually, a celebration was held in Russian. The Kiev committee was also particularly interested in raising funds to purchase a plot of land for Sholem Aleichem in Palestine and raised money to that end. For difficulties dealing with the government authorities, see: "be-Rusiyah," *ha-Tsevi* (Jerusalem, November 26, 1908), 2; "Khronikah ha-ir," *Hed ha-zeman* (Vilna, November 10, 1908), 3; "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum: a spetsiele telegrame tsum 'fraynd'," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 26 [October 9], 1908), 4; Matarah, "me-Are Ha-medinah: Kiev," *Hed ha-zeman* (Vilna, December 8, 1908), 3; Meir, *Kiev: Jewish Metropolis, A History, 1859-1914*, 184. For information on the committee's intention to purchase land in Palestine, see: "Shalom Alekhem be-Erets Yisrael," *ha-Tsevi* (Jerusalem, January 31, 1909), 2. St. Petersburg: See, for example: "Tsu Sholem Aleykhems yubileum," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 17 [30], 1908), 2. London: "Shalom Aleichem," *The Jewish Chronicle*, December 11, 1908, 34. Geneva: Weizmann signs his letter, "Chairman of the Geneva Committee for the Celebration of Sholem Aleichem's Jubilee [*Forzitsender fun Zhenever komitet af fayern Sholem-Aleykhem's yubileum*]." See, for example, Weizmann, "Sholem Aleykhems yubileum," 5. South Africa: This was reported by Berkovitsh in his memoirs. Berkowitz, *ha-Rishonim ki-vene adam*, 620. Buenos Aires: Sholem Aleichem, "Cedars of Lebanon: Sholem Aleichem in Sickness, Letter from Sholom Aleichem to Israel Cohen (19 Nov 1909)," trans. Israel Cohen, *Commentary*, October 1950, 383. In this letter, Sholem Aleichem also mentions that jubilee events are taking place in Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Montreal. Jerusalem: "Yafo," *ha-Tsevi*, June 15, 1909, 2. Alexandria: Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Natashe Mazor (25 Jan [7 Feb 1909])," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 91. Toronto: Yoysef Rozenfeld, "Sholem Aleykhems yubileum in Toronto, Kenede," *Der arbayter*, November 14, 1908, 1. New York: For just one advertisement for the New York event at Thalia Theater, see "Advertisement for Sholem-Aleykhem yubileums ovent," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, December 28, 1908, 7. Philadelphia: Dovid Pinski, "Sholem Aleykhems yubileum," *Der arbayter*, October 10, 1908, 6. Denver: "Sholem Aleykhem oventn in Denver, Kol.," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, January 10, 1909, 4. Jersey City: "Vaytere baytrage tsu Sholem Aleykhem fond," *Der morgn-zhurnal* (New York, January 7, 1909), 5. South Bend: "Vaytere baytrage tsum Sholem-Aleykhem fond," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, December 15, 1908, 8.Waco: "Der Sholem Aleykhem fond," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, January 15, 1909, 2.

[150] Most interesting, it would also be this committee headed by Pinski that would soon send the ailing Sholem Aleichem a Yiddish typewriter. Unable to write while standing at a desk, Sholem Aleichem initially embraced the typewriter. For his praise, see Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Mendele Moykher-Sforim (20 Feb to 5 March 1909)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 491. This sentiment was echoed in a letter to Israel Cohen in England. Sholem Aleichem wrote to Cohen that "My American colleagues in New York have presented me—may their hands never ache—on the occasion of my literary jubilee, with a typewriter, so I am no longer writing with a pen. And this is the best thing I could wish for my in the interest of my health." See Sholem Aleichem, "Cedars of Lebanon: Sholem Aleichem in Sickness, Letter from Sholom Aleichem to Israel Cohen (6 March 1909)," trans. Israel Cohen, *Commentary*, October 1950, 381.

Zhitlowsky, the prominent American Reform Rabbi Judah Leon Magnes and a performance by the Yiddish actor David Kessler.[151] Joseph Marcus, president of the Public Bank, was the treasurer of the New York committee, he received the donations on behalf of the evening.[152] These included contributions from the controversial socialist editor Philip Krantz, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America Rabbi Solomon Schechter, and Professor of Semitics Getzl (George) Selikovitch.[153]

Outside of New York, similarly impressive lists of local celebrities populated the committees, participated in celebrations, and donated funds in towns and cities across the globe. The British-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill sent a note to be read at the celebration in London.[154] I.L. Peretz attended a Warsaw evening in honor of Sholem Aleichem's jubilee, where a special song had been written for the occasion entitled, "Long live Sholem Aleichem [*s'zol lebn Sholem-aleykhem*]!"[155] And the Hebrew writers of Odessa, including Abramovitsh (Mendele Mocher Sforim), Bialik, Borochov, Levinski, Lilienblum, Ravnitsky, Usishkin and others, wrote a public letter announcing their desire that "the laughter of Sholem Aleichem remain among the Houses of Israel for many years."[156] Again, Rabinovitsh's name is absent from these events with

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[151] For a description in anticipation of the evening, see "'Sholem Aleykhem' yuibileum haynt in Thalia," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, December 28, 1908, 8. For a description of the evening after the fact, see "Groyser oylem bay'm Sholem Aleykhem ovent," 7.

[152] "A vikhtike 'Sholem Aleykhehm' komitet," *Der morgn-zhurnal*, December 11, 1908, 5.

[153] Along with writing for the Yiddish press, Zelikovitsh is most famous for writing a Palestinian Arabic textbook with Yiddish explanations. For information on Zelikovitsh and his famous textbook, see Rachel Simon, "Teach Yourself Arabic--in Yiddish!," *MELA*, no. 82 (2009): 1–15.

[154] Israel Cohen, "Cedars of Lebanon: Sholem Aleichem in Sickness," *Commentary*, October 1950, 379.

[155] Levin, "Sholem-Aleykhems krankhayt un zayn 25-yeriger yoyvl: fun der seriye, 'Varshe far der filkhome,'" 6.

[156] "Khronikah vrit," 3.

"Sholem Aleichem," his failing health and literary legacy, the subject of each event. Sholem Aleichem is his referential stand-in, giving a name to an author that the audience will respond to, express sympathy for, and rally around.

The multinational character of the celebrations and the variety of celebrities involved identify the grand nature of Sholem Aleichem's jubilee and, by extension, his illness. His tuberculosis became an international concern and the response to it, a global Jewish literary phenomenon that engaged writers and readers across the political spectrum. Put differently, Sholem Aleichem's disease became a decisive feature in the persona's symbolic capital. It was a variable that translated into economic capital. Throughout the jubilee literature, we find a similar refrain that might be paraphrased: *Sholem Aleichem is sick and poor. He needs material support.* This was a message that Weizmann emphasized in his original letter, writing that "we need to provide our writer with the material circumstances so that he may follow the advice of his doctor."[157] Over and over again writers emphasize that the purpose of the jubilee evenings is not only to demonstrate love for the writer but to raise money for him and to improve his material circumstances.[158] One politically-motivated writer who took the opportunity to criticize Sholem Aleichem as a bourgeois Zionist included a follow-up article in which he wrote, "Sholem Aleichem is now sick and that is where all criticism stops .[159] With his literary work, at any rate

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[157] Weizmann, "Sholem Aleykhems yubileum," 5.

[158] For just several examples, see R., "Ekspropri'irt Sholem-Aleykhemen!," 1; Cohen, "Shalom Aleichem: Letter from Israel Cohen," 26; M. Rivesman, "Der stil: a brif in redaktsiye," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 25 [October 8], 1908), 2; Ug, "Tsu Sholem-Alekhems yubileum," 2. The Rivesman article is particularly interesting. He responds to an article by Bal-Dimyen (pseudonym: Nokhem Shtif) who criticized those who wanted to celebrate Sholem Aleichem with an evening in Russian, Polish or German rather than Yiddish. Rivesman takes Bal-Dimyen to task for arguing about language in a time when Sholem Aleichem is ill and needs material support of any kind. For Bal-Dimayon's article, see Bal-Dimyen, "A brif in redaktsiye," *Der fraynd* (Warsaw, September 24 [October 7], 1908), 2.

[159] Tsivyen, "Eyn ernst vort tsu Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Yidishe arbayter velt* (New York, December 4, 1908), 5.

Sholem Aleichem has earned [our] help in this critical moment. He has earned and we are obliged to provide it."[160] During a period when Jewish particularist politics were fomenting, when competing visions of national unity vied for support and at a time when thousands of Jewish migrants were wending their way across Europe and the Atlantic Ocean, Sholem Aleichem emerged as a *cause célèbre* and his health became a rallying point for a transnational Jewish response.

Sholem Aleichem, of course, was not the only Jewish writer whose friends had tried to rally on the behalf of an ailing colleague. The young Hebrew writer, Mordekhai Ze'ev Feierberg, for example, was already suffering from tuberculosis by 1895. He traveled to Warsaw that year to seek treatment but soon returned to his Ukrainian home.[161] His condition, however, only worsened. In 1898, Feierberg's friends appealed to cultural Zionist Aḥad Ha'am, the famous Hebrew essayist and editor of *Hashiloakh*, to help the dying writer, to publish his work and pay him accordingly. A few years earlier, Aḥad Ha'am had in fact helped Feierberg receive some funds from the tea magnate Kalonymus Ze'ev Wissotzky.[162] Yet this time the Hebrew editor wrote a rather pathetic letter in return, explaining that it just was not possible for him to help. "My hands are tied," he wrote, "Because of the size of 'Hashiloakh' and the number of writers working for it, it's not in my power to give Herr Feierberg *permanent* work. I've had a short story of his in my hands for months and it still hasn't been printed because there are others

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[160] Tsivyen, "Vider vegn Sholem-Aleykhem," *Yidishe arbayter velt* (New York, December 25, 1908), 4.

[161] Now, Novohrad Volyns'kyi, Ukraine. For a brief biography of Feierberg in English, see Hillel Halkin, "Introduction and Notes to the Introduction," in *Whither? And Other Stories*, by M.Z. Feierberg (New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2004), vii – xxxiii.

[162] M.Z. Feierberg, "Mikhtave M.Z. Fayerberg le-Aḥad-Ha'am," *Moznayim* 1, no. 22 (1929): 11.

before him."[163] Though he would go on to try to secure funding for Feierberg, little help came to the Hebrew writer who died in 1899 at the age of twenty-five.[164]

Compared to the small community of Hebrew readers and benefactors in the final decade of the nineteenth-century, Sholem Aleichem's friends appealed to the Yiddish reading masses by means of the Yiddish newspapers which, in 1908, boasted hundreds of thousands of subscribers across multiple continents. Despite several disappointing turnouts, the efforts of the jubilee committees resulted in a successful fundraising effort on behalf of Sholem Aleichem.[165] As we saw earlier, Sholem Aleichem was stunned by the influx of donations from small and large towns alike from across the globe. With the help of these funds, he was able to remain in Nervi that winter and begin his recuperative process. Perhaps even more significantly, these funds allowed Sholem Aleichem to buy back the rights to his works, which he had sold to various publishers at desperate points in his career. Before falling ill, he did not possess the copyrights to his own work. He was at the mercy of notoriously dubious publishers and perpetually bankrupt Yiddish editors. This information also adds new allegorical depth to the short story, "Shmuel Shmelkes." In the months leading up to Sholem Aleichem's tubercular hemorrhage in Baranovitsh, he wrote multiple letters to publishers and editors who he claimed owed him money based on contracts that had been signed and promises never fulfilled. He would later colorfully claim that certain

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[163] Aḥad Ha'am, "Letter to the Friends of M.Z. Feierberg (3 Aug 1898)," in *Igrot Aḥad-Ha'am*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Moriyah, 1923), 122.

[164] Aḥad Ha'am, "Letter to Mr. Y. Tsaytlen (10 Oct 1898)," in *Igrot Aḥad-Ha'am* (Jerusalem: Moriyah, 1923), 150–151.

[165] Authors of several articles write of disappointing turnouts to evening celebrations in London, New York, and Vilna. See "Khronikah mekomit," *Hed ha-zeman* (Vilna, November 10, 1908), 3; "Sholem-Aleykhems yubileum," *Der arbayter* (New York, Jan 2, 1909), 1; Israel Cohen, "To the Editor of *The Jewish Chronicle*," *The Jewish Chronicle* (London, November 27, 1908), 34. In New York, an author blames the small audience on the socialist newspaper, *Forverts*, which planned an evening with Samuel Gompers the same night as that for Sholem Aleichem. Perhaps the most interesting critique of the fundraising efforts was the comedic sketch included in the Warsaw periodical, *Der Humorist*. There, a scene is described in which a group of armed men attack Sholem Aleichem's hotel room in order to steal all the money from the jubilee. However, all that they find are telegrams.

publishers treated him worse than the proverbial publishers of Sodom.[166] He also had a particularly nasty and public dispute with Saul Hochberg, the publisher of the Warsaw daily newspaper, *Unzer leben* (*Our Life*), which had serialized Sholem Aleichem's novel, *The Flood* in 1907. He claimed that Hochberg owed him money and had not fulfilled his promised to publish *The Flood* in a separate volume. Hochberg vehemently denied these claims and, in retribution, refused to publish Re'uven Brainin's article in honor of Sholem Aleichem's jubilee.[167] The dispute was played out both in private correspondence and in the pages of *Unzer lebn*.[168] When Sholem Aleichem fell ill shortly after a public argument with Hochberg, the publisher was even blamed for inducing the Yiddish writer's tuberculosis![169] One cannot help but recall here the pronouncement in Percy Shelley's introduction to *Adonais* (1821) that a series of bad reviews led Keats' to his consumptive end.[170] Here, however, it is not Sholem Aleichem's end that his mistreatment at the hands of the literary establishment actualizes but rather the writer's disease in the first place. What's more, one may rightly read this situation back into the short story, "Shmuel Shmelkes." Just as Shmuel, in a state of penury, must sell his house to the local rich man, so too had Sholem Aleichem sold his literary shelter to the Yiddish editors. In the end of "Shmuel Shmelkes," Shmuel is evicted and not allowed to return to his home. The question the

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[166] Vilnai, "Al-yad mitato shel Shalom Alekhem," *Hed ha-zeman* (Vilna, September 2, 1908), 1.

[167] Re'uven Brainen and *Der veg*, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem," Erev Yom Kippur 1908, Box 11, Folder lamed-vov 31/1, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive.

[168] For Dinezon's account, see Dinezon, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem (August 21, 1908)"; Yankev Dinezon, "A Brif in Redaktsiye," *Unzer Lebn*, September 11, 1908, 2–3; Yankev Dinezon, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem," October 9, 1908, Box 10, Folder lamed-dalet 10/54, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive. For a highly politicized Soviet account, see Nepomniashtshi, "Naye materialn vegn Sholem Aleykhem (1908-1909)," 171, 176–178.

[169] Dinezon, "A Brif in redaktsiye," 3.

[170] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Adonais, An Elegy on the Death of John Keats (1821)* (London: Publication for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886), 4.

story posed to its reader is whether Rabinovitsh/Sholem Aleichem would be allowed to return as the proprietor of his own literary oeuvre.

In the wake of Sholem Aleichem's departure to Italy, the Warsaw Jubilee committee took it upon itself to rectify Sholem Aleichem's relations to these publishers, including Hochberg.[171] Specifically members occupied themselves with buying back the copyrights of Sholem Aleichem's material on behalf of the sick writer. The committee included four major players in the Warsaw Yiddish literary scene: the author and literary advocate Yankev Dinezon, the writer and doctor Gershn Levin, the Zionist activist Avrom Podlishevski, and the editor Noyekh Finkelshteyn. The committee announced their intentions in public letter.[172] Their stated goal to buy back the rights—to buy back "the fruit of the pen"—became a refrain in jubilee-related articles.[173] Contributions soon began arriving at the designated location, the bank house of the brothers Bachrach in Warsaw. They came in large and small amounts, both of which were acknowledged publicly in the pages of the local press.[174] The hundred rubles from the editors of the Zionist daily *Haynt* (*Today*) and the two rubles from the director of the Warsaw theatrical group HaZamir, received equal attention.[175] This effort cast a wide fundraising net, attracting both angel donors and the single ruble gifts of small communities. The task of buying back the rights took nearly one year to complete and the negotiations grew so acrimonious that the

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[171] For a general account of these negotiations, see Levin, "Mayne zikhroynes vegn Sholem-Aleykhem," 263–271.

[172] Levin and Podlishevski, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems rererer," 1; Gershn Levin and Avrom Podlishevski, "Tsu Sholem-Aleykhems ferehrer," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, September 26 [October 9], 1908), 2–3.

[173] Sh., "le-Yovelo shel Shalom Alekhem," 1. See also B"N [Re'uven Brainen], "Tsum yubileum fun Sholem-Aleykhem," 2.

[174] "Fun der letster minut: tsum Sholem-Aleykhem yubileum," *Haynt* (Warsaw, October 14 [27], 1908), 1.

[175] "Fun der letster minut: afn mayontik far Sholem-Aleykhem," *Haynt*, October 16 [29], 1908, 1. Additional donations were documented in *Haynt* throughout October and November.

Warsaw Committee asked Olga Rabinovitsh, the writer's wife, to travel to Warsaw to advocate on behalf of her husband. Her presence proved beneficial.[176] By the summer of 1909, Sholem Aleichem's copyrights had been successfully bought back from the four major publishers: Hochberg (publisher of *Unzer lebn*), Ben-Avigdor (pseudonym of A.L. Shalkovich and head of the Tushiyah publishing house), Magnus Krinski (publisher of the *Bikher far ale* series), and Yankev Lidski (head of the Warsaw-based Farlag Progres). As Lidski had been the most flexible and the first to sell back his rights for the significant sum of 2813 ruble and 39 kopecks, he was given permission by Sholem Aleichem to become the Yiddish writer's official publisher.[177] He would go on to publish the high-quality three-volume American Jubilee Edition of Sholem Aleichem's collected writings. Such a jubilee edition had been a dream of Sholem Aleichem's for many years.[178]

The combination of general donations and the resumption of rights to his work also allowed Sholem Aleichem to support himself and his family with his writing. In a letter to Gershn Levin of January 1909, Sholem Aleichem writes that he has received enough individual donations to support himself through May of that year and, should he get the rights back to his work, it would allow him "to look towards the future without fear."[179] By that summer, those

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[176] Yankev Dinezon was particularly impressed with Olga's negotiating skills and the influence of her presence. In his letter from May 1909, Dinezon declared Olga to be "a great diplomat." See Yankev Dinezon, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem," March 28, 1908, Box 10, Folder lamed-dalet 10/62, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive; Yankev Dinezon, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem," May 17, 1909, Box 10, Folder lamed-dalet 10/64, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive; Yankev Dinezon, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem," May 4, 1909, Box 10, Folder lamed-dalet 10/63, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive. For Berkowitz's account, see Berkowitz, *ha-rishonim ki-vene adam*, 681–683. See also Levin, "Mayne zikhroynes vegn Sholem-Aleykhem," 269.

[177] Levin, "Mayne zikhroynes vegn Sholem-Aleykhem," 268.

[178] In a letter read by Israel Cohen at the Jubilee evening in London, Shalom Aleichem writes of his dream when someone will announce plans to publish all of his work in twenty volumes. "Tsvishn yidn in oysland: a Sholem-Aleykhem ovnt," *Unzer lebn* (Warsaw, December 25, 1908), 3.

[179] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Gershn Levin", January 27, 1909, 2, Folder mem-lamed 3/13, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive.

rights were his. Until the outbreak of World War I, he would live relatively comfortably (albeit peripatetically) as he continued to profit from his exclusive contract with Lidski. A telling letter of July 1912 to the Yiddish critic Bal-Makshoves (pseudonym of Isidor Elyashev) also relates the financial stability that he enjoyed. Writing from a *kurort* in Clarens, Switzerland, Sholem Aleichem responds to a recent article by Bal-Makhshoves that appears to criticize Yiddish writers who write only to make a living. Sholem Aleichem mocks the idea of "profit," noting that a) there isn't much of a living to be made from Yiddish writing and b) that he wrote with all of his energy, his "blood and marrow [*blut un markh*]"—again with the corporeal language!—even at times when he could not make a profit. He also admits that now, in the summer of 1912, he "can live, thank God, from my booklets alone, that are produced in the tens of thousands."[180] These are the booklets published by Lidski beginning in 1909 that, along with the 3-volume jubilee edition, enjoyed large print runs and successful sale records.[181] Yes, it is as if Sholem Aleichem says, there isn't much of a living to be made from Yiddish writing but thank goodness I am able to eke one out.

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[180] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Bal-Makhshoves (28 July 1912)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 551.

[181] See correspondence of Sholem Aleichem and Lidksi. Lidski wrote Sholem Aleichem a series of letters detailing the contract he was making in New York on his behalf to publish his collected work in three volumes in a print run of 5000. For those letters, see Yankev Lidski, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem," August 19, 1909, Box 11, Folder lamed-lamed 46/11, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive; Yankev Lidski, "Letter to Sholem Aleichem," October 24, 1909, Box 11, Folder lamed-lamed 46/14, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive. For a copy of the contract, see "Contract Between Lidski and Marinoff" (New York, October 17, 1909), Box 11, Folder lamed-lamed 46/13, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive. Lidski also sent Sholem Aleichem detailed accounts of the number of pamphlets published and sold. See Yankev Lidski, "Accounts and Sales Records from Lidski to Sholem Aleichem", April 1909-September 1910, Box 11, Folder lamed-lamed 46/5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive.

To understand Rabinovitsh's history as an author, one must consider the importance of these years of self-sufficiency. For the first time in nearly a decade, Rabinovitsh was able to live comfortably by his pen as Sholem Aleichem.[182] This was not something that he took lightly. He referred to the buying back of his rights as "redeeming the captives [*pidyon shevuim*]."[183] Shortly after falling ill, Sholem Aleichem had written to Yankev Dinezon. He explained, "I am missing two things that are deeply close to me and without which Sholem Aleichem cannot be Sholem Aleichem: 1) health, 2) my soul [*neshome*]."[184] This *neshome*, he explains, is "my children, my work, which must be mine, not someone else's." A few months later, he would write to Gershn Levin with the encouraging words: "buying back my work, my *neshome* is also bought back."[185] And, when the copyrights were returned to him, Sholem Aleichem wrote to Levin to thank him for giving him back his "free, redeemed soul [*fraye, oysgeleyzte neshome*]."[186] For Sholem Aleichem, the resumption of the rights to his manuscripts and published works meant financial security and, by extension, his ability to recuperate and continue to write.

We might pause here, however, to reflect on the other variable Sholem Aleichem explained to Dinezon that was necessary for "Sholem Aleichem to be Sholem Aleichem"—health. On the one hand, this is obviously true. When Sholem Aleichem was extremely ill, his authorial abilities were greatly curtailed or proscribed by medical authorities. On the other hand,

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[182] As Dauber shows, 1903 marked a "turning point for Sholem Aleichem: the first time he could give up his business activities and attempt to make a living through writing alone, even if it meant selling off some furniture and moving to a more modest apartment." Dauber, *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem*, 122.

[183] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Yankev Dinezon (27 March 1909)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 501.

[184] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Dinezon (18 Oct 08)."

[185] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Gershn Levin (15 Jan 1909)," 488.

[186] Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Gershn Levin (27 March 1909)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916*, ed. Avrom Lis (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 500.

as this section has attempted to prove, there is a clear link between Sholem Aleichem's illness, his jubilee celebrations, and his resumption of the copyrights to his own work. Somewhat counterintuitively, it is precisely Sholem Aleichem's disease that ensured him the tubercular capital to continue to be "Sholem Aleichem." There has been much written about the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Western European equation of tuberculosis and genius. The assumption is that the feverish tubercular experience corresponds to an equally feverish burst of creativity.[187] "Inescapable physical inactivity," wrote the historian Lewis Moorman as late as 1940, "begets mental activity" and that mental activity is flamed as the tubercular patient suffers.[188] In the case of Sholem Aleichem, however, his tuberculosis does not enable his authorial productivity by inducing fits of literary genius. Rather, tuberculosis affords him something far more mundane if no less valuable to the daily life of the writer: Money. Recall here the images of gold that dance through the head of Shmuel Shmelkes as he dreams of a jubilee in his honor. Here, tuberculosis performs alchemy and Sholem Aleichem's disease catalyzes an international fundraising effort with the result that the sickly author now owns the rights to his own work, has the funds to recuperate, and can continue on his literary path. Sholem Aleichem can continue to be Sholem Aleichem precisely because Rabinovitsh became ill and because that illness prompted an international response on behalf of "Sholem Aleichem." 1908 was not just the year that stylized critique of Sholem Aleichem's work began, as Werses suggests, but the year when Sholem Aleichem's readers demonstrated their love for their author not solely with words but with dollars, pounds and rubles. In Rabinovitsh's bio-literary network,

[187] For an elaboration of this idea, see Byrne, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination*; Dubos and Dubos, *The White Plague*, esp. chs. 2 and 5; Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature*.

[188] Lewis Jefferson Moorman, *Tuberculosis and Genius* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), xi.

sickness—not health—was the condition of possibility for the continued existence of his literary persona and literary career.

Conclusion: Life Writing and Disease

While in Italy, Sholem Aleichem also began to write two texts that took stock of his life. First, he began to seriously to work on his autobiography, compelled by the fear that "no one knows what tomorrow might bring."[189] His effort was also pushed along by an assumption that the New York Jubilee Committee would help fund his project. When that proved untrue, he abandoned the effort until some years later.[190] With death ever-present, the biological continued to impinge on the creative as Rabinovitsh drafted his will. The text would be read aloud years later in New York City during his funeral procession. The epitaph he had penned was also read aloud. Both had been signed by "Sholem Aleichem," once again forcing Rabinovitsh to recede from view, here at the moment of his own death.

The epitaph, moreover, is of critical interest to this chapter. A version of the gravestone poem had been written in the wake of the Kiev pogrom of 1905. The Rabinovitsh family had survived the pogrom, hiding out in the nearby Hotel Imperial. As with his autobiography and will, the threat of death appears to have compelled Sholem Aleichem to author a text intimately

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[189] Emphasis in original. Sholem Aleichem, *Funem yarid*, 10.

[190] Berkowitz, *ha-rishonim ki-vene adam*, 654. He retuned to the work in 1913, with the financial backing of the oil magnate Sh. Sharira. Sharira had become Sholem Aleichem's literary patron during the fundraising period immediately following the writer's hemorrhage in Baranovitsh. Eventually, Sharira's support would also fall through. For mention of Sharira's support, see Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Gershn Levin (23 Nov 1908)," in *Briv fun Sholem-Aleykhem, 1879-1916* (Tel Aviv: Beys Sholem-Aleykhem and Perets Farlag, 1995), 478. In a letter dated 22 Nov 1908, Sholem Aleichem wrote Sharira a florid letter narrating the scarcity of patrons in Jewish history and advocating that Sharira become the first "the first Jewish patron" [*der ershter yidisher metsenant*]. The letter was in response to one Sharira had written Sholem Aleichem, on the occasion of his jubilee. See Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Shmuel Sharira," November 22, 1908, 4, Folder mem-shin 12/1, Beth Shalom Aleichem Archive.

informed by his life and palpable mortality. The 1905 version of the epitaph as well as that which would ultimately grace the writer's gravestone depict Sholem Aleichem in a typically folksy manner. In both, he describes himself as a "simple Jew" [*a yid, a posheter*] who wrote for his audience despite the many obstacles he faced. The last stanza of the final gravestone verse, however, reads:

> And as the audience was
> laughing, applauding and enjoying itself
> he had been ill [*gekrenkt*], as only God knows
> in secret, so no one would see.
>
> *Un davke demolt ven der oylem hot*
> *gelakht, geklatsht un fleg zikh freyen,*
> *hot er gekrenkt, dos veys nor got*
> *besod, az keyner zol nit zen*.

There is an obvious historical tension in these last lines. After all, as we have seen, Sholem Aleichem's illness was a decidedly public affair. As I have suggested, his illness was common knowledge beginning in 1908. His tuberculosis featured as a calling card for Sholem Aleichem and was used by his avid supporters as a reason to raise funds on his behalf. What's more, throughout the years 1909 and 1910, the progression of his disease was repeatedly featured as a news feature in the Yiddish and Hebrew press.[191] His illness was a current event and it continued to direct his public image, his profitability, and his relationship to his readers for many years. The lines in the epitaph also appear to ironize the secrecy of his disease. After all, the grave states that Sholem Aleichem had been sick in private, yet it does so by publicly announcing the fact and engraving it in stone. Even if, as he claimed, he had suffered away from the eyes of his readers, he moved his sickness directly into their reverential line of sight. That he had been sick

[191] See, for example, "Shalom Alekhem," *ha-Tsevi* (Jerusalem, July 2, 1909), 2; "le-Matsavo shel Shalom Alekhem," *ha-Tsevi* (Jerusalem, November 12, 1909), 2; "Sholem-Aleykhem in Nervi (Italiyen)," *Der shtrahl* 1, no. 2 (7 [20] Sept 1910): 7–9. The article in *Der Shtrahl* featured four photographs of Sholem Aleichem in Italy, including one of him by the sea and one of him in bed surrounded by journals.

is to be remembered in perpetuity. It was to be part of the self-image Sholem Aleichem would project to his readers from the grave. His illness was now to be part of his lasting visual and textual legacy with each graveside visit. Just as he had presented himself in the introduction to "Shmuel Shmelkes" or *From the Fair*, Sholem Aleichem would render himself couched in sickness in his epitaph.

The version written over a decade earlier in the wake of the Kiev pogrom had featured a slightly different final stanza. While the audience was laughing, the stanza stated, "he had cried [*hot er geveynt*], as God only knows."[192] The original line had been more Gogolian, presciently descriptive of Sholem Aleichem's posthumous literary figuration as Dolly the Clown. However, in the revised epitaph of 1916, Gogol's aphorism is modified. Sholem Aleichem writes that while the audience laughed, he had been sick. His audience now laughs through his sickness. I read the revised epitaphal stanza as a directive and as motivation for the project this chapter has undertaken. Our task has been to recover Sholem Aleichem's illness, which has remained in full view on his gravestone, in memoir literature, and in brief biographical asides but has somehow evaded further inquiry. To understand the development of Sholem Aleichem's persona, authorial trajectory, and financial history is to attend to shifts like these in the penultimate line of his epitaph. Sholem Aleichem has moved from tears to illness. His readers do not laugh through his tears but through his disease, through his cough. Laughter through tuberculosis. Laughter through blood. The chapter has explored whether that laughter, either that of the audience or that of Rabinovitsh/Sholem-Aleichem, mediated something other than noise. And, as we have seen, Sholem Aleichem's *royte gelekhter* set into motion a network of reader responses, literary

[192] Gershn Levin, "Sholem-Aleykhem un der toyt," *Haynt*, April 23, 1926, 5. This version was also written down in a letter from Sholem Aleichem to his son-in-law, Berkowitz. Sholem Aleichem, "Letter to Y.D. Berkowitz (23 Nov 1905)," 50–51.

activities, bodily choices, and authorial decisions that would render the Yiddish master a global writer, a secure writer, and a celebrated writer enriched by tubercular capital.

Chapter Two

A Sickroom of Her Own: Tuberculosis and the Literary Case of Raḥel

A sick-chamber may often furnish the worth of volumes.
–Jane Austen[1]

Ve-'al ken ha-bayit li tsar… [*And so the house is narrow for me…*]
– Raḥel[2]

Introduction:

While thousands gathered in New York City to pay their respects to the great Sholem Aleichem, a Russian Jewish poet was beginning to find her voice far away in a sanatorium in Sukhum on the coast of the Black Sea.[3] She had arrived there after what can only be described as an adult life lived in transit. Born Raia Bluvshtein in the Russian city of Saratov in 1890, she had suffered from lung infections since her youth.[4] As a young girl, she was sent to Crimea to recuperate, relax and drink kumis.[5] While there, Bluvshtein even wrote her first poem, though it is remembered only as family lore.[6] In 1909, she moved to Ottoman Palestine and by the fall of the next year had begun to work as a farmhand. In 1911, she accompanied her teacher Ḥanah

[1] Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1992), 131.

[2] Raḥel, "Raḥel," in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1966), 59.

[3] Now: Sukhumi or Sokhumi, capital of Abkhazia in western Georgia.

[4] Muki Tsur, "Ke-ḥakot Raḥel: kavim biyografiyim," in *ha-Shirim*, by Raḥel (Bene Barak: ha-Kibuts ha-Meuḥad, 2011), 19.

[5] This fermented dairy product derived from mare's milk was frequently prescribed in the nineteenth century for consumptives and those suffering from lung infections. For example, Chekhov received the same instruction while "taking the cure" in Ufa in southeastern Russia in 1901. Richard Carter, "Anton P. Chekhov, MD (1860-1904): Dual Medical and Literary Careers," *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* 61, no. 5 (1996): 1561.

[6] Uri Milstein, "Dodati Raḥel," in *Raḥel: shirim, mikhtavim, reshimot, korot ḥayeha*, by Raḥel (Tel Aviv: Zemorah Bitan, 1985), 29.

Maizel to the newly established agricultural school for girls in the Galilee region. Two years later, Raia—now Raḥel—travelled to Toulouse to study agronomy.[7] With the outbreak of WWI, she was forced to move, again, as she was no longer able to remain in France as a Russian subject. She would go on to spend the war years volunteering in a Ukrainian Jewish orphanage and seeking treatment for acute pulmonary tuberculosis in Baku and Sukhumi.

It was in the latter port city that she began to seriously distill her life into poetry. "I live High up in a Sanatorium [Я живу высоко в санатории]," begins one such text.[8] Over the course of four stanzas, the speaker explores her newfound dwelling place. She is in an institution high above the city. She spends her days bored, whimsically catching strings of melodies from the distant ocean. Below, the lights of the enchanted city flare up, as if signs of life are summoning her to urban splendor. Yet she is unable to leave the sanatorium. As we read in the final stanza:

> I will go to my narrow room
> I will close the shutters more tightly…
> Oh, disperse heavenly forces,
> Evil spells of the evening lights!...
>
> Я уйду в свою комнату тесную
> Я закрою ставни плотней…
> О, рассейте силы небесные
> Злые чары вечерних огней!..

The speaker here returns to her small room. She shuts herself off from what is outside her window and tries to avoid the seductive pull of the city. Moreover, she specifically retreats to her narrow and cramped room (комнату тесную) and intends to close the shutters, further locking herself into a claustrophobic space. The poem ends with an ellipsis, letting readers ponder what

[7] Throughout this paper, I refer to the poet by her first name Raḥel. Like Sholem Aleichem, part of the poet's public allure stemmed from the accessibility and deceptively generic resonances of her name. At the time of her death, her full name was Raḥel Bluvshtein Sela. In the footnotes throughout this paper, I reference the poet as Raḥel, to reflect common bibliographic practices.

[8] Raḥel, "I Live High Up in a Sanatorium [Ia zhivu vysoko v sanatorii]," in *Lekha 've-'alekha: Ahavat Raḥel u-Mikha'el: mikhtavim, shirim, divre hesber*, ed. Binyamin Ḥakhlili (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibuts ha-Meuḥad, 1987), 79.

will happen next. On the one hand, it seems likely that the speaker will remain in her room frustrated at her inability to leave. On the other hand, the poem hints that there might be something potentially productive in her act of retreat. The closed room appears to offer the speaker a sense of safety or power. The speaker, after all, makes her demand on the "heavily forces" after having declared her intention to go back into the room. It is only after stating her plan to enter this confined space that she explodes into apostrophic lyrical command.

This amateur poem models several features that would become hallmarks of Raḥel's later Hebrew writing. The lyrical intimacy of the text, its short length and its clear yet evocative images bespeak the poet's future allegiance to the acmeist poetics of simplicity. The distance between the first-person speaker and the poet is also intriguingly close. Yet the poem is seldom read by scholars of Bluvshtein's work who focus almost exclusively on her Hebrew writing. Although it was not yet clear in 1916, the tubercular poet would go on to become one of the most popular and beloved Hebrew writers of the twentieth century, known by her first name alone. Raḥel's poetry would be set to music, her writings would be read during national holidays and her grave would become a cite of "civil pilgrimage." And much of this was the result of her tuberculosis. After returning to British Mandate Palestine in 1919, Raḥel moved to Kibbutz Degania by the banks of the Sea of Galilee. Yet the young agricultural community was unable to support the poet, lacking basic resources such as electricity or a sufficient infirmary.[9] As a result,

[9] Raḥel's exit from Degania would become the subject of much controversy. Her literary executor and great nephew, Uri Milstein, caused a stir in 1985. In an introduction to a collection of his great aunt's work, he argued that Raḥel "was forced to leave (*hukhraḥah la'azov*) Degania and the Galilee" as a result of her illness. He then accused "those of the second and third *aliyah*" of having "felt ashamed" of their behavior towards Raḥel and for having abandoned her (*hizniḥuhah*)." Milstein argued that the ensuing sense of guilt caused "the labor movement [to cultivate] the myth of Raḥel following her death." Many former residents of the Degania as well as labor movement activists responded harshly to Milstein's claims. They argued that Raḥel understand that she had to leave Degania. They contended that she understood the community could not properly care for her. The tension heightened to the point that Milstein brought one of the most vocal respondents, Raḥel Savurai, to court in a defamation suit. He won the suit and was rewarded 8,700 shekels. The anecdote emphasizes that Raḥel's tubercular capital continued to be mobilized long after her death. For Milstein's claims, see Milstein, "Dodati Raḥel," 41; 51. For charged reactions,

Raḥel would live out the final decade of her life in series of hospital rooms and apartments in Tsefat, Jerusalem and, finally, Tel Aviv. For many of her readers, her subsequent Hebrew poetry would be read as the product of a would-be *ḥalutsah* (pioneer) who was torn from her beloved land.[10] Recently, Ḥamutal Tsamir has explored this line of analysis as it relates to Raḥel's posthumous hagiography.[11] Unable to sacrifice herself either by fighting or by working the land, argues Tsamir, Raḥel became the ultimate symbol of sacrifice. After all, she had sacrificed her ability to sacrifice herself. And her disease was the root cause.

Many of the recent critical efforts to interpret Raḥel's life and poetry have worked to escape this interpretive paradigm that reads her biography in tandem with her poetry. Such biographical readings, they claim, ignore Raḥel's modernist innovations as well as her poetry's critique of gender boundaries.[12] My appreciation of Raḥel's work as artful and potentially iconoclastic is indebted to these scholarly interventions. Yet the Russian poem with which this

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see Arnon Lapid, "Ba-layla ba ha-mevaser," *ha-Daf ha-yarok*, August 27, 1985, Folder: Raḥel, Degania Archive; Raḥel Savurai, "Morashtah Shel Raḥel," *ha-Daf ha-yarok*, September 10, 1985, Folder: Raḥel, Degania Archive. For the court's ruling, see Natan Ro'i, "Bet-hamishpat: Uri Milshteyn lo neheneh mi-tamluge Raḥel ha-meshoreret," *Davar*, February 27, 1987, Folder: Raḥel, Degania Archive.

[10] For just one example, see Shmu'el Dayan, "Im Raḥel ba-Kineret," *Davar*, April 24, 1936, 5.

[11] Ḥamutal Tsamir, "ha-Korban he-ḥalutsi, ha-arets ha-kedushah ve-hofa'atah shel shirat ha-nashim be-shnot ha-esrim," in *Rega shel huledet: meḥkarim me-Sifrut ivrit uve-sifrut yidish li-khevod Dan Miron*, ed. Ḥannan Ḥever (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), Esp. 666.

[12] Dan Miron may be credited for initiating what continues to be a lively scholarly discussion about the nature of Raḥel's writing, her style, and the influence of her gender on her literary career. See Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, aḥayot ḥorgot: al reshit shirat ha-nashim ha-'ivrit* (Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibbuts ha-Me'uḥad, 2004), 14–20; 90–150. On issues concerning the intersection of Raḥel's modernist style and gender, see Naomi Brenner, "Slippery Selves: Rachel Bluvstein and Anna Margolin in Poetry and Public," *Nashim* 19 (2010): 100–133; Michael Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 100–140; Dana Olmert, *Bi-tenu'at safah ikeshet: ketivah ve-ahavah be-shirat ha-meshorerot ha-ivriyot ha-rishonot* (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 2012), 43-90; Miryam Segal, "Rachel Bluwstein's 'Aftergrowth' Poetics," *Prooftexts* 25, no. 2 (2005): 319–361.; On issues concerning Raḥel's modernist style and invocation of a female biblical namesake, see Susan Starr Sered, "A Tale of Three Rachels, of the Cultural 'Her'Story of a Symbol," *Nashim* 1–2 (1999 1998): 5–41; Wendy I. Zierler, *And Rachel Stole the Idols: The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Women's Writing* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 75–90.; On the importance of gender in Raḥel's posthumous hagiography, see Ḥamutal Tsamir, "ha-Korban he-ḥalutsi, ha-arets ha-kedushah ve-hofa'atah shel shirat ha-nashim be-shnot ha-esrim," in *Rega' shel huledet: meḥkarim be-sifrut ivrit uve-sifrut yidish li-khevod Dan Miron*, ed. Ḥannan Ḥever (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), 645–673.

chapter opened compels us to ask the question anew. This early work announces a spatial and poetological thematic that will be central to Raḥel's later work: the sickroom as a space of writing. The following chapter examines how disease mediates Raḥel's writing and symbolic capital by examining how the site of the narrow room, a space of pain and illness, managed her metaphoric range and representations of the act of writing. How, I ask, did the sickroom become a venerable performance space in which the poet could direct her public self-fashioning? And how might the metaphor of the room offer us new insight into Raḥel's own understanding of her position in a tubercular literary chain that extends from Russia to Palestine? How, by extension, does disease offer a new understanding of her chosen literary style of *pashtut*, simplicity? And how does the room make visible the bio-literary network that runs to and through her domestic space?

The notion of the constructive sickroom that I draw on emerges out of the lived experience and literary representation of women as invalids in Anglo-American literary and medical discourse of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century.[13] In her study of Victorian fiction, Miriam Bailin identifies the sickroom as a space where fictional and real-life women could experience "an alternative society." [14] For Victorian middle-class women, this meant an opportunity to indulge in personal reflection and the pursuit of projects outside those defined by motherly or wifely duties. In the case of Florence Nightingale, for example, life in the sickroom "permitted the inversion of the sentence imposed by her gender and class by permitting her to

[13] While the term "invalid" has fallen out of use in medical discourse, I invoke the term as it was commonly used throughout the nineteenth century to describe a category of ailing bodies. As Diane Price Herndl has demonstrated, especially with respect to women, "invalidism" as a mode "referred to a lack or power as well as a tendency toward illness." Diane Price Herndl, *Invalid Women: Figuring Feminine Illness in American Fiction and Culture, 1840-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1.

[14] Miriam Bailin, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction: The Art of Being Ill* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15; 17.

sequester and immobilize herself while laboring prodigiously on projects of national and imperial importance."[15] In other words, "her invalidism paradoxically enabled a life of almost uninterrupted exertion" and attention to matters of grave social import.[16] This description of Nightingale's "imperial" work echoes the interpretative tradition of Raḥel's poetry, which traces how Raḥel did the work of labor Zionism through her poetry. Writing about the cultural history of invalidism, the scholar Maria Frawley concurs, demonstrating that "confinement could be experienced as liberating" for a select group of the ailing.[17] Much of Frawley's evidence comes from the bestselling memoir *Life in the Sick-Room* (1844) by the English sociologist Harriet Martineau. Martineau experienced her own sickroom both as a prison cell and as a place of privilege from which to gaze out onto the world and "vindicate the supremacy of mind over body."[18]

There is no evidence that Raḥel knew the work of those British and American women whose life stories form the backdrop of these analyses. Yet I propose this ostensibly anachronistic spatial-experiential frame to reassess how tubercular capital was mobilized in Raḥel's life and career. As a woman in the *yishuv*, there were few avenues open to Raḥel to locate herself in a position of power.[19] Accordingly, she positioned herself squarely in the

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[15] Ibid., 32.

[16] Ibid., 34.

[17] Maria H. Frawley, *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1.

[18] Harriet Martineau, *Life in the Sick-Room*, ed. Maria H. Frawley (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2002), 129.

[19] The promise of women's equality in the *yishuv*, as professed by leaders of the labor Zionist movement, more often than not led to little change in gendered hierarchies. Women, even in agricultural settlements, often lacked agency to assume roles beyond that of mother and caretakers. For an elaboration on this phenomenon see the essays in Deborah S. Bernstein, *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992); Margalit Shilo and Gid'on Kats, eds., *Migdar be-Yisra'el : meḥkarim ḥadashim al migdar ba-yishuv uva-medinah* (Be'er Sheva: Universitat Ben Guryon ba-Negev, 2011).

sickroom and from there asserted her authority over her readers.[20] As I suggest, it was in spaces of health confinement—especially her final two rooms in Tel Aviv— where Raḥel would write, entertain and grow her reputation. Far from Kibbutz Degania, Raḥel established herself in a position of power over her over her career. These rooms were the incubators of her literary vocation and poetic expression from her earliest Russian poetry to her final Hebrew verse. When Sholem Aleichem fell ill, announcements of his condition flooded the Yiddish and Hebrew press across the globe. The discourse of his disease was expansive, far-reaching and insisted on spreading the news of the Yiddish author's cough throughout the world. As will become clear in this chapter, tubercular capital was mobilized on behalf of Raḥel not by looking abroad but, rather, by localizing attention to her immediate surroundings, by bringing those readers physically and literarily into the room with the poet herself—a poetic room she had already begun to construct in 1916.

A Tubercular Room of Her Own: From Russia to Palestine

In her famous essay of 1929, "A Room of One's Own," Virginia Woolf declared that for a woman to write fiction, she needed both "money and a room of her own."[21] By the former, she meant the financial independence that would allow a woman to embark on a literary career. By the latter, Woolf intended a tradition of women's fictional writing, into which the woman writer could insert herself and then modify for her daughters. Writing women's fiction, claimed Woolf,

[20] Dana Olmert has also done significant work to assess how gender is deployed within the space of Raḥel's poetry as a comment on the position of the woman in *yishuv* Hebrew culture. Olmert deftly notes that, because of her diseases, Raḥel was unable to fully participate in the collective ideological identity of the *yishuv*. Rather, she had "to consolidate her identity, her poetic voice, and her position as a cultural critic, and the stays in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem allowed her to direct her energy to these tasks." I suggest in this chapter that we must attend not just to the fact of these stays but to the space of these stays and the space of the sickroom. Olmert, *Bi-tenu'at safah ikeshet*, 72–73.

[21] Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own," in *A Room of One's Own; Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

was a practice of contingencies, dependent on a cultural legacy and material stability. To rethink the relationship between disease and writing in Raḥel's oeuvre, we might begin by assessing the nature of the literary "room" in which the poet would situate herself and be situated. Raḥel's room was not only one constructed by women poets. Rather, it was a room populated by tubercular Russian and Hebrew writers, informed by the Romantic image of the consumptive poet from her youth and destabilized by the Zionist perception of the tubercular subject of her adulthood.

In 1931, this room of ailing writers was one of the centerpieces of Ḥayim Naḥman Bialik's assessment of Raḥel.[22] That May, at a gathering of Hebrew writers in Tel Aviv, Bialik publicly mourned Raḥel's death, which had transpired one month earlier. He declared her passing to be a great loss to Hebrew literature in the Land of Israel. He also sought to set her within a literary community, first linking her to the group of women poets he called the "daughters of Miriam" (*benot Miryam*), and then to a second group of writers in which she was the only woman. This latter grouping included writers who had died in their youth, such as U.N. Gnessin, who succumbed in 1913 to heart disease, as well as Raḥel's Romantic consumptive predecessors Mikhal Yosef Lebensohn (known as "Mikhal"; 1828-1852) and Mordekhai Tsevi Mane (1859-1886).[23] Bialik placed her in the room of male poets, all afflicted by chest ailments. Such tubercular chains were not foreign to Hebrew criticism of he time. Joseph Klausner, for

[22] Ḥayim Naḥman Bialik, "Al Raḥel," in *Raḥel ve-Shiratah: mivḥar divre zikhronot ve-he'arot*, ed. Mordechai Shnir and Shim'on Kushner (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1971), 91. All subsequent references to this volume listed as in *Raḥel ve-shiratah*

[23] On Gnessin's heart disease (*maḥalat ha-lev*), see Bentsiyon Benshalom, *Uri Nisan Genesin: monografiyah* (Krakow: Miflat, 1934), 104; Sh. Bikhovsky, "Uri Nisan Genesin," in *ha-Tsidah: kovets zikaron le-A.N. Genesin.*, by Uri Nissan Gnessin (Jerusalem: Defus Aḥdut, 1913), 89–91; Zalman Shneur, "Al Uri Nisan Genesin," in *Ḥ.N. Bialiḳ u-vene doro* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1958), 405.

example, linked Mane to the tubercular Lebensohn.[24] Others extended the link to connect both to Mordekhai Ze'ev Feierberg.[25]

More than biographical, the link was also thematic. Like Raḥel, Mane had placed the space of the sickroom at the center of one of his most famous poems. He did so, moreover, having come of age as a poet in a Russian literary context in which the illness and literary creativity were considered mutually informative. For many consumptive poets of the nineteenth-century Russian Empire, writing was considered an inspired byproduct of illness.[26] Consumption, for example, dominated the self-perception, writing and posthumous legacy of the Russian poet Semyon Nadson (1862-1887).[27] In Nadson's poem, "Muse, I am dying…," the speaker assumes the guise of an invalid suffering from a fatal disease.[28] He recites his poetry from a state of ailing expiration. In another poem, entitled "He Died from Consumption, He Died Alone," Nadson draws us into a scene suffused by the Romantic glow of an imminent, delicate death.[29] The consumptive subject lays his feverish head upon a pillow and passes away. Shortly

[24] Mikhal was the son of Avraham Dov Lebensohn, the maskilic Hebrew writer known as "Adam ha-Cohen." (According to Eisig Silberschlag, the elder Lebensohn's greatest contribution to Hebrew literature was, in fact, his son.) Eisig Silbershlag, *From Renaissance to Renaissance: Hebrew Literature from 1492-1970*, vol. I (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1973), 112.

[25] Critical work on Mane would also often mention his biographical connection to Mikhal. Mane himself acknowledged this link in one of his most desperate letters. Feeling death near, he called on Mikhal as a spiritual guide and sickly brother in arms. Mordecai Zevi Mane, "Letter to Koyfman 18 Av 1886 (#146)," in *Kol kitve Mordekhai Tsevi Maneh: kovets shirav ma'amarav u-mikhtavav* (Warsaw: Tushiyah, 1897), 222–223.

[26] "Nadson: The Poet of Despairing Hope," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 15, no. 45 (1937): 681–683.

[27] Throughout my reading of analysis of Nadson, I draw heavily on Wessling's work. Robert Diedrich Wessling, *Semyon Nadson and the Cult of the Tubercular Poet.* PhD Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley. (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. Publication No. 9923103, 1988), 1–3. Nadson, himself, spent nearly his entire life writing and recuperating from Nice, to Bern, to Boiarka—the real-life double of Sholem Aleichem's Boyberek

[28] Ibid., 30.

[29] Ibid., 36.

thereafter, the heat that had consumed his body silently disperses and becomes the stuff of poetic verse.

Nadson died in 1887, and the memory of his pathological poetic subject would define how generations of Russian critics, as well as Yiddish writers, would read his work and continually regenerate the so-called "Nadson Cult."[30] Nadson's Romantic Hebrew contemporary Mordekhai Tsevi Mane would similarly write under the sign of pulmonary disease. Born in 1859, Mane developed consumption in his early twenties. He was advised, just as Raḥel in her youth, "to travel to a place to drink kumis."[31] His poetry would be admired by generations of critics for its beauty, musicality and—like Raḥel after him—its simplicity (*pashtut*).[32] Mane's critics were quick to link his literary talents with his tortured, sickly autobiography.[33] In the tradition of Nadson, Mane also explored this relationship in his poetry. In an unfinished poem from 1883,

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[30] Ibid., 123–135. Nadson's disease interested his Yiddish readers, such as the poet Menakhem Boreysho. In 1912, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Nadson's death, Boreysho wrote a heartfelt account of Nadson's work and illness-plagued life. "There," wrote Boreysho, "on a table and in a closet, between the mighty Pushkin and even the lonely Lermentov, between the self-conscious Nekrasov and the folksy-sad (*folkstimlikh-troyerik*) Kolzov, is the sickly Nadson with his abstract aspirations. See Menakhem [Boreysho], "S. Nadson (tsu zayn 25-tn yortsayt)," *Haynt*, January 31, 1912, 27 edition, 3.

[31] Mordecai Zevi Mane, "Letter to Parents 8 Iyar 1886 (#144)," in *Kol kitve Mordekhai Tsevi Maneh: kovets shiraẏ maʾamaraẏ u-mikhtavaẏ* (Warsaw: Tushiyah, 1897).

[32] On the *pashtut* of his style, see M[ordekhai] R[abinzon], "Ha-MTsY'R Mane ve-svivato," in *Radoshkovits: sefer zikaron*, ed. Mordekhai Rabinzon, Yisrael Rubin, and Betsalel Aizakson (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at Irgun yots'e Radoshkovits be-Yisra'el, 1953), 143–144; Eliezer Shteinman, "Ḥatan shira," in *Be-ma'agal ha-dorot* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1943), 79.; on the *temimut* of his style, see Ya'akov Rabinowitz, "Meshorerah shel tekufat aniyah (1936/7)," in *Maslule sifrut*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: M. Nyuman and Agudat ha-Sofrim, 1971), 149.

[33] Aleksandr Ziskind Rabinowitz, who would one day teach Raḥel Hebrew, comments "the best of Mane's poems, in my opinion, are the lyric ones, in which he expressed his soul's private torture and the wonder of natural beauty." Joseph Klausner concurred. "In Mane's poetry," the Zionist literary critic writes, "besides the glory of nature, there is also the sadness of life." Specifically, he directs us to observe the photograph of Mane that accompanies his collected works and to "look at his gaunt face, which from want, suffering, and disease have left recognizable marks." What follows in Klausner's critique are extended expositions of tragedy in Mane's poetry. Avner Holtzman, "Mordekhai Tsevi Maneh: meshorer ve-tsayar," in *Melekhet maḥashevet, teḥiyat ha-umah: ha-sifrut ha-ivrit le-nokhaḥ ha-omanut ha-plastit* (Tel Aviv: Zemorah Bitan, 1999), 101; Joseph Klausner, "Mordekhai Tsevi Mane," in *Yotsrim u-vonim: Ma'amre bikoret*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1925), 264.

"Alone in My Dwelling Place," the speaker appears by himself far from the tumult of the city.[34] He tries to read a book but his blood races and he erupts into brutal coughs. He cannot sleep, he cannot read, and he resigns himself to remain as quiet as possible.

When we read the poem quickly, it seems to suggest that disease prevents the speaker from engaging literature. Yet Mane's language presents a complication. The speaker sits down, opens a book and exclaims, "But the breath [*nishmat*] erupts from my mouth with the sounds of thunder/and my limbs [*vitsuri*] move without rest." The term employed by Mane to indicate limbs [*yitsuri*] shares its root [*y.ts.r.*] with the Hebrew word for inclination [*yetser*] and creation [*yetsirah*]. It also may allude to such concepts that would have been pertinent to Mane as an art student such: *tsurah* [form] and *tsayar* [painter, artist]. Mane, himself, often took on the penname of *ha-metsayer* [the artist/creator].[35] It is therefore precisely when this coughing fit (i.e. consumption) appears to preclude the speaker's engagement with literature that careful readers will observe the poeticized source of potential artistic inspiration. A locus of creativity is linked to coughing and to an ailing body recuperating alone in a sequestered room.

It is also a scene that recalls the poem that opened this chapter. Raḥel links pathology, creativity and architecture in a manner that would resonate throughout her oeuvre. Consider here one of the poems that she wrote in her small apartment on ha-Yarkon Street in Tel Aviv. The 1926 poem reads:

> Hooray for my new room, which faces the sea,
> raised twenty cubits above the sidewalk!
> Winds from four directions,
> with night—a festival of lights,
> loneliness blessed

[34] Mordecai Zevi Mane, "Badad bi-me'oni," in *Kol Kitve Mordekhai Tsevi Maneh: kovets shirayṿ ma'amarayṿ u-mikhtavav* (Warsaw: Tushiyah, 1897), 122–23.

[35] "Ha-metsayer" was actually an acronym for "ha-baḥur Mordekhai Tsevi yalid Radushkovits" (*the young man Mordekhai Tsevi, child of Radushkovits*]. Holtzman, "Mordekhai Tsevi Maneh: Meshorer ve-tsayar," 98.

So join with me, injuries small and large,
to make weary the exhausted.
I will shut my ears, hide my eyes:
My heart is reconciled to the disruptive.

Hedad ḥadri he-ḥadash, ha-tsofeh pnei ha-yam,
ha-nisa be-'esrim ama me-'al la-midrekhet!
ruḥot me-arba ruḥot,
im laylah—ḥag-negohot,
bedidut mevorekhet.

Kishru na alay, efo, pega'im ketanim im gedolim
lehal'ot ha-yage'a.
Et ozni mikem e'etom, et eynay a'alim:
Libi mefuyas le-mafre'a.[36]

Raḥel places her speaker at a high remove from the world below. "*Hedad ḥadri he-ḥadash*," she exclaims, opening the poem by praising her surroundings. Yet illness hovers over this line. The sentiment may be positive but the alliterative repetition of the breathy "h" and guttural "ḥ" choke the poem's speaker, as if coughing and gasping for breath. Raḥel phonically brings us into the space of the sickroom. There, like Mane's subject, Raḥel's speaker appears alone. At the same time, she is at the center of four crosswinds. The world sparkles around her and, in the quietude of the windy heights, loneliness is "blessed." In that high room, moreover, the speaker's loneliness does not seem to last very long. In the first line of the second stanza, the speaker invites "injuries small and large" into the room with her. The space of the sickroom becomes populated by pain and the speaker shuts herself inside that space. And like the sanatorium room she had earlier poeticized in Russian, the Hebrew space becomes one of conscious protest. For more than inviting "injuries," the speaker commands that they connect to her, attach to her, even work to tire her out. Yet she will shut her eyes and ears. The *pega'im* will not disrupt her. Her *lev*—her heart, her chest—will remain calm. There, in that sickroom, the speaker will

[36] Raḥel, "Ḥadri he-ḥadash," in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1966), 53.

demonstrate her power and her ability, quite literally, to remain above the fray. Most important, as the first line suggests, she will transform that pain into poetry.

Thematically and critically, then, we see that Raḥel found aesthetic inspiration and alliances in the Romanticized space of the sickroom. However, to fully understand her approach to this space we must also turn back to Bialik and reassess his eulogizing praise. He placed her in the room of male poets, who were all afflicted by chest ailments and who all died far from the labor Zionists of Palestine. Gnessin died in Warsaw, Mikhal in Vilna and Mane in Radoshkovitsh.[37] As a tubercular writer in British Mandate Palestine, Raḥel would likely have encountered a different cultural experience of illness than the one she met in Russia of the 1890s. Although the Romantic image of the feverishly creative writer persisted among certain segments of the cultural elite in the *yishuv*, that image was accompanied and countered by the perception of tuberculosis as a diasporic illness. When Raḥel's friends and admirers narrate her biography, it is rare that her illness is not specifically mentioned as having first manifested in Russia and having been brought back with her to Palestine in 1919. Historically accurate or not, her interlocutors insist that tuberculosis was not the result of life in the *yishuv* but of her life and suffering in Russia. Palestine, as it were, was considered to be a site of health, of physical renewal, and of outdoor work, where the "New Jew" could walk the land with vigor.[38]

At the turn of the century, Palestine was even said to be a location that would heal the Jew—not just the Jewish body politic but the physical invalid, such as the tubercular. As early as 1886, the Hebrew weekly *ha-Magid* (*The Preacher*) proposed Palestine as a new health destination for those with chest diseases. According to the article, the Land of Israel should be

[37] Now, Radashkovychi, Belarus.

[38] There is extensive writing on the concept of the "New Jew." For a general discussion, see S. Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), Chapter 2.

considered a Jewish substitute for the already established health resorts in Italy, Madeira and Algeria.[39] As Avner Holtzman has written, the idea even appealed to Mane who wrote of his desire to go to the healing Land of Israel rather than Alexandria or Cairo, as his doctor had recommended.[40]

Yet like Sholem Aleichem twenty years later, Mane would not make the journey to Palestine. Such a journey also likely would not have lived up to either the Hebrew poet or Yiddish writer's expectations. The availability of treatment for tuberculosis in Palestine was decidedly slim. The Anti-Tuberculosis League of Palestine did not become active until the early 1920s, when it immediately set an agenda of opening dispensaries, increasing the number of available hospital beds, raising money on behalf of Jewish tuberculosis victims, and organizing local branches. For decades, the League's plaintive cry went unanswered and the number of patients consistently overwhelmed the number of available hospital beds.[41] In 1935, as efforts were made to open a large sanatorium, a report to *The Palestine Post* expressed frustration that only three sanatoria were then extant—Mekor Ḥaim in Jerusalem, the tuberculosis division at the hospital of Tsefat, and the sanatorium of Gedera—and between them, only 90 beds available.[42]

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[39] "Hegyone ha-magid," *Ha-Magid* 30, no. 7 (February 18, 1886): 51–52.

[40] For Mane's letter on the subject, see Mane, "Letter to Parents 8 Iyar 1886 (#144)," 144. Mane went so far as to poeticize the idea of the land as salubrious in his 1886 poem, "My-Soul's Journey." There, the speaker exclaims that he longs for the air of the Holy Land, as it has the power to heal a corpse. Mordecai Zevi Mane, "Masa'at Nafshi," in *Kol kitve Mordekhai Tsevi Maneh: kovets shirayṿ maʾamarayṿ u-mikhtava* (Warsaw: Tushiyah, 1897), 147–50.

[41] For information concerning the treatment of tuberculosis in British Mandate, see Merav Gertz-Ronen, *Me'ah shanah le-vet ha-ḥolim bi-Tsefat, 1910-2010* (Zichron-Ya'akov: Itay Bahur, 2010); Yaacov Khassis, *Shaḥefet be-Yisraʾel: uvdot, netunim u-megamot* (Tel Aviv: Merkaz ha-ligah la-milḥamah be-shaḥefet uve-maḥalot reʾah be-Yiśraʾel, 1964); Nisim Levi, *Perakim be-toldot ha-refuʾah be-erets-Yisraʾel, 1799-1948* (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibuts ha-Meʾuḥad; ha-Fakulṭah li-refuʾah al shem Barukh Rapoporṭ, ha-Tekhniyon, 1998), 503–506. I have also drawn on the serial, *Yediʻot ha-ligah le-milḥamah be-shaḥefet be-Yisraʾel.* (Tel Aviv: ha-Ligah le-milḥamah be-shaḥefet uve-maḥalot reʾah be-Yiśraʾel, 1958). See also "ha-Ligah le-milḥamah be-shaḥefet," *Davar*, October 10, 1930; Avigdor Mendelberg, "ha-Shaḥefet ve-ha-poʻalim (le-yom ha-peraḥ)," *Davar*, April 20, 1927; "Mikhtavim la-maʻarekhet: azru le-Milḥamah be-shaḥefet," *Davar*, February 18, 1930.

Two years earlier, frustrated with the lack of care for tuberculosis patients, a contributor to *The Palestine Post* had pleaded: "We Jews come here to build Palestine, to redeem and rebuild the land and to repopulate the country, yet calmly let the best building material decay."[43]

Compounding these institutional and medical obstacles, the tubercular patient in Palestine faced a hostile cultural connotation of the illness as the disease of diasporic life. In 1919, the same year that Raḥel would return to Palestine, a report was issued by the Department of Immigration and Colonization of the Zionist Organization. In it, the author blamed the increase in the number of tubercular cases in Palestine on the recent Russian Jewish immigrants.[44] If the dream of labor Zionism was to rebuild the physical Jewish body by working the land, then what was to one to make of a disease like tuberculosis—a blight of urban life?[45] What were labor Zionists to make of this disease in the idealized rural setting of Palestinian fields and valleys? Tuberculosis was not troped as a Romantic disease of the *yishuv*, so much as an existential threat to national-cultural health.[46] The Hebrew poet Avraham Shlonsky, as quoted in the introduction to this study, also lambasted the idea of Hebrew and Yiddish bilingualism, writing:

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[42] "Tuberculosis Sufferers," *The Palestine Post*, March 8, 1935. On the history of the hospital in Tsefat, see Gertz-Ronen, *Me'ah shanah le-vet ha-ḥolim bi-Tsefat, 1910-2010*.

[43] "An Urgent Appeal: To the Editor of the Palestine Post," *The Palestine Post*, January 31, 1933. In 1933 the efforts of the Anti-TB League faced a complicated health landscape in which Jewish, Arab and British doctors and patients competed for resources. The state of the Jewish health care system was still in a relatively nascent form: the workers' General Health Fund (*kupat ḥolim klalit*) had only begun to take shape in 1911. After it was formally established in 1920, it functioned at a deficit for the next decade and it was in a constant state of tension with Hadassah, the American-funded Zionist organization that began to exert managerial control over larger segments of medical care in Palestine. Shifra Shvarts, *The Workers' Health Fund in Eretz Israel: Kupat Holim, 1911-1937*, trans. Daniella Ashkenazy (Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press, 2002).

[44] Dr. Goldsmit, "Memorandum on the Question of Emigrants' Suffering from Tuberculosis with Recommendations for Treatment and Segregation by Dr. Goldsmit," June 1919, Z441685-lt, The Central Zionist Archives.

[45] Sander L. Gilman, *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient* (New York: Routledge, 1995), Chapter 4; Mitchell Bryan Hart, *The Healthy Jew: The Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapter 5.

> We see this calamity of bilingualism as we see tuberculosis, which gnaws at the lungs of the nation. We want Israeli breathing to be *completely Hebrew*, with two lungs. A Hebrew Land of Israel, working for the nation, loving its producers and its culture—this is the "Society of the War Against Tuberculosis."[47]

Hebrew cultural activism, according to Shlonsky, could rhetorically function in lieu of the Anti-TB league. In other words, the Hebrew language nationalist was the ultimate health activist. Shlonsky's formulation is also clearly a jab at the classic Yiddish and Hebrew writer Mendele's oft-cited anecdote that Hebrew-Yiddish bilingualism was as natural to Jewish writing as breathing through both nostrils. Here, Shlonsky disagrees with Mendele's assessment. Yiddish for Shlonsky represents the diasporic language of confinement and disease in contrast to the thriving and healthy-lunged language of the Zionist laborer.

As Sandra Sufian and Eric Zakim have shown, it was malaria rather than tuberculosis that acquired mythic status among labor Zionists.[48] "The poetics of malaria," writes Zakim, "describe how illness becomes the intermediate bridge between a sick land and a sick people."[49] And the cure for malaria was rhetorically worse than the disease, as it took the would-be pioneer away

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[46] This message was also communicated in literature. In the short story, "At the End of Summer" (c.1920) by the Hebrew writer Devorah Baron, two consumptive characters are given the ghoulish task of accompanying a hearse filled with plague-ridden corpses to the cemetery. Already ailing, they are given this ostracizing task, walking with the corpses and embodying the ambiguous position of the living dead. Devorah Baron, "Be-Sof Kayits," in *Agav-orḥa: asufah me-ezvonah al D. Baron umi-sevivah* (Merḥavyah: Sifriyat po'alim, 1960), 15.For a discussion of this story, see Barbara E. Mann, *A Place in History: Modernism, Tel Aviv, and the Creation of Jewish Urban Space* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006), 31–32. Hebrew writing outside the yishuv also emphasized the stigma of the disease, such as in Baron's short story of 1907 "It Erupted." There, the tubercular protagonist, Ḥantshi, is a caretaker for a baby; she loses her job after she erupts in a bloody coughing fit in front of the baby's mother. Devorah Baron, "Hitparets... (reshimah)," in *Parashiyot mukdamot: sipurim (1902-1921)*, ed. Avner Holtzman (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1988), 411–14.

[47] A[vraham] Shlonsky, "Al ha-shalom,'" *Ketuvim*, May 11, 1927, 1. This quote is also of interest to Naomi Brenner. See Naomi Rebecca Brenner, *Authorial Fictions: Literary and Public Personas in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature. PhD Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley.* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. Publication No. AAT3331524), 2008), 122.

[48] Sufian has plotted how the efforts to eradicate malaria in Palestine dovetailed with the Zionist ideological agenda of healing the land and thereby healing the nation. Sandra M. Sufian, *Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920-1947* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 14.

[49] Eric Zakim, *To Build and Be Built: Landscape, Literature, and the Construction of Zionist Identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 65.

from his beloved land and "denie[d] the very goal of self-identification with the land."[50] Such a dynamic resonates in such canonical works as Yosef Ḥayim Brenner's 1914 novel, *Breakdown and Bereavement* (*Shekhol ve-kishalon*), where, the protagonist must retreat to the "shtetl-like confines of Jerusalem" after contracting malaria while working on a farm.[51] Tuberculosis when compared with malaria now fails doubly as a Zionist romantic disease. It was perceived as having been contracted far from the rural landscape of Palestine and its treatment kept its victims at a further remove. For Raḥel, the onus of a tubercular reputation would have been far from neutral. On the one hand, the illness positioned her as afflicted by a disease anathema to the Zionist project. On the other, she drew on the tubercular capital that had supported a generation of Romantic poets who came before her.

Raḥel's writing reveals her awareness of both cultural understandings of the illness. In 1921, for example, she wrote a letter from her hospital room in Tsefat to Devorah Dayan, mother of the future Prime Minister, Moshe Dayan. In it, her tone wavers between between discomfort and hesitant optimism. She describes herself as increasingly miserable but finds joy and relief in reading. Before closing the letter, she adds the postscript: "I should tell you that this letter was not written with *dam libi*. In our prosaic times, even the poets use ink."[52] The expression, *dam libi*, refers to one's whole heart. Yet here, Raḥel plays with the literal meaning of the expression—the blood of my heart, the blood of my chest. The phrase directs her reader's attention to the striking appearance of the letters. After a half page in black ink, she had switched to a pen of deep red. Each cross and ink blot subsequently pointed back to her bloody sputum.

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[50] Ibid., 71.

[51] Yosef Ḥayim Brenner, *Shekhol ve-kishalon* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-Meʾuhad, 2006).

[52] Raḥel, "Letter to Devorah Dayan," c 1921, Zalman Shazar Collection 248, Document 92307/1, Machon Genazim.

The postscript is indeed quite curious. After all, it is clear to anyone who looks at the letter that Raḥel has not written the text using her own blood. Why, then, state the obvious? What rhetorical affect does this have besides uncomfortable humor? Implicit in this addendum is Raḥel's recognition of the cultural associations between the tubercular patient and her literary impulse. Having barely begun to find her voice in Hebrew poetry, she reveals a prescient awareness that her writing, just like that of Nadson and Mane, would one day be read as the byproduct of her pulmonary disease—her bloody eruptions *cum* creative expression. Readers would explain that her poetry was "written with the quill of fate" and "deriv[ed] more from the blood of personal wounds than the depth of the soil of the Hebrew language."[53] Anticipating this reading, Raḥel specifically emphasizes that she is *not* writing with a pen filled by her own blood.

In a second letter from the early 1920s, Raḥel reiterates her hesitation in assuming a reputation as a tubercular writer whose creativity derives from her disease. In a letter written to her friend and fellow writer Menaḥem Poznanski, Raḥel relates that she is unhappy with her current status as an invalid. She is stuck in a world where her visitors give her special treatment and seem only to ask, "How are you doing?" In a reflective moment, she adds: "It's a distinguished disease (*maḥalah meyuḥeset*), is it not, having even earned the reputation (*shem*) as "the authors' disease" (*maḥalat ha-sofrim*). But don't think that because of this that I would imagine joining them." Indicated here is Raḥel's awareness of the cultural capital attending tuberculosis; the disease has the power to yoke her to an already-established group of writers. Yet she specifically resists the association.

Yet the meaning of these letters are not so clear cut when we read Raḥel's other personal writings in their entirety. The more one investigates this tension, the more one sees that Raḥel

[53] As cited in Segal, "Rachel Bluwstein's 'Aftergrowth' Poetics," 320.

understood both sides of her tubercular literary heritage. For example, in an anecdote recounted by her literary executor Uri Milstein, we learn of a conversation she had with Milstein's mother and her caregiver, Sara. As Milstein recalls, Sara had been forbidden from asking Raḥel how she was doing. But, as Sara told her son, sometimes Raḥel would offer an answer without the question being asked. She recalls:

> Suddenly [Raḥel] would say, "I didn't sleep last night" or "Today I had a good day. In the morning I even brushed my teeth. I am like Chekhov. He also was sick with tuberculosis and lived for a time in Crimea. His wife, Olga Knipper, was one of the great actresses of Russia, was [then] living in Moscow. In one of their letters, he writes to her: "Today I brushed my teeth."[54]

In this curious scene, Raḥel compares herself to Chekhov through their shared experience of illness (TB), their shared health landscape (the Crimea of her youth) and their shared pleasure in accomplishing a mundane and simple task (brushing one's teeth). While Raḥel previously declared that she did not want to be known as having been afflicted by "the authors' disease," here she recognizes her link to Chekhov and uses his experiences as a proxy for her own. Sholem Aleichem before her and the Yiddish memoirist Daniel Charney (whom we will meet in the next chapter) similarly called on Chekhov as a fellow tubercular writer in arms. With this brief Chekhovian reference, we must ask, has Raḥel linked herself in a tubercular literary chain?

In light of this account, how might we understand a second aside that Raḥel made in reference to the tubercular Hebrew writer, Mordekhai Ze'ev Feierberg? Feierberg had previously been linked to Raḥel's ailing colleagues, Mane and Mikhal. On the occasion of Raḥel's imminent discharge from the Tsefat hospital, she wrote to a friend about her concerns as to where she should move when she is released. Unsure of whether to stay in Tsefat or to travel to "the good air" of Jerusalem, Raḥel writes: "The question 'Whither?' (*Le-an*) stands before me as before

[54] Uri Milstein, "Einayim bo'arot," *Ḥadashot*, April 5, 1985, 51.

Feierberg in his time."[55] She refers here to Feierberg's novella *Le-'an.* The text was published in 1900, one year after he passed away from tuberculosis. At the end of the novella the protagonist launches into an impassioned monologue imploring his audience to "go East" to found a new society in the Orient. His tone is manic and his mental stability seems to be devolving, yet his message is clear. For Raḥel, already in Palestine but unable to live the rural ideal, what might this allusion to Feierberg's text have meant? To where did "Whither" point? Was she too feeling herself losing control, in a manner similar to Feierberg's protagonist? Or, does this allusion point to the poet's self-positioning in literary tradition of tubercular writers, Russian and Hebrew alike?

If Raḥel's allusions to Checkhov and Feierberg are frustratingly ambiguous, we might look elsewhere in the memoir literature for a hint of Raḥel's co-articulation of literary expression and disease. Rivkah Davidit met Raḥel in the last year of her life. She recalls one memorable visit to Raḥel's apartment in Tel Aviv, where Raḥel asked, "Which would you prefer? That I were healthy but my poems would not exist at all (*ve-shiray lo yihiyu be-nimtsa klal*), or that I would be as I am and my poems extant?" Davidit recounts that she looked at the ailing Raḥel, listened to her terrible cough and responded that she would prefer the Raḥel were healthy. The poet, clearly insulted, responded, "then you must not love my poetry!"[56] For critics like Dan Miron, this anecdote is evidence of Raḥel's sharp, witty and borderline aggressive nature.[57] I read the anecdote differently. In my understanding, Raḥel acknowledges here a link between her disease and her writing. After all, it is implied that were her health to improve, her poetry would

[55] Raḥel, "Letter to Shulamit Klugai (#10)," n.d., Arkhiyon ha-Medinah [Israel State Archives], http://www.archives.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/DF007C69-7D71-4D37-8FAA-D7DD0FCF9B90/0/Rachel10.pdf.

[56] Hebrew: "*eyn zot ki eynkha ohevet et shiray.*" Rivkah Davidit, "Ba-me'uḥar," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah,* 45.

[57] Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, aḥayot ḥorgot*, 118.

cease; similarly, had she not fallen ill, her poetry might never have existed. Within this tense exchange is the recognition that tuberculosis functioned in some way as an occasion for Raḥel's literary productivity. She may have generally resisted being categorized as a tubercular writer but this very refusal acknowledges an ambivalent awareness of both the cultural capital (Romanticism) and cultural debt (Zionism) conditioning her own perception of her illness.

It is here that we must now reconsider how tuberculosis mediated Raḥel's creative process, without resorting to Romantic explanations of literary genius and also without denying the social stigma that attended her disease among labor Zionists of the *yishuv*. Raḥel's writing would not directly address tuberculosis as a subject so much as poeticize the space in which the ailing writer found herself. Accordingly, the following section explores the parameters—literary and physical—of what is perhaps the most obvious answer to Raḥel's own question of *Whither*?: the sickroom.

The Sickroom Salon

In a collection of memoiristic accounts of Raḥel's life and writing, the Hebrew writer Yeshurun Keshet recalls a conversation he had with Raḥel's brother. The poet's sibling suggested that Keshet could get to know Raḥel if he were to make his way to her attic room—in Keshet's words, "*miklat ḥoliyah*," the shelter of her disease.[58] One is reminded here once more of the poem with which this chapter opened. There, the poetic subject finds herself located in a narrow sickroom, closed off from the world around yet ready to burst out with her poetry. Indeed, Raḥel's rotating dwelling places would offer her the space both to be defined and assert

[58] Yeshurun Keshet, "Olamah ha-shiri shel Raḥel," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah*, 248.

her power through her illness. One of the ways she did this was to transform the sickroom into a social space.

Investigating the history of the Victorian female invalid, Diane Price Herndl has argued that "representing oneself as an invalid [put] into play a whole structure of care, attention, responsibility and privilege."[59] In certain cases, this allowed the invalid to become a venerable hostess with multiple attendants in her own sickroom. In other cases, it allowed the invalid to become the center of a sickroom salon, as she entertained visitors in the privacy of her own room. Such would be case for Raḥel's various sickrooms. When Raḥel first visited Tel Aviv after a hospitalization in Tsefat, she wrote to her niece Sara Milstein about the bourgeois salon hosted by her sister-in-law. "I came back from Tsefat," wrote Raḥel, "and I discovered that there were cities—centers of culture. And I enjoyed myself."[60] As evidenced by multiple posthumous accounts, her sickroom became one such center of culture. In this tubercular salon, an ailing Raḥel took center stage, playing the coughing host to her admiring visitors.[61]

That Raḥel received visitors at all may seem curious. After all, she suffered from a disease that was already known to be highly contagious. After a brief stay with her brother and salon-hosting sister-in-law, for example, Raḥel had to leave their home for fear that she would infect their young daughter.[62] She had also notoriously been asked to leave Kibbutz Degania for

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[59] Herndl, *Invalid Women: Figuring Feminine Illness in American Fiction and Culture, 1840-1940*, 9.

[60] Raḥel, "Letter to Sara Milstein," no date, Zalman Shazar Collection 248, Folder 29449-Kaf, Page 12, Machon Genazim.

[61] There is a long history of studying the salon as a place of cultural exchange, especially in the German and Austrian Jewish contexts. Deborah Hertz's study has been particularly helpful in mapping the boundaries of women's agencies as participants—work that is indeed, helpful, in understanding the limits of Raḥel's power as a female host. I use the term here, however, not specifically to refer to the model of the German-Jewish salon but rather to delineate a domestic social space, bounded by the proclivities of a female host and occupied with literary concerns that resonate with political consequence. Deborah Sadie Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

fear that the toddlers in her care would contract tuberculosis. Yet Raḥel's communicable disease did not dissuade many of her friends and admirers from visiting her for short periods of time. The first visitors who deserve mention are those who constitute Raḥel's inner circle. Analyzing the social space of the Victorian sickroom, Miriam Bailin notes that "often, rather than reuniting kin, illness summons a society suited to one's own specifications and substitutes for the coercions of blood and marriage a physical tie as voluntary as friendship and as essential as survival."[63] While many people went in and out of Raḥel's various sickrooms, there was a core group of friends and fellow writers who went in and out on a regular basis. These included her niece and frequent caretaker, Sara Milstein, as well as editors of the labor Zionist newspaper *Davar*, such as Berl Katznelson, Moshe Beilinson (also a physician) and Yitsḥak Yatsiv. Living near the offices of Davar, these three editors made frequent appearances in her room. Shazar, for example, is known to have visited Raḥel's room precisely to help advance her career. As is often told, Raḥel was notoriously stubborn. She especially resented overt attempts on the part of her colleagues to help her in her condition. She refused to accept more than the standard price per line of poetry despite the fact that her poems were so short.[64] Yet she allowed Shazar into her room and let him flip through her poetry journal to choose a poem to be published in *Davar*. This was despite the fact that she had previously told him that she had nothing new to publish![65]

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[62] Temporary source: Uri Milstein, "Dodati Raḥel," in *Raḥel: shirim, mikhtavim reshimot, korot ḥayeha*, by Raḥel (Tel Aviv: Zemorah Bitan, 1985), 45.

[63] Bailin, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction: The Art of Being Ill*, 19.

[64] This fact is frequently recounted in the biographical writings. For a most recent occurrence, see Muki Tsur, "'Ba-bayit uva-ḥuts'--gilgulo shel sefer," in *Ba-bayit uva-ḥuts*, by Raḥel (Tel Aviv: Tamuz, 2001), n.p.

[65] Raḥel, "Letter to Shulamit Klugai (#23)," no date, Arkhiyon ha-Medinah [Israel State Archives], http://www.archives.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/BB354F0B-0A8D-4A9F-803C-1EC96650B0C1/0/Rachel23.pdf.

Finding a room was one of the few activities she allowed her colleagues to do. When Beilinson visited Raḥel in her room on ha-Yarkon Street, he was immediately dissatisfied. In his professional opinion as a physician, the apartment was untenable for the tubercular patient as it lacked an indoor toilet.[66] It was on his account, therefore, that Raḥel moved to 5 Bogroshov. Mobilizing Raḥel's tubercular capital, he and the editors of *Davar* took it upon themselves to find their new star poet a more suitable abode. They found more appropriate lodgings in the attic apartment of Lipman Levenzon, who would also visit his tenant Raḥel. His wife, an opera-singer named Rika, even implored Raḥel to translate several operas into Hebrew, which the poet did.[67] Raḥel thrived artistically in this room, which faced the sea, was soaked with sunshine, had an indoor bathroom and granted Raḥel access to the roof. In contrast to the actions of Beilinson and his colleagues, recall here Sholem Aleichem's strained relationships with the editors and publishers of various Yiddish newspapers. While he spent his years in health resorts haggling to retrieve his literary rights, Raḥel fostered a mutually-beneficial relationship with the editors of *Davar*.

Beyond maintaining her business relationships, Raḥel used the sickroom to present herself to an increasingly admiring public. The young Hebrew writer Avraham Broides recalls visiting Raḥel in Tel Aviv shortly after reading her poetry for the first time. The discussion during his visit touched on a wide variety of subjects, including the nature of love and contemporary literature.[68] The Hebrew poet Levi Ben-Amitai also recalls visiting Raḥel in the

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[66] Milstein, "Einayim bo'arot."

[67] Shlomo Sheva, "Raḥel ba-aliyat-ha-gag," *Davar*, May 7, 1971, sec. Davar ha-shavua, 18–19. Yatsiv initially proposed renting the room from Levinzon, without explicitly stating for whom it was. Beilison, however, followed up and made sure that Levinzon was aware that the intended occupant, Raḥel, was ill. It appears that her illness had initially given him pause. He had a young son and was aware that her disease was contagious. Yet he and his wife Rika eventually agreed and Raḥel came to live and write in the garret apartment.

city several times.[69] During these occasions, they spoke about poetry, in general, and Raḥel's reviews of other writers' works, in particular. Raḥel also read Ben-Amitai some of her unpublished poems from her personal journal. Finally, in addition to these budding writers, Raḥel acted as host in her room to such venerable literary guests as Gnessin and Bialik.[70]

There are so many accounts in the memoiristic literature of visits to Raḥel's sickroom in the body of so-called *sifrut Raḥel* (Raḥel literature) that we can suggest a paradigm: A friend/admirer/aspiring writer visits Raḥel in her rented room or garret.[71] He finds Raḥel alone and takes note of her physical state of illness. She comments on Raḥel's fiery blue eyes, tall stature, and dark brown hair. He then takes note of the sparsely-furnished room, save a bed, rocking chair and small table, on which only a single book—the Hebrew bible—can be found. And she notices the poet's simple white dress, sewn from plain linen. The poet appears almost to blend into the background of her sparse surroundings. The visitor likely will also comment on the bundle of flowers or branches by her side, a spot of nature between the four concrete walls. Others will take note of the ocean visible through Raḥel's window—physically so close yet rhetorically impossible to reach. Finally, the visitor and Raḥel will engage in a lively conversation about her own work or contemporary culture in the *yishuv*. She will challenge the visitor to explain his opinions and then, sometimes, interrupt their discussion with an insuppressible cough. Sometimes, these conversations occur while Raḥel is bedridden and her

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[68] Avraham Broides, "Raḥel (sheloshim shanah le-motah)," *ha-Po'el ha-tsa'ir*, 1961, 20.

[69] Levi Ben-Amitai, "Ba-meḥitsat Raḥel (20 shanah le-Motah)," *Davar*, April 30, 1951, sec. Davar ha-Shavu'a, 7; 10-11.

[70] On Gnessin's visit, see Ḥaim Be'er, "Raḥel: safiyaḥ," *Davar*, April 26, 1985, sec. Davar ha-Shavu'a, 5. On Bialik's visit, see Bialik's see Ḥayah Rutberg, "Raḥel ve-goralah," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah*, 28.

[71] Dan Miron coined the phrase *Sifrut Raḥel* to refer here to the ever-growing body of posthumously-published memoiristic accounts of Raḥel, first-hand reflections of reading her work, and public elegies that appear annually to mark the anniversary of her death Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, aḥayot ḥorgot*, 115.

physical weakness is on clear display even when she tries to be most stoic. One might describe these visits as segments in an extended piece of tubercular performance art, in which Raḥel appears as director, actress and part of the set.[72]

For many of her guests, these visits were also the first and sometimes last time they would encounter Raḥel. By extension, the image of Raḥel as an ailing poet would have remained present in their minds. Visiting Raḥel only served to confirm both Broides' and Ben-Amitai's impressions of the poet as sickly; Broides recalls that she appeared to be struggling to survive and Ben-Amitai noted her gauntness and overall weakness.[73] Both writers also indicate that she looked just as they had imagined from reading her poetry. In other words, visiting only served to confirm an already established image of Raḥel as an invalid poet. Contemporary scholars may finds biographical interpretations of Raḥel's poetry as limiting, but the more one examines Raḥel's sickroom history, the more one begins to see that some of her first literary performances were executed under the sign of illness, in the space of a sickroom, and in front of her sympathetic readers who were well aware of her disease. I must add here that Raḥel's acclaim as a poet only rose after she was diagnosed with tuberculosis, left the hospital in Tsefat and settled into the life of a chronic invalid in a sparse room. Her illness was coterminous with her

[72] For mention of the poet greeting her guests while bedridden or lying down, see: Shulamit Lapid, "Taglit sifrutit-historit: sefer yelado shel ha-meshoreret Raḥel nimtsa va-yetse la-or aḥare 43 shanot shivḥah u-genizah," *Ma'ariv*, June 7, 1974, 37; Ḥayah Rutberg, "Zikhronot," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah,* 27; Gustah Rekhev, "Al Raḥel ha-meshoreret," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah*, 58. For mention of her eyes, see: Rivkah Davidit, "Ba-me'uḥar," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah, 42*; Brakhah Ḥabas, "Sirṭuṭim li-d'mutah," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah,* 54. On the sparse furnishings, see Rutberg, "Zikhronot," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah*, 27. On the presence of the bible and flowers, as well as an insuppressible cough, see Avraham Broides, "ba-Meḥitsatah," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah*, 101. For mention of her white dress, see: Ben-Amitai, "Ba-meḥitsat Raḥel (20 shanah Le-motah)," 7; Broides, "Raḥel (shloshim shanah le-motah)," 29; Brakhah Ḥabas, "Pegishah," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah*, 56. For additional general accounts of visits, see: Itah Ig-Faktorit, "Raḥel ke-demut meḥanekhet," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah,* 62; Shmu'eli, "Be-arov Yomah," in *Raḥel ve-shiratah*, 50. Ig-Faktori also mentions the fear of her son contracting the communicable disease, so their conversation took place on the roof. They specifically did not speak in the confined room.

[73] Broides, "Raḥel (sheloshim shanah le-motah)," 20; Ben-Amitai, "Ba-meḥitsat Raḥel (20 shanah le-motah)," 7.

development as a Hebrew poet and her room was the location from which she would make her voice heard.

This lesson is distilled in one of Raḥel's more curious literary projects initiated in the sickroom. While living in 5 Bogroshov, the poet was approached by a toy salesman named Re'uven Goldberg.[74] Raḥel had been recommended to him as someone who might be able to write pleasant verses to accompany images for a children's book that he wanted to publish. The result was *At Home and Outside* (*ba-Bayit uva-ḥuts*). Published in 1930, the illustrated poetry collection is made up of a series of 5-line stanzas. Each stanza charmingly describes various animals and the sounds they make. One of the more rhetorically rich selections describes doves cooing in the eaves. It reads:

> "Gurrr-u…gurrr-u. Whence comes the song?"
> Lift up your head, my bright child.
> Under the roof, in several voices.
> Under the roof, doves coo.
> Gurrr-u! Gurrr-u!
>
> *Gurrr-u…gurrr-u—me'ayin ha-shir?"*
> *Harimah roshekha, yaldi ha-bahir!*
> *Mitakhat la-gag, be-khama kolot,*
> *mitakhat la-gag yonim homiyot.*
> *Gurrr-u! gurrr-u!*[75]

There have been debates as to whether or not Raḥel liked the poems that she produced in *At Home and Outside*, and the answer may never be decisively known. More interesting than the quality of the rhymes, however, is that this work was first proposed to Raḥel while she was sitting in her rocking chair on the roof of her attic room. This poem, ostensibly about doves, points us to the poet at work in that location. In Hebrew, the word for *shir* (song) also signifies a

[74] Lapid, "Taglit sifrutit-historit: sefer yelado shel ha-meshoreret Raḥel nimtsa va-yetse la-or aḥare 43 shanot shivḥah u-genizah," 37. For additional historical background, see Tsur, "'Ba-bayit uva-ḥuts'--gilgulo shel sefer."

[75] Raḥel, *Ba-bayit uva-ḥuts* (Tel Aviv: Tamuz, 2001), n.p.

poem. Considering that definition, we might retranslate the first line: "Gurrr-u…gurrr-u. Whence comes the poem?" We are directed to the origin in the garret on high where a chorus of white birds coos. We are pointed to see an avian stand-in for Raḥel, a pale poet dressed in white, high above in the space of creativity. Finally, we also poetically asked to consider creativity in the collective. There, beneath the roof, a group of doves sing in unison yet with distinct voices. Their music is produced as all the sounds join together. And yet the speaker maintains her role as director, encouraging the reader and listener to look up. Might we read this stanza, therefore, not simply as a children's poem but rather as the scene of Raḥel's literary salon. There, up above, is the domestic space where Raḥel's visitors became part of the poetic process of the pale poet in a white linen dress.

The Sickroom as Subject and Style

The interpretation of the stanza above is heavy-handed. Yet it announces the fact that, more than a salon and more than a place a business, Raḥel's sickroom was also space of poetic experimentation. It was a space where she would recite poetry in Russian and Hebrew, both alone and with others.[76] According to one visitor, it was there that Raḥel's would "get drunk on the poetry" of the greats, such as Akhmatova, Pushkin and Blok.[77] She also would test out her

[76] In her letters to Shulamit Klugai, her friend and fellow writer, Raḥel describes how she recites poetry "out loud… in the emptiness of my room (*be-kol ram….be-shamemet ḥedri*)." She would go on to recount having recited poetry by Yvgeny Yesenin and Konstanin Balmont, adding that every sad song seems to me like my own confession (*vidui*), like the story of my life, and I read it out loud to myself in the emptiness of my room (*shamemet ḥedri*), and my eyes fill with the tears." Raḥel, "Letter to Shulamit Klugai (#4)," no date., Arkhiyon ha-Medinah [Israel State Archives], http://www.archives.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/B3713D18-FFC3-40CA-9BA7-BEE3CFD20C96/0/Rachel04.pdf; Raḥel, "Letter to Shulamit Klugai (#6)," no date, Arkhiyon ha-Medinah [Israel State Archives], http://www.archives.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/D9D726A6-F674-4EC9-8B2A-85E9F9CB96E4/0/Rachel06.pdf.

[77] Davidit, "Ba-me'uḥar," 43.

own works in progress.[78] Beyond a sound studio, it was also a site that would be coded as a space of poetic possibility across her written oeuvre. In the following section, I analyze the representation of the sickroom as a key to understanding Raḥel's sense of the conditions of literary production. To do so, I investigate two groups of poems that similarly feature in the discourse of the nineteenth-century Victorian sickroom. The first group comprises poems where Raḥel thematizes the act of looking through a window at the world beyond and the second includes those poems that identify the spaces of confinement as potentially productive. The two groups are not mutually exclusive, as the window and the confining space of a narrow room are plotted together in Raḥel's oeuvre as the building blocks of poetry.

The act of looking out from the sickroom through the window is also a key feature of the Victorian invalid text. In her account of her own recuperation, for example, Harriet Martineau expends a great many words describing "the best kind of view for a sick prisoner's window."[79] Having spent years in bed, Martineau is well aware of the oppression of a confined space. In a poem that Raḥel wrote while a patient in Tsefat, the first-person speaker similarly describes herself as a "the captive," who can only look out the window and cry.[80] However for Martineau here and for Raḥel elsewhere, the experience of looking out the window was often more palliative than aggravating. Martineau, moreover, preferred a view of the sea—albeit in moderation. The waters that were "perpetually shifting" gave her a sense of the motion of life outside the sickroom. Yet she warns her readers that "there must not be too much sea. The

[78] On one occasion, Raḥel even asked her niece and caretaker, Sara Milstein, for feedback. Milstein had just read aloud a four-stanza draft of what would later be titled, "Spring" (*Aviv*). Milstein relates that she read the poem and found the final stanza to be wanting. Raḥel is said to have gotten angry but she did eventually erase the stanza from the text. As recounted in Uri Milstein, "Eynayim bo'arot," 51.

[79] Martineau, *Life in the Sick-Room*, 67.

[80] Raḥel, "Be-veit ha-ḥolim," in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1966), 32, l.2.

strongest eyes and nerves could not support the glare and oppressive vastness of an unrelieved expanse of waters."[81] Nevertheless, her memoirs are filled with anecdotes about how she managed to psychologically escape her housebound life not by physically leaving but by looking through the window at the sea. As Diana Postlewaithe has suggested, the art of seeing "transformed [Martineau's sickroom] from a cloistered retreat into a place of visionary perspective."[82]

Raḥel's poetry suggests that she felt the same. Confined to a room, it appears that Raḥel and her speakers find their poetic subjects through the windowpanes. In the text, "Pear Tree," an unnamed subject sees a blooming pear tree outside his window (*mul ḥalono*). This symbol of spring prevents her from dwelling on a flower that had perished the previous fall, i.e. on sadness. After all, as the speaker explains, the figure cannot remain glum when there is a "giant wreath of flowers right outside his window (*zer peraḥim anaki lemo ḥalono mamash*). The proximity of the wreath is emphasized—it is *mamash* outside the window—as if to indicate that the window is not a projection of an imaginary space but a mediator of real-life and real-time experience. The poem is said to have been inspired by the pear tree visible through Raḥel's own window in her Jerusalem apartment. A second poem, entitled "Next to the Window" (*le-Yad he-ḥalon*) features a speaker who describes a neighbor's garden and admires the vegetables growing there. In the final stanza, an image from the speaker's past (*demut-avar*) that had been long forgotten begins to silently climb up towards and look through the speaker's window. Just as in Raḥel's early Russian poetry, the window intervenes in the speaker's communication with that which exists beyond her interior space. In the Russian poem above, the window mediates the speaker's

[81] Martineau, *Life in the Sick-Room*, 67.

[82] As quoted in Frawley, *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 226.

relationship to other people; in "Next to the Window," it mediates the speaker's relationship both to his/her past and to the natural world of plants outside in the garden.

A view of the sea through the window would also mediate Raḥel's relationship to poetry. This is seen most explicitly in one of Raḥel's most beautiful poems, "Miniature Joys" (*Sesonot ze'irim*). The poem bespeaks the mystical streak in Raḥel's oeuvre. In the opening line, readers are introduced to "*sesonot ze'irim*," small joys that vibrate with connotations that reach the kabbalistic.[83] In the text, holiness appears immanent, brought down to the level of the natural world and cityscape. Words, moreover, not only comprise the poem but, as described, resonate with mystery and blessing. Everything appears encompassed in language, which itself is unanchored to any solid ground. Written in 1925/6, the poem also shares the view that Raḥel had from her apartment on ha-Yarkon Street. It reads:

> Miniature joys, small lizard-tails of delight:
> The sea, of a sudden, emerging between urban walls,
> The glass in the window at sunset glittering bright—
> A blessing in all!
>
> A blessing in all, and all resound with relief,
> In all are mysterious signs, and all is inclined
> To string lovely words on its threads like corals in a reef.
> As fancy will find.
>
> *Sesonot ze'irim, semaḥot keznav-leta'ah:*
> *ha-yam lefit'om ben shne binyanim bakrakh,*
> *zekhukhit ha-ḥalon notsetset be-shemesh shok'ah—*
> *ha-kol mevorakh!*
>
> *ha-kol mevorakh, la-kol neginat neḥamot,*
> *ba-kol remazim temirim, veha-kol yiskon*
> *laḥaroz al ḥutav almuge ha-milim ha-na'avot,*
> *ke-yad ha-dimayon.*[84]

[83] It is unlikely that Raḥel either read kabbalistic texts or intends here an engagement with kabbilistic ideals. Yet her choice of the adjective *ze'irim* does point to curious connections between Raḥel's poetry and the kabbalistic idea of *ze'ir anpin.* Shaul Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbala* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 24–30.

Here, the vastness of the sea that Martineau had warned could be deleterious to the invalid's health has been compartmentalized. Only a sliver of the ocean—one "miniature joy"—peaks out through the buildings. It does not overwhelm the speaker but, rather, becomes poetry in the second stanza. In Hebrew, the infinitive *la-ḥaroz* (line 7) connotes both "to bead" and "to rhyme," while the nominal form, *ḥaruz*, refers to both a rhyme and rhyming poetry. Accordingly, the views from Raḥel's room—the ocean and the window—all stand to become versified expression, to be beaded on the strings of words according to Raḥel's fancy—literally, with the hand of her imagination (*yad ha-dimayon*). The poetological agenda of the poem exhibits itself here, as the poem now reads as a poem about the writing of poetry itself. This agenda is reinforced in line 6 by the verb, "*yiskon*," a relatively rare verb that is here rendered as "inclined" and means more literally "to come to fruition." The future tense verb encompasses an anticipatory tone, as if the sea and the windowpane all exist on the cusp of becoming poetry. The verb also mobilizes the possibility of danger (*liskon*, to endanger; *sakin*, knife). Raḥel writes of a speaker who has in front of him/her the necessary variables for poetic expression; these include the sea and the window—the view from Raḥel's sickroom and the architectural frame through which that view would be perceived. Yet there is a tension that besets the act, embodied in the verb *yiskon*, which indicates that the poet is not stringing these words together from a completely relaxed setting but from a place that is quietly fraught.

One of the more interesting features shared by all of the above poems is that none explicitly locate Raḥel in her sickroom. In other poems, however, placing the speaker is not as tendentious practice. Recall here the Russian poem with which this chapter opened. The first line states: "I live in a Sanatorium on High." It is helpful to quote the stanza in full once more:

[84] I am grateful to Itamar Francez for allowing me to include his translation of this poem.

I will go to my narrow room
I will close the shutters more tightly…
Oh, disperse heavenly forces,
Evil spells of the evening lights!...[85]

Here the window is only implied by the shutter. The view outside is blocked by the action and the movement directs our attention into the room. Again, it is only after retreating that Raḥel's speaker makes a direct command on her surroundings. It is only after retreating to a narrow space that the poet find expresses herself and makes her command on the "heavenly forces." Indeed, this rhetoric of narrowness and the experience of the room as a place of confinement are common motifs throughout Raḥel's Hebrew writing. The poem, "I Knew Only to Tell About Myself" (*Rak al atsmi le-saper yad'ati*) is clearly in dialogue with this early Russian text.[86] Written in March 1930 in Tel Aviv, it is perhaps one of Raḥel's most oft-quoted poems. It shares with the sanatorium poem a reference to the distant lights, which both draw and taunt the speaker. It also similarly describes the narrow spatial context. The poem opens with the titular statement, "I knew only to tell about myself" and follows with a contextual observation, "my world is narrow [*tsar*] like the world of an ant [*tsar olami ke-olam nemalah*]." The remainder of the poem traces the ant's movement to a treetop—to a place up high—while burdened with a heavy load. Naomi Brenner has recently argued that this poem's reference to the ant should be read in conversation with Raḥel's review of Maeterlinck's *The Life of the Ant*. Raḥel, argues Brenner, lauded Maeterlinck's image of the ant as "part of a well-organized *meshek le'umi*, a national economy."[87] As the Hebrew ant is gendered feminine (*nemalah*), Brenner further reads Raḥel's analysis of Maeterlink's text as an allegory of women's contributions to Zionist society

[85] Raḥel, "I Live High Up in a Sanatorium [Ia zhivu vysoko v sanatorii]," ll. 13–16.

[86] Raḥel, "Rak al atsmi," in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1966), 128.

[87] Brenner, "Slippery Selves: Rachel Bluvstein and Anna Margolin in Poetry and Public," 123.

and the external forces that hinder them. For Brenner, Raḥel's invocation of the ant is also important in that it points to her modernist sensibility. In line with her acmeist style, Raḥel "[elevates] an ordinary insect to the level of poetic conceit."[88]

Yet the allusion also works on a level other than that of an allegory of Zionist labor. Consider Raḥel's summary of Maeterlink's description of the physical infrastructure of the ant colony. "In general," writes Raḥel, "the ant colony extends into the earth to a depth of thirty to forty cm.," where "days and nights pass filled with agricultural labor, food preparation, reciprocal feeding." When an ant returns to the colony exhausted, Raḥel continues, her friends rush to her, brush the dust from her body, and lead her to her small bedchamber (*kiton*) where she is allowed to rest.[89] The ant's world may be narrow and her bedchamber confined, but it is in this world and in that tiny room—*kiton* is built from the root *k.t.n.* meaning "small"—that ants care for those in need while they recuperate. This poem also mobilizes a second meaning of *tsar*. In the nominal form, the term refers to trouble or distress. That meaning is amplified when we consider the ailing ant whose physical struggles in the narrow room are met with concern. I contend that when Raḥel's speaker exclaims, "my world is narrow as an ant's," she describes the world of her sickroom where, though confined, she is the object of attention and care. There, she mobilizes tubercular capital on her behalf, which translates not only into the assistance of her friends and colleagues but the conditions of poetic experimentation.

In an untitled poem written several years earlier, Raḥel also gestures towards the possibilities of confined spaces that reflect the architecture of the sickroom. The poem reads:

> I don't complain! In a narrow room
> the longing for space is sweetened;

[88] Ibid., 124.

[89] Raḥel, "Ḥaye nemalim," in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1966), 228–229.

In days of grief, in the cold fall
there is crimson and there is gold.

I don't complain; a poem flows
from a heart wounded in the act of loving
the desert sand—like the green of the field,
from the peak, from Mt. Nevo.

Eni kovlah! Be-ḥeder tsar
timtak kol-kakh ergat merḥav;
Lime tugah, la-stav ha-kar
yesh argaman ve-yesh zahav.

Eni kovlah; nove'a shir
Mi-petsa-lev be-ohavo,
ve-ḥol midbar—ke-yerek-nir
me-rosh pisgah, me-har Nevo.[90]

The poem opens with an explanation, as if in response to the question that Raḥel hates so much: "How are you doing?" The assumed answer to that question would, it seems, be met with a complaint. But, "I don't complain!" exclaims the speaker. Rather, the cramped and narrow room (*ḥeder tsar*) that would be expected to elicit displeasure in the speaker becomes the location wherein her emotions become sweeter, more acute, more powerful and more sweet. The speaker has located herself in a confined space of distress, in a narrow room of pain, in my reading, in a sickroom.

The opening exclamation is also one of the few instances in Raḥel's poetry where the speaker is clearly identifiable as female. "*Eni kovlah*," she declares, conjugating the verb in the singular, feminine first-person. The gender specificity strikes the reader twice as the speaker announces that she does not complain in the first lines of both stanzas. Like the feminine space of the ant colony, the poem now locates the female subject in narrow quarters. And, just as in the ant colony, there are elements of value and beauty even in grim situations. Referencing the

[90] Raḥel, "Eni kovlah," in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1966), 63.

colors of crimson and gold, she poeticizes what might be rendered as the clichéd aphorism in which every cloud has a silver lining. Recall here Sholem Aleichem's introduction to "Shmuel Shmelkes" where he writes that "there is nothing in the world that is so bad that some good can't come of it." For Sholem Aleichem, this includes leeches that help the sick and bees that make honey.[91] For Raḥel, this has previously included the ant colony and now expands to include the narrow room of pain.

In the second stanza, the potentially positive outgrowth of a difficult situation acquires creative potency. A wounded *lev* becomes the source of poetry. In an earlier letter mentioned above, Raḥel had appended a postscript specifically to prevent her addressee from thinking that the letter had been written "with the blood of my heart (*be-dam libi*)."[92] Here, however, poetry flows precisely from her afflicted and ailing *lev*—her heart, her chest, perhaps her lung. The speaker then looks out from Mount Nevo onto desert sand. For Raḥel, Mount Nevo was a rhetorical location rife with meaning, as indicated by the title of her third collection, *Nevo.* The mountain references the biblical peak from which Moses would see the Promised Land but would not be allowed to enter. Here, it also points to the view from Raḥel's sickroom, from which she could see the sandy Mediterranean coast and ocean beyond. From her poetic Mount Nevo, Raḥel's speaker perceives desert sand as a verdant pasture (*yerek-nir*). The poem easily lends itself to a reading whereby the biographically-inflected speaker looks longingly out onto the beach and imagines a fertile land she cannot work. Such a reading would be decidedly in line with that of so many of Raḥel's most sympathetic readers, who understood her poetry as

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[91] Sholem Aleichem, "Shmuel Shmelkes un zayn yubileum," in *Ale verk*, vol. 1 (New York: Sholem-Aleykhem Folksfond, 1917), 203.

[92] Raḥel Bluvshtein, "Letter to Devorah Dayan," c. 1921, Zalman Shazar Collection 248, Document 92307/1, Machon Genazim. The letter was republished in *Davar*. See Raḥel, "Yom ha-shanah ha-shishi la-mot Raḥel," *Davar*, April 15, 1937, 28.

performing "a project of national importance" in a manner that echoes Florence Nightingale's own efforts. In this line of interpretation, Raḥel's poetry would be the nationalistic offering she submits in lieu of physical labor.

And yet the poem complicates this one-to-one symbolic interpretation. Another line of creative argumentation emerges when we consider a secondary meaning of *nir*. When unvocalized, *nun-yud-resh* may also signify *niyar*, paper. Accordingly, poetry flows from the speaker's wounded *lev* onto to a discursive field below. What's more, this hybrid space of *yerek-nir*, also points back to Raḥel's own tubercular condition. Just as *nun-yud-resh* may send us down an alternative interpretative route, so too does the root *yud-resh-kaf* direct us towards the ailing poet's own *yerikah*—her sputum and perhaps even her own physical emaciation, to a body made *reik*—empty—by the devastating disease. The agricultural space of *yerek-nir* has now been destabilized; the sick writer's poem descends from a confined place on high down to a literary space of spit and emaciation below. It is from the sickroom above that the Raḥel expresses herself onto a poetic page of illness. It is from the sickroom, moreover, that she harnesses the Romantic possibilities of tuberculosis to send forth onto the Hebrew literary landscape of the *yishuv*. The question is: With what type of literary expression has Raḥel flooded the land? Is the poem simply a nationalist donation of poet to a people? Or is it a more complicated exposition of disease, rage and perhaps even vengeance couched in a simple lyrical poem? Indeed, the opening exclamation "*Eyni kovlah!*" should stop us in our tracks for it so easily lends itself to a productive obvious misreading: *Ani kovlah!*, I complain.

A similarly complicated exploration of disease, writing and the space of confinement is realized in Raḥel's untitled poem of July, 1926, which reads:

Not a relative—but so very close,
not a stranger—but so very far,
And embarrassed wonder pours forth
from tender touch.

Will you remember? The walls closed
and above the strange crowd
there was woven from threads of looks
a bridge—a letter.

If you have caused pain—blessed is the pain.
pain has clear windows.
My way is on the side paths
and my heart is calm.

Lo go'el—ve-karov kol kakh,
lo nokhri—ve-khol kakh raḥok,
u-temiyah nevokhah yitsok
ha-maga ha-rakh.

Ha-tizkor? Sagru ha-kirot,
u-me'al le-hamon ha-zar
mi-kure mabatim nishzar
gesher—ot.

Im hikh'avta—barukh ha-ke'ev,
yesh la-ke'ev ḥalonot tsaḥim.
Netivi be-tside derakhim,
ve-libi shalev.[93]

The poem addresses an unnamed male counterpart with whom the speaker has a fraught but close relationship. He is introduced as a redeemer (*go'el*) or relative (alt. *go'el*) whose distance and relationship to the reader are equally suspect (*karov* as relative/*karov* as close). The first stanza suggests that perhaps the speaker and this man were lovers, between whom a "tender touch" elicited "embarrassed wonder." Yet the delicate nature of that "touch" is called into

[93] Raḥel, "Lo go'el--ve-karov kol kakh," in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1966), 91.

question when we consider the pathological connotation of *maga*—contact. It was precisely *maga* with a tubercular victim that was to be avoided.[94]

This pathological connotation of *maga* also gains currency as we move to the second stanza. The tone switches from a reflective mode concerning the relation of the speaker with the man to a direct address. "Will you remember?" asks the speaker, who proceeds to narrate an experience whereby walls closed in and a space of confinement on high emerges. The space-on-high recalls here the titular location of Raḥel's early Russian poem, "I Live High Up in a Sanatorium." There, the speaker retreats of her own volition into a narrow room. In the later Hebrew poem, the speaker has no choice. The walls do not close themselves but, rather, an unknown set of forces cause the walls to close in on the speaker (*sagru ha-kirot*). Yet, this space of confinement is not without opportunity, as it manifests a place of literary possibility similar to the process described in "Miniature Delights." From the enclosed room on high, looks are woven together into a bridge of letters, the building blocks of words. *Ot*, which I have here rendered as "letter," may also refer to a sign. The speaker's looks are braided together into a discursive bridge that presumably connects the room on high to the world below, the poet in her garret to her reader on the ground and outside of the walls. The possibility of confinement does not elicit a poetic command, as it did in "I Live High up in a Sanatorium"; rather, it begins a process whereby the gaze becomes another set of poetic expressions. And this process functions by specifically resisting physical *maga* and instead relying on visual communication.

The importance of the visual mechanism is further emphasized in the third stanza. The speaker turns her attention once again to the unnamed object that has caused her pain.

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[94] For just one example, Z. Avigdori, "ha-Ḥevrah le-milḥamah be-shaḥefet bi-Yerushalayim," *Do'ar ha-Yom*, September 29, 1931, 3. The term, moreover, shares its root with the commonly invoked adjective, "nagu'a," used to refer to those who have been infected by the disease. Dr. Avigdori, the author of this article, was also one of Raḥel's doctors. Asher Gilad, "Ha-rof'im: Raḥel u-maḥalat ha-sofrim (shaḥefet)," *Alon* 7 (June 2013): 16.

Specifically, the pain he has caused is identified as the proprietor of "clear windows." Here, the speaker blesses pain for it enables clarity and it allows the speaker to see through the window. At the end of the poem, the speaker declares, "my heart is calm." Once again, the process of writing is placed in conversation with the speaker's bosom. The question for her readers then becomes, if her *lev* is now calm, will more poetry come forth? That the poem ends directly after the statement may indicate a negative answer. Does this imply that another condition of poetry is the body in pain? Is it, as "I Don't Complain" posits, only from a wounded *lev* that poetry will pour forth?

Conclusion: The Simplicity of the Sickroom

Navigating between the set of poems above may raise more questions than provide answers. Nevertheless, by reading these texts together and investigating Raḥel's poetic fascination with the window and confined spaces, we are able to re-articulate the relationship between her writing and her disease. That relationship is not merely one of posthumous back-narration but of immanent literary concern to Raḥel as a poet who she sat, wrote and socialized in her various sickrooms. For more than a metaphorical space, Raḥel's sickroom was also a very real, physical dwelling. It had four walls and a window from which Raḥel could look out onto the world beyond her immediate context. The sickroom was the physical space where she demonstrated her literary magnetism, where she wooed her guests, where she recited poetry and where she placed herself at the center of a network of readers, writer and editors. These admirers and friends of Raḥel went in and out of her urban abode, engaging her in conversations about literature, helping her garner financial support, and cementing her posthumous image as a pale figure in a sparse room. Although she never achieved the complete financial independence so

lauded by Virginia Woolf, she planted the seed of her cultural capital in the sickroom and it would grow into what can only be called the Raḥel industry of contemporary Israeli tourism and publishing.

The sickroom, as I have argued, is the key to understanding the link between her biography and her poetry, between tuberculosis and writing and, I will add here, between illness and style. Raḥel joined Mikhal and Mane in a literary room not solely through a physiological connection but a stylistic choice, as well. Like her male predecessors, Raḥel also was critiqued for writing in a simple style. All three have been analyzed as poets of *pashtut*, simplicity: Mane's *pashtut* was evident in the calmness of his verse; Mikhal's *pashtut* was a function of his straightforward diction; and Raḥel's *pashtut* derived from her short verse, colloquial diction and her work's general legibility—which belies its complexities. The poet, herself, championed *pashtut* as the "literary sign of the times [*Al ot ha-zeman*]" in 1927 in what has been taken to be her literary manifesto.[95]

Raḥel's *pashtut* has similarly occupied the recent interests of scholars who endeavor to show the sophistication of her literary project despite what ostensibly appears as a body of short poem using a simple Hebrew register. For Michael Gluzman, Raḥel's simplicity and allegiance to a minimalist modernist style is that which allowed her to reject (and surpass) the styles and literary codes of the three generations of male writers who preceded her, for whom "the ready-made language of Jewish sources" formed the dominant creative substrate.[96] For Miryam Segal, it is not Raḥel's rejection of biblical sources that invigorates her poetry but, rather, Raḥel's

[95] Raḥel, "Al ot ha-Zeman (1927)," in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1966), 204–5.

[96] Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity*, 111–113. Gluzman and others also are all in conversation with an earlier claim by Dan Miron. He argued that Raḥel's simple and "non-elite" style positioned her as a literary-ideological weapon between the old guard (represented by Ya'akov Fichman) and the new guard (represented by Avraham Shlonsky) in Hebrew literature. Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, aḥayot ḥorgot*, 140–141.

incorporation of biblical imagery into her poetry written using the new "Sephardic" accent of colloquial Hebrew.[97] Finally, according to Naomi Brenner, Raḥel's ostensibly simple diction and sparse poetry specifically allows for the creation of her distinctly bare poetic "I" that is neither biographical nor gender-specific.[98]

These scholars are certainly correct to argue that Raḥel's *pashtut* is neither simple nor superficial. Yet they ignore here the semantic range of the aesthetic term. This poetic style of ***pashtut*** (simplicity), after all, shares its root (*p.sh.t.*) with the verb *le-hit**pashet*** (to spread, to be disseminated) as well as the verbal noun, hi***pashtut*** (spreading, dissemination). Both of these forms were already in use among physicians and public health advocates during Raḥel's lifetime. In 1927, Dr. Avigdor Mandelberg of the Palestine Anti-Tuberculosis League wrote an article for *Davar*, the same weekly paper that would make Raḥel a household name. In it, he warned of the high potential for the spread (*hitpashtut*) of tuberculosis in Palestine, specifically among Zionist laborers (*po'alim*). He called on his readers to support the efforts of the recently-established Anti-Tuberculosis League, both ideologically and monetarily.[99]

This neighboring connotation of simplicity, no less its curious appearance in the critical reception of this chain of tubercular poets, reminds us once again to consider the link between Raḥel's diagnosis and her literary practice. Disease is repeatedly mobilized in her poetry and the connections between her poetic process and the interpretive horizons of her texts cannot be ignored. From her earliest Russian poetry, the space of infection and recuperation was posited in

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[97] Miryam Segal, "Raḥel Bluwstein's 'Aftergrowth' Poetics," *Prooftexts* 25, no. 2 (2005): 319–361. Segal provocatively argues that Raḥel establishes a Hebrew poetics that emboldens the land, itself, as speaker.

[98] Naomi Brenner, "Slippery Selves: Raḥel Bluvstein and Anna Margolin in Poetry and Public," *Nashim* 19 (2010): Esp. 101, 109–110, 125.

[99] Mendelberg, "ha-Shaḥefet ve-ha-po'alim (le-yom ha-peraḥ)." For Mendelberg's brief account of Mandelberg's move to Palestine and his involvement in the founding of the Anti-Tuberculosis league in Palestine, see Avigdor Mandelberg, *Me-ḥayai: pirḳe zikhronot.* (Tel Aviv: Yedidim, 1942), 111–116.

simple language as a central poetic concern and the themes would continue to populate her poetry throughout her life. Disease would become a condition of possibility of her poetry, her writing practices and even her aesthetic.

Chapter 3

The Kingdom of Fever: Yiddish Writing of the Denver Sanatorium

We are finally in Denver…Here is where those magnificent poets sought the cure and to rest: David Edelshtat, Yehoash, L. Mattes and—here's to many more years—our dear H. Leivick…The sky is inflamed. And in the kingdom of fever, David Edelshtat's red flag greets me…
—Shea Tenenbaum[1]

Nevertheless for publicity purposes, we may mention en pasant [sic] *that it seems the JCRS is a fountain of poetry.*
—Dr. Charles Spivak[2]

Introduction

For both Sholem Aleichem and Raḥel Bluvstein, the tubercular experience offered an entrance into a literary conversation with a host of consumptive literary predecessors. Yet, in their immediate context, the disease marked these two writers out as decidedly singular. Indeed, neither Sholem Aleichem nor Raḥel found himself or herself taking the cure alongside fellow literary travelers afflicted by *the authors' disease*.[3] In the case of Sholem Aleichem, comparisons made between his illness and that of his predecessor Perets Smolenskin were the product of historical hindsight. And when Ḥayim Naḥman Bialik placed Raḥel in a literary line following Mane and Mikhal, he did so only after she had already passed away. Raḥel, in fact, is one of the few tubercular figures of the modern Hebrew canon who sought the cure in Palestine. While the space of her sickroom was decidedly—if not surprisingly—social, her visitors did not share her experience of illness. They could not speak of tubercular pain experienced firsthand.

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[1] Shea Tenenbaum, "Nyu-York--Denver (reportazh-notitsn fun a rayze)," *Nyu-Yorker vokhenblat*, June 5, 1936, 11.

[2] Charles D. Spivak, "Letter to Zishe Landau," July 16, 1923, JCRS File 6361, Patient Record Morris Lune, JCRS Archive.

[3] One exception in Sholem Aleichem's experience was his acquaintance with Daniel Charney in Bern, Switzerland, where both sought medical treatment. Daniel Charney, "Ikh shpil a 'zeks un zekhtsik' mit Sholem-Aleykhemen," in *Di velt iz kaylekhdik* (New York: CYCO-Bikher Farlag, 163), 248–252.

For the group of writers explored in this chapter, in contrast, it was precisely a shared experience of illness, in general, and a space of recuperation, specifically, that proved to be of paramount creative importance. The story this chapter tells is one of a sanatorium for indigent Jews that served its patients not only by providing therapeutic treatment but by supporting what may be described as a Yiddish literary colony. There, in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society (JCRS) of Denver, Colorado sustained a cohort of Yiddish writers who both took the cure and took up the pen.[4] The case study of the JCRS also alerts us to the intersection of philanthropy and creativity at an institutional level. If the previous chapters have demonstrated the power of a single individual to elicit support, the following work shines light on the space of a hospital, examining how it was funded and how, in turn, it generated a tradition of tubercular American Yiddish literature. The chapter further contributes to the task of rethinking the sanatorium not only as a health destination but as an institution that fostered creative collaboration and bilingual expression.

The profile of the institution comes into focus when we turn to one of the literary faces of the JCRS: the Yiddish poet H. Leivick. In March, 1935, Leivick describes the scene of the JCRS to his fellow tubercular, Daniel Charney.[5] "My health, is not good," he writes in the letter, "What a sanatorium is—you know already. I'm surrounded by two hundred patients. Many are very sick. Death and blood spurts, and snow on the Rocky Mountains, and the wonderful Colorado

[4] The JCRS was also referred to as the Denver Sanatorium or the Spivak Sanatorium, in honor of its founding officer Dr. Charles Spivak. On Spivak and the history of the JCRS, see: Jeanne Abrams, *Blazing the Tuberculosis Trail* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1990); Jeanne Lichtman Abrams, "Chasing the Cure: A History of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society of Denver" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1983); Jeanne E. Abrams, *Dr. Charles David Spivak: A Jewish Immigrant and the American Tuberculosis Movement* (Boulder, CO: The University Press of Colorado, 2009); Ernest Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2015). I am grateful to Ernest Gilman who shared an earlier manuscript of this book with me.

[5] Leivick Halpern assumed the nom de plume, H. Leivick, so as not to be confused with another Yiddish poet making strides in the American Yiddish literary scene in the 1910s and 1920s, Moshe Leib Halpern. Daniel Charney, *Bargaroyf: bletlekh fun a lebn* (Warsaw: Literarishe Bleter, 1934).

sky, and the nearly endless sun." Here, in a staccato description of his surroundings, Leivick presents the landscape of the American *kurort*, haunted by the specter of suffering, death and blood against snow-capped mountains. The sanatorium, he emphasizes, is also a decidedly public space. There are hundreds of other residents besides himself and, as we will see, his relationship to his fellow JCRS patients will become the stuff of poetic verse.

Seven months into his stay, Leivick informs Charney that he will likely need to spend more time at the sanatorium. "But—" he writes, "and this is the strength that sustains me—I write a lot and read a lot." So far, he explains, he has written a play and the extended poem, "The Ballad of Spivak Sanatorium."[6] What Leivick lists here is only a sampling of what he wrote in and out of the JCRS over the course of three years.[7] While there, he wrote dozens of poems, thousands of letters and published articles in the New York press. We might explain this burst of activity by turning to one of his JCRS poems, "A Neighbor has Died Again." The hospitalized speaker fears that his roommate will die and leave him next in line for the grave. He relates:

> I occupy myself with whatever I can,
> Even with inventing rhymes.
> I go ahead and ask my pen,
> If it knows from where we stem?

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[6] In the letter, Leivick refers to the poem as "The Ballad of Spivak Sanatorium." It appeared in *Tsukunft* under the title, "The Ballad of Denver Sanatorium." Throughout the chapter, I use the titles interchangeably. H. Leivick, "Letter to Daniel Charney," March 6, 1935, RG 421, Box 4, Folder 49, YIVO; H. Leivick, "Di balade fun Denver sanatoriyum," *Tsukunft* 40, no. 3 (March 1935): 131–34.

[7] H. Leivick entered and left the JCRS multiple times between 1932 and 1935. He was first admitted to the JCRS on 19 June 1932 and stayed through 18 April 1933, entered again on 6 September 1934 and stayed through 22 May 1935, and entered again on 6 June 1935 and left on 3 September 1935. For Leivick's medical documents, see "Halpern Leivick Patient Record," n.d., File 9698, JCRS Archive. Leivick also spent time in the Catskills in autumn 1933 and the summer of 1934. He was a patient at the Arbeiter Ring Sanatorium in Liberty, NY in the summer of 1937. See H. Leivick, "Letters from Denver Sanatorium," n.d., RG 315, Folder 74, YIVO; H. Leivick, "Letters to Wife and Children," n.d., RG 315, Folder 32, YIVO.

Ikh farnem zikh mit alts vos ikh ken,
afile mit tsutrakhtn gramen;
Ikh freg ot azoy bay mayn pen—
tsi veys zi fun vanen mir shtamen?[8]

To stave his concerns, the speaker turns to writing. He challenges the instruments of his creativity, here an English-language *pen*, to respond to the question of human origins. Such a question would surely necessitate a long answer. Near the end of the poem, the speaker finds himself writing as the only shield against his mortality; the longer his answer to the philosophical question of origins, the longer he will remain alive. Considering the output of his sanatorium years, it would not be farfetched to claim Leivick practiced this same form of poetic self-defense.

Leivick's time in the JCRS was, of course, not without challenges both to his health and his creative impulse. His letters to his wife bring into relief the profile of a sick man, coughing constantly, afflicted with skin ulcers and increasingly concerned with the dwindling finances. Like Sholem Aleichem and Raḥel, he was also often too sick to write. Yet Leivick's stay in the JCRS also opened his oeuvre up to new poetic interlocutors. And Leivick was not the only Yiddish poet to flourish professionally while affiliated with the JCRS. Yehoash, known to most readers for his Yiddish translation of the Hebrew Bible, spent years "taking the cure" in Denver. While there, he co-authored a Yiddish dictionary of "All the Hebrew and Chaldaic Elements of the Yiddish Language" with Dr. Charles Spivak, founder of the JCRS. He also published the first edition of his collected poetry and made forays into English-language poetry.[9] Lune Mattes, a

[8] H. Leivick, "Vider geshtorbn a shokhn," in *Lider fun gan eyden: 1932-1936* (Chicago: Farlag Tseshinksi, 1937), 10, ll. 4–7.

[9] Yehoash was the nom de plume of Solomon Bloomgarden (1870-1927). Charles D. Spivak and Yehoash (S. Bloomgarden), *Yidish verterbukh* (New York: Farlag Yehoash, 1911); Yehoash, *Gezamele lider* (New York: A. M. Evalenko, 1907).

forgotten poet whose work I will reintroduce, left his post in a Chicago cigar factory and began a career as a modernist poet while being treated at the JCRS.[10]

Clearly, a diagnosis of tuberculosis did not staunch the creative flow of these Yiddish writers. In fact, it was frequently during these periods in the JCRS that they began to experiment creatively. When Leivick stepped away from his long-days as a paperhanger, when Yehoash walked away from his bookkeeping post, and when Lune Mattes left the dusty cigar factory, they opened themselves up to years of writing, publishing and recuperating. At the JCRS, they founded and participated in a tubercular republic of letters that stretched across the country, across the globe, and across languages. In this chapter, I follow these writers to the sanatorium and ask how their affiliation with this institution offered them new opportunities to increase their literary capital, national exposure, and poetic influence. Contact with the JCRS provided these writers with new publishing venues, new geographic vistas and new literary genealogies.

My methodology once again hearkens back to the interventions made in science studies by Bruno Latour. Specifically, I mobilize the term *proposition*. Latour borrows the word from Alfred North Whitehead in his analysis of the scene of experimentation in Louis Pasteur's "Mémoire sur la fermentation appelée lactique." According to Latour, propositions are "first of all, actants" and include, in this case: Pasteur, the lactic acid ferment and the laboratory. *Propositions* "are not positions, things, substances, or essences pertaining to a nature made up of mute objects facing a talkative human mind, but *occasions* given to different entities to enter into contact."[11] Elsewhere, Latour explains that the *proposition* "indicates wonderfully that what is in question is a new and unforeseen association, one that is going to become more complicated and

[10] Lune Mattes was the penname of Mattes Luniansky (1896-1929).

[11] Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 141. Latour elsewhere defines a proposition as "what an actor offers to other actors," in this case, the JCRS as actant *proposes* itself to the JCRS writers. Ibid., 309.

more extended."[12] In this chapter, I submit the JCRS as a *proposition* where Yiddish writers come into contact with their disease, with the experience of sanatorium life, with the natural setting of the institution, with JCRS personnel, and with a tubercular literary tradition—Yiddish and otherwise. I plot the trail that these writers take to and through the JCRS in order to make visible their newfound *occasions* for literary experimentation, be it as bilingual writers, amateur Yiddish poets or professional writers inserting themselves into a tubercular literary lineage.[13]

This chapter therefore turns our gaze away from the skyscrapers, sweatshops, and cultural swelter of the major urban Jewish population centers in New York or Chicago. It directs our attention to Denver and the geographic periphery of American Yiddish literature.[14] There, in the land that Leivick called "the kingdom of fever," we will find an institution that proposed, mediated and occasioned the careers and reputations of three tubercular Yiddish poets: Yehoash,

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[12] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 83.

[13] Once again, I draw on the insistence of Latour in combining the metaphor of the trail (road, path, etc.) with optical verbiage, and the task of following a path in order to explicitly notice points, actants, and events along that path. See Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 136–139. One might be inclined in a discussion of the space of the sanatorium to invoke the Foucauldian idea of the heterotopia, a site of crisis or deviance that is simultaneously outside of society but extant in reality. Here, I remain committed to Latourian methodology for unlike the Foucauldian concept, Latourian terminology forces the critic not just to identify a space but to go inside it, follow various information threads, and identify how it is linked to a network beyond its walls. Michel Foucault, "Des epaces autres, Hétérotopies," *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46–49.

[14] The periphery and peripheral writing are concepts explored at length in Hebrew and Yiddish literary scholarship, most recently by Shachar Pinkser as well as Caplan, Schachter and Kronfeld. Pinsker encourages the scholar to consider various non-central locations as "third spaces" in the history of modern Hebrew prose. I follow Pinsker here in drawing attention to other locations (e.g. Denver) of literary production outside a presumed center (i.e New York City). To be clear, though, I am not identifying an exilic modernism (as does Schachter), a peripheral modernism of a metaphorically colonized people (as does Caplan), or a marginal modernism of voices not included in the modern Yiddish canon (as does Kronfeld). I do not propose the writing of the JCRS as in any minor key (or, necessarily, modernist key; Yehoash was decidedly a non-modernist poet). My interest in Denver as a space of hinges on both its natural landscape, which manifest in the tubercular poets' work, and as the home of the JCRS, an institutional space of literary experimentation. Marc Caplan, *How Strange the Change: Language, Temporality, and Narrative Form in Peripheral Modernisms* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics*, vol. 2, Contraversions (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Shachar M. Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Lune Mattes, and H. Leivick. There we will discover the JCRS: an institution that will emerge as one pulsing node in the extensive bio-literary network of American Yiddish writing. And there we will find an episode in twentieth-century medical history where a tubercular diagnosis was translated into a poetic idiom and literary tradition.

The JCRS: A Sanatorium of Writers and Writing

The JCRS, so the legend goes, was founded on a blistery October evening in 1903. A group of men gathered in the Jewish neighborhood of Denver "for the purpose of organizing a society to render aid and assistance to indigent consumptives, whose number [was] daily increasing."[15] A small sum of $1.20 was collected and so began the fundraising efforts for the as-yet unbuilt JCRS. This collection effort would develop into a national network of local JCRS societies and Ladies' Auxiliaries from California to Oklahoma to New York.

The men had gathered that evening to respond to the growing number of Jews who were arriving in Denver daily, sick and unable to pay for the treatments they sought. By the mid-1800s, Colorado was known as a prime destination for those with pulmonary health problems. A generation of migrants speculating on their health replaced the previous wave of newcomers who had speculated for gold.[16] The idea of Colorado as an "El Dorado" soon became the catchphrase

[15] Charles D. Spivak, "The Genesis and Growth of the Jewish Consumptives Relief Society (Part I)," *The Sanatorium* I, no. 1 (1907): 6. For the history of the institution, see Abrams, *Blazing the Tuberculosis Trail*; Abrams, "Chasing the Cure: A History of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society of Denver"; Abrams, *Dr. Charles David Spivak*; Ida Libert Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers & Tsadikim: The Story of the Jews in Colorado*, 3rd ed. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000).

[16] There has been significant historical research done concerning the immigration of health-seekers to Colorado, as well as the correlation between health-motivated immigration and the growth of Colorado. See Abrams, *Blazing the Tuberculosis Trail*; Abrams, "Chasing the Cure: A History of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society of Denver"; Abrams, *Dr. Charles David Spivak*; Meindert Bosch, *Bridges Across the Years: The Ninety-Year History of the Bethesda Hospital Association of Denver, Colorado* (Denver: Bethesda PsychHealth System, 1988); Douglas R. McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill: The Story of Cragmore Sanatorium* (Denver: State Historical Society of

of the so-called "lungers" who sought relief in the cool mountain air. Thomas Crawford Galbreath, one such health voyager, would write of his trip to Colorado in typically hopeful terms: "I never for one moment doubted that I was to be well…. What magic there was in that name—Colorado! To my mind it was truly Eldorado!"[17] Years later, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Masliansky, a national director of the JCRS, would similarly declare Colorado to be the "Eden of the West."[18] In the years before antibiotics, when a variety of therapies were prescribed to tuberculars, Colorado's high altitude and mountain air were considered the climatological equivalent of pain killers. For example, in his 1880 survey, *Rocky Mountain Health Resorts*, Dr. Charles Denison reported that the mountain air offered proper conditions for prolonging, if not curing, the consumptive's life.[19]

The clear mountain air also proved alluring to many of the urban Jewish immigrants who lived in overcrowded tenements and worked in poorly-ventilated sweatshops. At the turn of the twentieth century, tuberculosis was the leading killer in the US. Its sufferers were known in Yiddish circles as "victims of the capitalist system." Cementing his reputation as one such proletarian victim was the Yiddish poet David Edelshtat, who along with Morris Rosenfeld and Morris Winchevsky constituted the so-called "Sweatshop Poets." Edelshtat died in Denver in

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Colorado, 1983); Billy Mac Jones, *Health-Seekers in the Southwest, 1817-1900* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967); Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers & Tsadikim*; Cynthia Kay. Stout, *A Consumptives' Refuge: Colorado and Tuberculosis.* PhD Dissertation. The George Washington University. (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI (Publication No. AAT 9726673), 1997).

[17] Thomas Crawford Galbreath, *Chasing the Cure* (Denver: Thomas Crawford Galbreath, 1908), 20.

[18] "Maslianski bet rakhomim: der groyser yidisher redner makht an ufruf far di korbones fun der blaser pest in Denver," *Yidishes tageblat*, May 23, 1909, Box 198, JCRS--Newspaper Clippings, 1909-1912, JCRS Archive.

[19] Charles Denison, *Rocky Mountain Health Resorts: An Analytical Study of High Altitudes in Relation to the Arrest of Chronic Pulmonary Disease* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1880). For a treatise on medical climatology and its affect on phthisis (another name for consumption common in the nineteenth century and earlier), see S. Edwin Solly, *A Handbook of Medical Climatology: Embodying Its Principles and Therapeutic Application with Scientific Date of the Chief Health Reports of the World* (New York: Lea Brothers & Co, 1897).

1892, having ventured to the western city from Chicago to seek the cure.[20] Rosenfeld, for his part, would go on to immortalize the consumptive Yiddish laborer (though not Edelshtat directly) in his poem, "A Teardrop on the Iron." The speaker, a garment worker, stands holding a hot iron in a cold, dark room and states:

> …My heart is weak, I groan and cough,
> my sick chest barely rises.
>
> I groan and cough and press and think,
> my eye grows moist, a tear falls,
> the iron glows: my little tear
> it seethes and seethes and does not boil away.
>
> *…Mayn harts is shvakh, ikh khrekhts un hust;*
> *es heybt zikh koym mayn kranke brust.*
>
> *Ikh krekhts un hust un pres un kler,*
> *mayn oyg vert faykht, es falt a trer,*
> *der ayzn glit: dos trerl mayn*
> *dos kokht un kokht un zidt nit ayn*.[21]

The worker's body aches as he works. A lone tear falls from his eye. When it hits the hot iron, it begins to seethe torturously, struggling to stay in its original form. Like the consumptive body of the worker, the tea begins to boil away, to be consumed by the heat of labor and (dis)ease. In the German collection of Rosenfeld's poems, "A Teardrop On the Iron" appears several pages after a woodcut by E.M. Lillien of a pot-bellied vampiric capitalist sucking the life from a gaunt, round-

[20] He was initially buried in an unmarked grave. In 1915, after a year of hard work, Edelshtat's remains were exhumed and reburied. After extended but ultimately failed efforts at fundraising, Edelshtat's surviving brother paid for the exhumation and reburial. A large gravestone, engraved with his name and most famous poem, "The Will," was erected. See "Endlikh a monument tsu ere fun Dovid Edelshtat," *Fraye arbayter shtime*, December 18, 1915; M. Spanier, "Edelshtats tsveyte levaye," in *Dovid Edelshtat gedenk-bukh: tsum zekhtsikstn yortsayt, 1892-1952* (New York: David Edelstadt Committee, 195).

[21] I have drawn on Marc Miller's translation and modified it slightly. Miller has done the most to advance Rosenfeld studies. Marc Miller, *Representing the Immigrant Experience: Morris Rosenfeld and the Emergence of Yiddish Literature in America* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 123; Morris Rosenfeld, "A trer afn ayzn," in *Gezamelte lider* (New York: International Library Publishing Company, 1906), 14–15.

chested tubercular tailor slumped over his work.[22] The image would later be used to illustrate a dramatic text by Leon Kobrin first printed in the JCRS in-house journal, *The Sanatorium*.[23]

This leads us back to the JCRS. When ground was broken in 1904, The JCRS established itself as the sanatorium that specifically catered to indigent Jewish patients, including those with late stage tuberculosis.[24] Unlike the National Tuberculosis Association, also founded in 1904, the JCRS did not primarily seek to raise awareness about the disease nor to agitate for government intervention. Rather, its concern was the free treatment of impoverished Jewish patients.[25] Dr. Charles Spivak was the force behind the institution's establishment. He was also a friend of Yehoash and together they compiled and financed the aforementioned Yiddish dictionary.[26]

Yehoash's affiliation with the JCRS will occupy much of the following section of this chapter. But this allusion to Spivak's collaboration with Yehoash suggests something of immediate concern. From the outset, the JCRS relied on both Yiddish and English writers as well

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[22] Morris Rosenfeld, *Lieder des Ghetto*, trans. Berthold Feiwel (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1903), 36.

[23] Leon Kobrin, "Di retung," *The Sanatorium* II, no. 3 (1908): 186; Morris Rosenfeld, *Gezamelte lider*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Library Publishing Company, 1906), 2.

[24] Usually, late-stage patients would have been denied entrance to other hospitals, such as the National Jewish Hospital (NJH), also founded in 1904, also in Denver. NJH had a reputation of being a German-Jewish facility and accordingly hostile to the Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants arriving in the city. Though there are clear exceptions to this stereotype, it certainly persisted throughout the existence of both institutions. Abrams, "Chasing the Cure: A History of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society of Denver," 4; Abrams, *Dr. Charles David Spivak*, 78.

[25] For information about the National Tuberculosis Association, see Richard Harrison Shryock, *National Tuberculosis Association, 1904-1954: A Study of the Voluntary Health Movement in the United States*, Public Health in America (New York: Arno Press, 1977); Michael E. Teller, *The Tuberculosis Movement: A Public Health Campaign in the Progressive Era* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988). The National Tuberculosis Association also worked with the Red Cross and famously fundraised using the Christmas Seal Campaign. The JCRS, though it treated non-Jews and did not deny non-Jews entrance into the sanatorium, primarily addressed the needs of Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants.

[26] For Yehoash's account, see Yehoash, "Letter to Rose Cohen," June 16, 1899, Arc 116, Box 6, Folder: Cohen, Rose, JTS. For the dictionary, see Spivak and Yehoash (S. Bloomgarden), *Yidish verterbukh.* Yehoash's archive includes extended correspondence between Spivak and Yehoash concerning the difficulty of finding a publisher. Ultimately, it appears that they funded the project themselves. See Charles D. Spivak, "Letter to Yehoash," Undated (likely late 1910), Arc 116, Box 5, Folder: Spivak, JTS.

as journalists and editors to agitate on behalf of the institution. Just as the appeals on behalf of Sholem Aleichem would extend across party lines, appeals were made on behalf of the JCRS in print outlets of all ideological stripes. By 1906, calls for support had appeared in the communist-anarchist *Fraye Arbayter Shtime*, the socialist *Forverts*, the Orthodox *Yidishes Tageblat*, as well as *The American Hebrew* with its block of Conservative Zionistically-inclined readers and *The Reform Advocate*, which catered to Reform American Jewry.[27] Morris Rosenfeld, the author of "A Tear on the Iron," wrote a stirring appeal in *Der Teglikher Herald* of Chicago. "In years past," he wrote, "old Jews would go to the Land of Israel to die. Now the best of our Jewish youth go to Denver."[28] In Rosenfeld's language, Denver had become an ironized Promised Land. The folk artist and writer Joseph Zelig Glick wrote a powerful Hebrew poetic call to fundraising entitled, "The Voice of the Blood of Your Brothers" that appeared in the Pittsburgh *Folksfraynd*.[29] Each of the six stanzas describes consumptives begging for money. Beneath the poem is an address to where checks could be sent.

The JCRS also forged formal working relations with writers who served the institution as field solicitors. This group counted among its ranks Yehoash, Jacob Marinoff, and M.M. Dolitzki. These field solicitors were charged with raising money in towns across the country as well as writing public appeals. In the early 1900s, Marinoff had made his way to Denver for health reasons. Soon, he became involved with the JCRS, serving as its first superintendent, all the while building his reputation as a Yiddish poet. He would go on to make his name as the

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[27] Charles D. Spivak, "The Jewish Press," in *First Annual Report of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society at Denver, Colo., 1905* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing Company, 1905), 25–26.

[28] Morris Rosenfeld, "Di greste tsedoke," *Der teglikher herold*, no date, JCRS Records, Box 197, Newspaper Clippings 1904-1906, JCRS Archive.

[29] For information on Glick, see Gerald C. Wertkin, "Jewish Folk Art," in *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 257. For article, see Joseph Zelig Glick, "Kol dome okheykhem tso'okim," *Folksfraynd*, March 11, 1904, JCRS Records, Box 198, Newspaper Clippings, 1909-1912, JCRS Archive.

editor of the weekly Yiddish humor magazine, *Der groyser kundes* (*The Big Stick*). While volunteering for the JCRS, Marinoff not only practiced his own creative writing but devoted his time to making fundraising appeals to the Yiddish press and organizing events on behalf of the JCRS.[30] Sometimes, the various projects overlapped, such as when Marinoff composed lyrics for the song, "Das schwindsüchtige Mädel (The Consumptive Maiden)," which was performed at a benefit evening for the JCRS in New York. Though given a German title, the lyrics were written and sung in Yiddish.[31] The poem tells of a beautiful young maiden who plants flowers that will bloom in the spring. She dies from tuberculosis before the bulbs blossom. When the text was published in the JCRS journal, an English translation appeared on the same page. As we will see, the JCRS would play a role in the history of English/Yiddish bilingual publication in America.

A talented Hebrew writer, Dolitzki was known mostly through his serialized Yiddish novels. Unlike Marinoff, Dolitzki did not write creative fundraising texts for the JCRS.[32] His appeals in the Yiddish press, however, were certainly dramatic. He made sure to mention that Marinoff and "the great Yiddish poet" Yehoash were also involved with the institution.[33] Dolitzki emphasized the affiliation of Jewish writers with the JCRS, using the practice of literary namedropping to lend cultural prestige to the distant institution. Rosenfeld before him had done

[30] For one example, see Jacob Marinoff, "Fun folk tsum folk: vegn dem hospital far shvindzukhtike vos di rusishe yidn boyn in Denver," *Forverts*, August 23, 1904.

[31] The music was composed by Lazar Samoiloff. See Jacob Marinoff, "Das schwindsüchtige Mädel (The Consumptive Maiden)," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 1 (1909): 26.

[32] His work was no doubt influenced by Colorado, as evidences by such poems as "In the Rocky Mountains" and "Pike's Peak." M. M Dolitzki, "In Di roki berg," *Zunland* (June 1925): 19–20; M. M Dolitzki, "Payks pik," *Zunland* (July 1925): 14–15.

[33] M.M. Dolitzki, "Fun dem lebedikn beys-oylem," *Yidishes Tageblat*, February 27, 1906, 5. Dolitzki mentions them alongside Spivak and other founders of the institution, but Yehoash is the only name to receive a descriptive introduction. For an additional appeal, see M.M. Dolitzki, "An apil fun Denver," *Yidishes tageblat*, March 2, 1906.

the same.[34] One is reminded here of the cultural politics involved in Sholem Aleichem's own invocation of Lev Tolstoy. There, the name Tolstoy was mobilized to scold the Yiddish reader and revealed anxieties in the Yiddish literary community about the cultural health of its readership. Here, at nearly the same time, the JCRS employed a different tactic. The sanatorium solicitors do not look outside the Yiddish literary sphere to generate buzz and open wallets. Rather, they present an image of the JCRS as a bastion of Yiddish literary efflorescence. Their fundraising tactics focused on the positives of the institutions and its literary affiliates rather than the perceived abnormality of the Jewish reading public.

Besides the appeals in the Yiddish and English newspapers, the primary place where such namedropping occurred was in *The Sanatorium*, the chief propagandistic organ of the JCRS. The bimonthly journal was first published in January 1907. From the first edition, the primarily English-language journal welcomed Yiddish material. A Yiddish supplement was formally inaugurated under Yehoash's editorship in September of that year. When well-known Yiddish writers such as Jacob Gordin, Leon Kobrin, Dovid Pinksi, and Morris Winchevsky donated material to the journal, their names were sure to be mentioned repeatedly regardless of whether their writing was being featured in that edition. The English section also included material by Denver writers, such as the cowboy poet James Barton Adams. Excluding Adams, the majority of contributors were Jewish professionals affiliated with the JCRS. Along with creative pieces, *The Sanatorium* published articles on the history of the JCRS and new best practices in the treatment of tuberculosis as well as accounts of those who had visited the institution—Clarence Darrrow! Sholem Asch! The journal also reported the success of the JCRS solicitors and printed thousands of records of individual donations, including one of 50¢ by Harry Yudkoff of

[34] Rosenfeld mentions both Yehoash and Dr. Adolph Zederbaum, son of the founding editor of *ha-Melits,* commonly considered the first Hebrew newspaper in the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century.

Bayonne, New Jersey and one of $5 by S. Post of New York City, otherwise known as the great-grandfathers of the present author.[35]

As Ernest Gilman has recently shown, in-house journals like *The Sanatorium* were a common feature of sanatorium life during this period in America. Writing was deemed to have palliative potential and patients were encouraged to exercise their expressive skills. "In the absence of any magic bullet," Gilman explains, "writing, as a means of alleviating fear and boosting morale, served along with diet, bed rest and sunlight as a means of detoxifying the tubercular body."[36] The message was not lost on the pages of *The Sanatorium*. The patients' morale was of paramount concern. In May 1907, the journal introduced "Cough Drops," a column that would detail the humorous side of JCRS life. "Life at our Sanatorium has its bright side," explains the first article, "It is the sunny aspect that the patient is encouraged to view."[37] Recognizing that not everything was jocular, the journal also printed the psychologically-stirring Yiddish epistolary tale, "Outside the Camp." Penned by the patient-writer Sh. Naumoff, the text declares false sympathy more destructive than the bacilli that infect the consumptives' lungs.[38]

In later years, the JCRS would fund patient journals, such as *Tales of the Tents* (1914-1918), *Hatikvah* (1923-1932) and *The Cure-ier* (1950-1960), which printed texts by these JCRS "guests," regardless of quality. "Think you have no writing ability?" ask the editors of one journal in April 1926, "Make an attempt… 'Unload' by writing for *Hatikvah*."[39] But in the early years of the journal and during Yehoash's tenure as editor (c.1907-1910), *The Sanatorium* was

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[35] "List of Subscriptions and Donations for 1908," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 2 (1909): 127; 133.

[36] Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970*, 7.

[37] "Cough Drops," *The Sanatorium* I, no. 3 (May 1907): 67.

[38] Sh. Naumoff, "Mi-khuts le-makhne," *The Sanatorium* I, no. 6 (November 1907): 209.

[39] Editors of Hatikvah, "Literary and Dramatic Activities of Patients," *Hatikvah* IV, no. 3 (1926): 9.

more discerning. This may be explained by the explicit goal of the journal to serve as a fundraising tool. Its intention was not solely to give space to patients for literary expression like the subsequent patient journals. Rather, it was to raise money.[40] When *The Sanatorium* first appeared in 1907, its editors stated that "we want this magazine to be an open forum for the expression of views as to the best means and methods for increasing interest and raising funds for our cause."[41] By the second edition, the magazine was paying for itself. Five hundred subscriptions had already been sold.[42] By 1909, the journal had a circulation of over 12,000 and it was claimed that 75,000 readers perused its pages.[43] The journal would go on to be praised by Jews and non-Jews, in Yiddish and in English, for its aesthetic standards and its material quality.[44] The journal was a productive extension of the JCRS, advocating for the institution and spreading its message across the country.[45]

Yehoash: A Reputation Made in the JCRS

It is with an eye toward this goal of advertising the JCRS across the country that we may now examine Yehoash's affiliation with the sanatorium. Yehoash was never formally a patient at

[40] The subtitle of *Tales of the Tents* was "Of the Patients, by the Patients, for the Patients." *The Sanatorium* was printed until 1928.

[41] Committee on Press and Propaganda, "Editorial," *The Sanatorium* I, no. 1 (1907): 3.

[42] Charles D. Spivak, "Minutes of the JCRS, Record of the Board of Trustees," March 6, 1907, Box 299, JCRS Archive.

[43] Charles D. Spivak, "Sekreters berikht," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 2 (1909): 145; "Advertise in the Sanatorium," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 2 (1909): 158.

[44] "The Scribe's Pinkes: Denver, Colorado" I, no. 3 (May 1907): 58; "A Chat with the Publisher," *The Sanatorium* II, no. 3 (May 1908): 189.

[45] Charles D. Spivak, "Secretary's Report: Press and Propaganda" II, no. 2 (1908): 60.

the institution, but he remained actively invested in the JCRS' success.[46] In turn, his involvement gave him a national platform to augment his reputation, both physically and literarily. In the following section, I examine Yehoash's history as a field solicitor as well as editor and bilingual contributor to *The Sanatorium*. As will become clear, Yehoash capitalized on his affiliation with the JCRS to grow his name recognition and assert himself as a bilingual poet-hero.

Yehoash arrived in Denver on June 16, 1899, in his words, "more dead than alive."[47] The cross-country trip had been particularly harrowing in light of his infirmed, tubercular state. Yehoash, né Yehoash-Solomon Bloomgarden, had immigrated to America from Lithuania in 1890 and had bounced from job to job, trying his hand as a Hebrew tutor, tailor, peddler and bookkeeper in a glass factory. According to his daughter, the choking dust of this final place of employment exacerbated his condition.[48] Nearly a decade after arriving in New York, Yehoash traveled to Denver to seek the cure for his ailing lungs. He found temporary shelter in a sparse farmhouse, surrounded by snow-capped mountains.[49] In one his earliest poems, "Sunset in Colorado" Yehoash describes the beauty of the surrounding landscape, where mountains and

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[46] There is no record of Yehoash formally being admitted to the JCRS. It is possible though that he received informal treatment from Spivak. Since the archival record does not specify his medical relationship to the institution, this chapter focuses solely on Yehoash's affiliation with the institution in his administrative and official capacity.

[47] Yehoash, "Letter to Rose Cohen 16 June 1899."

[48] Evlin Yehoash Dworkin, "My Father Yehoash," in *Poems of Yehoash*, by Yehoash (London, Canada: Canadian Yehoash Committee, 1952), 11–15; Fox, "Yehoash."

[49] Yehoash, "Letter to Rose Cohen," June 22, 1899, Arc 116, Box 6, Folder: Cohen, Rose, JTS. While in Denver, Yehoash tried his hand unsuccessfully at the liquor trade, worked in a saloon, and owned a garment business with Marinoff. He also spent some time in the National Jewish Hospital. Regarding his work in a saloon, see Yehoash, "Letter to Dr. Jacob Morris," March 23, 1907, Arc 116, Box 4, Folder: Dr. Morris, JTS. Regarding his disappointing efforts in the liquor business, see Yehoash, "Letter to Rose Cohen," October 7, 1901, Arc 116, Box 6, Folder: Cohen, Rose, JTS. For stationary listing him as a proprietor of a bespoke clothing company, see Yehoash, "Letter to Rose Cohen," August 12, 1903, Arc 116, Box 6, Folder: Cohen, Rose, JTS. For mention of his stay at NJH, see John Livingston, "Editors Note," *Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Notes*, Summer/Fall 1989, 1.

clouds gather each evening to watch the sky shift from gold to red as the sun sets.[50] Slowly, we begin to see the sun fade away, and in the last four lines read:

> The sun climbs down the steps of heaven…
> The tops of the blue mountains loom over
> The green seam of the sky, proud of their might
> And with a divine look observe the springtime night
>
> *Aropgekrokhn iz di zun dem himls trep…*
> *es strashen nor di bloe berg aroys di kep,*
> *afn grinem zoym fun himl, shtolts af zeyer makht*
> *bakukn mit a geter blik di frilings nakht...*

The power of the natural landscape occupied Yehoash throughout this period. In a patchwork of poems from his time in Denver, entitled, "Amid the Colorado Mountains," the majesty of a fiery sunset over the mountains similarly takes center stage.[51] After a tumultuous storm, the landscape regroups, and the calmness of the gold and purple twilight resumes its tranquil reign. The energy in the poem soars to great heights as the storm passes over the mountains.

During the decade or so that Yehoash spent in Denver, his career would also reach peak after peak and he would leave Colorado with a glowing reputation. Before Yehoash arrived in America in 1890, he had already begun to make a name for himself in the Yiddish literary scene of Warsaw, having published a translation of Lord Byron's poem, "The Gazelle."[52] In New York, he turned his attention to Hebrew writing with little success. In Denver, he returned to Yiddish. He began to publish regularly in the New York newspapers and saw the publication of

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[50] Yehoash, "Zununtergang in Kolerado," *Tsukunft* I, no. 4 (April 1902): 186.

[51] Although often cited as a single poem, "Amid the Colorado Mountains" is a translation of one poem and two parts of another poem. The first part of "Amid the Colorado Mountains" corresponds to Yehoash, "Abend-klangen, Part 3," in *Naye shriftn*, vol. I (New York: Ferlag Yehoash, 1910), 111. The second part to Yehoash, "Barg-geviter," in *Naye shriftn*, vol. I (New York: Ferl, 1910), 107. The third part to Yehoash, "Abend-klangen, Part 2," in *Naye shriftn*, vol. I (New York: Ferlag Yehoash, 1910), 110. The poem was collected and translated by Aaron Kramer. See Yehoash, "Amid the Colorado Mountains," in *A Century of Yiddish Poetry*, ed. and trans. Aaron Kramer (New York: Cornwall Books, 1989), 66–67.

[52] George Byron, "Di gazel," trans. Yehoash, *Di yudishe bibliotek* 2 (1891): 203.

his first volume of poetry, *Gezamelte Lider* (1907). While in Denver, he also became involved with the JCRS. Though not in attendance at the fabled meeting of 1903, he soon joined Spivak to advocate on behalf of the young institution. In January 1904, he was named to the JCRS Printing Committee.[53] In 1906, he became the chair of the Committee on Press and Propaganda, and in that role oversaw the publication of *The Sanatorium*. He also served as the official editor of the Yiddish language supplement. We will soon return to Yehoash's contributions to the journal and its bilingual agenda. At the moment, I want to expand on his deep involvement with the fundraising arm of the JCRS through his work as a field agent.

In the summer of 1908, Yehoash left his wife and daughter behind in Colorado to embark on a fundraising tour. Over the course of the next year, Yehoash made public appearances and performed poetry readings throughout the northeast and midwest, making stops in New York, Philadelphia, Worcester, Boston, Chicago, and Cincinnati, to name only a few. Large crowds attended these performances, which were advertised heavily in local Yiddish papers. The tour resulted in great financial returns. *The Sanatorium* reported that "the Jehoash tour has been of incalculable benefit to the Society not alone from the increased receipts that came…but also on account of the wide publicity given to the work of the J.C.R.S. in centers hitherto untrod by our emissaries."[54] That "incalculable benefit" was soon given a number value. Spivak reported that "the renown and esteem which the classes and the masses have shown for their beloved poet, Yehoash, helped to replenish the coffers of the Society to the extent of $10,000."[55]

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[53] Charles D. Spivak, "Minutes of the JCRS Book 1," n.d., Box 299, Beck Archives Penrose Library.

[54] "The Jehoash Tour," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 1 (1909): 22.

[55] Charles D. Spivak, "Secretary's Report: Yehoash and His Jonathan," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 2 (1909): 67.

Yehoash, in short, became the face of the JCRS. And it was a sympathetic face. For although Yehoash's activities mirrored those of Marinoff and Dolitzki, he was a different type of solicitor.[56] He was the only one who made his tour while visibly ill. During his cross-country expedition, the JCRS board was well aware that Yehoash was making the trip despite and possibly at grave disservice to his physical condition.[57] At stops along the way, audience members, those introducing him, and those reporting on the events took notice of his poor health. They commented on his willingness to sacrifice his own well being for the JCRS. The reporter for the St. Louis *Star* provided some background about the Yiddish poet, writing:

> He is a sick man and his physicians told him he must remain in Colorado if life was dear to him. But he knew that the institution which had saved many a man needs funds…He, therefore, disregarded the advice of his physician and of his friends and went East. He has reaped financial success. Not for himself, but for the institution…[58]

The article describes an altruistic man, who has sacrificed his own health for a charitable cause. Similarly, *The Jewish Exponent* of Philadelphia reported on a local event where Yehoash was praised and declared him to be "very brave, brave almost to foolishness, for he is risking his health for the sake of the cause so dear to him."[59] Here, we certainly find echoes of Yehoash as Molière.[60] But there's a twist: Yehoash appears to sacrifice his health not for art but for his

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[56] For his correspondence with Spivak, see Charles D. Spivak, "Letter to Yehoash," November 21, 1908, Arc 116, Box 5, Folder: Spivak, JTS.

[57] In the summer of 1909, it appears that Yehoash's wife did not want her husband to make the fundraising rounds at the summer resorts in the Catskills due to his health. As recorded in the Board of Trustees minutes of that year, however, the board was confident that Yehoash would go anyway. "Board of Trustees Meeting Notes," June 9, 1909, Box 298, JCRS Archive.

[58] O. Leonard, "News and View," *Star*, April 30, 1909, JCRS Records, Box 198, Newspaper Clippings, 1909-1912, JCRS Archive.

[59] As quoted in O. Leonard, "News and View," *Star*, April 30, 1909.

[60] The seventeenth-century French playwright and actor Jean-Baptise Poquelin, known as Molière, remains one of the most famous consumptive performers and artists in theater and literary history. In what was to be his final performance, he played the lead role in *Le Malade imaginaire*. During the show, he erupted into a fit of coughing.

fellow sufferers of tuberculosis. Recall that we heard a variant of that refrain during Sholem Aleichem's jubilee. Sholem Aleichem, we read, had sacrificed his health in order to write for the Jewish masses. Here, Yehoash is said to sacrifice his health not just in the name of his poetry, nor in the name of the masses, but in the name of his Jewish tubercular brethren. Unlike his the Yiddish humorist, who stayed put in European health resorts, Yehoash left Denver—the Davos of the West—to raise money for tubercular Jews, like himself.

Yehoash was likely as effective as he was precisely because he, himself, was sick. He performed in the name of and as the embodiment of tuberculosis. In an early edition of *The Sanatorium*, Yehoash published an English-language poem entitled "The White Plague." There, he personifies the disease as follows:

> This greatest of all human sufferings, we call
> White Plague, though blackest, fiercest of them all,
> All silently it gathers in its harvest dread.
> And killing inch-wise long parades its living dead.[61]

Yehoash would become one such tubercular *on parade*, or better put, on a mission. His membership among the "living dead" would also be acknowledged by his admirers. One report identified him as an *umshterblekhn* poet and described his work as *umshterblekhe* poetry.[62] Both Yehoash and his writing were declared *undying, immortal, perpetual*. His disease was not only the impetus behind his journey to Denver nor his tour on behalf of the JCRS. Rather, it became a lens through which the ailing poet and his poetry were received, interpreted and praised.

Legend has it that Molière then died on the stage, having given his life in the name of art. As has been noted, Molière actually died shortly after the performance. On Molière's illness and death, see Virginia Scott, *Molière: A Theatrical Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 256.

[61] Yehoash, "The White Plague," *The Sanatorium* I, no. 2 (1907): 30.

[62] "Der Yehoash kontsert," *Der yidisher kuryer*, April 26, 1909, Box 198, JCRS--Newspaper Clippings, 1909-1912, JCRS Archive.

Yehoash also met with great success on his tour that extended far beyond financial returns for the JCRS. Dr. Adolph Zederbaum, a physician at the JCRS and son of Alexander Zederbaum, founding editor of the nineteenth-century Hebrew newspaper *ha-Melits*, would go so far as to describe his colleague's reception in the terms of hero worship.[63] Marinoff relayed the same sentiment in a letter to Yehoash's wife. He recounts how Yehoash was received at a recent performance. Referring to Yehoash by his English nickname, "Bloom," Marinoff writes:

> When Bloom got up on the stage every one in the vast audience rose to their feet and cheered, cheered, cheered, and then cheered again…The Theatre shakes, the stage cracks, and bloom, deeply moved, bowes again, and bears up like a heroe.[64]

Marinoff's letter, written with quick strokes and multiple errors, evinces the excitement of Yehoash's performance. Regardless—or perhaps in response to—the poet's physical weakness, the audience had thanked Yehoash with thunderous applause.

Marinoff's words also are a signal to the historian of Yiddish literature. They offer a glimpse into Yehoash's performance where we find not only a field agent on assignment but an author on a publicity tour. This was in fact Yehoash's *first* reading tour. It was his *first* chance to perform selections from his *first* volume of poetry, which had appeared in 1907 and was composed of texts that Yehoash had primarily penned in Denver. At the same time as we find advertisements identifying Yehoash as a world famous and beloved poet, we also find promotional material that introduces the poet as a writer who is presumably unknown to the readership. One editorialist in Chicago acknowledged that his readers might not be as familiar with this poet as they are with other Yiddish writers.[65] He accounts for Yehoash's attenuated

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[63] Adolph Zederbaum, "Letter to Yehoash," September 22, 1908, Arc 116, Box 5, Folder: Dr. Tsederboyn, JTS.

[64] Jacob Marinoff, "Letter to Flora Bloomgarden," September 16, 1908, Arc 116, Box 4, Folder: Marinov, Y., JTS.

[65] "Der bezukh fun 'Yehoash,'" *Der yidisher kuryer*, April 19, 1909, Box 198, JCRS--Newspaper Clippings, 1909-1912, JCRS Archive.

fame as a function of both style and biography. Yehoash, explains the editor, writes poetry that does not shout but is defined by its "withdrawn, quiet nature." What's more, his poor health has pulled him to Denver. Yehoash was certainly not a complete unknown in the Yiddish literary firmament. After all, he was famous enough to be the headline act of a fundraising tour. Newspaper advertisements and event tickets displayed his name in large font and relegated mention of the JCRS to small letters.[66] But as indicated in the Chicago editorial, the tour afforded Yehoash national exposure that had heretofore been unavailable to him and that would connect him to scores of potential acolytes. The JCRS had capitalized on Yehoash's growing fame and he, in turn, benefited from the fundraising *cum* national reading tour.

The receptions that greeted Yehoash became public opportunities for expressing admiration for the Yiddish poet. Paeans were published in his honor. Several of his poems were set to music.[67] Those participating in the evenings spent much of their time praising Yehoash, and reports specifically attended to his contributions to Yiddish poetry. In May 1909, the judge Julian Mack introduced Yehoash at a benefit in Chicago. He instructed the audience to help their tubercular brethren as follows: "We can do so by becoming members and contributors to the Jewish Consumptives Relief Society, but *above all* tonight we must not forget the tribute to the Yiddish language and literature and Yiddish poetry and to the profound and beautiful verses of Yehoash."[68] *Above all*, they should not forget that the evening was not only for the JCRS but for Yiddish literature and its present representative: Yehoash.

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[66] "Der bezukh fun 'Yehoash'," *Der yidisher kuryer* (Chicago, April 19, 1909).

[67] "Jewish Poet Is Guest at Sanitarium Benefit," *Chicago Record*, May 10, 1909; Ben-Ishay, "Tsu Yehoash," *Der yidisher kuryer*, May 9, 1909.

[68] My emphasis. "Chicago Honors Yehoash," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 4 (1909): 231. Another admirer praised Yehoash for "the work you have so successfully accomplished to enlighten the Jewish public with poetry, and also

It also appears that the JCRS was not averse to the dual benefit posed by the tour for the institution and for Yehoash's reputation. In January 1909, *The Sanatorium* printed a report on the success of Yehoash's tour that stated:

> While Jehoash's tour was intended as propaganda for the J.C.R.S. his presence in the East has at the same time stimulated the cultivation of Jewish poetry. Thousands of our American co-religionists who had no idea of the literary and poetic possibilities of the Yiddish for the first time had a startling revelation of the progress that has already been achieved in this language, which is still the mother tongue of the preponderating majority of the Hebrew people.[69]

Even the JCRS saw Yehoash's tour as a major cultural stimulator and as an extended, live advertisement for the literary tradition in which Yehoash chose to stake his claim. Reconstructing the history and rhetoric of Yehoash's tour as a solicitor on the behalf of the JCRS reveals a complicated network of intersecting *propositions*: tuberculosis, Yehoash, the JCRS, the national tour. When brought into contact, the resulting entity is an occasion for the creation of something new. Accounts of this tour, demonstrate that tubercular capital worked in two complementary ways—first, raising money for the JCRS; second, providing Yehoash national exposure; and third, increasing public awareness of Yiddish cultural expression.

The JCRS and the Space of Bilingual Writing

Before being sent out on tour, Yehoash promoted the JCRS through his writing while on the ground in Denver. His first published work on behalf of the JCRS was, curiously, not in Yiddish but in English. The poem entitled "The White Plague," cited earlier, was published in the *Colorado Medical Journal* in 1905. It appeared following an article about the dedication of

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the good work you are doing to better the conditions of your fellow men D. Pellman, "Letter to Yehoash," September 16, 1908, Arc 116, Box 5, Folder: D. Pellman, JTS.

[69] "The Jehoash Tour," 21.

two new tents at the JCRS.[70] The accompanying byline, "S. Bloomgarden (Yehoash)," asserts the poet in English while never relinquishing recourse to his Yiddish name. In Sholem Aleichem's case, the name "Rabinovitsh" soon slipped away. Yehoash, in contrast, would cultivate this hybrid poetic identity between Yiddish and English throughout his stay in Denver.

The Sanatorium, as mentioned earlier, was also a bilingual publication. The JCRS recognized that its fundraising project would require the support of Yiddish and English-speakers alike. The result of this eminently practical need was a bilingual journal, a phenomenon that was rare at the time and that would never really catch on.[71] To be clear, the journal did not always print the same material in both English and Yiddish, nor were the sections equal in length. The Yiddish supplements often contained a redacted version of the Secretary's Report (i.e. information on activities at and improvements made to for the JCRS). These supplements also printed Yiddish sketches, such as the "Street Scenes" of Dovid Pinksi, which were never translated.[72] In general, the Yiddish section was significantly shorter, contained fewer photographs, and did not include the lists of donors' names. Although the Yiddish and English sections were not mirror versions of each other, there were frequently at least some overlapping articles and *The Sanatorium* became an active site of English/Yiddish and Yiddish/English translation, especially during the years of Yehoash's editorial tenure. And although the JCRS,

[70] The article had been reprinted from *The Jewish Outlook*. "Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society Dedicate Three Tents," *Colorado Medical Journal* 11 (1905): 434. Yehoash's poem appeared directly below the article. Yehoash, "The White Plague," *Colorado Medical Journal* 11 (1905): 434.

[71] For example, appeals were submitted to both English and Yiddish papers and appeared in the same editions of *The Sanatorium*. "Appeals," *The Sanatorium* I, no. 6 (November 1907): 189, 194.

[72] Dovid Pinksi, "Gasn-bilder," *The Sanatorium* II, no. 4 (July 1908): 225–226.

itself, offered English classes to its patients alongside vocational lessons, the bilingual agenda of the in-journal was not education.[73] Rather, it opened the magazine up to Yiddish readers.

And yet the editors of the journal were also aware of the cultural capital associated with being translated and written in English. The bilingual character of the publication appears even to have been a draw in soliciting established Yiddish writers to submit material. Consider the letter Yehoash wrote to the playwright Jacob Gordin. In April 1908, Yehoash requested that Gordin submit to *The Sanatorium*. "It doesn't matter how small the submission or how few the number of lines," he wrote. "Your prestige as a world-famous dramaturge will indirectly help our holy work."[74] Yehoash took care to describe *The Sanatorium* as a "bimonthly journal that appears in Yiddish and English together." Gordin responded to the request with an enthusiastic Yiddish letter, printed that July.[75] He praised the JCRS and committed to writing more for the journal. The pledge would not bear fruit before his death the next year, but it did not stop the editors from repeating in English and Yiddish that the famous Jacob Gordin had written for their publication.[76] After his death, the journal published a translation of his letter under an editorial note that honored Gordin's commitment to the JCRS.[77]

The Yiddish playwright Leon Kobrin would not have to wait over a year to see his work translated in *The Sanatorium*. While Yehoash was editor, Kobrin would become legible for the first time to an English readership. His text, "The Rescue" (*Di retung*) appeared in the journal

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[73] In addition to English classes, the JCRS offered patients courses in German, Spanish, Yiddish and bookkeeping. S.D., "A Few News Items," *Tales of the Tents* II, no. 2 (1915): 3.

[74] Yehoash, "Letter to Jacob Gordin," April 26, 1908, Arc 116, Box 1, Folder: Gordin, Jacob, JTS.

[75] Jacob Gordin, "A briv fun her Yankev Gordin," *The Sanatorium* II, no. 4 (1908): 224.

[76] "Our Bililngual Bimonthly," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 2 (1909): 68; Charles D. Spivak, "Sekreters berikht: unzer baredevdiker meshulekh--der sanatoriyum," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 2 (1909): 146.

[77] "Mr. Jacob Gordin," *The Sanatorium* III, no. 4 (1909): 228. The letter follows the note.

both in Yiddish and English. [78] It had been commissioned for *The Sanatorium* and tells the desperate story of the tubercular Morris Gutman. His family is willing to go to extreme measures in order to send him to Colorado. The play's message is blunt: donate money or else the wife of the aptly-named Gutman will be forced to prostitute herself to the trilingually resonant Mr. Bootz, who stands ready to kick (*boots*) the Gutmans into the mud *(bots* = "mud" in Hebrew).

The Sanatorium also printed a translation into Yiddish of Morris Winchevsky's short English-language story, "Cranky Old Ike." Known primarily as a socialist Yiddish poet, Winchevsky also wrote prose for the British socialist press. His story, "Cranky Old Ike," first appeared in the London-monthly, *The British Socialist*.[79] Like Kobrin's play, Winchevsky's story lent itself to a fundraising cause. Its hero is named "Cranky Old Ike," which is rendered into Yiddish as "*der alter krenk Ayk."* This translation move is intriguing. The English term "crank" is not translated but, rather, transliterated, rendering the title character sick (*krenk*) rather than curmudgeonly. Ike/*Ayk*'s sickly nickname accordingly announces that illness is at the center of this text. We also learn that Ike's family died in a typhoid epidemic in Russia. He subsequently immigrated to America where he begins to work in a factory. The story narrates his shift from an apathetic laborer to a socialist ideologue. The transformation occurs after Ike hears the speech of a socialist politician who "showed that the unsanitary conditions prevailing in the dwellings of the poor render them a sure prey to every contagious disease."[80] In the Yiddish translation, prey is rendered as *korbn*, a polysemous word meaning both "sacrifice" and "victim."

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[78] "Editorial: Leon Kobrin's Drama," *The Sanatorium* II, no. 3 (1908): 130. Kobrin, "Di retung"; Leon Kobrin, "The Rescue: A Drama, Part I," *The Sanatorium* II, no. 5 (1908): 247–50; Leon Kobrin, "The Rescue: A Drama, Part 2," *The Sanatorium* II, no. 6 (1908): 298–302.

[79] Morris Winchevsky, "Cranky Old Ike," *The Social-Democrat* 4, no. 8 (1900): 253–56. All subsequent citations refer to this edition. The English version also identifies that "Cranky" seems homonymous with the Yiddish, *krenk*.

[80] Ibid., 254.

If the reader of *The Sanatorium* wondered why this had been chosen, the answer is now clear. The socialist politician's message is the same as that of the field solicitors of the JCRS: poor urban Jews are living in conditions that predispose them to diseases such as tuberculosis and something must be done. Again, tuberculars were often troped in Yiddish as *victims* (*korbones*) of the capitalist system or of the proletarian disease. The socialist in Winchevsky's English text trying to gain political constituents becomes the anti-tuberculosis Yiddish activist fundraising on behalf of the JCRS and its patient-*korbones*.

Yehoash, himself, entered into this translingual and translational conversation while serving as editor of *The Sanatorium*. His history as a translator is well-acknowledged. Along with the Bible, he translated into Yiddish sections of the Koran, Heine's *Paganini,* and the poetry of Byron and Longfellow. It is less known, though, that Yehoash began to try his hand at writing poetry *in English* while living in Denver. Drawing on the connections of his colleague Jacob Marinoff, Yehoash published his first English-language poems in the Zionist monthly, *The Maccabaean*. In a brief biographical introduction to his work, the editors relate that Yehoash has now relocated to Denver on account of a pulmonary infection.[81] His entrance into English-language poetry would thereby be marked with reference to his disease. The poems that follow in *The Maccabaean* also point obliquely to his state of illness. The first, "Phantom of Death," describes a dying soul that "…like the drowning man will cling/To waning life with lingering breath." The latter, "At Quarantine," describes a ship that is refused permission to dock due to illness on board.[82] The experience would have been familiar to tubercular Jewish immigrants. Daniel Charney, introduced at the beginning of the chapter, was perhaps the most famous

[81] "A New Poet.--Solomon Bloomgarden," *The Maccabaean* 4, no. 6 (1903): 303.

[82] "A New Poet.--Solomon Bloomgarden"; Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarden), "At Quarantine," *The Maccabaean* 4, no. 6 (1903): 394; Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarden), "The Phantom of Death," *The Maccabaean* 4, no. 6 (1903): 304.

Yiddish writer refused entrance to America in 1925 on account of his ailing lungs. He chronicled the shameful experience in the Yiddish daily, *Der Tog*. Unable to speak English, he reported that he had undergone each medical examination in quarantine like "a mute beast before the slaughterer."[83] Recourse to English, and the attending power, was unavailable to Charney.

It was not, by contrast, unavailable to Yehoash. *The Sanatorium* became the venue for him to test out his American voice and engage the Anglo-American literary tradition. The premier edition of *The Sanatorium* includes one piece of creative literature: a Yiddish poem by Yehoash entitled, "The Dying Consumptive." The poem comprises four quatrains, and introduces the titular *shterbender konsomptiv* in typically Romantic terms:

> His face grows thinner, paler,
> His limbs, more tightly contracted,
> And his voice grows ever softer,
> And his eyes ever more beautiful.
>
> *Zayn ponim vert als darer, bleykher,*
> *di glider eynger ayngetsoygn,*
> *dokh vert zayn shtime tomid veykher,*
> *un tomid shener zayne oygn*.[84]

The poem opens with a sketch of the refined tubercular. He is pale, gentle and gaunt. Specifically, he grows every more thin—*darer*—a word that evokes the then-common name for tuberculosis, *di dar* (lit. "the withering"). As the subject withers and approached death, so too does he grow every more lovely before ultimately succumbing to the disease at the end of the short poem. The poetic interlocutor who hovers over this aestheticized invalid is without a doubt

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[83] Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 1)," *Der tog*, November 15, 1925, 6. Charney wrote of his experiences in a series of articles for *Der Tog*. See Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 1)"; Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 2)," *Der tog*, November 22, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 3)," *Der tog*, November 29, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 4)," *Der tog*, December 6, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 5)," *Der tog*, December 14, 1925; Daniel Charney, "Fun Eyrope keyn Elis Aylend un tsurik (Part 6)," *Der tog*, December 21, 1925.

[84] Yehoash, "Der shterbender konsomptiv," *The Sanatorium* I, no. 1 (1907): ll. 1–4.

Keats. In his 1819 "Ode to a Nightingale," written soon after the death of his brother from tuberculosis, Keats writes of a world "where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin and dies."[85] And the life course of Yehoash's poetic subject would be the same. Next to Keats, Byron peaks out from the text. In what has now become part of the Byronian legend, we are told of an occasion where the poet looked into the mirror and exclaimed, "How pale I look! I should like, I think to die of a consumption." When asked why, he responded, "Because then the women would all say, 'See that poor Byron—how interesting he looks in dying!'"[86] For Byron and the other romantic poets, the tubercular visage was *interesting*, beautiful, alluring. Yehoash, in fact, had translated Byron into Yiddish in his youth and he would have certainly been aware of this aestheticized, tubercular ideal.[87] On his way to America, he had passed through Warsaw where the don of Yiddish belles-lettres, I.L. Peretz, had declared Yehoash to be "our Byron."[88] Here, on the pages of *The Sanatorium*, the nickname takes on new meaning, as Yehoash inserts himself into a Romantic literary conversation by means of tuberculosis.

In the following edition of journal, Yehoash continues this conversation with his English interlocutors—this time, in their own language. In March 1907, he published the English-language poem "The White Plague," excerpted earlier. The poem reads in full:

> Humanity is changing color as it goes
> Its onward march—so are the miseries and woes;
> Of yore the fatal war-scourge was the terror red
> That like a bloody blade hung o'er the nation's head,
> Black epidemics swept and thinned the human race,

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[85] John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," in *Poems of John Keats*, vol. 2 (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1896), 80, l. 26.

[86] Thomas Moore, *The Life of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1844), 113.

[87] George Byron, "Di Gazel," trans. Yehoash, *Di Yudishe Bibliotek* 2 (1891): 203. This is a translation of Byron's poem, "The Wild Gazelle."

[88] Dworkin, "My Father Yehoash," 12.

Turning whole continents in one huge burial-place;
Now Fate, unsated still, is on our heels once more,
But not in robes of night or crimson garb of yore—
This greatest of all human sufferings, we call
White Plague, though blackest, fiercest of them all,
All silently it gathers in its harvest dread.
And killing inch-wise long parades its living dead.[89]

Yehoash speaks in the language (English) of his Romantic forbearers if only to distance himself from allegiance to their aesthetics. The subject here is not the refined tubercular victim but the encroaching terror of "The White Plague." The imagery is stark—black, red, white—and seems to allude more to the image of the consumptive as capitalist victim than fading beauty. Although the couplets end in full rhymes, the poem's meter is forced. The sixth line turns on an awkward preposition ("in" rather than "into") and the lofty diction is needlessly repetitive ("yore" lines 3 and 8). One cannot help but read this as the product of a poet not yet comfortable or fluent in English. Compared to his precise Yiddish poetry, which boasts perfect meter and fastidious rhymes, "The White Plague" reads as clunky, plodding and overwrought.

But the poem must be contextualized. In fact, the poem appears in conversation with another text published several pages earlier. I refer to the "The Climate Worshipper," by the Denver-based cowboy poet, James Baron Adams. The text is a paean to climatological therapy. The speaker describes his wife and children's health condition as follows:

Sca'cely looked like human bein's, more like skeletons we were,
Wife a-hackin' with consumption, that was ketchin' hold o' her,
An' the younguns both a-coughin', me a-worryin' till—well,
Got discouraged till I wasn't wuth a pinch o' salt in hell![90]

The family picks up and moves from Arkansas to a mountainous region, presumably Colorado, and sets up a ranch. The new climate proves palliative and the speaker's wife and children soon

[89] Yehoash, "The White Plague," 1907.

[90] James Barton Adams, "A Climate Worshipper," *The Sanatorium* I, no. 2 (1907): ll. 13–16.

recover. Written in the dialect of a rancher, purposefully riddled with misspellings, and freely making use of a low lingustic register, Adams' bawdy poem stands in sharp contrast to the staid and polished effort of "The White Plague." Yehoash's poem is insistently grammatically correct and the diction is of a decidedly high order. There is no accent perceptible and no culturally-specific locution. Yehoash's technique, even if projecting the insecurity of a new English-speaker, allows him to "pass" as an English writer.[91] By placing the poem in conversation with Adams', a new picture comes into focus: Yehoash presents himself in English as no less refined than he was known to be in Yiddish. His assessment of tuberculosis may not be Romantic but his style bespeaks a high literary sensibility when compared to the brashness of Adams' work. The inclusion of Adams' poem also alerts us to the new collaborative possibilities that were opened up to the Yiddish writer after relocating to Denver. If the Yiddish poets in New York would soon discover the writers of the Harlem Renaissance and if the Chicago Yiddish poets would soon be rewriting Carl Sandberg's work in paeans to Michigan Avenue, then Denver Yiddish writers now entered into a scene of cowboy literature and Western dialects.

Yehoash's engagement with American writing did not stop with Adams' verse. While in Denver, Yehoash famously rendered the entirety of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1885 epic poem, *Hiawatha*, into Yiddish—even maintaining the strict trochaic tetrameter of the original.[92] Most recently, Ernest Gilman has posited that Yehoash's decision to translate *Hiawatha* was likely influenced by his location. Taking up residence in Colorado, reasons Gilman, would have brought Yehoash into contact with Native Americans. Local tribes, moreover, performed in and

[91] Hana Wirth-Nesher has commented on the phenomenon of linguistic passing in Jewish American literature, whereby an immigrant author suppresses any evidence of his or her accent in an English language text. Hana Wirth-Nesher, *Call It English: The Languages of Jewish American Litearature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 56–60.

[92] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Dos lid fun Hayavata*, trans. Yehoash (New York: Ferlag Yehoash, 1910).

around Denver as well as entertained patients at the JCRS. Yehoash's disease, accordingly, placed the poet in a new landscape (the American West) and in conversation with a population (Native Americans) that Longfellow could only imagine while he wrote *Hiawatha* far away in Massachusetts.[93]

Gilman's argument is compelling, particularly considering that other tubercular poets, such as Reuben Ludwig, began poetic explorations of Native American life upon moving west for health reasons.[94] He further posits that Yehoash's translation stands as a "work of cross-cultural encounter and imaginative identification that would channel Longfellow in order to evoke the powerful myths and the tragic history that lay behind these woe-begotten performances.[95] Focusing on a series of decisions made in the Yiddish translation, Gilman argues for an understanding of the poem that maps the Yehoash's immigrant experiences onto that of the Native American. By attending on this relationship, Gilman also distinguishes himself from other interpreters of the text, such as Chaim Zhitlowsky. The Yiddish language activist and socialist wrote the introduction to the book-version of Yehoash's translation.[96] There, Zhitlowsky argues that translation in general, and of *Hiawatha* in particular, gives Jews the opportunity to increase their own connection to European universalism. It also allows them to learn about the soul of the non-Jew, here, modeled by the Indian, and to build a robust vocabulary for Yiddish that will be the groundwork for future Yiddish masterpieces. For Gilman, that reading ignores the inter-ethnic identification at the basis of the translation.

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[93] Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970*, 74.

[94] Ibid., 63. For examples, see Reuben Ludwig, "Indiyaner motivn," in *Gezamelte lider* (New York: Y.L. Perets Shrayber-Farayn, 1927), 68–75.

[95] Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970*, 66.

[96] Chaim Zhitlowsky, "Vegn dem vert fun iberzetsungen," in *Dos lid fun Hyavata*, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, trans. Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarden) (New York: Farlag Yehoash, 1910), iii – xxiv.

Gilman rightly draws our attention to the parallels of persecution that Yehoash may have seen between Jews and Native Americans. Yet he underplays the force of Yehoash's assertion of his creative power as a translator. For example, Gilman turns our attention to Yehoash's decision to exclude one of Longfellow's passages that overtly censures the Jews. He does not translate the ten lines in which the black-robed priest narrates how the Jews mocked Jesus. Gilman speculates on the reasoning behind the decision through a series of provocative questions: "Does he not want to inflict them on the reader? Does he want to sanitize the poem for the sake of Longfellow's prestige as a classical author Yiddish speakers should admire?" He ultimately concludes that the excision allows the poem to maintain its hope in ecumenical brotherhood of all religions.

My understanding of this passage, in contrast to Gilman, is one that explicitly acknowledges the power of Yehoash to demonstrate his agency not only as translator but as an interpreter of the American canon for the Yiddish audience. Gilman provocatively asks at the beginning of his discussion: "Would publishing a Yiddish *Hayavata* qualify [Yehoash] the translator as 'our Longfellow,' just as he had earlier been proclaimed 'our Byron'?"[97] My short answer is yes. Translating Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, an American schoolroom classic, was certainly an opportunity that Yehoash gave himself in order to assert his own poetic authority and cosmopolitan potential.[98] This as well as the nature of that authority becomes more nuanced when we consider that, while he was working on his translation, Yehoash also published a poem under the pseudonym "Lung-Fellow." Let us now return to the poem, which reads:

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[97] Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970*, 62.

[98] For information on *Hiawatha* as a schoolroom classic see Angela Sorby, *Schoolroom Poets: Childhood, Performance, and the Place of American Poetry, 1865-1917* (Durham, NH: New Hampshire Press, 2005), 3; 11.

A man of letters, a 'candidate,'
That's quite a pair, a good one:
The first one goes, no shoes or clothes,
The second has 'consumption.'

The first one hangs there deep in thought,
No care for the wants of the masses.
The second's got, a lung despot,
And shudders at bacillus…

There's just one plus, and it's big enough
For us to now consider.
How nice and sweet, the coupling is
Of *writing* and *being sick*.

A literat, a 'kandidat'—
dos iz a por a gute:
der eyner geyt, on shukh on kleyd,
der tsveyter hot 'katute.'

Der eyner heyngt, in vos er denkt,
on oylm-goylm's viln;
der tsveyter hot, a lung-despot,
un tsitert far batsiln…

Eyn mayle bloyz, genug iz groys,
haynt ken men zikh shoyn denken,
vi sheyn un zis, der zivug iz,
fun shrayberay *un* kreynken...[99]

The poem posits a symbiotic relationship between being a writer and being sick, harkening back to the Romantic correlation between tuberculosis and artistic production. The writer is poor, the tubercular ails, and together they make literature. The term *zivug*, here rendered "pairing," connotes wedlock or sexual union. There is something about the dual identity of being sick and being a writer that is generative and potentially sexually charged.

Yet the tone here is humorous. The rhyme is jumpy and my translation in no way suffices to convey the energy of the poem dramatized by the back and forth between the figures of the

[99] Yehoash (Lung-Fellow), "A literat-kandidat," *The Sanatorium* II, no. 1 (1908): 39.

literat and *kandidat*. Like Adams' poem, Lung-Fellow's text is by catchy diction and a local idiom—*katute*, as would have to be defined in a footnote, was a term for consumption. Humor is also evidenced by the author's allusive pseudonym, Lung-Fellow. Such authorial playfulness, I suggest, is Yehoash's attempt to deflate Longfellow's authority, to render him comic, and to substitute a tubercular alter-ego for the American icon. Lest there be any confusion about the object of the allusion, the synechdocal name typographically points back to Longfellow; it is printed in English letters next to a poem otherwise devoid of Roman script. Yet the poem offers no other references to the American poet nor can it be read as a parody. Put differently, the only variable connecting Yehoash's poem to Longfellow is the appended pseudonym. Why add it, then?

I suggest that it points back to Yehoash's larger project evidenced in the pages *The Sanatorium* to assert himself as bilingual author, who wants to speak to both a Yiddish and English audience, and who wants to assume a place within both a Yiddish and America literary tradition. He has turned himself into Lung-Fellow, the tubercular bilingual doppelganger of the American poet. His lung has become his physiological entrance ticket into English literature. If translating *Hiawatha* is the culmination of this aspirational project to become an American poet, we see the beginnings with Lung-Fellow, "The White Plague" and "The Dying Consumptive" in the pages of *The Sanatorium*. It was a culmination of a project that began when Yehoash solicited material from his colleagues to be translated in the JCRS journal and it was continued in a Yiddish conversation with Keats and Byron, in a refined English conversation with the rowdy James Barton Adams, and in the comedic rendering of Longfellow. In this third act of translingual identity formation, Yehoash somatizes and assumes the American poet's persona. And, under that name, he crafts a poetic exposition about the correlation between illness and

creative production. Under that name, moreover, he harnesses the cultural capital of established literary figures and maps onto them the tubercular capital of the JCRS.

Lune Mattes: A Poet Made in the JCRS

The Sanatorium and the subsequent patient journals of the JCRS, including *Tales of the Tents* and *Hatikvah*, would continue the tradition of publishing tuberculosis-themed Yiddish texts in English and English texts in Yiddish, as well as welcome submissions that engaged the Anglo-American literary tradition. Deena Spivak Strauss, Dr. Spivak's daughter, would render the patient A. Druskin's Yiddish poem, "The Invalid," into English. The poem describes how sickness chains a consumptive patient to his bed, imprisoning him between four-walls[100] The English patient-poet, E.M. Butler, saw his nature poetry rendered into Yiddish by fellow patient Louis Gross.[101] And the bilingual patient writer, Isidore Heilberger, published his "Ode to Time: 'If Winter Comes,'" which eponymously alludes to Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," and shares its final line, "If Winter comes/Can Spring be far behind?"[102] In Shelley's poem, the assurance that spring will follow winter is only a frail guarantee that freedom will follow tyranny, or that creativity will follow a loss of imaginative power."[103] In Heilberger's poem, the guarantee is similarly tenuous. After tuberculosis, will the springtime of health arrive? Will the germs of tuberculosis begin to grow anew? And would the arrival of spring hasten a physical renewal at all?

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[100] A[braham] Druskin, "The Invalid," trans. Deena Spivak Strauss, *Hatikvah* I, no. 4 (1923): 6; A[braham] Druskin, "In Shpitol," *Lid* 2, no. 1 (1934): 4.

[101] E.M. Butler, "Demerung," trans. L. Gross, *Hatikvah* IV, no. 6 (1926): 4.

[102] Isidore Heilberger, "Ode to Time: 'If Winter Comes,'" *Hatikvah* III, no. 2 (1925): ll. 27–28.

[103] Michael O'Neill, "Sonnets and Odes," in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Madeleine Callaghan, Michael O'Neill, and Anthony Howe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 334–335.

But the poets mentioned above would rarely be remembered, either in English or Yiddish, beyond their stay at the JCRS. After the early years of *The Sanatorium*, well-known literary figures such as Gordin, Kobrin, and Winchevsky no longer submitted material for publication or translation. Yehoash was the lone exception. He continued to engage the JCRS' bilingual literary scene even after he left Denver permanently in 1910. In 1912, his short story, "Both Were Waiting," was translated in *The Sanatorium*. The darkly humorous text relates the plans of two consumptives in Colorado who miss their respective homes in New York City. One of the patients, Selig Zalkind, learns that should a patient die in Colorado and his family request that the body be sent east for burial, then the corpse would be shipped accordingly. An additional passenger would be enlisted to travel with the corpse. The story narrates the awkward and morbid relations between Selig and the other homesick patient as each waits for the other to die.

The text certainly elicits a muffled chuckle. My interest in the story, though, is less in its subject than its presentation. There are a number of distracting typographical issues. The main character's name is spelled both as "Selig" and "Zelig" and the spacing between lines is inconsistent. After the initial years of publication, both the quality of the typesetting and creative writing of *The Sanatorium* declined. Early in 1911, the journal announced a short story contest, requesting submissions in either English or Yiddish. "Fearing that the fountain stream of stories produced by home talent may run dry," the editors explain, "a friend of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society…offers through the editor the sum of $100 to be awarded in four prizes for the best short stories."[104] In the summer of 1912, the winners were announced. "After a careful reading of the many stories submitted to The Sanatorium in the Short Story Contest," we read, "the judges found that although none of the those worthy of recognition came up to the

[104] "Four Prizes for Short Stories," *The Sanatorium* V, no. 1 (1911): 4. See also "Advertisement: $100.00: Four Prizes for Short Stories," *The Sanatorium* V, no. 1 (1911): 32.

standard set when offering the original prizes, still they showed merit enough to entitle them to some award."[105] Each of the eight winners was given $5.

Yehoash served as one of the judges and signed his name to the announcement. The archival record confirms that Yehoash had lost confidence in the quality of the JCRS publications. In a letter of 1926 to Louis Gross, editor of the patient-journal *Hatikvah*, Yehoash wrote that he would contribute $5 and a short poem to be printed in the journal on one condition. Yehoash instructs Gross that he must show "Dr. Spivak a proof, that he might read and correct the proof in comparison with the original." The poem was printed in the October edition of the journal along with Yehoash's letter—albeit with the demand for external review excised.[106]

Yehoash was by then an established and respected litterateur and he was perhaps justified in making his request of Gross. Though he listed his employment as a "newspaper man," Gross worked on the journal with a group of non-professional patient-writers, many of whom published their first literary efforts in the pages of the JCRS patient-journals. The majority of the poems and stories published in *Tales of the Tents* and *Hatikvah* are decidedly amateurish: humor is favored above introspection, the limerick and the acrostic are the preferred literary forms, and themes of hope and optimism subtend most of the texts. As indicated earlier in the chapter, publications such as *Hatikvah* and *Tales of the Tents* functioned primarily to provide a space for patient literary expression regardless of quality.

Of course there were exceptions. Among the dozens of JCRS poets who become visible while following the tubercular literary trail through the JCRS was a young man named Lune Mattes. Unlike Yehoash, Mattes' name has long been lost to Yiddish literary studies. To claim

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[105] Sol Bloomgarden (Yehoash), I.J. Zevin (Tashrak), and Philip Hillkowitz, "The Award of Prizes in the Short Story Contest of The Sanatorium: A Statement by the Judges of Award," *The Sanatorium* VI, no. 3 (1912): 96.

[106] Yehoash, "A Grus," *Hatikvah* IV, no. 10 (1926): 1; Yehoash, "Notitsn," *Hatikvah* IV, no. 10 (1926): 2.

that he is even a minor poet would be an overstatement and until now there has been no effort to investigate his oeuvre. His was a short poetic career bounded first physically and then aesthetically by the JCRS. From 1923 to 1932, he published five collections of poetry, one collection of children's poetry, and one five-act drama. His chosen style was free-verse, and his influences ranged from Whitman to Pound to his fellow Yiddish tuberculars, Reuben Ludwig and Yehoash. He ironically memorialized the former with the poem, "The Poet is Well," written after Ludwig died of tuberculosis. He also memorialized Yehoash in a short, admiring poem where an illuminated figure walks around the natural world bearing "The Crown of His Grace."[107] The first stanza reads:

> A gesture from his hand and a call,
> a naked one
> removed from his body,
> an unseen in an unseen land,
> another call—
> from a hand gesture.
>
> *A tseykhn fun zayn hant un a ruf.*
> *a naketer,*
> *oysgeton funem guf,*
> *a nit geze'ener avek in nit geze'enem land,*
> *nokh a ruf—*
> *fun a tseykhn fun hant.*

The opening verses describe a man who verges on the indescribable. He has been reduced to a gesture and a voice. He is naked, the clothes undressed from his body. He walks around invisible to the eye in a landscape equally undetectable. Yet his call breaks through the ill-defined barrier, and a gesture follows. Written following the death of Yehoash, the poem reflects signs perceived by Mattes in the world of the living from his poetic predecessor in the unseen world of the dead. Although Mattes today remains similarly unseen among literary historians, his work calls out to

[107] Lune Mattes, "Dem dikhter iz gut," in *Studya* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1928), 24; Lune Mattes, "Kroyn fun zayn gnod," in *Studya* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1928), 20. He also wrote the poem "Head Bent" in honor for Spivak. See Lune Mattes, "Kop geboygn," in *Studya* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1928), 20.

us to consider how tuberculosis as his disease and the JCRS as his shelter can serve to mediate the career, poetic choices, and literary reputation of a daring and talented Yiddish poet.

Born in 1896 in what is now the Polish city of Białystok, Mattes Luniansky arrived in Boston in 1913 and soon settled in Chicago where he found work as a cigar maker. Shortly thereafter, he fell ill and spent over a year in the Chicago Municipal Tuberculosis Sanatorium. While in Chicago, it seems that Mattes became acquainted with the Yiddish writer Kalmen Marmer, who may have helped the aspiring poet publish his first poem in the Chicago journal, *Di Velt*.[108] In April 1918, Mattes left Chicago and entered the JCRS at the age of twenty-one. He would remain there until February 1921 and upon discharge make his new home in Denver. Two years later, in January 1923, he reentered the JCRS and stayed for an additional eight months. After being discharged again that autumn, he was hired by the JCRS to serve as the in-house librarian.[109]

Mattes' first stay in the JCRS corresponded to a lull in patient-publications. *Tales of the Tents* would run its last issue one month after his arrival. Yet by the time of his second stay, *Hatikvah* had been inaugurated and it was there that he witnessed the publication of his poetry into English. That February, Mattes' poem, "Denver," was published in a translation produced by fellow-patient Abraham Wolftraub. The poem is Mattes' ode to his adoptive city. Mattes assumes Whitmanian bravado as he exclaims in the final lines, "O, Denver, my chosen one,/My loveliest beauty of the West!"[110] Four months later, Deena Spivak Strauss would publish a

[108] This point is speculative. There is mention on the back cover of Mattes' first poetry volume that his work had earlier appeared in *Di velt*. Unfortunately, I have been unable to corroborate this with the extant editions newspapers, which lack many of the 1918 editions.

[109] Material relating to Luniansky's biography is scant. The information of above was culled from his publicly-accessible naturalization papers, draft papers, and material included in his file in the JCRS. His patient record includes various application materials he submitted and the most complete record of his movements between Chicago and Denver. See "Mattes Lune Patient Record," n.d., JCRS Folder 6361, JCRS Archive.

translation of a second poem by Mattes' entitled, "The Song of Thanks and Love." This ode to the dawn ends with similar Whitmanian verve: "And softly sinks the setting sun,/I kneel at your feet, bow my head/And sing the song of Thanks and Love—/I sing to you,/To you."[111] Here, in the pages of *Hatikvah*, Mattes announces himself in English as heir to the poet of *Leaves of Grass*. He would make this connection even more explicitly with his first volume of poetry, *Open Portals* (*Ofene Toyern*), in August 1923. His poem "Without a Fig Leaf," narrates the sexual longings of a feverish speaker. It includes as an epigraph the following lines rendered into Yiddish from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*: "Through me forbidden voices,/Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,/Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured."[112] Here, those "voices of sexes and lusts" find their mouthpiece in the hot, trembling, and suffering body of the speaker.

Unlike Yehoash, Mattes did not connect himself to his American literary forbearer through humor. Rather, he wrote multiple poems that picked up Whitman's language, style, and tone as refracted through the prism of a tubercular patient writing in Yiddish in Denver. When we return to the pages of *Hatikvah*, however, we see that Mattes and Yehoash may have shared something else in common. Both used the publications of the JCRS for publicity purposes. "Denver" and "The Song of Love and Thanks" were both poems that would be included in Mattes' first volume of poetry. The book would appear later that year. In *Hatikvah*, "Denver" and "The Song of Love and Thanks" appear above the following parenthetical subtitles

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[110] Lune Mattes, "Denver," trans. Abraham Wolftraub, *Hatikvah* I, no. 2 (1923): ll. 25–26.

[111] Lune Mattes, "The Song of Thanks and Love," trans. Deena Spivak Strauss, *Hatikvah* I, no. 6 (1923): 15.

[112] Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Sculley Bradley, vol. I (New York: New York University Press, 1980), Part 24, ll. 516–518. For a history of Whitmanian influence on American poetry, see Leonard Prager, "Walt Whitman in Yiddish," *Walt Whitman Quartery Review* 1, no. 3 (1983): 22–35.

respectively, "(From My Book, 'Open Portals')" and "(From my book, 'Ofene Toieren')." Not only did the journal provide Mattes the opportunity to see his work translated but it did so while advertising his forthcoming publication.

Mattes also drew on the institution's personnel to advertise his recent work.[113] The archival record indicates that Spivak was one of the most vocal advocates on behalf of his patient-poet-wonder. In May and June of 1923, Spivak beseeched the managers of the JCRS New York office to contact a Dr. K. Vorenberg, who was in charge of the publication of *Ofene Toyren*. Vorenberg was evidently delinquent in sending Mattes copies of the printed volume.[114] After the book was published, Spivak continued to advocate on behalf of Mattes, sending publicity letters to various Yiddish literati. In July 1923, he sent a copy to the modernist Yiddish poet Zishe Landau. In the accompanying letter, he praised Mattes' as a "lovable man" who "while regaining his heath…discovered that he must give vent to his feelings in rhyme." In the self-declared role of "a publicity man," Spivak proceeded to recount for Landau the miraculous poetic trajectory of Mattes who went from someone who "could not even spell correctly [in] Yiddish, and [who] was ery [*sic*] crude in ways of expressing his thaoughts [*sic*]" to the talented author of a collection of poetry.[115] He added:

> [I]t is not out of place to mention the fact that one of our founders of the JCRS is a poet and to my mind perhaps the greatest Yiddish poet in the world. I refer to the fact that Mr. Yehoash wrote his first volume of poems while a resident of Denver…. Of course we

[113] In fact, the archival record indicates that Yehoash may similarly have drawn on the JCRS network for self-promotion. We find in Yehoash's personal archive an undated letter from Lune Mattes, himself, reporting to the senior poet that a local Denver literary critic would like to write an article about Yehoash. Mattes explains that he has provided the critic with Yehoash's address he may supplement the limited information he has, which consists of an article from fourteen or fifteen years earlier. Lune Mattes, "Letter to Yehoash," Undated, Arc 116, Box 4, Folder: M. Lune, JTS.

[114] Charles D. Spivak, "Letter to Messrs. Rosen & Miller, Mgrs. New York Office JCRS," May 29, 1923, JCRS 6361, Patient Record Morris Lune, JCRS Archive; Charles D. Spivak, "Letter to Messrs. Rosen & Miller, Mgrs. New York Office JCRS," June 18, 1923, JCRS 6361, Patient Record Morris Lune, JCRS Archive.

[115] Spivak, "Letter to Zishe Landau (16 July 1923)."

> have to say lehavdil when we mention these two poets, nevertheless for publicity purposes we may mention en pasant [*sic*] that it seems the JCRS is a fountain of poetry.[116]

In order to promote Mattes, Spivak invokes the literary lineage of the JCRS and Yehoash, albeit with the requisite *lehavdil* to differentiate between the two. Notable here is the proprietary tone of the letter, in which Spivak claims responsibility for Mattes' literary ascent in the creative atmosphere of the JCRS. Spivak repeated the story of Mattes' rise to Hillel Rogoff, editor of the Yiddish daily *Forward*. There, he described Mattes as a tubercular who had arrived at the JCRS who "hardly knew how to write Yiddish." Yet in a story that "borders on miraculous," Mattes "succeeded to write some excellent stuff." Spivak then tells Rogoff that his interest in Mattes lies not in that fact that he is a poet but that he is "a product of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society environment." Mattes' success, in turn, is not simply a function of his inherent talent but of a nurturing, literary space. Spivak concludes by asking Rogoff to publish a photograph of a banquet held in Denver in honor of Mattes' book.[117]

Despite Spivak's efforts, there is no evidence that the letters led to immediate results. The photograph never made an appearance in *Forverts*. Both letters, however, reiterate the narrative that Lune Mattes was a poet reared in the JCRS and supported by its leaders and literary gestalt. Mattes himself would describe the wonder of entering the JCRS, which encouraged its patients to spend their free time reading. The institution's Isidore Hurwitz Library, where Mattes would one day work, had hundreds of volumes in multiple languages and classic works in translation. In Mattes' own experience, reading was prohibited at other sanatoria and considered a hindrance

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Charles D. Spivak, "Letter to Hillel Rogoff," August 17, 1923, JCRS File 6361, Patient Record Morris Lune, JCRS Archive.

to recuperation.[118] At the JCRS, in contrast, tubercular patients like himself were permitted to spend their time familiarizing themselves with "world literature," here likely referring to the classic works available in the library .[119] More than a space of reading, the JCRS also functioned as a workshop of sorts, where "one [could] get, not only a book and newspaper to read, but also a pencil, pen and ink with which to write."[120] It was there that he wrote the poems that would comprise his inaugural volume.

Mattes would also deposit his own volumes of literature in the Isidore Hurwitz library. Nearly a decade after he left the JCRS, his books remained in active circulation. The prolific journalist, memoirist, and tubercular Yiddish writer Shea Tenenbaum, for example, "got to know L. Mattes" after he "found his work in the [JCRS] library." He declared Mattes in hindsight to have been the "court-poet of Spivak Sanatorium." He also lovingly recounted having heard of the banquet that Spivak had organized in honor of Mattes' first book.[121] Though Rogoff may have ignored Spivak's letter, the banquet would become part of the JCRS' institutional memory. It is against this background that we may now approach Mattes' oeuvre and ask how tuberculosis constituted his literary output and mediated his reputation.

Writing about the dependence of Proust's literary style on his asthma, Walter Benjamin concludes that "a physiology of *style* would take us into the innermost core of [Proust's] creativeness."[122] I wish to propose a modified conclusion for the work of Lune Mattes: a

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[118] Lune Mattes (M. Lune), "Light and Dreams," *Hatikvah* I, no. 3 (1923): 5–6.

[119] Spivak, "Letter to Zishe Landau (16 July 1923)."

[120] Mattes (M. Lune), "Light and Dreams," 5.

[121] Shea Tenenbaum, "Kinstler in Spivak Sanatoriyum," *Shikage Kuriyer*, June 28, 1936.

[122] Walter Benjamin, "The Image of Proust," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 214. My emphasis.

physiology of *subject* would take us into his innermost core of creativeness. Unlike that of Proust, Mattes' syntax does not "rhythmically and step by step [reproduce] his fear of suffocating"—a fear, perhaps, shared by asthmatics and tuberculars alike.[123] To be sure, one may be tempted to read the Whitmanian verbosity of Mattes' first poetry as evidence of a desire to talk his way out of death. Alternatively, one may be tempted to interpret Mattes' collection of 1926, *Moments*, in light of his disease. The collection includes poems of two to five lines, their tone and length derivative of Pound. One may be tempted to interpret these imagistic verses as the output of a poet unable to catch his breath.[124]

But Mattes' oeuvre is stylistically inconsistent. His premier volume contains such works as the 47-part poem, "I am Young and Old," in which the first person speaker is a twenty-five year old invalid, confined to a bed in a sanatorium metaphorized as a monastery.[125] Worms burrow holes in his lungs, and he asks of God, "Should I perhaps with my bloody phlegm [*blutikn leykhets*]/sing you a song of praise?"[126] His volume of 1928, *Studio*, includes the eight-line poem "Rhymed and Unrhymed." The text describes a pale poet who lies with his head toward the west. At his feet, "death hammers, death hammers.[127] Another volume from 1928 entitled *The White Prince of the White Plague*, contains only five-line poems, such as "I am Well," which reads in full:

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[123] Ibid.

[124] Lune Mattes, *Momentn* (Chicago: Byalistoker Yugnt Farband, 1926). Mattes refers to his short poems as *Lamatelakh*, a name derived from the phrase: **La**med **Mat**es Lid**lakh** [L. Mattes' little poems]. See the editorial note in the front pages of: Lune Mattes, *Vayse trit* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1932), 3.

[125] The poem includes 46 numbered sections that follow an unnumbered section I have called a preface. Lune Mattes, "Yung bin ikh un alt," in *Ofene toyren* (Denver: Literarishe Grupe (Dovid Edelsthat Branch 450 Arb. Ring) and Ladies Educational Club, 1923), 25, Preface, l. 12.

[126] Ibid., 43, Part 30, ll. 7–8. I have included a translation of the poem in the appendix.

[127] Lune Mattes, "Mit gram un on gram," in *Studya* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1928), ll. 7–8.

And I am well. And I am well.
Naked lies my heart in blood.
The flowing-pen drinks
and sings:
Blood my blood, my red ink.

Un mir iz gut, un mir iz gut!
naket ligt dos harts in blut.
trinkt di flusfeder
un zingt:
blut mayn blut, mayn royter tint.[128]

The previous chapter recounted how Raḥel nervously insisted in her personal correspondence that, despite her red pen, she was not writing with her own blood. Here, in Mattes' poem, the first person speaker does not hesitate. His blood becomes his ink, and he drains himself in the creative act. Mattes' poetic style may not be symptomatic of his disease, as Benjamin claims of Proust. Yet "I am Well" suggests that Mattes' disease fuels his creative process; it is the bloody ink of his tubercular pen.

Although formally diverse, Mattes' oeuvre is thematically consistent. The subjects of creativity, illness, and their interrelations subtend most of his literary output, as exemplified by "I am Young and I am Old," "Rhymed and Unrhymed," and "I am Well."[129] Disease, moreover, can often be found lurking in Mattes' poems that may otherwise seem divorced from physiological concern, such as the text, "Denver," that was translated for and published in *Hatikvah*. The poem is as an ode to the city. The speaker kneels in awe of its glory and beauty and declares Denver to be "my dream, my dream."[130] No doubt Lune Mattes was also awestruck by the Coloradan landscape that surrounded the JCRS. The Rocky Mountain motif was certainly

[128] Lune Mattes, "Mir iz gut," in *Der vayser prints fun der vayser plag* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1928), 44.

[129] There are clear exceptions, most notably his children's' poetry. He also wrote dozens of nature poems and has a particular interest in colorful flowers.

[130] Mattes, "Denver," l. 24.

a common subject for JCRS poets, including Yehoash and H. Leivick. When contextualized, however, the poem reveals its tubercular substrata. The text is actually the fourth section of a fifteen-part poem entitled, "Colorado," which begins as an ode to the Rocky Mountain landscape and concludes by addressing the relationship between the land and the tubercular body.

The first canto of "Colorado" opens with the speaker directly addressing the Western state: "I lift up my poem/in song to you, Colorado,/*my* Colorado! [*ikh heyb uf mayn lid/in gezang tsu dir, Kolerade,/*mayn *Kolerade!*].[131] Mattes, in fact, became a naturalized American citizen while living in Colorado in October 1923. Nat Baum and Hyman Fox, both then patients of the JCRS, served as witnesses[132] From this perspective, Colorado became Mattes' possession—*his* Colorado—with the help of his fellow patients.[133] Following these opening lines, the natural landscape of Colorado beckons the speaker to observe his surroundings and express himself: "Artist,/with paintbrush, chisel, word and sound,/with your delicate souls and visionary look/come here!/….and breathe in the deep-distant-quiet of the mountains [*kinstler,/mit penzl, dlot, vort un klang,/mit ayere emfindlekhe neshomes un viziyonerishn blik/aher!/…un otemt ayn di tif-vayte-shtilkayt fun di berg*].[134] The poet-artist answers the call and proceeds to depict Colorado as rich with metaphoric excess. The Rocky Mountains are compared to a bride under the wedding canopy, to waves turned to stone, and to small children kissed by the moonlight. Most important, it is among the mountains that the speaker wanders and learns the poetry of the

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[131] Emphasis in original. Lune Mattes, "Kolerade," in *Ofene toyren* (Denver: Literarishe Grupe (Dovid Edelsthat Branch 450 Arb. Ring) and Ladies Educational Club, 1923), Part 1, ll. 1–3.

[132] U.S. Department of Labor, "United States of American Petition for Naturalization: Mattes Luniansky" (Ancestry.com, October 3, 1923), http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?new=1&gsfn=mattes&gsln=luniansky&rank=1&gss=angs-g&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=2449742&recoff=4+5&db=USnatsoriginals_imagefirst&indiv=1&ml_rpos=1.

[133] Baum was also an active member of the sanatorium's literary cohort. He wrote poetry for *Hatikvah* and served as the journal's editor-in-chief during the period when Mattes' poems were published.

[134] Mattes, "Kolerade," Part 1, ll. 4–7, 22.

wilderness. Over the course of the poem, the sun sets, night falls, and by the tenth canto, the speaker has been reduced to a shadow. He clambers up the mountains like a thief, not wishing to wake the night from its slumber. In the final section, the sun rises, and the speaker begins a series of commands: Get up with the dawn! Stretch out your chest! Look joyfully at the mountains! And, then:

> your consumptive body falls to the foot of the Rockies,
> and you breathe easily, and you breathe deeply,
> and you bless the light, that has been lit with faith,
> and the mountain-blue dream, that has filled your soul [*neshome*].
>
> *Dayn shvindzikhtiker guf falt di Rakis tsu di fis,*
> *un du otemst laykht, un du otemst tif,*
> *un bentshst dos likht, vos hot dem tog mit gloybn ongetsunden*
> *un dem barkig-bloyen troym, vos hot dayn neshome ongefilt.*[135]

Here is where the poem shifts from a poetic exposition on the beauty of the Colorado landscape to a meditation on what this landscape means for the speaker's tubercular body. In the high altitude of the Rockies, the consumptive poet breathes easily and deeply. And the "mountain-blue dream"—which recalls Yehoash's blue mountain tops—fills the poet's *neshome*. This term, meaning "soul," is derived from the Hebrew root *n.sh.m.*, "to breathe." In this final line, readers come to understand that the speaker's entire relationship to the landscape has been meditated through his lungs. What begins as a long excursus on the beauty of a mountainous region becomes a medico-climatological argument for the beauty of salubrious Colorado. The mountain-blue dreams fill his breath, his soul, and the Coloradan landscape is ascribed life-giving potential. And, if we turn back to the poem's opening command to the speaker, we find that the importance of the *neshome* has been maintained all along. There, the artists have been instructed to pick up their artistic tools and to encounter the natural landscape with their

[135] Ibid., Part 15, ll. 13–16.

emfindlakhe neshomes, their delicate souls, and to "breathe in the deep-distant-quiet of the mountains." From the outset, this poem has been not just a command for the speaker's artistic expression but a prescription for his own therapeutic *inspiration*. One is reminded here of a letter written by a fellow Jewish tubercular at around the same time. Across the ocean in 1920, Franz Kafka sought treatment for his own tubercular diagnosis in the Austrian town of Meran. As we will see in Chapter Four, the Hebrew writer David Vogel also sought the cure there several years after Kafka left. The town, set in the mountainous landscape of South Tyrol, boasted glorious vistas not so different from the Coloradan mountains. In a letter to a friend, Kafka commented:

> I am feeling well when I am not having trouble sleeping—but I have this often and acutely. Perhaps the mountain air is to blame. Perhaps something else. The fact is I don't much like living in the mountains or at the seashore—all that is too heroic for me. But these are only jokes, and sleeplessness is serious.[136]

For Mattes, the Rockies provide the occasion to write. For Kafka, the vista is one more experience to be ironized and to deflate any pretense of grandeur.

The comparison with Kafka also suggests to some degree just how different Mattes' early approach to literature was than that of his fellow patient. To be sure, Mattes' subject of choice was not always as subtle. His 1927 drama, *A Jewish Tragedy* is set at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. It tells the story of a complicated love affair between Sheyndl, a woman who has suffered from a nervous disorder since surviving a pogrom, and Avner, a tubercular artist who erupts in a bloody hemorrhage towards the end of the play.[137] The villain of the play is a corrupt caseworker at a local charity office. A reviewer in the elite Warsaw journal of arts and letters, *Literarishe bleter*, maintained that it was difficult to find the human angle in Mattes' work,

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[136] Franz Kafka, "Letter to Felix Weltsch (April/May 1920)," in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 236. For the German original, see Franz Kafka, "Brief an Felix Weltsch in Prag (nach dem 16. Mai 1920)," in *Franz Kafka: Briefe 1918-1920*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2013), 141.

[137] Lune Mattes, *A yidishe tragedye* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1927).

which was more akin to a "publicity canvas."[138] In a similar vein, the limited reception of Mattes' works during the 1920s and early 1930s tends to judge the poet's narrow subject choice negatively. One of the few reviewers of Mattes' first volume, *Ofene Toyren*, argues that Mattes' poetry too often repeats such words as "blood, sputum, phlegm, cough [*blut, shpayekhts, leyekhts, hust*]," and that, ultimately, the poet had not yet reached his potential. Rather, he was stuck in his own "little world [*veltl*]" of the sanatorium.[139] Towards the end of the review, with slight optimism, the reviewer compares him to "a tree at the end of summer, heavily laden with ripe fruit."[140] Writing in the New York weekly *Vokh*, a reviewer similarly laments that Mattes' poems were "pale, bloodless" and never moved beyond the single motif of "the white plague." The reviewer posits that had Mattes been healthy, he would have branched out to themes beyond "the poetic documentation of a consumptive." Ultimately, "the disease consumed [*hot ufegegesn*] both the man and the poet."[141] What had served as Mattes as his great poetic subject had also precluded the poet from becoming great. In Raḥel's case, critics often remarked that her disease had generated her work and refined her poetic tone. In Mattes' case, his diagnosis is perceived as that which reduced and overdetermined his creative reach.

Not all reviewers, though, assessed Mattes' reliance on tubercular themes similarly. Rather than inhibit his creativity, his devotion to a single theme was said to unify his oeuvre.[142]

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[138] Sh[muel] Zar[amb], "Bikher velt," *Literarishe bleter*, no. 1 (January 4, 1929): 16. Another reviewer was not as kind, and recommended that Avner, the play's hero, create a sculpture in Mattes' image entitled "A Tragic Young Writers Who Cannot Write a Tragedy." [Melech Ravitch], "Yo! Un neyn! Af naye bikher: L. Mates, 'yidisher tragedye,'" *Naye folkstaytung*, no. 234 (October 14, 1927): 8.

[139] H. Rosenblat, "Bikher: ofene toyren fun L. Mates," *Mayrev* I (Feb 1925): 53.

[140] Ibid., 55.

[141] "L. Mates," *Vokh* I, no. 7 (November 15, 1929): 7.

[142] I[saac] E. Ronch, "Dray liderbikher," *Der oyfkum* II, no. 7 (1927): 47; "L. Mates -- Vayse Trit," *Lid* I, no. 2 (1933): 14.

One reviewer saw Mattes' volume, *The White Prince of the White Plague* (1928) as thematically linked to his previous volume, *Moments* (1926), but more successful in its language, technique and imagery.[143] In other words, by constantly referring to the same theme, Mattes had refined his poetic skills and matured as a poet. I suggest that these reviewers were more accurate in their assessment of Mattes' poetic potential. His thematic consistency was not evidence of deficient creativity but rather critical to his self-fashioning as a Yiddish poet, as the eponymous *White Prince of the White Plague*. It is basically impossible and, I argue, counterproductive, to analyze Mattes' poetic oeuvre and poetic choices without recourse to his biography. Like the earlier studies of Sholem Aleichem and Raḥel have shown, a biographical account of a writer's experience of disease offers a lens onto the conditions of literary production, the chosen form of creative expression—be in publicity material or poetry, and the tubercular capital deployed in the act of literary creation.

His name alone should give us pause: Lune Mattes. When he became a naturalized citizen in 1923, he changed his name from "Mattes Luniansky" to "Mattes Lune" and then proceeded to publish under the name "L. Mattes" and "Lune Mattes."[144] Admittedly, "Mattes" was not a name unheard of among Jewish immigrants. For example, the Yiddish poet Mattes Deitch garnered attention at the same time as our tubercular hero. But for Lune Mattes, the name assumes specific import. The root of the name is *mat*, a Yiddish adjective of Germanic origin. *Mat* may be defined as languid, weary, or pale; Lune Mattes, as it were, is the Yiddish persona, "Pale Moon." Despite the numerous byline options our poet could have chosen when publishing his material, he consistently included "Mattes" in some fashion. This poetic appellation would

[143] Ronch, "Dray liderbikher," 47.

[144] To make matters more confusing, at some point he began to be called "Morris Lune," though he never published under that name.

present the poet under the sign of the same pallor and the same "bloodless" hue that would become his poetic signature. In the poem, "I am Young and I am Old," the term even appears to describe the speaker. Imprisoned between four walls of his hospital room, he states:

> The grayness of the walls has burrowed into my bones.
> The grayness of the walls of my pale [*mate*] eyes that look, look out;
> And the light, the color of life. I have forgotten it entirely.
>
> *Di groykayt fun di vent hot zikh in mayne beyner ayngegesn.*
> *di groykayt fun di vent fun maybe mate oygn blikt, kukt aroys;*
> *un dos likht, di farb fun lebn, hob ikh ingantsn gor fargesn*.[145]

The atmosphere of the poet's room has been suffused by grayness and a dullness that snuffs out the surrounding light. Like this room, the poet and his poetry would fall under the sign of *Mattes*.

Previously, I argued that to understand the symbiotic relationship between the persona "Sholem Aleichem" and its creator, Sholem Rabinovitsh, one must attend to the tubercular variable mediating between the two. I suggested that the health of the author was contingent on the perceived health of his fictional creation and, at the same time, that the cultural capital of the persona was directly proportional to the health status of the physical author. The name "Lune Mattes" could never have and never did demonstrate the same fundraising and reputation-raising potential as did the image of a sick Sholem Aleichem. Yet when Mattes faced his reader, he did so with his pale face forward; his public reception would be mediated not solely by his tubercular subject matter but also by his tubercular byline. And, unlike the greeting-turned-name, "Sholem Aleichem," Mattes' title advertised the condition of the poet in his very appellation.

Tuberculosis would become the constitutive and stable point of his poetic persona—not just the subject of his poetry, not just the disease that afflicted him, but the all-encompassing experience that gave name to and grounded his poetic identity. If in his lifetime he faced his

[145] Mattes, "Yung bin ikh un alt," 30, Part 10, ll. 1–3.

audience through his pallor, in his passing he left behind *White Footsteps* (1932). He had prepared this, his final collection, before his death and it was lovingly published by his friends posthumously. The volume includes various poems from his previous collections as well as several new additions, bringing to light a lifetime of poetic creativity. The opening poem, "White Footsteps," reads:

> A word cuts and climbs,
> Opens the gates of heaven.
> And night—
> Has hung out a lantern,
> To light the white footsteps of the white prince…
>
> *A vort shnaydt un shtaygt,*
> *efnt di toyrn fun himl.*
> *un nakht—*
> *hot a lamtern aroysgehangn,*
> *vayse trit fun vaysn prints tsu balaykhtn…*[146]

The poem had previously appeared in Mattes' 1927 collection, *The White Prince of the White Plague* but with a different opening line: "Windwings cut [*vintfligl shnaydn*]." In this earlier version, the neologism "windwings" is the agent of opportunity. In the version of 1932, that position has been occupied by the "word." A "word" opens the gates of heavens and the white prince walks toward it. We may read this poem as Mattes' farewell where his triangulation between disease, writing, and death reaches an apex. Like the white prince, pale-moon Mattes will walk the illuminated nighttime path toward heaven and leave nothing but *vayse trit* in his wake. And, while those *vayse trit* would basically be lost along the path of Yiddish literary history, their impressions would remain to be encountered by future JCRS writers as well as those on the path of the bio-literary network.

[146] Lune Mattes, "Vayse trit," in *Der vayser prints fun der vayser plag* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1927), 5; Lune Mattes, "Vayse trit," in *Vayse trit* (Los Angeles: Farlag "Palme," 1932), 7.

From H. Leivick to Sh. Tenenbaum: A Tradition Made in the JCRS

We may also wonder if H. Leivick, perhaps the most famous poet of the JCRS, would also have known Mattes' work. During the 1920s, Mattes began to publish his work rather widely. His children's poetry frequently appeared in the Vilnius-based children's journal, *Grininke beymlekh* and his modernist work appeared in journals from Warsaw (*Literarishe bleter*) to Philadelphia (*Baym fayer*) to Chicago (*Ineynem*, *Kultur*) to LA (*Mayrev*) and to New York (*Oyfgang*, *Shriftn*, and *Vort*). His work also posthumously appeared in the New York-based weekly, *Vokh*, edited by H. Leivick. Would Leivick have been reading Mattes? Might he, in fact, have written the anonymous review of Mattes' work in *Vokh*?

The questions are pertinent as Leivick was more than the editor of *Vokh*. Like Mattes, he was tubercular and would spend time seeking the cure in the Denver sanatorium over the course of three stays from 1932-1935. Unlike Yehoash and Mattes, Leivick arrived at the JCRS already an established poet-hero. Flora Bloomgarden, Yehoash's widow, wrote to the JCRS on Leivick's behalf. She urged the institution to expedite his admittance and to provide him with a private room where he could "shut the door on the outside world and be with himself only." To justify the request, she added that "the needs of the poet in this case are stronger than the needs of the man."[147] Baruch Charney Vladeck, general manager of the New York *Forverts* (and brother to Daniel Charney mentioned at the outset of this chapter), also submitted a letter on Leivick's behalf. He urged the JCRS to take care of the poet for "besides being the greatest Jewish poet and perhaps dramatist, [he] is also a landsman of mine."[148] Regional affinities aside, Leivick

[147] Flora Bloomgarden, "Letter to Dr. Hillkowitz," June 9, 1932, JCRS File 9698, Patient Record Halpern Leivick, JCRS Archive.

[148] B.C. Vladeck, "Letter to Mr. Rosen," June 15, 1932, JCRS File 9698, Patient Record Halpern Leivick, JCRS Archive.

arrived in Denver already famous. He had already published multiple volumes of poetry, multiple dramas in verse, and the first edition of his collected works. Leivick was famous enough in the Yiddish literary world that his trip west warranted comment in all the major North American Yiddish papers and his stay became fodder for gossip back east.[149] His third stint at the JCRS even garnered the attention of the local English-language *Post*, which reported in August 1935 that "for three years a man has been living unsung, unknown in Denver, lost in halls of a sanatorium while a vast world beyond acclaimed his genius."[150] The article sought to bring this writer from the obscurity of Yiddish literature to English-reading audiences. Yet despite the claims of the article, Leivick had in fact already been appreciated beyond the Yiddish world; his work was translated into Hebrew as early as 1925 and into English as early as 1932.[151]

Leivick came to Denver not only having established his reputation but also with a recognizable poetic aesthetic. Recall here the letter he had sent to Daniel Charney as one tubercular to another. In it, he wrote, "What a sanatorium is—you know already. I'm surrounded by two hundred patients. Many are very sick. Death and blood spurts, and snow on the Rocky

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[149] Leivick's patient record at the JCRS archives contains clippings concerning his journey from multiple newspapers and periodicals, including: *Morgen Zhurnal* (New York), *Hebrew Journal* (Toronto), *Jewish World* (Philadelphia), *Yidish* (New York), *Eagle* (Montreal*)*, and *Forverts* (Chicago). Gossip was also stirred when the New York communist paper, *Morgn-Frayhayt*, published an article in the summer of 1932 accusing Leivick of being alienated from the workers and felt himself above the patients of the JCRS. The JCRS patients, in turn, published a retort in the New York periodical, *Yidish*, ensuring that he maintained close relations with them. For these clippings, see JCRS File 9698, Patient Record Halpern Leivick.

[150] Ralph Radetsky, "Denver Patient World Famous Playwright," *Post*, August 11, 1935, 3, JCRS File 9698, Patient Record Halpern Leivick, JCRS Archive.

[151] While in the Sanatorium, Leivick learned that his play, *The Golem*, was being performed in English in Los Angeles. It had been performed in Hebrew in Moscow by the HaBimah group in 1925. See Freddie Rokem, "Hebrew Theater from 1889 to 1948," in *Theater in Israel*, ed. Linda Ben-Zvi (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 75. For his reflections on the occasion of the English performance, see H. Leivick, "Letter to Daniel and Samuel Leivick," November 4, 1932, RG 315, Folder 32, YIVO. For just one reference to the Toronto and Chicago evenings, see H. Leivick, "Telegram to Daniel Leivick," November 6, 1933, RG 315, Folder 32, YIVO.

Mountains, and the wonderful Colorado sky, and the nearly endless sun."[152] The contrasting red and white of blood and snow, the silhouette of mountains against a blazing sun, and the topography of an endless sky were all motifs that would feature prominently in Leivick's *Poems from the Garden of Eden* (*Lider fun gan eyden*), a collection that he wrote while recuperating in Denver and, for a short while, at the Workmen's Circle Sanatorium in Liberty, New York.[153] The volume's opening poem, "Open, Gate!," concludes with the direct address of the speaker to his Denver surroundings:

> I lay at your feet
> My sack of woe
> Land Colorado
> Of Fire and snow.
>
> *Ikh leyg tsu di fis dir*
> *mayn zak mit geshrey,*
> *land Kolerade,*
> *fun fayer un shney*.[154]

Colorado here, as in the letter to Charney, is a land of extremes. The contrast of red and white, and the attending referents of fire and snow, predominates in the collection. This imagery echoes that found in Leivick's first collection, *Lider* (1919). There, Leivick poeticizes his experiences of a Siberian prison and his subsequent escape. Born in 1888 in Belarus, Leivick was found guilty of anti-Czarist activity at the age of eighteen. He was sentenced to four years in a prison camp in

[152] Leivick, "Letter to Daniel Charney (6 Mar 1935)."

[153] H. Leivick, *Lider fun gan eyden: 1932-1936* (Chicago: Farlag Tseshinksi, 1937).

[154] H. Leivick, "Efnt zikh, toyer," in *Lider fun gan eyden: 1932-1936* (Chicago: Farlag Tseshinski, 1937), 7, ll. 25–28.

Siberia to be followed by perpetual exile.[155] After a daring escape, Leivick made his way to America in 1913, where he began to publish poetry.[156]

In *Lider*, the Coloradan landscape of "Open, Gate!" finds its earlier iteration in the poem "Somewhere Far Away," in which the setting sun illuminates the icy, mountainous landscape of Siberia."[157] The red and white that would dominate in *Poems from the Garden of Eden* are also manifest in such earlier texts as "Red Drops," in which the speaker runs bleeding through snow after escaping a Siberian prison. The speaker "…give[s] a shout [*geshrey*]/and drop after drop/falls on the snow [*shney*]."[158] Here the *geshrey* and *shney* of Leivick's sanatorium sack find earlier incarnation in the bloody eruptions of a desperate fugitive. Moreover, the Coloradan *zak* [sack], a bilingually resonant term, is Leivick's American substitute for the *torbe* [pack] that his speaker carries through the Siberian landscape.[159] Finally, in Leivick's most famous poem of *Lider*, "On the Roads of Siberia," readers learn that one can find remnants of the speaker's past on the eponymous Russian roads, be it a button, a page of a holy book, a ribbon flecked with dried blood or frozen footsteps (*trit*) in the snow.

The image of the frozen footsteps preserved in snow may likely recall the white steps (*vayse trit*) of Mattes' poem of the same name. It is certainly hard to read Mattes without assuming that he not only would have read Leivick but would have been influenced by the poet and his snowy Siberian landscape—a landscape that maps onto Colorado so productively. The

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[155] For Leivick's account, see Jacob Pat, *Shmuesn mit yidishe shrayber* (New York: Jacob Pat, 1954), 144–147.

[156] Ibid., 153–155.

[157] H. Leivick, "Ergets vayt," in *Geklibene verk* (Vilna: Farlag B. Kletskin, 1925), 7.

[158] H. Leivick, "In shney: royte tropn (part XXIII)," in *Geklibene verk*, vol. I (Vilna: Farlag B. Kletskin, 1925), 106, ll. 10–12.

[159] H. Leivick, "Di nakht iz finster," in *Geklibene verk*, vol. 1 (Vilna: Farlag B. Kletskin, 1925), 35, ll. 5; 14.

question that I posed at the beginning of this section, though, was whether Leivick would have been reading Mattes. I wish to speculate that the answer is yes. Mattes' work appeared in *Vokh*, which Leivick edited, and was accompanied by an anonymous review that Leivick may have written. Tenenbaum's recollections also indicate that Mattes' books were available in the JCRS library, to which Leivick had access as he spent his days reading and writing in the sanatorium. Beyond these possible encounters, there appears to be a shared tubercular vocabulary that can be traced between Mattes and Leivick.

Consider, for instance, the title of Mattes' first book: *Ofene Toyren*, which might be rendered *Open Portals* or *Open Gates*. The title suggests to the reader that this is a book about new vistas. In light of the sanatorium imagery that is prominent in the book, the title also points to the tension between confinement and openness that motivates poetic productivity. The inaugural poem of Leivick's sanatorium volume, *Poems from the Garden of Eden*, is similarly entitled "Efnt zikh toyer"—"Open, Gate!" Throughout the volume, Leivick's speaker struggles like Mattes' speaker to use poetic expression to take him beyond the walls of his hospital room. The scholar may interject here that perhaps Leivick's title refers to Mani Leib's poem, "Efnt mir ayere tirn [Open Your Gates For Me]," an erotic poem in which a wild climbing vine demands that the speaker open itself up to him.[160] Yet the erotic undertones of Mani Leib's work are muted in Leivick's poem. A close reading of the work also resonates with another of Mattes' poems that we have already encountered: "I am Young and Old." There, Mattes' speaker finds himself in a sanatorium. In the opening canto, he gets out of the white bed, takes ten steps [*trit*], touches the cold, gray walls and then remarks that "the larger, hard brick gate [*toyer*] is reminiscent of a monastery [*manastir*]."[161] In Leivick's poem, the speaker looks at the open gate

[160] Mani Leib, "Efnt mir ayere tirn," in *Lider un baladan* (Tel Aviv: Y.L. Perets Farlag, 1977), 45.

[*toyer*] and asks: "[Is it] a hospital? Maybe a prison?/Or even a monastery [*tsi gor manastir*]?"[162] And the monastery goes on to be a significant setting in subsequent poems of Leivick's volume, particularly his extended piece, "Poems from Abelard To Heloise." There, the history of the doomed and ailing lovers is refracted through the prism of a Yiddish sanatorium experience. Again, the scholar may protest that Leivick's interest in monastic life is already evident in his 1921 dramatic poem, *The Golem*, yet there the prominent image is of a corrupt monk rather than a confined place of literary self-reflection, such as the sanatorium. In one final intertextual possibility, Leivick's speaker echoes Mattes' bodily movements. The speaker of Mattes' poem, "Colorado," narrates that "your consumptive body falls to the foot of the Rockies [*dayn shvindzikhtiker guf falt di Rakis tsu di fis*]."[163] In Leivick's poem, "Open, Gate!" the speaker places his sack of woe "at the foot of the rockies./…/of land Colorado [*tsu di fis dir/.../land Kolerado*]." Leivick's sack [*zak*] replaces the pack [*torbe*] he carried in Siberia. He lays it down beneath the Rocky Mountains, following the literary technique of his predecessor, Lune Mattes.

The connections I propose between Leivick and Mattes' work are speculative. Nevertheless, they bespeak a phenomenon of JCRS sanatorium writing that can now be articulated more confidently. There exists a tubercular Yiddish literary tradition in America, and it runs through the JRCS. Indeed, Leivick's most famous poem from the JCRS, "The Ballad of Denver Sanatorium" places a tubercular philosophical genealogy at its center. The ballad, a staggering 112 quatrains, dramatizes the life and death of a tubercular patient named Nathan Newman. Newman's character is based on that of Jonathan Newman, a former patient of the JCRS who died in May 1933. Leivick had met Newman in Denver, having learned that the dying

[161] Mattes, "Yung in ikh un alt," 25, preface, l. 12.

[162] Leivick, "Efnt zikh, toyer," 6, ll. 21–24.

[163] Mattes, "Denver," 22, part 15, l. 13.

man was an acolyte.[164] Recently, Ernest Gilman has translated and analyzed the ballad and my reading of Leivick's work from this period is indebted to him. Gilman pays particular attention to how Leivick manipulates the historical facts of Newman's case for poetic effect. For example, the poem maintains that Newman had been lying in "Denver's hospital" for fifteen years; in fact, he had been discharged from the JCRS in 1929, had spent time in a sanatorium in California, and had arrived back in Denver to die at the National Jewish Hospital at the age of thirty four.[165] As Gilman shows, Leivick depicts Newman in a halo of pseudo-religious pathos that is reinforced by the extension of the years spent in the sickbed.

More than engender sympathy for the dying patient, Gilman rightly argues that "The Ballad" blurs the distinction between poet and subject, between Leivick and Nathan Newman. In the poem, the speaker offers us information about Newman's childhood. We learn that in his shtetl, Newman was too young to be exiled to Siberia or to be bound by the "prison chains [*tfise-keytn*]." Yet he was not "too young for the deadly tuberculosis." Now, in "Spivak House," he lies bound to his bed. Gilman explains that "backdating Newman's illness to his childhood," the ballad "elides political exile and tubercular wandering, Siberia and the sanatorium."[166] Leivick collapses the temporal and biographical distinctions between imprisonment and disease, between the experience of Siberian prison camps and being chained to a sickbed. Put differently, Leivik's and Nathan's experiences intermingle. And the separation of the two figures is further diminished when the speaker describes Newman's bedside table in the sanatorium. Placed on the table were "…a few books/a thermometer, a jar and a glass.//a watch, a pen [*pen*]," the latter of

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[164] Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970*, 98.

[165] Ibid.; H. Leivick, "Di Balade Fun Denver Sanatoriyum," in *Lider Fun Gan Eyden: 1932-1936* (Chicago: Farlag Tseshinksi, 1937), 123.

[166] Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970*, 100.

which Newman uses to write his beloved.[167] Recall Leivick's poem mentioned at the outset of this chapter, "A Neighbor has Died Again." There, Leivick's speaker relates: "I occupy myself with whatever I can,/Even with inventing rhymes./I go ahead and ask my pen [*pen*],/If it knows from where we stem?" [168] Both poems use the translated English term rather than the Yiddish *feder* drawing our attention to Leivick's American modes of expression. Newman echoes Leivick's speaker; both confined to hospitals, both turn to writing. Leivick was a prolific letter-writer at the JCRS, penning thousands of notes to family, friends, and business contacts alike.

Having narrowed the distance between Newman and Leivick, we can now identify the voices of ailing figures that write themselves into "The Ballad": Heine, Spinoza, and David Edelshtat. In Gilman's words, these three figures constitute Leivick's "trinity of godlike predecessors" in a poem laden with theological allusions.[169] The ballad relates that Newman is pleased to learn from his roommate (who is none other than the speaker, that is to say, Leivick) that Heine and Spinoza were also both bedridden from illness and that Edelshtat lies buried very close by; in fact, both Spinoza and Edelshtat had died of tuberculosis. Edelshtat died in Denver in 1892 over a decade before the founding the JCRS and Spinoza died of a consumption most likely exacerbated by his work with glass (in a situation that echoed Yehoash's experience of the illness centuries later). Once again, Newman finds himself in good company no doubt reflects Leivick's own interest in the figures. During his time in the JCRS, Leivick was reading Spinoza's *Ethics*. He also wrote an eleven-part poem named for the philosopher, in which he examines Spinoza's philosophy by rendering the Amsterdam legend the tubercular roommate of

[167] Leivick, "Di balade fun Denver Sanatoriyum," 1937, 126.

[168] Leivick, "Vider geshtorbn a shokhn," 10.

[169] Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970*, 103.

an ailing speaker.[170] While at the JCRS, Leivick also had a copy of Edelshtat's proletariat poems in his possession and, according to a memoiristic article, often visited Edelshtat's grave—which, as he notes, was near to that of the real-life Jonathan Newman.[171] In a passage reflecting on the composition of "The Ballad," Leivick reminisced, "I called on the good, pure spirit of David Edelshtat for help"; the poet, in turn, responded, and "came to help."[172]

Edelshtat's poetic assistance and hovering presence becomes evident in "The Ballad." Towards the middle of the piece we find ourselves in Newman's room. A disembodied hand writes the first stanza of Edelshtat's most famous poem "My Will" (as in, will and testament) on the hospital wall. The poem calls on the working class to raise the flag of revolution. Edelshtat was a much lionized poet of the proletariat, whose contribution to communist-anarchist politics even garnered the attention of Emma Goldman.[173] The opening stanza reads:

> O, good friends! When I die,
> Carry to the grave [*tsum keyver*] the flag of red—,
> The flag of red with colors bright,
> Flecked with the blood of working men![174]

In "The Ballad," Newman proceeds to make this poem his own. He declaims, "O, good friends, when I die/also carry to *my* grave [*tsu* mayn *keyver*] the flag of red—." Newman is stopped mid-verse, however, as a tubercular hemorrhage erupts from his throat, somatizing Edelshtat's blood-

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[170] H. Leivick, "Shpinoze," in *Lider fun gan eyden: 1932-1936* (Chicago: Farlag Tseshinski, 1937), 101–11. Leivick also sent a letter to his wife requesting that she send him the translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*. H. Leivick, "Letter to Sarah Leivick," January 30, 1933, RG 315, Folder 32, YIVO; Benedictus de Spinoza, *Barukh Shpinoza: di etik*, trans. William Nathanson (Chicago: Nay Gezelshaft, 1923).

[171] Spinoza was a common cultural reference points for Yiddish poets of the early twentieth century, including Melekh Ravitch and Abraham Sutzkever. For a study of Spinoza as a cultural symbol, see Daniel B. Schwartz, *The First Modern Jew: Spinoza and the History of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[172] H. Leivick, "Dovid Edelshtat: tsu zayn zekhtsikstn yortsayt (1952)," in *Eseyen un redes* (New York: Congress for Jewish Culture, 1963), 207.

[173] Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 1 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), 55.

[174] David Edelshtat, "Mayn tsevoe," in *Shriftn* (London: Farlag "Arbayter Fraynd," 1914), 232.

splattered flag. The relationship between disease and writing is rendered most fraught in these lines, as Newman's poetry becomes physically and literarily expressed in his own blood. With this act of writing, Newman continues Edelshtat's legacy, making his own tubercular contribution to Jewish literary history. Earlier in the poem, Newman's neighbor introduces him to the fact that Heine and Spinoza were ill, describing their deaths as links in a chain of wonder [*vunder-keytn*]. The chains that bound Leivick in Siberia have now become a wondrous chain of literary generations. The subsequent links are then fastened by Edelshtat and Newman respectively. Just as Newman's life becomes the fodder for Leivick's poetry as well as reflective of Leivick's own life experiences, we may read "The Ballad" as one more link in that chain. Towards the end of the poem, the speaker visits Newman's grave, which is in the same row as Edelshtat's. He looks up to see the tubercular forbearer's gravestone, on which the poem "The Will" has been etched. For the second time, the poem records the opening stanza in full. This time, however, Newman's rewriting is absent. Rather, the speaker recites the verse and then, in the penultimate stanza of "The Ballad," leaves the cemetery and returns to the "the kingdom of fever [kenigraykh fun fiber]." One final stanza follows before the poem closes. Edelshtat is dead. So too is Newman. But, as the poem implies, the tradition of tubercular writing continues—and it is Leivick who carries it forth.

The network of associations I have narrated in broad strokes has received extended attention by Gilman, who sensitively reads Leivick's interest in Spinoza, Heine, Edelshtat, and Newman as a chain of literary martyrs. In his conclusion, he poses the question as to whether "the 'Ballad' [is] to be Leivick's own testament, now entrusted to the reader?"[175] For Gilman, the question is rhetorical, an evocative ending to a fine close reading. However, I suggest that an

[175] Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970*, 107.

answer is indeed available. In "The Ballad," as I have tried to show, Leivick implicates himself in the chain, and his influence would subsequently be traceable in the output of other American tubercular poets. Consider, for example, the literary output of Shea Tenenbaum, the writer who read Mattes' work in the JCRS library. Tenenbaum arrived in Denver early in 1936 from Norman, Oklahoma, and he would stay at the JCRS until the end of 1938. Born in 1910 near Lublin, he lived a rather peripatetic lifestyle, including an extended stay at a Belgian sanatorium for tuberculars.[176] To say that he was a prolific writer would be an understatement. He wrote multiple memoirs as well of scores of articles and poetic reflections he called "miniatures." Admittedly, the quality of his writing is inconsistent and oftentimes rather weak. While living in Oklahoma, Tenenbaum submitted work to be published in multiple American journals only to frequently be met with rejection.[177] He also corresponded with Leivick, while the poet recuperated at the JCRS. At the time, Leivik was also involved in editing the anthology *Zamlbikher*, to which Tenenabum submitted his writing; he received feedback from Leivick that his style was bombastic, hysteric and artificial.[178] Despite the criticism, Tenenbaum continued to send Leivick his work throughout the latter's stay at the JCRS.[179]

He would also continue to correspond with Leivick after he, himself, arrived at the JCRS and the established poet had left. His kinship with his tubercular Denver predecessors would fuel his creative output and become a major subject of his work. In an article written for the Romanian Yiddish paper, *Tshernovitser bleter*, entitled "H. Leivick—The Person," Tenenbaum

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[176] For basic biographical information on Tenenbaum, see Chaim Leib Fox, "Shiye Tenenboym," *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* (New York: Alveltlekhn Yidishn Kultur-Kongres, 1981 1956).

[177] Shea Tenenbaum, "Letter to H. Leivick," Undated (c. -1935 1934, RG 315, Box 29, Folder 54, YIVO.

[178] Shea Tenenbaum, "Letter to H. Leivick," March 11, 1935, RG 315, Box 29, Folder 54, YIVO.

[179] Ibid.

describes sitting alone in a white room in the JCRS. There he reads Leivick's poetry and looks out the window to "see the same landscape that Leivick saw two years ago." Tenenbaum writes that "yesterday I saw a sunset, red and flaming, and I was reminded of Leivick's poem where he sees in the sunset the Creator himself, opening the red wounds of humanity to suffer with them."[180] Tenenbaum refers here to Leivick's poem of 1930, "Clouds Behind the Forest." It is a complicated, extended poetic exploration of birth, love, imprisonment, poetry and the relationship between the human and the divine.[181] For Tenenbaum, what is most important is the final section in which a sunset is described as a scene of divine Eros, where human violence and God's mercy meet and create new life. In Leivick's poem, the speaker remains lying on the ground, bloody, as if having been born a second time, and cries out, "Creator—Creator!—." Tenenbaum's work of his JCRS period reproduces the fraught scene of love and death at sunset in his short piece, "Spring in Denver."[182] More a series of evocative poetic images than a linear narrative, the text describes how the sun sets against a feverish sky, which is so bright it is as if there were not merely a single sun but thousands of sun-women on the cusp of death. Similarly, a piece entitled "Tuberculosis" opens with an image of sunset. It focuses on the rays of a sun, which bleed as they pierce broken windowpanes.[183] There a pale, tubercular woman lies next to a child in an atmosphere saturated by the glow of death and melancholic music.

It is decidedly possible that Tenenbaum may have turned to the subject of the fiery sunset in Colorado of his own volition, as it was a common theme among poets of the region, including

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[180] Shea Tenenbaum, "H. Leyvik--der mentsh," *Tshernovitser bleter*, June 24, 1936.

[181] H. Leivick, "Volkns ahintern vald," in *Lider* (New York: Farlag "Fraynt," 1932), 300.

[182] Shea Tenenbaum, "Friling in Denver," *Tshernovitser bleter*, August 6, 1936.

[183] Shea Tenenbaum, "Tuberkuloze," in *Bay der velt tsugast: dertseyln un reportazhn* (Warsaw: Literarishe Bleter, 1937), 10–12.

Yehoash. However, throughout his time in Denver, Tenenbaum would repeatedly turn to the poetry of H. Leivick, and insist on his connection to the literary great. In a review of Leivick's *Poems from the Garden of Eden*, Tenenbaum refused to assume a position of critical distance. Rather, he opens the review by explaining to the reader that he feels close to H. Leivick and his poems which "were written in the Denver Sanatorium, where I now find myself."[184] His subsequent review of "The Ballad of Denver Sanatorium" is equally inflected by personal pathos. He describes the work saying, "it reverberates in me, on all the strings of my soul."

His connection to "The Ballad" moved beyond sentimentality into the realm of hagiography. In a letter to Leivick, Tenenbaum writes of his fondness for "The Ballad," recalling having "love[d] to read [it] over and over again."[185] He also corresponds with Leivick from the sanatorium, informing him that he has started to write a series of articles about life in the JCRS, which he intends to put out as a collection. He tells Leivick that he wishes "to name it after a phrase from 'The Ballad': *In kenigryakh fun fiber,*" is the kingdom of fever to which the speaker retreats in the penultimate stanza of "The Ballad."[186]

Tenenbaum's volume devoted to his experiences at the JCRS would never be published. Still, he assumed the task of chronicling the artistic history of the JCRS and the "kingdom of fever would appear repeatedly."[187] In an article entitled, "Artists in Spivak Sanatorium," he constructs a pantheon of artistic greats who were affiliated with the sanatorium, including

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[184] Shea Tenenbaum, "Lider fun gan-eydn," *Der Yidisher kuryer*, June 16, 1940.

[185] Shea Tenenbaum, "Letter to H. Leivick," May 1937, RG 315, Box 29, Folder 54, YIVO.

[186] Shea Tenenbaum, "Letter to H. Leivick," April 25, 1936, RG 315, Box 29, Folder 54, YIVO.

[187] He writes in a letter to Leivick that Abraham Reisen had expressed some interest in publishing a book about "life in Spivak Sanatorium." In his 1937 work, *Bay der velt tsugast*, Tenenbaum publishes several items related to his experience of tuberculosis. However, a full volume does not appear to have ever been published. For a description of the publishing possibility, see Shea Tenenbaum, "Letter to H. Leivick," July 1936, RG 315, Box 29, Folder 54, YIVO.

Leivick, Yehoash, and Mattes. The most interesting part of the article, in light of the present discussion, is Tenenbaum's description of Mattes as a the "court poet" of the JCRS who lived for years "*in kenigraykh fun fiber*." Using Leivick's terms, Tenenbaum connects Mattes to the literary great and bestows literary capital by association on the unknown poet Mattes.

Elsewhere, Tenenbaum speaks of "The Ballad" and imagines Leivick standing on Edelshtat's grave. He wonders whether Leivick "felt dependent on the hero above whom he was standing."[188] In another memoiristic piece, he speaks of sneaking out of the JCRS at night. While others patients visit prostitutes, he hurries to visit the "*neshome* of a colleague—David Edelshtat."[189] He goes to the cemetery, stands by the sparkling gravestone of Edelshtat, and recites the poem engraved on its surface, "The Will." Tenenbaum calls it the poem that "glows and burns [*glit un brit*] in my blood like fire."[190] Then, he foretells that soon Yehoash and H. Leivick will arrive and tread on the holy ground of Edelshtat's grave and will read the gravestone inscription like a prayer. The short piece inverts the generational progression of the Denver poets, as Tenenbaum places himself between Edelshtat's grave and a future arrival of Yehoash and Leivick. He does so by declaiming a poem written by Edelshtat and cited by Leivick, a poem that serves as their shared inheritance. The scene also recalls here an earlier article, written shortly after Tenenbaum arrived in Denver. The text describes his train trip to the sanatorium. While on board, he meets a fellow tubercular who is also travelling to seek the cure. At the conclusion, Tenenbaum writes: "We are finally in Denver…Here is where they sought rest and the cure, those magnificent poets: David Edelshtat, Yehoash, L. Mates and—here's to many

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[188] Tenenbaum, "H. Leyvik--der mentsh."

[189] Shea Tenenbaum, "Baynakht baym keyver fun Dovid Edelshtat," in *Hunger tsum vort: miniyaturn* (New York: CYCO-Bikher Farlag, 1971), 412.

[190] Ibid., 413.

more years—our dear H. Leivick… The sky is inflamed. And in the kingdom of fever, David Edelshtat's red flag greets me…" Denver functioned for Tenenbaum as a literary crossroads. It was in that city that Tenenbaum entered into a tubercular literary tradition, comprising a cohort of writers who shared a common vocabulary and a common experience of disease. The JCRS, Edelshtat's grave, the Rocky Mountains—these were all propositions in the literary landscape of the *kenigryakh fun fiber*.

Conclusion: The Tubercular Network Beyond the JCRS

Following the tubercular trail to and through the JCRS, there has emerged a picture of the Denver sanatorium as not only an institution for the treatment of tuberculosis but as an occasion for literary experimentation and working out of literary identities. For Yehoash, affiliation with the JCRS offered him multiple public venues to augment his reputation and, at the same time, to assist in fulfilling the mission of the JCRS. It also offered him an editorial platform, from which he was able to refine his poetic relationship to the Anglo-American tradition through the thematic prism of tuberculosis. For Mattes, the JCRS was not simply a hospital but a library, a creative writing classroom, and a resource for publicizing his work and growing his reputation. Though Mattes' work has largely been forgotten, it is by attending to the tubercular tradition within American Yiddish literature that the voice and poetic verve of the coughing cigar-maker may now be reclaimed. And for Leivick and Tenenbaum, it is the recognition of just such a tubercular literary tradition that is at stake. In the JCRS, Leivick brought himself into conversation with David Edelshtat and elected himself as the next tubercular flag bearer. Tenenbaum picked up that same flag and wrote himself, as well as Mattes, Leivick, Yehoash and Edelshtat into the *kenigryakh fun fiber*.

This *kenigryakh* would also extend beyond the immediate environs of the JCRS. The literary vitality sustained by the JCRS never precluded communication with the world beyond the sanatorium. As editor, Yehoash actively solicited Yiddish writers back east to submit material. In turn, *The Sanatorium* was sent to subscribers and local JCRS support groups across the country. Readers were introduced to Kobrin's Yiddish drama in English and Winchevsky's English short story in Yiddish. Over a decade later, when Mattes needed help promoting his first volume, it was Spivak who wrote to the editors of the Yiddish daily *Forverts* and to the modernist poet Zishe Landau in New York City to publicize his work. And when Tenenbaum wrote his chronicle of the artists of the JCRS, his text appeared both in the Chicago *Yidisher kuryer* and in Warsaw's *Literarishe bleter*. His personal reflections of "H. Leivick—The Man," appeared in Czernowitz.[191]

The extension of the *kenigryakh* beyond the confines of the JCRS or Denver is perhaps best exemplified in the literary output of Daniel Charney, whose name has appeared several times throughout this chapter. He was the younger brother of Baruch Charney Vladeck, the newspaperman who wrote to the JCRS on behalf of H. Leivick, and the poet who experienced firsthand the meaning of quarantine when he was denied entry to New York in 1925. He is also the poet to whom Leivick penned the letter with which this chapter opened. Writing from the JCRS in 1935, Leivick thanked Charney for sending along his most recent collection of memoiristic sketches, *Up the Mountain*. Leivick wrote to his friend that he had read the text "in one breath [*in eyn otem*]," an expression that gains significance in light of Leivick's tubercular state. The collection, divided into "Family Chronicle" and "Political Chronicle," narrates Charney's experiences as a child and nascent socialist activist. Much of the first half concerns

[191] Now, Chernivitsi , Ukraine.

disease; his father died of tuberculosis and Charney himself soon showed evidence of it as well as a host of others viruses and infections. When Leivick received the letter, he responded not only with a thank you note but by pointing Charney, who was then in France, towards "The Ballad of Spivak Sanatorium," which had appeared in the American monthly, *Tsukunft*.[192]

A decade later, Charney continued the conversation concerning Leivick's "Ballad" in a letter dated March 1, 1946, sent from the Workmen's Circle Sanatorium (WCS) in Liberty, NY. Four years after his second—and this time successful—attempt to enter America, Charney's tuberculosis had worsened. He was forced to leave his new home in New York City for the Catskills. Until his death in 1959, he would live in various sanatoria and hospitals up and down the east coast. Like its Denver counterpart, the WCS became a space where writers socialized and developed their literary voice, although the institutional support offered the Yiddish writer in Liberty was far less developed than at the JCRS. During his stay in the WCS, Charney met his fellow tubercular poet, Mani Leib.[193] He also occupied himself with reading and took particular pride in the in-house library. There, to his delight, he found his own volumes alongside those of tubercular writers like Chekhov and Maksim Gorky as well as the works of another tubercular Jewish trifecta: Sholem Aleichem, Yehoash, and Edelshtat. Charney would write that the works of these three "hover in the sanatorium library and inspire [him] to live on and create."[194] In Charney's hands, the tubercular literary tradition extends from Nervi to Denver and onto Liberty.

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[192] Indeed, he and Charney had already corresponded about his sanatorium poetry as early as September 1932, when Charney was serving as a Yiddish correspondent in Berlin. In this earlier exchange, Charney had directed Leivick's attention to a sanatorium poem, "Towards Death," that he had written while hospitalized in Bern, Switzerland. Daniel Charney, "Letter to H. Leivick," September 21, 1932, RG 315, Box 29, Folder 54, YIVO; Daniel Charney, "Tsum Toyt," in *Oyfn shvel fun yener velt: tipn, bilder, epizodn* (New Yorkq: [s.n.], 1947), 184.

[193] One of the more curious documents in Charney's generally curious archival collection is a list of writers and cultural activists who visited him at the WCS as well as the number of times each visited. See Daniel Charney, "Reshime fun shrayber un klal-tuer, vos hobn mikh bazukht in sanatoriye far di 2 yor 1948-1949," undated, RG 421, Box 23, Folder 285, YIVO.

Charney also wrote prolifically at the WCS, chronicling his experiences as a tubercular immigrant whose hometown and family in Europe had been decimated. Many of his accounts of sanatorium life were printed in the New York daily, *Der tog*, and were subsequently published as a single volume, *On the Threshold of the Other World* (*Oyfn shvel fun yener velt*). The text is an uneven collection of humorous anecdotes about life in the WCS and tender, tragic reflections of a refugee not only in exile from his place of birth but sequestered in a hospital. The dominant image of the text is the titular *yener velt*, a Yiddish idiom for the hereafter. Charney activates the phrase as a polysemous euphemism for the hereafter, for life in the sanatorium, and for Europe after the Holocaust.[195] These are overlapping worlds populated by sick refugees, orphaned survivors, and the living dead—a category we first encountered in Yehoash's "White Plague."

The trauma of Charney's experience as a tubercular refugee is only exacerbated by the difficulty he now has writing for a European audience. The difficulty does not stem from a lack of shared experience. Rather, writing and recuperating in America has inflected his language with English. One reader in Germany asks him to provide translations—into Yiddish!—for he cannot understand the terms he uses, which include: *ulser, kenser, ti-bi, eks-rey, semeteri and noyrs* [nurse].[196] Charney's experience is an interesting corollary to that of Yehoash. For the latter, tuberculosis was a thematic prism through which he could engage the Anglo-American tradition and broaden the conversations of American Yiddish literature. For Charney, the use of English is precisely that which situates him in an American tubercular tradition but which distances him from his readers in Europe—a problem that would not have been foreign to the American Yiddish writers who peppered their texts with English colloquialisms. We see here

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[194] Daniel Charney, *Oyfn shvel fun yener velt: tipn, bilder, epizodn* (New York: [s.n.], 1947), 77.

[195] For "yener velt" as hospital, see Ibid., 125. For "yener velt" as Europe, see Ibid., 164; 118.

[196] Charney, *Oyfn shvel fun yener velt: tipn, bilder, epizodnn*, 159.

Charney slowly shifting identities from a Yiddish writer from one *yener velt*—Eastern Europe/Russia—to a Yiddish writer from a different *yener velt*—the American sanatorium.

It is here that we can now return to that letter from March 1946 that Charney sent to Leivick. The letter was sent one month before Leivick left for war-torn Europe as a cultural representative of the Jewish World Congress on a trip sponsored by UNRWA. Charney tells Leivick that he hopes they can see each other when Leivick returns from *yener velt*, where he will likely see those of Charney's friends who have survived. The purpose of the letter, though, is business. Charney explains that he has been keeping *bizi* by writing articles. In one of them, he would like to describe the "Leivick Room." Charney may be referring here to a room that Leivick occupied at the WCS during his short stay there in 1937. He asks that Leivick send him "The Ballad of Denver Sanatorium," from which he would like to quote. Four days later, Charney received the book, *Poems from the Garden of Eden*. In his thank you note, Charney quotes extensively from the poem, "February in Liberty."[197] The text, written while Leivick recovered in Liberty, uses many of the same motifs as Leivick's "Ballad," such as the burning sunset and the feverish neighbor. It even places its speaker in a *kenigryakh*, this time of silence rather than fever. We see here the JCRS literary network and tradition expanding, not only as its practitioners travel, but as its authorship and readership extends beyond the Coloradan borders.

Charney would continue to engage Leivick's tubercular work, sometimes explicitly, sometimes elliptically.[198] Most interestingly, he prefaces *On the Threshold of the Other World*

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[197] H. Leivick, "Februar in Liberti," in *Lider fun gan eyden: 1932-1936* (Chicago: Farlag Tseshinski, 1937), 150–52.

[198] An explicit engagement can be found in an article written for the journal of the Workmen's Cirle, *Der Fraynd*, in 1947. There, Charney opens an article celebrating the thirty-sixth year of the WCS by quoting from a poem Leivick wrote while in Liberty. In the remainder of the article, Charney once again invokes the tubercular literary tradition of Sholem Aleichem, Yehoash and Edelshtat into which he has entered. Daniel Charney, "Ikh zing tsu aykh fun der Liberti-Sanatoriye," *Der fraynd* 3, no. 3 (June 1946): 14.

with an excerpted quotation from Leivick's own memoiristic work, *Among the Survivors* (*Mit der sheyres hapleyte*). Leivick wrote the text during and after his trip to the displaced persons camp on the UNRWA-sponsored mission. The epigraph Charney chose reads:

> Consumption does her destructive work quietly, gradually, as if with silk fingers, spinning thin, delicate webs. Consumption wraps herself in a mystical-philosophical canopy and carries death in her hands, as cake is carried to a holiday dance. Very few groans are heard in a tuberculosis sanatorium. And if so, the groans are inner, ashamed.
>
> *Shvindzukht tut ir tseshterendike arbet shtil, behadreygedik, kimat vi mit zeydene finger, fanandershpinendik dinike tsarte gevebn […] Shvindzukht hilt zikh ayn in a mistish-filosofisher khupe un trogt in ire hent dem toyt, vi men trogt lekakh af a yontevdike tants. Zeyer veynik krekhtsn hert men in a tuberkuloz-sanatoriye. Oyb yo—zaynen di krekhtsn shemevdike, inerlikhe.*[199]

Charney attributes the quote to Leivick's text, *Among the Survivors*, thereby introducing his readership to the tension between life in the sanatorium, life as a refugee, and life in the shadow of the Holocaust that will subtend the entire text.

Most interesting, though, is not that Charney has recourse to his tubercular colleague's reflections on the disease but the context in which Leivick's statement appears in the original text. The epigraph is taken from a short account of Leivick's visit to a hospital in the German town of Gauting that treated 500 tubercular Jewish survivors. He goes there with the intention of hosting a cultural evening. Before arriving, Leivick worries that the patients will not accept him and that they will tell him, "You are just not from our world, even if you were in the Denver Sanatorium at one time and poeticized [*bazungen*] one of ours—Nathan Newman."[200] Leivick is concerned that neither his shared experience of illness nor his "Ballad" will be enough to overcome the experiential barriers between himself and the Gauting patients. But the evening is a

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[199] I have indicated with "[…]" that a line in the Yiddish has been excised. Charney, *Oyfn shvel fun yener velt: tipn, bilder, epizodn*, 5; H. Leivick, *Mit der sheyres hapleyte* (New York: H. Leyvik Yubiley-Komitet durkhn Tsiko-Farlag, 1947), 184–185.

[200] Leivick, *Mit der sheyres hapleyte*, 181.

success. The patients tell him that they are spiritually hungry.[201] Following the performance, Leivick visits one of the patients and nearly faints. The man, it seems, bears stark similarities to the deceased Nathan Newman. Considering that Newman was Leivick's poetic double, this moment of mortal recognition is doubly uncanny as Leivick recognizes in the sick survivor not only Newman but also himself.

This scene in Gauting subsequently provides the definition of tuberculosis with which Charney prefaces his own exploration of sanatorium life after the war. Leivick and his "Ballad" now stand between Charney and Europe. The bio-literary network has now crisscrossed the Atlantic, extended from Denver to Liberty to Gauting and back, from Worcester to Warsaw, from Cincinnati to Czernowitz, and has become the filter through which Charney will write himself into the tubercular canon of American Yiddish literature. It is a canon that took shape in Denver, that Yehoash nurtured at the JCRS, that Mattes quietly contributed to while a patient, and that Leivick offered to a future generation of Yiddish writers who would continue to compose in the *kenigryakh fun fiber*.

[201] Ibid., 183.

Chapter Four

In the Sanatorium: David Vogel Between Hebrew and German

We have allowed ourselves out into the world at large to be fascinated [by it], to dress ourselves as European.
–David Vogel[1]

Vogel was young and very poor. He wrote less and less frequently. He suffered from lung disease. And he had blue eyes, big, white, beautiful teeth, and blushing red cheeks like those with lung disease. I tried to convince Vogel to write prose. First, so that he could make a living, because prose writing earned more. And second, because he told me his life story. I told him, that's material for a novel. Sit and write.
– Haim Ḥazaz[2]

Introduction

In the summer of 1910, Sholem Aleichem "took the cure" in the famous springs of Badenweiler. Shortly after arriving in the resort town, he visited the Sommer Hotel.[3] Six years earlier, Anton Chekhov had died from tuberculosis in the hotel, exclaiming "Ich sterbe" before famously drinking a glass of champagne.[4] No doubt the visit was marked by alternating feelings of excitement to be standing where Chekhov once stood and uncanny dread as he recognized his own mortality. Two decades later, the poet Raḥel also compared herself to Chekhov in a pitiable moment after she had managed to gather just enough strength to brush her own teeth.[5] Later, in a letter to a friend, Raḥel invoked Sholem Aleichem's ironic medical maxim—"Laughter is healthy. Doctors prescribe laughter"—as she tried to make light of what would ultimately prove

[1] David Vogel, "Y. Kh. Brener: a por verter tsu zayn 4th yortsayt," *Literarishe Bleter*, April 30, 1925.

[2] As told to Eli Mohar in an interview. See Eli Mohar, "Ke-shemesh be-yom-kevisah," *Davar*, February 12, 1971, sec. ha-Shavu'a, 9.

[3] Yitsḥak Dov Berkowitz, *Unzere rishonim: zikhroynes-dertseylungen vegn Sholem-Aleykhem un zayn dor* (Tel Aviv: Menorah, 1966), Vol. 4: 89–90.

[4] For an analysis of the versions of this death scene, including that of Chekhov's wife Olga Knipper, see Janet Malcolm, *Reading Chekhov: A Critical Journey* (New York: Random House, 2001), esp. 62–72.

[5] Uri Milstein, "Einayim bo'arot," *Ḥadashot*, April 5, 1985.

to be a terminal diagnosis.[6] And nearly two decades after Raḥel's death, the Yiddish writer Daniel Charney admired the library at the Workmen's Circle Sanatorium in Liberty, New York, where he found his work sharing space with volumes by none other than Chekhov and Sholem Aleichem.[7] His work would also become one more node in the Leivickian "kingdom of fever," first imagined in Denver and that expanded to include the work of Yehoash, Lune Mattes and Shea Tenenbaum.

Across the ocean in central Europe, an additional network took shape in which patient-writers could develop their own intertextual allies. There, an assemblage of literary accounts of tuberculosis, the recuperative process and the sanatorium as a space of social illness flourished well into the twentieth century. Tubercular themes and motifs found ample representation among German language writers in works as varied as Arthur Schnitzler's 1896 *Sterben* (*Dying*), Stefan Zweig's 1913 *Brennendes Geheimnis* (*Burning Secret*), Klabund's 1917 *Die Krankheit*, Herman Hesse's 1925 *Kurgast*, as well as Thomas Mann's *Tristan* (1902) and *Der Zauberberg* (1924).[8] One could arguably also include here works that were quickly translated into German and that became part of the discourse, such as Knut Hamsun's *Das letzte Kapitel* (German, 1924; Norwegian original 1923). Some of these authors, like Klabund (né Alfred Henschke), personally experienced a tubercular diagnosis.[9] Others, like Mann, witnessed firsthand the

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[6] As quoted in Muki Tsur, "Ke-ḥakot Raḥel: kavim biyografiyim," in *ha-Shirim*, by Raḥel (Bene Barak: ha-Kibuts ha-Meuḥad, 2011), 67. Raḥel also quotes the passage in Yiddish, "*Lakhn iz gezunt. Doktoryrim heysn lakhn,*" in a letter to Shulamit Klugai. See Raḥel, "Letter to Shulamit Klugai (#12)," no date, Arkhiyon ha-Medinah [Israel State Archives], http://www.archives.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/313D8E87-C7A0-4D83-B75D-85AD6F72DFC0/0/Rachel12.pdf.

[7] Daniel Charney, *Oyfn shvel fun yener velt: tipn, bilder, epizodn* (New York: [s.n.], 1947), 77.

[8] One could also mention here novella Schnitzler's novella *Fräulein Else* (1924) as well as Zofia Nałkowska's 1927 Polish novella, *Choucas*. Arthur Schnitzler, *Fräulein Else*, trans. F.Y. Lyon (London: Pushkin Press, 2013); Zofia Nałkowska, *Choucas: An International Novel*, trans. Ursula Philips (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014).

difficulties of a tubercular patient wanting for recovery.[10] All staged the sanatorium as the space of artistic and philosophical debates, to be conducted among a cohort of international patients. These patients also all found themselves in a seductive literary setting where Eros and the death drive battled with particular desperation and at times fraught elegance.

The language and subject matter of these German texts constitutes the framework necessary for understanding the Hebrew prose of David Vogel (1891-1944). Born in the Ukrainian town of Satanov in 1891, Vogel studied Hebrew as a young schoolboy.[11] He later immersed himself in the world of Hebrew literature when he moved to Vilna as a teenager. At the age of twenty-one, he moved to Vienna. After being imprisoned as a Russian subject during WWI, he later returned to Vienna and soon afterward developed pulmonary tuberculosis.[12] With the support of associates in Vienna, he subsequently sought "the cure" in Merano, Italy (formerly Meran, Austria) and then fictionalized his experience in his 1927 novella, *In the Sanatorium* (*Bevet ha-marpe*). In this novella and nearly all of his published work, Vogel would touch upon tuberculosis with various degrees of intention and interest.[13] After leaving Merano, Vogel would

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[9] On Klabund's experiences in Davos as well as a biographical description of his tubercular experience, see Paul Raabe, *Klabund in Davos: Texte, Bilder, Dokumente* (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1990).

[10] Mann visited his wife Katja in Davos in 1912. On Davos as well as Mann's realist literary relation to it, see Thomas Sprecher, *Auf dem Weg zum "Zauberberg": Die Davoser Literaturtage 1996*, vol. 16, Thomas-Mann-Studien (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1997), esp.11–19.

[11] Now Sataniv, Ukraine.

[12] For Vogel's general biography, see Dan Pagis, "David Vogel," in *Mi-ḥuts la-ahurah: masot ve-reshimot al ha-shirah ha-ivrit ha-modernit* (Jeursalem: Keshev, 2003), 9–29.

[13] In the poem, "Howling of the Dogs" (Vienna, 17.8.1916), Vogel writes how "strange shadows of tuberculosis/like thin, dark fingers/put out the traces of light/and will also dig graves for me." In the novel, *Married Life* (1929), one of the women who cares for the self-destructive narrator suffers from tuberculosis and is sent to take the cure. In his recently-discovered novella, *Viennese Romance*, the anarchist activist Misha is pale and spits up blood. In his novella, *Facing the Sea* (1932), Vogel similarly populates the tubercular wife of the Italian musician hovers in the background. David Vogel, "Yilelat ha-klavim," in *Kol ha-shirim*, ed. Aharon Komem (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-Meʾuḥad, 1998), 226; David Vogel, *Ḥaye nisu'im: roman* (Jerusalem: Mitspeh, 1929); David Vogel,

make his home in Berlin, Tel Aviv, Paris and Hauteville, France. His colleagues would recount, that in each place, Vogel lived a life removed from others. He was indigent, misanthropic and constantly sick.[14] Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to continue to investigate how the disease mediated not only Vogel's actual peregrinations around the world but also his literary output and narrative concerns.

Besides the urban space where he would develop tuberculosis, living in Vienna also brought Vogel into contact with a modernist German literary milieu. He read voraciously and, like his fellow central European Hebrew writers such as U.N. Gnessin, Avraham ben Yitzḥak (Sonne) and Gershon Shoffman, he drew liberally on the style and themes of the surrounding culture. Vogel's poetry and prose have accordingly been investigated alongside German literature, whether expressionistic, impressionistic, decadent or minimalist.[15] His work has been compared with that of Else Lasker-Schüler, Peter Altenberg, Josef Roth, Arthur Schnitzler and Thomas Mann and his poetry has been afforded more sustained attention in comparison with the work of Georg Trakl.[16] The critic Gershon Shaked even called Vogel's longest novel, *Married*

Roman Vina'i (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2012); David Vogel, "Nokhaḥ ha-yam," in *Taḥanot kavot: novelot, roman, sipur, yoman*, ed. Menachem Perry (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-Meʾuḥad, 1990), 7–63.

[14] On Vogel in Paris, see Yeshurun Keshet, "Rishme masa be-Eyrope," *ha-Do'ar* 39 (October 13, 1967): 738–40; Mohar, "Ke-shemesh be-yom-kevisah."

[15] Glenda Abramson, "Poet of the Dark Gate: The Poetry of David Vogel," *Jewish Book Annual* 50 (1992): 128–42; Glenda Abramson, "Vogel and the City," in *The Russian Jewish Diaspora and European Culture, 1917-1937*, ed. Jörg Schulte, Olga Tabachnikova, and Peter Wagstaff (Boston: Brill, 2012), 37–54; Robert Alter, "Fogel and the Forging of the Hebrew Self," *Prooftexts* 13, no. 1 (1993): 2–13; Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose: Modern Fiction and the Language of Realism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 76–91; Yoram Baranovski, "Misḥake ahavah ve-mavet," *Davar*, January 9, 1975, sec. Masa: Musaf le-Davar; Chana Kronfeld, "Fogel and Modernism: A Liminal Moment in Hebrew Literary History," *Prooftexts* 13, no. 1 (1993): 45–63; Dan Miron, "Ahavah teluyah ba-davar: toldot hitkablutah shel shirat David Fogel," in *Aderet le-Vinyamin: sefer ha-yovel li-Vinyamin Harshav*, ed. Ziva Ben-Porat, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-Meʾuḥad, 1999), esp. 54; Shachar M. Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Gershon Shaked, "David Fogel," in *ha-Siporet ha-Ivrit, 1880-1980* (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem: ha-Ḳibuts ha-meʾuḥad and Keter, 1988), 93–101; Shimon Sandbank, "David Fogel, Georg Trakl--veha-tseva'im," in *Shete berekhot ba-ya'ar: kesharim u-makbilot ben ha-shirah ha-Ivrit veha-shirah ha-eropit* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-Meʾuḥad, 1976), 70–92; Harold Shimel, "Ha-tsad shelanu--hayam shelanu," *Davar*, July 19, 1974.

Life (*Haye nisuim*), "an Austro-Viennese novel written by chance in Hebrew." Shaked's fellow critic Robert Alter has noted with no small amount of awe that Vogel took up the "task of creating an authentically European fiction in Hebrew without a national context and without a vernacular base."[17] What Shaked posits as an almost incidental choice (*bemikre*), Alter reads as a volitional attempt by Vogel to distinguish his work from the Hebrew writing produced in the name of Zionism. In fact, Vogel spent less than year in Palestine from 1929 to 1930 before returning to Paris via Berlin and to a life of penury and illness. Throughout his career, he would consistently distance himself physically and stylistically from the maximalist and nationalist aesthetics then dominating Hebrew literature.[18]

His brief sojourn in the *yishuv* certainly lends itself to speculation as to where the author's most imminent political allegiances lay. But beyond a political lens, the trip to Tel Aviv directs us to consider tuberculosis as a constitutive component of Jewish literary history. Vogel's decision, for example, to travel to and ultimately leave British Mandate Palestine can be directly connected to both his tubercular diagnosis and that of his wives: his first wife, Ilka died from tuberculosis in Austria (c. 1926) and his second wife Ada, also suffered from the disease, eventually surviving WWII as a patient at the L'Espérance Sanatorium in Hauteville.[19] As early as 1923, Vogel wrote to a friend in America about his desire to travel to Palestine, explaining:

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[16] On Vogel's different approach to writing than Trakl, see: Sandbank, "David Fogel, Georg Trakl--veha-tseva'im." On Vogel and Goethe, see: See Michael Gluzman, "Unmasking the Politics of Simplicity in Modernist Hebrew Poetry: Rereading David Fogel," *Prooftexts* 13, no. 1 (1993): 35–36.

[17] Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose: Modern Fiction and the Language of Realism*, 91; Shaked, "David Fogel," 95.

[18] On the notion of the minor and the simple, see Gluzman, "Unmasking the Politics of Simplicity in Modernist Hebrew Poetry: Rereading David Fogel"; Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 7. as well as Miron's response in Miron, "Ahavah teluyah ba-davar: toldot hitkablutah shel shirat David Fogel," 55.

[19] I am grateful to Dan Laor for this information. It has also been recorded that the chief medical officer of the institution, Léon Bonafé, did help women and children survive the war. On David and Ada Vogel's time in France

> I want to go to the Land of Israel not because I have a specific perspective and not—I must say—because I'm overcome with longing. I'm just so shattered, body and soul, that I have no room for such luxuries. My idea is to go so I may leave behind the troubles of Vienna, I need to rest a bit… and because I think that the sun of the Land of Israel will bring relief (*marpe*) to my rotting lung and restore my strength. And it might even help my wife [Ilka's] health.[20]

Six years later, Vogel arrived in Palestine—but not with Ilka. Rather, he and his second wife, Ada, were welcomed to Tel Aviv with a warm reception. Just as the urban literati had procured an ocean-view apartment for the ailing Raḥel, they also found Vogel and his wife a residence on the coast.[21] Yet the generally warm welcome did nothing to quell Vogel's near constant complaining.[22] The change in air ameliorated neither his own condition nor Ada's.[23] Early in 1930, the couple left Palestine for good. Later, when asked why he had emigrated, Vogel offered two justifications. First, the climate had been rough on his wife's health. As we have already seen, the supposedly salubrious affect of the Palestinian climate for the tubercular proved false. Second, Vogel explained that his preferred environment was in Europe. "*Zehu avir sheli—la-neshimah*," he said. "This is my air—for *breathing*."[24] Physical and cultural inspiration would be located firmly on European grounds.

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during WWII, see Dan Laor, "Le-an huvelu ha-Otsrim?: al ha-perek he-ḥaser bakhronikat ha-milḥamah shel David Fogel," in *mimerkazim la-merkaz: sefer Nurit Govrin*, ed. Avner Holtsman, Mikhal Oron, and Zivah Shamir (Tel Aviv: Mekhon Kats le-Ḥeker ha-Sifrut ha-Ivrit, Bet ha-Sefer le-Mada'e ha-Yahadut al Shem Ḥayim Rozenberg, Universitat Tel-Aviv, 2005), 385–411.

[20] David Vogel, "Letter Sh. Pollack," May 21, 1923, 4–5, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19227/1, Machon Genazim.

[21] Yoḥanan Arnon, *Uri Tsevi Grinberg: taḥahnot be-ḥayav* (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1991), 79–80.

[22] Menaḥem Poznanski, "Letter #126 to G. Shofman (31 May 1930)," in *Igrot tar'at-tashtaz* (Tel Aviv: M.Z. Volfovski, 1960), 135.

[23] Part of the trip was even spent in the hospital, for the already sickly Ada had contracted dysentery shortly after giving birth to the couple's daughter—an event, Moreover, itself was likely trying to her health. Vogel relayed this information in a letter to Uri Zvi Greenberg, as quoted in Arnon, *Uri Tsevi Grinberg: Taḥahnot be-ḥayav*, 80.

[24] Ibid., 84.

More than a history of health tourism, Vogel's trips to and from Tel Aviv bring into sharp relief just one way in which tuberculosis came to mediate the writer's relationship between Palestine and Europe or, more broadly put, between Hebrew and the language through which he sought European *Bildung*: German. I will demonstrate that an awareness of the cultural connotations of disease and the tubercular body was a constitutive part of his prose apprenticeship. This apprenticeship, moreover, witnessed the development of an antagonistic perception of German-Hebrew linguistic symbiosis, which I will identify in Vogel's personal diary (1912-1922) and then examine in Vogel's first extended prose piece entitled, *In the Sanatorium*. The text was written shortly after his second stay in a Jewish sanatorium in Merano. Published in 1927, the work garnered few laudatory reviews and provoked more curiosity than overt praise. Yet a reassessment of this text reveals that Vogel's early prose offers a critique of German-Hebrew literary and linguistic contact. Indeed tuberculosis provides the cultural context of illness through which Vogel would engage the modernist masters of central European prose.

Vogel: Between German and Hebrew

Vogel's engagement in Hebrew-German literary debates was far from predestined. In his hometown of Satanov, Yiddish was the language of everyday life and Russian the language of the governing authorities. Despite some claims to the contrary, Vogel was able to write in Yiddish.[25] While living in Vienna, he also helped organize a collection of literary reflections entitled *Death Cycle*. Later, he wrote a critical Yiddish article about the work of Y.H. Brenner

[25] Although his mother tongue, it appears that Vogel struggled to write in Yiddish. According to the Yiddish poet Melekh Ravitch, Vogel had the idea in 1919 to publish a Yiddish literary pamphlet on the theme of death but had trouble writing in Yiddish. Though the pamphlet entitled *Death Cycle (Toyt-tsiklus*) was eventually published, Vogel's Hebrew poems appear there only in Yiddish translation. On the initiation of the journal, Melech Ravitch, "David Fogel," in *Mayn leksikon* (Monteal, 1958), 333. See also Melech Ravitch, ed., *Toyt-Tsiklus* (Vienna: Der Kval, 1920).

and drafted a fictionalized if heavily autobiographical account of an Austrian citizen interned in southern France during WWII.[26] A concern for Yiddish as a literary language never left Vogel, yet it was Hebrew that became his literary language. As Alter explains, "paradoxical though it may seem, [Vogel] chooses Hebrew because it is the one avenue open to him for being European, for joining European high culture."[27] Alter reasons that Yiddish, dismissed as the jargon vernacular of Jewish masses, could not have served Vogel as the language through which to enter the European literary republic. As *In the Sanatorium* will make clear, Vogel was well aware of just that diminished assessment of Yiddish.

Alter's statement above, though not incorrect, is incomplete. Soon after acquiring a solid sense of the Hebrew language and its literary potential, Vogel cast his sights on studying German. Vogel left Vilna in the autumn of 1912 and before long wrote in his diary about his desire to study with a "*moreh ashkenazit*," a German teacher.[28] Some two weeks later, he had begun to study the language on his own. To do so, he used Dr. Shimon Bernfeld's German Bible. First published in Berlin in 1902, the translation would go on to sell over 100,000 copies. As

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[26] For an investigation into various psychological motivations prompting Vogel to write his final prose work in Yiddish, see Shiri Goren, "Writing on the Verge of Catastrophe: David Vogel's Last Work of Prose," in *Choosing Yiddish: New Frontiers of Language and Culture*, ed. Lara Rabinovich, Shiri Goren, and Hannah S. Pressman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 29–45.

[27] Alter, "Fogel and the Forging of the Hebrew Self," 5. Alter continues his claim as follows: "Indeed, his incorrigible Europeanness is no less determinative of his identity than that of his exact Germanophone coeval, Walter Benjamin: both men in the end perished because they could not manage to extricate themselves, even as the clouds of destruction gathered, from the European setting they had made their only conceivable theater of operation." I would like to note here my discomfort with this contention made by Alter and often repeated throughout Hebrew and English language scholarship and criticism of Vogel's work. His attachment to European aesthetics, so the argument goes, blinded him to the fact that he would ultimately be killed by Nazis. His belief in the idea of Europe, accordingly, was naïve and misplaced. The logic of this critique, however, is fundamentally flawed and insists on blaming the victim for his own death, as a result of political myopia rather than Nazi aggression. It also frequently assumes migration—and, more often than not, migration to Palestine—would have been a better solution, as if alternative solutions were readily available. I must note my displeasure with this line of argumentation that accuses Vogel, Benjamin and others as having placed aesthetic idealism above political realism, an accusation that can only be made in hindsight and judges aesthetics to be less important than nationalism.

[28] David Vogel, "Ketsot ha-yamim," in *Taḥanot kavot: novelot, roman, sipur, yoman* ([Tel Aviv]: ha-Kibuts ha-me'uḥad, 1990), 280–281.

Mordekhai Eran and Ya'akov Shavit have written, the Bible was particularly successful for its use of popular German language. It also incorporated certain Protestant nomenclature for Old Testament figures, such as referring to the Tetragammaton as "der Herr" rather than "der Ewige." The latter had been customary in German renderings of the Bible by Jewish translators since Moses Mendelssohn's *Biur*.[29] Bernfeld's translation also had a subtle assimilatory agenda that sought to homogenize Jewish and Christian scriptural vocabulary.

Most important, having chosen to engage a text with which he was so familiar—the Hebrew Bible—Vogel's acquisition of German progressed rapidly. "My vocabulary resources increase (*mitrabe*) by the hour," he writes, "I have to practice in order to travel to Vienna." Yet Vogel's advanced German language skills did not come without compromise, as he explains, "I have to contract (*lehitkavets*) in order to continue…—and my Hebrew language is forgotten (*mishtakhaḥat etsli*) by the hour for I'm not engaging Hebrew literature or strengthening my memory, but I have no other choice."[30] Vogel writes of the diminishment of his Hebrew language in the passive voice (*mishtakhaḥat etsli*), as if his Hebrew were "being lost unto him" by an external force. Yet the reason for that loss is clear. Improving his German comes directly at the cost of his Hebrew. He must "shrink/contract himself" (*hitvakets*) in order to make room for the German language to grow (*mitrabe*). Vogel here also contributes his own bodily metaphor of bilingual life to a growing corpus of such distinctions of complimentarity and antagonism. Mendele describes his practices of Yiddish and Hebrew writing as being as natural as breathing through both nostrils; Sholem Aleichem describes the bilingual contest between Hebrew and Yiddish as akin to twins battling in the womb though, as he confidently asserts, he

[29] Mordekhai Eran and Ya'akov Shavit, "'Tana'kh yehudi be-Germanit': tirgum ha-tana'kh le-Germanit al-yade Shim'on Bernfeld (1903): ben meḥkar 'Kofer' le-Ttrgum 'shomrani,'" *Bet mikra* 54, no. 2 (2008): 127–8; 142.

[30] Punctuation in original. Vogel, "Ketsot ha-yamim," 283.

has overcome that struggle; and Bialik, in contrast, compares the plight of the Hebrew writer burdened by another language to someone forced to drag his leg behind him and unable to move freely.[31] Bialik's words resonate most strongly for Vogel, for whom the effort to learn German impinged on his Hebrew facilities.

Clearly German did not push out all of Vogel's Hebrew, nor would he lose his flexibility with his chosen literary language. These diary lines, after all, are written in a poetic Hebrew idiom. But the passage points to a recurrent theme in his diary. Hebrew and German are antagonistic. To increase familiarity with one necessitates the depletion of skills of the other. Several months later while in Vienna, Vogel describes his daily routine as a life lived buried in literature, reading German books all day and "Hebrew—barely at all."[32] Elsewhere he explains that he has "entered a new period in [his] life, in which the central point is—German culture."[33] He subsequently writes in an excited tone about reading Ibsen and Maeterlinck (by implication, in German translation), of the works of philosophy he has yet to read and of his rhetorical thirst for knowledge and enlightenment. He writes of having entered "into a foreign life, into a foreign language" yet, he adds, it pains him to see his Hebrew so depleted. He is thirsty (*tsame*) for European writing at the same time as he has nothing with which to nourish (*le-hazin*) his Hebrew resources.[34] By June 1914, Vogel poses the simple question to himself, "What else is there to study besides German (*germanit*)?" The question's rhetorical force is augmented by his subsequent response. "I barely read Hebrew. First, because of the lack of books and second

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[31] I am grateful to Na'ama Rokem for alerting me to this trend in metaphoric language. Ḥaim Naḥman Bialik, "Ḥevlei lashon," in *Kol kitve Ḥaim Naḥman Bialik* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1956), 196; Dan Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 423.

[32] Emily K Abel, *Tuberculosis and the Politics of Exclusion: A History of Public Health and Migration to Los Angeles*, Critical Issues in Health and Medicine (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

[33] Ibid., 289.
[34] Ibid., 295.

because of all the German reading."[35] His access to Hebrew materials is limited and his time is at a premium. When faced with those challenges, Vogel chooses to study German.

In Vogel's intellectual life, German and Hebrew seesaw back and forth in a proportionate relationship of power and influence. Yet it is Hebrew that maintains its position as the chosen language of Vogel's oeuvre. After all, save a single German poem and a brief effort to translate the novel *Married Life*, Vogel chose to produce his creative works in Hebrew. Yet the tug between German and Hebrew should not be underestimated. On the one hand, according to Vogel's diary, German has the power to occlude Vogel's access to Hebrew. German cannot exist comfortably side by side with Hebrew, his chosen language of literary expression. On the other hand, by writing in an increasingly-flexible Hebrew, Vogel's diary presents the language as a therapeutic response to the susceptibility to German infection. To extend this medical metaphor, the Hebrew language of his diary works to immunize Vogel from the contagious transmission of German. Rather than see his Hebrew capacities shrink, the language of the diary expands to encompass and narrate the entire experience of learning German. Considering these tensions, then, we might ask: What does this mean for understanding Vogel's position in a German literary cultural milieu? What does this mean for Vogel's Hebrew text in which the presumed language of the characters' speech is German? And what does this mean for us, as we reconstruct the cultural conception of tuberculosis available to Vogel?

Vogel: Tuberculosis, Creativity, Eroticism

These questions continue to resonate when we isolate additional passages in Vogel's diary where disease, literature and erotic allure are triangulated. Vogel kept his diary

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[35] Ibid., 310.

sporadically from 1912 until 1922. Following Alter, I understand the diary to be a textual exercise in Vogel's first attempts to find his Hebrew narrative style. As Alter has argued, Vogel's future strengths as a realistic prose stylist were prefigured in this diary where, "evidently writing only for himself, in an effort to make some sense of his own experience, [he] flatly ignores the decorum of literary Hebrew in order to make the language fit the disjunctive nature of his thought and feeling."[36] What Alter finds "compelling about [V]ogel's diary is the palpable feeling it conveys of fashioning a living language, a language that, though not the writer's actual vernacular, is able to trace the twisting contours of his inner life, to body forth a thoroughly modern and European sense of self and other, motive and identity."[37]

Alter's word choice also draws attention to the embodied rhetoric woven throughout Vogel's diary. The future Hebrew writer had to "body forth" into the world of European belles-lettres. This task involved a corporeal effort and physical exertion. In a near constant state of hunger, Vogel writes repeatedly of his fruitless attempts to find work and food. He even compares himself to the protagonist of Knut Hamsun's novel, *Hunger* (1890), for he too has lost hair from malnourishment. Here, Vogel "bod[ies] forth" into the modernist canon by means of his own emaciation. Beyond the direct affiliation with Hamsun's hero, Vogel is keen elsewhere in his diary to examine his own state of physical health in the context of identifying as a man of literary pursuits.[38] In an entry from March 1913, shortly after he arrived in Vienna and less than a year after beginning to study German, Vogel writes of his unsuccessful attempts to garner the attention of women. "The fact is," he records, "I'm not qualified to live a natural and healthy life. A man of the book (*ish ha-sefer*)…I'm not like everyone—that's an existential fact (*uvdah*

[36] Alter, "Fogel and the Forging of the Hebrew Self," 10. On Vogel's style and interest in "narratorial mediation of consciousness" see Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose: Modern Fiction and the Language of Realism*, 76–95.

[37] Alter, "Fogel and the Forging of the Hebrew Self," 5–6.

[38] Vogel, "Ketsot ha-yamim," 299.

kayemet)."[39] Vogel then spends several lines describing how disconnected he feels from the world and once again comes to the conclusion that "I'm not healthy," *Eyni bari.* Less than five years after Sholem Aleichem's jubilee celebrations, Vogel accepts the terms of an authorial career that the Yiddish author had refused. Beginning in 1908, Sholem Aleichem and his supporters criticized what they saw as the plight of Jewish writers caught in a cycle of material insecurity and physical incapacitation. They vehemently rejected the tubercular fate as Jewish literary destiny. As they claimed, the ailing Sholem Aleichem deserved to be honored in hard cash rather than empty words of praise or a fatal diagnosis. Here, Vogel seems resigned to the sickly condition.

Still, like Sholem Aleichem, Vogel certainly did not enjoy being sick. Less than six months after arriving in Vienna, Vogel would record his fear that his chest pains prefigured tuberculosis. Later, when he was diagnosed with the disease, he would assume an even more somber tone as he became physically exhausted and at times was too infirmed to write.[40] Yet Vogel's understanding of the relationship between disease, creativity and erotic allure was nuanced. It would not, as in the case of Sholem Aleichem, generate a global effort on his behalf. Yet it would position him within a literary community. Since beginning his career in Vienna, he had been surrounded by a central European cultural landscape long dominated by considerations of disease as a constituent component of literary production. In his immediate context, Vogel would have been aware of the tubercular capital that was then translatable into ideas of literary

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[39] Ibid., 294.

[40] As early as May 1913, less than six months after arriving in Vienna, Vogel would write, "Five days ago I started to feel a pain in my chest and I am scared that it is the beginning of tuberculosis (*shaḥefet*). "This fear," he added, "bothers me more than the pain." Several lines after this admission of psychological distress, Vogel exclaims, "I want to live!" Later, he would write of his fear that tuberculosis inhibited his ability to receive poetic inspiration. Ibid., 296.

genius. Tracing the representation of disease in Thomas Mann's novel, *Der Zauberberg*, for example, the scholar Hermann Weigand has plotted a representative line from Goethe to the German Nobel Prize winner. Goethe, notes Weigand, "squarely credits disease with effecting spiritual awakening."[41] Novalis followed suit, crediting illness with mental alertness. "Himself a consumptive," notes the literary scholar and historian of medicine Clark Lawlor, Novalis "had valorized sickness as leading to greater consciousness of life and the self, both physical and spiritual."[42] Nietzsche also offered his own reflection on the linkage between illness and creativity. "It is exceptional states that determine the artists," wrote the philosopher in *The Will to Power*, "such states are all intimately related and entwined with morbid symptoms, so that it would seem almost impossible to be an artist and not be a sick man."[43] It is a necessary platitude to assert that Nietzsche's legacy loomed large well into the twentieth century. One did not merely read him, as Thomas Mann would explain, so much as one "experienced him."[44] The Nietzschean idea of illness and creativity has also long driven studies of Mann's own work.[45] In 1922 and again in 1945, Thomas Mann himself relied on this Nietzschean framework to

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[41] For this run-through of the relationship between illness and creativity in German intellectual history, I have relied on the efficient narrative account of Dietrich von Engelhardt, which itself follows the projection famously plotted by Hermann J. Weigand in his chapter on "Disease" in *Der Zauberberg*. Dietrich von Engelhardt, "Tuberkulose und Kultur um 1900. Arzt, Patient und Sanatorium in Thomas Manns *Zauberberg* aus Medizinihistorischer Sicht," in *Auf Dem Weg Zum "Zauberberg": Die Davoser Literaturtage, 1996*, ed. Thomas Sprecher (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 340–341; Hermann J. Weigand, *Thomas Mann's Novel, Der Zauberberg: A Study* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1933), 39–58. For Weigand's comments on Goethe see p.40.

[42] Clark Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease* (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 119. For mention of Novalis' relationship to disease as it pertains to the perception of disease among and following German Romantic writers, see Stephen C. Meredith, "Mortal Illness on the Magic Mountain," in *A Companion to Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain*, ed. Stephen D. Dowden (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1999), 117; Weigand, *Thomas Mann's Novel, Der Zauberberg: A Study*, 40.

[43] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici, vol. II (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1924), 811, http://archive.org/stream/completeworksthe15nietuoft/completeworksthe15nietuoft_djvu.txt.

[44] Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, trans. Walter D. Morris (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1983), 13.

[45] For an evaluation of the importance of Nietzschean conceptions of genius and disease in Mann's writing, see Weigand, *Thomas Mann's Novel, Der Zauberberg: A Study*, 36–38.

understand Dostoyevsky's epilepsy as an intensifying agent of his literary genius. As Mann maintained, the talent of great artists was only "genialized" by disease.[46]

Vogel similarly posited the cultural experience of illness as a categorical identity of the literary man and tuberculosis held a specific allure. In 1916, for example, Vogel made the acquaintance of the woman who would later become his first wife, Ilka. Shortly after meeting, he wrote in his diary:

> Ilka. Tubercular and sickly. And she seems to love me. And I feel very bad for her. For what am I?! Shattered. A young man who lacks vitality. And I'm unable to love at all. And her, specifically. And yet here I am taking walks with her, long and short. And I feel her to be very close and I enjoy her childish talk. But yet when she's not with me, I am inexplicably afraid of her. It's a fear that I can't understand (*i meḥuvar*). Maybe her tuberculosis causes it. I feel death in her. And I get close to her out of pity (*raḥmanut*) and I am affectionate towards her.[47]

Vogel's attraction to Ilka is confused. He feels less strongly for her than she does for him yet at the same time he feels unworthy, incapable of loving her properly. He also knows that Ilka is sick. He emphasizes this point twice: she is not only tubercular (*sheḥufah*) but also sickly (*ḥolanit*). And he is frightened by her seemingly inexplicably—*paḥad i meḥuvar li*. Yet the reason for his fear is embedded in his language. His fear is not "comprehensible," it is not *meḥuvar*. The term is rooted in the deadly pale affect (*ḥiver*) of the tubercular object of his affection. Vogel's inability to understand his own panic at the sight of Ilka, in fact, integrates his own fear of tubercular contagion. She is pale (*ḥiver*) and his fear stems directly from it. Though frightened he is also drawn to her out of pity, out of mercy, out of *raḥmanut*, a term that

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[46] Thomas Mann, "Introduction," in *The Short Novels of Dostoevsky* (New York: Dial Press, 1945), xiv. See also Thomas Mann, "Goethe and Tolstoy," in *Three Essays*, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 3–140. For example, Dostoyevsky's epileptic condition, accordingly, was a disease of mystical consequence, the "explosive manifestation of sexual dynamics," and an affliction that only invigorated his literary talents. Mann, "Introduction," x.

[47] Vogel, "Ketsot ha-yamim," 317.

incorporates the Hebrew word for womb (*reḥem*) and draws our attention to her reproductive organs. Ilka's illness simultaneously frightens and seduces Vogel, making him aware of his own susceptibility to disease as well as alerting him to Ilka's sexual allure.

Vogel's attraction to Ilka places him squarely within the Freudian battlegrounds of Eros and the death drive. Fear, contagion, tuberculosis, and reproduction all intersect here in a personal record of Vogel's perception of his future wife. The entry also places him within a literary discourse that identified the tubercular as a morbid object of erotic fascination. The trope was common at the turn of the century. Consider here Arthur Schnitzler's 1896 novella *Dying* (*Sterben*). Although published over two decades before *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* (1920), the novel witnesses the explosive nexus of Eros and the death drive. In an intimate moment, the tubercular protagonist Felix breathes onto his lover, Marie. "I'm taking you with me," he tells her, "I don't want to go alone!"[48] With these words, he infects her with tuberculosis. Felix's drive toward death is transformed from a self-directed impulse to one directed outwards. Felix homicidally infects his own lover. Although Marie will not die at the same instant as Felix, readers understand that her fate has been sealed. It is only a matter of time before her own final tubercular hemorrhage. Like Marie in *Sterben*, Vogel also feels compelled to stay with his tubercular partner out of pity-laced attraction. And, like Felix, Vogel even expresses his desire to kill Ilka, in a diary entry dated 22 May 1917.[49] His attraction to Ilka is never without a decidedly morbid and at times demonstrably violent impulse. When Vogel himself is diagnosed with tuberculosis, his relationship with Ilka remains equally fraught in a constant push and pull between attraction tinged with violence, duty and diseased repulsion.[50]

[48] Arthur Schnitzler, *Dying*, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Pushkin Press, 2006), 118.
[49] Vogel, "Ketsot ha-yamim," 321.

Tuberculosis, as indicated in Vogel's own reflections of the subject, was never a neutral disease. In 1913, it was something to be feared. By 1916, it was something that inspired lustful impulses. And by 1919/1920, it was the disease from which Vogel himself would suffer and languish in various states of weakness, depression and self-pity. It was the disease that he would contract and experience while entering the German art world of Vienna—a world he would narrate in his Hebrew diary. It would later become the textual medium by which he would explore the status of his Hebrew in conversation with his German interlocutors.

Vogel in Merano and *In the Sanatorium*

By January of 1925, neither Vogel's health nor his financial situation had improved. He had recently published his first book of poems, *Before the Dark Gate* (*Lifne ha-sh'ar ha-afel*), as well as a Hebrew translation of Gerhart Hauptmann's *Der Ketzer von Soana*. Neither, however, granted the destitute and ailing writer any relief. Only a few copies of both were sold and even fewer reviews appeared in the Hebrew press. Vogel's desperation was acute. In letters to his friend Shimon Pollack in America, he bemoaned his illness as well as his helplessness in the face of it. He was too poor, as he wrote, to do anything to alleviate his condition.[51] Vogel even

[50] The eroticized tubercular female also draws heavily on its antecedents of the Romantic consumptive female figure. From the dying heroine of the novel *La Dame aux camélias* (1848) by Alexandre Dumas Fils to the painterly depictions of the consumptive muse Elizabeth Siddel by the English poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rosetti, the consumptive female body was a common figure of European romanticism. The image also appeared in fin-de-siècle German texts, such as Thomas Mann's novella *Tristan.* There, the consumptive heroine Gabriel Klöterjahn is described in typically Romantic terms as correspondingly pale and alluring. Thomas Mann, "Tristan," in *Death in Venice and Other Stories*, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 320. On the cultural discourse concerning the aesthetics of the consumptive female body see Katherine Byrne, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination*(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[51] David Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," June 9, 1924, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19241/1, Machon Genazim; David Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," July 17, 1924, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19293/1, Machon Genazim; David Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," August 31, 1924, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19242/1, Machon Genazim.

explored the possibility of moving to New York on the condition that Pollack could find him work before he left Europe.[52]

But Vogel was not destined to land in America. In a letter dated December 1924, we learn that he had managed to secure funding from a charitable organization to "take the cure" in the Tyrolean mountains.[53] By January 17, 1925, Vogel had made his way to the Jewish Sanatorium in Merano, known as the Jüdische Genesungsheim or Sanatorio Israelitico.[54] He stayed through April and returned the following year for another three-month sojourn from February to April 1926. Austrian Meran/Italian Merano had long held an allure for a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish health-seekers who arrived in the mountain town to take the cure in the thermal baths and to promenade in the fresh air of the famed Tappeinerweg. Many also came to the region eager to try the variety of grape-derived remedies heralded for their nutrient-rich and medicinal properties.[55] Like Marienbad and Carlsbad, Merano also became a hub for middle-class Jewish tourists.[56] Freud, Schnitzler, Zweig and Kafka would all find their way to this

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[52] David Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," February 18, 1924, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19243/1, Machon Genazim; Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," July 17, 1924.

[53] David Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," December 3, 1924, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19240/1, Machon Genazim.

[54] I am grateful to Mr. Eugenio Valentini of the Merano historical archive for finding records of Vogel's stay in the *Meraner Kurzeitung*. For Vogel's records of his stay in 1925, see also David Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," February 28, 1925, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19244/1, Machon Genazim. For 1926, see David Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," February 18, 1926, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19248/1, Machon Genazim; David Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," March 18, 1926, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19249/1, Machon Genazim.

[55] Dr. Raphael Hausmann, who would become a prominent member of the local Jewish community in the nineteenth century, had spent years in the area investigating and publicizing various health treatments utilizing local grape crops. See Raphael Hausmann, *Die Weintraubenkur: mit Rücksicht auf Erfahrungen in Meran* (Meran: Fridolin Plant, 1905).

[56] On the Jewish social history of Marienbad and Carlsbad, see Miriam Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture*, trans. William Templer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

Tyrolean town, the latter on account of his own laryngeal tuberculosis.[57] So too would the consumptive Hebrew writer Perets Smolenskin.[58] He died there in 1885 and was buried in the local Jewish cemetery. Years later, Merano would also serve as the port of disembarkation of the tubercular Hebrew poet Avraham ben Yizḥak, perhaps most famous for being a central figure in modernist discussions in Vienna between the two wars.[59]

Like Vogel, Smolenskin made the trip thanks to the generosity of Viennese charities. Although the nature of these charities—both those which supported Smolenskin and those which helped Vogel—remain at the moment inexact, their presence again brings us into the world of the tubercular Jewish writer's support network. As indicated in his extant correspondence, Vogel was not shy about asking for money. In the winter of 1925, Vogel asked his friends in Vienna directly for help, requesting the funds to support a two month stay in Merano.[60] One of those friends was Meir Wiener. A Yiddish and German critic, Wiener was based at the time in Vienna,

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[57] For an analysis of Schnitzler's love letters to Olga Waissnix from Meran, to which he travelled for health reasons in 1886, see Bettina Marxer, "Die Liebesbegegnung in Meran," in *Liebesbriefe, und was nun einmal so gennant wird: Korrespondenzen zwischen Arthur Schnitlzer, Olga Waissnix und Mare Reinhard: Eine literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Lektüre* (Würzberg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), 57–75. On evidence of Zweig's time in Meran, see Stefan Zweig and Friderike Zweig, *Briefwechsel: 1912-1942* (Berlin: Alfred Scherz Verlag, 1951), 45. For Kafka's letters to his family from Meran, see Franz Kafka, *Letters to Ottla and the Family*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 42–52.

[58] Re'uven Brainin, *Perets ben Mosheh Smolenskin: ḥayav u-sefarav* (Warsaw: Tushiyah, 1896), 152.

[59] After WWII, Merano served as a common stopping point for Jewish émigrés on their way to Palestine, as it was the headquarters of the local *Bricha* unit that facilitated illegal emigration to Palestine. Many Jewish refugees, Moreover, arrived in Merano under the guise of "TB Patients," and from there continued on their path to emigration. In addition, a Merano sanatorium was established specifically to provide mental health to the Jewish victims of the Auschwitz concentration camp. See Jack Adler, "Therapeutic Group Work with Tuberculosis Displaced Persons," *The International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 3, no. 1 (1953): 302–8; Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: Random House, 1971), 174; Jacob Markovizky, "The Italian Government's Response to the Problem of Jewish Refugees 1945-1948," *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture* 19, no. 1 (1998): 23–39; Eva Pfanzelter, "Between Brenner and Bari: Jewish Refugees in Italy 1945 to 1948," *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture* 19, no. 3 (1998): 83–104. On Sonne, see Avraham ben Yizḥak, "Aḥarit davar: al ḥayav ve-yetsirato shel Avraham Ben Itsḥak," in *Kol ha-shirim*, ed. Ḥannan Ḥever (Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-Meʾuḥad, 1992), 104.

[60] David Vogel, "Letter Sh. Pollack," December 15, 1925, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 19247/1, Machon Genazim.

though he would soon make his name as a Soviet Yiddish literary scholar. Several of Wiener's letters to Vogel from the fall and winter of 1925 have survived and indicate that he was working on Vogel's behalf alongside Hugo Knöpfmacher, a Viennese lawyer who also actively translated Hebrew literature into German.[61] Unlike the poets of the JCRS, Vogel solicited money on his own behalf, rather than on behalf of an institution. His back and forth with Wiener, accordingly, is quite personal. Consider, for example, Wiener's response to Vogel from December 1925:

> I have received your letter with the news from [Merano]. I'll speak with Knöpfmacher today. I hope we'll be able to do something and you will go. Apart from the payment, will you also need some travel expenses? For a return trip? And you don't have any money yourself? I need to know everything exactly. It would be better if you had some money. These are difficult times. Anyway, we'll see. Write to me immediately. How foolish of me to write, "it would be better," as if it depended on you. I have decided that whatever happens, we'll do it. You absolutely must go.[62]

The urgency in Wiener's voice is clear, as is his determination. Vogel arrived in Merano less than two months later with the explicit support of Wiener's colleague Hugo Knöpfmacher and was admitted to the sanatorium in January 1925.[63] Interestingly, on December 11, 1925, Knöpfmacher published a positive review of Vogel's Hebrew poetry in the Berlin weekly *Jüdische Rundschau* and accompanied his remarks with German translations of three of Vogel's poems.[64] Though far from his Yiddish poetic counterparts in Denver, Colorado, Vogel's tubercular diagnosis also afforded him with this opportunity to see his work in translation—not in English, but in German.

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[61] For biographical information and archival material related to Knöpfmacher, see *Guide to the Papers of Hugo Knoepfmacher (1890-1980), 1865-1979, AR7172*, n.d., http://digifindingaids.cjh.org/?pID=256143.

[62] David Vogel, "Letter 3 (Vienna, 15 Dec 1925)," trans. Mikhail Krutikov, *Jews and Slavs* 17 (2006): 100.

[63] Vogel, "Letter to Sh. Pollack," February 18, 1926. Hugo Knöpfmacher is also listed as the party financially responsible for Vogel's stay in Merano on receipts dated 9 Jan 1925, 18 Jan 1926 and 3 March 1926. See "Wiener Bank-Verein, Receipts," n.d., Istituzione di Assistenza per Israeliti Poveri, Seie Atti, Contabilità e Corrispondenza antecedente al 1949, Scatola N° 18, Contiente Unitá N 97°, Fascicolo 1, Archivio Storico della Comunitá Ebraica di Merano, accessed August 3, 2014.

[64] Hugo Knöpfmacher, "Der hebräische Dichter David Vogel," *Jüddische Rundschau*, December 11, 1925, 811.

The first of the three poems chosen by Knöpfmacher was none other than "Black Flags Flutter."[65] This poem is among Vogel's most famous. "We," the poem declares, will stand before the eponymous dark gate that title Vogel's first poetry collection. "We," will stand "like black flags that flutter/in the wind/like the wings of imprisoned birds [*ke-kanfe tsiporot asurot*]." In Knöpfmacher's translation, the line reads, "Wie Flügel gefangener Vögel." In this German translation, the restrained *Vögel* point back to the poet, David Vogel. Vogel himself insisted that his name be spelled in Roman letters as "Vogel" rather than "Fogel"; although the latter would have transliterated his Hebrew/Yiddish last name, the former rendered his identity Germanic.[66] In Vogel's diary, German language was depicted as having the power to occlude his access to Hebrew. Here, in translation, the German text works in the opposite manner, rendering Vogel legible to his non-Hebrew reader. And yet, at the same time, the poet does not describe a Vogel able to move freely. His wings are constrained, his vista is dark and it is unclear whether the dark gate stands opened or closed.

Vogel would travel to Merano for a second time in the winter of 1926, once again with the financial backing of Knöpfmacher. After this second stay, Vogel turned his attention to what would become his first published novella, *Be-vet ha-marpe* (*In the Sanatorium*). The text was completed in 1926 and published in Palestine the following year.[67] The text follows two

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[65] David Vogel, "Degalim sheḥorim mefarperim," in *Kol Ha-Shirim*, ed. Aharon Komem (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-Meʾuḥad, 1998), 80.

[66] David Vogel, "Letter to A. Broides," October 29, 1937, David Vogel Collection 231, Document 43957/1, Machon Genazim.

[67] We know from correspondence that Vogel had begun to try his hand at prose by the winter of 1925 and it is possible that he drafted the novella while he recuperated in Merano in 1926. Accordingly, the novella may read as a form of patient life writing. Alternatively, the manuscript that remains in the archive is dated "Paris 1926," and may indicate that Vogel drafted the entirety of the text after his return to Paris in the summer of 1926. We must also note here that although *In the Sanatorium* is Vogel's first published novella, it was not his first attempt at prose. After leaving the sanatorium the first time in 1925, Vogel made his way to Paris. Along the way, he began to experiment with prose writing, which admittedly did not come easily. In 1925, he published a Yiddish article on the occasion of

characters during their stay in a tuberculosis sanatorium in South Tyrol. The first character, Irme Ornik, is a business school student who initially keeps to himself and follows the sanatorium health regime with extreme precision.[68] In the end, however, he commits suicide after his romantic overtures to a fellow patient, Gerte Finger, are rebuffed. The second character is named Shevaḥ Adler. Unlike quiet Ornik, Adler is an urban dandy who is ultimately expelled from the sanatorium precisely because he seduces one the institution's employees.

While we know nothing of Vogel's own romantic dalliances during his convalescence in Merano, his stay at the local Genesungsheim certainly influenced the novella. Both institutions were also supported by wealthy benefactors from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1873, a small sanatorium was opened in Austrian Meran with funds from the Königswarter Stiftung. By Vogel's arrival in 1925, the local Genesungsheim had grown into a state-of-the art treatment center for Jewish tuberculars from across Europe.[69] By that time, the Königswarter family was spread across Europe, in a manner not dissimilar to the officers and chief benefactors of Vogel's fictional sanatorium who send donations to the institute from Prague, Vienna and Ostrau.[70]

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the fourth anniversary of the death of Y.Ḥ. Brenner in the Warsaw weekly, *Literarishe bleter*. And in 1925/1926, he drafted though did not publish a short text entitled, "The Inhabitant" (*ha-Dayar*), in which the erotic and the sickly make uncomfortable bedfellows. Moshe, a male boarder, sleeps with his landlady, Beile. When her children discover a man in her bed the next morning and threaten to squeal, Beile yells at them to "let a sick man rest," attempting to cover up her affair under the guise of illness. Having felt well up to that point, Moshe then begins to feel sick to his stomach. David Vogel, "Dayar," in *Taḥanot kavot: novelot, roman, sipur, yoman* (Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-meʾuḥad, 1990), 265–68.

[68] Irme is a nickname for those men named "Yirmiyahu," the Hebrew equivalent of Jeremiah.

[69] On the early history of the sanatorium and influence of the Königswarter family on the region, see Rosanna Pruccoli, "Un cimetero, un sanatorio per indigenti e una sinagoga: storia di un patto di solidarietà ," in *Storie di ebrei: contributi storici sulla presenza ebraica in Alto Adige e in Trentino = Jüdische Schicksale: Beiträge zu einer Geschichtsforschung über die jüdische Ansässigkeit in Südtirol und im Trentino*, ed. Federico Steinhaus and Rosanna Pruccoli (Merano, Bolzano: Comunità ebraica di Merano/Jüdische Kultusgemeinde Meran, 2004), 47–76.

[70] Ostrau is the present day city of Ostrava, Czech Republic. David Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe" (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibuts ha-me'uḥad, 2008), 22.

In the Sanatorium also reflects Vogel's intimate knowledge of the paradigm of *Kurort* prose then common in modernist German literature—its setting, character profiles, plot points and motifs. Consider, for example, the Tyrolean landscape. The setting similarly anchors Arthur Schnitzler's 1896 novella, *Dying*. Vogel's characters look out and comment on the same mountains, brisk air and bright sun that Schnitzler elaborates in his own work. Yet while Schnitzler's text makes brief reference to the town (Meran) and the nearest city (Bolzan), Vogel's text works obsessively to map the topography of the area. His characters amble along the Tappeinerweg, look out at the ruins of the San Zeno Castle, walk down Goethestraße, take the tram to the village of Lana, cross over the Passer River and stroll along the Gilf Promenade. The text functions as a veritable travel guide to the sights and paths of Merano and its environs. These detailed directions work to assert Vogel's authority over the *Kurort* landscape and, by extension, the attending narrative of sanatorium life.

Vogel introduces himself as an author intimately familiar with the subject of the health resort, its town, inns and institutions. Various plot details, for example, recall three prominent texts of sanatorium literature that were available in German during his stay in Merano. The first is Klabund's 1917 expressionist novella, *Die Krankheit*.[71] The novella, set in various sanatoria and inns around Davos, follows the protagonist Sylvester Glonner as he falls in love with the beautiful tubercular actress, Sybil Lyndquist. After she dies, he continues to admire her performative tubercular affect in the cinema. Although ostensibly a love story, Klabund's text focuses on the ugly and degrading physical consequences of tuberculosis and the psychological

[71] The novel was completed in 1916 and published the year later. Klabund, *Die Krankheit*, ed. Christian V. Zimmerman, vol. 2, *Werke in Acht Bänden* (Heidelbern: Elfenbeing Verlag, 1999), http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/die-krankheit-2549/1.

devolution of its victims.[72] Closer to the time of his stay in Merano, two additional books were published that were of consequence to Vogel. The first was a German translation of Knut Hamsun's 1923 two-volume novel, *The Last Chapter* (Norwegian: *Siste Kapitel*; German: *Das letzte Kapitel*). Like many Hebrew and Yiddish writers, Vogel admired Hamsun's modernist sensibility. As a young man in Vienna he had even sought to describe his own physical state of deprivation with recourse to Hamsun's protagonist in *Hunger*. *The Last Chapter* would have been of interest to Vogel not due to its modernist style but, rather, due to its subject. The text focuses on an international cast of characters and their various romantic dalliances, financial chicanery and deviant behavior at the Torahus Sanatorium in Norway. Alongside Hamsun's work, Thomas Mann's novel *Der Zauberberg* entered the market in November, 1924. The modernist *Bildungsroman* narrates the three-week turned seven-year-long stay of Hans Castorp at the International Sanatorium Berghof in Davos. Completed after WWI, the novel allegorizes the dissolution of the European world order in the lead up to the Great War, transporting representatives from across class lines to the space of a tuberculosis sanatorium.

Vogel's reading habits during his stay in Merano are unknown. A series of specific details and thematic echoes within his novella, however, suggest his familiarity with Klabund, Hamsun and Mann's texts. At twenty-three years old, Irme Ornik is the same age as Hans Castorp when he first entered the sanatorium on *The Magic Mountain.* Beyond this direct allusion, Ornik's personality and physical presence recall a similarly large and suicidal character from Hamsun's *The Last Chapter.* Known simply as "The Suicide," Hamsun's character Leonhard Magnus is perpetually misanthropic and repeatedly threatens to kill himself. His

[72] Katrin Max, *Liegekur und Bakterienrausch: literarische Deutungen der Tuberkulose im Zauberberg und Anderswo* (Würzberg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, 2013), 103–104.

depressed personality, no less than his physical girth, presages Ornik's own relentlessly pessimistic outlook.

Unlike "The Suicide," Ornik carries through with the task of killing himself. He does so after being rejected by Gerte Finger. Like the characters in *Die Krankheit* and *The Magic Mountain*, Ornik becomes entangled in a relationship that is far from health-inducing. In *Die Krankheit*, Sylvester rides in a horse race at Sybil's request, despite his ailing health. In *The Magic Mountain*, Castorp imagines himself to be increasingly infirmed if only to prolong his stay at the sanatorium and opportunities to encounter the seductive Claudia Chauchat. In a manner that resonates with these rhetorically (and tubercularly) love-sick characters, Ornik chases after Finger until the point where he is so hurt by her rejection that suicide is the only solution. Ornik's attraction to Finger reminds one not only of his German literary counterparts but Vogel's own attraction to Ilka. Like Vogel, Ornik takes long walks with Finger during which he is simultaneously drawn to her and repelled from her. For Vogel, the attraction was debilitating. For Ornik, it proved fatal.

This tension between the erotic and deadly, between lust and disease, saturates the atmosphere of Vogel's sanatorium even beyond Ornik's suicidal attraction to Finger. The text draws our attention to the lascivious intentions of the in-house physician. Dr. Maḥlis is suspected of dubious behavior when he is said to have unnecessarily injected female patients in their bare thighs. Like Hofrat Behrens of *The Magic Mountain,* Maḥlis allegedly abuses his position of professional authority to molest female patients. While the sanatorium has been established to care for the tubercular patient, it introduces them to an environment in which the tensions of disease, erotics and power afflict doctor and patient alike. As a rhetorical move, turning the place

of healing into a threatening setting only serves to heighten the anxiety at the center of the novella: a space intended for care and recuperation has been rendered unsafe.[73]

Perhaps most significantly Vogel depicts his Tyrolean sanatorium as a cross section of European tuberculars and invalids. The patients who arrive at the sanatorium hail from across central Europe. Herr Minzel arrives from the Czech lands and Frau Wiesel and Dr. Schamhof travel from Prague. Little Windel has arrived from Vienna as do his fellow urbanites Herr Kisch, Herr Ritter and Herr Adler. Lyuba Goldis journeys to the sanatorium from a Russian-speaking household, origins unknown. And the list goes on. Vogel's novella overflows with new names, characters and geographic places on nearly every page. Aharon Komem, one of Vogel's most sensitive readers, puts the number of characters in this decidedly small narrative at nearly thirty.[74] This surfeit of personalities bolsters the impression of the sanatorium as an international meeting place of ailing patients from across Europe. Vogel's work echoes here the diverse array of people and characters who enter the complex of *Kurhäuser*, sanatoria and *Pensionen* of Klabund's expressionist text, *Die Krankheit*. There, a variety of characters identified by their origins—"the handsome Russian," "the Japanese," "the Bulgarian officer"—gather together in a shared state of ironically romanticized illness. The cross-section of Europe and the bordering Russian Empire also calls to mind the select few who enter and exit Mann's *Magic Mountain*: the protagonist Hans Castorp arrives from Hamburg, Claudia Chauchat from the Eurasian steps, and Mynheer Peeperkorn from Holland. Vogel's Tyrolean sanatorium similarly gathers together patients from across the European map, albeit focusing the majority of its attention on those

[73] Disease, notes Weigand, disrupts the security of Hans Castorp and "puts him beyond the pale of the bourgeois law of mental-moral behavior." Weigand, *Thomas Mann's Novel, Der Zauberberg: A Study*, 47.

[74] Aharon Komem, *ha-Ofel veha-pele: iyunim bi-yetsirato shel David Fogel* (Haifa and Tel Aviv: Universitet Ḥefah and Zemorah-Bitan, 2001), 123.

coming from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Irme Ornik is even described as "a tangled and complicated jumble of Budapest and Vienna."[75]

For some of Vogel's first readers, this excessive number of characters was more of a hindrance to the novella than a productive literary conceit. Reviewing the book in 1929, Shlomo Tsemaḥ accuses Vogel of an inability to penetrate the lives of his characters. The result, he explains, is a boring novella—"a story (that in truth isn't a story)," but rather a series of moments in various characters' lives. While Tsemaḥ admits that the novella succeeds in offering detailed accounts of small moments (such as Ornik performing his compulsive hygienic routine), the narrative ultimately does not cohere into a compelling text. Tsemaḥ also cautions in a dramatic manner not foreign to the Hebrew critic that the style may be a permanent defect of Vogel's "spirit" rather than just "the heavy movement of [Vogel's] first steps" into literature.[76] Decades later, Gershon Shaked offered a similar assessment, critiquing the novella for lacking a strong plot or clear purpose. As Shaked suggested more generously than Tsemaḥ, perhaps the novella was only practice for his subsequent prose efforts.[77]

To be sure, there are moments in the plot that are decidedly slow. What Menaḥem Perri would call Vogel's "life in parenthesis" style, where the narrative lacks motifs to advance it and time seemingly proceeds without any catalysts, appears here in its least refined iteration.[78] What's more, neither Ornik nor Adler is a particularly compelling character. Their personalities are so sketchy that it is hard to sustain sympathy for them even in the face of their terminal

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[75] Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 56.

[76] Sh[lomo] Ts[emaḥ], "Be-vet ha-marpe," *Mozanyim*, 1929, 12.

[77] Shaked, "David Fogel," 95.

[78] Menachem Perry, "Ibud Fogel et Fogel: aḥarit-davar le'taḥanot kavot," in *Taḥanot Kavot: Novelot, Roman, Sipur, Yoman*, by David Vogel (Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-meʾuḥad, 1990), 332.

diagnoses. Yet what is ultimately flawed in these readings is that they do not pay enough attention to the overt intertextual network into which Vogel actively places himself. Shaked goes so far as to say that *In the Sanatorium* is "a type of mixture of personal experience and literary tradition (*The Magic Mountain*, T. Mann; *The Last Chapter*, K. Hamsun), but his attention to these influences stop there.[79] Yet Vogel's first steps into Hebrew prose were guided by a selection of German and modernist works and a reading of them gives meaning to his text not only as a work of art but as a cultural critique. Vogel's text overtly draws on established archetypes of the sanatorium/*Kurort* drama—be it a location (Schnitzler), an international population (Klabund, Hamsun, Mann), an erotic plot conceit (Klabund, Schnitzler, Mann), an attention to the sexual power dynamics of doctor/patient privilege (Mann), the ever-presence of suicide as a final outlet (Hamsun), or the age of the protagonist (Mann). Even the "boring" quality that Tsemaḥ identifies in the novella may be a response to the examination of monotony and disinterest fundamental to sanatorium life explored in Mann's *Magic Mountain.* As Katrin Max had recently shown, Mann's novel incorporates within it both Romantic ideals of tubercular suffering, beauty and literary inspiration while at the same time demonstrating a notion ever more common in German medical discourse by the 1920s that tuberculosis leads to a general crankiness and a condition that constricts the dynamism basic to a healthy life.[80]

For Vogel, *The Magic Mountain*'s own reputation as a *Bildungsroman* is less important than how he uses Mann's text and the *Kurort* narrative to work through his own German modernist literary *Bildung*.[81] Consider, for example, the international population gathered at the

[79] Shaked, "David Fogel," 94.

[80] Max, *Liegekur und Bakterienrausch: literarische Deutungen der Tuberkulose im Zauberberg und Anderswo*, 132–138.

Tyrolean sanatorium. Unlike Mann, Klabund, Hamsun or Schnitzler's characters, Vogel's cohort of patients has more in common than a shared diagnosis. They are all recognizably Jewish. A Jewish accent here, a Hebrew name there, a crass Yiddish joke in between, Vogel's patients reveal their Jewish identity both overtly and discreetly, in their names, in their speech and even in their faces. Like Mann's Naptha, Vogel's Shevaḥ Adler is identifiable with one embarrassing glance to his nose.[82] The homogeneity of the population is far from incidental. Rather, Vogel carves out an exclusively Jewish space of convalescence narrated in Hebrew that evokes the German modernist tradition precisely in order to critique the possibility of a Hebrew-German conversation. More than simply a Judaized retelling of *The Magic Mountain*, Vogel's novella becomes the context in which he allegorizes the Hebrew-German struggle he had first announced in his diary.

In the Sanatorium: Between German and Hebrew

In a recent essay about the Austrian Jewish writer Arnold Schoenberg's opera, *Moses und Aron,* the musicologist Ruth HaCohen locates Schoenberg's work within a German-Jewish milieu of Viennese culture of the later 1920s and early 1930s. One of the touchstones of her analysis is David Vogel's longest and most developed prose text, *Married Life*. Trying to understand the socio-cultural positioning of Schoenberg's work, HaCohen finds Vogel's effort to write a Hebrew novel about German speaking Viennese urban dwellers particularly enlightening.

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[81] On Mann's novel as a *Bildungsroman*, see Russel A. Berman, "Modernism and the Bildungsroman: Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. Graham Bartram (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 77–92. See also T.J. Reed, *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition*, Second (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 226–274.

[82] In a discussion with Castorp regarding Naphta, Joachim Ziemmsen comments on Naphta's nose, saying, "And that nose is too Jewish, too—take a good look at him." Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. John E. Woods (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 379.

The discrepancy between the novel's textual language and the language of its characters, according to HaCohen, bespeaks the theme of "transcendental homelessness" mobilized in the work.[83] Drawing on the terminology of socio-linguist Ghil'ad Zuckerman, HaCohen posits moments of "phono-semantic transposition" as particularly important. In these instances, the German language behind and/or motivating the Hebrew language of the text is identifiable and analyzable to the motivated reader.[84] These are moments when the Hebrew narratival fourth wall is peeled back to uncover and recover the German cultural substrate.

Such moments of Hebrew-German crossing are not unique to Vogel's prose yet it is only recently that the phenomenon has captured the widespread attention of scholars of central European Hebrew writing. Na'ama Rokem, Amir Eshel, Rachel Seelig and Maya Barzilai have all devoted attention to interpreting precisely this "Hebrew-German conversation."[85] Reading a variety of works, these scholars look to the texts of Hebrew writers who were also German speakers and/or German authors in order to understand the historical interplay between these two linguistic and literary systems. This category of Hebrew writers includes such major figures as Mikhah Yosef Berdyczewski, S.Y. Agnon and the Yehudah Amichai. It also includes a cadre of writers who were known in smaller circles, such as Avraham ben Yitzḥak and Ludwig Strauss. Born in Germany, Strauss would go on to write in both German and Hebrew. Rachel Seelig has claimed recently that Strauss' bilingualism was "part of his vision of a continuous multilingual

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[83] Ruth HaCohen, "Sounds of Revelation: Aesthetic-Political Theoloy in Schoenberg's Moses and Aron," *Modernist Cultures* 1, no. 2 (2005): 112.

[84] Ibid., 133n23. Ghil'ad Zuckerman, *Language Contact and Lexical Enrichment in Israeli Hebrew* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[85] Maya Barzilai, "S.Y. Agnon's German Consecration and the 'Miracle' of Hebrew Letters," *Prooftexts* 33 (2013): 58–75; Amir Eshel and Na'ama Rokem, "German and Hebrew: Histories of a Conversation," *Prooftexts* 33, no. 1 (2013): 1–8; Rachel Seelig, "The Middleman: Ludwig Strauss' German-Hebrew Bilingualism," *Prooftexts* 33 (2013): 76–104; Na'ama Rokem, "German-Hebrew Encounters in the Poetry and Correspondence of Yehuda Amichai and Paul Celan," *Prooftexts* 30, no. 1 (2010): 97–127.

'Jewish canon.'" His poetry, argues Seelig, tries "to occupy this border [between Hebrew and German] as an alternative cultural space" and functions as a "model of a transnational, translational approach to literature that decenters entrenched doctrines of exile and rupture in favor of continuous cultural transfer and creative exchange."[86]

Strauss and Vogel were contemporaries. Yet unlike the Strauss, Vogel was not a bilingual writer. He also did not put forth a public opinion as to the merits of a transnational "Jewish literature." Yet as the following reading of *In the Sanatorium* will show, this did not prevent Vogel from beginning to push the boundaries of the German-Hebrew cultural border as well as expose its weakest points. Vogel punctuates the novella with intertextual and linguistic touchstones that identify, examine and problematize just that potentially creatively-symbiotic space. *In the Sanatorium* reads as the staging ground for Vogel's investigation into the compatibility of Hebrew and German as languages and literary traditions. It is an investigation that also will not ignore the ever-lurking presence of Yiddish between the two idioms, as a Germanic language rendered in Hebrew letters. Concerned with language hierarchies, Vogel cannot ignore the Yiddish "other" that haunts his text. In short, Vogel inserts his text into the genre of the German *Kurort* narrative and from there examines his position as both insider and outsider to the literary tradition and language. This becomes clear, as I will demonstrate, in four rhetorical decisions that Vogel makes, the first of which concerns the name of Irme Ornik's roommate: Engineer Tseberg.

[86] Seelig, "The Middleman: Ludwig Strauss' German-Hebrew Bilingualism," 79.

1. Tseberg, Zauberberg, Zwerg

Unlike many of the patients of the *The Magic Mountain* or *The Last Chapter*, the tubercular characters in Vogel's work are more often than not completely indigent. They are being treated, after all, in a "Sanatorium for Those of Limited Resources." Ornik, for example, is so concerned with money, that he even describes his back pain as being localized to a space the size of an "Austrian Krone."[87] Unable to afford a private room, Ornik also has a roommate—the Engineer Tseberg. Their relationship is tense. When we are first introduced to Tseberg, we find him in the middle of chastising the compulsive Ornik for taking his temperature for a second time. Although Tseberg is not a main character, he appears throughout the text as a figure akin to Ornik's devil-on-the-shoulder or, in the Hebrew tradition, his *yester ha-ra* or evil inclination. It is a role he has ample opportunity to practice. As Ornik's roommate, he is privy to all of the latter's obsessive health machinations. Tseberg frequently encourages Ornik to ease up on his rigid hygiene practices and to enjoy himself—to flirt with women and to relax. At one point Tseberg yells at Ornik to "read" and "let your mind wander! You'll see," he adds, "after a week you'll feel better!"[88] Until that point, Ornik had not considered engaging in what he had otherwise deemed an indulgent activity. For over a year and a half, he had refrained from reading

[87] Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 10. Mann's novel has been read as a critique of the money-making agenda of health resorts that promote expensive treatments that have no demonstrable effect. Vogel's novella may also be read as a critique of the then contemporary health infrastructure in which indigent Jewish tuberculars were completely dependent on charities for health care. On Mann, see Thomas Sprecher, "Kur-, Kultur- und Kapitalismuskritik im Zauberberg," in *Literatur und Krankheit im Fin-de-Siècle (1890-1914): Thomas Mann im europäischen Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), 187–249.

[88] Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 47.

and devoted all of his energy to recuperating.[89] Tseberg, however, encourages Ornik to branch out, to engage the social life of the sanatorium and even to find joy in reading.

Like Hans Castorp, Tseberg is an engineer. His name also aurally gestures back to *the* "Zauberberg" where Castorp would dwell for seven years. This is a point emphasized in all printed editions of the novella, in which the first instantiation of his name is vocalized as *Tseberg* (צֶבֶרְג). Engineer Tseberg haunts Vogel's *bet-marpe* as a specter of Mann's great novel, pushing Vogel's texts and Vogel's characters into communion with—or, more precisely, into the same room as—German modernist literature. And yet, the inclusion of the engineer also suggests that when pushed, Ornik and his creator may likely stumble. After all, following a discussion with Tseberg, Ornik initiates a series of actions that leads to his dalliance with Gerte Finger which, in turn, results in unreciprocated love and suicide.

A singular reading of Tseberg's name, however, is challenged by the nature of Hebrew, itself. When, as in various parts of the novella manuscript, the surname is unvocalized—צברג—the pronunciation is flexible. It may be rendered in English as Tseberg, Tsebarg or Tsobarg. It might also be rendered as *Tsverg*, akin to the German word *Zwerg*, meaning "dwarf." In Ruth Achlama's 2013 German translation, for example, Ornik's roommate is none other than that "Ingineur Zwerg."[90] The engineer's name may now be read as a none too subtle onomastic commentary on Vogel's work in comparison with Mann's. How can a thin novella written in a literary language read by few compare to a multi-volume, thousand page novel in German? How can its characters not be dwarfed by the intertextual giant with whom they share a room? One is reminded here of a letter that the Yiddish poet Mani Leib wrote while recuperating from

[89] Ibid., 44.

[90] David Vogel, "Im Sanatorium," in *Im Sanatorium, An der See: Zwei Novellen*, trans. Ruth Achlama (Munich: List Verlag, 2013), 11.

tuberculosis at the Deborah Sanatorium in New Jersey in 1935, over a decade after Vogel's first stay in Merano. While there, he had been sent and had read *The Magic Mountain*. Addressing his friend and fellow poet Meir Shtiker, he put his own life in stark relief with the text. In comparison to the "world of ideas" that opened up to Hans Castorp on the *tsoyberbarg* (magic mountain), Mani Leib explains that his life as a Yiddish poet in the *tsoybertol* (magic valley) was only of the smallest of the smallest (*der mindster fun di mindste*) consequence.[91] "In my magic valley," Mani Leib wrote, "the whole human world comes to life for me in keener miniature… I am not Goethe, nor even Heine. I am a limited Jewish artist will all the shortcomings of a Jew, with his poor cultural inheritance and closeted jargon of a language."[92]

Mani Leib allegorizes cultural hierarchies using the variables of German and Yiddish literature. Unlike his German colleagues, Mani Leib is a Yiddish writer. He is not the great German *Mann* but rather the minimized Yiddish *Mani Leib*. And he describes a poetic life lived in the flatlands, down below, where every effort proves futile in his attempt to leave a lasting literary legacy. Writing in Hebrew, Vogel may likely have been nervous about encountering a similar linguistically-parochial fate and being dwarfed by the German icon. And yet it would be shortsighted not to acknowledge that the engineer's surname may also be read along exactly the opposite allegorical lines. Perhaps Engineer Tseberg/Zwerg appears to suggest not that Mann's German texts dwarf Vogel's but that Vogel's dwarfs Mann's. Earlier in this chapter, we read Vogel's admission that he learned German to the detriment of his Hebrew which shrank proportionately. "My vocabulary resources increase (*mitrabe*) by the hour," he wrote in his diary upon first studying German. "I have to practice in order to travel to Vienna—in all aspects; I

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[91] Mani Leib, "Mayn lebn in tsoybertol," in *Tsuzamen*, ed. S.L. Shneiderman (Tel Aviv: Y.L. Perets, 1974), 494.

[92] My translation follows that of Ruth Wisse. For her commentary on the letter see Ruth R. Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 210.

have to contract (*lehitkavets*) in order to continue."[93] Here, however, he has literally contracted a giant of German literature and placed him within a Hebrew frame. He has similarly reduced the title of Mann's most recent masterpiece to its bare consonants, rendering *Der Zauberberg* into *Der Zwerg, into TsBRG*. The engineer's presence introduces a moment of indecipherability into the text where Vogel reads not only as Mann's interlocutor but simultaneously as both his superior and his subordinate.

2. Hansel, Hermann, Herr Mann

The tense relationship between *In the Sanatorium* and *The Magic Mountain* is further animated as a question of onomastic politics during a series of events that lead to the dismissal of Shevaḥ Adler from the sanatorium. Again, alongside Ornik, Adler is the second most developed character in the novella. Aharon Komem has gone so far as to declare that the novella presents Ornik and Adler together as one divided hero.[94] The characters themselves each comprise two conflicting yet complementary empires. While Ornik embodies Vienna and Budapest, Adler incorporates Vienna and Jerusalem. His last name—the Germanic "Adler"—points to the double-headed eagle adorning the crest of the imperial coat of arms of the Austrian Empire. His first name—Shevaḥ—is the Hebrew word meaning "praise." His name, accordingly, seems to be a pronouncement of his patriotic loyalty to the land of his chosen abode. Less a zealous nationalist, however, Adler is most comfortable in the sanatorium as one of many unyielding Lotharios. Like Vogel, he is attracted to the pale skin and tubercular visages of his fellow

[93] Punctuation in original. Vogel, "Ketsot ha-yamim," 283.

[94] Komem, *ha-Ofel veha-pele: iyunim bi-yetsirato shel David Fogel*, 131.

patients.[95] Yet his most successful conquest occurs after his rather aggressive physical overtures to one of the sanatorium's employees, the buxom non-Jewish chambermaid Anni.

Like his fellow patients, Adler has a particular affection for the non-Jewish women in his midst. Little Windel, for example, takes particular pleasure is touting the merits of the "*shiksah*" female whom he meets on the *Kurpromenade*. Unlike "the kosher daughters of the sanatorium," he explains, the non-Jewish object of his attention is fleshier, the embodiment of health compared to the gaunt Jewish female patients.[96] Anni is similarly described. In order to capture her attention and begin to plot their nighttime tryst, Adler grabs Anni by her fleshy arm and pushes his hand against her overflowing breast.[97] She is neither diminutive nor submissive. She does not contract in the face of Adler's overtures but rather responds to Adler with an encouraging laugh.

After some scheming, a plan is hatched. One night while patients are supposed to be sleeping, Adler and a fellow patient named Fleischmann (literally: "Flesh-man") sneak out of the sanatorium to meet up with two chambermaids, Anni and Betti respectively. After the two couples rendezvous, they share several bottles of red wine at a local inn. Alerting readers to the disruption that is to come, Vogel interrupts this drinking scene with the inclusion of a folk poem that is engraved on the wall of the inn. The quatrain reads: "Rebensaft/Gibt uns Kraft,/Regt das Blut,/Macht uns Mut [The juice of the vine/Gives us strength/Stirs the blood/Makes us brave]."[98]

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[95] Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 19.

[96] Ibid., 24. It is worth noting that one critic has argued that the appearance of the term "*shiktsah*" is especially striking in the novella for it reminds readers that the sanatorium patients are Jewish, despite being the subject of a text where Vogel "writes about non-Jews in a style that is almost not-Jewish." Yet of interest to this discussion is that once again it is a term with overt sexual overtones that brings the Hebrew-German discord to light and indicates that something about the coupling is naughty, transgressive or crass. Shimel, "ha-Tsad shelanu--hayam shelanu."

[97] Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 47.

The lines appear in Roman letters within the Hebrew text, orthographically intruding into the literary space. These letters visibly alert readers to the potential incompatibility of German and Hebrew. Vogel must include a Hebrew translation of the folksong in a footnote, himself signposting the fact that his readers might not understand the German phrases or be able to read the German lettering.

"Rebensaft," as previously mentioned, was also part of a variety of therapeutic treatments for tubercular patients in South Tyrol. Yet here, rather than curative or palliative, the juice of the vine linguistically attests to just how far the Jewish patients are from being cured. Like the ailing English "Lung-Fellow," Vogel's quatrain appears on the page in Roman letters—far from the implied safety of the Hebrew sanatorium. Here, the juice of the vine will not ameliorate their condition but, rather, bespeaks the drunken escapade on which Adler and Fleischmann are about to embark.[99] The German folksong warns readers of the potential danger that will result from the coupling of the two Jewish patients with the non-Jewish nurses. Indeed, throughout the novella, the relationship between German and Hebrew is allegorized as the relationship between non-Jews and Jews. Having crossed the threshold of the Hebrew sanatorium, the warning appears all the more overtly, emblazoned in German on the wall of the inn.

Yet the ominous warning sign goes unheeded. Rather, following this eruption of German language, the two couples pair off, eventually retiring to Betti's apartment which, unlike the

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[98] Vogel is likely referring to a variant of the following folk poem: "Der/Rebensaft/Gibt uns Kraft,/Ist gut,/Schafft Muth/Und Gluth/Dem Bluth." Joh. Hehl, ed., "Die Weinflasche," in *Blüthen der Musen für das Jahr 1816* (Vienna: Jos. Riedl, 1816), 14.

[99] This is further emphasized by the footnote that Vogel appends to the scene. There, he translates the German phrase as follows: *Asis ananim/noten lanu koaḥ,/meorer damenu/u-mosif omets la-lev* [Juice of grapes/gives us strength/arouses our blood/and gives courage to the heart]. In the Hebrew, Vogel specifically directs readers' attention to this link between *Rebensaft* and the *lev* (heart, chest). The former works to help those afflicted with chest diseases. Yet here, the German "juice of the grapes" is not being deployed for the health benefits of the Hebrew tubercular but, rather, in the name of romantic exploits. Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 78.

sanatorium, is dark, stuffy and dirty.[100] The air, notes the narrator, "was heavy and dense [*atum*], a few days old." Once again, environmental clues should set off warning signs for the tubercular Adler. Neither the "Rebensaft" of the inn nor the suffocating atmosphere of Betti's apartment will bode well for the Jewish patient, short of breath yet insistent on the sexual conquest. Early the next morning, they return to the sanatorium, yet the night of passion does not go unnoticed. By breakfast, Adler is expelled. Romantic dalliances are not to be tolerated. Acting on an erotic impulse has led to Adler being dismissed from the sanatorium. Hermann, the non-Jewish sanatorium orderly, is sent to help Adler pack.

Adler then begins to wonder who was responsible for his dismissal. While he knows that such relationships among patients are not sanctioned, he does not know how the affair has come to the attention of the institution's superintendant. Before Hermann arrives to help with the packing, Adler realizes that it was none other than the janitor, himself, who had played the role of informant. As readers learn earlier in the text, Anni is also seeing Hermann and it is he whom she had asked to leave the gate open so that she, Betti, Fleischman and Adler could leave the sanatorium undetected. This character might have flown under the readers' radar were it not for a conversation that Adler held with Anni at the pub the previous evening. In a flirtatious move, he asks Anni whether she loves him more than "that Hansel [*he-Hansel*]." After some confusion, Anni realizes that he is speaking about Hermann. Between little Hans and Hermann, Vogel's reader again begins to see an ever-larger figure hovering in the text. Of course, it is none other than *Herr Mann* himself, whose own little Hans had spent seven long years living and lusting in a mountaintop sanatorium for tuberculars. And it is that Hansel/Hermann who is, in the end, responsible for Adler's dismissal from the sanatorial enclave.

[100] Ibid., 81.

With the introduction of Engineer Tseberg on the third page of the story and this final act by Hermann/Hansel towards the novella's conclusion, Vogel's novella now appears to have been bookended by the players and language of *The Magic Mountain*. Tseberg may have encouraged Ornik to go out into the world republic of letters—to read, flirt and relax—but when Adler does just that, he is kicked out by none other than *Herr Mann* himself. Should we understand Hermann's intrusion into the text, therefore, as a symbolic gatekeeper of modernist German writing? Will Adler along with Vogel—whose name, coincidentally, shares an avian agenda—be excluded from the literary tradition? Again, the complexities of the text preclude a clear answer. On the one hand, Adler has successfully wooed the non-Jewish object of his affection. Read symbolically, he has been allowed access to German-culture through an erotic encounter first initiated in a space of disease and illness. The fictional sanatorium, according to this interpretation, is the artistic setting from which Adler makes his first leap. On the other hand, Adler has been expelled from the sanatorium on account of Hermann's jealousy and betrayal. When Adler returns to the fictional sanatorium, he learns that he is no longer welcomed there. Read allegorically, *Herr Mann* has kicked Adler out of the literary sanatorium. And yet, perhaps most curiously, *Herr Mann* has also kicked Adler out of the exclusively Jewish/Hebrew recuperative space. The affair has rendered Adler's place within both the German tradition and Hebrew tradition equally tenuous. Adler's expulsion reminds us that he is not playing a game in which he is able to set his own rules. When Hebrew (i.e. Jewish) and German (i.e. non-Jewish) mix, asserts the text, Vogel's character will find neither physical nor literary stability. Reading Adler as a Vogelian avatar, we must ask whether the text is concerned that Vogel will meet with a similar fate? Will *In the Sanatorium*, ever find a settled relationship vis-à-vis the German literary tradition? Vis-à-vis Hebrew?

3. The Sun, *die Sonne*, *ha-Zoneh*

These questions take on new significance as we continue to consider precisely how German language functions in the text and how it challenges the authority of the Hebrew narrative language. As in Adler's dismissal, much of the Hebrew/German linguistic tension in the novella corresponds to the interactions between Jewish patients and non-Jewish health professionals. For example, when the non-Jewish Nurse Liesel wishes to quiet rowdy patients, she yells with her Tyrolean accent at them in transliterated German (here, I have transliterated the transliteration), "*Yo, vos ist den, mayne herrn, mit der ligekurr?!*" "What, gentlemen," she asks with exasperation, "is going to happen to your rest time?" The narrator follows this with a parenthetical Hebrew aside in which we find a literal translation of her admonition, "(*ve-hashekhivah, rabotay, mah tehe aleha*)." Vogel may have included the translation in deference to his readers for whom the German would have been foreign. As in the explanatory footnote appended to the "Rebensaft" poem, the Hebrew text works under the assumption that the German words would not be immediately comprehensible. Yet here, unlike with the appearance of the quatrain in the inn, Nurse Liesel's German words are rendered orthographically in Hebrew letters. The legibility of the words is not at issue. The likelihood that Vogel's Yiddish-speaking, Hebrew-reading audience would not have been able to read or understand Nurse Liesel's admonition is quite low. Rather, Vogel includes Liesel's German words if only to demonstrate that even her most "defective" (*pagum*) German succeeds in quieting the patients. German, argues the text, is the language of non-Jewish authority figures who govern the patients and rule over the sanatorium. Liesel may have an accent but her German words silence the room and her Jewish patients. Vogel's addition of a Hebrew explanation, by extension, seems completely

unnecessary. It is as if he is writing for an imagined audience so divorced from Yiddish and/or German that Liesel's words would be incomprehensible. Read differently, it is as if he were writing for a future audience for whom the German-Hebrew conversation would be relegated to a past life.

Liesel's statements also draw our attention to the German words that appear in the Hebrew text—either transliterated, as in the case of the nurse's admonition, or engaged in a number of German-Hebrew word plays. Such word plays, as Maya Barzilai has shown, can point to a variety of authorial agendas. For example, in her work on the Hebrew writer S.Y. Agnon's 1952 novella, *To This Day* (*Ad henah*), Barzilai pushes for a reevaluation of the text as a meditation on "the problem of finding a home or place in language, and in the Hebrew tongue, specifically."[101] Barzilai reads *To This Day* as an ironic engagement with Gustav Meyrink's 1915 popular novel, *Der Golem*. She approaches Agnon's work as an example of Hebrew writing of the 1940s and 1950s that at times insistently and at other times subtly recognizes the persistence of German within Agnon's Hebrew milieu. In an astute close reading, Barzilai notes that a main character—an amnesic soldier who has returned home from war—begins to recover when his name, *Hans*, is finally revealed. Transcribed into Hebrew, his unvocalized name may also be read as *ha-nes*—"the miracle." This German-Hebrew word play bespeaks Agnon's own appreciation for the creative power of language and bilingual interanimation.[102]

Agnon's miraculous *Hans*, however, is a far cry from Vogel's punishing *Hansel*. And, as it soon becomes clear in Vogel's text, German-Hebrew word plays are often anything but commentaries on the mutually-ennobling encounter between languages. For example, towards the beginning of the novella, readers encounter a brief exchange between patients. It is the

[101] Barzilai, "S.Y. Agnon's German Consecration and the 'Miracle' of Hebrew Letters," 49.

[102] Ibid., 49; 66–67.

beginning of the rest hour and they are preparing for their daily afternoon ritual of sunbathing. Trudi Wiesel—"the little imp from Prague"—has been tasked with letting her fellow patient Frau Schnabel know whether or not the sun is to be found in the proper position. "Frau Schn—a—bel," yells Wiesel, "she is still sleeping!" Frau Schnabel asks in reply, "Who is sleeping?" and Wiesel answers, "The sun!"

The brief exchange would likely have gone unnoticed had not Adolph Ritter, a male patient sunbathing one level below, overheard the women's conversation. As we read:

> And a good idea occurred to Adolph Ritter, who was lying in the middle of the balcony. Turning to his left and right, slightly raising the upper part of the body, he commanded [those around him] in a restrained voice and with helpful gestures, like a general in battle who had already been thrown from his horse:
> —One—two—th—r—ee!!!!
> And all those lying on the first floor in unison [*lit. in one mouth*]:
> —Frau Schna—bel— *Die—so—nne*!
> From above came boisterous laughs from the women's mouths.[103]

Ostensibly, this is a scene documenting an afternoon rest cure. But it soon devolves into a comically crass exchange between a variety of orifices. Frau Schnabel ("Mrs. Beak") is made fun of by a chorus of mouths that laugh at her in unison at the command of an aggressive male patient. Were a German reader to have heard the text read aloud, however, the humor of the scene would likely have been lost. In the recent German translation of the novella, the ensuing laughter seems completely unwarranted. What, after all, is so funny, about *die Sonne*? Does it not simply point back to the heliotherapeutic cures prescribed to tubercular patients?

For Vogel's Hebrew readers, the answer would be obvious. The seemingly innocuous German term *Sonne* is rendered in the Hebrew as vocalized *zoneh,* a "prostitute" or "slut." The vowels added by Vogel in the manuscript also specifically suggest that the reference is to a male prostitute, further augmenting the brunt of the taunt. That which is supposed to heal—the sun—

[103] Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 10.

radiates here textually as a locus of derogatory affect. Like the resignified *Rebensaft*, the *Sonne* functions less as a therapeutic presence than that which contributes to the patient's measured pain. What's more, the word play further draws us into a world where sexual intrigue and illness are collapsed, where the sun, the whore and the tubercular Jewish body meet at the intersection of German and Hebrew.

It is helpful also to consider here the rhetorical resonance of the pun. As Haun Saussy following Maureen Quilligan has shown, the pun offers a productive model for understanding "that instant of ambiguity whereby two meanings are suspended in a single signifier, and two speech communities can coincide in their language, although not in their frames of references."[104] In Vogel's text, the pun both links and distinguishes the German from the Hebrew speakers, those who hear *Sonne* and think of celestial light and those who hear *zoneh* and think of disparaging names and sexual impropriety. Most interesting, however, is how the pun of *Sonne/zoneh* alerts us to a third linguistic community of which Vogel was quite aware—that is to say, Yiddish speakers, for whom both *Sonne* and *zoneh* would have been immediately comprehensible. Unlike the wordplay of *Hans/hanes*, the slash between *Sonne* and *zoneh* gestures towards the Yiddish *zoyne*. The potential source of healing, the sun, not only becomes a naughty Hebrew sobriquet but also identifies the Yiddish lurking between the Hebrew and German divide. Can German and Hebrew overlap, asks the text, without the situation devolving into one extended sexual joke or, for that matter, into a naughty Yiddish aside? Is meaningful German-Hebrew coupling possible without recourse to Yiddish as a mediator?

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[104] Haun Saussy, "In the Workshop of Equivalences: Translation, Institutions, Media in the Jesuit Re-Formation of China," in *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 32. Quilligan notes that "like the word 'pun,' the term 'allegory' defines a kind of language significant by virtue of its verbal ambidextrousness. What is radical about this redefinition is the slight, but fundamental shift in emphasis away from our traditional insistence on allegory's distinction between word said and meaning meant, to the simultaneity of the process of signifying multiple meaning." Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 26.

Vogel notably did not publicly share in the hostility towards Yiddish, as did many Hebrew and German writers. Yiddish was often critiqued as an unrefined jargon, a language whose impurities reflected the mongrel racial construct of the Jews themselves. Mani Leib, himself a Yiddish poet, lamented "the closeted jargon of a language" in which he wrote.[105] Yet Vogel was not overly antagonistic towards Yiddish. While in the sanatorium, he wrote to Melekh Ravitch on behalf of a fellow patient named Vishlitski. He beseeched the Yiddish editor to publish the amateur Yiddish patient-writer's work. Just as Vogel's German-Hebrew literary support network would help fund Vogel's recuperation, so too would Vogel advocate on behalf of his fellow patient-writers.[106] Yet regardless of his sympathies for the Yiddish literary project and its practitioners, Vogel's novella problematizes the relationship of Hebrew and German as one insistently disrupted by Yiddish. Put differently, Hebrew and German are collapsed into one big Yiddish pun. The ability for the Hebrew text to capture and communicate German language, be it Liesel's admonition or Ritter's cuss, is repeatedly challenged as the German assumes a Yiddish face when rendered in Hebrew letters. In her work on the writer Ludwig Strauss, Rachel Seelig has examined the role played by Yiddish as a *Mittlersprache* (mediating language) in Strauss' 1914 novella, *Der Mittler* (The Middleman). The novella thematizes the difficulty a young Jewish man named David has integrating with his non-Jewish German classmates. Only the soothing voice of his mother calling him by the Yiddish "Dovidleh" provides him with comfort. This moment of relief also becomes a moment of self-discovery as the German-speaking David finds solace and a creative energy in Yiddish. As Seelig writes, "Only when he acknowledges his ethnic origins—a moment of self-discovery caused by the intrusion of

[105] My translation follows that of Ruth Wisse. For her commentary on the letter see Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan*, 210.

[106] David Vogel, "Letter to Melekh Ravitch," January 16, 1925, ARC. 4º 1540, Folder D. Vogel, National Library of Israel Archives.

Yiddish—that David discovers his latent creative prowess that is transformed into a *Schöpfer*, a true and honest poet."[107]

For Vogel, Yiddish is not a pathway back to a Jewish cultural ideal. It does not bring the assimilated German Jew "back" to a Jewish identity. Rather, it prevents the Hebrew text from totally occupying a German space. The disruptive position of Yiddish between Hebrew and German also registers in the second phrase that Vogel presents to readers in Roman orthography. During a dining room scene, one patients calls another "*ein betamter Bursch*," "a charming boy."[108] Like the German drinking song adorning the local inn, this sarcastic aside linguistically interrupts the Hebrew page, presenting readers with the *Bursch* (a version of the German word *Bursche*) who is *betamter* (a Yiddish adjective of Hebraic origin meaning "charming"). On the one hand, we might interpret this intrusion as one more reminder to the reader that Vogel's characters are speaking German. On the other hand, we might also understand this phrase as Vogel's way of indicating that the German of these patients would only be comprehensible to the Yiddish reader. Even when the "German" language of the patients appears in "German," it does so with a Yiddish inflection. And, by extension, even the Hebraized German of these speakers who use a term such as "*betamter*" must filter their Hebrew through Yiddish. Elaborating on the puns he earlier defined, Haun Saussy posits that "a connected series of such puns is an *allegory*." With these two scenes of *Sonne/zoneh/zoyne* and *ein betamter Bursch*, Vogel allegorizes the inability of the Hebrew text to fully inhabit the German space of the sanatorium. Lurking between Hebrew and German there is, according to the text, always a Yiddish pun. It subtends both Hebrew and German orthography, it interrupts both Hebrew and German discourse and it

[107] Seelig, "The Middleman: Ludwig Strauss' German-Hebrew Bilingualism," 87.

[108] Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 30.

reinforces the message that *In the Sanatorium* narrates the tension between Hebrew and German rather than their collapsibility.

4. On Jewish Time

The sanatorium in Vogel's text is a liminal space where the potential for German-Hebrew creative symbiosis is posed if only to be problematized. The text repeatedly disrupts any chance for the two languages and literary traditions to map onto each harmoniously. In addition to the embedded allusions to Mann's text as well as the German/Hebrew/Yiddish eruptions, Vogel drives this point home in one of the only scenes of writing in the text. For while there are multiple allusions to the novella's literary context, the fictionalized sanatorium is a distinctly uncreative space—the patients spend their days eating, sunbathing, taking walks and flirting. Excluding one of the patients who is handy with a camera, there are no artists, writers or creative personalities walking through its halls. The most embellished verbal exchanges are relegated to the flirtatious banter of would-be lovers.

The sole account of literary output occurs when Irme Ornik decides to write a letter to Dr. Kalbel in Vienna. Unwilling to trust the in-house physicians, Ornik writes to the Viennese doctor every two weeks, providing him with a report of his recuperative process as well as appending a detailed chart, entitled "Temperature Chart of Irme Ornik, Student of the Academy of General Commerce." The chart contains information concerning his temperature, pulse, sputum, bowels, weight, medications and general notes. Vogel includes the table in its entirety in the Hebrew text. Most of the information is relatively quotidian in the life of the tuberculosis patient.[109] Over the course of three days, his temperature fluctuates from 36.6 to 37.8 degrees Celsius. His pulse

[109] The chart does not appear in the German translation of the book.

varies between a low of 80 to a high of 106 beats per minute. And he adds marginalia, such as "restless all night," "bloody nose," and "exhaustion after a ten minute walk." There is also a column in which Ornik marks down the date. There, Ornik records the three successive dates that he has been charting his health as the 11th, 12th and 13th of Shevat. The fifth month of the Hebrew calendar, Shevat roughly corresponds annually to January or February. In 1925, the dates would have corresponded to February 5th through 7th and in 1926, January 26th to 28th—both overlapping with Vogel's own stay in the sanatorium.

Ornik's decision to record the date using this notational system is curious. An educated German speaker, Ornik would likely have chosen to mark the date using the terms of the Gregorian calendar. Yet in the novella, he inscribes the chart he will send to his Viennese doctor according to the Hebrew dating system. This immediately positions him outside the temporal progression of medico-scientific and secularizing time. Were we to assume that the physician Dr. Kalbel was also Jewish, as well as aware of the Hebrew calendar, we might infer that evident here is not only a secret letter being written by Ornik but also an example of Jewish medical in-speak; after all, the patient uses a culturally-specific language to communicate his experience of illness. Yet working in Vienna, it would be highly unlikely that Dr. Kalbel would function in his daily routine according to the Hebrew calendar. Rather than connect Ornik to the Viennese physician, the Hebrew dates reinforce just how far he is—physically, culturally and most, important, linguistically—from the Austrian and German-language cultural center.[110]

[110] It is of interest to note before moving on that in the German translation of Vogel's text, the table included by the translator does not specifically identify the Hebrew month used by Ornik. Rather, the table is dated simply "11.1, 12.1, 13.1," allowing readers to intuit the dates as January 11th-13th. In doing so, however, Vogel's contemporary German interlocutors miss out on this most crucial of narratival details. In German translation, Ornik has been rendered part of the rhythm of Gregorian time. In Hebrew, however, he remains at a distant remove. David Vogel, "Im Sanatorium," in *Im Sanatorium, An der See: zwei Novellen*, trans. Ruth Achlama (Munich: List Verlag, 2013), 42.

Writing about early modern culture in Europe, Elisheva Carlebach has carefully attended to the significance of the Jewish calendar as an example of "how a minority culture creatively and simultaneously embraced and distanced itself from the majority culture."[111] The constant negotiation of the rhythms of Jewish time over and against the Christian calendar, argues Carlebach, offers strong evidence of the double consciousness of Jewish culture as both an inward and outward-looking body. Although writing in a far different European climate than Carlebach's subjects, such double consciousness of competing temporal frameworks are evidenced in both the lives of Vogel's characters and that of Vogel, himself. For example, when Vogel first arrived in Vienna, he switched away from the Hebrew calendrical system he had used in his diary while in Vilna to the Gregorian system; the new chronological system, as one might expect, appeared more in line with his burgeoning German studies.[112]

Yet while the move to Vienna in Vogel's case was marked by this shift from Jewish to Christian time, Ornik's letter from the sanatorium to Vienna is dated according to the Hebrew month of Shevat. At the same time as disease brings Vogel's text close to a tradition of sanatorium writing, his character writes himself out of that temporal alignment. Ornik's dating also touches on one of the most prominent concerns of those same sanatorium narratives—specifically, the measurement of time while in the institution. Hans Castorp famously arrives to Davos intending to stay for three weeks and only leaves the International Sanatorium Berghof seven years later. Shortly after his arrival, Castorp is shocked to learn that the doctors have recommended that his cousin Joachim remain on the mountain for at least another six months. "Six months? Are you crazy?" replies Castorp. Joachim replies in turn, "Ah, yes, time… You

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[111] Elisheva Carlebach, *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 4.

[112] Vogel, "Ketsot ha-yamim," 286.

wouldn't believe how fast and loose they play with people's time around here. Three weeks are the same as a day to them. You'll see. You have all that to learn."[113] Several hundred pages later, Castorp (along with the reader) has adapted to the temporal pace of sanatorium life. "Notions of time here," as he reflects "were different from those applicable to trips to the shore or stays at a spa. The month was, so to speak, the shortest unit of time, and a single month played no role at all."[114] As Russell Berman has summarized elegantly, above and beyond its status as a *Bildungsroman*, *The Magic Mountain* sits comfortably within the category of the *Zeitroman*; it "poses fundamental questions about its own time, and it is a novel thematically and structurally concerned with time and its duplicities."[115]

Vogel's novella similarly touches on the tension between the progression of time in the sanatorium as well as in the Mannian "flatlands" below. Ornik, for example, is shocked at one point to realize that he been hospitalized for over a year and a half. It is Ornik's dating system, though, that most directly removes this Tyrolean sanatorium for indigent Jews from the temporal zone of its geographic setting (Austria) and its literary context (German modernism). Vogel positions Ornik within a temporal frame of the character's own creation, of Ornik's own writing and within a Jewish context. With this move, the novella chronologically divorces itself from the German temporal-cultural sphere to which the text alludes. Vogel's work argues against the compatibility of Hebrew and German literature. The bodies share neither a language nor a temporal-experiential context. Rather, Hebrew and German are pitted against each other. Their texts are out of sync with each other, or, put differently, the Hebrew sanatorium is rendered anachronistic. When Ornik finishes drafting the letter to Dr. Kalbel, he gives the envelope to the

[113] Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, 7.

[114] Ibid., 221.

[115] Berman, "Modernism and the Bildungsroman: Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain," 74.

janitor, Hermann, to send out into the world. Once again, *Herr Mann* appears as the gatekeeper of the literary sanatorium.

Conclusion: Tubercular Contraction

Following the scene of Ornik's letter writing, readers find themselves taking stock of the sanatorium bookshelves. The books are old and yellowing, some are classic novels and some are illustrated periodicals that are at least fifty years old. Next to the shelves, the narrator observes, are a number of patients flipping through volumes "that have soaked up the sweat of thousands of sick hands and the tens of thousands of tuberculosis germs."[116] Vogel does not offer any more information about the books or bookshelves, but the rhetorical thrust of the observation is strong. He has pointed readers to consider the work of literature as an infectious agent. The book, according to the text, is a potential site of contagion. It is the space where tuberculosis may be touched, absorbed and contracted.[117]

For the patients at the sanatorium the lesson may already fall flat. After all, they are already suffering from the disease. Yet it is precisely a concern for the polyvalent English category of contraction that has motivated the preceding inquiry into Vogel's early writing. Already in his diary, Vogel alerts his readers to his fear that his Hebrew must contract, must shrink, must *hitkavets* in order to make room for German language and culture. He responds to that threat by growing his own Hebrew prose style, by developing a literary language to describe his daily life and by rendering his Hebrew flexible enough to endure the encroaching German vernacular. He begins to adopt the Gregorian calendar, to engage German literature and to

[116] Vogel, "Be-vet ha-marpe," 48.

[117] Ornik, himself, is aware of the contagiousness of his disease. At one point, he proclaims that the "sick person, a burden to others, also doesn't have the right to inhale air!... Especially the lung patient! He endangers the healthy with every breath. He fills the air with corrupting bacteria." Ibid., 45.

assimilate a set of German cultural ideas of disease, creativity and erotics while remaining committed to Hebrew.

In Vogel's interlingual imagination, Hebrew remains as the creative medium of choice. Yet over a decade after Vogel first began to study German, he would still be engaging the same questions of linguistic and cultural compatibility. No longer writing for a private diary, Vogel explores these questions in the space of his first Hebrew novella, *In the Sanatorium*. The novella is heavily influenced by Vogel's own experiences "taking the cure" in a Tyrolean sanatorium for indigent Jews. More than an autobiographical account of his hospitalizations, Vogel allegorizes the fictional Genesungsheim as a European tradition of writing about the sanatorium. This symbolic sanatorium contracts around its Jewish patients. Fictional and linguistic borders are established and, when crossed, speak to the tensions subtending the Hebrew-German conversation. When Engineer Tseberg/Zwerg enters the Hebrew sanatorium, he brings with him the *Magic Mountain*, dwarfing Vogel's thin novella. "I have known more than one reader," wrote Weigand, "to take up [*The Magic Mountain*] and lay it down again, for fear of contracting tuberculosis through suggestion."[118] For Vogel, however, it is not only a fear of contraction but a fear of being rhetorically contracted, of being diminished in a linguistic hierarchy and of being replaced by German language. The text reacts to this threat by reducing *Der Zauberberg* to its consonantal base, shrinking the novel into its most minimal form and relegating the Engineer Tseberg to a peripheral role. Like the Hebrew of Vogel's diary, the novella works to immunize itself from the intertextual interloper by contracting the literary giant into a Hebrew dwarf.

The more one reads the German-Hebrew intertextual moments in Vogel's work, the more complicated antagonisms between the two languages and cultures proliferate. The German *Herr*

[118] Weigand, *Thomas Mann's Novel, Der Zauberberg: A Study*, 39.

Mann kicks the Vogelian avatar of Adler out of the Hebrew sanatorium while Ornik writes himself out of Gregorian time. Vogel's Hebrew narrator disparages the Tyrolean accent of Nurse Liesel while a German-Hebrew pun reveals the ever-lurking specter of Yiddish attending the hyphenated exchange. And while the sanatorium itself provides an entrée into a German literary conversation, Vogel's Hebrew repeatedly gestures to the closed borders of that tradition, to orthographic dissimilarities, to proprietary administrators and to a conversation that is written under the sign of incurable disease, of intercultural unease and of the emaciating illness of tuberculosis.

Vogel's world is far from the positively-troped space of German-Hebrew cultural exchange identified by Seelig in her reading of Ludwig Strauss' prose. Rather, Vogel's German-Hebrew conversation is sick, angry and combative. Even while the novella identifies Vogel's familiarity with the German model of sanatorium writing, the rhetorical moves of the text push Vogel precisely out of the tradition. Ornik commits suicide, Adler is expelled from the sanatorium and the remaining patients are no closer to physical recuperation. In broad strokes, one character leaves of his own volition, one character is kicked out and the remaining characters are left in an ambiguous zone of conflict and illness.

For more than a vehicle of symbolic capital, tuberculosis is the literary context through which Vogel enters the German cultural sphere as well as recognizes his necessary distance from it. The disease offered Vogel new literary opportunities to see his work translated into German and even to advocate on behalf of a fellow writer, albeit a Yiddish author. It also garnered him the support of the Hebrew Viennese literary elite. Yet Vogel did not become famous by virtue of contracting a terminal disease. He certainly did not boast the same renown as Sholem Aleichem and a global appeal was not initiated in his name. His disease did not render him the central

figure of a private salon, as it did for Raḥel. And tuberculosis did not place him squarely within a tubercular bio-literary network of literary opportunity as it would for the Yiddish poets of the JCRS. Rather, tuberculosis mediated Vogel's first steps into the Hebrew-German literary conversation. And, it provided him with the literary language to challenge precisely the possibility of that conversation. That sanatorium, as indicated in his novella, was not simply a place for tubercular patients to recuperate but also the allegorized stage of German-Hebrew difference.

Conclusion

After the Cure

Let's go back to the sanatorium. People have to go back to where they came from. So they say, if I'm not mistaken.
—Aharon Appelfeld, *Badenheim*[1]

David Vogel left Merano in 1926 and made his way to Paris. Excluding extended stays in Berlin, Vienna and Tel Aviv, he settled in the French capital and remained there on and off for over a decade. Throughout his time in Paris, he lived in the manner to which he had grown accustomed: he was poor, sickly and underemployed. There was no sign that either financial or physical relief would arrive. Still, he continued to write and despite his French surroundings his prose remained embedded in the German cultural landscape of his early work. When the war broke out in 1939, Vogel left Paris with his daughter and joined his wife in the town of Hauteville in the east of France. Ada Vogel had already moved to the town in order to enter the Sanatorium de l'Espérance. The institution had been founded in 1926 by Adelaide Rothschild, specifically for women, like Ada, who suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis.[2]

At the outbreak of WWI, Vogel had been living in Vienna. A Russian subject, he was imprisoned by the Austrian government. Now living in France as an Austrian citizen, he was imprisoned once again in 1939. From the fall of that year to the summer of 1940, he was moved from internment camp to internment camp, unsure whether or not he would be able to rejoin his

[1] I draw on Bilu's translation throughout this chapter. Appelfeld, Aharon, "Badenhaim, ir nofesh," in *Shanim ve-sha'ot* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbuts ha-Me'uḥad, 1975), 81; Aharon Appelfeld, *Badenheim 1939*, trans. Dalya Bilu (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1980), 117.

[2] Henry W. Paul, *Henri de Rothschild, 1872-1947: Medicine and Theater* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011), 25.

wife and daughter in Hauteville.[3] During his incarceration, he wrote dozens of postcards to Ada and, after being released, he would go on to distill his experiences through a literary lens. During this period, he drafted a Yiddish narrative that has alternatively been described as an autobiography, a novel, and a chronicle. The text concerns the recent imprisonment of an Austrian Jewish painter named Weichert by the French authorities. Over the course of the narrative, Weichert moves between camps, where his living conditions grow exponentially worse and his Jewish identity increasingly stigmatizing.

Vogel ensures that the link between author and protagonist is established within the first few pages. In one of the opening scenes, Weichert is arrested. Despite his protestations that as a Jew he is no supporter of Hitler, he is told that he will soon be placed in an internment camp. The gendarmes suggest that he procure a document from a reputable French citizen attesting to his loyalties. Weichert turns to the local Dr. Bonafé, who is in charge of the sanatorium where Weichart's wife is suffering from tuberculosis. The physician, in fact, shares his name with Dr. Léon Bonafé, then the chief medical officer at the Sanatorium de l'Espérance where Ada Vogel was recuperating. The character Bonafé provides Weichart with the document and then turns to Vogel's literary avatar. We read:

> He tried to calm me, saying that I shouldn't lose hope, that I'd return soon, in France we're…"the French aren't like that"… And it occurred to me that he must use the same strong tone when he pacifies his patients who are hopeless, for whom there is no treatment.[4]

[3] For the most complete account of Vogel's internment in France as well as his murder at Auschwitz, see Dan Laor, "Le-an huvelu ha-otsrim?: al ha-perek he-ḥaser bakhronikat ha-milḥamah shel David Fogel," in *Mimerkazim la-merkaz: sefer Nurit Govrin*, ed. Avner Holtsman, Mikhal Oron, and Zivah Shamir (Tel Aviv: Mekhon Kats le-ḥeker ha-sifrut ha-Ivrit, Bet ha-sefer le-mada'e ha-Yahadut al shem Ḥayim Rozenberg, Universitat Tel-Aviv, 2005), 385–411.

[4] David Vogel, "Kulam yats'u la-krav," in *Taḥanot kavot: novelot, roman, sipur, yoman*, ed. Menachem Perry (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbuts ha-Me'uḥad, 1990), 72.

This final line is devastating. Vogel paints the future of Austrian Jewish citizens with the brushstrokes of chronic illness. The condition is permanent, incurable, fatal. Shortly after the conversation, Weichert is imprisoned at a camp in Bourg-en-Bresse and then moved to an internment camp in Arandon. There, one of his fellow inmates suffers a tubercular hemorrhage and is released to a hospital in Grenoble. Weichert is gripped by jealousy. "To be liberated by tuberculosis!," he writes, "In my mind, there was only: 'To be liberated.'"[5] For the moment, it is as if Weichert could serve as one of Didier Fassin's interviewees. A lack of health seems to offer a glimmer of freedom. Yet as Bonafé's words suggest, a terminal disease could offer no permanent escape. Considering Vogel's personal experience with tuberculosis as well as his earlier novella, these episodes are all the more unsettling. Once again, the metaphor of disease names the path that the Jewish artist will take through a European landscape. Yet here that path is not marked by allusions to Thomas Mann, Klabund or Arthur Schnitzler. The dynamism of that potential conversation in lost. There is only a tubercular future with no possible relief.

Vogel's text would not appear in published form until 1990. Since the time of the text's composition and until today, the presence of the tubercular trope has only waned in Hebrew and Yiddish literature. With the introduction of antibiotic treatments for tuberculosis beginning in the 1950s, the sheer number of patients shrank at a rapid rate. By 1955, the so-called "Triple Therapy" treatment had been implemented. Patients were treated successfully using a combination of three chemotherapeutic agents: streptomycin, PAS (para-aminosalycilic acid) and isoniazid.[6] As fewer individuals in the United States and central Europe suffered from tuberculosis, health institutions around the world were closed or repurposed. Today the Jüdische

[5] Ibid., 116.

[6] The combination was necessary to combat strains of the disease that proved increasingly resistant to streptomycin and PAS. Thomas Dormandy, *The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis* (London ; Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1999), 362–369.

Genesungsheim in Merano houses municipal offices and apartments. The Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society in Denver was turned first into a cancer research center and then into an art college.[7] Raḥel's apartment on 5 Bogroshov is now a private residence above a real estate broker and travel agency. And there is a plaque in the town of Nervi, where Sholem Aleichem once took the cure. The coastal resort town, however, no longer welcomes scores of tubercular patients.

Over the decades, the disease also lost cultural currency for Hebrew and Yiddish writers. The former looked elsewhere for the material to generate the narratives of Israeli literature and the latter faced an ever-dwindling population of writers, readers and publishers. Perhaps surprisingly, Yiddish writers did not turn to tuberculosis as a metaphor for the decline of the literary tradition; the Yiddish poet Jacob Glatstein, for example, deployed the sclerotic motif instead.[8] One exception to this rule of tubercular erasure persists in the canon of Holocaust literature, especially that written during and in the immediate aftermath of WWII. The prevalence of the disease in internment camps, ghettos and death camps led writers, including Vogel, to reference the disease in a variety of memoiristic accounts. In 1946, the Yiddish writer Chava Rosenfarb published "The Ballad of T.B.," a poem that follows a teenage girl in the Łódź ghetto on her way to the cemetery.[9] She carries with her a small note bearing her terminal diagnosis. It stands as the final text that this young woman will read. As late as 1992, Rosenfarb returned to the theme of tuberculosis in her autobiographical novel, *Letters to Abrashe*.[10] The modified epistolary novel narrates the exchange between two patients who begin to write to each

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[7] Ernest Gilman, *Yiddish Poetry and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, 1900-1970* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2015), xvii.

[8] Jacob Glatstein, "Tsurikgetrakhtungen," in *Gezangen fun rekhts tsu links* (New York: Bikher Farlag, 1971), 12.

[9] Chava Rosenfarb, "Te-be-tse balade," in *Di balade fun nekhtikhn vald* (London: The Narod Press, 1947), 19–24.

[10] Chava Rosenfarb, *Briv Tsu Abrashen* (Tel Aviv: Y.L. Perets Farlag, 1992).

other after the war. Both patients are located in hospitals in displaced persons camps. The protagonist suffers from typhus and she writes to the eponymous Abrashe, who she believes is suffering from tuberculosis.[11] The hospital functions as a liminal space for the Holocaust patient-survivors who hover between life and death. In Rosenfarb's novel, tuberculosis is not a sign of European cultural potential so much as the narrative device that lends some stability to an otherwise homeless person. Both tuberculosis and typhus, moreover, linger as physiological remnants of the Holocaust. The war may be over but the disease persists.[12] We might also recall here the tubercular patients whom H. Leivick visited in the Gauting Sanatorium. Many of these survivors spent years in the hospital, too sick to emigrate.[13]

In the world of post-war Hebrew fiction, there is one author in particular who stands out in his allegorical invocation of tuberculosis and the space of the sanatorium. The Israeli novelist Aharon Appelfeld is himself a survivor of the Holocaust. Born in Romania in 1932, he grew up

[11] At the end of the novel, the protagonist learns that, in fact, she has been writing to Abrashe's paralyzed cousin. The Abrashe of the title had perished.

[12] This is especially noticeable in memoirs, such as that of Inge Auerbacher. Auerbacher developed tuberculosis as a young child in the Thereisenstadt concentration camp, where she was imprisoned at the age of seven. In her memoir, a book written for an adolescent audience, she recalls how she had prayed for tuberculosis while in Thereisenstadt because children with the disease were given a small amount of additional food. She, too, eventually tests positive. Her symptoms begin to manifest while on the ship to America. After landing, her family did not speak of the disease by name because of the stigma of contagion associated with it. She is hospitalized for the disease in America and suffers from reoccurring episodes for the next decade. Eventually, she becomes a chemist. The novel memoir how the disease would continue direct the entire course of Auerbacher's life. Inge Auerbacher, *Beyond the Yellow Star to America* (Unionville, NY: Royal Fireworks Press, 1995).

[13] H. Leivick, *Mit der sheyres hapleyte* (New York: H. Leyvik Yubiley-Komitet durkhn Tsiko-Farlag, 1947). The Machon Lavon archive also contains a letter written in Yiddish by the patients of the Gauting Sanatorium from 1953. They are writing because they are considering moving en masse to Israel yet they want to make sure that they will be met with the necessary accommodations once they arrive. They have heard that other tubercular immigrants were thrown into transit camps (*ma'abarot*), where they only become sicker. They write that the are aware that the economic situation in Israel is not good but they claim a moral right to demand appropriate funds as they are the last "remaining victims [*di letste farblibene korboynes*] of Hitler's regime." Yidishe Patsiantn Komitet (Sanatorium Gauting), "Tazkir shel va'ad ḥole shaḥefet be-maḥane Fernvald-Germaniyah," October 1, 1952, VII-126-876, Machon Lavon.

in a German-speaking household.[14] During WWII, he and his family were sent to a concentration camp. After the young Appelfeld escaped, he wandered from village to village and in 1944 joined the Russian army as a kitchen aide.[15] He immigrated to Palestine in 1946 and his first collection of Hebrew short stories was published in 1962. He, himself, never suffered from tuberculosis.

Since the publication of his first Hebrew collection, he has continuously set the majority of his texts in the central European landscape of his youth. Accordingly, tuberculosis, health spas and sanatoria appear throughout his literary oeuvre. In his 1995 novel, *Until the Dawn's Light* (*Ad she-ya'aleh amud ha-shaḥar*), the protagonist is a young Jewish woman named Blanca. She grows up in Austria in a petit bourgeois family. They spend every summer in resort town chosen precisely to avoid other Jews. Blanca's father believes that "Jewishness [is] an illness that had to be uprooted" and as a young girl she had similarly conceived of her identity as "a kind of severe disease, accompanied by fever and vomiting."[16] At first, her mother tries to dissuade her. Later, after being diagnosed with tuberculosis, she tells her daughter that Jews are weak and that they "suffer everywhere." Blanca goes on to marry a violent non-Jewish man. Adolf, whose name overstates his anti-Semitic predisposition, repeatedly criticizes Jews and refuses to let Blanca visit her mother in the sanatorium. Eventually, Blanca kills her husband and begins a life on the road as a serial arsonist, which ultimately leads to her demise.

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[14] He was born in the Bukovina region of Romania, now in Ukraine.

[15] For a short biography of Appelfeld, see Gila Ramras-Rauch, *Aharon Appelfeld: The Holocaust and Beyond* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 3–12.

[16] I draw here on Jeffrey Green's translation. Appelfeld, Aharon, *Ad she-ya'aleh amud ha-shaḥar* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1995), 21; 57; Aharon Appelfeld, *Until the Dawn's Light*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (New York: Schocken Books, 2011), 23; 69.

Like other Appelfeld narratives, *Until the Dawn's Light* is a story of failed assimilation, of abusive intermarriages and of a German-Jewish society that understands Jewish life as a pathological disease. Nowhere are these themes more pronounced or the critique more relentless than in Appelfeld's 1975 novella, *Badenheim, Health Resort* (*Badenheim,'ir nofesh*). He sets the scene of the health resort using his own memories from childhood. In hindsight, he recalls that the spa towns were "shockingly petit bourgeois and idiotic in their formalities. Even as a child, I saw how ridiculous they were."[17] At no point do his sympathies lie with his subject as he writes with the hubris of someone who knew better, even as a child.

The novella introduces Badenheim as a typical spa town of central Europe. Assimilated Jews arrive there each summer for entertainment, recuperation and as an exercise in proper social behavior. Set in 1939, the typical spa season is interrupted by the increasingly onerous demands of the Sanitation Department. First the municipal body requires all the Jewish residents and guests to register. Although some are initially hesitant, all eventually acquiesce. Later, the officials institute the forced emigration of Badenheim's Jews to Poland. In the final scene, the characters enter the trains without protest. After boarding, the local impresario remarks, "if the coaches are so dirty it must mean that we have not far to go."[18] The dramatic irony of the novella is heavy-handed and readers are left without a doubt that this will be the final train ride for the residents and guests of Badenheim. As Ruth Wisse has commented, "fate sits in judgment on all the ugly, assimilated Jews—fate in the form of the Holocaust. The result

[17] Appelfeld, Aharon, "A Conversation with Philip Roth," in *Beyond Despair: Three Lectures and a Coversation with Philip Roth* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1994), 66.

[18] Appelfeld, Aharon, "Badenhaim, ir nofesh," 103; Appelfeld, *Badenheim 1939*, 148.

is a series of pitiless moral fables more damning of the victims than of the crime committed against them."[19]

It is, in fact, difficult to read *Badenheim* without wishing to excoriate Appelfeld for his relentlessly over-determined interpretation of German Jewry. It is even more troubling when we take into account how frequently Appelfeld is placed in a Hebrew literary tradition alongside Vogel in passing comments. Yigal Schwartz notes that both authors matured in shared cultural landscape and Gila Ramras-Rauch rightly both mention Vogel and Uri Nissan Gnessin as prose writers whose prose influenced Appelfeld.[20] Both Schwartz and Ramras-Rauch are correct in their assessments, yet *Badenheim* is also a far cry from Vogel's first novella. Appelfeld does not engage the German literary tradition to test the boundaries between Hebrew and German cultural production. Consider, for example, the rhetorical difference of two characters' names, one from *In the Sanatorium* and one from *Badenheim*: Engineer Tseberg and Frau Zauberblit (alt.: Tsoyberblit). Vogel's character initiates a conversation with Thomas Mann's *Zauberberg* that involves a back and forth of power and prestige. He simultaneously dwarfs Mann's epic novel while being dwarfed by it. Appelfeld's Frau Zauberblit resists such a back and forth. Divorced from a dismissive non-Jewish husband, Zauberblit has visited Badenheim every summer for years. In the novella, she arrives to her visit directly from a tuberculosis sanatorium. Throughout the text, she is feverish and spits up blood. Her surname points back to Mann's *Zauberberg* while at the same time to her bloody sputum. Her enchanted identity is tied to her *blit*, i.e. her *blüt*, her

[19] Ruth R. Wisse, "Aharon Appelfeld, Survivor," *Commentary* 76, no. 2 (1983): 76.

[20] Yigal Schwartz, *The Zionist Paradox: Hebrew Literature and Israeli Identity*, trans. Michal Sapir (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 96; Ramras-Rauch, *Aharon Appelfeld: The Holocaust and Beyond*, 14. These two examples are anecdotal and are not the central arguments of these texts.

blood.[21] Her racialized identity is legible in her name and there is no escaping her tubercular condition just as there is no way for her or any of the characters to hide from their Jewish pasts. Tuberculosis is simply the physiological manifestation of Appelfeld's understanding of European Jewish identity. And for Appelfeld, the only thing outside of *Badenheim* is the death camp.

At the same time as tuberculosis became a treatable affliction, Appelfeld painted pre-war life with a tubercular visage as incurable. Tuberculosis and the sanatorium become metaphors for the inevitable destruction of the diaspora. Central Europe, in Appelfeld's literary world, is a topography of graveyards. The sanatorium is the waiting area before the gas chamber and tuberculosis is the disease that points to an inherent Jewish weakness exacerbated by assimilation. Appelfeld's writing manifests an understanding of tuberculosis through literature that Sander Gilman has investigated as a cultural historian. Tuberculosis for both metaphorizes Jewish difference as an identity that is always, only and can be nothing other than fatal. While not every writer is Kafka, all the tubercular Jewish characters of Appelfeld's oeuvre are already fated to succumb to their pathologized identities.

By limiting the metaphoric range of tuberculosis to the prefiguration of Jewish destruction, Appelfeld flattens out the opposing valences that have attended the disease throughout this study. Tuberculosis impinged on the health of the Jewish writer while expanding his or her literary horizons. It was both physically debilitating and literarily generative and it isolated writers at the same time as it expanded their readerships and translated their texts for new audiences. Tuberculosis confined them to hospital beds while it simultaneously introduced their artistic profiled to new geographic contexts. The disease mobilized authors, poets, readers, editors, publishers and critics at the same time as it managed the variety of anxieties about the

[21] Often, the German letter [ü] is rendered in Hebrew or Yiddish by the phone [i]. For example, the German city of Lüneberg is rendered in Hebrew as *lineburg*. Frau Tsauberblit's name, accordingly, would be rendered in German as Frau Zauberblüt.

future of Yiddish and Hebrew literature. It assumed a Romantic patina as well as a socialist edge, it looked out at the world through a Zionist lens and from a modernist sanatorium, and it was expressed by authors who peppered their words with humor and those who could not avoid crying in a melancholic tone. What Appelfeld ignores in his literary map of central Europe is precisely the paradox of tubercular capital. For him, the disease means only one thing—only one vision of Jewish cultural and corporeal failure. But for the writers of this study, a diagnosis of tuberculosis was a physical reality and a literary possibility. It led them down unpredictable pathways of creativity and experimentation. "Let it be consumption!" declared Peretz's protagonist, "At least something should happen." What the histories and writing of Sholem Aleichem, Raḥel, Yehoash, Lune Mattes, H. Leivick, David Vogel, and others have proven is precisely that *something did happen*. And that *something* was neither homogeneous nor predetermined. The question of tuberculosis has become a matter of the past for Hebrew and Yiddish writers today. But for the authors and poets of the early twentieth century, it was always a matter of the future, its risks, its obstacles and its rewards.

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