

JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF AMERICA
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Fall 1996

Prof. David G. Roskies

Lit. 5217x *Sholem Aleichem: The Comedy of Dissolution*

Requirements: Ten 2-3 pp. writing assignments.

5 Sept. The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem

Ken Frieden, *Classic Yiddish Fiction: Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, & Peretz* (Albany, 1995), chap. 4; "Chronology of S.A.'s Life" - PJ5124 F75 1995

12 Sept. Breaking the Maskilic Mold

דאָס מעסערל / The Penknife (1886) - xeroxed
דער אוצר / האוצר (1889) - xeroxed

Dov Sadan, "Three Foundations (SA and the Yiddish Literary Tradition)," *SA and the Critical Tradition* (= *Prooftexts* 6 [1986]): 55-63 - file #157 on reserve.

Dan Miron, *Sholem-Aleykhem: Person, Persona, Presence* (NY, 1972) - PJ5129 A3 S5 Z7643

19 Sept. In Search of the Jewish Novel

סטעמפעניו / Stempenyu (1888) - xeroxed
אַ בריוו צו אַ גוטן פֿרײַנד (1889)

Frieden, chap. 5.

26 Sept. Goat to Scapegoat

דער פֿאַרבישוּפֿטער שניידער / The Haunted Tailor - xeroxed

David G. Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing: The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), pp. 147-67. PJ 5124 R67.

3 Oct. **The Man Who Wouldn't Go Home**

מנחם-מענדל / Menakhem-Mendl - xeroxed

Max Erik, "*Menakhem-Mendl* (A Marxist Critique)," *SA and the Critical Tradition*, pp. 23-39 - file #157 on reserve.

Ruth R. Wisse, "Ironic Balance for Psychic Survival," *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero* (Chicago, 1971), chap. 3. PN 6149 J4W5 1971.

Dan Miron, "A Sampling of *Menakhem-Mendl*," *Michigan Germanic Studies* 3:2 (1977): 12-33 - file #2 on reserve.

10 Oct. **Unanswered Questions**

דאָס טעפּל / The Pot (1901) - xeroxed

ווען איך בין ראָטשילד / If I Were Rothschild (1902) - xeroxed

Victor Erlich, "A Note on the Monologue as a Literary Form: Sholem Aleichem's *Monologn* - A Test Case," in *For Max Weinreich on his Seventieth Birthday* - file #574 on reserve.

Frieden, chap. 7.

Hana Wirth-Nesher, "Voices of Ambivalence in SA's Monologues," *Prooftexts* 1 (1981): 158-71 - xerox on reserve.

17 Oct. **Tevye: The Making of a Folk Hero**

דאָס גרויסע געווינס / Tevye Strikes It Rich (1895)

plus orig. version from *Hoyzfraynd* 4 (1895)

אַ בוידעם / Tevye Blows a Small Fortune (1899)

היינטיקע קינדער / Today's Children (1899)

Hillel Halkin, "Introduction" to *Tevye the Dairyman*

Meir Wiener, "On SA's Humor" - xeroxed.

TBA Screening of Maurice Schwartz's *Tevye* (USA, 1939)

25 Oct. **The Comic Job**

Hodl (1905), Chava (1905), Shprintze (1907)
 לֶח-לֶחֹ / Tevye Leaves for the Land of Israel (1909)
 Lekh-lekho (1914).

Frieden, chap. 6.

Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (California, 1990), pp. 102-7. PJ 5113
 H33 1990

Michael Stern, "Tevye's Art of Quotation," *SA and the Critical Tradition* - file #5014

31 Oct. **Myths of the Mundane**

עוֹלָם-הַבָּא / Eternal Life (1902) - xeroxed
 אוֹיף פֿסַח אַהיים / Home for Passover (1903) - xeroxed
 דִּי פֿאַן / The Flag (1900) - xeroxed
 דער אורח / The Guest (1906) - xeroxed
 אַיבער אַ היטל / On Account of a Hat (1913) - xeroxed

Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing*, pp. 167-75.

Ruth R. Wisse, *Sholem Aleichem and the Art of Communication* (Syracuse 1979) -
 PJ5129 A3 S5 Z9.

7 Nov. **Brave New Worlds**

מאָטל פֿייסי דעם חזנס / Mottel the Cantor's Son (1907-1916) - xeroxed
 Dan Miron, "Bouncing Back: Destruction and Recovery in Sholem-Aleykhem's *Motl peyse dem khazns*," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 17 (1978): 119-84 -
 file #6003 on reserve.

Naomi B. Sokoloff, "Sholem Aleichem -- *Mottel, the Cantor's Son*," *Imagining the Child in Modern Jewish Fiction* (JHUP, 1992), chap. 3. PN842 S6 1992.

14 Nov. **Trains, Stories, & Miracles**

אייזנבאַן-געשיכטעס / Railroad Stories: To the Reader, The Slowpoke Express,
 The Miracle of Hoshana Rabba, The Wedding that Came Without its Band,
 Third Class - Halkin

David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), pp. 172-76 - PJ5020 R67 1984

21 Nov. **The Comedy of Dissolution**

Railroad Stories - the other 16 tales

Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing*, pp. 176-81.

Optional

דן מירון, "מסע באיזור הדמדומים: אחרית דבר לסיפורי רכבת, " סיפורי רכבת, עמ' 227-300.
PJ 5129 A3 S5 K675 1989

5 Dec. **The Storyteller as Healer & Hero**

פֿונעם יריד / From the Fair (1908-1916) - Leviant

David G. Roskies, "Unfinished Business: Sholem Aleichem's *From the Fair*,"
Prooftexts 6 (1986): 65-78 - xerox on reserve.

Translations Into English

(Titles marked by an asterisk are available at West Side Judaica.)

*Ken Frieden, *Classic Yiddish Fiction: Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, & Peretz* (Albany: SUNY, 1995),

*Hillel Halkin, trans., *Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories* (Schocken pb - \$15.00).
PJ 5129 A3 S5 T4213 1987.

Curt Leviant, trans., *From the Fair: The Autobiography of Sholom Aleichem*. PJ5129 A3 S5
F83 1985.

*David G. Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing: The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling* (Harvard University Press, pb \$16.75). PJ 5124 R67.

Writing Assignments

19 Sept. **Romantic Realism in *Stempenyu*.**

Define Sholem Aleichem's romantic realism by examining the interplay of comic-grotesque and lyric styles of narration within each chapter and from one chapter to the next. How does this achieve his desired poetics for the "Jewish novel"?

26 Sept. **The Multidetermined Goat.**

Follow every description of goats and allusions thereto as you try to unearth the mock-mythic structure of this tale. Where (if at all) does the grotesque reality give way to pure fantasy?

3 Oct. **A Feminist Reading of *Menakhem-Mendl* or, What Ever Happened to Sheyne-Sheyndl?**

How does SA distinguish between male and female speech patterns? What is the function of the mother-in-law's embedded folk speech? Why does Sheyne-Sheyndl ultimately disappear from the scene?

10 Oct. **Structure and Meaning in "Dos tepl."**

Despite appearances, "Dos tepl" is a carefully structured work. How does this structure manifest itself? What is the real question Yente is posing and why is there no answer to it?

25 Oct. **Tevye's Dialogic Art in "Hodl."**

Are the Tevye stories a species of skaz or are they dialogical? What is the implied role of his two main addressees -- "Pani Sholem Aleichem" and God?

31 Oct. **SA's Myth of the Mundane**

- (1) How does SA go about secularizing and democratizing the Jewish holidays?
- (2) How does he invest this "folk religion" with transcendent meaning?
- (3) Does myth mitigate the sense of fatal inevitability?

7 Nov. **Motl Between Old and New**

How does SA revisit the theme of generational strife from a child's point of view? What are the structural similarities between the Old World and the New?

14 Nov. **Wresting Miracles from an Age of Technology: Tales of the Slowpoke Express.**

How are the stories told in and about the Slowpoke Express different from the rest of the book? How is personal memory different from traditional narrative?

21 Nov. **The Comedy of Sexual Exploitation**

"The Man from Buenos Aires" is one of the most harrowing tales in SA's oeuvre. How is his comic art being stretched to its limits?

5 Dec. **SA: A Man for All Seasons**

Is Sholem Nokhem Veviks an archetype? A romantic hero? A portrait of the young artist? Choose one chapter or scene to exemplify your thesis.