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DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH LITERATURE

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May 29, 1987

Mr. Leon Wieseltier
Literary Editor
The New Republic
1220 19th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Leon:

Schocken is coming out with Hillel Halkin's new translation of the Tevye monologues and the Railroad Stories by Sholem Aleichem. It's a book I very much want to review, both because I admire Halkin's free-wheeling approach, and because Sholem Aleichem is my overriding passion.

What I envision is a piece titled "Sholem Aleichem's Magic" that would do for Sholem Aleichem what Richard Poirier did for Emerson (presumptuous, I know, but I think I can do it). The "magic" idea is to show how SA achieves a larger-than-life quality in his scrupulously "realistic" narratives. It has to do with his use of language, setting, cyclical plots, and especially his manipulation of history. SA, in short, invented magic realism.

Let me know what you think and what the guidelines (length, deadline) for such a piece should be.

Yours,



David G. Roskies

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