

## The Education of Tevye the Dairyman

1894

Those  
ten yrs.  
make a  
huge  
difference!

When Sholem Alekhem's first story about Tevye, "dos groyse gevin" <sup>the hero is</sup>, was published in 1885, Tevye was depicted as an impoverished <sup>who had</sup> poor wagon driver with the difficult task of feeding seven daughters and a wife on meager earnings. However, as in a fairy tale, his fortunes changed suddenly one day in a forest. He found two frightened women wandering about <sup>suddenly</sup> lost and drove them in his wagon to their home. Their grateful families rewarded him handsomely with money, a cow that gave no milk (shades of "The Enchanted Taylor"), and food. With the cow and the money, Tevye embarked upon a new life as a dairyman who was able to call Sholem Alekhem an intimate friend. This transformation is the first of several subsequent changes in Tevye which Seth Wolitz explores in his excellent study, "The Americanization of Tevye or Boarding the Jewish Mayflower". Wolitz details how Tevye, in a series of films and plays which appeared between 1919 and 1971, was gradually transformed. <sup>in a forest</sup> He evolved from an East European folk type, who had difficulty coping with the changing world about him, into an adaptable, liberal Jewish-American grandfather, who successfully embraced the modern world and American culture. In 1964, says Wolitz, in the Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye finally emerges as a new cultural icon who reflects contemporary Jewish cultural history as it was seen from the perspective of liberal Jewish ideologies in the 60's. <sup>too fast</sup> <sup>going</sup> <sup>story</sup>

Conflicts between the forces of tradition and enlightenment which once fractured Tevye's religious world in Europe were now interpreted in the light of American ideas concerning individual

rights and progress. The result was a complete new fiction. Says Wolitz:

A gigantic substitution occurred in the musical. American ideals of individual rights, progress, and freedom of association are assimilated into the Judaic tradition which is *presented as a cultural tradition parallel to the American*. The musical posits Jewish adaptability as the key to Jewish continuity. Tevye becomes the mediating force in the musical leading Anatevka to America to confirm and fulfill Anatevka's ideas in contemporary Jewish American life. (p. 527. My italics)

The key to continuity and survival in *Fiddler*, then, became Jewish adaptability. This is made manifest in Tevye's repeated question about conformity and tradition. At every rupture involving a daughter and tradition, Tevye first asks a question about how tradition started, and then answers that he doesn't know. That permits him to freely embrace the new traditions, saying: "Our old ways were once new, weren't they? It's a new world, a new world. Love." By the end of the musical, Tevye has been transformed into a robust immigrant grandfather who joyfully prepares to leave for America with three daughters and an entire new shtetl called Anatevka. His re-invented past, says Woltiz, is created in the image of the present.

I was unable to agree with Wolitz's assertion that only in *Fiddler* did Tevye <sup>become</sup> an adaptable, mediating force who was could lead the old Jewish world into a new American life. In

this paper I seek to establish that Tevye's ability to adapt to new, more liberal views was already demonstrated in the original novel. The story of Tsaytl and Hodl reveals that Tevye reluctantly yields to the personal wishes of his daughters over the interests of the larger society. Wolitz regards this as a sign of ambivalence in Tevye regarding traditional practices and as proof of how deeply the Haskala had already penetrated into ordinary Jewish life. Tevye's father, notes Wolitz, would never have waived about enforcing patriarchal rights. However, Tevye and his generation are caught in a moment of cultural transition. I agree completely. My argument with Wolitz centers on what Tevye does eventually about that ambivalence.

Tevye's refusal in the novel to yield to Khava shows us he draws a line on assimilation and will not yield to the concept of intermarriage. However, when he accepts her back into the family in the end, he is able to do so only because he finally resolves his ambivalences about traditional patriarchal rights. He accepts a more adaptable, benign perspective on tradition and authority which permits him also to accept the legitimacy of individual rights. As the story ends, he is positioned to lead the newly reconstituted, more enlightened society forming around his daughters and grandchildren to congenial, enlightened soil in America. It is not a solution without problems, as Sholem Rabinovitch always <sup>new</sup>. There were no simple, easy, black and white answers. In America the pattern of adaptability will lead to greater acculturation and finally to the assimilation of *Fiddler*.

It was Sholem Rabinovitch himself who took the evolving, adaptable, humanistic Tevye of his novel and transformed him back into an earlier, more rigid, more religious and observant folk type in his dramatization of *tdm* The Tevye of the drama lack complexity, subtlety, or humor. He wears peyes, which grow longer as the play progresses. He repeatedly reads psalms from his pocket tehilim in moments of stress. He is in possession of a large Hebrew library and names off the titles of his seforim. Jewish ritual practices highlight each scene, centering on kaddish and shiva, the lighting of shabbos candles, and the havdala ceremony. Augmenting this, Tevye behaves like the stereotype of the fawning, obsequious Jew when he runs around the village the entire day before Khava's wedding searching for her. He scrapes and bows before the gentile, kisses his boots, and allows himself to be spat upon. We must speculate that this was done in an effort to please popular "folk" tastes for melodrama and nostalgia in the American Jewish theater audiences and thus to assure financial success. *sad, sad, sad, but true.*

In the novel, all of Tevye's variously acculturated daughters act out positive and negative tendencies already present in Tevye. The two conformist younger daughters, Sprintse and Beyle who instead of rebelling against their father act out his materialistic interests, are both "punished" in the end. The three older rebellious daughters, who represent activist, enlightened pluralistic Jewish cultural patterns, are in the end "rewarded". Each in her own way helps lead Tevye gradually forward toward

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this*

*detention*

greater adaptability and away from older rigid models of authority. They are a new breed of emancipated Jewish woman who grew out of the the spirit of enlightened, anti-autocratic European thought which began centuries earlier as Western Enlightenment. It emphasized reason and science rather than religion and authority . It broke with an earlier emphasis on form, order, tradition, obedience; created a revolution in the arts and sciences throughout Western Europe.; and gave rise to realism and romanticism in literature. In the late 18th century it influenced Jewish thought as the Haskala , a movement which spread from Germany west to the the Russian Pale and finally, in the late 19th -early 20th century, even into Tevye's tiny nameless dorf..There it contributed to the generational confrontation between an ambivalent Tevye caught between and old world and a modern one and his resolute modern daughters.



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Sholem Rabinovitch was born in 1859, three years into the relatively benevolent reign of Alexander II., the tsar who freed the serfs and undid many oppressive laws passed in the previous 30 year rule of his father, Nicholas I. Restrictions for Jews were removed in the areas of education, business, press censorship, and limitations upon where Jews could live. Life improved immeasurably for Russian Jews.

The writer's father, Nakhum Rabinovitch appears, to some extent, to have straddled two worlds (as Tevye will) for he was a pious Jew, a Talmud scholar, a devoted follower of the Reb<sup>be</sup> of Talna; yet at the same time, he read and enjoyed secular Hebrew novels written by rebellious writers who often ridiculed religion. He gave his talented son not only a conventional religious education, but also encouraged him in the direction of the enlightenment-- again, much as Tevye also would later do, with his daughters. When Sholem was 14 years old, his father placed him in a Russian district school rather than in a yeshiva, and by 1876, when Sholem graduated from the gymnasium, aged 17, <sup>Sholem</sup> ~~he~~ thought of himself as an intellectual and a maskil. He wore western dress, spoke fluent Russian, and was already writing stories in Hebrew.

When Sholem Rabinovitch was 22, Alexander II was assassinated and his son, Alexander III, ascended the throne of Russia (1881-1894). A terrible period in Jewish history followed, and continued, unabated for 36 years, into the reign of Nicholas II (1894-1917). The condition of the Russian Jews deteriorated rapidly. An economic strangulation of Jews in the Pale and rising levels of popular anti-semitism were augmented by government

incited pogroms and arbitrary laws. Again there were restrictions on mobility, university education, property rights, and professional and educational advancement. The maskilic dream of full participation in the mainstream of Russian life, which had so recently seemed attainable, suddenly disappeared. It was against the background of these terrible years, the worst for Jews since the Chmelnitzky destructions of 1648-1649, that Sholem Rabinovitch engaged in the serious art of comic Yiddish fiction.

The author published his first Yiddish story in 1883 at the age of 24. "tsvey shteyner", centered on the blighted romance of two parted lovers who go mad (he) or commit suicide (she) The story was a veiled, exaggerated account of Sholem Rabinovitch's own aborted romance with his former student, Olga Loyeff. Sholem, her tutor, was sent packing in 1879 when her wealthy father discovered their romance. Though the story lacks serious literary merit, it is interesting because the topic, love, and the narrative mode, romance, were both deployed several years later in three subsequent novels: *stempenyu, yosele solovey* and *tdm* published respectively in 1889, 1890, and 1894-1916.

In the same year, 1883, Sholem Rabinovitch was reunited with Olga and they were married in a private ceremony for like the later fictional Khava, Olga broke all the traditional Jewish rules. when it came to love. She engaged in a surreptitious correspondance with SR, and slipped away secretly from her father's home to be married to him without benefit of a shadkhin or parental consent. Unlike Tevye, however, Elimelkh Loyeff, forgave his daughter and new son-in-law their deception, and

invited the young couple to live with him on his large estate. In that edenic setting, where young Sholem had earlier spent the happiest 3 years of his life, as her tutor, the couple lived in romantic, privileged upper class isolation. They were removed from the financial wants which confronted the masses of Russian Jews and the writer was extremely productive. He not only wrote a great deal, but he also dedicated himself to the renovation of Yiddish literature. He was especially critical of the love stories of Shoymer, which he found were filled with non-realistic and non-Jewish plots and characters--counts, dragons, witches, and enchanted princesses. His intent was to counter that influence and to write realistic social novels about ordinary Jewish men and women that would be devoid of Shoymerisms. Yet reading his two early novels today, though one finds social criticism of traditional Jewish society, especially as it relates to the oppression of women and the misuse of Jewish artists, the writer's efforts at realism seem overwhelmed and undone by a heavy handed romantic and melodramatic plot structure, characterizations, and tone. Romance was to remain a congenial mode for the writer all his life, but in his later years, as he was forced to leave the edenic estate of his father-in-law and fend for himself and his family in a more difficult economic world, the writer learned to temper the idealized romantic mode of fiction and round it out with large amounts of moderating realism and comedy, and occasional forays into the hinterlands of irony and tragedy.

Someday, you  
should read  
0142  
Gal. 4



In romance, the hero is larger than life and lives in a world where unusual events occur as a matter of course. With the exception of "der farkifeshter shnayder", Sholem Rabinovitch's stories are seldom pure romance. If they were, (like "The Enchanted Tailor") they would be complete fairy tales. Thus even in his earliest days, his romance stories were adapted to meet modern requirements of plausibility. In their basic plot structures, the early stories employ the structure of romance. Stories, therefore, often consists of a set of adventures patterned in three stages. Usually there is some variation of a perilous journey which involves the hero in a dangerous, even life and death struggle, which in a successful quest, he wins.

SR augments romance with social criticism in *Stempen-yu*. However, the union there between the two narrative modes makes for an uneasy and dull marriage. The novel lacks the comic humor and adroit balance of laughter and tears that brings such distinct life to SR's later fiction. Intent upon removing the exotic Shoymer element, the author instead succeeds in replacing one set of romantic conventions with another. Instead of princesses and witches, we find pure virtuous Jewish heroines and evil demonic grotesque Jewish villains. The two virtuous heroines are counterposed by two equally evil, Lilith-like demonic females with extraordinary sexual abilities who enslave and emasculate men.

The two earlier books take their titles from their male heroes,\* yet SR appears as much, if not more interested, in the lives and difficulties of the virtuous bas Yisroyl (ideal) daughters

note Anita Norich's article in Prooftexts which discusses this.

who are oppressed by traditional Jewish culture. Denied individual rights and freedom of choice, they are held in low esteem, and manipulated into arranged loveless marriages. In *Stempenyu*, Rokhl, suffers in a loveless, arranged marriage. Soon she finds herself awakened to a world of submerged sexual desires by (the border-line demonic) musical talents of a klezmer called Stempenyu. She is saved from submitting to him at the ultimate moment by the sudden vision of a long dead friend. When --that same night--she returns home, accepts responsibility for her actions, and confides in her husband, she at last finds love with, and lives happily ever after. If nothing else, the fact of (1) the magical vision, which comes from another world to rescue her, and is not presented as a dream, and (2) her successful "rebirth" at the end tells us that, despite the author's protestations to the contrary, we are awash in the land of romance. The good Jewish daughter successfully survives her troubled quest for love and is rewarded by the author at the end of a year not only with a child but with a small shop that she runs efficiently and profitably. So much for SR's early attempt at a Jewish love story and social criticism of traditional society. Even setting the story back into an earlier time period could not save it from being essentially a fairy tale. Everything works out fine for virtuous Rokhl, who never really rebels and who returns to the traditional fold. However, the evil satanic, dissolute klezmer is appropriately punished. He becomes impotent and withers away into a loveless old age still holding his violin. Although society

I think you  
exaggerate  
here

contributes to his destruction, there is little sympathy for him or exploration of that complex problem. *Also He cursed by Norich.*

In *Yosele Solovey*, another virtuous Jewish maiden, Esther, loses her beloved young Yoysele, a talented khazn, to the world and the lures of a rich sophisticated seductress. Esther's family manipulate her into a loveless marriage with a wealthy widower and, in the end, as in "*tsvey shteyner*", Esther sickens and dies, while a remorseful Yoysele goes mad. Does the unhappy ending -- which is now, certainly, a heavier indictment of traditional society than *Stempenyu*, merit the term "better social criticism"? Yes and no. Yes, because now the author offers criticism of the society, but his criticism lacks bite, complexity, and comic leavening.

Later, in *tdm*, the author again takes up the problem of women and romance and uses the themes to explore the complex, disruptive forces inside and outside traditional Jewish culture in his own troubled. He merges romance and comedy successfully to explore a range of problems and solutions. His heroines take various positions. Some win, some lose, and often Tevye is confused, as SR was in *Stempenyu*, about which side of the great divide between modernity and tradition to place himself on.

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After his father-in-law died, SR inherited his vast holdings. In 1887 he moved to Kiev where he continued to write, work in the stock exchange, and edit/published the first and second issues of *di yiddishe folks bibliotek* in 1889 and 1890. The stock market

crash in '90 wiped him out and put an end to his journal. He escaped his creditors by fleeing to Europe (as Beyle's bankrupt husband in *tdm* will flee to America) while the rest of the family relocated to less posh living quarters. After his mother-in-law (who lived with the family, but never cared much for her son-in-law) paid off his debts, the writer returned. (In later years, he repaid her this debt).

In 1894, a more experienced SR, now 35 years old, published his first Tevye story entitled "dos groyse gevins" (Tevye Strikes It Rich). This was followed in 1899 with a second Tevye story, "a boydem" (Tevye Blows a Fortune). The titles aptly summarize the writer's financial affairs over the previous several years. While both stories continue to employ a romantic plot structure, the author now uses enough comedy and humor to merit the term "comic romance". In "dos groyse gevins", Tevye begins a quest for a better <sup>life</sup> society for himself and his family, which is to say for larger parnose (income) and some social recognition. He has a perilous adventure in a disorienting "magical" forest with two women whom he suspects, for a time, might be demons. He conquers his fears and prevails over entrenched social forces which have kept him poor. In the end, he is reborn as Reb Tevye with a new position in society as a milkheker (dairyman) and a secure, larger income.

The influence of comedy tilts the story toward greater realism. To the extent that Tevye <sup>l</sup>servives at the end of the story as a heroic and invincible shtetl Jew, he remains ~~st~~ongly identifiable as a romantic legendary figure; but that portrait is



you should look at the first version of *ג'רשון רוקח* to see SA struggle with the noble savage image of Tevye.

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modified by: (1) the realistic and comic element--isn't this how real Jews really act and talk? (2) and by the realistic description of an impoverished Jewish family somewhere in the Pale in the late 19th century.

The realistic comic element increases in chapter 3, "a boydem" (Tevye Blows A Fortune) published in 1897. The story deals humorously and self-critically, with the vagaries of the stock exchange, where SR himself had so recently lost a real fortune, and with the people, *luft menshen* and foolish investors, who pin their hopes on making a quick fortune there. Like the first chapter, this story is also structured as a romance and so Tevye--in the end remains an invincible romantic hero, who is able to surmount a false quest for riches and a catastrophic encounter with that consummate romantic dreamer par excellence--Menakhem Mendl. Tevye not only rises above his financial losses, but even admits to the error of his dreams/way/journey/quest. He sins, dies, repents, and is reborn at the end, promising to give up the pursuit of base materialistic concerns forever.

Thus when Wisse says:

Tevye, who is actually defenseless against the barrages of challenges and attacks that lay him low, should have been a tragic victim. Instead, balancing his losses on the sharp edge of his tongue, he maintains the precarious posture of a comic hero.

and Miron says:

..Every story thus portrays a Tevye revived and refreshed who



is entertaining, timeless, and immutable, ready for the next trial ,  
for death and resurrection.

both are correct, but only as their statements apply to chapters 2 and 3 of the book. For that "mythological" pattern does not persist throughout the book.

It changes in chapter 4, "hayntiker kinder" (Today's Children) when the author discovers his real theme: bonim gidalti veroymanti-- "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah, 1:2) With that posek, SR leaves the world of romance and quests, and enters into the more realistic mythos of comedy. In comedy, plot takes the form of opposition between an older entrenched society (often a parent) and a rivalrous younger society that threatens to replace it (often a child). In *tdm* Tevye is (ambivalently) aligned with an entrenched, monolithic conservative Jewish world, while his daughters are associated with a variety of new younger societies which contain erotic elements which challenges tradition and authority and seeks to replace the old.

Which is to say, that in the problem of parents and children, Tevye run smack into the Haskala and behind that, into elements of Western Enlightenment, with its full regalia of attendant social, religious, economic, and political, and philosophical problems. To accommodate his text to these weighty subjects, the author relinquishes the pattern of episodic adventures in favor of realistic, thematically linked stories that build one upon another. The timeless world of romance yields significantly, but not

completely, to the urgencies of the ordinary world. The everyday lower mimetic, successes and failures that occupy his readers takes center stage, and the plot becomes fixed upon Tevye's difficulties with his daughters, with God, with a disintegrating world...

SR returns to his early theme of love, but his new heroines are a far cry from the ideal bas Yisroel passive heroines whom he had used earlier in *L.S.*, *S.*, and *S.V.* His three older daughters seek to alter/depart from/rebel against the constricting traditions of Tevye's patriarchal world, and they are determined to take control of their own lives, and to exercise individual rights and freedom of choice, tenants basic to the Haskala and to Western Enlightenment.

Tsaytl, Tevye's oldest daughter, in chapter 4, "haytike kinder" 1899, initiates the pattern of rebellion when she rejects an arranged marriage to Lazer Wolf, a rich widower old enough to be her father. She takes control of her life and her sexuality, and chooses love with a poor young tailor who is also very low on the social scale (to Tevye's chagrin). Her behavior indicates that (1) the Enlightenment has finally reached that last stronghold of Jewish orthodoxy in eastern Europe, the dorf (village), and (2), that Tevye's daughters will represent a new breed of assertive Jewish women who, like Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll House*, also know how to slam a door on an old order in an attempt to build something new.

Tevye responds to Tsaytl's non-conventional behavior with understandable concern. Though he thinks of himself as a

I wonder how one can explain this. Is it merely a function of genre? Is it rooted in his own life experience? Is it keeping abreast of new lit. developments?

nice traditional Jew of the old school, he is actually ambivalently rooted in the orthodox world. He departs from tradition by cutting some religious corners, by tolerating less rigorous observance of ritual in others, and by raising his daughters to have minds of their own. He is enormously proud of their independence and learning, but he has difficulty accepting them when they do not conform to his rules, and no where more so than in the area of marriage. For like other conservative Jews of his day, Tevye has grown up in a hierarchical, patriarchal world of communal institutions and arranged weddings. His society looks at marriage as a practical economic relationship and assumes that fathers choose their children's spouses with the assistance of the time honored and traditional marriage broker. The idea of a union based upon love and self selection, and with the suitor, Motel, serving as his own matchmaker, strikes Tevye not only as foolish but as dangerous. It is a direct affront to his authority, as the father and head of the family, to the entire authorial superstructure of community and to the concept of God that he subscribes to, in theory, if not practice. Tsvetl's wish for individualism potentially threatens a heretofore good ordered universe with chaos..

✓ Vos heyst "ze aleyk hobn zikh gegeben dost vort. "vos is dos far a velt gevorn? a bokher bagegent zikh mit a meydle un zogt tsu ir: "lomir zikh gebn dos vort, az mir zoln zikh nemn." eges glat hefer-tsebeles....! p. 88-89

(What do you mean, "They pledged their word to each other." What is becoming of the world? A young man meets a girl and says to her: "Let's pledge our word to become engaged." such lawlessness!



\* You must read Jender Blauk (the original version in the Soviet 1948 ed.) where the father faces off against his son. 16

Though he fumes, he soon yields to his daughters tears, something Tevye's father or the parents in *S and J's* would never have done. \* Why he yields is disputed by the critics. M. Samuels thinks it is not in Tevye's nature to force an unwanted marriage on a reluctant daughter. (170). Woltze believes that when Tevye yields to his daughters personal inclinations, that he reveals internal ambivalences about religious and community practices which eventually bring about a breakdown of the entire system. Both are true. In terms of the comic plot structure, however, which dictates how the story must end,--if it is to remain a comedy--when Tevye yields at the end of the story, he is following a necessary convention.

Tsaytl, the most traditional of Tevye's 3 older daughters, quickly settling down to a "normal" courtship with Motl. The usual formalities are observed. A standard Jewish wedding follows, and seemingly in the story written in 1899, order is restored to the troubled Tevye.

But the peace is precarious and short lived. In 1904, Tevye's second daughter, Hodel, in chapter 5, shatters the calm again by revealing that she has also chosen her future husband. Modeling herself upon Tsaytl, she has also not used a shatkin or asked for parental approval. So there she stands, engaged to Feferl, a former Jewish university student and now an ardent revolutionary.

Hodel's love for the militant Feferl is historically on target. This story, published 10 years after the first chapter, and 5 years after the second, demonstrates how the author has narrowed the

gap between events in the stories and contemporary history. By the first decade of the 20th century, in reaction to the oppression and restrictions in their lives Jews had become active in all kinds of parties and revolutionary schemes. Zionism and the Bund had evolved simultaneously earlier in 1897. Many Jews chose migration over political solutions, but SR will not take that up until a later chapter 9.

It is as committed secular revolutionaries that the couple inform Tevye that they plan to wed with a minimum of religious fuss. They want no engagement party, and Feferl asks for no *nadn* (dowry). There is no time for, or interest, in a trousseau or large wedding, since following the wedding, Feferl must leave on a secret assignment. This violates Tevye's sense of propriety but he restrains feelings of outrage and again yields to the wishes of his daughter. After the marriage, Feferl leaves immediately on his political mission, is soon arrested, imprisoned and exiled for life to Siberia. To Tevye's intense sorrow, his second daughter, the idealistic and committed Hodl decides to accompany her husband into exile and to share his fate.

Despite snobbish bourgeois reservations regarding Motl's poverty and occupation, and ambivalent reactions to Feferl's intense but naive radical politics and social solutions, Tevye accepts the marriages of his two older daughters, partly because he likes both young men, and partly because he knows that he has no alternative. He cannot persuade his independent and wilful daughters to change their minds. They are spirited and determined young modern women who will not listen to him. They



seek to take life into their own hands and to alter the world through personal commitment to love, revolution, universalist ideals. His authority is compromised but he does not wish to lose them completely. Tevye feels helpless to change the new modern world and says he must accept conditions as he finds them, which is to say, as God decrees, he adds. His daughters, on the other hand, are less inclined to rely upon externals like God or Fate. The story ends again in comedy, but the tone is bittersweet.

1905 was a watershed year for SR. The abortive Russian revolution occurred in that year, and resulted in the tsar's capitulations to the people's demands for major constitutional reforms (October Manifesto of 1905). There was a new wave of reactionary suppression which swept the new reforms aside and left Jews blamed for the failures of the government. The peasants were stirred up, Jewish communities were plundered, and hundreds of Jews were killed. SA himself witnessed the Kiev pogrom. In December of that year, he and the family left Russia permanently.

"Khava" was published in 1905/1906 (Halkin gives the earlier date, Shmeruk and Rosanski the later.) against the background of these major upheavals. The story dramatizes the increasing dissolution and fragmentation of the Jewish family and community.

Khava's hero is Gorky, a proletarian Russian writer who became the idol of young Jewish and Russian intelligentsia alike, who aspired to universalist ideals. Tevye has never heard of him. Khava significantly escalates her sisters' pattern of rebellion

by establishing links outside the Jewish community.

Tevye intercepts Khava talking outside their house to Khvedka, and when the gentile leaves, Tevye warns his daughter not to continue her relationship with him. Khava deflects the reproof and finesses the conversation into a long debate with her father which discloses their conflicting beliefs and values. (See below) After a secret romance, she marries Khvedka, a young Russian villager and aspiring writer, and converts to Christianity.

Her duplicity and apostasy causes Tevye intense shame and pain. He orders the family <sup>to</sup> sit shiva for her, and she is declared dead. Sometime afterwards, Khava ~~s~~ runs after Tevye's wagon and begs to talk with him. At first Tevye is confused and thinks to listen to her, but when she attempts to wrestle the horse's reins from Tevye's hands-- clearly a symbol of his masculine control and authority-- he perceives her as a satanic force and quickly drives away from her without a word. He sinks into a profound depression, and it is in that frame of mind that he begins his monologue in chapter 6, which is only one of two such chapters in the book to begin without a greeting or address to Sholem Aleykhem. The absence of amenities or humor should alert the reader to Tevye's extreme distress.

On the latent level of the story, below the manifest structure of scenes, commentaries, narrators and perspectives, the Edenic myth emerges to shape events and to lend meaning not only to the chapter but to the novel as well. As God exiled Adam and Eve (Khava in Yiddish) from Eden for disobeying his commandments, so Tevye exiles Khava from their Edenic home

good!

the other being?

for disobeying him. Thus Tevye [in the microcosm] is analagous to God [in the macrocosm] and Khava is analagous to Eve.

is you need this?

In both <sup>the biblical story</sup> stories, the incident which provokes each parent to anger involves defiance of the father's authority and transgression of his <sup>awkward</sup> religious taboos <sup>against</sup> associated with the acquisition of knowledge. In the Bible, God cautions Adam (before Eve is born) not to eat from that tree, lest he die. In "Khava", Tevye cautions his daughter not to continue in her relationship with Khvedka, who represents forbidden fruit on the Russian Tree of the Enlightenment. When Khava refuses to comply, and poses troubling questions about the prerogatives of established authority and traditional belief, he becomes alarmed and warns her that her rebellious stand will lead to her death. The following excerpt from their dialogue <sup>underscores this</sup> highlights aspect of their classical impasse.

(Tevye). "...ikh volt beser, zog ikh, geven tsufridn ven du zolst zayn bakant mit im (Khvedka) fun der vaytn; du badarfst nit fargesn, zog \* ikh *mayayin basa ule'an atah hoyleykh* -- ver bistu un ver iz er"... makht zi tsu mir: "got hot bashafn ale mentshn glaykh"... "yo, yo, zog ikh, got hot bashafn odm <sup>freshonen</sup> nokh zayn gestalt; me tor ober nit fargesn, az itlekher darf zukhn zayn glaykh, vi in <sup>psuk</sup> shteyt bay \*undz geshribn: *ish kematnas yodoy* "... an antik! -- zogt zi tsu mir -- af altsding hostu a posek! efshr gefint zikh, zogt zi, bay dir a psuk vegn dem, vos mentshn, zogt zi, hobn genumen un hobn zikh, aley, zogt zi, ayngeteylet af yidn un af goyim, af balebatim un knecht, af pritsim un betlers?"... "te-te-te! -- zog ikh -- bist mikh shoyndakht mir, farforn, tokhter, in alef h'shishi arayn!" un ikh gib ir tsu farshteyn, az azoy firt zikh shoyndakht af der velt *memshishis yemey* *breyshis* fregt zi mikh: "L'may zol zikh azoy firt af der velt?"... zog ikh: "derfar, vos azoy hot got bashafn zayn velt"... zogt zi: "L'may hot got azoy bashafn zayn velt?"... zog ikh, "e, az mir veln onhaybn fregn kashes -- L'may azoy un L'may azoy, is *in ledv sof* -- a mayse

posek

misheyshe

eyn ledv



on an eki"... zagt zi mir: "deroyf hot dokh undz got gegeben a farshtand, az mir zoln fregn kashes"...zog ikh: "Bay undz iz faran a mindg azelkher, az a hun-- zog ikh, heybt on tsu kreyen vi a hon, zol men zi bald avektrogn tsum shoykht, vi mir zogn in de brokhes: "hanoyseyen lasekhvi binoh".

"... I'd feel better if you and he (Khvedka) were friendlier at a distance. Don't forget *mevayin basa ule'on alah haayleykh*--just think of who you are and who he is."

"God," says my Khava, "created us all equal."

"So He did," I say. "He created man in His likeness. But you had better remember that not every likeness is alike. *Ish kematnas yaday*, as the Bible says..."

"It's beyond belief," she says, "how you have a verse from the Bible for everything! Maybe you also have one that explains why human beings have to be divided into Jews and Christians, masters and slaves, beggars and millionaires."

"Why, bless my soul," I say, "if you don't seem to think, my daughter, that the millennium has arrived." And I tried explaining to her that the way things are now, is the way they've been since Day One.

"But why are they that way?" she asks.

"Because that's how God made them," I say.

"Well, why did He make them like that?"

"Look here," I say, "if you're going to ask why, why, why all the time we'll just keep going around in circles."

"But what did God give us brains for if we're not supposed to use them?" she asks.

"You know," I say, "we Jews have an old custom that when a hen begins to crow like a rooster, off to the slaughterer she goes. That's why we say in the morning prayer, *hanoyseyen lasekhvi binoh*--not only did God give us brains, He gave some of us more of them than others." (p. 72-73)

The blessing Tevye refers to actually says nothing about death, but since Khava knows no Hebrew, Tevye takes advantage of her ignorance to interpret the posik as it suits his purposes and \*conspicuously fails to translate it into Yiddish. The lurking demonic element embedded in the story suddenly surfaces here

Too quick! Too quick! You can't bring such a long quote without saying something about it. Take another look at shey shes "the six days of creation," for instance...

in the submerged image of a kapore hen sacrificed by a threatened father. \*christian image -?

Eve and Khava grow in knowledge and sexual awareness as a result of their non-compliance and defiance of authority. Eve's disobedience is a matter of public record in *Genesis* 2:8-3:24. Unfortunately that does not help much to understand her.

Although she has been depicted in many ways by various writers employing different perspectives and ideologies, we learn from Erich Auerbach, in *Mimesis* (1968) that the style of the Bible lends itself to all kinds of interpretations and symbolism. It stands

in sharp contrast to another great myth from the classical age, the *Odyssey*, where events and characters are fully described and nothing is left obscure or blurred. On the other hand, the Bible decisive points in the narrative are obscure; unexpressed or shrouded in suggestion and silence. Complex characters are represented only with fragmentary speech; their motives for action are ambiguous and contradictory. God extends into depths which cannot be understood. Thus the Bible demands symbolic reading and interpretation. What Eve does and why is open to myriad interpretations beyond the scope of this paper.

not written during World War II.

Rehashing well-known imprisonment

Naomi Ashkenasy in an introduction to *Biblical Patterns in Modern Literature* states that the Midrash began a tradition of re-writing Biblical tales, embellishing them either to entertain the listener or to drive home a didactic/aesthetic truth.

Unlike Eve, Khava eats the apple falls/transgresses/sins offstage, yet it is possible to make some minimal observations about her character, for Tevye tells us repeatedly that all his



daughters commit themselves to love and to ideas with a single minded intensity from which they cannot be diverted. It appears that Khava looks upon herself and Khvedka as a van guard breed of enlightened, universalist Russian intellectuals who, with all the impatience and confidence of youth, thinks that she has progressed beyond the confines of her father's narrow antique religion. As we shall see later, a biased Sholem Rabinovitch, who puts such reasoned and thoughtful questions into her mouth, and presents her with such dignity and poise, may not entirely disagree with her.

When their transgressions are discovered by their parents, the frightened children hide. God, ~~who is~~ <sup>he</sup> All Powerful, easily locates Adam and Eve in the Garden, but Tevye, who is merely a limited literary analogue of God, is less successful with the unctuous ~~priest~~ <sup>priest</sup> who refuses to reveal Khava's whereabouts. Does he use Khava's love for Khvedka to persuade her to deceive and defy Tevye? Is she firmly committed to Christianity? We don't know. In the novel, S R gives us no direct access to her mind or motivations. Later, when he adapts *tdm* into a drama, he will alter that situation.

While the two men wrangle over who has authority over Khava, muted echoes of an older conflict between God and Satan for the soul of man and woman resound in the background. The priest wins this first round. Is it any wonder, then, that Tevye regards the wily Russian who leers at him with a cold-blooded, reptilian smile, as an \*emissary of the devil and pronounces the ultimate Jewish curse upon him: *yimakh shemoy ves<sup>z</sup>ikhoy* - May

his name and memory be erased forever. Indeed, in the novel, Sholem Rabinovitch never gives us the name of the priest. As an added demonic touch, the author places threatening dogs in the priest's yard who bite at Tevye's heels and suggest the three-headed dog that stands guard to the entrance of Hell.

good

The transgressions of the children threaten both F/fathers. God expresses his fear openly:

'Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.' Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken.

YHWH, God Said:

Here, the human has become like one of us, in knowing good and evil. So now, lest he send forth his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat

So YHWH, God, sent him away from the garden of Eden, to work the soil from which he had been taken. 3:22-23

Tevye is less direct, but as we have seen was no less threatened by the loss of paternal authority. As early as chapter 2 this was already an issue with Tsaytl..

zey hobn zikh gegbn dos vort, as zey zoln zikh nemen? nu, un vu bin ikh? epes hob ikh oykh a shtikl daye tsu zogn af mayn kind, tsi mikh fregt men shoyt gor nisht? (p. 87)

They pledged their word to each other to become engaged? Well, and who am I? Don't I also have a bit to say with regard to my own child, or isn't anyone asking me anything anymore?

Adam and Eve are punished with exile and forced to leave the mythic pastoral world of Eden where they lived in animal-like

unawareness and god-like immortality. Khava is punished with exile from the security and protection of her edenic Jewish home. She, like they, must now trade a world of innocence for the world of experience where life is difficult. For the first time they all must learn to cope with independence, responsibility, and face the need to work.

Similarly, Tevye, who functions like God in the <sup>miniature</sup> microcosm, punishes Khava with expulsion from the family. After her exile, Tevye becomes seriously depressed and even toys with the idea of suicide.

This is one of three changes Sholem Rabinovitch makes in the myth as he adapts it to suit his own vision:

1. In the original story, God has one role. He functions as a Divine Father of dependent children for whom He provides a nurturing "green and gold" garden of ideal beauty and delight. In the earthly edenic microcosm, a less awesome Tevye plays two roles: (1) not only is he is a father figure with powers and responsibilities for his children analagous to God, (2) but he is also a child of God upon Whom he is, himself, dependent. When Tevye orders his family to sit shiva for Khava, he acts as a god-figure who is visiting expulsion/death upon a disobedient child who has threatened his authority and rebelled against him. However, when Khava pursues him in the woods, and he refuses to speak or listen to her, he functions as a child of God who refuses to engage with her for fear that she may undermine his relationship with his Father, as I show below..

2. In the Bible, God exiles Adam and Eve only once and suffers no conflicts, remorse, or depression over His behavior. However Tevye exiles Khava twice, first in his role as a father-god figure, and again in his role as a child of God. He is very troubled both times by his actions. After the first exile, Tevye is haunted <sup>by</sup> memories of Khava and wonders whether he has been just. So when Khava pursues him in the woods, (sc. 7) he has a second opportunity to revoke his death sentence and to "restore" Khava to life.

*genim* "Tevye, du shtelst af zikh tsu fill vos vet dir arn, <sup>az</sup> du vest zikh op<sup>st</sup>eln af a vayle, oys-hern vos vil zi? efsher hot zi dir tsu zogn azelkhes, vos du darfst dos visn? efsher a kashe af a mayse, hot <sup>ze</sup> harote un vil zikh umkern tsurik? efsher ligt <sup>ze</sup> bay im in der erd un bet bay dir, du zolst ir helfn aroys fun gehena?" efsher un efsher, un nokh a sakh azelke<sup>r</sup> efshers flien mir durkh in kop. (p. 139)

("Tevye, you make it too hard for yourself. What harm would it do you if you stopped for a while to listen to her? Perhaps she has something special to tell you. Perhaps she has regrets and wants to return home. Perhaps she is having a bad time with him and wants you to help her out of the hell she is in." Perhaps and perhaps and still more perhaps fly through my mind.")

Among the things that come to his mind are thoughts provoked by Khava's critical, probing questions in the conversation quoted earlier.

un es krikht mir in kop arayn meshune-modne makhsoves un gedanken: vos iz dos azelkes yid un vos <sup>iz</sup> nit-yid?...un far vos hot got bashafn yidn un nit-yidn? ... un az got hot shoyrn yo bashafn yidn un nit-yidn, far vos <sup>ze</sup> zoln zey zayn azoy opgeteylt eyms fun dos andere, nisht konen onkukn eyms



dos andere, glaykh vi der iz fun got un yener iz nit fun got? (p. 139)

(Strange, weird thought crept into my head: actually what is this thing, Jew and non-Jew? ...and why did God go ahead and create Jews and non-Jews? And since God did go ahead and create Jews and non-Jews, why then should they be so divided one from the other, not be able to look at each other, just as if one is from God, and the other is not?...)

However, these questions, which are so like Khava's questions, alarm Tevye. He fears that her dangerous ideas, which he said earlier would lead to her death as a Jew, might also lead him astray. Therefore, acting as a faithful child of God, Tevye responds to Khava as if she were the Satanic serpent tempting him into sin, and flees from her saying:

Tevye veyst vi azoy me iz noyeg mitn sotn meketeg. (p. 138)

(Tevye knows how to conduct himself with Satan the accuser.)

good

His actions effectively exile Khava a second time, which places Tevye in an untenable position. For in order to remain an obedient and faithful child of God, he has had to become a bad father and to turn aside from his favorite child. His prophecy about the kepore hen comes true, and he sacrifices /sentences her to death in order to save himself.

Here he is no longer a passive participant or yielding observer as he was with Tsatyl and Hodl.. He is the prime mover, and his decision distresses him deeply. He attempts to justify his behavior, and asks: "zi hot dos den bay mir nisht fardint?" (p. 137) [But didn't she deserve this from me?"] But he cannot find an answer to comfort himself.. "ikh bin oser l'rakhem, nisht vert vos



di erd trogt mikh,"(p. )["I am forbidden mercy/compassion, and not worthy that the earth should tolerate me. For he cannot escape the fact that a discrepancy exists between what is professed in <sup>Scripture</sup> poseks what is practiced in reality .

As a father Tevye said: (1) *tsa'ar gidul bonim*, which he translates as: "fun kinder hot men tsores un me muz dos on-nemen mit lib " (p. 21) [One has sorrow from children and one must accept this with love.]

However, in practice he fails to accept the sorrow Khava brings him with anything approaching love.

As a father, he also said: (2) *kerakheym ov al bonim* which he translates as: "nishto keyn shlekht kind bay a tatn " (p. 139) [There is no bad child to a father]

Yet he has judged her very negatively and exiled her from the family.

As a father he also said: (3.) *eyl/rakhum vekhanum*. but he has not been merciful and gracious ( or long suffering and abundant in goodness) as God the Father is supposed to be.

Although he defends his behavior intellectually, his emotions snowball and as the chapter closes he asks Sholem Aleykhem to forget him: "...oys Tevye der milkheker." (p. 114) [Tevye the dairyman is finished/no more] His words sound remarkably like the curse and judgment he meted the priest and Khava whom he also ordered be wiped out/erased/ blotted from memory.

Beginning with "Khava", SR passes increasingly hard judgment upon Tevye and the older generation ,who with their

tie men  
two  
together  
both  
invoke  
the concept  
of mercy

that's  
quite a  
leap!

\* But what about all that self-flagellation you just recounted? Is this the way a tyrant reacts?

29

! inflexibility and dictatorial manner contributed to the generational conflict that destroyed many Jewish families. Tevye doesn't listen or communicate well with anyone in the family. When he feels himself threatened, he has no compassion, love, patience or forgiveness and acts to save himself. If Tevye is a stand-in for God, Sholem Rabinovitch is making some harsh judgment about the old Jewish God of traditional faith also.

Is the fault really his?

I am not convinced.

+++++

With his family settled in Geneva, Switzerland, Sholem Rabinovitch, his wife and one daughter left for America in October, 1906 in an exploratory visit with the thought of settling there. However the experience proved to be both unhappy and non-profitable. He was the object of much adulation by the public and received multiple offers from the press and theaters, most of which did not work out. Two plays of his that opened in the Yiddish theater both folded within two weeks. His daughter, Marie Waife-Goldberg in the biography of her father explains that his plays were ahead of the times and concentrated on subtle psychological motivations that were more suitable for sophisticated Russian art theaters than for a folk theater. Jewish immigrant audiences in 1906 looked to be reminded of their old home in Europe, old rituals and habits, weddings, a kaddish, melodrama is what they wanted. That is a lesson SR will absorb and apply when he adapts his book to a drama in later years. But now, the dispirited writer returned to Europe in June 1907, and in the same year published chapter 7 in the Tevye cycle titled "Shpintse", the story of Tevye's fourth daughter.

This is totally self-serving. You cannot accept this judgment as free value. Read Berkovits 7/25/14 p. 112 for counter-vailing opinions.

Reading her story makes it clear that the story of Khava - published 1-2 years earlier, --functioned as a watershed in the novel. After Khava, Sholem Rabinovitch, who had since the publication of that chapter, himself been outside and seen more of the wider world, focused the novel on external broader social, political, and economic problems which begin to assault the family. Now, several years after the fact ( Kishenev 1903, Kiev 1905) we begin to hear of pogroms in urban centers and of village expulsions; of sexual dalliance, materialism and the virtual abandonment of traditional belief or ideals; and of isolation, alienation, and death. It is a tragic story of the continuing dissintegration of traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe .

The pogroms  
lasted thru  
1906

With "Sprintse" SR introduces a new world of effete, non-observant, self indulgent, morally lax Jews who have no problem about declining traditions or cultural conflicts. They have crossed the line and are at home in a materialistic world as acculturating modern Jews. That world intrudes into Tevye's village in the form of urban Jews who seek temporary refuge in Boyberik until pogroms in the city created after constitutional reforms were initiated in 1905 blow over. One of them, Avromchik is a big city irresponsible sophisticate who is taken with Sprintse, woos her for a while, it is suggested seduces her, and then departs the scene when conditions in the city improve. His uncle arrives soon to buy Tevye off from further responsibility

The story of Sprintse is an intensification of ground already covered in Tsaytl and Hodel. In Tsaytl, it was a morally suspect Tevye himself who cut traditional corners in order to slip out of



\* very tricky. Both are monologues and probably should be looked at in terms of the speaker. In "Happiest Man," the monologist is on the verge of madness. What does that mean in terms of SA's position?

31

the agreement he made with Lazer Wolf that he would give him his oldest daughter in marriage. In *Hodl*, it was a foot-in-both-worlds Tevye who brought home Feferl, the revolutionary, as he now brings home Avromchik.

Sprintse is Tevye's most passive and vulnerable daughter. When Avromchik abandons her, --there are suggestions that she may be pregnant,--she kills herself. It is a strange chapter that deserves further study for Tevye is less upset by this terrible tragedy,--the physical death of a daughter-- than he is by the religious "death" of Khava, or the later the moral "death" of Beyle who adapts materialism as a way of life. He seems more concerned with the shame and disgrace of the situation than the pain of losing Sprintse, and a critical SR keeps reiterating that shame precedes pain in Tevye's middle class mind. Janet Hadda believes that Tevye thinks Shprintse did the right thing and saved the family from dishonor. (PWPM) I am not sure of this where SR stands in this story. Two years later in 1909, SR will publish "Happiest Man in all Kolodny" a story that also deals with a young Jewish woman who has an unhappy love affair with a Russian officer. When she is abandoned by her gentile lover, she also tries suicide. However, her very rich assimilated father brings in a famous doctor who saves her. In that story SR dramatizes different social mores of assimilated, enlightened Jew and shows no sympathy for either father or daughter. \*

OK

In 1908 SR became very ill and lay near death for several months. His recovery was slow and he remained a semi-invalid



until 1913. Like other writers before him he used this period of enforced rest to produce many important works.

In 1909, one year after "meeting the angel of death" SR published "teveye fort keyn <sup>crates</sup> yisroyl" (Tevye Leaves For Land of Israel) Tevye is now widowed. His youngest daughter, Beyle, in a reversal of Hodel, has turned her back on idealism in order to marry a rich crude contractor whom she does not love but who can provide her with great material comfort.

*good* Tevye seems never to learn. He modestly pursued wealth and status in chapter 1, found it, and appeared satisfied. But, soon the dream of even greater wealth led to great losses in chapter 2 and he forswore that pursuit forever. Yet a chapter later, with Tsaytl, the prospect of gaining a rich son-in-law induced severe moral amnesia in Tevye and permitted him to overlook deficiencies in the rich, old -enough-to-be-her-father boorish Lazer Wolf. Tsaytl rebelled and Tevye yielded. However, he never gave up his favorite past time, which is to spend hours day dreaming about how his daughters will marry wealthy men and how he will spend their money. Now at last, with Beyle wed so advantageously, he thinks his daydreams will be fulfilled. Instead, his son-in-law views him as a social embarrassment for, ironically like Tevye, Podhotzur is also a social snob who aspires to a place in high society where a father-in-law who is a dairyman would be a socially detrimental. Podhotzur solves that problem by urging Tevye to emigrate to America, to Israel, to anywhere. When Beyle not only does not oppose the plan, but stands by her husband and defends his reasoning to an incredulous Tevye, he feels so

betrayed, insulted to think they think he can be bought off so easily, that he vows silently not to sell himself to his rich son-in-law. He even fantasies how he will throw any money offered to him, back into Podhotzur's face, yet when the cash is held out, Tevye takes it and agrees to depart. Money --having it and not having it--is a tremendous problem in Tevye and in the East European Jewish world.

Before he can leave, Beyle's husband becomes a bankrupt and the couple escape their creditors by fleeing to America. That leaves Tevye cut off from his community and family. The plot takes a turn away from comedy and social integration, and veers in muted elegaic tones towards isolation from society, and tragedy. Tevye sells his possessions prior to departure and then catalogues all the things he had complained about earlier but now knows he will miss: his horse, the village, the police, the summer homes in Boyberik, his rich customers, and even Ephraim the matchmaker, the man he most loves to hate. As the chapter closes, Tevye's circle has rounded. He is as he was when we first met him in chapter 1, --without identity, no longer a dairyman, his life long wish for wealth and social prestige has gone up in smoke. He has no idea what he will do with himself in Eretz-Yisroyl. The fact of Golde's death. was a severe blow and death looms heavily on his mind. How much Tevye's words, published one year after the author's near death, reflect the thoughts of the author is interesting to think about.

nice

Az men zet far zikh dem toyt, muz men vern an apikoyres un men heybt-on nokhtsyuklern, mah onu umeh khayeyny, ("What are we and

what is out life?") vos iz in gantsen ot di velt mit di gilgulim, vos zey dreyen zikh, mit di banen, vos loyfn meshugenervayz, mit dem gantsn tareram arum-un-arum, un afile brotski mit zayne milyonen-- *shebe...* hakol hev'l, gor nish shevgornisht! (p. 166)

When you see death before you, you have to become a heretic. and begin to think "What are we and what is our life?" --what is this whole world and its wheel/planets which go around, with the trains that race crazily, with the whole fuss going around and around, and even Brodski with his millions, it is all vanity, nothing with nothing.

Tevye has lost his faith and his bearings. The modern world threatens with crazy speed and senselessness. He seems to stand perilously close to the existential world of Kafka as he bids final adieu to Sholem Aleykhem. The popular image of Tevye as a modern Job who is unshakable in his faith does not stand up. He is full of real moments of doubt at the end of the chapter, pessimistic about the future, depressed, down beat.

Khone Shmeruk in "The Evolution of a Literary Work" says this was originally the planned end of *tdm*. It was the final monologue in editions of the novel published in 1909 and 1911 in Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish. Many have speculated regarding subsequent chapters SR added to the text. Shmeruk conjectures, that the solution to the Khava conflict, published in 1906, did not satisfy either the author or his readers\*. Israel Bartal notes that in other works of SR such as *der mabl* and *shver tsu zayn a yid*, Jewish girls who ran away with non-Jews returned sooner or later to the Jewish world. Halkin? says the ending was probably too depressing. What ever the reason, Shmeruk says that in 1913-

1914, SR first completed a dramatization of *tdm* which would later be produced by Schwartz, and then later in 1914 wrote chapter 9, "Lekh-Lekho" in which Tevye permits Khava to return to the family. Wolitz reverses the dates. He believes that SR wrote "Lekh-Lekho" in 1914 and though he permitted Khava to return, he was ambivalent about that decision. However when he wrote the drama in 1916 he had Tevye take her back unequivocally. In any case, it should be noted that Khava returns to the family after the Beilis blood libel trial in 1913, when the tsarist government fabricated evidence against the Jewish defendant in order to find him guilty. Khava says in both the novel and the play that the oppressive policies of the government, and the pogroms, awakened in her a sense of family and national solidarity.

acquitted  
nonetheless

SR discards the elegaic tragic note that chapter 8 ended in and begins "LL", with a broad hello. Considerable time has passed and he explains that he was packed and ready to leave for Eretz-Yisroyl when suddenly Motl died and left Tsaytl a widow with two young children. So he remained in the village, after all, and they came to live with him. Soon, however, they became victims of a local pogrom, and then--ironically, in a reversal of "Khava", - the entire family was exiled from their edenic home by the government.

Tevye's account of the pogrom is an ironic Kafkaesque combination of comedy, logic, pain, and absurdity. The village pogromchikes are polite, orderly, and reasonable. They discuss the details of the pogrom with Tevye at leisure, detailing when it

Gogol-esque



should take place, what should be destroyed, and even why it is necessary to have the destruction. It is required, they explain, because the villagers do not wish to lose face in the eyes of the their neighbors who have already completed their quota of necessary pogroms.

Despite the humorous way the story is told, a demonic world with threats of death, torture, and a sense of nightmare lurks on the periphery of the event. This is the ironic mythos -- in a comic mode-- which ~~Kafka~~, the master of the ironic mythos, employed. ~~Kafka wrote~~, he explained, to awaken frozen minds to suffering. In a mirror reversal of that intent, SR wrote to ease suffering Jewish minds. However, regardless of SR's stated purpose, what emerges is the most negative section of the book.

What is Tevye negative about? Virtually everything: about the world, it is a fool place p 200.; about life and death- it is time to think about the next world, p 198 and Golde was smart to die, p.200; about God, He sends the wheel of fortune butter side down, p. 198; about children, it is better to live in the earth and bake bagels than to feel sorrows from children, p. 200; about his health, he is a broken vessel and without strength to fight, p 209; about work, it is slavery, p.199; about America, it is the place where the beloved holy Sabbath disappears, p. 199.

As Tevye reaches the end of his cycle, a sense of injustice, folly, crime is taken for granted in the world around him, and the fact of the pogrom is a given. Tevye asks:

un vu iz got? der alter yidishe got? vos shraygt er? vi derlozt  
er aza zakh? p. 204

Where is God? The old Jewish God? Why is he silent? How does he permit such a thing?

But there is no answer to his question.

[When after all this, at the end of chapter 10.-- "vekhalaklakoy," the incompleated or aborted last chapter which SR did not feel satisfied with,--when Tevye's in his last words affirms "unzer alte Got lebt!" p 227 (our old God lives!) the sentiment seems forced and rings false, for no development occurs in "vekhalaklakoy" to justify that conclusion. The chapter is a tired recapitulation of previous events, and the only new development is hardly something to write home about: Tevye tells Sholem Aleykhem that since chapter 9, he never got anywhere, is homeless, still traveling. He has become a permanent wanderer-- the golum archetype. . Structurally, Tevye's story ends in chapter 9, yet it is as if having brought Tevye to an ending without an affirmation of God, SR felt he had to tack one on in the problematic chapter 10.]

After the pogrom and expulsion, Tevye makes plans to emigrate to America. . As Tsaytl did earlier, in the beginning of the novel, (note:--everything in this novel get recycled, along with the overall cycle of myths-- ) she makes a second remarkable decision, and insists that Tevye reconcile with Khava. Khava has heard that the family had become homeless and has left her husband to return to her God and to share in the plight of her family. (p. 218) While Khava waits in an adjoining room, Tsaytl tries to negotiate the return, but Tevye resists her efforts at reconciliation. However, she and the author pull out all the

rhetorical stops, and in a scene that counter balances Khava's verbal duel with Tevye, in chapter 6, (note: here's another repeat) now an impassioned Tsaytl squares off to confront her father and do battle with him for Khava's life. Sholem Rabinovitch gives her very powerful arguments. She insists that Tevye not farshpil (waste, forfeit) this third opportunity to forgive and restore Khava to the family. She appeals to him first on the basis of reason, but when she is unable to sway him through words, she changes her tactics and appeals to him on the level of feelings. She throws herself at his feet kisses his hand, shows him Khava's packed torba (sack)-- the symbol of the exiled Jew; and finally, summons Khava herself from the adjoining room.

Khava enters like a queen from the world of romance, beautiful and poised, and once again Tevye yields to his daughters. He tells Sholem Aleykhem:

un vos zol ikh aykh zogn, liber fraynt? take, punkt azoy vi bay aykh in di bikhlekh vert bashriben, bavayzt zi zikh, khave hest es, fun alker aroys, a gezunte, a glate, a sheynze, vi geven, nit geminert a hor, nor dos ponim a bisl farzorgt, di oygn a bisl bartsoygn, un dem kop halt zi hoykh, mit gedules, blaybt shteyn a vayle, kukt af mir, ikh--af ier, dernokh tsit zi oys tsu mir beyde hent un nor eyn vort kon zi aroysreydn, eyn un eyntsik vort, un shtil:--ta te. p 217.

(And what shall I say, dear friend? Really, just as you describe in your books, she appears, Khava, I mean, from out of a small adjoining room, healthy, slender, a beauty as she was, not changed by a hair, only her face a little worried, her eyes a bit drawn, and she held her head high, with great pride, remained standing a short time, looked at me, I--at her. Then she stretched out both hands to me and could say only one word, only one single:-- "Ta-te"( pa-pa) )

Thus in chapter 9, SR makes a third change to the original myth; Tevye rescinds the exile and restores Khava to life. In the novel, Tevye asks for and receives no explanation of her behavior beyond what he learns from Tsaytl. After he describes the scene of reunion and forgiveness to Sholem Aleykhem, he says:

...vos ikh hob gefilt beys mayse in <sup>veynik</sup> in hartsn--dos iz epes andersh. ir zayt dokh aleyk oykh a tate fun kinder un ir veyst glaykh mit mir dem ~~poshut~~ <sup>psuk</sup> funm <sup>psuk</sup> "kerakheym ov al bonim" un dem tem fun dem, beys a kind, es meg zikh vi farzindikn, nor az ze kukt aykh glaykh in der neshome arayn un zagt aykh: "tate!" --anu, zagt demolt a ~~brere~~, un traybt es op!...un tsurik ober, dem koykh hadem arbet. un es kumen mir akegn bald dos sheyne shpitzl, vos zi hot mir opgeton...khvedke galagan, ayngeszunken zol er veren...un der galekh, yemaykh shemu...un mayne trern...un golde alev hasholums toyt...neyn! zagt shoyn ir aleyk, vi kon men dos fargesn, vi kon men dos fargesn?...un vider tsurik---s! tlaytsh! fort a kind!...kerakheym ov al bonim...vi tor a mentsh zayn an akhzer, az got aleyk zagt af zikh az er iz an <sup>e</sup> al erekh apoyim!\*. <sup>u</sup> bfrat, zi hot <sup>k</sup> harote un vil zikh umkern tsurik tsu ir tate un tsu ir got!...vos zagt ir, <sup>pani</sup> sholem aleykhem? ir zagt dokh epes a yid, vos katori ir makht bikhlekh un ir git der velt eytses--zagt shoyn ir aleyk vos hot tevye badarft ton? arumneyn zi vi an eygene, kushn <sup>e</sup> un haldzn zi un zogn ir, vi mir zogn yom-kiper zu "kol-nidre": solakhti kidvorekho-- kum zu mir, du bist mayn kind? zi efsher farkereven dem dishel, azoy vi demolt un zogn ir: Lekh-Lekho-- gey dir gezunteheyt fun vanen du bist gekumen?... neyn loz zikh aykh dakhtn, l'moishl, elehay ir zagt af tevye's ort un zagt mir ~~bohn shli~~, nor ofntlekh, vi far an emesn gutn fraynt" vi azoy volt <sup>ir</sup> zikh noyeg geven?...un oyb ir kont es mir nit zogn, bald, gib ikh aykh zagt af tsu batrakhtn zikh..un dervayl, darf men geyn--di eyniklekh vartn shoyn af mir, kukn aroyss afn zeydn.

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...what I felt during that time inside in my heart--that's something different...you are afterall yourself a father of children and you know as well as I do the literal meaning of the posek, "Kerakheym ov al bonim" [*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,*] (Psalm 103:13)- and the sense of it, no matter how a child maay sin, if only it looks you straight into your soul and says to you "Pa-pa" --well, go be exacting then, and drive her away!...and



from the other point of view, my imagination is working. and I think of the pretty trick that she played on me...Khvedke Galagan, may he sink into the earth, ...and the priest, may his name be erased... and my tears... and golde'e, may she rest in peace, death....no! Say yourself how can one forget that, how can one forget that? but again, from the other point of view--shtaytsh! after all my child...Kerakheym oy al bonim...how can a person be a brute, when God says himself that he is a eyl erekh apoyim (a long suffering God\*) ...And especially, she is remorseful and want to return to her father and to her God!... What do you have to say, Pani Sholem Aleykhem? You are after all a special person who writes little books and who gives the world advice--say now yourself what should Tevye have done? Embrace her as one's own, kiss her and hug her and tell her, as we say on Yom Kipper at Kol Nidre: Solakhti kidvorekho ("And the Lord said, *I have pardoned according to thy word*" Numbers, 11:20)--come to me, you are my child? Or to reverse everything, the way I did before, and say to her: Lekh-Lekho-- ("And the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: Genesis, 12:1) Go in good health back to where you came from? ...No, imagine, for example, that you are perhaps in Tevye's spot and tell me plainly and openly like a good friend: how would *you* have acted? ...And if you can't tell me right now, I'll give you time to think it over...And meanwhile, I have to go, my grandchildren are waiting for me already, watching to see if I'm coming ....

The chapter is a point of contention with Wolitz and Shmeruk..

Wolitz states that SR equivocates here when he refuses to have Tavye take a position on Khava and, instead, asks Sholem Aleykhem what he would have done in the same situation. That indicates, according to Wolitz, that Tevye is still trapped by a conflict between communal duties to reject Khava and his love for her. He believes that later, in the drama (which Wolitz dates as 1916) SR takes a firmer stand. There he has Tevye beating his breast on the stage and saying aloud, "Must I feel guilty when

after all she is my child? Deep in my heart, in my soul? " Then turning to Khava, he opens his arms to her, and says, "Come to me, Khavele, you are my child. "

In his interpretation, Wolitz fails to take into account the Hebrew quotations Tevye uses. They are critical for they reveal that Tevye is able to effect the reunion with Khava only after he makes a significant change in his previous thinking. In chapter 6, Tevye rejected Khava because he believed that an inflexible, jealous, easily threatened Jewish God, associated with rigid orthodox belief was quick to punish children who questioned His authority or did not heed His commands. Tevye's duplicates that kind of unbending Authoritative behavior in chapter 6, when he first expells Khava, and then refuses to talk to her later. But a more benevolent, humane, forgiving and loving Authority also exists in Tevye's mind and Sholem Rabinovitch plays with Tevye's ambivalence between those two views of God. Tevye resolves the conflict in the end by identify<sup>ing</sup> only with the benign concept of God i.e. he accepts the daughter who has brought him such sorrow with pity and love, he becomes long suffering, merciful and gracious like the God of Exodus and distances himself from a earlier concept of God for Whom one might have to sacrifice a child. It is a subtle reproof from SR, the humane writer, to those who hold rigid orthodox beliefs.

very  
fine

As Khava learned from her experiences in the world and has now returned to her Jewish origins, so Tevye has learned from his, and is ready to re-evaluate his beliefs. In "tevyefortkeyn yisroyl", Tevye for the first time, he assumes responsibility for

the direction all his daughters took. [un efsher, az mir zoln veln gut batrakhtn, griblen zikh, a bisl tifer, kon zay<sup>^</sup>, az ikh aleyn bin do mer khayev fun alemen. (p. 167-168) ("and perhaps, if we want to really think about it, dig deeper into oneself a bit, it might be that I alone am more guilty than everyone.) ]

The situation thus is mediated through an adaptable Tevye. An altered family survives the cultural dislocations in Europe and prepares to embark for America. The branches that Tevye feared in "Lekh-Lekho" would die, if broken from the oak tree, in fact survive. Khava is proof that a separated branch need not wither. It can grow separately and root anew. In fresh soil and a more hospitable climate, the fruit of the tree may improve. The tree itself, Tevye, who thought he could not survive the loss of the branches, also remains alive at the end of the chapter. He is not, however, a simple, effervescent comic hero. But for the grace of comedy, and its insistence that even the old blocking figures be incorporated into society, he would be a isolated ironic, even tragic figure. Much is owed the character of the balanced Tsaytl who fights for everyone to be included and forgiven.

At the end of the chapter, as Tevye prepares to embark in 1914, he remains the traditional authoritative head of the family, but he openly accepts guidance and direction from his more liberal, enlightened daughters. The Judaism they bring to American shores is already a liberal modification of orthodoxy. It was not a musical comedy invention as Wolitz states.

Shmeruk finds fault with the chapter also, but on different grounds. He states that the solution in chapter 9 destroys the structure of the closed book which previously ended with chapter 8, "teveye fort keyn yisroyl" By then, all the situations had been cohesively resolved. He conjectures, however, that SR was not satisfied with the exile of Khava and that it also ran counter to the expectations of his readers, who had learned to expect that in literature, wayward Jewish daughters did not remain forever estranged from their families. SR died before he was able to edit the chapters prior to publication, and therefore, certain deviations and contradictions he resorted to in his efforts to straighten out the course of his monologue sequences were never resolved.

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Regardless of dates of composition, what is at issue here is whether SR wanted *tdm* to end as a comedy or tragedy. If he wanted to resolve *tdm* in the direction of comedy, he needed another chapter in which everyone could be integrated into society. Had he ended it earlier with 8, *tdm* would have been a tragedy, with Khava and Teveye both excluded from society. ✓

Whether he did what he did to please the public or himself, the book uses all of the mythic cycles masterfully to come back to where it started from, which may be one reason the book feels so satisfying. We recall that *tdm* started in romance in chapters 2 and 3 with the hero in quest of fortune and in possession of grand powers of recovery from life's trials. As a mythic or legendary hero, Teveye had greater powers than ordinary men and lived in a



legendary world where unusual events could happen. That means: as a small Jew--often a schlemiel-- in a big bad world, he could win against all kinds of odds and disasters and come back for more, over and over.

But then *tdm* moved into the realistic domain of low mimetic fiction where fiction can represent "ordinary" everyday comedies or tragedies. Thus in the chapters on Tsaytl (3) and Hodl (4) Tevye begins in the comic mode and plot turns on a clash between two societies. At the beginning an obstructing figure, usually a parent, is in charge of the dominant society, but by the end of the comedy, the opposing young hero or heroine overturns the old and a new society begins to form around him/her/them. In the end, solutions are often found by a twist in plot, and as many people as possible are included in the new society. The blocking parental figure is reconciled or converted in the end rather than repudiated or excluded.

With realism, matters become more complicated and "life-like" Thus with Tsaytl and Hodl, in chapter 4 and 5, we begin to observe Tevye with a double perspective: (1) we see him as an authority/ power at conflict within his own family and (2) at the same time we will begin to see how the outside world also intrudes upon Tevye and the family.

In chapter 4 and 5, Tevye possesses only ordinary everyday powers, but he manages to cope with the problems inside his family. He yields to his daughters and thus balances losses with gains. While he loses prestige and authority as patriarchal head of the family, he remains their benevolent and loving father ~~is~~.

the family, by recognizing their need to exercise individual choice, he remains their benevolent and loving father in meaningful contact with Tsaytl and her family, who remains most closely allied to traditional society; and also with Hodl, who teaches Tevye that children must learn to swim on their own and in their own way. She moves away to a fringe Jewish revolutionary world, but maintains contact through letters. The separation from her is a profound loss, yet she remains alive and inside the Jewish fold. With Chapter 6, however, the domestic comedy turns to domestic tragedy. The novel now begins to explore the alternative mode of low mimetic narrative, the tragic dimension which leads to isolation from family/community/society. Tevye's personal powers prove ineffective against Khava's beliefs/intransigence/deceit/commitment/idealism. Of all Tevye's daughters, she takes <sup>the</sup> rebellious streak in Tevye himself to its greatest extreme and threatens his autonomy. In order to preserve what diminished authority he has, he excludes her from the now smaller family circle. In successive chapters, Tevye possesses increasingly less power, and moves to greater isolation and alienation from his society. That culture is now thoroughly attacked from within Judaism by (1) materialism- the total loss of faith and order, the triumph of the Enlightenment and secularism -and (2) and from without, by Russian oppression. Tevye's family disintegrates almost to non-existence. First, Sprintse kills herself, then Golde dies, finally Beyle commits spiritual suicide, and Tevye, with no family left, gives up his home. He is not yet forced out, but he is isolated

That is, that children's "rebellion" is natural and necessary for growth and change to take place.

and the plot <sup>is</sup> operates in a muted tragic overtones. In chapter 9 when Tevye <sup>tragedy</sup> gives way to the ironic mode for Tevye has no power to cope against the tsarist government and we watch from above as he is forced out of his home.

But Tevye restores himself to life and power when he restores Khava to life in the family. By allowing her to return to the family, the plot takes an upward turn and moves away from irony, toward comedy. Tevye regains some parental powers. He is not the man he once was, and he will have to adapt to the new society that is forming around Khava and Tsaytl and the grandchildren, but he is not isolated. The loss of their old world is tragic. It also signals that there were failings in the old world, such as parents who sacrifice children for questionable reasons. Perhaps this can be ameliorated in the new society regrouping in the old world in Tevye's home and preparing to journey to the new land.

The underlying threat, that when Authority loses its power to command, --disorder, chaos, a hefker-velt will emerge is revealed in the realism of *tdm*. It exists in a non-traditional Jewish society's hedonism, philistinism, and loss of all religious values. It exists even more profoundly in intermarriage. These are problems which awaits them also in America, where Beyle is already a convert to the dollar. . . Perhaps the idealism which resides in Tevye's older daughters, and the modified traditional beliefs Tevye brings with him, will sustain them in the new world. That is another quest, and takes us from comedy back to the realm of romance and wish fulfillment. As the novel ends, the

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dominant image is not the huge celebratory finale of comedy, but the picture of Khava as she emerges from the side room to take center stage, poised and beautiful like a queen right out of the world of fairy tales.

SR employs the cycle of myths and modes with a virtuoso intuitive understanding of how they must work for him. To end the story in chapter 8 in tragedy would have been inappropriate for a writer who wanted to relieve the suffering of Jews. On the other hand, a great comic celebration would be unrealistic considering the fact of forced exile and disintegrating East European traditional world. But a family reunion where everyone is included, and an aging Tevye embraces Khava, seems just the right combination of romance and realism moderated by tragic and ironic overtones.

Superb !

An utterly original reading that also incorporates the best of prior criticism. Now all you need are the footnotes and some tightening