



92nd Street Y  
1395 Lexington Avenue  
New York, N. Y. 10128

Education Department  
Dr. Robert A. Glick, Director  
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July 14, 1986

President  
Mrs. Robert E. Rubin

Associate Executive  
Director for  
Administration  
Sol Adler

Dr. David Roskies  
c/o Jewish Theological Seminary  
3080 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027

Dear David:

All parties at the 92nd Street Y are delighted that you have agreed to participate in our series entitled Arnstein Lecture Series. Your presentation on "The Art of Modern Storytelling" is scheduled for January 12, 19, 1987; February 2, 9, 1987 at 8:15 pm. As per our agreement, the 92nd Street Y will pay you an honorarium of \$600 for your participation. *Xiddish*

In order to facilitate our promotion of the program, we would appreciate receiving a biographical statement from you, along with a photograph, if possible. We ask that you fill out the enclosed information card as well and return it to my office.

Again, I wish to express our pleasure in your participation in the Jewish Omnibus program. We believe that this program will be of great interest to the Jewish community and the community at large. Your participation will serve to attract a thoughtful, concerned audience and assure an engaging and worthwhile evening.

As the series approaches, I will be back in touch with you to discuss the final details of the program. Until then, if you have any questions or concerns of any kind, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to greeting you at the Y on January 12, 1987.

With all good wishes,

Cordially,

Rabbi Lavey Derby  
Associate Director of Education,  
Jewish Education

*David -  
Your series has already generated  
much excitement at the Y.  
I'm looking forward to seeing you.*

*UD*

RLD:kmr

enclosure

## THE ART OF MODERN YIDDISH STORYTELLING

David G. Roskies

- I. The Storyteller as Mystic, Maggid and Maskil
  - A. The role of storytelling in traditional society
    1. Traditional settings: home, house of study, heder
    2. Traditional tellers: the maggid
    3. Traditional texts: aggadah, hagiography, mayse-bikhl, mussar literature
  - B. The impact of Hasidism
    1. The zaddik as hero
    2. Nahman of Bratslav and the hieroglyphics of the holy
  - C. Maskilic Camouflage
    1. The maskilic chapbook
    2. The periodical press: the medium is the message
    3. Ayzik-Meyer Dik and the fear of fantasy
- II. Peretz: The Art of Creative Betrayal
  - A. The storyteller as parodist
  - B. The search for a faithful teller
  - C. Reinventing folklore and hasidic fantasy
- III. Sholem Aleichem: Mythologist of the Mundane
  - A. The maskilic legacy
  - B. "The Haunted Tailor": myth and madness
  - C. The story cycles
    1. Holiday Tales
    2. Stories for Children
    3. Kasrilevke
  - D. The Railroad Stories: Myth, history and the male subculture
  - E. The story as self-reflexive genre
- IV. Der Nister: Suturing the Divided Soul
- V. Love, Legend and Story
  - A. S. Ansky
  - B. Ber Horowitz
  - C. Itsik Manger
  - D. I.J. Trunk
- VI. I.B. Singer and the Art of Exorcism
  - A. The demon as storyteller
  - B. The storytelling round: male vs. female
  - C. Fantasy and nightmare
- VII. The Yiddish Storytelling Legacy
  - A. In Hebrew
  - B. In English

## MODERN YIDDISH STORIES: A COMPANION VOLUME

This anthology would bring together, for the first time, the entire modern Yiddish storytelling corpus in fluent and reliable translations. It would differ fundamentally from the now classic Howe & Greenberg Treasury of Yiddish Stories in that the latter draws almost exclusively on the realistic and social-critical school of modern Yiddish writing. The only comparable volume is Joachim Neugroschel's Yenne Velt, ~~long out of print~~.

Of the writers represented here, some are better known to English readers than others. In almost every case, however, existing translations will have to be carefully edited.

1. The hasidic tale: reliable translations already exist of the two early hasidic classics, In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov and Tales of Rabbi Nahman. Since the focus of this anthology will be modern, no more than two or three representative tales will be needed in any event.

2. The maskilic tale: no translations exist.

3. I.L. Peretz: much of the corpus has been translated (by Moshe Spiegel, Maurice Samuel, Neugroschel, Irving Howe & others). Sometimes, there are multiple translations to choose from. Most of the material is long out of print. The Howe & Greenberg anthology of Peretz is their shoddiest endeavor and is virtually unusable.

4. Sholem Aleichem: the classic Butwin translations are surprisingly free, often omitting the narrative frames and crucial cultural references. Leviant's translations are serviceable, but flat. Sholem Aleichem's modernity will come through especially in a generous selection from the Railroad Stories that have never been collected. An additional surprise will be a number of "self-reflexive" stories, i.e., stories about storytelling, that have never been translated before.

5. Der Nister: Neugroschel has made an excellent start on Der Nister in Yenne Velt. I would want to reprint much of that material. Since Der Nister promises to be the great "discovery" of the 1980s, I would want to include about a half dozen new stories as well.

6. Ansky, Manger, Trunk: Neugroschel has also covered some of this ground. I would also want to reprint, in its entirety, Leonard Wolf's brilliant translation of Manger's The Book of Paradise which has been out of print for over 20 years.

7. I.B. Singer: Here one would have to negotiate with the author (or his heirs) over revising the existing translations, some of which are outrageously free.

It is fair to say that there are only two translators around who can do justice to this material: the above-mentioned Joachim Neugroschel and Leonard Wolf. Both are professionals and charge what they are worth. I happen to be on excellent terms with them both.

A hidden bonus to this project is the rich illustrative material that is available. The same movement of reinventing Jewish folklore and fantasy in literature had its obvious parallel in east European Jewish art. Each author (~~except for Singer~~) had his illustrators: Chagall and Bergner for Peretz; Anatoli Kaplan (and many others) for Sholem Aleichem; El Lisitzky for Der Nister; ~~and~~ Manger's Book of Paradise comes complete with its own delightful drawings. Much of this material, incidentally, is in the public domain.

the roster of illustrators  
and all of Singer's stories for children is a Who's Who of pop.  
American artists.