

BOOK PARTY

June 25, 1995

Where Do Yiddish Stories Come From?

1 major source, not yet recorded in the annals of modern Jew. culture:

My Parents' Home in Mtl.

at the farthest remove from the traditional home/hearth where Yiddish lore was once passed down from generation to generation,

mother's motto: what's treyf is not what goes in / comes out

yet an inexhaustible source of stories

stories-taken-from-life

The World of Experience (Benjamin)

off hand, can think of only 1 folktale that made it into Mother's repertory: the 2 Jews from Vilna who visit Rothschild in Paris

mother's **song repertory** likewise product of Yiddish secular revolution, not to speak of Alexander Vertinsky, Polish love songs, etc.

parents: 1st generation rebels, revolutionaries, Yiddish cultural activists

There was no aspect of Yiddish cultural life that parents weren't either involved in directly or lent their support to

the Vilna, Bialystok landsmanshaft

the Folkshule,

the YIVO

the Jewish Public Library
 the amateur Yiddish Theater
 the Keneder Odler,
 publishing Yiddish books
 supporting Yiddish artists, actors, writers

Ruth, Eva, I = beneficiaries of this network of institutions, wealth of personal contacts
 most of mother's stories / songs were not about these viable institutions that existed here
 and now,

or about artists, actors, and writers whom we met in our living room
 rather: they were stories that told of rebellion-and-loss in a world that was destroyed
 They told of the exceedingly high price that my parents and others of their generation
 had had to pay for having betrayed the patriarchal society in which they were born
 they told of guilt, self-betrayal
 they also told of an amazing cultural renaissance in all fields of human endeavor

For years now I've been trying to make sense of the 2 competing narratives:

- 1) **narrative of rebellion, subversion**
- 2) **narrative of artistic renewal, cultural continuity, institution building**

I've even had the chutzpah to give it a name: **creative betrayal**

rebellion / loss = are precisely what drive the need for rescuing pieces of the discarded
 past which, once put back together again, become the source of a new Tradition

this, in a nutshell = The main narrative line of my book

Will now read a short selection that makes explicit this link between theory / praxis;
cultural history / AB

[QUOTE]

THANKS:

a book = only as good as its editor(s)

HUP: [in addition to Peg Fulton]

Joyce Backman (provided the title)

Anita Safran

Gwen Frankfeldt

Ansche Chesed

Judith Turner

Students from Project Judaica

(a dream come true)

Shana: catering

Aryeh: sign

All of you for coming!