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Honors Seminar
1 October 1987

Antisemitism takes many forms and reveals itself in a multide of ways, but certainly one of the most common manifestations is sheer physical brutality. Persecuted Jews suffered not only the more abstract loss of their basic human rights but also the immediate and very real consequences of violence. It is striking, thus, that such a large part of the Jewish response to catastrophic events emerged through language. For many Jews, physical violence was a penetrating reminder of the temporality of this world, of this generation; the victims sought solace in the permanence, the indestructibility of words. For others, language was directed to the Jewish community as a call to action. Through the potency of words, the Jews could come to terms with the calamitious events that had befallen them, and in doing so confront with action what might othrwise have proven to be paralysing circumstances.

Into the first catagory one might place the writings of Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh. Through the character of Reb Mendele the Bookseller, the author strikes not only at the heart of the past and the present, but also of the future. These writings are notable primarily for their use of sacred parody. However, they are also indicative of another response to the tragedy of anitsemitism. Abramovitsh writes of a lost world and of lost people; his vivid portraits, aided by Mendele's often sardonic, often wrenching commentary, calls to mind an image of Jews streaming through the world en masse, their possessions and their sorrows bound to their backs in equal quantities. The author's testimony to destruction becomes a text for the future. No matter what happens to the Jews themselves, their memory and, arguably more importantly, the memory of their circumstances will live on forever through Abramovitsh's words.

A further example of sacred parody is offered by Bialik's poem "In the City of Slaughter," a work that exists outside of a specific time. The parodic structure itself is then magnified by the larger framework of the poem as a whole. Bialik writes in horrific images; Nature is distorted, warped, in many ways a unceasing festering sore. Man is portrayed not only as an abused creature but also as an ignoble one, alternately hiding and skulking but never acting. God, revealed to be the speaker of the poem, is understood through a variety of means: he is ravaged by the text, decried

as the source of the tragedy due to his abandonment of the people, praised (through context only) as a force urging the Jews stike back against his deeds and the deeds of history. In simple terms, however, the poem stands largely as a cry against an assumed futility.

Into the second category may be placed the literature of the Jewish Labor Bund and the Hebrew Writers' Union. Both sets of writings are somewhat didactic. That is, the are presented from a set and established point of view, and their purpose is not only to inform but also to pursuade. Highly ideological in content, their forms-for instance their language and structure-are equally determined by an encompassing world view.

For the Labor Bund, that world view was of socialism and "international proletarian solidarity." The authors of the text begin with a mention of the Kishinev pogrom, reminding their readers of an event just past and therefore still deeply troubling both to their minds and hearts. The language of this text utilizes that duality, emphasizing sweeping physical language ("The entire capitalist world that trembles before the international force of the united proletariat..." p.198) that seeks to educate the reader even as it draws him into a community circle of 'we' against 'them.' The immediate juxtaposition of the specifics of Kishinev and the diatribe against the class, racial and national hatred fostered by capitalism further unites the Jews to an event outside of themselves, and thus encourages them to transfer the anger of an instance to the anger of a cause. good

The text of Hebrew Writers' Union is in many ways similar to that of the Labor Bund; both are concerned with raising consciousness, both call out for unity, and both use language to manipulate/active their readers. The Writers' Union, for instance, employs literary techniques such as rhetorical questions and the repitition of words within a sentence ("...the severest of punishments is not potent enough to wipe out the sinners from the face of the earth where there are internal causes which lead to the birth of such sinners" p.205; "Only one who can defend his honor is honored by others" p.207) to emphasize certain points within the context of the larger whole.

Underlying all of these texts is a sense that change is necessary; no longer could the Jewish people trust placidly in their God, in their history, and in their civilization. Language, always a mediator between man and God, became increasingly a mediator between man and himself.

Extremely well argued, full of nuance & insight. My only comment is that I would distinguish between sacred/sacrilegious parody and reserve the latter precisely for Bialik & Abramovitch.

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