Painted with a "black brush":
Maskilic Creativity and the Conscription of Jews into "Fonya Gonnef's" Army: 1827 to the eve of The Great War.

Jillian Davidson

A story from the Talmud. Will it help? It can't hurt. So let's try. An army is besieging a city. They demand as the price for lifting the siege... thirty people. If they're handed over to be slaughtered, the city will be spared. I'm not saying it fits our case exactly. Let's see where it gets us. So the Talmud asks: should we hand over the 30 or not? And the Talmud answers: if no individuals have been specified you must hand over no-one. The whole city must go up in flames. But if the enemy asks: give us this one and this one, if they ask for them by name, then hand them over, save everyone else. So says the Talmud. Now, who here is the enemy? Can anyone specify which individuals must die so that others may live? Obviously not.

From Ghetto,
a play by Joshua Sobol.

...I am one of those who went before you
Five-and-twenty years ago: one of the many who never returned,
Of the many who returned and yet were dead...

We think we gave in vain. The world was not renewed.
There was hope in the homestead and anger in the streets
But the old world was restored and we returned
To the dreary field and workshop, and the immemorial feud

Of rich and poor...

From "To a Conscript of 1940",
by Herbert Reed.

I.

"Not even a brush full of black paint could put such horrors on canvas."

Alexander Herzen.

The close relationship between modern Jewish art and modern Jewish literature is a subject which has only recently attracted some scholarly attention. As Professor Amishai-Maisels has succeeded in showing, it was a "similarity of viewpoint" which led a famous Polish-born German artist in 1916, whilst employed by the German army as a photographer of war graves in Lithuania, to turn to the great Russian-Hebrew poet, Bialik as a sympathetic literary source. Transpiring from this, Jakob Steinhardt's drawing of the Russian wartime pogroms of 1914-15, entitled "Pogrom III", represented no less than an illustration of parts of Bialik's famous Kishinev dirge, "In the City".[1] of slaughter

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[1] Amishai-Maisels' essay, "Steinhardt and Bialik", Jewish Book Annual, vol. 42, 1984-5, pp. 137-49, pioneers scholarly analysis of this relationship. See, relatedly but to a lesser extent, D.G.Roskies, Against the Apocalypse. Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture", Harv. Uni. Press, Mass., p. 275: "The artists' changing perception of catastrophe directly paralleled that of the professional writers...", and B.& B. Harshav [eds] American Yiddish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology, Uni. of Cal., Berkely, 1986, p. 54: the work of American Jewish artists "exhibits striking parallels to the work of the Yiddish poets selected here..."

Despite Herzen's specific insistence, then, that Russian Jewry's experience in uniform could not be portrayed on canvas -a quote which, incidentally, seems to be a most popular of references[2]- it may well serve as an interesting introduction to this paper to draw, in outline, the maskilic version of the Jewish recruitment story, through its pictorial representations.

The reliance of Moritz Oppenheim [1799-1882] on literary sources is hardly surprising. Popularly known as "the first Jewish painter", there was no graphic tradition to which he could readily turn for his depiction of Jewish life. Nonetheless, it is probably true to say that, independent of any piece of literature, his composition, Return of a Jewish Volunteer from the Wars of Liberation to his Family Still Living According to the Old Tradition, of 1833-4, became the Haskalah model for his and later generations.

The illustrated scene emanated an aura of joy, of dignity and, above all else, of harmony. Rejoicing in, and glorifying, the unity between the Jewish home and its ritual, and the national state and its civil law -with confidence in this fact being most certainly assured by the dominating, yet noble, presence of the mother in the centre of the picture- Return of a Jewish Volunteer thus honoured Jewish participation in the German army as part of an

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[2] See, for example, the Encyclopaedia Judaica's article on "Cantonists"; Michael Stanislawski's Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews, p. 27; Louis Grenberg's The Jews in Russia, vol. 1, p. 49; John Shelton Curtiss' The Russian Army under Nicholas 1 1825-55, p. 235; Sol Liptzin's Eliakum Zunser. Poet of His People, p. 51...

appeal for the granting of equal rights. Oppenheim's canvas was, indeed, no less than a call to Kaiser and arms; an hymn of praise to the German Haskalah platform of the compatability of the demands of Judaism with those of citizenship.

The theme of fraternity was conceptualised in quite a different fashion by Mark Antokolsky's Ecce Homo, or Christ before the People's Court, of 1873. In giving Christ Eastern European Jewish facial features, such as 'payot' [side locks], and a 'yamulka' [skullcap], and in clothing him in ancient Jewish garb, picked out from a book on historical costume, the Vilna-born sculptor [1843-1902] made his bid to reclaim Jesus for Judaism. This idea of the Jewishness of Jesus, though extremely provocative and controversial at the time, was not a new statement. Indeed, both the "founders" of the German and Russian Haskalah movements, Moses Mendelssohn and Isaac Ber Levinsohn respectively, had earlier made this claim in their writings. And, it was the literature of the latter, 'Ahiya Shiloni ha-Hozeh, written in 1841, but not published until 1863, with its forceful attack against Christians who persecute Jews, instead of obeying Jesus' teachings of humility, charity, and brotherhood, which Antokolsky's own powerful figure of Jesus boldly echoed.

Antokolsky thus presented, and most probably greatly identified himself with, his Jesus as a reformer: "He stood up for the people, for brotherhood and freedom, for that blind people who with

such rage and ignorance shouted: 'Crucify, crucify him!' I will represent Him during that moment when He stands before the court of that people before whom He fell as a victim." As his letters further show, however, the rising tide of anti-semitism in Russia, during the 1870s, recalled his childhood memories of Jewish children being kidnapped, as cantonists, for Russian military service, and missionary purposes. And, it was these recollections which were so implicit in the artist's vision of Jesus, "the great Isaiah".[3]

Of far less renown and publicity is a watercolour, which perhaps best captures the third chapter of our story. In fact, were it not for a common Jewish soldier, who thought it of relevance, when writing the memoirs of his experience in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5, to make casual mention -in parentheses- of this anonymous work, the drawing would most likely have remained in oblivion. It is, however, exactly this fate which helps to make this picture such an important and impressive challenge, "from below", of the rather elitist and intellectual maskilic view of army participation.

The autobiographer is, then, describing the widespread lack of enthusiasm which each of his fellow Jewish soldiers in the midst of battle shared, because of the dual realisation that howsoever

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[3] See, Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Jewish Jesus", Journal of Jewish Art, vol. 9, 1982, p. 94.

bravely he carried out his duties, for every official enemy in Japanese uniform, he had a far more dedicated enemy at his side, or behind him; and, relatedly, that he would only thereafter be returning home to precisely the same morass of poverty, descrimination, and intermittent pogroms, as had been the case prior to his service. The narrator, at this point, adds, in brackets, that he recalls "long after the war, seeing a watercolor painting of a one-legged Jewish soldier resting on a crutch as he faced the artist, gaunt-eyed, in his ragged great coat. Underneath was a one-word caption in Yiddish: FARVOS? -'For what?'"[4]

It is almost as if in answer to this same question that Mosei Leibovich Maimon's painting, After the Pogrom, of 1917, part of the permanent collection of the Tel Aviv Museum, can be viewed. Although not much is known about Maimon, as the title of "Artist of the First Degree", conferred upon him in 1886 by the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts, indicates, he was clearly a distinguished leader in his field. He was also, significantly, a noted contributor to the Russian-Jewish monthly Voshkod, meaning, optimistically, like the titles of many enlightenment papers, dawn. An article of his in Hebrew was, moreover, presented, in the form of a pamphlet, by one of the foremost Haskalah Hebrew journals, Ha-Meliz [the Advocate] to its readers.

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[4] The Samurai of Vishogrod: The Notebooks of Jacob Marateck, retold by Shimon and Anita Wincelberg, The J.P.S. of America, Philadelphia, 1976, 149.

After the Pogrom represents, however, the final and fatal blow dealt at the corpus of Haskalah ideology from within. For, herein, a wounded Jewish soldier is seen returning home only to discover his wife and daughter butchered, his father half-mad with despair and his home in a total shambles. Such a scene of domestic devastation could convey its message of the failure of emancipation in no starker terms than through a purposeful inversion of Oppenheim's earlier idealistic scene of domestic bliss.

II.

"Arm! Arm! it is -it is -the cannon's opening roar!"
Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

The immense popularity which Oppenheim's paintings won, in the nineteenth century, places them firmly in the realm of social history. As Professor Schorsch has persuasively argued, in his essay on "Art as Social History: Oppenheim and the German Jewish Vision of Emancipation", their "reception bespeaks a singular accord between artist and audience, providing the social historian with a rare opportunity to probe the state of Jewish consciousness in Germany in the half-century before World War One."[5] This paper similarly aspires to read the Yiddish literary counterparts to those pictures described above as documents which reveal a collective state of mind.

An analysis of the literary treatment of the recruitment issue

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[5] Ismar Schorsch, in Moritz Oppenheim. The First Jewish Painter, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 1983, p. 31.

promises well to provide a focal key into the state of Russian-Jewry's consciousness during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This is because of the remarkable centrality of place which the 'Rekrutchina' held throughout this time, both in Russian governmental politics and in Jewish communal politics. As Michael Stanislawski has shown, "The two main poles of Nicholas's Jewish policy were conscription and conversion through the military."[6]

Even after the reign of Nicholas I and the repeal of the cantonist system, the question of Jewish involvement in the Russian Army preoccupied State ministers, and was, subsequently, incorporated into anti-semitic policies, prevalent from the 1870s onwards. Amongst the many infamous incidents, there were the following three. In 1882, the Minister of War issued an order to the effect that the number of Jewish physicians in the army should henceforth amount to no greater than 5% of the total number. Further discriminatory, a law was passed in 1896 which forbade Jewish soldiers to spend their furlough anywhere beyond the Pale. Henceforth, a Jewish soldier, whose regiment was based outside the Pale, could not take his leave in the city where he was performing his military service. A serious, though ultimately unsuccessful, bid was even made by the "Black Duma" of 1907 to oust Jews from the army altogether. Accompanying each of these instances, there was, almost inevitably, occasion for regurgitation of the hackneyed

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[6] Michael Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews. The Transfiguration of Jewish Society in Russia 1825-1855, J.P.S., Philadelphia, 1983, p. 35.

accusations of Jewish disloyalty, cowardice, evasion of military duty, and corruption of the armed forces. Such were, it is worth mentioning, the staples of modern anti-semitism, which later fed the most pernicious and pugnacious of "stab-in-the back" legends, in the Weimer Republic of Germany.

From the recipient end, conscription incurred for the Jews severe family and communal losses. Impelled by the imperial "ukaz" to hand over ten recruits per every 1000 adults, the city of Vilna was, for example, with its population of approximately 25,000, required, annually, to furnish 250 recruits, each for a period of twenty-five years. Measured in terms of a total, it is estimated that, during Nicholas' rule, this meant that some 70,000 Jews were drafted into the army; of these, though, about 50,000 were children -that is Cantonists-, approximately half of whom were forcibly baptised into the Russian Orthodox faith, and so were never to return home.

Throughout the Pale of Settlement, the weight of this burden was, however, significantly, thrust upon the poorer classes by the wealthy community leaders. Regardless of whether there were "many mitigating circumstances"[7], it was, consequently, not only the demographic, but also the moral, strength of Russian Jewry which was severely impaired by such vices as the employment of "khappers"

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[7] Isaac Levitats, The Jewish Community in Russia 1772-1844, C.U.P., N.Y., 1943, p. 66.

[kidnappers -mainly of children]. Arguably, this resultant rupture was, furthermore, never repaired, but it lay at the root of the formidable social cleavages which later exploded in the political radicalisation of Russian Jewry. It was, accordingly, possible for the Soviet-Yiddish writer, Lipe Reznik to turn the most well-known piece of recruitment literature, Der Erster Yiddishe Rekrut in Russland, by Yisroel Aksenfeld, into his communist-inspired, proletarianised drama Recruits or That's How It Was, without deviating too much from the plot, characters or spirit of the original.

Is it to be wondered at, then, that inbetween Aksenfeld and Reznik, in the hands of Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian-Jewish writers, the recruitment experience, and in particular, the Cantonist episode, repeatedly "served as the most egregious example of the pathology of Jewish life under the tsars -governmental persecution, forced baptism of little children, internal Jewish corruption and divisiveness"?[8]

Any analysis made of, and from, this corpus of literature necessarily plays a role in canon formation, through the actual selection of texts. The advantage of concentrating on Yiddish literature, accordingly, needs to be explained briefly. Written in the only language spoken by the Jewish masses, this literature is

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[8] Michael Stanislawski, For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry, O.U.P., Oxford, 1988, p. 173.

most qualified to provide the historian with a rare opportunity of viewing the interaction between popular and elite culture, and of how the intellectual maskilim and the common people coped with the same kind of problems.

It is, interestingly, herein that the weakness of Michael Stanislawski's book, otherwise, the most up-to-date and important piece of historical research in this subject, lies. For, although, in his very opening couple of paragraphs, he introduces the point of comparison, whereupon the conscription of Jews in Russia supposedly differed from the conscription of Jews in Western Europe -the latter was ordered and received as a herald or harbinger of emancipation-, he then proceeds to describe the "traditional" reaction of "the pious Jews" in Russia, who regarded the edict as a punishment from G-d, and "found refuge in their traditional channels".[9] Totally absent from his discussion is, then, the view of conscription, as propagated by the small but growing number of Russian Jews, who, along German lines, did indeed wish to reform their society, and thereby earn emancipation.

This is a most strange omission, especially since the title of Stanislawski's book is none other than, Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews. The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia 1825-55, and since he, accordingly, took due care to analyse the relationship of the Russian maskilim with all other major governmental policies.

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[9] Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I, pp. 31 & 32.

This becomes still more curious when one considers that it has been his intent to provide, in his Psalms for the Tsar. A minute-book of a Psalms-Society in the Russian Army 1864-67, "a brief but fascinating look at the reverse side of the coin: not the sufferings of the Jews in the Tsar's service but their ability- when the circumstances were ripe, to be sure -to live as faithful Jews while serving their emperor and their country." To which, he adds significantly, "This, of course, was the dream of the Jewish enlightenment movement in Russia, as elsewhere in Europe."[10] Indication of this "of course" can, however, only be found in yet another of Stanislawski's books, a biography of "the most prominent and most passionate exponent of the Jewish Enlightenment movement in Russia", the Hebrew poet, Jehudah Leib Gordon.[11]

In fact, on the sole occasion that Stanislawski, in his first book, Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews, gave voice to a maskil, with regards to conscription, he chose to quote I.M. Dik reporting on the conservative response of the masses to the Ukaz: "no matches were made, and many were broken off. Many Jews prepared to go to Palestine, others rushed to join the merchant guilds. A cripple was considered a saved man, an only son a joy, a hunchback an

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[10] Michael Stanislawski, Psalms for the Tsar. A minute-book of a Psalms-Society in the Russian Army 1864-67, Yeshivah Uni. Press, N.Y., 1988, p. 12.

[11] Stanislawski, For Whom Do I Toil?, p. 3, and see especially, pp. 39, 50-51, 69-70, & 172-3.

aristocrat."[12] Readers of Der Erster Nabor or The First Recruitment will, however, have noticed that in the second half of his essay, Dik turned, almost a complete volte-face, in order to detail his own, more enlightened, and very contrary response. And, it is precisely the co-existence and juxtaposition of two such opposing descriptions, which appears frequently in Yiddish Maskilic literature, and the subsequent tension arising between them, which proves so interesting.

The texts enlisted and prioritised for analysis in this paper are, further, those which demonstrate greater historical flavour and insight. Dik, himself, was actually eager to impress his own credentials as a quasi-historian, when he introduced the subject of his narrative as "an historical fact": "I was 13 years old at the time of the first recruitment -now 43 years ago. But I remember the day so well as if it were yesterday."[13] As it so happens, many of the more fictional representatives of cantonist literature also clearly fall under the category of social realistic writing. Such a phenomenon is by no means coincidental. As Dan Miron has articulated, a "strongly negative attitude towards fiction was deeply rooted in the hearts of the maskilim", who, with heavy didacticism, sought to change society through exposing its weaknesses in their literature. Even more pronounced was this

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[12] Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I, p. 31.

[13] I.M. Dik, Der erster nabor vos var in dem yor 5588-1828, Vilna, 1871, p. 4. All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

attitude in the case of Yiddish maskilic literature, where "the aesthetics of ugliness" further postulated a need for literal veracity.[14]

Even the later, and often far less realistically-grounded, Yiddish literature, which concerns the draft, is not lacking in historical significance. Hillel Halkin, translator of Sholem Aleichem's Railroad Stories, accordingly, cautions his audience not to be misled by "the seemingly surrealistic plot of The Automatic Exemption".[15] Herein, a father has to rush enlessly from one draft board to another [taking the railroad!], even though his boy, being an only son, has, according to Russian law, "a guaranteed, a one-hundred-percent lifetime exemption", because the younger son who died in infancy still appears in the population registry.

Yet, this is not surrealistic in the least, -when a poor, timid Jew looks at himself in the mirror and sees the face of a Russian army officer staring back at him, then that is surrealistic[16]- but, rather, perhaps, too realistic, or simply satirically so. For, only too frequently did inaccurate civil records lead to the

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[14] Dan Miron, A Traveler Disguised. The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century, Schocken Books, N.Y., 1973, pp. 217 & 54.

[15] Sholem Aleichem, Tevye The Dairyman And The Railroad Stories, trans. & intro. by Hillel Halkin, Schocken Books, N.Y., p. xxxiii.

[16] see Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg eds., A Treasury of Yiddish Stories, Andre Deutsch Ltd, London, 1955, p. 55.

calling up of people who were either long since dead or who had already emigrated abroad. Moreover, besides much play on the bollocking up over the confusion of the two boys' names: "Try to concentrate,' I said. 'I've already told you fifteen times that Itsik, Avrom-Yitzchok, and Alter are all the same person, that's who they are- that is, Itsik is really Avrom-Yitzchok, but his mother called him Alter for good luck. It was Eisik who knocked over the samovar in Vorotolivke, I mean before I moved to-", there can be no mistaking that even the sum of 300 rubles, which a lawyer informs the distraught father that he shall be liable to pay as a fine, was the exact sum specified by Russian law for such cases.[17]

By including herein such a story as Sholem Aleichem's The Automatic Exemption, written as it was in 1902, the temporal framework of this paper differs significantly from that adopted in the only other major piece of literary criticism carried out in this same area. For ~~Max~~ Meier Wiener, in his Die Rekrutschina in der sheyna literatur fon der Haskalah, divides his treatment into a first period of the Enlightenment, which approximately covers the first Rekrutchina, during the reign of Nicholas I, 1825-56, and a second period of Enlightenment, which extends until the introduction of universal conscription in 1874.[18] As already mentioned, however, conscription remained very much on the agenda of Jews throughout

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[17] The Railroad Stories, trans. by Hillel Halkin, p. 236.

[18] Max Wiener, Zu der geshichte fun der Yiddisher Literatur in 19th Jorhundert, Yiddisher Kuture Farband, N.Y., 1945, pp. 150-192.

what may be termed the third period of the late Haskalah, 1874-1914.

From Sholem Aleichem's autobiography, From the Fair, we know that universal conscription certainly did not lessen talk, amongst the Jews, about the draft. [On the contrary, writers, in particular, necessarily fearful of censorship, had felt they had to maintain "a discrete silence" which could only be broken after the abolition of the old system.][19] Concerning Sholem Aleichem's work, Professor Roskies has, though, incidentally, commented that "In 1913 the long-range plan was to write an historical overview of Yiddish literary development; but it would have been a spotty history at best, since From the Fair contains not a single date..."[20] Chapter 15 of the second book begins, however, as follows: "One can confidently say that during these three years hardly a day passed in Sofievke without hearing the word 'draft'", and it soon becomes clear that these three years are 1874-77 -the first three years after universal conscription was decreed- from the text itself, which declares, on the very next page, "The Russo-Turkish War broke out, and rumors spread that the reserves might be called up." And that, without a doubt, can only mean that the writer is speaking of

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[19] Eliakum Zunser in, A Jewish Bard. Being the biography of Eliakum Zunser, trans. by Simon Hirsdansky, pub. by Zunser Jubilee Committee, N.Y., 1905, p. 33.

[20] David G. Roskies, "Unfinished Business: Sholem Aleichem's From the Fair", Prooftexts vol. 6, The John Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 66.

the year 1877.[21]

This rewarding need to "tease meaning from documents" has been best exemplified by the work of Robert Darnton, whose approach to history has, at least initially, inspired the nature of this paper. It is, in following his trail, then, that this

> inquiry leads into the unmapped territory known in France as 'l'histoire des mentalités'. This genre has not yet received a name in English, but it might simply be called cultural history;... I realize that there are risks in departing from the established modes of history... And still more readers will recoil at the arbitrariness of selecting a few strange documents as points of entry [into eighteenth-century thought] rather than proceding in a systematic manner through the canon of classic texts. I think there are valid replies to those objections, but I do not want to turn this introduction into a discourse on method. Instead, I would like to invite the reader into my own text. He may not be convinced, but I hope he will enjoy the journey.[22]

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[21] Sholem Aleichem, From the Fair, Penguin Bks, Harmondsworth, 1986, trans. by Curt Leviant, pp. 245 & 246.

[22] Robert Darnton, The Great Cat Massacre and other episodes in French cultural history, Penguin Bks, Harmondsworth, 1988, p. 15.

III.

"Everything with us now is in the German manner."
Lev Levanda, Turbulent Times.

Although Germany was not the only route via which the Haskalah movement and its ideology reached Russia -there were ~~indigenous~~ endogenous as well as ~~endogenous~~ exogenous factors contributing to its development- the first generation of Russian maskilim certainly preached "the German manner". This sometimes reached a point of obsession, as best epitomised in another of Y. Aksenfeld's works -the anti-Hasidic, polemical novel, Dos Shterntichl, The Headband- when a Russian Jew

cries out in despair and frustration, "We are peasants. We have to have talented, educated Jews, young men who know a great deal and would like our children to know a great deal as well. But those destroying angels, the rebbes, hold us by our hair and won't let us. I agree with Mr. Margosin that there is no remedy for such a plague. What do you think, Hailperin, what do you think, Kroin, and you Blumenfeld? Unless we send our children to Germany." [my emphasis][23]

Far more customary and less extreme, though, would it have been the case that the first books, to which the maskilim fathers turned their attention, would have been German. Thus, in the library of Sonia Aronson, from Lev Levanda's Turbulent Times, were the weighty tomes of Michelet, Guizot, Karl-Julius Weber, Shakespeare, Schlosser, Mendelssohn, Kant, Fichte, and Feuerbach -a clear favouring of the German authors. All these books belonged to her maskil father, the "Berliner", who embraced German culture, in part because the merchants of the Western Region made frequent business journeys to Germany. Surely it is not too implausible, then, to interpolate Levanda's text just a little, by suggesting that Sonia's father, and other members of the Jewish middle class, might also have boasted of an Oppenheim print, a copy, perhaps, of The Return of a Volunteer, proudly displayed on their study walls!

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[23] Yisroel Aksenfeld, The Headband, in, The Shtetl. A Creative Anthology of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel, The Overlook Press, N.Y., 1989, p. 111.

The issue of recruitment had, afterall, been tied publicly to the Haskalah bandwagon, in Germany, from the very beginning. Johann David Michaelis, in his "blood and iron" speech against the Enlightenment activist, Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, had indeed cited as his "principal objection" to the recommendation that Jews be granted equality of rights the fact that "the power of the state does not depend on gold alone, but rather, in large part, on the strength of its soldiers. And the Jews will not contribute soldiers to the state as long as they do not change their religious views... One must add to this a further physical argument, albeit a hypothetical one, which Herr Dohm seems not to have considered. It is held that the conduct of modern warfare requires a specific minimum height for the soldiers... If this claim be true, very few Jews of the necessary height will be found who will be eligible."[24]

These comments, in turn, called for a counter-response from Moses Mendelsohn himself. In line with his philosophy that religion was but a matter of personal conviction, which should not interfere with affairs of state, he accordingly retorted that "it is up to the individual to deal with any problem that might arise from a collision of his personal convictions with public law." As for the slight on Jewish physical inadequacy, Mendelssohn coolly shrugged that off, with a succinct dismissal, "...I doubt the validity of

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[24] quoted in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz eds. The Jew In The Modern World. A Documentary History, O.U.P., Oxford, 1980, p. 38.

Herr Michaelis' view that we are unfit for army service."[25]

Perhaps the paradigmatic Haskalah statement on military involvement, accepted as the number one pre-requisite for emancipation, was, though, proposed by the nineteenth century champion of Jewish emancipation, Gabriel Riesser. "There is only one baptism", he declared "that can initiate one into a nationality, and that is the baptism of blood in the common struggle for a fatherland and for freedom. 'Your blood was mixed with ours on the battlefield', this was that cry which put an end to the last feeble stirrings of intolerance and antipathy in France. The German Jews also have earned this valid claim to nationality. The Jews in Germany fulfill their military obligations in all instances. They did so even before the Wars of Liberation..."[26] It was evidently <u>this</u> text which Oppenheim translated into the medium of art just a couple of years later. And, this partnership, too, received public recognition when, in 1835, a group of Baden Jews expressed appreciation to Riesser for having bravely defended their political interests, by presenting them with Oppenheim's original <u>The Return of the Volunteer</u>.

It is only within this context that the otherwise surprising word of "remarkably", in Salo Baron's comment on the recruitment of Russian Jews, can, therefore, be understood: "<u>Remarkably</u>, such

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[25] ibid., p. 43.

[26] ibid., p. 131.

extension [of the draft which now included Jews], under discussion since 1800, was treated not as a privilege to be granted to Jews as part of their sharing in all citizens' rights and duties, but rather as a punitive measure to help reduce the size of the Jewish population, to make it pay up tax arrears, or to force it to take up agricultural pursuits."[27]

Throughout the whole of Yiddish literature and its portrayal of the Rekrutschina, one can find, then, but one full-hearted salute made to, and heralding of, the decree's introduction as a pre-requisite for equal rights. This is Shlomo Etinger's [1803?-1856] extraordinary poem entitled Shmaters, or Rags. Although published only posthumously, this poem was probably written close onto 1827, in Poland, where recruitment was, importantly, not introduced until 1842, and with far better conditions -service was limited to fifteen years; the draft was personal and not communal; and there was no drafting of children. All this, however, can hardly account for the extreme jingoistic elements and character of the poem itself.

Divided into two parts, the first revolves around a conversation between a wagon load of rags and the wagon's driver, a conversation which is being relayed by the poet to his readership of merchants. Each rag competes for the right to complain the most about its

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[27] Salo W. Baron, The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets, Schocken Press, N.Y., 1987, p. 29.

decline of status -one piece of rag is a declassé Hasidic Shtreiml, another a declassé Rebbitzen's veil, and so forth- until the coachman, having reached his point of exasperation interrupts the whole bundle of them. Insisting upon having his word, he silences the nagging rags by promising them a literally golden future: just be patient for a short while, and you'll secure the glory of printed matter - Bible sheets and all sorts of shining, artistic matter, which is useful to all and which the wise and progressive will not feel ashamed to hang up on their wall, nor to delve into.

This, by way of an implicit metaphor, introduces Etinger to his main purpose. As among the rags, so among his fellow Jews [a charming comparison indeed!] the poet has heard a commotion -a scream, a cry; from both the large and the small; the aged and the young... "They're taking Jews off to the military!"[28] Again, just as the rags were beckoned to hold quiet, so are the Jews: give me a breather and just listen... Almost to the letter, the line "just be patient for a few minutes" on page 117, recalls "just be patient for a short time" on p. 115. The proceeding frivolity of tone and mocking voice at this point, however, changes as the narrator earnestly explains that it is no disgrace to be a soldier. Quite the contrary, for just as printed matter is a step towards improvement for rags, so is conscription for the betterment of the Jews. Afterall, "look at the Jews in other lands! How joyfully

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[28] Sh. Etinger, Collected Works, [in Yiddish] ed. M. Erik,pub. by the Ukrainian Scientific Institute, Kiev, 1935, p. 117.

and gleefully they serve their king, with both their body and soul, be it in peace or in wartime... So, similarly, with joy and glee, just you be forever ready to run even into the fire of battle, to carry out the king's command, because the good monarchs already know how to reward you."[29]

In other words, recruitment is as much a pre-requisite for Jewish emancipation as is the education of Jews through the printed word. And here, in Etinger, we have this expressed in terms so belligerent that this poem may well be referred to as "the Yiddish code of chivalry"; the nearest equivalent there is in Yiddish literature to Horace's old-fashioned dictum, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" -"Lovely and honourable is it to die for one's country."

This "old lie", as Wilfred Owen was later to expose Horace's phrase in his poetry of the First World War, was undermined, almost immediately, though by no means totally so, by other Yiddish maskilic writers of the first period. Isaac Ber Levinsohn [1788-1860], the aforementioned Moses Mendelssohn of the Russian Haskalah, also broached the issue of recruitment. This was in his short symposium, entitled Die Hefker Velt -which can be translated as The World Turned Topsy-Turvy or Where Might is Right- written sometime in the first decade after the 1827 Ukaz.

In this dialogue, the author features as a stranger who has been in

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[29] ibid., p. 118.

Israel, Italy, Germany and several other states where the affairs of the Jews are administered honestly. Having returned home, he poses the question to his fellow travellers: so, what's new in Russia?, and is horrified to discover so contrary a state of moral bankruptcy. The manipulative power, which the rich leaders of the community yield, provokes the stranger to declaim "Why, with you Russian Jews, it really is a Sodom of a place, may the merciful G-d save us!"[30] But it is only then that his companions begin to tell him of the conscription situation: "The truth is that since they've taken recruits, they've not given away one rich man's child, not one official's child, not one broker's child, not one Bet-Medrach boy, only poor people's children, G-d bless 'em, real workmen's sons, who help their parents with their work."[31] Such news eventually causes the stranger to vary his opinion, "Nay, Sodom is but a puppy's squeak against your kahal with its butchery and thieving."[32]

Early criticism of the Rekrutschina remains, albeit, internal. It is the way the Jewish leaders administer it, and not the way in which the Tsar and his government perceive it, which comes under attack. "De iure", the decree is seemingly flawless; "de facto", in kahal hands, it is, however, corrupted. This is most clearly

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[30] Isaac Ber Levinsohn, Die Hefker Velt, Warsaw pub., 1903, p. 32.

[31] ibid., p. 33.

[32] ibid., p. 34.

spelt out with regards to the question of the only son. Although, by law, no only son ought to be drafted, "You should just see how they go about dragging off tiny little children, like pigs, from their mother's breast! It's enough to break one's heart! Although such wee, little things, whom one knows for certain the council-chamber will not accept, the "khappers" kidnap away regardlessly..."[33]

"Of 'how joyfully and gleefully they serve their King'", Max Wiener has sarcastically commented, with regards to folksongs about the recruitment, "we cannot find here any trace."[34] The same might just as well be said of Levinsohn's Di Hefker Velt, where there is, equally, no hint of the popular jubilation which Etinger sought to arouse. Levinsohn's tale is, rather, that of the stranger returning home from abroad. Such was, of course, a recurring theme in Haskalah literature. A successful homecoming would, naturally, signify the triumphant ascendency of the Haskalah, and this was precisely Oppenheim's point in his painting The Return of a Volunteer. Di Hefke Velt, by contrast, is perhaps the earliest appearance of an unsuccessful return home, in Yiddish literature- the first sign that the Haskalah's triumphant rise is confronted by problems. "The stranger" is thus drawn into the news of the shtetls' affairs; he expresses sympathy to the plight of the common people, but he cannot empathise. He is, by self-definition,

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[33] ibid., p. 33.

[34] Max Wiener, p. 154.

forever estranged. Additionally, his repeated expressions of abhorrence and disbelief only go to strengthen even further this impression of a wide gulf. He, likewise, disassociates himself with the words, "bei eich"; whenever he says "bei unz", he is referring to elsewhere.

As part of this recurring theme of the returning maskil, there was in Yiddish literature the motif of the window. A window scene would amply allow for the author to focus on both the maskil, as seen from one side of the window, and the populus, as seen from the other. The relationship between the two of them, and their interaction, could thus be revealed more dramatically and more concretely. This device was perhaps most memorably employed by Peretz in his Travel-Pictures. Herein, Peretz returns to the Jewish provinces on a statistical expedition, which is founded on the optimistic premise of the Enlightenment that if the true facts about Jewish life were but to be exposed, "anti-semitism" would be eliminated.

At his first halting-place, however, Peretz records that "...I stood by the window and looked at the market-place... The market-women are in a state of great commotion. I must have impressed them very much. 'Bad luck to you!' screams one, 'don't point at him with your finger; he can see!'... Sitting at the table, I saw without being seen. I was hidden from the street, but I could see

half the market-place..."[35] Thus, already, ominous indication is given that the distance and alientation experienced between the shtetl people and Peretz, the outsider, threaten to thwart any smooth and speedy realisation of the expedition's goals.

In Aksenfeld's play, The First Jewish Recruit in Russia, there is, similarly, a window scene of crucial importance. News has just reached the shtetl of Nibivayleh that Jews are to start contributing to the Russian draft, and the kahal council leaders have been asked to sign their consent to the decree. Gathered in the house of the Parnes -one of the elected heads of the community- are, accordingly, all the communal elders. But, "The window looking onto the street stands open", so the stage directions inform us, and outside the house can be seen the townfolk, who have amassed themselves; they are ready, if need be, to try and ensure that the decree is not signed.[36] They are the vox populi; the chorus which is referred to, collectively, as "fon droisn", that is, the voice which comes from outside.

At first, though, the opinion from either side of the window cries in unison; it is univocally conservative and lamenting in its stand against the bitter decree. Competing against such a united front is, however, the singular voice, from inside the house, of the

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[35] Stories and Pictures by I.L. Peretz, trans. by Helena Frank, Bks for Library Press, N.Y., pp. 224-5.

[36] Y. Aksenfeld, Der Erster Yiddische Rekrut in Russland, in, Aksenfelds verk, vol 1, ed. M. Wiener, Kiev, 1931, p. 149.

well-known figure, with maskilic pretensions, Pinchus. He interrupts the proceedings to shout above them that they've all missed the point: whether they agree to sign the decree or not is irrelevant; the decree will remain in force. Then, raising his voice so that he can be heard from both within the house and without, Pinchus continues, "Listen, gentlemen, I'm only from a small shtetl, from Titiev that is, but when my father was alive and when I was a young boy, I spent all my time in Berdychev, mixing with all the V.I.P.s there. That's where I learnt to read and write both Russian and Yiddish. I heard plenty too from those who came from Brody and from other people who'd been in other countries, besides Petersburg and Moscow."[37]

With such wordly credentials, and since, unfortunately, shtetl Jews know nothing, and understand even less, it is but left for him to clarify the meaning of such a decree. Interestingly, however, Pinchus at this point switches from the personal pronoun of "I" to the impersonal third person plural of "other great people say that with this decree the Tsar intends to bestow a privelege on the Jews so that we Jews may enjoy equal rights in Russia." The indirect nature of this report is of no small consequence, since it shows that he himself is not fully convinced by it. "The truth is that none of us can know what will come of this decree", Pinchus admits.

Despite this lack of complete confidence in the maskilic belief in

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[37] ibid., p. 154.

recruitment as the primary portent for emancipation, Pinchus, nonetheless, stands firm by the maskilic interpretation of the rabbinic dictum, "dina de-malkhuta dina" -"the law of the land is law". In accordance with this principle, he recommends, that Jews must comply with the laws of state, in the same way as, and with the same fearful sense of punishment with which, they obey the laws of the Torah. Thus, here again, the Haskalah premises, are only partially shaken. Even more so, in fact, than in the Levinsohn piece because, in Der Erster Yiddische Rekrut, it becomes not only clear that the kahal's conduct is worthy of reproach, but it is, additionally, no longer clear whether the Tsar's motifs are themselves all that free from reproach.

This question of whether recruitment was a pre-requisite for Jewish emancipation has an interesting parallel in the wider framework of Russian history, or rather historiography. The Rostrow-Gershenkron debate about Russia's economic history, and whether, or to what extent, the emancipation edict of the serfs was a pre-requisite for Russian industrialization, though far separated in time from the decree of 1861 and even more so from our own recruitment decree of 1827, nevertheless, helps towards a greater understanding of our subject.

The administration of agriculture and the administration of the military in Russia were, afterall, inexorably linked. This can best be seen in the creation of military colonies which, set up

mainly after the Napoleonic Wars, were designed to remove the army from its total dependency upon the charitable grace of the nobility who, under the system of serfdom, owned the peasants; to alleviate the burden of frequent recruiting on the peasant population; to free a large part of the army for agriculture, and thereby lessen the onus of taxation. It is not surprising that the intense unpopularity of these colonies, in turn, led the Decembrists to demand, in "The First Russian Revolution" of 1825, the repeal of serfdom, together with the reduction of the term of military service, and the granting of civil rights.

The failure of the Decembrists to enforce this programme meant, further, that the recruitment of the Jews, enforced only two years later, was similary shaped by such Russian military and agricultural considerations: Jewish recruits, and especially cantonists, were sent to military colonies where they were frequently expected to carry out arduous arable duties.

It is worthy of note that the whole plan for military colonies was fashioned after the Austrian model of military colonies along the Turkish border. Prussia, likewise, provided Russia with a German example when it came to peasant emancipation; the Stein-Hardenberg reforms of 1807 and 1810 had been conceived as a necessary step towards economic modernization. There was also the Austrian precedent of recruiting Jews -Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor, was the first ruler to issue such a decree in 1787- for Russia to

pursue, and this was first proposed by one of Alexander I's ministers in 1810: "I reckon that in certain particulars we can, right away, follow the example from Austria, i.e. to take Jews as recruits."[38] The ambiguous phrase of "in certain particulars" brings us, however, to the heart of the Rostrow-Gerschenkron debate.

According to W.W. Rostrow's monolithic view of industrialization, each country must undergo certain economic and accompanying non-economic changes before it can claim to have had its industrial "take-off", and thereby to have overcome the structural crises predicted by Malthus and Ricardo. A. Gerschenkron, by contrast, has argued for a more flexible approach: to the effect that backward countries, most particularly Russia, can find substitutes for the missing pre-requisites and thereby provide an alternative means to a "take-off". The question, therefore, becomes what were the "certain particulars" over which Russia could afford to hurdle.

The missing element in both the emancipation of the serfs and the recruitment of Jewish soldiers was the intention -nay, the ability- to follow it up with any substantial politico-economic reforms. The motivation for serf-emancipation came from elsewhere; it came from "an appetite for twin securities, the security of peasant equilibrium at home, the security of sustained prestige in the international forum. Unfortunately, these aims were partially

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[38] quoted in M. Wiener, p. 160.

incompatible, for international security required at least a measure of economic modernization, while internal security could not readily accomodate the social tensions which modernization entailed. The paradox was not resolved:"[39] not even by any "substitutes", which Russia managed to improvise. There accordingly followed the structural crises in Russia, which proved of fatal consequence: famine, war, and revolution.[40]

To avoid as much possible domestic upheaval, Jewish recruitment was, for example, similarly, not accompanied, as it was preceded both in Austria and Prussia, by the abolition of the kahal. [The kahal was only nominally abolished in 1844.] There thus ensued in Russian-Jewry, comparable structural crises, as mentioned earlier, which pitted the poor against the rich. Although the first generation of maskilim advocated for the abolition of the kahal as much as they did for the introduction of Jewish conscription, they

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[39] Clive Trebilcock, The Industrialization of the Continental Powers 1780-1914, Longman Press, London, 1983, p. 208.

[40] In significant ways, Russia still has not resolved this paradox, and the military situation remains familiar. Although Soviet armed forces are based on the principle of universal military service, "Russians account for the vast majority of Soviet Army officers, but only 43 percent of the 2.2 million 18-year-old Soviet men subject to conscription... In general, Soviet soldiers have not been allowed to serve in their native regions, but instead have been stationed in geographically distant and ethnically different areas. This 'extraterritorial policy' has become extremely unpopular... Draft evasion is a crime under Soviet law, but military authorities depend on local law-enforcement agencies to prosecute, and local officials have been reluctant to take action against members of their own nationality." "Moscow Worries About The Effect Of Nationalist Tensions On Army", The New York Times, March 28, 1990.

failed to realise the extent to which, remarkably simply, Russia just was not Germany; Tsar Nicholas I, and so too Alexander II, were not western reformers. If Russia, afterall, in 1827, did not herself have universal military service for brief periods, as in the Prussian army, but selective, long-term conscription, which was borne begrudgingly by the underpriveleged section of society, how could recruitment possibly be seen as a portent for the granting of political rights, let alone equality.

The Jews were therefore, for all practical purposes, trapped in the peculiarly Russian web of contradictions, which has been described above. The popular Jewish response to recruitment was, accordingly, basically and emotionally no different than that of the Russian folk, which was most faithfully and vividly represented on a canvas by Russia's leading painter Ilya Repin. [It may well be recalled that when Chekov drew up "an honours list" of contemporary Russian talent in 1890, he accorded first place to Tolstoy, second to Tchaikovsky, and third to Repin -placing himself a modest ninety-eigth!!]

Entitled "Leave-taking of a Recruit", and dated 1879, this painting movingly portrays, with the fiery colours of brown, red, auburn, and gold from Repin's brush, a whole village -dog and all!- gathered around an unfortunate peasant, fated for army service. Two women stand, in the centre, closest around him. One has an expression on her face of utter fear, whilst the face of the other

can not be seen since she tearfully buries it into his shoulder, almost as if determined to prevent him from taking his leave at all. Of the two, though, it is not certain which is the mother and which the wife; this is also significantly in contrast to our opening canvas.

A caption from a Yiddish folksong, such as, perhaps, "Fonye dienen iz zeyer biter, In soldaten iz zeyer schlecht..." -"To have to serve Fonya, is really terrible, to be a soldier is really hard"[41], would hardly seem too out of place underneath the Repin!

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[41] Fonya dienen in, Yiddish Folksongs with Melodies, ed. I.L. Cahan, vol. II, The International Library Publisher, N.Y., p. 179.

IV.

[V.] 24. "Care and responsibility for the prompt and correct execution of the military orders shall rest upon the Jewish communities themselves."
Statutes Regarding the Military Service of the Jews, August 26, 1827.

"And of all plagues with which mankind are curst,
Ecclesiastic tyranny's the worst."
Daniel Defoe, The True-Born Englishman.

The ground upon which "the two cultural traditions" -the "great tradition" of the educated few, and the "little tradition" of the uneducated many- could meet was in their common antipathy of the kahal. Even, at best, however, such a relationship was prone to be asymmetrical, as Professor Peter Burke has pointed out in his study of Popular Culture In Early Modern Europe, "The elite participated in the little tradition, but the common people did not participate in the great tradition."[42] For any interaction of this kind to occur, moreover, a mediating force is needed.

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[42] Peter Burke, Popular Culture In Early Modern Europe, Harper Torchbooks, N.Y., 1978, p. 28.

In nineteenth century Yiddish literature, the mantle of intermediary was tailor-made to fit the bard, Eliakum Zunser. "The art of the bards" is, afterall, and so The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics informs us, "essentially social in function, related to the life, traditions, and ideals of the community."[43] The poetry of a bard is, further, transmitted both informally amongst the common people, and formally amongst the intellectuals. It is his songs, therefore, which can join together both oral and written cultural traditions. Thus, to borrow - and appropriately so- from the phrase of Homer, the greatest bard of all time, the bard alone can utter "winged words" which rise from the populus to the elite.

Born in Vilna, Zunser [1836-1913] was a contemporary and playmate of Motke Antokolsky, who later developed into the renowned sculptor, Mark Antokolsky. Zunser too was early attracted to a specialized handiwork -but his was the poor man's art of braiding. Albeit, this was a craft, which involved skillful sowing of golden threads on the collars and cuffs of military and civilian uniforms of all ranks. It was, further, only reluctantly and through lack of choice that he later had to give up this occupation trade, and turn to the typical means by which a young Jew of good learning and literary ambitions would find employ in a strange town: that is, he became a family tutor. Thus from the very beginning, even if

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[43] The Princeton Encyclopedia Of Poetry And Poetics, ed. by Alex Preminger, 1974, p. 65.

rather superficially, Eliakum Zunser wandered between two worlds: the world of the workbench and the world of learning. And, from this journeying was to emerge, in the 1860s and 1870s, the mature maskilic poet who, according to his biographer, became "the sensitive seismograph that faithfully recorded the reactions of the common man."[44]

When it comes to this particular maskil's oeuvre of recruitment literature, it is clear that Zunser was, in any case, personally involved to a degree that perhaps no other Yiddish-writing maskil ever was. This is because he himself was led off to the barracks- not once but twice. The first occasion was in 1855, "at the age of fourteen"[45], when, still tutoring, his employer schemed to earn for himself the reward for turning in a potential recruit, instead of paying Zunser his wages. The second time was in 1873, after performing at a wedding, into which some "impressors" [those hired to recruit every hidden Jew, i.e. any Jew whose birth was not recorded, and so had no passport] had barged in and made off with the groom. Zunser, abhorred, spoke out harshly and rashly only to find that upon his return to his hotel, the "impressors" were waiting in the lurk for him too. Zunser was thus twice abducted into the military, and both times illegally so, since his brother

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[44] Sol Liptzin, Eliakum Zunser. Poet of His People, Behrman House, Inc. Pubs., 1950, p. 7.

[45] Zunser's autobiography, p. 19; someone's calculations seem to be askew here though! Born in 1836, by 1855, Zunser must have been going on 20!

Akivah had already been taken as a cantonist and the tsar's decree forbade taking more than one son per family. [Can Sholem Aleichem's story, one can again ask though purely rhetorically at this juncture, still be considered surrealistic.]

Although Eliakum Zunser never actually trained nor served as a soldier, having been recruited twice, he wrote with the empathy which Levinsohn lacked; "not with my own blood alone, but with the blood of all my unhappy people; not alone my sorrows resound through my verse, but the despairing wail of all Israel."[46] He also sung in a manner which the masses could well understand and appreciate -a Yiddish, rich in biblical allusions.

This was the traditional way in which the people themselves spoke about conscription, and in the first half of I.M. Dik's essay we find ample examples of this. Women in Vilna would thus recall the prophecy from Jeremiah [31;13], "For I will turn their mourning into joy", as they enviously watched a mother, whose son had died, dance joyfully [N.B. Etinger!] around his grave, thanking G-d that she had been favoured to bring him as a Jew to a Jewish burial.[47] Dik himself recalled that, as a little boy, he too fell into line with this mode of thought. For, he remembers how, just before the Kol Nidrei service of that memorable Yom Kippur very soon after when the community had just learnt of the decree, when his father

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[46] ibid., p. 19.

[47] Dik, p. 16.

blessed him with such a sense of urgency, he felt as courageous as "our patriarch Isaac was at his binding".[48]

The Akedah of Isaac was probably the most popular of all biblical reference points, but Zunser chose instead to take his first prooftext from a slightly more obscure source -from the prophet Haggai. This provided him, nonetheless, with a pertinent and powerful theme. For, in the second, and final, chapter of this little prophetic book, Haggai asks of the priest whether a man, or even his garment, can become holy if either comes into contact with the holy meat of the sacrifice. The answer given is negative. To the question as to whether either can become unclean after contact with any unclean meat, the reply is, however, adamantly, positive. Similarly, Haggai concludes, the Jewish people, while living among the wordly nations can only acquire their bad customs.

Zunser's own conclusion from this biblical parallel is, however, founded on a subtly different reading. In his Child Recruits or Judged and Found Guilty -Die Poimanes oder Geshtanen zum Mishpot un Herois Shuldig, it is Russian-Jews who, having been tested by "the horrible ukaz" and having performed so poorly, have "revealed to the world a bad element among them!"[49] In other words, the emphasis is no longer on the unfortunate influence which the outside world has had on the Jews, but on the unfortunate

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[48] ibid., p. 23.

[49] Zunser's autobiography, p. 19.

impression which they themselves must have given, which smacks rather of a maskilic twist added onto a folksong. It will be recalled, afterall, that toward the end of Dik's piece on recruitment, he too regrets that the acts of shame committed amongst the Jews "were described in many newspapers and became the material for many novels. And so, they will remain forever a mark of stain on our Jewish people which the stream of time will not be able to wash away."[50]

Haggai was not the only biblical role in which Zunser, however, cast himself. Nor was his other that of the lonely prophet, but rather a part which he co-starred with many: he was Joseph who had been sold into slavery for a few pieces of silver along with all the other "hundreds of 'sales of Josephs' [which] occurred daily."[51] Significantly, it is Joseph's story, which Zunser later dramatized, in 1872, in his play The Sale of Joseph, whose appeal, perhaps more than any other story from the Scriptures, could draw together "the little tradition" and "the great", since it "speaks with no less poignancy to the peasant and the child than to the intellectual and the theologian."[52]

It was not until 1874, however, "when Alexander II, by ukaze, abolished the old system of recruiting and introduced the new

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[50] Dik, p. 34.

[51] Zunser's autobiography, p. 18.

[52] S. Liptzin, p. 127.

system" that Zunser composed his song The Izborshtchik. This was Zunser's most popular piece of recruitment literature, which he sang "at every opportunity, to the great satisfaction of the Jewish masses".[53] In every stanza, the Izborshtchik, that is the kahal agent in charge of the local draft, lamented his fall from authority and grace, only to be joined in the refrain by a chorus of similarly dejected kahal cronies. No longer could the Izborshtchik, thus one stanza went, -alas! alas!- make an "easy groschen" in trapping some gemorrah protégé, or bridegroom -it hadn't really mattered which, so the Izborshtchik pines, since it made no difference to the monetary reward.

Although Zunser was "the poet of the people", he was still, in the 1870s, very much the dedicated maskil, and there were times when he experienced difficulties in reconciling his loyalties to these two particular roles. An attempt to do so was made in 1879 when he began writing a series of articles in the journal Kol L'Am. Having opened out with his unequivocal espousal of the cause of conscription, he argued against the unfailing efforts of the Jews to evade the draft: emigration, of course, posed a serious challenge to someone such as Zunser who still believed that emancipation could and would be realised on Russian soil. Thereafter, he listed the reasons which motivated the flight of Jews, ostensibly only to counter them. Being of two minds, however, he gave equal weight to each side of the argument, which

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[53] Zunser's auto., p. 33.

was quite unlike the manner of Dik who ultimately but firmly placed his feet in the camp which held that "it is the greatest privilege of all to give soldiers."[54] [There is, incidentally, an inherent irony in this. For, according to Peter Burke, "Between learned culture and traditional oral culture came what might be called 'chap-book culture'" -the most capabe mediating force.[55] Dik, the writer of Yiddish 'chap-books' par excellence certainly did not play the role of intermediary in this instance.] - yes, but he did in every other.

Zunser's contrary state of bivalence, not surprisingly, arose the suspicions of the censor. In order to continue with these articles, Zunser was then forced to write under a pseudonym; it was in his new guise of Iakmuel, however, that he finally managed to reach some sort of compromise between the maskilic principle that the law of the land was to be obeyed, and the practical reality whereby Jewish soldiers could not observe their own laws -of Kashrut, Shabbat etc. The laws of the land, and Zunser was perhaps the first maskil to arrive at this sensible conclusion, of which W.W. Rostow would certainly approve, needed to be reformed and improved themselves: "political and economic liberation must precede the best-intentioned efforts of enlightenment. As long as all avenues of escape from oppression and intolerance were closed to the Jew, and aslong he was being prevented from making a living by medieval restrictions, there was no use [in trying] to hammer

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[54] Dik, p. 36.

[55] P. Burke, p. 63.

modern philosophy and the new science into his head."[56]

In the "conclusion" to his autobiography, Zunser writes that "Many of my friends are no doubt interested to know the fate of my brother Akiba, who was sent to the Cantonists when he was nine years old."[57] On the one hand, this was indeed an odd way in which to close an autobiography; on the other hand, it was a most natural finale for Zunser's autobiography. For, in Zunser's eyes, it was his brother, far more than himself, who had experienced the archetypal fate of a Jew in the nineteenth century Russia. As the bard of the Jewish people, it was this experience which Zunser strove to record, and, as a maskil, it was this story which threatened to make his own personal convictions seem so irrelevant.

When Akivah had finally returned from eight years of slave labour for a Siberian village farmer, followed by fifteen years of barrack duties [Alexander II had reduced the term of service from 25 to 15 years], and rejoined his brother in Minsk, "Great as was my love for him, I found that we could not get along together. He was a withered limb of the old tree -a Siberian in life and soul. Our customs were strange and oppressive to him; we could not live together, I gave him some money and he returned to Siberia." Nonetheless, as in the army, Akivah persevered in his heroic fight to remain a Jew, to the best of his ability. "He was a pious Jew",

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[56] as summarised by Liptzin, p. 143.

[57] Zunser's autobiography, p. 43.

Zunser remarked, "although he knew not a word of Hebrew."[58]

Even this pathetic "return" of a Jewish soldier from the Russian army was too fortuitous to last. In 1884, one of Akivah's children died, and it then became known that, though baptized by a priest when he was a soldier, he now had a Jewish wife, circumcised children, and observed Jewish law and ritual. Such a criminal offence was punishable in Russia by eighteen years' imprisonment in hard labour. The fact that Akivah had been baptized whilst asleep and had never accepted it himself was of course mentioned to no avail. Taken to court for trial, Zunser never again heard from his brother, "and to this day I know not what has become of him."[59]

V.

> It is the logic of our times,
> No subject for immortal verse-
> That we who lived by honest dreams
> Defend the bad against the worse.
>
> C. Day Lewis, Where are the War Poets?

In dismissing the military character of the 1827 ukaz with remarks such as that "The real meaning of the decree does not lie in militaristic aims; the government was skeptical from the beginning of Jewish recruits as soldiering material", as well as that "It is

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[58] ibid., p. 43.

[59] ibid., p. 44.

typical that, with the Jewish recruit question, for the most part, it was not war ministers, but finance ministers which were interested", Max Wiener absolves himself from any analysis whatsoever of Yiddish maskilic writers and the military topic of war itself.[60] Although Wiener can perhaps be excused for this grave omission, since - and, it is worth bearing this in mind- he was writing in Kiev in 1929 under Stalinist pressure, this paper cannot.[61]

This is, in the first place, because Tsarist Russia was as much a military autocracy as it was a feudal one: the Tsar [Nicholas I] who would sneak off to play in the room in his palace which was filled with toy soldiers, treated Russia like a larger roomful of toy soldiers; both he and his minister for the military colonies, Arakcheev, shared a vision of a nation marching in a goose step. Nor did the two of them hold back for too long -the year after his ascension to the throne, Russia went to war with Persia [1826-7], followed immediately by war with Turkey [1828-9]. In 1831, the Russian army once more found itself on the march, into Poland this time to crush rebellion there. Again, and most notoriously, in 1849, Russian forces intervened to stamp out the attempt made by Hungarian liberals to stage a revolution.

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[60] Max Wiener, p. 161.

[61] See, on this, Shlomo Back, "On the Literary Portrayal of the Recruitment of Jews in Russia and Galicia" [Hebrew], in Proceedings of the 8th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division C, 1982, Jerusalem, p. 323.

As if to complete the circle, Nicholas in 1853 seized a welcome opportunity to attack her old enemy, Turkey and thus initiated the Crimean war. Russia's first defeat in that war, however, reduced the Tsar to a state of extreme nervous disorder from which he never really recovered. In February of 1855, whilst inspecting the drill of his palace guard in the frozen cold, he caught a chill, and died within the week.

War was no less central to the "weltanschauung" of the maskilim, but for a diametrically opposed reason: "For the modern world, [however,] the ultimate test of compatability was the battlefield, and emancipated Jewry hastened to alloy all doubts."[62] Hence, of course, the overwhelming impression of confidence rendered by Oppenheim's painting. Apart from, however, Etinger's attempt to raise the warring spirits, which one could say totally misfired, this confidence is most noticeable by its very absence in Yiddish literature, even in the works of the first generation of maskilic writers.

Thus, even though Aaron, the wise, in Aksenfeld's Der Erster Yiddische Rekrut is a far more confident maskil than Pinhus, his confidence, which also reflects, of course, Aksenfeld's own feelings, similarly shows that it has its definite limits. Addressing the new decree for the first time, Aaron, as to be

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[62] Schorsch, p. 52.

expected, repeats verbatim the official party line: "Our Tsar, G-d bless him, wishes that all the subjects living in his kingdom should have equal rights to live or trade anywhere. And we must believe that our Tsar, in return for Jews giving recruits, will give Jews the right to trade and live everwhere. That's what we must understand." Aaron's wife, Perele, however, takes the maternal view, and reminds her husband that "Meanwhile this is very harsh for the mother and father. And for me that's the worst of all wordly misfortunes" -in other words, the parents' loss is more of a minus than the promise of equal rights is a plus.[63]

Aaron willingly accepts to answer this challenge, but "only briefly" since he sees a visitor approaching. He, therefore, begins to talk about the necessity of war, which he fails to consider in any moral terms; war to him is a matter of self-preservation, a matter of "realpolitiks". "According to the principle of nature, everyone should go to fight the enemy, only one doesn't <u>need</u> so many, a few hundred thousand soldiers can also overcome the enemy in war." In a sober fashion, he therefore explains that parents of children who are selected to fight must realise that their sons actually go and fight on their behalf, "so that not everyone <u>need</u> go to war."[64] As for the rest, Aaron promises to review that with his wife some other time. He never does, though; not once, throughout the rest of the play.

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[63] Aksenfeld, p. 161.

[64] ibid., p. 162.

Instead, having engineered that the nuisance, Nahman should volunteer himself as the shtetl's first recruit, and having subsequently witnessed the death of Frumele, Nahman's betrothed, who collapsed from a broken heart, Aaron has to admit that in having mustered only his powers of reason, he had forgotten that when it comes to feelings from the heart, reason holds no place. It is then with acute tragic irony that, at this very moment, Nahman's blind mother, screaming and wailing over her son's dreadful fate, enters and swoons over the dead body of Frumele.

Although spoilt for a choice of Russian wars, rarely was the test of emancipation tried -to borrow from the title of Henri Barbusse's World War One novel- "under fire". Rarely, indeed, did the maskil take his story from the periphery of modern society, that is the shtetl, to its very centre of the battlefield. The nearest, in fact, which Yiddish literature gets to the line of gunfire in the nineteenth century, is a letter brought back to a shtetl from a Jewish soldier at war! This can be found in Mendele Mocher Seforim's play <u>The Draft</u>. The letter, however, catches nothing of the drama of war, only the melodrama; it is full of kitsch, to say the least. "Now, my dear Reisel, it is midnight... with arms in his hands our commander is now sleeping to revive himself a little after so many days... bullets have flown... in thunder and lightning from the fire-vomiting cannons, the angel of death has... weaving itself among flying bombs thrashed... tomorrow the great

war will continue to rage... and not one of these men now sleeping will tomorrow... Reisel! I speak now in this letter with you, in the hope that if a bullet ever gets me, it will explain to you how strong my love is... In the last moments of my life I have thought only of you."[sic][65]

Arguably the landscape of war was too foreign a territory for Yiddish authors to write about. For, unlike their contemporary Russian poets and novelists, the Jewish literary classes were separated from the war-fighting classes, and it was not until the First World War that, for the first time, the two came together. In Turgenev's Fathers and Sons, there is the delightful quip between the young nihilist Bazarov and his mild disciple Arkady. The former is boasting of how he likes to reject everything, and as if to prove his point by deliberately misquoting Pushkin, he provokes his more earnest friend: "Incidentally, he must have served in the army." "Pushkin was never in the army!" "Why on every page one reads 'To arms! To arms! For the honour of Russia!'" "That's pure invention on your part! It's downright calumny."[66] The truth remains, though, that most nineteenth century Russian poets "joined the Hussars or some such thing and fought either Napoleon or national minorities at the Empire's outskirts." The result can be well appreciated in the example of

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[65] Sh. Y. Abramovitsh, Ale Shriften fon Mendele Mocher-Seforim, Hebrew Pub. Co., N.Y., vol. 1, pp. 69-70.

[66] Ivan Turgenev, Fathers and Sons, Penguin Classics, 1975, p. 212.

Lermontov since, according to Joseph Brodsky, "Though he worked in various genres, he particularly exels in his battle pieces which drew on his firsthand experience of the military. Of the three things to which this poet of negation repeatedly pledges allegiance -war, the motherland, and freedom- only the first has emotional or literal content for him; the other two are to him metaphysical categories rather than sentimental or political realities."[67]

By contrast, the closest candidate to anything remotely military, amongst our early maskilic writers, was Yisroel Aksenfeld, who used his good connections to secure for himself a supplies contract with the Russian army during the Napoleonic War!

There was one war, however, which did attract the attention of the maskil, S. J. Abramovitsch. In both his novelette The Travels of Benjamin III, written in 1878 and his play The Draft, written in 1884, he reenacts the imperial drama of the Crimean war within the arena of the synagogue, or that of the market streets! Thus, for instance, "The tiny congregation of one of Teterevka's humble synagogues was thrown into turmoil by the Crimean war, then in progress; overnight the congregation had split into sundry factions, each at loggerheads with the other."[68]

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[67] Joseph Brodsky ed., An Age Ago. A Selection of Nineteenth-Century Russian Poetry, Penguin Bks., 1988, pp. xv & 162.

[68] Mendele Mocher Seforim, The Travels and Adventures of Benjamin The Third, trans. by Moshe Spiegel, Schocken Press, N.Y., 1968, p. 68.

The question has, quite naturally, already been posed by Dan Miron and Anita Norich, in their article on The Travels of Benjamin III, as to "why Abramovitsh chose to make this European war the historical background for Maseos Benyomin hashlishi, which was afterall written and published more than twenty years after the war had ended."[69] Their various answers include the consideration that to broach topics of contemporary politics necessarily involved high risks. Published as it was in 1878, however, The Travels of Benjamin III significantly coincided with the Congress of Berlin, which was convened in order to try, once more, to settle the Eastern question.

To elaborate upon this, the purpose of the Congress was to intervene the treaty of San Stefano, by which Russia, determined to settle old scores -the humiliation of the treaty of Paris which had concluded the Crimean conflict of 1853-6- had prized for herself, as victor of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8, the satellite state of "Big Bulgaria". The international question of what to do about "the sick old man of Europe", that being Turkey, was, therefore, not only as relevant in 1878 as it was in 1855-6, but 1878 was one of the consequences of 1856. Additionally, and this is not mentioned by Miron amd Norich, when Abramovitsh published The

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[69] Dan Miron & Anita Norich, "The Politics of Benjamin III: Intellectual Significance and its Formal Correlatives in Sh. Y. Abramovitsh's Maseos Benyamin hashlishi," in The Field of Yiddish: Fourth Collection, Philadelphia, 1980, p. 73.

Draft, in 1884, the outstanding disputes on the Montenegrin frontier, just to the west of Bulgaria, were only finally being settled. Furthermore, inbetween the publications of these two works which shared this similar historical background of the Crimean war, Abramovitsh withdrew into silence: the massacres of 1881-2 had petrified his heart, so that his tongue forbad him to speak, and his hand forbad him to write.

The Crimean war, secondly, broke out over a dispute between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, which took place in Palestine, then under Turkish jurisdiction. It was, accordingly, one of the few political events after the Napoleonic Wars which actually and personally affected the lives of nineteenth-century East-European Jews. The Holyland was, afterall, the grand destination of Benjamin's travels.

A third reason is that during the Crimean War, the conscription laws were changed to the effect that a Jewish quota of thirty conscripts per every thousand males -instead of the previous ten- was then demanded. This made the period of the Crimean War the most notorious for its numerous kidnaps and impressments. It showed the Jewish community at its worst, which is the most appropriate background for Benjamin's own impressment and, likewise, for the underhand recruitment of Alexander in The Draft.

The "basic" reason which Miron and Norich give is, however, that

the analogue of the Crimean War provided an excellent chance to critique the position of Jews in the hierarchy of poltical power. With England and her nautical supremacy at the top, and Russia with her defeat at Sebastopol at the bottom, it is clear that the Russian Jews, whose fighting takes place in the synagogue, do not even make it onto the hierarchy. The moral is then, "He who has no political power cannot participate in the political game although he can be victimized by it. What he can offer is only a ludicrous imitation of the real thing."[70] Having drawn this conclusion, however, Miron and Norich thereafter continue with their analysis of the novel, but fail to integrate the Crimean War parallel with their final conclusion. In so doing, a case may be made that they have overlooked the most brilliant opportunity with which this particular background provided Abramovitsch.

Of the effect of the Crimean War on the British mentality it has been said that "As the numerous Alma Terraces and Inkerman Arms of Victorian England attest, the Crimean War caught the imagination of the British public as no other war between 1815 and 1914. <u>But the subsequent picture of the war in the public mind was highly selective</u>... The reprehensible and useless charge of the Light Brigade at [the battle of Balaclava] was remembered; the tactically important and equally courageous charge of the Heavy Brigade forgotten... The Crimean "Winter" became a by-word, although the Crimea is a health resort where the vine and tobacco plants are

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[70] ibid., p. 75.

cultivated, and the winter of 1854-5 was not particularly severe..."[my emphasis][71] A similar, and for that matter most illuminating, case of selective memory from the Crimean War can be evidenced in the way it triggered the imagination of the shtetl Jews in Eastern Europe.

A story told by Peretz corroborates the view of Anglomania evoked by Abramovitsh. Mendel Braine's is the tale of another shtetl Jew who is aroused by a wanderlust similar to that of Benjamin. Here is an ordinary, pious Jew who wants to be buried in the Holyland. But he also has a fascination with England. If anything impressed him by its cleverness, he automatically believed it came from England because "Mendel Braine's had heard a lot about England -he thought the world of England. This was after the Crimean War, after the fighting at Sebastopol. The whole 'bet hamedrash' rang with the prowess and skill of the English. The stories were told by Jews who had been at the front in the Russian army and had seen things for themselves."[m.e.][72] A favourite such story was that the English had invented some kind of ingenious cannon which fired not cannonballs, but more cannons. "And when each cannon hit the ground it fired more cannons, and then all these cannons started firing cannonballs. Now who can get out of the way of that! You realize what a massacre there was." Asked why the Russians had

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[71] Norman Gash, Aristocracy and People. Britain 1815-1865, Edward Arnold Pub., Lond., 1979, pp. 307-8.

[72] The Book of Fire. Stories by I.L. Peretz, trans. by Joseph Leftwich, Thomas Yoseloff, N.Y., p. 230.

been unable to retaliate with such cannons, the Jewish war veteran immediately responded that after the war an international conference had "outlawed these terrible weapons, to save the world from destruction, not to use these cannons in warfare!" From that instant, though, Mendel admired the English and decided to make his way to Israel *via* England.

Of course, Peretz gives here a sinister twist to his caricature of the little Jew's zealous admiration of the technically-advanced England, whose inventive dexterity could ultimately lead to the end of the world. And, it is exactly this same double-edged critique of admiration for Britain which can be found in *The Travels of Benjamin III*. Here too, the leading fan of British inventions "had a way of telling stories about the ingenuity of English mechanical contraptions, stories so tall one simply couldn't believe one's own ears..." but stories which were supported by the fact that, during the Crimean War, "Aunt Victoria launched an armada of one thousand ships freighted with ever so many terrifying contraptions."[73]

Agreed, "it is generally true that an army is an extension of society; military disaster is often national decline exposed by the violence of battle..." This, afterall, was the interpretation given to Russia's defeat in the Crimean War. "However, the British army in the Second World War is an exception, perhaps the only one in history. Although the army of a twentieth-century social

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[73] M.M.S., *The Travels of Benjamin III*, pp. 68 & 73.

democracy and a first-class industrial power, it was nevertheless spiritually a peasant levy led by the gentry and aristocracy."[74] And, how much more spiritually stultified was the British Army which fought in the Crimean War.

Of the two commanding British generals in the Crimean War, one officer accordingly complained that Lord Cardigan "has as much brains as my boot. He is only to be equalled in want of intellect by his relation the Earl of Lucan. Without mincing matters, two such fools could hardly be picked out of the British army. And they take command. But they are Earls!"[75] As for the Commander-in-chief, Lord Raglan, he added to the confusion by constantly forgetting that the French were now Britain's allies, and incessently talking of "the French" when he meant "the enemy". So ill-equipped was the British army that it had been embarked before it had even been decided where it was going. For sure, it was heading for the Crimea, but where exactly was anybody's guess and in the end that is what it practically amounted to, since no proper reconnaissance of the Crimea had ever been carried out. During the fighting itself, astonishing blunders were committed both by the Russians and the British. Such in fact was the "characteristic insanity" of the Crimean war that the British general, in order to capture Sebastopol, went marching around it, and the Russian

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[74] Correlli Barnett, The Desert Generals, Indiana Uni. Press, Bloomington, 1982, p. 103.

[75] quoted in Cecil Woodham-Smith's The Reason Why, A Dutton Paperback, N.Y., 1960, p. 205.

general, in order to defend it, went marching away from it, etc. etc. ad infinitum et absurdum...

What, however, could be a more perfect analogue for Abramovish than this? Benjamin, his hero afterall, is a comic parody of Cervantes' hero Don Quixote. Whereas with the latter, in preparation for his adventures, "The first thing he did was to burnish up some old pieces of armour..."[76], Benjamin, in an obviously intended contrast, set off unarmed, with nothing other than his spiritual armoury of a prayer shawl and phylacteries. Further, the political rangling in the synagogue is of no interest to Benjamin; politics, he feels, do not concern him nor Jews in general, and he is consequently not in the least impressed by either the British faction, or any other. All these developments lead up to the final and marvellous climax, when Benjamin, having been kidnapped into the army and finding himself on trial for his attempted escape, boldly and defiantly speaks out against the military: "We want to tell you that we don't know a thing about waging war, that we never did know, and never want to know. We are, praised be the Lord, married men; our thoughts are devoted to other things; we haven't the least interest in anything having to do with war. Now, then, what do you want with us? You yourselves ought to be glad to get rid of us, I should think!"[77]

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[76] Cervantes, Don Quixote, Putnam portable paperback, Canada, 1966, p. 61.

[77] M.M.S., The Travels of Benjamin III, p. 123.

In the original Sebastopol Sketches, there is, of course, that truly glorious passage in which Tolstoy, even more radically, declares the universal madness of war. How much more radical [and humane] Tolstoy is than Aaron, the wise in The First Jewish Recruit in Russia can also be seen. For, while in the beseiged town of Sebastopol, "A strange thought often used to occur to me: what if one of the warring sides were to propose to the other that each should dismiss one soldier from its ranks?... Then a second soldier from each side could be told to go, followed by a third, a fourth, and so on, until each army only had one soldier left... Finally, if it still appeared that the really complex disputes arising between the rational representatives of rational creatures must be settled by combat, let the fighting be done by these two soldiers..."[78]

The radical nature of Abramovitsh's message was, however, more specific. Returning to the Miron-Norich conclusion, "Starting with a criticism of Jewish political impotence in the imperialist world he now arrives at a position which implies a critique of politics per se."[79] Abramovitsh, the disappointed maskil, thus neither recommends Jewish participation in the army, nor Jewish participation in politics -together they stood, and together they

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[78] Leo Tolstoy, The Sebastopol Sketches, Penguin Classics, 1986, p. 60.

[79] Miron & Norich, p. 103.

fell.

There is a final, and in this case clearly unconscious, irony, in choosing to make the Crimean war the political and historical background to The Travels of Benjamin III. For, one anecdote to the Crimean War in Britain came in 1858 when the old general Lord Lucan, most unexpectedly, stood up in the House of Lords and proposed a solution to the conflict over the Bill for the emancipation of Anglo-Jewry. The solution was greeted with unanimous relief, and the Bill, with Lord Lucan's recommended clause, finally passed into law. The crowning irony, in terms of this paper, is, of course, that Anglo-Jewry's contribution of manpower was never questioned in the political debate which preceded the granting of emancipation. If any contribution was in any way consequential, it was rather that of the banker, Lionel Rothschild who had floated the sixteen million pounds loan necessary to finance the persecution of the war!

VI.

> "We must retreat! Retreat! We must go home, we must become independent, have a nation of our own, a voice in our government. We must learn to be ourselves."
>
> David Pinski, The Last Jew.

On the street which overlooks the military council-chamber in Mendele Mocher Seforim's play The Draft, an illuminating, though rather one-sided, conversation takes place between Shmulik, an old, retired Nicholean soldier and Hershl, a young soldier of the next generation. The former, described as merely skin and bone and a little bit tipsy, is busy imitating the cries of a woman whose husband, Berele, is obviously at that moment undergoing his examination, inside the draft council. "Pfui", he scoffs at her. "You call this a draft! The Berele, Shmereles of today don't realise how easy they have it. Why they merely 'stroll' on foot down to the draft board. Oh, if only we'd have known what that was like, all those years ago. But no, we had to go off fettered in bracelets so that our chains went booming and clanging with an echo which resounded throughout the whole world..." The woman continues, quite unpreturbed, though, to lament over her poor Berel, who, even though he's a father of children, might, she

fears, well be taken. At this, Shmulik again mocks: in his time, of course, it was the little children of a father, and not the father of little children who were led off. At this point, Hershl cuts the veteran short, "These are old stories, grandfather. Enough already, we've heard them all before." But, neither can Shmulik be shut up so easily: Yes, they're old tomb-stones from the past! So go ahead and say the memorial prayer over them...[80]

Shmulik would, clearly, have us carefully differentiate between the lot of the first generation of Jewish recruits, and the second. Afterall, he is speaking sometime in the year 1852-3, twenty-five years after the first draft. His words are, however, soon to ring tragically false; the Crimean War intervenes into his scenario and as the drama of the play unfolds, there can be no question as to whether the "modern" soldiers have it so easy.

There is one other habitual practice, though, to which Shmulik clings at least as persistently as he does to his old "grandpa-stories", and that is he interlaces what he says with broken words of Hebrew, and with the odd references to Jewish ritual and custom. ["veani veich"..."u-bizman kariv"..."noch shaharis geht mosaf un zvishen, a cos, a kiddush mit treren likoved dem heitigen yom hadin"...][81] True, it may be possible to explain this simply by calling attention to Shmulik's constant state of insobriety. There

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[80] Abramovish, Ale Shriften, pp. 27-8.

[81] ibid., pp. 98, & 34.

is, however, a more profound reason involved here. The clue comes towards the end of the play, when, in particular, abandoned wives are expecting the return of their husbands from the war. At this point, Shmulik, who is more worked up than usual, bursts out into a fit of self-pity. "For twenty-five years my mother waited and waited, in vain, for her Shmulik to come back from 'heder', from where he was carried away, a little whisp of a lad, on the brass-buttoned shoulders of the assistant."[82]

Shmulik's education as a Jew had, therefore, been abruptly interrupted by his seizure into the army, and although he was fortunate enough, finally, to return from service, those lost days of his childhood were irretrievable. Such a loss, Shmulik feels acutely and he is, subsequently, always trying to prove his credentials in the Jewish community. The pathos of these attempts is, however, but intensified by the way in which he frequently and uncontrollably, breaks into Russian colloquialisms.

The question of a generation gap was also raised by Sholem Aleichem in his story, written in 1904 about the Russo-Japanese war of that same year, entitled The First Passover Night of the War. Herein, the soldier Yerakhmiel represents the "old-style" maskil, whereas Leibke is a raw recruit, of the next generation. Accordingly, their age differnce is immediately stressed; it is "the young soldier" as against "the older soldier". The real distance which

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[82] ibid., p.98.

divides them is, however, one of mentality rather than years.

More specifically, the point where communication breaks down between the two is over the question of "war enthusiasm": "Young Leibke, a poor, simple workingman, could not understand why his friend Yerakhmiel went to battle with such joy...'I can understand your point that it's every man's duty. But why the great joy? What's so glorious about it?'"[m.e.][83] The response which Yerakhmiel offers to this is nothing less than a churning out of the classical maskilic manifesto: "Just three things are enough to make me happy. That a Jew like me is equal with everyone else; that a Jew like me is one of the Czar's men; and that a Jew like me can show his loyalty to the entire world." Yerakhmiel, though, might just have well have spoken in Japanese for all the good it had done him -"Leibke stared at his friend and thought: What queer fish these Malorsye Jews are"!

There is another line of separation, though, which Sholem Aleichem, simultaneously, shows an interest in drawing; not one which lies between the two Jews, but, rather, between the Jews and their fellow Russian soldiers. From the beginning, the Jewish soldiers are, then, marked off from the rest: "Off to the side, two soldiers sat alone on a bench beneath the lantern." And, as the two of them converse, "The other soldiers, in turn, stared at the

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[83] Old Country Tales. Sholem Aleichem, trans. by Curt Leviant, G.P. Putnam's sons, N.Y., p. 160.

Jews, eager to know what sort of outlandish language they were talking."[84] Despite the obvious cultural barriers, this relationship is, however, described as comradely.

Nonetheless, when one considers the oft-mentioned fact that Sholem Aleichem's artistic portrayal of the shtetl is that of an island, uninhabited by 'goyim', and moreover that it is precisely this seclusion which enables his characters to preserve the sanctity of their belief and tradition, regardless of the turmoil of history, one cannot but expect that this rare exposure of goyim to Jews, an exposure which is, what's more, not even stuck out in the periphery of society but happens on the move towards its very centre -the story takes place in a train headed for war-, might lead to, at the least, some kind of confrontation. Such a confrontation does indeed arise, when Yerakmiel is reading aloud "stories of old-time Russian soldier-heroes, and tales of the Battle of Sebastopol describing how the Russians attacked and cast themselves into the heart of the fire."[85] As each soldier would listen, he would cast himself in the role of hero, in the thick of the present war against Japan. When, however, Yerakhmiel tells them of an incident, in which thousands of Russian soldiers were all massacred together, one Russian soldier, calling him a ~~liar~~ liar, refuses to believe that Jews, too, could have died with Christians, and shared the same final fate. This infuriates Yerakhmiel, because it

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[84] ibid., pp. 259 & 262.

[85] ibid., p. 263.

challenges the very core of his existence: after a barrage of returned insults, he shouts back that the angel of death is indifferent to religious identities: "If the enemy's bullet hits me, I'll know that I fell for the same Czar and the same land that you did."[86]

Although, the voice of the Russian, who rejects this statement, is that of the lonely dissenter, Sholem Aleichem deprives his reader of drawing any too cosy a conclusion. For, as the two Jews continue to sway in prayer, in celebration of the first night of Passover, another Russian asks his mate whether it's the Jews' "Sabeth". "No", comes the reply, "not Sabbath, but a holiday." "What kind of holiday?" "Shush, let's ask Rakhmiel himself. Rakhmiel?" "Leave him alone... let 'em pray."[87] These mispronounciations, the first of the word, Sabbath and the second of Yerakhmiel's name, are characteristic of a device employed by Sholem Aleichem in order to allude to the turbulence of his period. A break-down in communication was, indeed, Sholem Aleichem's way of indicating the break-up of a civilisation.[88]

As the story's end suggests, moreover, the problem of communication between the younger and older Jewish soldier is not as critically

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[86] ibid., p. 264.

[87] ibid., p. 264.

[88] see Ruth Wisse, "Sholem Aleichem and the art of communication", The B.G. Rundolph Lectures in Judaic Studies, Syracuse Uni., 1979.

divisive as that which bedevils the Russian and Jewish soldier. For all his insistence that only three things suffice to make him happy, on this first night of Passover, Yerakhmiel's thoughts are as much turned homeward as are Leibke's; they are both equally nostalgic and homesick for "pesach aheim". "And to prevent Leibke from noticing, Yerakhmiel, the hero of Malopereshtchepeneh, turned aside, pretending to blow his nose, and hastily wiped away a tear."[89]

Such emotions actually bring Yerakhmiel closer to Sholem Aleichem's own feelings about recruitment. Afterall, when threatened, himself, by the draft and the Russo-Turkish war, he admits in his autobiography that no one could afford to think about money at such a time. No amount could be too much to buy one's freedom: "Freedom was the only thing that mattered; freedom was the only blazing star." Accordingly, when Sholem Aleichem is allowed to go, he considers this a miracle on a par with the exodus from Egypt![90]

What is, perhaps, most innovative in this story, within the context of our genre of recruitment literature, is, however, the introduction of the mythical shtetl. Up until now, the shtetl has been synonymous with the kahal, and consequently an object of virulent attack. Stripped of its kahal associations -there's no Parnassim, no Nagidim, and no Izborshtchik mentioned here- the

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[89] Old Country Tales, p. 265.

[90] Sholem Aleichem, From The Fair, p. 249.

shtetl becomes idealized. Thus, in the mind of the young Leibke, remembering his home: "The village was no bigger than a yawn; the mud was waist-high, and its poor -oh, those Holoneshti paupers- were legion. The stench and the stifling air of the overcrowded village were unbearable. Yet how he loved this poor little muddy, smelly, and stuffy Holoneshti. If ever there was an earthly Paradise, it was surely his village."[91]

Romanticism, with all its manifold attendant elements and themes of memory, nostalgia, nature, symbolism, folklore, exoticism, irrationality, intuition, sponteneity, unrestrained imagination, visions, mysticism, creative freedom, extremism, and great personalities, was entirely contrary to the spirit of the Enlightenment period. In Yiddish literature, this post-enlightenment revolt found its embodiment in the grand figure and writings of Isaac Leib Peretz, himself a former maskil. It follows from this the probability that the most romantic of recruitment stories was authored by him. Not only is this indeed the case, but Peretz's That's good, a story about a Jewish cantonist, is really one of his so-called "Hasidic stories", which are amongst his most romantic creative pieces.

A brief comparison between That's Good and what is, perhaps, Peretz' most famous "Hasidic" story, Between Two Peaks, offers to clarify this identification of the former as a romantic, "Hasidic"

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[91] Old Country Tales, p. 260.

tale. In the first place, both stories are hagiographic monologues recited by a Hasid. The narrator of each, as "disciple", thus takes for granted the revelation of his "rebbe", since each Hasidic leader, almost by definition, had to be revealed. Concerning the Biale Rebbe from Between Two Peaks, "As I have said, he was 'revealed' in Biale. [How it happened is a thing I will not tell- though it's an astonishing story.]"[92] Similarly, even though we are only told in our introduction to "the Grandfather of Shpolle" that he had not yet revealed himself, the implication is that he did so soon thereafter.

The struggle between the Mitnagdim and the Hasidim, which is at the forefront in Between Two Peaks, is also part of the background to That's Good. It is because of the Mitnagdim that the Grandfather of Shpolle lost his shochet's permit. "The Mitnagdim must have sensed what he was and spread stories about him, made accusations against him to the 'Beth Din'! The sort of thing Mitnagdim would do!"[93] So too, the message of the story, in which a cantonist forgets everything which he has ever learnt, and yet still retains its spiritual content, smacks strongly of the same brand of Hasidism preached by the Biale Rebbe, who questioned the Brisker Rov with what he had to offer those who are not scholars.

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[92] I.L. Peretz. Selected Stories, eds. Irving Howe & Eliezer Greenberg, Schocken Press, 1975, p. 85.

[93] Leftwich, p. 433.

Central to both stories is, further, the importance of dreams and visions. In Between Two Peaks, spiritual visions constitute the "Hasidic" alternative to the arid atmosphere of Mitnagdic legality. It is, accordingly, a dream which first shows the future Biale rebbe the way of escape from the suffocating scholasticism of the Mitnagdic Yeshivah world. It is, moreover, a vision which the rebbe offers to show his former teacher, the Brisker rov, by way of demonstrating the difference between the body and the spirit of the Torah; the difference, that is, between the "two peaks".

Although we are not told what, in fact, the rov sees, it is doubtful that he sees anything other than the reality of poor Hasidim, in tatty clothes, dancing around the Torah in dirty, narrow streets. He cannot partake of the Rebbe's purely subjective and symbolic mystical experience. He cannot see what the rebbe sees -that the garments of the dancing Hasidim "were glittering like mirrors"; that the songs of their rejoicing were joined by the songs of nature: "And all things sang. The skies were singing, the celestial spheres, and the earth beneath. The spirit of the world was singing. Now everything was song."[94] All that the rov can think of is that it is the legally appointed time for the evening prayers.

Herzl's famous dictum "If you will it, it is no dream" neatly sums up the role which visions play in That's Good. First, though,

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[94] Selected Stories, p. 94.

comes the boy's initiation, when he sees "the grandpa of Shpolle" singing the Song of Songs together with the whole of nature, just as in the vision from Between Two Peaks: "Flocks of birds sat on branches, singing the Song of Songs with him."[95] At this point, the Tzaddik makes the boy promise that, although he is to be taken far away, where they will try to rob him of his faith, he will remain true to his name of Yehudah; he will remain a Jew. The rest of the story accordingly recounts how, at each time he came to the brink of abandoning his faith, he would see the tzaddik and hear his parting words of "Jehudah, remain a Jew!" Adamantly, "I knew it wasn't a dream. Because as the years passed I saw him grow older, his beard and earlocks became grey and then white, his face aged. Only his eyes remained the same, kind and full of love. And his voice remained gentle and sweet."[96] And thus, Jehudah's faith, consequently, ensured that he remained a Jew.

Despite this new radical spirit of romanticism, in the late Haskalah period, the essential point to be realised is, then, that the traditional question of compatability between service to the state and loyalty to Judaism continued to occupy the central place. Such an interpretation is, in fact, akin to the conclusion which David Roskies has drawn from another innovation of this period, "when a new generation of Jews took history into their own hands, organizing strikes, self-defense units, and revolutionary cells..."

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[95] Leftwich, p. 434.

[96] ibid., p. 435.

As manifested in literature, this saw the promotion of the literary career of the Ba'al-Guf. This new character was "an articulate boor who lived by his passions and responded not to the dictates of Law but to the varied calls of nature. He and his fellows were a motley group of thieves and roughnecks, but when Jews were in danger they fought back, and when the draft board called them up- they went."[97] To quote from the memoirs of one such proudly and defiantly out-spoken ba'al guf, "...I soon worked my way up in the world until, at eighteen, being too strong and adventurous to consider self-mutilation, I was duly conscripted into 'Fonya's' army, where, in the name of Jewish honour, I was careful never to raise a hand against a Russian or Ukrainian comrade which did not result in at least one of us being hauled off to the hospital."[98]

The creative counterpart to Jacob Marateck's The Samurai of Vishgorod is Fishl Bimko's novel Recruits, which, although not published until 1916, surely reflects the mentalité of this pre-World War One era. In the first chapter, entitled The Draft, although we are bashlessly exposed to the shocking activities of the rowdy gang of ba'al-gufim, determined as they are to milk the rich of the community dry before going off to the army, their basic conservatism is unmistakable. How, otherwise, can one account for the discrepency or inconsistency in Berel's reaction to the insult

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[97] David G. Roskies, Against the Apocalypse. Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture, Harvard Uni. Press, 1984, p. 141.

[98] The Samurai of Vishogrod, p. 5.

from the goyish policeman in Layzer's tavern, and the insult from the cantor in the synagogue. If true to his nature, he should have taken foul revenge on both. But no, the insult against their physical manliness from the policeman does not really bother him; the cantor's insult, by contrast, vexes and irks him where he is most sensative, vulnerable and lacking in confidence.

Demanding to be honoured by the Hakafah-circuit on Simhat-Torah, the cantor, instead of reciting the Hoshanah prayer of "Please save us -for Your sake, our G-d!", debunks the gang by calling, in a squeaky voice, upon "G-d who helps the poor".[99] In so contradicting the spirit of this particular prayer, to the shame of the whole bunch of them, he reduces the rest of the congregation to uncontrollable laughter. And, in so doing, they had stabbed Berel, along with his fellow ba'al gufim, in the Achilles' heal.

In full agreement, then, with Professor Roskies:[100]

> The point not to be missed about these foul-mouthed Yiddish-speaking rowdies is their essential conservatism. Their highest aspiration is to return home with enough money to make a good match -with a Jewish girl, to be sure. And though Berel the Lout, the leader of the pack, feels free to prey upon the local moneybags, whose sons are off in hiding, in a later episode of Fishl Bimko's Recruits, Berl's sense of honor sends him rushing back to save some elderly Jews from peasant hands. The ba'al-guf's behaviour does not effect change; his behaviour is society's barely sanctioned release mechanism and guarantee that everything in the end will return to what it was.

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[99] Fish Bimko, Rekrutn, Warsaw, 1921, p. 20.

[100] Roskies, Against the Apocalypse, p. 143.

VII.

I must warn you to avoid close contact with the Jewish population here. Our Supreme Commander His Majesty allows every Jewish soldier at any time to enter the Officer Corps of the Imperial Army but anyone who associates with rag-and-bone merchants shouldn't be in uniform. One more thing: some of the Jews here -no, most of the Jews here- trade closely with Jews across the border: Vodka, fabrics and God knows what else is being smuggled. We suspect that they are also trading information gleaned from officers who've dined on their gefilte fish. We must, therefore, decide whether we're officers of the Royal and Imperial Army or a Slovak, a Ukrainian or a Jew.

Colonel Redl, a film directed by Istvan Svabo.

So far as this writer is aware, scholars have hitherto not heeded the striking echo in Karl Emil Franzos' story, Moschko von Parma. In this story, the title-role is played by a Jew who, much to the community's consternation, willingly chooses to become a blacksmith, and then, still worse, a soldier. In Moshke's opinion, however, the soldier's career is far more attractive than anything which the shtetl can offer him. For, "...the Kaiser provides you with your daily bread and pay; yesterday's, today's, and tomorrow's. One doesn't have to worry about a thing, one lives so joyfully for oneself here in the army and need not have a thought about anything else."[101] Surely, this rings powerfully like the rhetorical question which Etinger posed to his hasidim, who trade themselves to death: "Who, tell me, amongst you, is as respectable honest as the soldier, who doesn't have to borrow nor take things on credit; who doesn't have to think nor to worry about a thing; but is, instead, well-dressed out; and well-fed at every meal-time."[102] Interestingly enough, Etinger's poem preceded Franzos' story, dated 1875, by many years.

Franzos' placement as a writer is, significantly, not without controversy. To one side, there is Ismar Schorsch' considered conviction that Franzos stands apart from the group of Jewish authors, who, writing in German, created a new genre of ghetto

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[101] quoted in Sybille Hubach's Galizische Träume. Die jüdischen Erzähungen des Karl Emil Franzos, Akademischer Verlag Stuttgart, 1986, p. 76.

[102] Etinger, p. 118.

fiction, which radically and dramatically broke away from the Haskalah Hebrew and Yiddish literature on the same subject. Franzos, according to Schorsch, does not belong amongst these writers like Leopold Kompert, Aron Bernstein, Solomon Kohn, Ludwig Philippson, Markus Lehman and Berthold Auerbach.[103] To the other side, there is Steve Aschheim's confident persuasion that "Franzos perhaps more than anyone else was the embodiment of German-Jewish Enlightenment". As such, Aschheim contends, in agreement with Miriam Roshwald, that Franzos wrote in a fundamentally different way from the Hebrew or Yiddish writers who had been raised in the shtetl.[104]

Although, therefore, Schorsch and Aschheim disagree whether Franzos was a German ghetto writer or an East European shtetl writer, the two are of the same mind that these two literary genres are distinct. If one, however, accepts Aschheim's above-quoted statement that Franzos was indeed a writer of German ghetto fiction, then an analysis of Moschko von Parma is bound to call this unqualified distinction seriously into question. The chapter-title of Sybille Hubach's critique of Franzos' story is indicative of why this must be so: "Die Dialektik der Assimilation".[105] For,

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[103] Schorsch, p. 57.

[104] Steve Aschheim, Brothers And Strangers. The East European Jew In German And German Jewish Consciousness 1800-1923, Uni. of Wisconsin Press, 1982, p. 27. Miriam Roshwald, The Stetl in the Works of Karl Emil Franzos, Shalom Aleichem and Shmuel Yosef Agnon, ph.D. diss., Uni. of Minnesota, 1972.

[105] Hubach, p. 63.

in every one of the Yiddish works discussed thus far in this paper, except, ironically, Etinger's poem, a similarly dialectical view of emancipation/assimilation is projected.

The metamorphosis of names which Moschko undergoes is symptomatic of the dialectics of his assimilation experience as a soldier. Born Mosche, he becomes Moschko, then Moses, next Moriz, and finally he dies as Moschko. For, having, at last, reached the point of calling himself by the assimilated name of Moriz, he realised that howsoever impossible it was for him to pray to the G-d of the Hasidim, it was even more impossible for him to pray to the man on the cross. And, just as a conclusive departure from Judaism is debarred from him, so too is a complete return to his original Jewish identity denied him. Symbolizing this dialectic fate, on the one hand, after his death, his son, carries out the Jewish tradition by reciting kaddish for him and by observing, annually, the anniversary of his death. At the same time, though, Moschko is buried "at the very edge of the churchyard, near to the military road". His grave is "well-tended" and, in contradiction to Jewish custom, it is bedecked, from the early days of spring until late autumn, with the most beautiful of flowers.[106]

The distinction between German ghetto fiction and Yiddish Haskalah fiction is at least as unhelpful, if not competely redundant, when we come to consider the recruitment literature of our final, and

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[106] ibid., pp. 78-9.

probably most ambivalent, author: Joseph Roth. Most recently, the debate over his Job. The story of a simple man has, subsequent to this accepted differentiation, simultaneously, taken three different directions. Ritchie Robinson has argued the case for placing this work within the tradition of German-Jewish ghetto fiction and not that of the Yiddish literary classics; while Gershon Shaked has advocated that the story is really a late enlightenment novel, from the point of view of Hebrew and Yiddish Haskalah novels, which was but "translated" into Roman characters; and Geoffrey Butler has pressed for an altogether more universal reading of the book, suggesting that it is even a matter of indifference whether the protagonist is Jewish.[107] The point is, of course, that each of these positions are valid.

A comparison between Roth's most "Austrian" novel and his most "Jewish" novel, with special regards to his portrayal of German-speaking Jews in the Austro-Hungarian army and Eastern European Jews in the Russian army, is intended to support and clarify this last point, and the main thrust of this argument. Although both The Radetzky March and Job were written, respectively, in 1932 and 1930, they are both portraits of the Europe of pre-1914, and so

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[107] Ritchie Robinson, "Roth's Hiob and the tradition of Ghetto fiction", unpublished paper delivered at the Joseph Roth Symposium, Leeds, March 1989; Gershon Shaked, "Wie Jüdisch ist ein Jüdisch-Deutscher Roman? Uber Joseph Roths Hiob, Roman eines einfachen Mannes", Bulletin Des Leo Baeck Instituts, 1986; G.P. Butler, "It's the bitterness that counts: Joseph Roth's 'most Jewish' novel reconsidered", German Life and Letters, 41:3 April 1988.

weighty material for this paper. Furthermore, these novels are relevant to our paper, because it has been the accepted practice to interprete The Radetzky March as written in recognition, if not veneration, of the relative tolerance and benevolence bestowed upon the Jews by the Habsburg monarchy, as compared with the persecution suffered by Russian Jews across the eastern border. In recognition of this different climate of a Jewish sense of belonging, Sidney Rosenfeld has duly cited the example of the friendship between Carl Joseph von Trotta, the grandson of the Battle of Solferino [1859], and the Jewish regimental doctor, Max Demant, the grandson of "that silver-bearded king among Jewish publicans".[108] The fact that these two characters could find a kindred spirit in each other is, supposedly, evidence of the Austrian humanity which Roth prized so dearly, and further, of the reason why this swan-song of the old Empire, composed by a Galician Jew, has even been lauded as "the most beautiful poetic monument to the Habsburg Empire".[109]

The "only" flaw in this interpretation is, however, that it neglects to mention that this shared kindred spirit, this feeling of "brotherhood", between the Lieutenant and regimental doctor, actually stems from the fact that both are misfits, of the first degree, in the "supra-national" imperial army. Thus, although arrogantly determined to die an honourable death, in an heroic

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[108] Joseph Roth, The Radetsky March, trans. by Eva Tucker, Penguin Books, 1984, p. 103.

[109] quoted in Sidney Rosenfeld's "Joseph Roth and Austria. A Search for Identity", L.I.Y.B., 1986, p. 458.

military duel, to the distant echo of his grandfather's voice chanting "Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one God.", it must be recalled that he was first provoked into this dual by Captain Tattenbach who addressed him as "Doctor Ikey" followed by "Jew, Jew, Jew", eight times running. What's more, Demant despises the code of honour and the rules of the army book, calling them "sheer stupidity". Holding out his hand to his friend, the only blessing which he can, therefore, honestly, offer him is, "'In case we don't see each other again,' said the doctor; he stopped, and said a few seconds later, 'I advise you to get out of the army.'"[110]

Although the stories of Russian Jews who crossed the border into the Austrian Empire in order to avoid the Russian draft are, then, for the most part, well-known, the stories of Jewish traffic in the opposite direction are less so. The drive for Jews to get out or stay out of both armies was, then, powerful on both sides of the border, and this important historical truth has perhaps best been called to attention in the recent, and brilliant, film about Alfred Redl, the Galician-born colonel whose very name became an emblem of the ambivalent loyalty to the Habsburg rule in its final decades- for here was Austria's most promising intelligence specialist, whose remarkable service to the Empire also included the leak of vital Austrian military secrets to Russia!!

Based on A Patriot For Me, by the British playwright John Osborne,

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[110] Roth, The Radetzky March, p. 104 & passim.

and also on, inter alia, Roth's The Radetzky March, it is worth quoting that part of Osborne's text, which shows how comparable the issue of recruitment was in both lands:[111]

> Hötzendorf: ...but you know it's not that the Jews themselves are specially rotten. It's what they represent. For instance, no belief in service, and how can the Empire survive without the idea of service? Look at the Jews in Galicia, you must know, Redl, getting them into the army - quite impossible.
> Redl: Indeed. And the high percentage of desertion.
> Möhl: Really? I didn't know that.
> Redl: Nineteen percent.
> Hötzendorf: There you are. They're outsiders, they feel outsiders, so their whole creed of life must be based on duplicity -by necessity.
> Redl: I agree, sir. Even their religion seems to be little more than a series of rather pious fads.
> Hötzendorf: Quite. We're all Germans, all of us, and that's the way of it. At least: Jews, when they get on, remind us of it.
> Redl: Which I suppose is a useful function.

The first thing to note about Roth's Job is, then, that, contrary to one's expectations, Mendel Singer does not think of emigrating to America when his sons are threatened by the draft. Only his younger son takes flight, at that moment, across the border to journey to the New World. As for his elder son Jonas, he actually welcomes the life of a soldier. Thus, it is only when Mendel discovers that his daughter, Miriam is going with a Cossack that he decides that he must emigrate. Without reservation, then, Mendel regards Miriam's relationship with great disappointment. On the other hand, Mendel would sometimes proudly reflect that "Jonas was right! Jonas, the most stupid of my children!... Jonas, I shall

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[111] John Osborne, A Patriot For Me and A Sense Of Detachment, faber & faber, London, 1983, pp. 89-90.

never see you again, I shall never be able to tell you that you were right to become a Cossack!"[112] More often and far more ambivalently, however, Mendel would privately muse over his son, the soldier, as a cossack "not without contempt, nor without pride."[113] The point is here that Mendel's ambivalence is, ultimately, but a reflection of Roth's own ambivalent attitude towards the processes of Jewish emancipation from the shtetl.

Perhaps this overwhelming strand of ambivalence was not to be expunged from Yiddish literature until the impulse of modernism assaulted this literature's previously exclusive bias towards social realism and romanticism. An example of the way in which the Haskalah myth of recruitment then became exploded, in shocking fashion, comes from Moshe Leib Halpern's apocalyptic poema A Night [1916-19]: "Your brother's hands have both been amputated in battle, poor bloke. Since he can no longer scratch himself, he can't get to sleep at night. And, who will pray for him from now on? Who will wear the phyllacteries for him from now on? And with the breasts of a 'shikse' he can play, no more."[114]

Interestingly, within the continuous flow of this paper, Halpern himself was a Galician émigre living in America who had been

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[112] Joseph Roth, Job. The Story of a Simple Man, trans. by Dorothy Thompson, Chatto & Windus, London, p. 174.

[113] ibid., p. 111.

[114] Moshe Leib Halpern, In New York [Yiddish], Farlag Matones, N.Y., 1954, p. 200.

greatly influenced during his time spent in Vienna by German expressionist art. It should hardly come as a surprise then to mention that Halpern's poem has, as its parallel piece, "War Cripples" [1920-1], a black and white etching by the German anti-war Expressionist painter, Otto Dix. Herein, peg-legged crippled soldiers, returning from the "Great War", are grotesquely pictured against the background of a shoemaker's store.