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ON THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF YIDDISH RIME

By Uriel Weinreich

YIDDISH POETRY RANKS among the outstanding cultural accomplishments of the Jewish people. It expresses traditional themes as well as individual Jewish experience through literary techniques both inherited and more recently adopted; in so doing it explores and exploits in full the structural originality and the esthetic possibilities inherent in the Yiddish language. The history of Yiddish poetry is the typical history of all Jewish culture: the never-ending creative innovation of the heritage.

When this body of writing is analyzed not as philosophy or ideology, but specifically as poetry, one is struck by various of its technical aspects. Its word coinages, for example, have brought to fruition the many enrichment patterns available in Yiddish; its rhythmic diversity has been progressively attuned to the sound and stress organization of the language. Even the form of its rimes has not remained inflexible: here, too, Yiddish poetry has sought to incorporate the achievements of other literatures while feeling out the individuality of its own linguistic medium. It is the purpose of this paper to set the problem of rime in the larger comparative framework which Benjamin Hrushovski, of the Hebrew University, has just so brilliantly erected for the study of Yiddish poetic rhythm.[1]

Since my task is only orientational, I have cited examples from many authors sometimes at random, and have simplified the identification of sources as much as possible, often dispensing with the titles of poems and quoting from collected volumes or even from anthologies rather than from journals where the same poems might have been published for the

[1] Benjamin Hrushovski, "On Free Rhythms in Yiddish Poetry," in *The Field of Yiddish: Studies in Yiddish Language, Folklore and Literature Published on the Occasion of the Bicentennial of Columbia University* (New York, 1954), pp. 219-66. For an over-all sketch of Yiddish poetry, see now U. Weinreich, "Yiddish Poetry," in *A Dictionary of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and Frank J. Warnke (New York, 1957).

first time. When the identity of the author is of subordinate importance, I abbreviate his name to an initial.[2]

I have not tried, on the whole, to evaluate the effectiveness of particular rimes in particular poems. It is rather the over-all riming possibilities and limitations inherent in the Yiddish language and its changing poetic conventions that are discussed. Also, digressions into problems of poetic vocabulary in general have been avoided. To be sure, when the state name *Arizone* is rimed with a traditional word like *kavone* 'intention' (L 227), some readers may be impressed by the American local color of the poem; the appearance of a bold new coinage like *akhzerayen*[3] 'cruel acts' riming with the ordinary word *klezayen* 'arms' (L 226) reflects modern Yiddish poetry's penchant for neologisms; while the riming of plain *klyamkes* 'doorknobs' with so choice a word as *amkes* 'profundity' (L 55, 136) illustrates the absorption by Yiddish poetry of the intellectual vocabulary of traditional Jewish scholarship and philosophy. But in all these cases the rimes only highlight lexical processes which are equally prevalent in the rimeless interior of lines, away from the conspicuous line ending. This paper, on the other hand, concentrates on the riming relationship as such.

RIME AND LINGUISTIC FUSION

The riming possibilities of poetry are determined by two factors: the stock of words in the language and the conventions on what constitutes

[2] The following abbreviations are used: B = M. Basin, *Antologye; 500 yor yidishe poezye* (New York, 1917), Vols. I and II; C = Y.-L. Cahan, *Yidishe folkslider* (New York, 1912), Vols. I and II; Gl = Yankev Glatshteyn (Glatstein), *Gedenklider* (New York, 1943); GlF = *idem*, *Fraye ferzn* (New York, 1926); GM = S. M. Ginzburg and P. S. Marek, *Jevrejskije narodnyje pesni v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1901); Gr = Khaim Grade, *Shayn fun farloshene shtern* (Buenos Aires, 1950); GM = *idem*, *Der mames tsavoe* (New York, 1949); K = Moyshe Kulbak, *Geklibene verk* (New York, 1953); L = A. Leyeles, *A yid oyfn yam* (New York, 1947); LF = *idem*, *Fanye* (New York, 1954); LFL = *idem*, *Fabyus Lind* (New York, 1937); Li = Mikhl Likht, *Letste lider* (Buenos Aires, 1954); Lk = *Ale verk fun H. Leyvik* [Leivick] (New York, 1940), Vol. I; Ma = Itsik Manger, *Lid un balade* (New York, 1952); MaM = *idem*, *Medresh Itsik* (Paris, 1951); Mk = Perets Markish, *Stam* (3d ed., Warsaw, 1922); N = Leyb Naydus, *Litvishe arabeskn* (Warsaw, 1924); Sb = Eliezer Shteynbarg (Steinbarg), *Mesholim* (2d ed., Bucharest, 1935); Sf = Nokhem Shtif, *Di eltere yidishe literatur* (Kiev, 1929); Su = Avrohom Sutskever, *In-fayer-vogn* (Tel Aviv, 1952); SuV = *idem*, *Valdiks* (Vilna, 1940); Y = Yehoyosh (Yehoash), *Fablen* (New York, 1912). Number following initial refers to the page; e.g., Sb 99 = Shteynbarg, p. 99.

[3] Formed by adding the suffix *-ay* to the existing word, *akhzer* 'tyrant,' on the model of the existing *khazeráy* 'filth; contemptible act' (from *khazer* 'swine'). Yiddish forms are cited in the widely used YIVO transcription, in which *y* corresponds to the sound

an adequate rime. Let us for the moment accept the narrowest view of rime as repetition of sounds, usually at the end of a verse, beginning with the last stressed vowel and including all that follows it. Within this definition, then, the riming possibilities of a language depend on the existence of words of similar terminations.

Evidently the rime resources of Yiddish have benefited from the fusion history of the language.[4] Each stock language has contributed rime schemes to Yiddish which do not exist in the other stock languages: for example, all Yiddish rimes in *-ovim* listed by Stutchkoff's Rime Lexicon[5] are of the Hebrew component of the language ("Hebrew" here is an abbreviation for "rabbinical Hebrew-Aramaic," or, in Yiddish terms, for *loshn-koydesh*); all rimes in *-enye* are of Slavic origin; rimes in *-ukhe* are of mixed Slavic and Hebrew descent, but not Germanic. Even more characteristic of Yiddish fusion are the rime schemes to which all major stock languages have given their share; these may well hold a majority. When we find poems riming *fakh* 'layer': *shlyakh* 'highway': *tanákh* 'Bible' (L 195) or *svore* 'supposition': *nore* 'den': *vore* 'true' (L 41), we have the fusion history of the language manifested in actual poetic practice. (In the first trio, the rime words are of Germanic, Slavic, and Hebrew origin, respectively; in the second, the order is Hebrew, Slavic, Germanic.)

A comparison of the rime schemes of Yiddish with those of the stock languages should prove rewarding. For example, when we compare the Yiddish *-akh* scheme with the German *-ach* and *-ache*,[6] we find that Yiddish lacks cognates of a number of German words (e.g., *brach* 'fallow,' *Drache* 'dragon,' *Rache* 'revenge'), but has about a dozen words of Hebrew origin (e.g., *krakh* 'large city,' *shvakh* 'praise,' etc.) and three or four words of Slavic origin (e.g., *monákh* 'monk,' *lyakh* 'Lachite, Pole') which German lacks. *Mensch* is a notorious example of a German word which has no rime altogether;[7] Yiddish *mentsh*, on the other hand, rimes both with *bentsh* 'bless,' contributed by Southern Loez (medieval

y of English *yes;* consequently *ay* stands for a diphthong similar to that of English *my*, and *ey* for a diphthong similar to that of English *day*. *Zh* corresponds to the *s* of *measure*, while *kh* is similar to the German *ach* sound. The stress falls on the next-to-last syllable of a word except where otherwise indicated by a stress mark (e.g., *kávene*).

[4] On the fusion character of Yiddish, its components, and its relation to the stock languages, see Max Weinreich, "Prehistory and Early History of Yiddish: Facts and Conceptual Framework," in *The Field of Yiddish*, pp. 73-101.

[5] N[okhem] Stutchkoff, *Yidisher gramen-leksikon* (New York, 1931).

[6] Willy Steputat, *Deutsches Reimlexikon* (Leipzig, n.d.).

[7] Solutions to this dilemma by rimesters of various degrees of seriousness are discussed

Judaeo-Italian)—a hackneyed rime pair since around 1500[8]—and *paréntsh* 'banister,' of Polish provenience (e.g., Li 25). It would be worth while to investigate how the riming possibilities of Yiddish and its stock languages have diverged as a result of both disjunctive phonological developments (e.g., Yiddish *hot* 'has': *got* 'God,' but German *hat* ≠ *Gott*: Yiddish *Avróm* 'Abraham': *thom* 'abyss,' but Hebrew *Avrahâm* ≠ *tehôm*) and the selective adoption and elimination of words (e.g., *brach*, which Yiddish failed to adopt from German; or *sayâḥ* 'young ass,' never adopted from Hebrew).

While the Slavic component in literary Yiddish does not become important until the modern Yiddish period (eighteenth century and onward), the Hebrew, like the Romance component, has always been present, and although the use of Hebrew-origin rime words of this component may not have been as frequent formerly as it became in the nineteenth and the twentieth century (statistics wanted!) it would be hard to prove that the riming of Hebrew-origin and other words was ever intentionally avoided. On the contrary, the famous *Bovo-bukh*, completed by Elye Bokher in 1507,[9] rimes *hof* 'court': *tof* 'letter tav' (stanza 285), *zol* 'should': (*hamavdil ben kodesh*) *lekhól*: *fol* 'full' (st. 335), *Bove* 'Bovo': *krove* '(fem.) relative' (st. 384), and also rimes Hebraisms with each other, like *bore olem* 'Creator': *sholem* 'greeting' (st. 386). Even earlier examples are cited further on.

But the full enjoyment of the fruits of fusion in rime has been impeded by the retention of the traditional spelling of Hebrew-origin words in Yiddish. Although this is justified, culturally, by the special status which *that* stock language has preserved for the users of Yiddish, linguistically it is an anomaly which already troubled such a nineteenth-century master of Yiddish and Hebrew prose as Mendele Moykher-Sforim, and was bound to irritate much more seriously the modern Yiddish poets. Continuing familiarity with the stock languages of Yiddish by its users and many decades of Maskilic and post-Maskilic vilification of Yiddish

by Erich Schmidt, "Deutsche Reimstudien. I," in *Sitzungsberichte der kön. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (1900), pp. 430-72; esp. pp. 441 and 453 f. On German riming difficulties, cf. also Ernst Bednara, *Verszwang und Reimzwang* (= Beilage zum Osterprogramm 1912 des kön. kathol. Gymnasiums zu Leobschütz, Trebnitz i. Schl., 1912).

[8] See Max Weinreich, "*Yidishkayt* and Yiddish: On the Impact of Religion on Language in Ashkenazic Jewry," *Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1953), pp. 481-514; p. 509, footnote 42.

[9] Elye Bokher (Elia Bachur), *Poetishe shafungen in yidish*, Vol. I (New York, 1949); reprinted from the first edition (Isnae, 1541) and provided with an introduction by Judah A. Joffe. Cf. the introduction, p. 21.

hybridity have tended to make every Jew his own etymologist, ready to decompose the delicate fusion that is Yiddish into its components. The modern poets, who have been concerned precisely with the total integration of the language, could not help but find that the disparate spelling systems for words of different components only aggravate the unhealthy analytic attitude. Nowhere has the orthographic dualism been as vexing as in riming position. There it obscures intended parallelisms by differing spellings of rime words (e.g., *vide* 'confession': *meride* 'rebellion'—וידוי: מרידה) and occasionally yields unwanted "eye rimes" (e.g., וער *ver* 'who': צער *tsaar* 'sorrow').

The special spelling of Hebraisms was proclaimed outmoded in 1920 by the particularly self-conscious and advanced group of poets, *In zikh*. "All Yiddish words are equal," they wrote in their manifesto. "As poets—not as propagandists—we shall spell all Yiddish words alike, regardless of their pedigree."[10] Their example was followed widely even by poets outside the group. As B. J. Bialostotzky put it, "Why should the visual obstruct our free riming of words and our finding of additional word and image relations?"[11]

The iron logic of spelling unification might well have prevailed were it not for the fact that a similar reform, undertaken in the Soviet Union in absolute rejection of the Jewish past, had become a symbol of a vulgar antitraditionalism which was unpalatable to the majority of Yiddish users. Until 1939, the poets in and about the *In zikh* group held out; but the political events of that year, and the discontinuance of the journal *Inzikh*, apparently made it impossible for them to continue publishing in a unified spelling. Now Yiddish writing—in any orthography—has been suppressed in the USSR since 1949; but not until the association between Soviet Communism and Yiddish spelling reform is forgotten is the unification of the orthography likely to be considered again. However, such uniquely Yiddish riming possibilities as *kediboe* 'properly': *Elyoe* 'Elijah' (כדבעי: אליהו) might never have been discovered or accepted if not for the episode of a unified orthography.

[10] *In zikh: a zamlung introspektive lider* (New York, 1920). Introductory essay by Yankev Glatshteyn, A. Leyeles, and N. B. Minkov, pp. 21 f.

[11] B. J. Bialostotzky, "Di shaykhes fun vort tsu vort," in his *Lider un eseyen*, Vol. II (New York, 1932), pp. 77-130, p. 114. On orthographic parallelism as a rime criterion in English and French, see Henry Lanz, *The Physical Basis of Rime* (Stanford University, 1931), pp. 146-51; on orthographic riming in Russian, see Viktor Žirmunskij, *Rifma, jeje istorija i teorija* (Leningrad, 1923), and now B. V. Tomaševskij, "K istorii russkoj rifmy," in Akademija nauk SSSR, Institut russkoj literatury, *Trudy otdela novoj russkoj literatury*, I (1948), 233-80, esp. pp. 235 ff.

The relationship between Yiddish words of Hebrew origin and between the same words as units of an integral Hebrew language has recently been described as one between "Merged" and "Whole" Hebrew.[12] For example, the word for 'bride' has the form *kaló* in Ashkenazic "Whole" Hebrew, but is *kale* in the Hebrew that is "merged" with Yiddish; 'rich man' is *oshír* in Whole, but *oysher* in Merged Hebrew. Since words in the two forms of Hebrew often differ in stress and vowel makeup, a given rime usually admits only one, but not both forms. One would expect Yiddish verse to resort only to Yiddish (i.e., Merged Hebrew) forms; indeed, this is universal practice today, and is supported by a tradition that goes back at least to the *Bovo-bukh*, as the previously cited examples show. On the other hand, the *Shmuel-bukh* (fourteenth century?) contains such Whole Hebrew rimes as *Pninó* 'Peninah': *fro* 'gay' (st. 19); *kohen-godól* 'High Priest': *vol* 'well' (st. 26), *sefer Shmuél*: *kol yisroél* (epilogue),[13] all implying a final stress and full vowel in the Hebrew-origin rime words, i.e., a choice of the Whole Hebrew form. A chronology is hard to establish; in the older (i.e., pre-nineteenth century) period, a correlation may perhaps exist between Whole vs. Merged Hebrew and the familiarity vs. reverence with respect to the Hebrew language typical of secular as against religious poetry.[14] In the nineteenth century, the secularity of Yiddish poetry and the hunger for new rime words in the verse of the *badkhonim* (wedding jesters) and "folk poets" make the use of the Merged Hebrew forms in riming position almost universal, while in the twentieth century this practice becomes a matter of principle with the growing recognition of the integrity of Yiddish. Statistics would probably also reveal a great increase in the riming of Hebraisms of different morphological construction in the stock language (e.g., *nakhes* 'joyous satisfaction' < *naḥat* with *lehakhes* 'for spite' < *lehak'is*) at the expense of analogically constructed words (*shures* 'rows': *tsures* 'faces,' etc.).

THE RHYTHM OF RIME WORDS

From a rhythmic point of view, rimes are classified as (a) masculine if the stressed syllable is the last (e.g., *bold*: *behold*), (b) feminine if the stressed syllable is followed by one unstressed (e.g., *better*: *letter*, symbolized – ⏑),

[12] See pp. 85-87 of M. Weinreich's study cited in footnote 4.

[13] Cited from the excerpts in Max Weinreich, *Bilder fun der yidisher literatur-geshikhte fun di onheybn biz Mendele Moykher-Sforim* (Vilna, 1928), pp. 68-111.

[14] For example, a religious poem by Ayzik Valakh (d. 1632) rimes *alzó* 'thus' with

and (c) dactylic (trisyllabic or "triple") if two unstressed syllables follow the stressed one (e.g., *attitude*: *platitude*, symbolized – ∪ ∪).

(a) The dropping of final unstressed *e*'s in many words of the Germanic component has considerably increased the stock of Yiddish masculine rime words as compared with German (cf. German *Sache* with Yiddish *zakh*; German (*ich*) *sage* with Yiddish *zog*, etc. Statistics would be helpful). As a result Yiddish poets need not resort to the hard-to-suppress habit of German poets to multiply apocopated forms.[15] Whereas in German verse *Sach'*, *sag'* occur as products of poetic licence, in Yiddish their equivalents are not only legitimate, but the only ones possible. (On the other hand, Yiddish has its own original apocopes in words of non-Germanic descent.)[16] Moreover, modern Yiddish has favored the coinage of new nouns directly from verbal stems far more than German[17] and has thus further enriched its repertory of masculine rimes.

(b) The transfer of many words from the feminine to the masculine rime group has probably been more than offset by the increase of "masculine words" of non-Germanic stock. The stock of feminine rime words has also been increased by the elimination of secondary stresses on syllables adjoining the primary stress[18]—a development attributed by Hrushovski (p. 241) to the influence of co-territorial Slavic languages. Older Yiddish poetry could base masculine rimes on secondary stresses, e.g., *shlekht* 'straight': *únrèkht* 'injustice' (in a recently discovered poem dated 1382),[19] *end* 'end': *élènd* 'misery' (1616, *Megilas Vints*, st. 43), much as older German poets did.[20] Contemporary Yiddish verse, however, has

the phrase *ki govar* [?] *oleynu khasdó*, in its Whole Hebrew version, as it would be read in the liturgy (B I 35), while a contemporary historical poem, *Megilas Vints* (ab. 1616), rimes *ore* 'pray': *tsore* 'trouble' (st. 17), *skhore* 'wares': *ferlore* 'lost' (st. 34), in Merged Hebrew forms. (Citations according to reprint in Max Weinreich, *Shtaplen* [Berlin, 1923], pp. 140-92.)

[15] See J. Minor, *Neuhochdeutsche Metrik* (2d ed., Strassburg, 1902), pp. 171-73.

[16] A folk song (C II 251) rimes *padlóg'* 'floor': *astróg* 'jail' (normally *padloge*). Sutskever (SuV 18) playfully tries *yodl'* 'fir': *nodl* 'needle' (normally *yodle*); Glatshteyn toys with *khalát* 'long coat': *gele lat'* 'yellow patch' (normally *late*).

[17] On this trend in Yiddish, see Yudel Mark, "Vegn neologizmen," *Yidishe shprakh*, XII (1952), 37 f., and *idem*, "Vortshafung in H. Leyvik's lider," *ibid.*, XIV (1954), 13 f.; on the corresponding conservatism of Standard German, cf. Walther Henzen, *Deutsche Wortbildung* (Halle, 1947), p. 128.

[18] On the modern Yiddish stress system, see Uriel Weinreich, "Stress and Word Structure in Yiddish," in *The Field of Yiddish*, pp. 1-27.

[19] L. Fuks, "The Oldest Literary Works in Yiddish in a Manuscript of the Cambridge University Library," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, IV (1953), 176-81. See also the same writer's "On the Oldest Dated Work in Yiddish Literature," in *The Field of Yiddish*, pp. 267-74.

[20] Minor, *Neuhochdeutsche Metrik*, pp. 126-31.

emancipated itself from traditional vestiges and, in conformity with the structure of the language, uses such words for feminine rimes: *kozak* 'Cossack': *blozzak* 'bellows' (B II 318), *blozzek* 'bellows' (pl.): *glozik* 'glassy' (Mk 142), *khumre* 'difficulty': *umru* 'anxiety' (LF 35), *hayor* 'this year': *shtayer* 'tax' (Gr 171). (The discrepancy in the unstressed vowels does not invalidate the rhythmic harmony of the feminine stress patterns.) As a consequence of the elimination of secondary stresses there has been a trend in colloquial Yiddish to neutralize the difference between various vowels in unstressed position. Yiddish poets seized on this trend and exploited it—as the unsophisticated folk songs had done[21]—to broaden the resources of feminine rimes; note such pairs as *altmódish* 'old fashioned': *kodesh* 'holy' (L 54), *novis* 'prophet's': *soves* 'owls' (L 118), *oylem* 'crowd': *oylim* 'immigrants to Palestine' (Su 12), *logik* 'logic': *milkhemes-Gog-u-Mogeg* '(eschatological) war of Gog and Magog' (Sb 68), and the like. In its leaning on the "allegro forms" of colloquial speech, Yiddish poetics proved itself to be far ahead of the orthoepic suggestions made for the standard pronunciation[22] and demonstrated that poetic phonology need not be conservative in every literature.[23]

(c) Dactylic rimes manifest Yiddish independence from the patterns of the stock languages even more clearly. Rimes of this type seem to be oddities even in those European literatures in which they are linguistically possible.[24] In German dactylic rimes are restricted to unusual genres or have associations of levity.[25] Also, true dactylic rimes are hard to form in German because secondary stresses tend to reduce them to shorter forms: *Gróssvater* (– ∪ ∪) easily becomes *gróssvàter* (– – ∪), which is feminine, not dactylic.[26]

In older Yiddish poetry, dactylic rimes are as rare as in German;

[21] E. g., *kholem* 'dream': *hevl-havolim* 'vanity of vanities' (GM No. 124), *Rashi* 'RaSHI': *kashe* 'porridge' (GM No. 45).

[22] Cf. Yudel Mark, "Vegn a klalishn aroysreyd," *Yidishe shprakh*, XI (1951), 1-25, §§ 26-29. See also the paper cited in footnote 32.

[23] On the conservatism of poetic phonology, cf. J. Vendryes, "Phonologie et langue poétique," *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Phonetic Sciences* (London, 1935), p. 106; with special reference to English, Kurt Stryjewski, *Reimform und Reimfunktion* (= *Sprache und Kultur der germanischen und romanischen Völker, Anglistische Reihe*, 36), 1940, esp. p. 100. The introduction of allegro forms in modern Russian rime is discussed by Tomaševškij, "K istorii russkoj rifmy," in Akademija nauk SSSR, Institut russkoj literatury, *Trudy otdela novoj russkoj literatury*, I, 267.

[24] Žirmunskij, *Rifma*, pp. 36, 98 f.

[25] Minor, *Neuhochdeutsche Metrik*, pp. 401 f.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-26. Even suffixes of little weight tend to receive a secondary stress, so that in older German poetry, at least, *Prédigèr* could be rimed with *Herr* or with *Schlésièr*; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 122, 400.

presumably a more German-like accentual structure with prominent secondary stresses, and possibly an explicit German literary model, hindered their development.[27] Yiddish folk song—which has in some rhythmic respects been more sensitive to the stress structure of the language than has literary poetry[28]—on this point has been rather conservvative; such linguistically dactylic words as *ópsheydn* 'to separate' (– ∪ ∪) are found to function as feminine rimes (... – ∪), e.g., with *reydn* 'to speak' (GM no. 36). Nineteenth-century poets often adhered to this tradition (cf. Mikhl Gordon's *ganéydn* 'Heaven': *óysrèydn* 'utter'; Sf 166), but contemporary Yiddish writing has eliminated such rimes almost entirely and has thus further attuned itself to the structure of the language.

The use of suffixes of dactylic words for masculine rimes has also become an archaism. While Berl Broder (1817-80) could still rime *aráynkumèn* 'enter': *váremèn* 'warm' (Sf 202), contemporary poetry has rather given such words their deserved freedom to rime as full-fledged dactyls; and while in English we associate such rimes with low comedy (Byron's *Don Juan*, Gilbert's operettas), the Yiddish reader thrills to the solemn fervor of such dactylic rimes as those written by Leyvik in 1917 (Lk I 7): *Ergets vayt, ergets vayt/ ligt dos land dos farbótene./ Zilberik bloen di berg/ nokh fun keynem batrótene...* ('Somewhere far, far away lies the forbidden land. Silvery blue are the mountains still untrodden by anyone...').[29]

Occasionally Yiddish poets have even introduced rimes where the stress falls on the fourth syllable from the last (hyperdactylic), e.g., *óvesdike* 'ancestral': *katóvesdike* 'jocular' (Su 34). Such contrivances remain humorous even in Yiddish,[30] but they do illustrate the peculiar increased distance between stresses which has made it possible in Yiddish, as Hrushovski has shown (pp. 240 ff.), to write entire poems in quadruple meter (paeons).

A noteworthy experiment in the use of dactylic words as masculine rimes has been the recreation in Yiddish of the Russian folk epos (*bylina*),

[27] In Russian verse, especially serious poetry, subservience to West European models is known to have delayed the introduction of dactylic rimes well into the nineteenth century; cf. Žirmunskij, *Rifma*, pp. 36-38.

[28] Hrushovski, "On Free Rhythms in Yiddish Poetry," in *The Field of Yiddish*, pp. 230 f., 241 (footnote 68).

[29] The first explicit condemnation of rimes based on a secondarily stressed ultimate as un-Yiddish seems to have been made by Arn Tseytlin (Zeitlin), "Fragn fun yidisher poetik," *Yidishe velt*, 1928, No. 1 (April), p. 111.

[30] In Russian, hyperdactylic and even longer rimes have also remained experimental; cf. Žirmunskij, *Rifma*, pp. 23 f.

where such rimes are common.[31] Leyeles, in "Di almone un er," rimes *zátikèr* 'satiated': *mútikèr* 'courageous,' *khmúrikèr* 'clouded': *tróyrikèr* 'sad' (LFL 105). We see a rime pattern which had existed in older Yiddish poetry and had been eliminated because of the increasing linguistic and poetic autonomy of Yiddish reintroduced as a stylistic device. Originally of Germanic origin, the pattern now comes back—but from an archaic Slavic source. Here is another instance of the complexity of cultural currents in the history of Jewish culture.[32]

COMPOSITE RIME

One of the characteristics of modern Yiddish verse has been the rapid development of composite rimes, in which at least one of the riming elements consists of more than one word (e.g., *illicit*: *miss it*). In its simplest form, where the match is phonetically exact and forces no unusual inversions of word order, this rime has existed in Yiddish at least since the sixteenth century;[33] it also occurs in folk song (e.g., *broygez* 'angry': *toyg es* 'it is suitable'; C 128) and was used even by conservative rimers up to World War I. In its contemporary period, Yiddish poetry also introduced more complex composite rimes which are phonetically or syntactically strained, or both: *zay nit* 'don't be': *taynet* 'argues' (Sb 192) is phonetically inexact, while the riming of *fayer* 'fire' with *tsi iz dem balbós azóy getráy er* 'whether to his master so faithful is he' (Sb 56) requires unusual liberties in syntax.

Composite riming of these more complex types, it seems, entered Yiddish verse through two separate channels: as a humorous device, in a Byronian vein, it is common in the satirical fables of Reb Mordkhele, Yehoyosh, and especially Eliezer Shteynbarg.[34] The other impulse has come from certain German expressionists, and especially from those Russian modernists who strove to rejuvenate the concept of rime.[35] The boldest innovator along these lines was probably Perets Markish; his books of the period immediately following World War I abound with

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 263 ff.

[32] I have discussed Yiddish polysyllabic rimes in greater detail in a separate paper, "Vegn filtrafikn gram," *Yidishe shprakh*, XV (1955), 97-109.

[33] The use of composite rimes in the *Bovo-bukh* was pointed out by Israel Tsinberg, *Die geshikhte fun der literatur bay yidn*, VI (Warsaw, 1935), 91.

[34] Composite rimes have been classified and analyzed in the paper mentioned in footnote 32.

[35] On Russian, see Žirmunskij, *Rifma*, pp. 92, 179, 187, and footnote 95; on Yiddish interest in German and Russian experiments on this point, see F. Shames, "Der nayer gram in yidishn ferz," *Di royte velt* (December, 1926), pp. 108-14, esp. p. 111 (footnote).

such contrivances as *khalef* 'slaughtering knife': (*efn . . . dayn . . .*) *zal oyf* 'open your hall' (Mk 112), *meshugoim* 'madmen': (*shlaydert . . . zey . . .*) *azóy um* 'hurl them around thus' (Mk 127). In a less extreme form, such rime patterns became a hallmark of serious Soviet Yiddish poetry.[36] This is a more advanced stage of composite riming, for its purpose is solemn; the punning connotations have been overcome, as they were gradually surmounted in Russian verse in the course of the nineteenth century.[37]

RIME AND THE "INTERNATIONAL" OUTLOOK

Yiddish poetry, like all aspects of Jewish culture, was caught up in the vast modern broadening of the Jewish intellectual horizon. To encompass the totality of the present-day Jew's experience, without antiquated compartments for an "outside" non-Jewish, and an "inside" Jewish, world, became a guiding principle for many Yiddish poets. "Wars and revolutions," ran the 1920 manifesto of *In zikh*, "Jewish pogroms and the labor movement, Protestantism and Buddhism, . . . all of these may or may not move us. . . . [If they do,] we write poetry about them" (p. 17). One of the *In zikh* leaders, A. Leyeles, characterizes "modernism" as "the attitude which accepts the entire experience of mankind": from science, the discoveries of astrophysics or psychoanalysis; from the Jewish tradition, the central messianic idea of justice and salvation. "With reference to the Yiddish language, modernism is an attitude according to which . . . all the highest accomplishments reached by other languages in poetic culture are possible in Yiddish. Modern in literature means: the most exact word, the most adequate expression."[38]

The search for the "exact word" meant, for those poets who gathered under the banner of modernism, a rapid increase in vocabulary and a blurring of the distinction between poetic and "unpoetic" terms. To be

[36] Shames, "Der nayer gram in yidishn ferz," *Di royte velt*, pp. 110 ff. M. Khmelnitski has suggested that the new inexact rime patterns, created in revolt against hackneyed tradition, themselves became a rut for Soviet Yiddish poets ("Bamerkungen vegn tsvey iberzetsungen fun [Shevtshenko's] lider," *Yidishe shprakh*, II [1942], 118). Few contemporary Yiddish poets have been able to reject the resulting expansion of the riming repertory, but some have used composite rimes more boldly than others. For example, Khaim Grade—one of the leading present-day practitioners of the art—attains the greatest "juncture strain" possible by ending a sentence and beginning a new one in mid-rime: *Reb Yankev nemt mikh bay der hant un* PAMELEKH *| er firt tsu der tir mikh, un biz tsu der* SHVEL. IKH *| derhér fun zayn bet . . .* (Gr 138) ('Reb Y. takes me by the hand and slowly he leads me to the door, and as far as the doorstep. I perceive from his bed . . .').

[37] Žirmunskij, *Rifma*, pp. 178 ff.

[38] A. Leyeles, "Vegn eynem a durkhfal," *Inzikh*, No. 31 (January, 1937), pp. 27-31.

sure, literary Yiddish had never been plagued by the xenophobia which is cultivated toward *Fremdwörter* in Germany, for example. But under the influence, perhaps, of the completely open-minded view toward new words prevalent in English, modernist Yiddish poetry—despite the uneasiness of some conservative critics—could absorb a host of internationally current words in one big swallow without suffering lexical indigestion.

Since a fair share of the new internationalisms in poetry turned up at the end of lines, they brought with them fresh riming problems. Many of them, it turned out, terminated in sound sequences which were absent in traditional Yiddish vocabulary. To rime them exclusively with other internationalisms having similar novel terminations would place them in precisely that isolation which the modernist poets hoped to avoid. Consider words ending in *-ado*, for example: in a strict interpretation, *bravado* could only rime with *eldorado*, *mikado*, and other novelties. The solution adopted by most poets has been quietly to "hasten" the familiarization of these words. In the rime *avade* 'certainly': *mikado*: *Granade* (Sb 199), Shteynbarg is only subjecting *mikado* to the same reduction of the final full vowel to *e* which the Spanish city name, *Granada*, underwent when it became familiar in Yiddish at an earlier stage.

By such precipitate adaptations (which are again ahead of conservative orthoepy; cf. footnote 22), Yiddish poets have helped to repeat a trend which has always been a part of the history of Yiddish. As in the case of the Hebrew-origin words, we may view the choice between *mikado* and *mikade* as one between "whole" and "merged" internationalisms. It is another example of the perennial tension between the foreign and the adapted in Jewish history.

BIBLICAL ECHOES

Rime has not been the only form of sound effect cultivated in Yiddish poetry. Assonances, for example, were developed into a systematic method by most Soviet and many American Yiddish poets.[39] The repetition of consonants combined with a variation of the vowel (so-called consonance: e.g., *flint—flaunt*) met with particular hospitality in Yiddish because the language has experienced the convergence of

[39] Cf. Shames's analysis of such rimes in the study cited in footnote 35; cf. also Bialostotzky, "Di shaykhes fun vort tsu vort," in his *Lider un eseyen*, II, 127. Possible American English influences remain to be investigated.

grammatical "ablaut" paradigms not only of Indo-European and Germanic origin (e.g., *toyt* 'death'—*teyt* 'kill'), but also of Semitic descent (e.g., *mies* 'ugly'—*moes* 'disgusting').[40] A. Leyeles in particular has not only organized entire poems by consonance (e.g., L 176), but has taken the device one step further and made it an echo of the Hebrew of the Bible, where consonance is a favorite pattern of "poetic etymology." Let us recall such playful etymologies as *Bavel* 'Babel' < *balal* 'confuse' (Gen. 11 : 9) or such consonances as *yoruhu* 'they will shoot him': *yerau* 'they will fear' (Psalms 64 : 4). In one poem (L 85), Leyeles has Reuben say: *nite aykh in ayer* SHTARKKAYT *tsu* SHTREKN *a hant oyf dem yung* ('you must not in your strength raise your hands against this lad'); and later: *hot er far*KÍLT *in zayn* KEL *dos* KOL *fun zayn* KLÉMENISH ('then he congealed in his throat the voice of his distress'). By combining consonance with the syntax and diction characteristic of Yiddish Bible translations, Leyeles has truly recreated biblical poetry in a new Jewish medium.[41]

RIME AND THE STANDARDIZATION OF YIDDISH

Written Yiddish has for centuries functioned as an effective medium of Europe-wide, and later world-wide, communication between Ashkenazic Jews. In its vast territorial expansion the language was bound to develop dialectal differences, but the spelling system has been such that in many cases it could serve several dialects equally well. For example, the rime *krum* 'crooked': *skhum* 'amount,' written סכום :קרום, is a rime also to those who read *krim, skhim.*

However, because the vowel differences are not always quite that regular, many sets of words which rime in one dialect do not rime in another, or those that match at one period of the language may not correspond later. The evidence of rimes in older Yiddish poetry can therefore be used, with appropriate safeguards against generalization, in dating and localizing texts by the pronunciation which they imply, or conversely, where the genesis of a poem is known, the text may be used to unravel the unknown pronunciation.[42]

[40] Proverbs also make use of consonance; cf. *a melokhe iz a melukhe* 'a trade is [worth] a kingdom.'

[41] As Glatshteyn put it (*In tokh genumen*, I [New York, 1947], 101), Leyeles discovered in Yehoyosh's modern Bible translation "the Hebrew potentialities of Yiddish. . . . Yehoyosh revealed to him a new original." On Leyeles's sensivitity to biblical rhythms, see also Hrushovski, "On Free Rhythms in Yiddish Poetry," in *The Field of Yiddish*, p. 266.

[42] Note, for example, the subtitle of Bruno Kormann's *Die Reimtechnik der Esther-*

But when rime makers desire to escape regional restrictions, they must choose between two solutions. One is simply to avoid rime schemes which would not work beyond their dialect. This procedure, however, although it was recommended to modern Yiddish poets by Stutchkoff's rime lexicon (pp. 17-20) as late as 1931, excludes large masses of words from riming position; for example, a Southeastern ("Ukrainian") Yiddish writer could not rime such common words as *bobes* 'grandmothers': *shobes* 'Saturday,' because elsewhere the pair would be *bobes* ≠ *shabes; nukh* 'after': *bukh* 'stomach' (elsewhere *nokh* ≠ *boykh*, *nukh* ≠ *boukh*); *nuvnt* 'near': *uvnt* 'evening' (elsewhere *noent* ≠ *ovnt*), and so forth.

The other solution is the achievement of a uniform literary language with standardized pronunciation norms valid for all regions.[43] This in fact has been the path followed by Yiddish writers at two separate stages of its development: first on a Western-Yiddish basis, and when the old literary standard crumbled about 1800, again in Eastern Europe. Yiddish represents a remarkable case in the sociology of language, for twice it was unified without the coercive apparatus of a state, a centralized system of schooling, or a prestigious capital or social elite to imitate. The modern standard pronunciation—some dissenting voices to the contrary[44]—is a unique compromise between the dialects, an autonomous system based on the firmly established features of the spelling in such a way that, ideally, every graphic symbol corresponds to one sound.[45] While occasional nonstandard (i.e., dialectal) rimes still occur in contemporary poetry, they are surprisingly rare in comparison with other languages having longer histories of standardization.[46] No poet of *litvak* origin would today be caught dead riming *zeydes* 'grandfathers': *ruakh-*

Paraphrase Cod. Hamburg 144: Beitrag zur Erschliessung des altjiddischen Lautsystems (Diss. Hamburg, 1930). See also the use of rime testimony by Judah A. Joffe in "Dating the Origin of Yiddish Dialects," in *The Field of Yiddish*, pp. 102-21.

[43] A third solution—the switching of dialects in the middle of a poem for the purposes of forcing a rime—has of course repeatedly been ridiculed as far too cheap; cf. Tseytlin, "Fragn fun yidisher poetik," *Yidishe velt*, 1928, No. 1, p. 118; Stutchkoff, *Yidisher gramen-leksikon*, p. 21; N. P. [Noyakh Prilutski], "Di shprakh fun Yekhiel Lerers *Mayn heym*," *Yidish far ale*, No. 4 (June, 1938), pp. 106-18; p. 106.

[44] Cf. Chaim Gininger's review of Uriel Weinreich, *College Yiddish*, in *YIVO Bleter*, XXXIII (1949), 208 ff.; Solomon A. Birnbaum, "Two Problems of Yiddish Linguistics," in *The Field of Yiddish*, pp. 63-72: pp. 71 f.

[45] See Uriel Weinreich, "Tsu der frage vegn a normirter oysshprakh," *Yidishe shprakh*, XI (1951), 26-39, and Yudel Mark's paper cited in footnote 22, pp. 10-12.

[46] Some none too recent examples are cited by Stutchkoff, *Yidisher gramen-leksikon*, pp. 20-22. On substandard rimes in German, see Friedrich Neumann's excellent *Geschichte des neuhochdeutschen Reimes von Opitz bis Wieland* (Berlin, 1920), and on more recent German dialect rimes, Heinrich Stürenberg, "Mundartliche Reime,"

hakoydesh 'Divine Inspiration' (dial. *-hakeydes*), as Yehude-Leyb Gordon permitted himself to do in 1886 (Sf 183).

It is important to appreciate the constructive effort involved in the creation of supraregional rimes. When Itsik Manger, for instance, rimes *Stoptshét* (place name): *zet* 'sees' (Ma 376), which in his native Southeastern dialect is *zeyt*, he is following and at the same time reinforcing the normalized literary pronunciation; similarly, when Moyshe Kulbak, a native Northeastern ("Lithuanian") speaker, rimed *aróys* 'out' with *groys* 'big' (K 243), which in his dialect is *greys*. The resulting uniformity has helped to raise Yiddish literature to the general European level.

AUTONOMOUS RIMING CONVENTIONS

By establishing its own requirements of exactness in riming, every literature seems to regulate its rime resources so that, for the greatest artistic effect, riming should be neither too easy nor too difficult. For example, in Russian, where words ending in stressed vowels are superabundant, poetic convention makes their riming more difficult by requiring the preceding, "supporting" consonant to be different in each rime word: thus *oknó*: *vinó*, which in other languages would be a "rich" rime, is in Russian merely adequate, while *oknó*: *bjuró* is inadequate. German permits the riming of *ü* with *i* (*grün*: *Wien*), thus enlarging the "riming valences" of *ü* words.

Yiddish poetry has not adopted the Russian restriction, matching *gedréy* 'whirl': *arméy* 'army': *vey* 'pain' (L 52) without scruples. Nor has it shared the Anglo-German distaste for "rich" rimes (e.g., *nation*: *damnation*);[47] on the contrary, Yiddish poets seem to enjoy exploring the accidental identities in word terminations which have resulted from fusion in Yiddish: note such rimes as *bule* '(papal) bull': *takhbule* 'remedy' (Gr 39), *palmes* 'palmtrees': *tsepalmes* '(progressively intensive) post-mortem' (Su 141), *beygl* 'doughnut-shaped boiled roll': (*zenen*) *khoyte-beygl* 'commit a sin (of worshipping the Golden Calf)' (Sb 145).

One variety of phonetic freedom allowed by modern Yiddish riming

Muttersprache, XL (1925), 299-303 and XLI (1926), 171 f. On uncertainties in Russian, cf. Žirmunskij, *Rifma*, pp. 129 ff.

[47] Žirmunskij, *Rifma*, p. 104 (German); on English, Jane Shaw Whitfield, *The Improved Rhyming Dictionary* (New York, 1951), p. v. In languages like Hungarian, where there are many frequent automatically riming suffixes, rime as a poetic device becomes subject to special syntactic restrictions; cf. George Herzog in *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (New York, 1950), p. 1038.

convention is the equivalence of final voiced and unvoiced consonants: *glants* 'glow': *gandz* 'goose' (Su 126), *gendz* 'geese': *inteligénts* 'intelligence' (Sb 102), *shoys* 'lap': *hoyz* 'house' (GrM 78), *shliakh-myukhed* 'special emissary': *geskrukhet* 'shuddered' (Y 90), *koved* 'honor': *óys-gekhovet* (Gr 173), *tayneg* 'enjoyment': *vaynik* 'winy' (SuV 51, Su 29).[48] The unvoicing of historically voiced consonants has actually occurred in one of the dialects (Central Yiddish), but writers from other regions have, in varying degrees, taken advantage of this extra tolerance to expand their riming resources, as the above examples, all drawn from the works of Northeastern writers, show.[49] It would be interesting to analyze the advantages accruing from this convention to particular poorly endowed rime patterns of the language in order to show the structural motivation behind the convention.

THE PUZZLING YIDDISH WORD FOR RIME

We have seen that many aspects of Yiddish rime, although their sources can be conjectured, are uniquely Yiddish in their configuration. This is also true of the mysterious Yiddish word for rime itself—*gram*. It is apparently composed of a prefix, *g(e)-*, and a root, *-ram*. Now in German, a prefixed form—which, incidentally, is a neuter while Yiddish *gram* is consistently masculine—is attested in the medieval and early modern period only in the meaning 'collection of rimes, rimed poem,' especially in a disparaging sense. Obviously the Yiddish word—though ultimately of Germanic origin—developed, like the poetic tradition, in complete independence of German, shifting its meaning from 'rimed poem' to rimed 'line of verse' to 'rime.'[50]

But while the prefix symbolizes Yiddish autonomy from German, the vowel of the root involves some internal Yiddish puzzles. The vowel being derived from a medieval long *i* (cf. Middle High German *rîm*, *gerîme*), we would have expected Central Yiddish to have *graam*, which

[48] For a normative statement, see D. Hofshteyn and F. Shames, *Literatur-kentenish (poetik)*, I (Moscow, 1927), 22; also Stutchkoff, *Yidisher gramen-leksikon*, p. 16.

[49] A case of tolerance practiced by Yiddish writers of the Central and Southeastern regions, but obscured by the spelling, is the riming of short and long *i;* cf. M. M. Varshavski's *ki(i)kn* 'look': *kvikn* 'refresh' (B I 208), Gotlober's *shmi(i)st* 'chats': *imzist* 'in vain' (B I 149), and the examples given by Prilutski in the paper cited in footnote 43. Stutchkoff, himself a non-*litvak*, makes no distinction between *i* and *ii* words and does not even mention the problem in his riming dictionary.

[50] Yiddish *gram* thus duplicates, without directly participating in, the semantic evolution of the German terms *Vers* and *Reim;* cf. F. Kluge and A. Götze, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (15th ed., Berlin, 1952), where the German research literature is cited.

it does, but Northeastern Yiddish should have had **graym*, whereas it generally has *gram*. This would suggest that the word was diffused from Central Poland—perhaps by riming wedding jesters—to Lithuania and Belorussia. But why and when? The puzzle is deepened further by the Western Yiddish equivalent which is attested in the form *raam*,[51] where **graym* was to be expected. The attested form is German in its lack of a prefix but Central Yiddish in its vowel. Could it be due to a contamination of the two? If so, where did this take place? Perhaps the unusual vocalism of this word was supported by the rime with *taam* in the locution *on taam un on raam* 'without rime or reason'—itself a rimed version of the French alliterative *sans rime et sans raison*, which is possible in Yiddish but not in German... But here we are completely in the domain of speculation.

FUNCTIONS AND THEORIES OF RIME

An examination of rime arrangements would lead us afield into the history of Yiddish stanza forms. Suffice it to say roughly that oldest Yiddish poetry depended mostly on the use of alternately rimed and unrimed lines (*xaxa*), and that this quatrain pattern, as Hrushovski has shown (pp. 225 f.), has remained basic in Yiddish folk song. However, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Elyohu Bokher introduced from Italy the elaborate *ottava rima* riming *abababcc*, which he used in the 650-stanza *Bovo-bukh* and elsewhere, and which did not appear in German poetry until more than a century later.[52] It is curious that not only were Italian-Yiddish poetic relations more lively than Italian-German ones in the Renaissance period, but that Italy had by then replaced Germany as a source of Yiddish literary innovation.

The nineteenth century saw the wide spread of badkhonic couplets (*aabb*) and of *rimes couées* (*aabcccb*), favored in satiric popular verse. But as part of modernist experimentation, such poets as Broderzon, Naydus, and Leyeles introduced almost every strict rime scheme known in European literature, not only the sonnet and sonnet ring, but also Romance and oriental forms—triolets, rondeaux, villanelles, ghasels, and the like. Rare patterns, such as systematic "following rime," in which

[51] Thus Abraham Tendlau, *Sprichwörter und Redensarten deutsch-jüdischer Vorzeit* (Frankfurt, 1860), Nos. 419, 734; *es hot ka taam un ka raam*, communicated to me by Professor Ezekiel Kutscher from Slovakia. For one Prussian and several East European outcrops of the form *raam*, see Max Weinreich, *Shtaplen*, (Berlin, 1923), pp. 219 f., and the discussion by D. Leybl in *Filologishe shriftn [fun Yivo]*, I (1926), 74.

[52] Max Weinreich, *Bilder fun der yidisher literatur-geshikhte*, p. 156.

the end of each verse rimes with the beginning of the next, were also successfully tried (e.g., Leyeles's "A tfile," L 28).

On the other hand, sporadic riming and completely rimeless lines also came into their own in contemporary Yiddish writing. In the twentieth century, when "Yiddish poetry undertook ... to catch up with Europe's deepened appreciation of the classics and the modernistic trends of recent generations" (Hrushovski, p. 219), it toyed with rimeless hexameters, iambic pentameters, and vers libre. Even today, when most Yiddish verse has returned to the use of rime, some poets (most notably Yankev Glatshteyn) continue to use the freer forms.

The theory of rime itself underwent scrutiny in Yiddish much as it did in other contemporary literatures.[53] The serious poets of the late 1800's, the American *Yunge* of the early 1900's, and their conservative followers to this day have worked hard to restore the seriousness of rime which, they felt, had been violated by the extravagant rimings of their predecessors. An elaborate statement of what might be called the "romantic" theory of rime was published by the poet-critic B. J. Bialostotzky in 1932 (cf. footnote 11). This theory, which makes semantic relevance a criterion of good rime, claims to carry forward the subliterary (folk) conception of rime as it functions in folklore. It sees in rime and other sound repetitions a network of association paths which operates as an organizing principle of a vocabulary.[54] The finding of nonobvious semantic relations between riming words becomes the task of the poet's imagination. Other contemporary Yiddish poets, on the contrary, have joined the modernistic world-wide trend to "dethrone" rime by depriving it of semantic relevance while intensifying its euphonic value.[55] The search for "exotic" rime words

[53] For a review of European theories of rime, see Lanz, *Physical Basis of Rime*, chap. V, where additional literature is cited.

[54] The operation of the factor of sound similarity in lexical structuring has been analyzed for English by Dwight L. Bolinger, "Rime, Assonance, and Morpheme Analysis," *Word*, VI (1950) 117-36. Material from many Indo-European languages is presented by Francis A. Wood, "Rime Words and Rime Ideas," *Indogermanische Forschungen*, XXVII (1907-8), 133-71. Ber Shnaper expressed this rime theory poetically when he wrote (*Mayse un lid* [Warsaw, 1934], p. 11): *...nemt lemoshl—broyt! | ...vi "shtram" as gramt zikh mit—noyt! - Un beyde in eynem mit—toyt!* etc. ('Take, for example, *broyt* "bread": how neatly it rimes with *noyt* "need, poverty"! And both together with *toyt* "death"!') Glatshteyn refers to this theory of rime ironically in a line full of poetic ambiguity (GlF 78): *di gramshtegn fun broyt firn tsu noyt* 'the rime-paths of bread lead to poverty.'

[55] On the Russian aspect of post-romantic rime theory, cf. Roman Jakobson, *Novejšaja russkaja poezija* (Prague, 1921), p. 63; for a recent American statement, see W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., "One Relation of Rime to Reason," *Modern Language Quarterly*, V (1944), 323-39. Explicit statements by Yiddish poets or critics seem to be lacking

associated with Naydus (e.g., *emune* 'faith': *fortune* 'Fortune' N 38, *tsaar* 'sorrow': *penyuár* 'peignoir' N 51); the use of colloquial allegro forms; the breakup of symmetry by the cultivation of composite rimes; the use of assonance to dodge predictable rime words; the riming of semantically "trivial" words, e.g., prepositions, and the use of "broken rimes" (i.e., the breaking up of compounds between lines);[56] and finally, the use of unfinished words in rime to signify interrupted speech[57]—all these devices have served to lighten the semantic role of rime at the expense of the euphonic.

In the hands of masters, contemporary Yiddish rime has become an instrument of unprecedented subtlety. One example will have to suffice. In a prologue introducing his volume of Israeli poems, Sutskever rimes (*dos glik un*) *vey do* 'the happiness and pain here': *khevle-leyde* 'birth pangs': *akeyde* 'sacrifice (as of Isaac)' (Su 9). In the composite rime *-ey do*: *-eyde* there is not only the usual tension of inexact rimes, but the full *o* of *vey do* brings out, like an otherwise imperceptible overtone, the "Hebrewness" of the following two rime words in *-eyde*. (In Whole Hebrew—Ashkenazic, to be sure!—these words end in *-eydo*.) This "Hebrewness," which would not be apparent in a phonetically exact rime scheme, is kept from going out of control by the incontrovertible Yiddish *e* of the last rime word, *zeyde*. But once the two middle rime words are viewed, under the pressure of the rime, as genetically Hebrew, the *-e* note of the same rime scheme in turn underscores their Yiddishness; more generally, it suggests the "mergedness" of the Hebrew component in Yiddish and, symbolically, of the Zion theme in Diaspora culture. Now this unity of Zion and the diaspora is precisely the burden of Sutskever's book! To render it so completely by a single rime chord of the overture is a stroke of genius.

Where did Yiddish rime come from? At its beginnings, Yiddish poetry could have adopted it from several sources: from German oral literature, on which it leaned heavily for forms and themes (in de-Christianized

so far; but P. Markish's role as a pioneer of assonance was indicated by Arn Tseytlin, "Fragn fun yidisher poetik," *Yidishe velt*, 1928, No. 1, pp. 112 f.

[56] Insignificant rime word: *min* 'kind': *eyn mol in / di teg*... 'once during the days' (Y 23). Broken rime: *nafke- / mine* 'difference' (Sb 188).

[57] For example: *papá* 'daddy': "*zent ir dos frayln Ra*..." / "*Un ir zent Yakob, mayn kuzén*?" ('Are you then Miss Ra...[chel]?' 'And you are Jacob, my cousin?' MaM 58); "*Vi bistu óyfgeshtanen tkhies-*..." / *Un zi hot óyfgeshmeykhlt mit di fiolete vies* ('"How did you arise... [from the dead = *-hameysim*]" And she broke into a smile with her violet eyelids' Su 138).

versions); from Hebrew *piyyutim*, in which rime had been obligatory since the seventh century C.E.;[58] and possibly even from Loez (medieval Judaeo-Romance) poetry. There are still many missing links in this construction, but potentially Yiddish rime could be seen as a poetic equivalent of the fusion which culturally became Ashkenaz and yielded the Yiddish language itself. Over the centuries Yiddish poetry became increasingly independent, especially of German models. It looked to Italy for innovations during the Renaissance, and remained completely aloof from the German controversies about the use of rime in the classicist eighteenth century. In the modern period, Yiddish poetry discovered in word derivation, rhythm, and rime the full richness and linguistic specificness of Yiddish. Secure in its mastery of its linguistic medium, it assumed a posture of self-assured universality, reinterpreting formal traditions from as far back as the Bible and creatively adapting patterns from new sources in Europe and America. Centuries older than Russian rime, Yiddish rime was rejuvenated by modern Russian experimentation. In its increasingly supraregional nature, Yiddish rime today reflects the use of literary Yiddish as an instrument of world-wide communication and as a medium of a mature art.

[58] Israel Davidson, "Rhymes in Hebrew Poetry," *JQR*, XXX (1939-40), 299.