

The Americanization of Tevye or Boarding the Jewish *Mayflower*

*American
Quarterly*

Vol. 40,
Dec. 1988,
No. 4.

SETH L. WOLITZ

University of Texas, Austin

His health cares and financial woes, however, were not assuaged. He worked incessantly to feed his large family and in two years completed the American chapters of his unfinished novel, *Mott*; the main part of his autobiographical novel, *Funem Yarid (The Great Fair)*; a new comedy, and a dramatization of his finest short story cycle, *Tevye the Dairyman*. He died on May 13, 1916, and over 250,000 Jewish immigrants escorted his bier to a simple plot in a Brooklyn cemetery.² This massive turnout puts into perspective the extraordinary bond that existed between the immigrants and their favorite Yiddish writer whose good humor eased their burdened lives. Perspicaciously, he captured in his stories the struggling "greenhorn" who, like himself, was adapting ambivalently to the new realities. He was the forerunner of immigrant Yiddish writers Sholem Asch and I. B. Singer, who also interpreted both the old country and the new one to fellow immigrants, and, in English translation to a general American readership. Sholem Aleykhem also influenced much of the comic grotesque lurking in Jewish-American writing. Bernard Malamud and Saul Bellow are direct heirs to Sholem Aleykhem's humor and pathos. The adaptation of Sholem Aleykhem's Tevye stories for *Fiddler on the Roof*, is not, therefore, accidental, for his stories continue to serve as a source for Jewish-American aesthetic creativity.

Tevye first appeared in print in 1895. Originally Tevye was a mere wagon driver, a lowly position in the Jewish social hierarchy. The characterization was so successful that Sholem Aleykhem developed the personage and added self-contained stories cast as monologues between 1895 and 1916 which were finally brought together for his collected works under the heading *Tevye the Dairyman*.³

In all of the monologues Tevye addresses his friend, "Mr. Sholem Aleykhem," the author, who frames the story and mediates between the loquacious Tevye and the reader. Intimacy is quickly established by placing the author as silent participant on an equal footing with the hero, who feels free to talk directly and intimately. Through the frame of "Mr. Sholem Aleykhem," the reader assumes the writer's role and directly experiences the verbal embrace of Tevye. Tevye is in an unenviable situation in a traditional society because he has seven daughters without dowries and no male heir. Marrying off each daughter constitutes the basic problem of each monologue. Grouped together, a family saga emerges. In these monologues, written over the space of twenty years, Sholem Aleykhem records the effects of contemporary events upon the lives of Tevye and his family, that is, the Jewish people.

Tevye, whether of 1895 or of 1964, appears as the quintessential Eastern European Jewish folk type defending "tradition" to his peers yet privately questioning God's ways. His hopes, doubts, experiences and reactions reflect a traditional culture under siege internally and externally. Both Tevyes are cloaked in nostalgia, but crucial distinctions separate them. Sholem

WHEN THE MUSICAL, *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*, OPENED ON BROADWAY IN 1964, Zero Mostel in the character of Tevye introduced a new archetype into American cultural history: the "old country" immigrant. The success of the musical and its film sequel (1971) startled the producers and creators of the musical as much as it delighted audiences of Broadway, the United States, and later the world. Tevye encapsulated the world of tradition coming to terms with modernization, and in particular Americanization.

Tevye was not a new figure for Jewish-American audiences. He was remembered somewhat distantly as a beloved figure in the Yiddish stories of Sholem Aleykhem, the most popular and perhaps the greatest Yiddish writer of the immigrant generation. At least four of his *Tevye* stories provided the characters and plot material for the musical.

Sholem Aleykhem (1859-1916), the pen name of Sholem Rabinowitz, projected the image of a warm comic writer who captured the bittersweet lives and tribulations of his generation torn out of the traditional world of Eastern Europe and forced in many cases to distant emigrations.¹ The stormy life of Sholem Rabinowitz, the man, in fact, parallels that of his readers. Although quite famous by 1900, the writer was not successful in his financial dealings. In the vain hope of improving his economic lot he immigrated to the United States and arrived in New York in 1906. He produced two plays which failed. Exploited by the local Yiddish press, he returned to Europe in 1907, sorely disappointed.

When World War I broke out, rather than return to Tsarist Russia, he ventured across the Atlantic again and was given a splendid reception at Carnegie Hall.

Seth L. Wolitz is the Gale Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Texas, Austin. He is a professor of French and Comparative Literature and teaches in the American Studies Program. His present publications have been on Yiddish American Poetry, Moshe-Leyb Halpern and Aba Shtoltzenberg, and he has published books on Marcel Proust and Bernart de Ventadorn.

Aleykhem's Tevye attempts to defend a world he believes in but cannot protect, leaving him bitter and isolated, whereas the American Tevye of 1964 joyfully prepares his *shtetl* (small Jewish township), Anatevka, for boarding the Jewish *Mayflower* for the Golden Land. The maintenance of the proper noun *Tevye* is required for cultural continuity, but his signification shifts over time to reflect the needs of the contemporary audience.

Each Tevye recasts Jewish cultural history according to a contemporary ideology in order to absorb the pain-laden past of Tsarist Russia, the Holocaust, and Americanization. The musical Tevye becomes a Jewish Pilgrim, a victim of religious persecution, fleeing intolerant Europe to the land of fulfillment, America. From the stubborn but passive traditionalist of Sholem Aleykhem's hero, Tevye becomes an almost progressive grandfather figure, a legitimizer of change.

This study will show that the Americanization of Tevye reflects the efforts of Yiddish and Jewish-American artists to capture different stages and ideologies of their group's acculturation to Western secularism. In reworking the character of Tevye to fill the needs of Jewish cultural adaptation, these artists over the course of one century manipulated yearnings for a lost "pastoral" past, acknowledged surreptitiously the wounds of the Holocaust, and expressed the need for historical-cultural recognition and legitimation. The Americanization of Tevye expressed the validation of Jewish-American participation in American life.⁴

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Sholem Aleykhem's Tevye reflects the traditional Jewish ethical guide, the *Pirke Avot* (*Sayings of the Fathers*): "Be submissive to the Ruler, patient under oppression and receive everyone with cheerfulness" (3, 16). Because Tevye is steeled by his sense of inheritance and place in the Eastern European Jewish *Weltanschauung*, he can bear large amounts of physical or emotional adversity. But once his heritage is challenged intellectually by his own daughters and their swains, he must defend himself by appeals to tradition and irony. He becomes a comic figure, like Don Quixote, because he fights with obsolete weapons in support of a system in which he fervently believes without a clear understanding of its intellectual underpinnings. Tevye is a snob who believes himself descended from a learned line fallen on hard times. This subterfuge to escape his low caste is both comic and pathetic for his pretensions to rabbinic learning become obsolete in an emerging capitalistic society—of which he is ignorant—where wealth outranks rabbinical knowledge and treats it with contempt. Tevye's inability to comprehend the inexorable pressure of the new in Sholem Aleykhem's text contributes to his ultimate discomfiture.

Ironically, the outside world is the source both of his "upward mobility"

and his painful ruin. In the first monologue, Tevye is raised from a lowly drayman to a dairyman as a reward for having helped some nouveau-riche Jewish women, lost in the countryside, return to their summer *dacha* in Boiberik. Boiberik, a vacation colony, represents the intrusion of the new into Tevye's world. For the contemporary Jewish readership in the unhappy days of 1895, Tevye evokes the yearning for the traditional, "simple life" and possibly for the quasi-liberal era of Czar Alexander II (1856–1881), whose assassination in 1881 brought on the infamous May Laws of 1882, evicting the Jews from the countryside and restricting their economic and social activities, all of which led to pogroms and the general deterioration of the Jewish condition in Russia.

Tevye lived in a world of hierarchy, patriarchy, communal institutions, clear generational roles and arranged marriages. But this world was under two direct threats: external by market forces and anti-semitism, and internal by Western Enlightenment ideas of individualism and freedom of choice. Tevye could cope with external humiliations but the continuous challenges of each daughter to choose a mate, regardless of her father's convictions, tested Tevye's world view. Sholem Aleykhem carefully chose the theme of romantic love as the narrative ploy most likely to reveal the disruptive force of the new at the very heart of the traditional Jewish collective: the family. That Tevye would yield almost continuously to his daughter's inclinations over personal, familial or communal interests sheds light upon his ambivalence about traditional practices. These events reveal, furthermore, how far the *Haskala* (the Jewish enlightenment movement) penetrated ordinary Jewish life in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Russia. Tevye's father, for example, would never have waived about enforcing his patriarchal rights. Tevye's generation, however, was caught in a crucial moment of cultural transition.⁵

With seven daughters to marry off, Tevye faces many problems and Sholem Aleykhem makes sure that every daughter contributes another rent in the social fabric. All the monologues built around the marriage plot have the tripartite structure typical of a folktale. The exposition rapidly places Tevye in confrontation with a daughter who presses her choice of mate upon him. This scene usually takes place at the edge of a forest, a traditional image for untrammelled nature and human insecurity. Discomforted by the encounter, Tevye returns to the security of his home. The second section consists of finding a face-saving formula to the predicament which will protect the external authority of Tevye while ceding to the wishes of his daughter. The third section concludes the monologue with the marriage and a precarious restoration of Tevye and his world.

Tevye, whose name contains the Hebrew word for good (*Tov*), or the good man, begins his encounter with romantic love in the ironically titled story

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Modern Children, published in 1899. His oldest daughter's name, Tsaytl, a typical Yiddish name meaning time, permits Sholem Aleykhem to comment ironically on the coming events. Poor Tsaytl has been betrothed by her father to the rich old widower, Lazar-Wolf, the butcher. Desperately in love with Motel, the tailor, a suitor of little promise or caste, Tsaytl presses Motel to ask Tevye for her hand in marriage. Tevye's reaction to this startling innovation is: "You're crazy. What are you—everything? The matchmaker, the bridegroom, the in-laws all rolled in one?" (420). Not only were traditional forms ignored but Tevye was irked by the challenge to his authority. When Motel says: "Tsaytl and I gave each other our pledge . . ." Tevye's patriarchal reaction is, "Do I still have a right to say something about my daughter?" (421). Tevye fully understands the threats to his role and to the family structure. Furthermore, how can he retreat from his verbal contract with Lazar-Wolf? He had given his word. And then, how to handle Golde, his sharp-tongued beloved wife? Sholem Aleykhem invented the dream sequence in which Tevye awakes screaming that Lazar-Wolf's first wife was choking his daughter for daring to marry him. Golde acquiesces and the marriage of Tsaytl to Motel will take place. Tevye yielded to the wishes of his daughter. Significantly Sholem Aleykhem eschews the price of breaking the verbal agreement with Lazar-Wolf. Tevye reneged on his word and lost some honor for his daughter's individual happiness. In any case, the Lazar-Wolf-Tsaytl marriage was doomed from the start, for in Jewish kosher food laws you cannot mix dairy (Tevye the dairyman) with meat (Lazar-Wolf the butcher).

By 1904, the first stirrings of revolution were in the air and Sholem Aleykhem brought some of its liberationist ideas into Tevye's world. Hodel, his second daughter, whose name in Hebrew means glory, is one of his brightest offspring. She has come under the spell of Perchik, who has seen a little of the outside world and has become a revolutionary socialist whose simplistic views divide the world into rich and poor. Jewish tradition means nothing to him. Perchik and Hodel do not request Tevye's blessing so much as insist that he give it. Tevye acquiesces if only to have a Jewish wedding. No sooner are they married than Perchik disappears and word arrives that he is imprisoned in Siberia. Hodel prepares heroically to join her husband. No scene in Yiddish literature is more fraught with emotional pain than Tevye's description of his farewell to her at the railroad station. Kissing her goodbye was equal to burying a child, for whoever returned from Siberia? The traditional Jewish world of Tevye did not understand secularism, class enemies and fraternization with Gentiles. He could only watch the train depart and fight back his tears for "Tevye is not a woman!"

But romantic love can stretch the belief systems of Tevye just so far. Khava, whose name means love in Hebrew and who is Tevye's favorite daughter, dares to love outside the community of Israel. In the story bearing her name

(1906), she runs off to marry the Gentile, Fyedke Galegan (Russian for hooligan). This act goes beyond Tevye's tolerance and is certainly unacceptable to either Sholem Aleykhem or his contemporary readers. By disowning Khava and proclaiming her dead (following Jewish law), Tevye reaffirms his Jewish identity, shows solidarity with his community, and asserts the validity of his world view. To have done less would have been to compromise his identity. Nevertheless, Tevye's favorite daughter had planted serious questions in her father's mind: "And peculiar thoughts came into my mind. What is the meaning of Jew and non-Jew? I regretted that I was not as learned as some men so that I could arrive at an answer to this riddle" (495).

The *Khava* story remains the most painful story by Sholem Aleykhem. It poses serious unresolved questions: What are the limits of individual rights? Does the right of a community to survive outweigh individual choice? Sholem Aleykhem equivocates, moving from side to side unable to find any resolution. His ambiguity reflects the limits of his accommodation with Western civilization.

The American theme entered the Tevye stories only after the disastrous Revolution of 1905 and Sholem Aleykhem's unsuccessful immigration to the United States in 1906. America does not appear as a particularly desirable solution to the Russian-Jewish condition, but as a place of exile. In *Beilke*, 1909, Tevye's new son-in-law, a vulgarian determined to rid himself of this old-fashioned Jew, suggests, "Quit being Tevye the Dairyman. Maybe you'd like to pick yourself up and go to America" (604). Tevye, it is important to note, is only willing to depart for the "Land of Israel." When the upstart husband of Bielke loses his fortune, they both flee to America and live in misery. Even as late as 1914, just as Sholem Aleykhem set sail again for the United States, he puts into Tevye's mouth, in the expulsion story *Get Thee Out*, a negative view of America, "That's where all the unhappy souls go" (648). America was not for a Jewish traditionalist.

Sholem Aleykhem's pessimism courses through the last Tevye monologue. Anti-semitism and the order of expulsion force the worn-out Tevye to relinquish his homestead and become one more Jewish wanderer of the age. The traditional world he knew with all its seeming stability is unraveled beyond repair. The last monologue takes place suspended some where in time and space on a train.

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Sholem Aleykhem capitalized on the continuous popularity of the Tevye stories to alleviate his financial condition by making a theatrical adaptation of the stories. Because the Yiddish press provided a mere pittance, a box

office success was the quickest means to economic solvency. The Yiddish-speaking immigrants in America in the first thirty years of this century were such avid theatergoers that the Yiddish theater, particularly on Second Avenue in Manhattan, not only flourished but thrived as the world center of Yiddish drama. The theater was their major entertainment. Sholem Aleykhem worked feverishly on the play, named *Tevye Der Milkhiger*, (Tevye the Dairyman) *A Family Portrait in Five Scenes*, and barely finished it before his death in 1916.⁶

This play opened the 1919 fall season of the Yiddish Art Theater. It was directed by Maurice Schwartz, a major Yiddish actor who performed the leading role. The play was an immense success and became a staple in the repertory of the Yiddish Art Theater. The play also became a favorite in Warsaw, Moscow, and Tel Aviv.⁷

The Sholem Aleykhem adaptation stressed the two most poignant stories: the defection of Khava and the eviction of Tevye. Sholem Aleykhem understood well what affected immigrant audiences the most. An expulsion scene played on their own sad memories of immigration to an unknown land and their present fears of losing their children through intermarriage in the new land. Sholem Aleykhem interpolated scenes of Jewish religious ceremony for their dramatic effect and for their emotional pull to a childhood world the immigrants had lost or abandoned. Maurice Schwartz lavished extra time and effort on the religious scenes, such as mourning customs and Havdole (closing Sabbath prayers with candles, wine and spice box). These religious events are neither mentioned nor described in the original stories. The rhetoric of nostalgia cloaked Tevye in the stylized role of the archetypal folk Jew who maintains his customs in the face of adversity.

Schwartz faithfully reworked the Sholem Aleykhem play into a film. The film, starring Schwartz, was shot on Long Island in 1939.⁹ It was one of the most successful Yiddish films made in the United States. Schwartz brought to the film the bitterness of the Yiddish cultural intelligentsia in New York, fully aware that the Jews of Europe and particularly "their Jews" of Eastern Europe were crushed under economic boycotts, anti-semitism, and the lack of opportunity to emigrate. In America, the future of a Yiddish-American culture seemed menaced as well by the end of the free-flowing immigration in 1924, and by the appeal of the readily accessible majority culture. Yiddish cultural figures not allied to socialist or communist solutions to the "Jewish question" retreated back into *Yiddishkayt*, Yiddish culture and things Judaic.

The Schwartz film was concerned with evoking the Jewish pastoral world of the Old Country while hinting at parallels to the tragic contemporary situation of the Jews in Europe in 1939. The Jewish-American immigrants and their children who saw this film, however, were already quite removed from the film's pastoral setting. Schwartz's Tevye and his world was their

past: an aged father or grandfather left behind in the old country. They were urban workers and bourgeoisie who worked, most likely, in the garment industry in New York skyscrapers, shopped in department stores and went on weekends to watch planes take off at La Guardia airport or to explore a museum. These were people who had made liquor in their bathtubs during Prohibition and were sending their children to City University. Al Jolson in the *Jazz Singer* was as real to them as Tevye.

With Tevye, however, they gratified the urge to reaffirm their solidarity with the Jewish condition. A film sequence, never mentioned in the stories, depicts Tevye in the last moments before his enforced departure, pulling out the Bible and, with bitter irony, teaching his grandchild in an old, sentimentalized singsong fashion, the passage where God informs Abraham to "Get thee out of thy country."

In the final scene of the play and the film, Tevye must decide if he will readmit Khava into the family at the moment of their departure. Now chastened by life, Khava has abandoned her Gentile husband and wishes to rejoin her people in their fate. The return of Khava reflects the inward turning of both Sholem Aleykhem and Maurice Schwartz toward a reaffirmation of Jewish pride and a certain distancing from further acculturation. Khava speaks to her father: "I thought that what I believed was more beautiful and better than that which you believe. But it has become clear that your old faith is truer and deeper. The wide open world where I was deceived is strange and bad. It threw me into the cold. I want to come home."¹¹

For all of Sholem Aleykhem's pessimism at the end of his life, he was still a man of cultivated Western liberal humanistic principles. What, then, could the author do to alleviate Tevye's quandary? Should Khava, as a prodigal daughter, be readmitted after her treasonous act? In 1914 Sholem Aleykhem refused to take a position in the monologue *Get Thee Out*. Tevye states: "What should Tevye have done? Should he have embraced her . . . or should I have turned my back on her . . . what would you have done?" (659). A traditional Jew like Tevye was trapped between his communal duties to reject her and his love for a wayward daughter. By 1916, in the dramatic adaptation, Sholem Aleykhem had a change of heart, so Tevye's last words after the reconciliation became: "Must I feel guilty when, after all, she is my child? (he beats his breast) Deep in my heart, in my soul? (He turns to Khava and opens his arms to her) Come to me, Khavele, you are my child!"¹²

This scene seems to use as its subtext Luke, chapter 15; the Return of the Prodigal Son is inverted to the Prodigal daughter. Sholem Rabinowitz, one suspects, was too sophisticated and learned a man not to be aware of its origins. Is this not another example of the author's special humor: where a Jewish family crisis precipitated by a Christian is resolved by a sacral Christian subtext teaching reconciliation, and the reintegration of the Prodigal back into

Coby Weitzner; Israel Bartal

the Jewish family? The other subtext which must not be discounted is the book of Ruth, "Whither thou goest, so go I." Not only does Sholem Aleykhem have then, his ecumenical in-jokes, but he reconfirms his general humanistic principle of acquiescence to personal need over communal demands unless the community itself is threatened. Sholem Aleykhem, in his last years, had his doubts about the gains or successes of Jewish accommodation with the West, but it never affected his esteem of the great men and the great texts of the West.

In the filmscript (copied from the 1939 film), Maurice Schwartz concludes the Khava reconciliation scene with less overt melodrama and more irony. Schwartz's Tevye states, "But I'm a father with a heart, with a soul. God! So what do you say? Ha? I know?"¹³ Sholem Aleykhem sought tears and that special Jewish humor, *lakhn mit yashthesherkes*, laughter with anguish. Schwartz concludes the film on a sardonic note that fits closer to Sholem Aleykhem's 1914 *Get Thee Out* equivocation.

The majority of the 1939 Jewish-American audience, viewing the film, likely would have approved the reconciliation and readmittance of Khava. The argument posited by Tevye in both the play and the film, that he is a father "with a heart," echoed the sentiments of the immigrant audience no longer willing to put up with strict traditionalism. Tevye embodied the secular and populist tendencies of Yiddish-speaking masses whose moral and cultural attitudes would mesh with American values. He was the Eastern European folk Jew who not only passed on the Jewish inheritance, but tempered justice by finding personalized interpretations of it.

Neither Sholem Aleykhem nor Maurice Schwartz conceived that Tevye might become a cultural hero to the immigrant masses. Tevye, for the writers, simply represented the old country and its threatened life style. As we have seen, according to Sholem Aleykhem, if Tevye were to emigrate, it could be only to the land of Israel—the traditional ideal. In both the play and film, Tevye states "Where else should I go? I won't go to America. What will I do in my old age in America? They don't understand my language and I don't understand theirs."¹⁴ The Jewish-American first and second generations seem to have ignored these lines. But these bitter words accurately expressed Sholem Aleykhem's pessimism that America was no "Golden Land."

Maurice Schwartz also delivered these lines in the 1939 film with biting contempt. Schwartz's Tevye was surely not *en route* to America. What was there for Tevye in America? Schwartz was alluding in the film to his own personal loss. The Yiddish Art Theater, by 1939, could no longer sustain itself. His Yiddish-speaking audience was Americanizing too rapidly and abandoning Yiddish theater and Yiddish culture. David Lifson, who knew Maurice Schwartz, states that Schwartz complained in the spring of 1940 "that Jewish organizations no longer bought benefits (large blocks of seats to

be sold for fund raising) in the Yiddish theater, they (the Jewish organizations and their members) were patronizing Broadway."¹⁵ Schwartz believed that these new Americans were abandoning Yiddish culture.

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By World War II the number of native-born Jewish-Americans who could speak and read Yiddish and who knew the Eastern European Jewish past was limited. In order to interpret this lost world, the trilingual essayist Maurice Samuel wrote *The World of Sholem Aleichem* (1943).¹⁶ It was not history but a readable defense and illustration of Jewish life in Tsarist Russia using Sholem Aleykhem's creations as examples of changing Jewish reality between 1850 and World War I. Tevye emerged from Maurice Samuel's analysis as a folk icon, the last embodiment of the rural, intrepid Eastern European Jew.

After the revelations of World War II and the Holocaust, further efforts to preserve the cultural life of Eastern European Jewry began to appear in English. The Julius and Frances Butwin translations of Sholem Aleykhem were not the first translations but they were the most accessible. Their 1949 translation, entitled *Tevye's Daughters*, was the most complete and only authorized version of these famous stories until the 1987 Halkin translation.¹⁷ Unfortunately their efforts were not distinguished. The sparkle of Sholem Aleykhem's style and humor flattened out into an overly sentimentalized and "folksy" language and syntax. It is as if they could not recognize that Sholem Aleykhem had created a sophisticated stylized folk language which permitted Tevye to express his traditional world view and which permitted the author to communicate his perceptions. The translators fell into a generational trap that has bedeviled many a Sholem Aleykhem interpretation. They could not distinguish *the persona* (and *nom de plume*) Sholem Aleykhem, in his multiple roles of actor, narrator and interlocutor in the texts *from the real author*, Sholem Rabinowitz—the urbane Yiddish writer who spoke Russian at home and who read Gogol and the Russian classics, which provided so many of his literary strategies.

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When in 1953 Arnold Perl decided to test the Jewish cultural sensibilities of the second and third generation English-speaking Jewish-Americans, he turned to theater as the natural route. Because Yiddish theater continued to be the most popular medium of Yiddish culture in America, Arnold Perl had every expectation that a series of one act skits in English, based on Yiddish stories, might well reach his targeted audience. He borrowed the title of Maurice Samuel's book *The World of Sholem Aleichem* as the cover title of

his skits and the play opened off-Broadway. Even though the skits were slight, they proved successful enough to permit Perl to risk another venture using the same format on Yiddish tales. In 1957, he opened a new play in the Carnegie Hall Playhouse, *Tevye and his Daughters*.¹⁸

On the surface, this play in two acts eschewed the controversial or painful aspects of the Tevye material. The first act, in two scenes, describes Tevye's fortunate encounter with the Boiberik Jewish ladies who help him become a dairyman and the story of Tsaytl's marriage to Motel, the tailor. Act two reworks the Hodel story. The Tevye of Arnold Perl no longer has the ironic, warm, chipper style of Maurice Schwartz. Perl's Tevye has become a jolly Jewish peasant, a Jewish *moujik*, without the restraint and dignity of the earlier characterizations. He has been coarsened. Of the many Yiddish interpretations of Tevye, none characterized him as a peasant. Tevye, with all his poverty, *read and wrote* like the majority of Jewish males in the Russian Empire, where eighty percent of the total population in 1900 was illiterate.

In Perl's play Tevye speaks in English, but the syntax and intonational rhythms are made consciously Yiddish, like that of an untutored immigrant. Unabashedly sentimentalized, he moves against the stylized canvas of a folk tale set in the restricted Pale of Settlement (the Western provinces of Russia to which Jews were legally restricted). But Perl has added a new element to the American Tevye. When Hodel is at the railroad station about to leave for Siberia to join Perchik, the revolutionary, Tevye states, "Wherever he is, this is your place. Go."¹⁹ What a far cry from Sholem Aleykhem's Tevye, who says, "Shall I fall on her neck and plead with her not to go? I know it won't help . . . I was firm as steel—though inside I was more like a boiling samovar."²⁰ Arnold Perl's Tevye indulges American taste for romantic love and its dominant rights. All ambivalences are swept aside and the new Tevye appears happy, positive, flat, indulgent and "grandfatherly."

Although it is easy to criticize Perl's play—the flop of its 1982 revival underscores the sophistication of today's audience—it expresses an honest first attempt of a Jewish-American interpreting his cultural inheritance—on the American stage in English. It was not a Gentile stereotype of the old country Jew as in *Abie's Irish Rose*. By presenting an idealized and sentimentalized Tevye who conformed to the liberal ideology of the 1950s theater world, Perl carries over the celebration of the ordinary Jewish folk type from Yiddish secular culture. Furthermore, this play marks the beginning of the integration of Eastern European Jewish culture into American culture. But the play is an exercise in nostalgia, and avoids the central questions in the Tevye stories: intermarriage and assimilation. There floats about the Perl play and its production the distant flavor of the 1930s ARTEF style (*ARbiter TEater Farband* [Jewish Workers' Revolutionary Theater]). The theme of class conflict wends its way through the scenes, whether between the Boiberik ladies

and Tevye, between Motel the Tailor and Tevye the Dairyman, or between Perchik the revolutionary worker-intellectual and the Jewish bourgeoisie. Given that many of the theater people involved in the production of this play were, in the mid 1950s, under the scrutiny of Senator Joseph McCarthy's "red-baiting" in the House Un-American Activities Committee, this play hints at a mild defense of the old Jewish socialist and revolutionary inheritance as a legitimate political perspective.

Howard da Silva, the director, recalled on a television talk show in 1982 the anxiety of "putting on" this play. But he and Perl were happily mistaken. There were at least three fears: first, that an audience "might not materialize." Second, the "background" of the theater people, and third (just as delicate), placing a Jew *qua* Jew on stage. The fear of placing an "honest-to-goodness" Jew on Broadway also plagued the creators of *Fiddler on the Roof* (1961–64). Sheldon Harnick, the lyricist, stated, "I must say I was running scared most of the time because we had a show that seemed to be long, that was Jewish and was very serious."²¹ Even today putting a Jewish play on Broadway is still not considered "good box office." This insecurity should not be read strictly as a fear of financial or aesthetic failure, but rather as Jewish-American insecurity which the Tevye plays seek to allay.

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Fiddler on the Roof was conceived in 1961 on Tin Pan Alley and was affected by the political events of the period. The Civil Rights movement dominated both the domestic and international scene. The dramatic emergence of the Third World focused attention on the preservation of traditions, the problems of modernization and the costs of social and economic mobility. At the same time, Jewish-American life was characterized by rapid upward mobility, assimilation and its threats to the community as well as the dawning reality of the devastation of the Holocaust. The new musical addressed all these influences.

With consummate skill the creators of the musical wove into the romantic plot the themes of civil rights, assimilation, collapsing traditions, modernization, and generational conflict. ("Aha, the university. Is that where you learned to criticize your elders?")²² Tevye, as protagonist, reflects and responds to these themes which create the suspense and interest throughout the musical.

Sheldon Harnick admitted years later that the *Fiddler* team hoped "that maybe we would last a year" when it opened on Broadway, September 22, 1964.²³ *Fiddler on the Roof* integrated the contemporary concerns of Jewish-Americans with those of the general American population by using Yiddish cultural matter shaped into a classic American genre, the musical. The new version sprang from the American musical, Maurice Schwartz's Yiddish Art

Theater approach to *Tevye Der Milkhiker* with its melodrama, Jewish ceremonies and the *Pintele Yid* (authentic run-of-the-mill traditional Jew) motif, as well as to the sentimentalized, "proletarized," Chagallesque Tevye of Perl.²⁴ Joseph Stein, who wrote the libretto, showed greater theatrical skill than either Sholem Aleykhem or Perl, for he integrated three of the marriage tales (Tsaytl-Motel, Hodel-Perchik, Khava-Fyedke) with the eviction story. (It is a masterful construction which today is recognized as a model of the genre.)

Stein's own contribution to the Tevye material was the pogrom scene which concludes the first act. Besides its theatricality, the scene revealed the powerful "memory trace" among second-generation American Jews. Sholem Aleykhem avoided describing such scenes and none appeared in the *Tevye* stories. The pogroms and especially the Holocaust for American Jews by the 1960s were becoming fused in folk memories intimately associated with the "Old Country." By placing the pogrom in the heart of the musical, Stein subverted the honeyed image of the *shtetl* by emphasizing the omnipresent terror lurking in this supposedly idyllic world.

By moving Tevye from the countryside to Anatevke, Joseph Stein also removed the "anomaly" of Tevye as a country Jew and confirmed Tevye as the classic *shtetl* [traditional township] Jew. The complex history of Eastern European Jewry was reduced and simplified in an effort to create a unified "mythic" past. Maurice Schwartz could rely on childhood memories of the Old Country to create Tevye and his world as well as on a Yiddish stage tradition. Arnold Perl and Joseph Stein, native born Jewish-Americans, never knew the Old Country nor could they possibly have visited it. They were obliged to use photographs taken of *shtetlakh* (plural of *shtetl*) by Roman Vishniac and Alter Katsisne in the late 1930s, as well as the colorful depictions of *shtetl* life by Marc Chagall, in order to create both the stylized *shtetl* Anatevke, and the stylized folk figure, Tevye.²⁵ Their *shtetl* image, therefore, necessarily reflects a mythicized past and their Tevye figure is its best personification.

The image of the fiddler on the roof is central to the aesthetic effectiveness of the musical, for it is the emblem of enduring Jewish culture as Tevye is its folk representative. The fiddler comes from Chagall's canvases of 1908 depicting a fiddler on the roof, looking down upon a corpse: the eternal cycle of life and death. The fiddler image and his song were already enshrined Jewish artifacts. They derive from the classic Yiddish story of Yitskhok Leyb Perets's *Gilgul fun a nign* (*Metamorphosis of a Melody* [1901]). ("If you want to know how many Jewish men are in the house, count the fiddles hanging on the wall.")²⁶ The singing and playing of *nigunim*—wordless Jewish spirituals—was a practice of the Khassidim in their mystical approach to the Godhead. As Perets aptly interpreted, "Whatever a man feels, he can put it into a *nign* and it comes alive."²⁷ The fiddler, Chagall's symbol of tradition

and continuity, was used by Joseph Stein (librettist), Boris Aronson (set designer), Jerry Bach (composer), Sheldon Harnick (lyricist) and Jerome Robbins (director and choreographer) to frame the musical.²⁸

The key word, *tradition*, which integrates all the elements of the work, passes from stasis to process. Each of the three love plots represents a break with the patriarchal tradition, raising all the parallel concerns of the 1960s audience. The changes that are wrought—Tsaytl's right to choose a mate, Hodel's freedom to choose an alternate lifestyle, Khava's freedom to think the impossible, intermarriage—are momentary rents in the evolving Jewish fabric which are rewoven back into the musical.²⁹ Here Americanization comes to the fore. The same events which unravel Tevye's world in Sholem Aleykhem become, in the musical, the natural evolution of the Jewish tradition.

A gigantic substitution occurred in the musical. American ideals of individual rights, progress, and freedom of association are assimilated into the Judaic tradition which is presented as a cultural tradition parallel to the American. The class conflicts, which riddled the *shtetl* and which Sholem Aleykhem considered destructive of Jewish communal interests, are sidestepped in the musical. The musical posits, in fact, Jewish adaptability as the key to Jewish continuity.

Tension is created through the contrapuntal theme of anti-semitism which surfaces in the pogrom scene at the end of Act I, and again in the eviction scene at the end of Act II, an effective dénouement. Although the Sabbath Prayer number and the Wedding Scene's "Sunrise, Sunset" are encomiums to "tradition," the static unity they represent is so streaked by violence that it becomes wholly unviable. The intolerant Tsarist world must goad the Chagallesque community of Anatevke on to fulfillment elsewhere. The musical affirms a past created in the image of the present, the values of which are "the same" as those of the present but which were denied fulfillment earlier because of intolerance.³⁰

Tevye becomes the mediating force in the musical leading Anatevka to America to confirm and to fulfill Anatevka's ideals in contemporary Jewish-American life. From the very opening lines Tevye places doubt on the guarantee of tradition: "How did this tradition start? I'll tell you, I don't know. But it's a tradition." As each marriage alters the static condition of tradition, Tevye undergoes a transformation, "What's happening to tradition?" Whereas Sholem Aleykhem's Tevye hesitates and yields cautiously for the sake of the daughter's happiness to the polyvalent significance of romantic love, the musical Tevye is made to embrace it culturally as his own: "Our old ways were once new, weren't they? It's a new world, a new world. Love."³¹ When the musical Tevye sings "Do you love me?" to Golde, Sholem Aleykhem's static Tevye is transformed into a conscious evolutionist, radically changing everything about the role save the name. If the original Tevye had difficulty

accommodating to the new values of his children, it was certainly beyond his capacity to accept them or test them within himself. The musical Tevye has taken on some of the basic values of American Jewry circa 1964. In the song "If I were a Rich Man," Tevye projects an image, in *shtetl* terms, of what the good bourgeois life would be: a happy condition already achieved by most of the Jewish-American audience.³² This anachronistic Tevye, the "American Tevye," therefore mediates the radical changes in one hundred years of Jewish American life by continuously affirming the new.

The testing of Tevye in the Khava-Fyedke love affair must be recognized as a remarkable confrontation with a central Jewish-American issue as potent with grief as in Sholem Aleykhem's day. In the musical, the tendency to make Fyedke attractive forms a part of the ideology of the musical to encourage a general rapprochement of Gentile and Jew. The tavern scene illustrates this intention vividly: the Jews dance the *Rikud* and the Gentiles perform a *Czardas*, then both join together "to a wild finale pile-up on the bar."³³ Nothing could be further removed from a Sholem Aleykhem *shtetl* scene.

Tevye, however, expresses the clear ambivalence of Jewish America in 1964 to intermarriage: "Can I deny everything I believe in? [but] Can I deny my own child?"³⁴ Tevye's denial of his daughter in the musical is excused by the chorus' singing "Tradition." Full acculturation is acceptable, but not assimilation, accommodation but not conversion.

The *Khava* story reveals most sharply the evolution of Tevye and how each new adaptation struggled with the problem of breaching tradition. Sheldon Harnick, the lyricist for *Fiddler* explains their solution to their Tevye dilemma.

As Joe [Stein] said, Sholem Aleichem [sic] wrote the stories as Tevye's monologues. In that particular story [Khava], Tevye tells about how his daughter married the Russian [Fyedke], but at the end of it he doesn't tell you what happened. Instead, he lays it in the readers' lap by saying 'What would you have done?' It was unresolved. So we had to make a choice. It seemed clear to us that even here Tevye would have found some way of bending; some way to accept the daughter he adored even though she had done something that was unconscionable to him. That was our choice, but we had a lot of talks about how we should end that scene. I think it was Joe who came up with that extraordinary solution of having Tevye say, 'God be with you!' to the air. He says the words but not to the daughter.³⁵

Harnick confused the *Khava* story with the eviction story, *Get Thee Out*. As we have seen in the first story of *Khava* (1906), Tevye is unequivocal about cutting all ties with his daughter. In *Get Thee Out* (1914), Sholem Aleykhem remains ambivalent if Khava will be reaccepted, "What would you have done?"³⁶ In 1916, Sholem Aleykhem changed his mind in the play and permitted the reconciliation.

When the eviction notice appears in *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), Khava's last appearance is not to join her family but to announce that she and her

husband Fyedke are *leaving together* for a more just society. In the original Sholem Aleykhem play, Khava returns to Tevye in order to join him in exile.³⁷ In the musical, Tevye consciously remains on stage with his back to Khava and Fyedke but hears all and is not unhappy that they know where the rest of the family is going. The *Fiddler* collaborators created a paradox: they maintain Tevye's wavering ambivalence toward Khava, yet her "mixed" marriage is made "legitimate" because Fyedke goes into exile with her. By maintaining the integrity of this "mixed" marriage, the liberal assimilating bias of 1964 was prophetic, "God be with you!"

Tevye's reaction to the expulsion in *Fiddler* is bitter but comparatively low-keyed. He does not threaten civil disobedience, for he fears an unequal confrontation, "The whole world will be blind and toothless."³⁸ The problem posed is where should Anatevka seek refuge? For Tevye it is America, where he has a brother-in-law, Abram (a Stein creation).

Stein also creates another character, Yente the matchmaker, who is drawn from two American sources: the gossip *Yente Talabender* from a popular serial story in the New York Yiddish daily, *The Forward*, and—with a sex change—Ephraim the Matchmaker in Sholem Aleykhem's *Beilke* who leaves for the "Holy Land." This dichotomy of destination is not accidental. It gives recognition to the historical realities, and it gives legitimacy to both Jewish options, Zionism and the Diaspora. The musical obviously needed a justification for America and it made use of a family tie. Actually, Sholem Aleykhem had already placed this possibility in Tevye's mouth, "Today you and I meet on this train, tomorrow we might see each other in Yehupetz, next year I might be swept along to Odessa or to Warsaw or maybe even to America."³⁹ The creation of Abram (an Abraham: "father of the people") can surely be read as an intertextual allusion. Tevye, then, by analogy, should become Moses leading his people to the Promised Land.

As the curtain is about to fall, the fiddler on the roof—the multivalent symbol of Jewish continuity, Jewish soul and Jewish art—joins Tevye, *not* Yente, because the musical has named Tevye the Jew "of all seasons," as the *true* heir to the Eastern European Jewish tradition, and he, Tevye, has chosen to live in the New World. By making America the "Promised Land" and not the "Land of Israel"—euphemistically called in the musical the "Holy Land" (a Christian term rarely used by Jews) to avoid the then-contemporary term, Palestine—the *Fiddler* artists dared to defend the Diaspora and to legitimize the option for American Jews of accepting comfortably and consciously their "Jewish-American" status. In short, Tevye upholds the authenticity of the Diaspora as a valid alternative to going to Israel. As we have seen, it is the useless busybody, Yente, the matchmaker, who is sent off to Israel in the play, for, like the comic figure of the Rabbi, she represents the "dead traditions" which shackled Eastern European Jewish life.

The symbol of Jewish spirit, the fiddler, joins Tevye and the vital folk Jews as they go to the "Golden Land"—America. This pride in the folk aspect of American Jewry, the *proste* (ordinary Jews), as opposed to the *zaydene* (the traditional religious and economic élite) not only distinguishes the ideological perspective of the musical but reflects accurately the division between the "Jewish folk" who immigrated to the United States for pragmatic reasons and the Israel-centered Zionists, a majority of whom came either from Rabbinic families or more assimilated families. America was the choice of the Jewish masses because it was a real, immediate fact. The musical Tevye, being the quintessential "folk Jew," naturally should choose the pragmatic solution. But this only underscores the transformation of the original Tevye who *disliked* America. Hidden in the musical version of Tevye as the "folk Jew" may also be the last remnants of Jewish socialist admiration of the *folksmasn*, whose "spirit"—if we are to believe Irving Howe's *World of our Fathers*—continued into the second generation, the generation of the *Fiddler* team.⁴⁰

Tevye becomes the personification of the Jewish immigrant and the universal grandfather of Jewish America. Significantly, he brings his wife and *all his children* save the socialist and the outcast. He has already adopted in Anatevka the American-Jewish ideals of tolerance and individual rights, and his departure for America fulfills what persecution and eviction did not permit. By contrast, in the original Yiddish text, Sholem Aleykhem's last image is that of a Tevye, passive, betrayed, alone, without Golde (dead), without family, traveling without any destination, made a Wandering Jew, "where he is told to go, he goes."⁴¹ How different is the American musical Tevye, a vigorous immigrant accompanied by his family and who affirms the Jewish-American mythos of *Jewish adaptability and continuity*.

Even the score reinforces the ideological perspective of the musical—itsself a "hybrid" art form, like "Jewish-American." When Mark Slobin defined the Eastern European Jewish melody types as based on the augmented second and the augmented fourth, he pointed out that even *Fiddler on the Roof* could not resist using the first type. He was amused, however, that it was used only as the counter-theme of the orchestra to the opening theme played by the fiddler on the roof. Why, he asked, was a *definable* Jewish melody type *not* given to the fiddler? Slobin, I believe, misinterpreted the meaning of this musical decision when he stated, "It is as if the mainstream wanted to force the musical stereotype on an unwilling captive Old World *klezmer* who knows he is merely one of the stage props."⁴² The Fiddler's "Broadway" melody, which begins and *ends* the musical with its slight "exotica," is the message of the musical: Jewish continuity exists through accommodation and acculturation. The construction of the fiddler's theme expresses the ideology of the composer. Bock's use of the "minor mode and the characteristic opening half-step—but not following the augmented second" is, then, totally in char-

acter: the Jewish and the Western/American elements coming together to create a "Jewish-American" sound.⁴³ The orchestra's counter-melody represents the "pure" Eastern European *shtetl* world which suffuses the work, but its "transmigration" and "transmogrification" are found in the melody of the fiddler—symbol of the Jewish paradox, continuity-by accommodation.

Boris Aronson, the celebrated Broadway stage designer of *Fiddler*, also provided a particularly valuable link to the Eastern European Yiddish theatrical tradition. Having participated in the flowering of secular Yiddish art in Kiev in 1919, and having worked with the Moscow Yiddish State Theater and then Maurice Schwartz's New York Yiddish Art Theater, he brought to the production the Cubist-fantastic style derived from Alexander Exter's studio in Kiev, and Marc Chagall's and Natan Altman's set designs in Moscow, and his own unique abstract shapes and lighting for Broadway which poeticized and stylized the *shtetl* sets. The movement on stage, therefore, had the quality of an animated Chagall painting, an aesthetic whole, a wistful idealization. By 1971, in the *Fiddler* film, on the other hand, the director, Norman Jewison, eschewed the stylized stage design and sought an "authentic" setting, choosing a Yugoslavian village turned into a Jewish *shtetl*. The incongruity between the stylized story and the sanitized but realistic village jars the film's aesthetic effectiveness.

There are other changes as well in the passage from one medium to another. The Tevye of Topol, styled for the London stage, appears in the film oversized due to the many close-ups which tend to isolate and over-individuate him. Joseph Stein (librettist) takes Topol to task because "he didn't play a peasant." This reveals the basic attitude and change in the English-language Tevyes—whether in the Perl or the *Fiddler* productions. Yiddish productions—excluding the Soviet one—never considered Tevye a peasant. Both Jewison and Topol (an Israeli who would have known the Sholem Aleykhem material as part of his Israeli cultural education) were attempting to bring more dignity to the Tevye role. In an ironic American twist, the commentator Peter Stone suspected, "Norman (who is Gentile in all things but his name) was so nervous about the responsibility of doing this very Jewish piece and took it so seriously a great deal of the humor that had been in the stage version was missing from the film."⁴⁴ That the American Gentile director looked deeper than his Jewish-American counterparts into the Sholem Aleykhem Tevye is not without its irony and significance. Whereas the original *Fiddler* collaborators were making Tevye palatable to the 1964 audience by anachronistically modernizing him, Jewison was fascinated by the ethnographic possibilities and took a more respectful attitude towards Jewish traditions—particularly religious ones—than the Jewish-American collaborators who could and did allow themselves a more patronizing look at Tevye and the world of their own fathers. Even if Jewison erred by filming Golde in a church—for no *shtetl* Jew would enter

a church even *in extremis*—his ethnographic approach enriched the film and aided his own interpretation.

By reanimating old photographs of *shtetl* life in many frames and sequences, by the placement of his actors, and by the camera angle, Jewison prepared the audience subliminally for the concluding scene with all the exiled Jews of Anatevke, carrying heavy bundles, and slowly trudging off, as depicted in Holocaust photographs. By injecting this sinister element anachronistically, Jewison effectively commented visually upon what the *Fiddler* creators eschewed—that this *shtetl* world did not only “emigrate,” it was also exterminated. This film’s very bittersweet ending is certainly closer to the pessimistic spirit of Sholem Aleykhem and Schwartz than to the Broadway production.

Jewison’s interpretation used anachronism to provide a history lesson on European Jewry whereas the Broadway version sought the “old” and the achronological in order to create a distant positive origin myth. Thus, the fiddler’s opening melody, repeated at the end of *Fiddler on the Roof*, functions more as a lament in the film than as the “hail and farewell” and “onward” of the stage version. Perhaps a generous non-Jewish but American artist could better express the lurking unease in 1971 of his fellow Jewish-American artists. The stage version ends determinedly positive: the film version ends melancholically.

The worldwide success of the musical underlines the appeal of one central element, the stress of modernization upon a traditional society and upon the transitional generations. Stein (librettist) relates: “The Japanese producer turned to us and said, ‘Tell me, do they understand this show in America?’ I said, ‘What do you mean?’ He said, ‘It’s so Japanese!’”⁴⁵

In November 1983, besides productions in Warsaw and even Moscow of *Fiddler on the Roof*, dubbed *Tevye from Anatevka*, the Yiddish theater in New York, with the late Ben Bonus, struck back with *Tevye in America*, a satire on the success of *Fiddler*, in which Tevye is persuaded to come to America and to go on stage.⁴⁶ But someone has beaten him to this “sold out” play, and Tevye reports to a horrified Golde that it shows them in bed together in front of hundreds of people. The revealing advertisement is as follows:

Weekend performances only at the Norman Thomas Theater . . . An English narration, written by Miriam Kreisyn and delivered by Jerri Ann Frank, assists those whose Yiddish is uncertain.⁴⁷

Although this sketch is of little consequence, it underscores how American culture—to which almost all the Jews in the United States now belong—both absorbs and transforms the dying ethnic culture by introducing back into it American events, concerns and attitudes.

A sequel was rumored for years to be “in the works” by the collaborators

of *Fiddler on the Roof*: to be tentatively called *Tevye in America*. Broadway likes sequels of successful works, but the unsuccessful musical *Rags* (1987), which also treats immigrants on the Lower East Side, may have dashed their plans. In any case, the *Fiddler* collaborators would have less to fear, although they have a new generation to face. But Tevye is no longer merely a character; he has become an American type: the Old Country immigrant. Sholem Aleykhem may have sent Tevye in his play to the Land of Israel, but history and the Eastern European Jewish masses drew Sholem Aleykhem and Tevye to America. Well beyond the control of Sholem Aleykhem, the immigrants and their descendants created their American Tevye, who reflects the various stages of Jewish-American acculturation. Coarsened, toughened, burly, jovial and positive, he embodies the ancestor of whom Jewish America wants to be proud. His portrayal expresses the Jewish-American striving towards normalization and security in America. Tevye, then, is the Jewish Pilgrim whose *Mayflower* has long since docked.⁴⁸

Probably the most significant proof of the Americanization of Tevye is found in the continuous productions and revivals of the musical by professional and amateur groups, and by high school and college drama classes throughout the United States. Tevye has even passed out of Jewish-American hands; he has become part of American cultural history and of its citizenry.⁴⁹

NOTES

1. Sholem Aleykhem is the standard academic transcription from the Hebrew alphabet in which Yiddish is written. Sholem Aleichem is the old transcription which is on the wane. *Sholem Aleykhem* literally means “Peace unto you” in Hebrew but in its normal daily usage in Yiddish it became the simple greeting of “Hello.” Rabinowitz used this expression as his pen name in his early Yiddish writings while saving Rabinowitz for his Hebrew creations. (Hebrew always carried a higher prestige.) The success of his Yiddish works, however, determined his career as a Yiddish writer and the pen name served as an effective literary persona.

2. Zalmen Reyzen, *Leksikon fun der yidisher literatur, prese, un filologie* (Vilna, Poland, 1929), 4:691; *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* (New York, 1981), 8:685; Maurice Samuel, *The World of Sholem Aleichem* (New York, 1943), 326–27; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. “Sholem Aleichem.”

3. “Tevye Der Milkhiger” (*Tevye the Dairyman*) first appeared in a literary yearbook, *Der Hoyz-fraynd*, ed. M. Spektor (Warsaw, 1895), 4:63–80, (passed by censor on June 14, 1894). The first publication of the collected stories, *Gants Tevye Der Milkhiger* (the complete *Tevye the Dairyman*), appeared as volume 5 of the collected works of Sholem Aleykhem, *Ale Verk fun Sholem Aleykhem* (New York, 1917–1925). The Yiddish text of the *Tevye* stories which I cite is found in the Argentine edition using modern orthography): Sholem Aleykhem, *Ale Verk Fun Sholem Aleykhem*, vol. 3 (Buenos Aires, 1952). I am using the English translation of Julius and Frances Butwin originally published in *The Old Country, Collected Stories of Sholem Aleichem* (New York, 1946) and *Tevye’s Daughters* (New York, 1949), jointly republished as *Favorite Tales of Sholem Aleichem* (New York, 1983); all further references to this work will appear in

the text, and where necessary in notes as *Favorite Tales* (Avenel). Incidentally, the Butwin translation, which has served all English adaptations, is now superceded by the new translation of Hillel Halkin: Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye The Dairyman and the Railroad Stories* (New York, 1987).

4. Cynthia Ozick in "A Critic At Large: Sholem Aleichem's Revolution" (*New Yorker*, 28 Mar. 1988, 99-108), overviews Sholem Aleikhem's place in Yiddish literature and gives a critical appreciation of Tevye in the new translation of Hillel Halkin. She scorns, however, on historical cultural grounds, the American Tevye of *Fiddler on the Roof*, blaming his creation on Jewish-American "amnesia of the central motifs and texts of their civilization" in the rush to Americanization. The result is a cheapening of a literary master, Sholem Aleikhem, the deformation of old world Jewish life and the vulgar sentimentalization of Tevye. Although a Yiddish scholar can agree from the historical perspective that the book and lyrics of *Fiddler* present "the sort of *shund* (romantic vulgarization) that Sholem Aleichem had battled against" (103)—and at times succumbed to himself, the musical is a masterpiece in its own terms, within an American genre, which has always "misrepresented" old country cultures brilliantly in earlier successful musicals such as *Finian's Rainbow* (Ireland), *Brigadoon* (Scotland), and *Song of Norway*. American musicals, after all, are *aesthetic creations*, not documentaries. Nevertheless, Ozick's complaints register an artist's sensibility to the massive Americanization of Eastern European Jews within three generations which the Tevye of *Fiddler* does reflect—for better or for worse.

5. Sol Gittleman in *Sholem Aleichem, A Non-Critical Introduction* (The Hague, 1974) has also noted that Tevye is not a pure "patriarch": "Besides being a traditional Jewish patriarch, he is also a loving father" (114). His thoughts about Tevye were stimulated by the critical study of Y. Y. Trunk, *Tevye un Menakhem Mendel in Yidishn Velgoyrl* (New York, 1944), the first edition published in Poland as *Sholem Aleikhem* (Warsaw, 1937). The second edition—the more pessimistic version—of New York in 1944 was revised after his lucky escape.

A valuable study of the Tevye material was also published by Khone Shmeruk, "Tevye der Milkhiker"—L'toldotia shel yetzirah" in *HaSifrut*, 26 (April 1978): 26-38. His article "Sholem Aleikhem in Amerike," *Di Goldenekeyt*, (1987) no. 121:56-77 is a useful overview of the theme of America in Sholem Aleikhem's works. Shmeruk underscores with many citations the complex and constantly changing attitudes and perspectives of Sholem Aleikhem regarding America and its effect on Jewry.

6. The play *Tevye Der Milkhiker, a familie bild in fir tsenes*, (*Tevye the Dairyman, a Family Portrait in Four Scenes*) was published in the incomplete "Collected Works" of Sholem Aleikhem (New York, 1923) 25:165-235. The Library of Congress has recently recovered the typescript in five scenes (not four) in its copyright deposits, and Yivo Institute for Jewish Research in New York has an almost complete typescript copy in its archives (Maurice Schwartz Yiddish Art Theater Collection) with ink markings indicating it was probably the working script for the 1919 and subsequent productions. The text needs to be published. The printed version has been edited most uncritically, and freely, Sholem Aleikhem's son-in-law, Yitskhok Dov Berkowitz, who translated Sholem Aleikhem's work into Hebrew, was known to tamper with, "improve" or "correct" the original texts and manuscripts of his father-in-law.

7. There is a European tradition as well. See Faina Burko, *The Soviet Yiddish Theater* (Ann Arbor, 1979), 128.

8. The film scenario *Tevye Der Milkhiker* by Maurice Schwartz (based on the Sholem Aleikhem play) is in the Archives of the Yivo Institute (New York) in the Maurice Schwartz Yiddish Art Theater Collection; hereafter referred to as *Scenario* (not to be confused with the filmscript taken off the film, which is at Brandeis University, Rutenberg and Everett Yiddish Film Library; hereafter referred to as *Filmscript*).

9. The film *Tevye Der Milkhiker* is one of the most successful Yiddish sound films made in the United States, with the musical score by Sholem Secunda, the creator of *Bey Mir Bistu Sheyn*. The film is now available from the Brandeis University Film Library with English subtitles. See also Eric A. Goldman, *Visions, Images and Dreams: Yiddish Film, Past and Present* (Ann Arbor, 1983); Sarah Blacher Cohen, ed., *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Jewish-American Stage and Screen* (Bloomington, 1983); Judith N. Goldberg, *Laughter Through Tears: The Yiddish Cinema* (East Brunswick, N.J., 1983); Ronny Loewe, ed., *Das Jiddische Kino* (Frankfurt, 1982).

10. See David S. Lifson, *The Yiddish Theater in America* (New York, 1965), particularly

chap. 8, "Art and the Yiddish Theater," and chap. 9, "Maurice Schwartz and the Yiddish Art Theater." Nahama Sandrow's more general study, *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater* (New York, 1977), offers the English reader the general tonality of Yiddish theater in its short life. She is clearly influenced by the histories written in Yiddish.

11. Typescript of Sholem Aleikhem play (in the Library of Congress) 77-78; *Filmscript* (in Rutenberg and Everett Yiddish Film Library at Brandeis University), 33-34; *Scenario* of *Tevye Der Milkhiker* (in the Maurice Schwartz Yiddish Art Theater Collection at the Yivo Institute in New York City), 62. This passage never appeared in the printed version of the play in the *Collected Works*. The translation is my own.

12. Typescript of play *Tevye Der Milkhiker* (in Library of Congress), 66. Translated by author.

13. *Filmscript*, 34. Translated by author.

14. Typescript of Sholem Aleikhem play (in Library of Congress), 67, and the printed version, *Tevye Der Milkhiker in Fun tsvey velm of Ale Verk fun Sholem Aleikhem* (New York, 1923), 25:226.

15. Lifson, *The Yiddish Theater in America*, 370.

16. Maurice Samuel, *The World of Sholem Aleichem* (New York, 1943).

17. For lists of English translations of Sholem Aleikhem, see U. Weinreich, "Guide to English translations of Sholem Aleichem," in *The Field of Yiddish* (New York, 1954), 285-91, and D. N. Miller, "Sholem Aleichem in English: The Most Accessible Translations," *Yiddish*, 2 (1977): 61-77.

18. Arnold Perl, *The World of Sholem Aleichem* (New York, 1953), contains three dramatizations: 1) "Khelm" (a folk tale), 2) "Bontshe Schweig" (adapted from I. L. Perets' short story of the same name), and 3) "The High School" (adapted from Sholem Aleikhem's short story "Gymnasium"). It debuted May 1, 1953 at the Barbizon-Plaza theater in Manhattan (a small off-Broadway theater), directed by Howard da Silva and Arnold Perl.

Arnold Perl, *Tevye and His Daughters* (New York, 1958), debuted September 16, 1957 in the small off-Broadway theater, Carnegie Hall Playhouse, and was directed by Howard da Silva. Mike Kellin played Tevye. Act I is divided into two scenes: 1) "How Tevye Became a Dairyman," and 2) "Tsaitl." Act II is an adaptation of the tale "Hodel."

19. *Ibid.*, 46.

20. *Favorite Tales* (Avenel), 455-56.

21. "Landmark Symposium: *Fiddler on the Roof*," Peter Stone, Moderator, Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, Joseph Stein, in *The Dramatists' Guild Quarterly* 20 (Spring 1983): 21; henceforth cited as "Landmark." According to David Lifson, Zero Mostel—the first musical Tevye—went through the book and score of *Fiddler* for Ben Raeburn, editor of Horizon Press, N.Y., and then asked, "Was it too Jewish?" (personal communication).

22. "Fiddler on the Roof," in *Great Musicals of the American Theater*, ed. Stanley Richards (Radon, Penn., 1973), 1:403; henceforth referred to as *Fiddler*.

23. "Landmark," 21.

24. Neither Perl nor the *Fiddler* collaborators ever mention the Yiddish productions, whether on stage or on film. In fact, a Yiddish stage production of *Tevye Der Milkhiker* was performed as late as the 1959-60 season at the *Folksbine* Theater on the Lower East Side.

25. The photographs of Roman Vishniac and Alter Katsisne were studied and even imitated, particularly in the film version; see *The Vanished World*, ed. Raphael Abramovitch (New York, 1947).

26. I. L. Perets, "A Gilgul fun a Nign," in *Ale Verk*, New York, 1947, 4:118.

27. *Ibid.*, 121.

28. "Landmark," 17. Stein stated: "Actually, when Jerry [Robbins] was working out the form of the show—I mean the physical structure—he was going to use a fiddler to move us from one scene to the next. So the sense of a fiddler being a part of the show was very much in our minds. Then one of us saw the Chagall painting, and the title came from that." Harnick stated: "But somebody said, 'Do you know what this play is about? It's about the dissolution of a way of life.' Robbins got very excited. 'If that's what it's about,' he said, 'then we have to show our audience more of the way of life that is about to dissolve. We have to have an opening number about the traditions that are going to change. This number has to be like a tapestry against which the entire show will play.' And that was the beginning of 'Tradition'" (17). Notice the *Fiddler*

team is entirely first and second generation Jewish-Americans, who, with twenty years' hindsight, represent one of the greatest "ingatherings" of talent in the history of the American musical stage.

29. "Landmark," 14. Stein states: "I always had in mind that the line of the show was the community. The first act always ended with the pogrom. The second act always ended with the exodus to America. For me, the community was always central to the story" (14).

30. "Landmark," 17. "He [Jerome Robbins, Director] loved the source material. Somewhere along the line he told us that when he was six he had been taken to Poland. He said he never forgot the experience because his forebears [sic] came from there. Robbins said what he wanted to do was put the shtetel [sic] life onstage to give another twenty-five years of life to that shtetel [sic] culture which had been devastated during World War II. That was his vision." Here we can see the critical blindness of the creators who thought they were capturing the "spirit" of the *shtetel* - and keeping it alive twenty-five years after its dissolution. In fact, their work, far from showing dissolution, was a restorative act from their New York Jewish-American perspective "twenty-five years later." Being second generation artists they knew from their parents the emotional tale of Jewish woes in Eastern Europe, but they reveal in their statements absolutely no real knowledge of the ethnicities (for example, Fyedke is Ukrainian, not Russian) nor the political, economic, social or cultural realities of Eastern Europe 1881-1909.

31. *Fiddler*, 393, 430, 431.

32. "If I Were a Rich Man" is based on Sholem Aleykhem's story, "If I were a Rothschild." The theme of "rags to riches" was also used in their musical, *The Rothschilds*.

33. *Fiddler*, 410.

34. *Ibid.*, 438.

35. "Landmark," 15.

36. *Favorite Tales* (Avenel), 659.

37. *Tevey Der Milkhiger* (New York), 25:224.

38. *Fiddler*, 440.

39. *Favorite Tales* (Avenel), 659.

40. Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976).

41. *Favorite Tales* (Avenel), 659.

42. Marc Slobin, *Tenement Songs* (Urbana, 1982), 196.

43. *Ibid.*

44. "Landmark," 27; Frank Rich with Lisa Aronson, *The Theater Art of Boris Aronson* (New York, 1987), 171-186.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Austin American Statesman*, 23 Dec. 1983. See *Sovetish Heymland*, June 1984: 5, 76, 78, for photographs of the Russian Tevyes.

47. *Hadassah Magazine*, Nov. 1983: 26.

48. The case of the evolved Tevey, particularly the Tevey of the musical, which had such a success in the United States, would reinforce the basic thesis of Werner Sollors in his book, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*: "By choosing to fulfill a grandfather (even a largely invented one) we (the present generation) become, in fact, a 'chosen generation'. American culture is rich in such uses of a grandparent" (232).

49. The success of *Fiddler on the Roof* has brought in its wake not only endless productions of the musical but a series of "spin offs" attempting to use the immigrant formulae of this musical and its open treatment of Jewish themes. In the New York theater season of 1987 alone, the success of Jewish material has spawned 1) the Jewish Repertory Theater with a musical production *Half a World Away* "based on the stories of Sholem Aleichem [sic]," 2) the American Jewish Theater with its musical, *Bar Mitzvah Boy*, and 3) the unsuccessful musical *Rags*.

Lost Utopias and Present Realities

JAMES A. HENRETTA

University of Maryland, College Park

Reflections on History and Historians. By Theodore S. Hamerow. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. 267 pages. \$25.00.

The New History and the Old: Critical Essays and Reappraisals. By Gertrude Himmelfarb. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987. 209 pages. \$20.00.

The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe. By Russell Jacoby. New York: Basic Books, 1987. 290 pages. \$18.95.

ONCE UPON A TIME HISTORY MATTERED. AND HISTORIANS STOOD PROUD. "THEY FELT themselves to be sages and prophets," Theodore Hamerow tells us, because of a widespread belief that their discipline "held the key to an understanding of the past and a vision of the future." Then, amidst the uncertainties of the post-World War II world, society and historians alike lost faith in history as a reliable guide. Simultaneously, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology appeared "more precise, scientific, reliable, and reassuring than history," usurping history's central place in the public mind and the college curriculum (11).

This "grave crisis" sparked a revolution in historical scholarship. To "escape from decline, neglect, and irrelevance," New Historians adopted the approaches and methods of the social sciences. In the process, as Gertrude Himmelfarb continues the lament, they rejected the traditional assumptions of their discipline, "that the proper subject of history is essentially political and that the natural mode of historical writing is essentially narrative" (1). New Social Historians focused

James A. Henretta is Burke Professor of American History at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is the co-author of *America's History* (1987), a survey text.