

JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF AMERICA  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Fall 1993

Prof. David G. Roskies

Lit. 5217x *Sholem Aleichem: The Comedy of Dissolution*

Requirements: Ten 2-3 pp. writing assignments.

13 Sept. **Breaking the Maskilic Mold**

דאָס מעסערל / The Penknife (1886) - xeroxed  
דער אוצר / האוצר (1889) - xeroxed

Dov Sadan, "Three Foundations (SA and the Yiddish Literary Tradition)," *SA and the Critical Tradition* (= *Prooftexts* 6 [1986]): 55-63 - xerox on reserve.  
Dan Miron, *Sholem-Aleykhem: Person, Persona, Presence* (NY, 1972) - on reserve:  
PJ5129 A3 S5 Z7643

20 Sept. **In Search of the Jewish Novel**

סטעמפעניו / Stempenyu (1888) - Neugroschel  
(inc. opening letter to Mendele)  
אַ בריוו צו אַ גוטן פֿרײַנד (1889)

Anita Norich, "Portraits of the Artist in Three Novels by Sholem Aleichem,"  
*Prooftexts* 4 (1984): 237-51 - Xerox on reserve

Optional:

נ. אויסלענדער, "דער יונגער שאַלעם-אַלייכעם און זײַן ראָמאַן 'סטעמפעניו'," שריפטן 1 (1928): 5-72.

27 Sept. **Goat to Scapegoat**

דער פֿאַרכישופֿטער שניידער / The Haunted Tailor - xeroxed

Zoya Prizel, "The Narrator in SA's 'The Enchanted Tailor'," *Yiddish* 2:4 (1977): 55-60 - xerox on reserve.

#### 4 Oct. **The Man Who Wouldn't Go Home**

מנחם-מענדל / Menakhem-Mendl - Kahana

Max Erik, "*Menakhem-Mendl (A Marxist Critique)*," *SA and the Critical Tradition*, pp. 23-39 - Xerox on reserve.

Ruth R. Wisse, "Ironic Balance for Psychic Survival," *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero* (Chicago, 1971), chap. 3. PN 6149 J4W5 1971. On reserve.

Dan Miron, "A Sampling of *Menakhem-Mendl*," *Michigan Germanic Studies* 3:2 (1977): 12-33 - Xerox on reserve.

#### Optional

אברהם גוברשטרן, "מנחם-מענדל לשלום-עליכם: בין תולדות הטכסט למבנה היצירה," תרביץ, נד (1985): 105-146.

#### 11 Oct. **Unanswered Questions**

דאָס טעפל / The Pot (1901) - BSA

ווען איך בין ראָטשילד / If I Were Rothschild (1902) - BSA

Victor Erlich, "A Note on the Monologue as a Literary Form: Sholem Aleichem's *Monologn* - A Test Case," in *For Max Weinreich on his Seventieth Birthday* - xerox on reserve.

Hana Wirth-Nesher, "Voices of Ambivalence in SA's Monologues," *Prooftexts* 1 (1981): 158-71 - xerox on reserve.

#### 18 Oct. **Tevye: The Making of a Folk Hero**

דאָס גרויסע געווינס / Tevye Strikes It Rich (1895)

plus orig. version from *Hoyzfraynd* 4 (1895)

אַ בוידיעם / Tevye Blows a Small Fortune (1899)

היינטיקע קינדער / Today's Children (1899)

Hillel Halkin, "Introduction" to *Tevye the Dairyman*

Meir Wiener, "On SA's Humor" - xeroxed.

Ruth R. Wisse, *Sholem Aleichem and the Art of Communication* (Syracuse 1979) - on reserve PJ5129 A3 S5 Z9.

TBA Screening of Maurice Schwartz's *Tevye* (USA, 1939)

25 Oct. **The Comic Job**

Hodl (1905), Chava (1905), Shprintze (1907)  
 טביה פֿאַרט קיין ארץ-ישראל / *Tevye Leaves for the Land of Israel* (1909)  
 Lekh-lekho (1914).

Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: A Study in the Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (NY, 1973), pp. 169-79 - on reserve.  
 Michael Stern, "Tevye's Art of Quotation," *SA and the Critical Tradition* - xerox on reserve  
 Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (California, 1990), pp. 102-7. PJ 5113 H33 1990 - on reserve.

Optional

חנא שמרוק, "טביה דער מילכיקער — לתולדותיה שך יצירה," הספרות 26 (1978): 26-38.

8 Nov. **The Carnival**

אויף פסח אַהיים / *Home for Passover* (1903) - *BSA*  
 די פֿאַן / *The Flag* (1900) - *OCT*  
 דער אורח / *The Guest* (1906) - *BSA*  
 שיר השירים / *A Page from the Song of Songs* (1909-11) - *TYS & OCT*  
 אַ איבער אַ היטל / *On Account of a Hat* (1913) - Xerox.

Intro. to *BSA*, pp. xxviii-xxx.

15 Nov. **Brave New World**

מאָטל פייסי דעם חונס / *Mottel the Cantor's Son* (1907-1916) - *BSA & Kahana*

Dan Miron, "Bouncing Back: Destruction and Recovery in Sholem-Aleykhem's *Motl peyse dem khazns*," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 17 (1978): 119-84 - xerox on reserve.  
 Khone Shmeruk, "Sholem Aleichem and America," *YIVO Annual* 20 (1991): 211-38 - xerox on reserve.

Naomi B. Sokoloff, "Sholem Aleichem -- *Mottel, the Cantor's Son*," *Imagining the Child in Modern Jewish Fiction* (JHUP, 1992), chap. 3. On reserve PN842 S6 1992.

22 Nov. **Trains, Stories, Madness & Miracles**

אייזנבאָן-געשיכטעס / Railroad Stories - Halkin  
David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, pp. 172-76.

Optional

דן מירון, "מסע באיזור הדמדומים: אחרית דבר לסיפורי רכבת," סיפורי רכבת, עמ' 227-300.

29 Nov. **From Melodrama to Folk Play, From Chronicle to Comedy**

שווער צו זיין אַ ייד / It's Hard to Be a Jew (1914)- xeroxed  
דאָס גרויסע געווינס / The Jackpot (1914) - Weitzner

Kobi Weitzner, "Introduction" to *The Jackpot*  
Nina Warnke, "Of Plays and Politics: Sholem Aleichem's First Visit to America,"  
*YIVO Annual* 20 (1991): 239-76.

Optional

\**The Bloody Hoax*, trans. Aliza Shevrin (Indiana, 1991). PJ5129 A3 B5813 1991

6 Dec. **The Storyteller as Hero**

פֿונעם יריד / From the Fair (1908-1916) - Leviant  
אַ וואָרט פֿאַר אַ וואָרט / Tit for Tat (1914) - TOC

David G. Roskies, "Unfinished Business: Sholem Aleichem's *From the Fair*,"  
*Prooftexts* 6 (1986): 65-78 - xerox on reserve.

## Writing Assignments

### 20 Sept. **Two Narrative Styles in *Stempenyu*.**

In the wake of SA's own pronouncements, most critics have focused on the thematics of this so-called "Jewish Novel." They note the conflicting agenda. Your assignment is to pay special attention instead to the interplay of comic and lyric styles of narration within each chapter and from one chapter to the next. What does SA achieve by this and can it help us redefine his idea for the Jewish novel?

### 27 Sept. **The Multidetermined Goat.**

Follow every description of and allusion to goats as you try to unravel the mock-mythic strands of this endless tale. At what point (if any) does the grotesque reality give way to pure fantasy?

### 4 Oct. **A Feminist Reading of *Menakhem-Mendl* or, What Ever Happened to Sheyne-Sheyndl?**

Feminist criticism has not yet caught up with this extraordinary exposé of the woman's world. Is it any less restrictive than the man's? How do language and folk speech function in each? Why does Sheyne-Sheyndl ultimately disappear from the scene?

### 11 Oct. **Structure and Meaning in "Dos tepl."**

Despite appearances, "Dos tepl" is a carefully structured work. How does this structure manifest itself? What is the real question Yente is posing and why is there no answer to it?

### 25 Oct. **Tevye's Dialogic Art in "Hodl."**

Building on the insights of Wisse, Harshav and Stern, try to characterize the various types of dialogue at work in "Hodl." Is Tevye's dialogue an example of I-Thou or I-It?

### 8 Nov. **SA's Myth of the Mundane**

- (1) How does SA go about secularizing and democratizing the Jewish holidays?
- (2) How does he then invest this new "folk religion" with transcendent meaning?

**15 Nov. Motl and His Critics**

What is it that makes Motl in particular the hero of the New Kasrilevke and the new age? Is Motl the Yiddish Tom Sawyer?

**22 Nov. Wrestling Miracles from an Age of Technology: Tales of the Slowpoke Express.**

How are the stories told in and about the Slowpoke Express different from the rest of the book? How is personal memory different from traditional narrative?

**29 Nov. All the World's a Stage**

How did writing for the theatre allow SA to revisit old haunts (remember "The Treasure") and new historical traumas? Do the plays make a political statement?

**6 Dec. SA: A Man for All Seasons**

What precisely was SA trying to do in these semi- and pseudo-autobiographical writings? Why are the complaints leveled against him by Roskies (1986) entirely beside the point?

### Translations Into English

(Titles marked by an asterisk are available at the Judaica Emporium.)

\**BSA - The Best of Sholom Aleichem*, ed. Howe & Wisse (Jason Aronson) - PJ 519 A3 S5 B472.

\*Halkin, Hillel - *Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories* Schocken pb - \$10.95.

Kahana, Tamara - *The Adventures of Menachem-Mendl*, PJ 5129 A3 S5 M43.

Kahan, Tamara - *Adventures of Mottel the Cantor's Son* - PJ5129 A3 S5 M6 E5.

\*Leviant, Curt - *From the Fair: The Autobiography of Sholom Aleichem* - Penguin pb - \$4.95.

Neugroschel, Joachim - *The Shtetl: A Creative Anthology* (New York 1979) PJ 5191 E8 S5.

*OCT - Old Country Tales*, trans. Curt Leviant (New York 1969) PJ5129 A3 S5 O4.

\*Sholem Aleichem - *The Bloody Hoax*, trans. Aliza Shevrin (Indiana 1991) PJ5129 A3 B5813 1991.

*TOC - The Old Country*, trans. Julius & Frances Butwin (New York: Crown, 1946) PJ 5129 A3 S5 O39.

*TYS - Treasury of Yiddish Stories*, ed. Howe & Greenberg (Schocken paperback)

Weitzner, Kobi - *The Jackpot: A Folk-Play in Four Acts* (Workmen's Circle, 1989) - for sale in class.

### Translations into Hebrew

Hrushovski, Benjamin - *Tevye haḥalban vemonologim* (Tel Aviv, 1983) PJ5129 A3 S5 T4262.

Miron, Dan - *Sippurei rakevet* (Dvir, 1989) - PJ 5129 A3 S5 K675 1989 - on reserve.