

Four periods in Abramovitch's Career

- I 1857-1869 : Berditchev Years - he was not kicked out ; he himself mythologized his origins
- II 1870 - 1879 : National allegories & feelings. For ~ 5 yrs after this, wrote almost nothing
- III 1884 - 1905 : על כניסיון - not trans. into Y. by A.
- IV 1905 - 1917 Concentrated on jubilee editions

1860 : מלכת ספר : זמן "מכתב אל צבי הדין" (1857), עליו
 "ישלח אל קיסקל דמנים" 1862 עליו
 1864/65 : "ישלח וודיק" : זאס קליט מתעסקת ; זאס וויטשענעסעל.
 1866 : על מלכת : טיפישע אטאלי אויף "ישלח" זאס זאל עאלטווייזן

1867 : הגדת והבנים : אגוים אין בינשטאקס רוס'לע איבערעצונג
 אין פערשטעבאלג

1868 : הגדת והבנים : אגוים אין אגוס אויף הסברות! מי צוגעזאגט
 בייק'ים

1867 : על טאקס (פיוס), פיליט צוז דרום
 צוז פערשטעבאלג פון זשול וודין צוגעמאכט מיט בינשטאקס

[הגדת והבנים איז אגוים אויף "ישלח" אין פאג 18 פון מתעסקת פ"ג
 עפ"בא'ם קאן זיך צו שפערענדיקן נוסח]

מתעסקת פ"ג

1. ענין 1828
2. השמות זעט סודי פאג 5
3. שאלת זינאבויג אין ענין פאג 5
4. זאס מתעסקת-בוק unreliable!

1853 לר 2121

- claimed he didn't intend to publish it
- written to a teacher of his, a melamed who complains of not being respected.
- on the nature of the child.
- child reacts to sensory stimuli - can't judge a child by his actions
- education is holy
- ~~where~~ children are creatures capable of being rational
- children are completely dependent on what they get from their teachers. <imitation>
- basic analogy between a person & an animal - underlying ~~the~~ psychology: man is an animal capable of being formed into a rational human being thru education.
- this was his position from the very beginning
- picked up from German books: post-Hegelian reaction of 40's & early 50's.

1859 Letter to Tankhum Leyer May 21 No 14

- pejorative analogy between human being & ugly animal
- other Maskilim, he says, would use beautiful analogies from Job & א'ב'ב'ב'ב'ב'
- Abr. compares soul of young men to a bug.

1862 Introduction to א'ב'ב'ב'ב'ב'

- full of biblical quotations
- man is superior to animals because of the intellect which God gave him

2-
Abram. intrigued by biological analogy. His conviction:

Man was born an animal. Reacts to pain/pleasure by approaching/recoiling. As a child, he has no divine sparks. Only improves later.

This led to metaphoric lang. where he stresses those parts which are most animal-like. His use is pejorative, while most maskilim use the analogy to stress the ideals of man.

Abram. remained till his death an 18th cent. man in many ways.

Deistic, mechanical chain of being type of thinking. Late 17th cent.

Intro. to Toldot Hatevah: written for Jewish schools that the Czarist gov't was expected to open, not just for other maskilim.

Wanted to show that the study of religion was not incompatible with zoology.

Three Uses for Zoology:

1. Moral. In order to be convinced of God's existence, look at animals as chains in being which leads to 1st cause.
2. Rabbinical. (a) Proper study of dietary laws.
(b) Cannot really understand the metaphoric lang. of biblical texts without knowing zoology (and botony).
3. Practical. He's very brief on this. Quite unlike his letter to Leyev where man = bug.

Abram was never an atheist. He really believed in three above uses. Unlike Uri Kovner who eventually converted. Lerner and Kovner were atypical. Most maskilim held to some deistic beliefs but regarded themselves as truly religious.

The fear of the Lord is true knowledge, so the two cannot be incompatible. Therefore one must begin with religion and only then go on to secular studies.

PLACE & IMPORTANCE OF LITERATURE IN AMBRAMOVITSH

No mention at all in first letter on education.

Six ~~Positive~~ mitsvahs:

1. Lev tov.
2. Emunah.
3. Geduldikeyt.
4. Gelasnkeyt.
5. Ayngehalttnkeyt.
6. Sheyn-redevdikeyt. This meant: (a) Don't translate Heb. text into Yiddish because latter is impure. Either Heb. or lang. of reigning culture should be used.
(b) implies the aesthetic function of education. Leads to accurate transmission.

Beauty in a work of art is a means to an end. This is basic to Abram. thinking.

Kilkul Haminim (1860)

He calls all those who oppose Haskole -- misnagdim
He calls misnagdim -- lomdim.

Purpose of literature: moral instruction.

Writer and biblical prophet use same method for same purpose: lead the community.

Examine writers through:

1. Range of sensibility
2. Pitch of enthusiasm (prob. means inspiration)
3. Power of imagination
4. Sharpness of intellect
5. Quality of understanding
6. Susceptibility to beautiful and sublime
7. Logic
8. Grammar
9. Psychol. penetration
10. Humility
11. Shying away from seeking honour
12. Love of truth
13. Righteousness

Some of these qualities are inborn and don't x depend on will. Some are acquired thru study.

Look for diff. things in diff. writers. However, there are 3 criteria which should be used to examine all x writers at all times:

1. Grammar
2. Logic
3. Moral characteristics

Lit. should be governed by norms of order in all these realms. Thus, in his conception, enthusiasm and imagination are secondary. All this must be understood in the Russian context.

W Eg. Pushkin compares himself to Isaiah. (This tradition continues until Bialik).

Russian authors were treated as moral leaders of their time.

Function of critic: examiner of the prophet.

Abram attacks Zweifel on:

Whether criticism is legitimate in itself: Abram means all forms of criticism, not just literary.

Aesthetic quarrel. Zweifel said that the value of beauty is ephemeral, has no rational basis; based on age and thus, is always changing. Jew should not involve himself in this.

This bothered Abram, because he really believed the same thing but could not agree with the formulation.

Abramovitch says there are: subjective sequences (intrinsic subjective consciousness) but this consciousness ~~xm~~ jumps from one thing to another and imaginations runs wild. Diachronic.

But there is also connection of ideas. Synchronic. Intellect rules here. External process.

Soul prefers imagination to intellect because the former does not have to differentiate between truth & untruth, only between attractive and repulsive. This soul can be satisfied by reading of novels.

In 2nd consciousness -- soul led by staff of logic; tries to break free from time to time.

Once intellect has reached a truth, it must never be dissolved. If imagination etc. are governed by grammar, logic and morals, they are acceptable, tho their origin be low.

Limdu Heytev (1862) & its contribution to Abram's theory of literature:

Literature is composed of two parts:

1. Universal: wisdom and science; everyone needs this.
2. National. Nation must know if its customs don't contradict morality. Expresses people's time.

Direct relationship between a people and their lit.

In Hebrew lit. the writers take no notice of their times; they go back to times of old and to other peoples.

Therefore the people find Hebrew lit. neither useful nor pleasing.

MEANING AND FUNCTION OF LITERATURE FOR ABRAMOVITSH

Kilkul haminim is considered by some to be the beginning of criticism in Hebrew. For the first time we have a discussion of what criticism should be and what its function should be rather than the neo-Classical bible exegesis that characterized criticism until then.

Abram did recognize & respect the aesthetic (sublime and beautiful), but they were secondary and ancillary to the instructive use.

Underlying Philosophy of Consciousness:

Intrinsic and extrinsic consciousness

Derived from German philosophers & psychologists of 18th cent particularly Moses Mendelssohn

Belles lettres are intrinsic -- not harmful, as Zweifel thought, but should be secondary to grammar, logic, ethics.

By 1860/61, when he wrote Limdu Hetev, his ideas about novel writing had changed.

In this period he began to believe that that which relates to the reader is what attracts him.

Initially, he used the word sifrah for 'literature.' Later he created the word sifrut. He believed a belletristic text must be pure.

He even changed personal names and place names to maintain purity.

Dealt with two genres:

1. scientific or exposition'
2. Dichtung (poetic diction), belles lettres, melitsah, imaginative fiction.

These two genres would combine beauty with real descriptions of real people; it would awaken desire or tendency toward enlightened behaviour.

It is the function of the writer to elevate the people.

Trying to define an sense of craft, of discipline.

Abram. thought of himself as a man of poetic nature who had to work very hard to discipline himself.

Critique of Haskalah literature: Instead of writing articles about Lot's daughters or Potiphar's wife, if they would incorporate these subjects into stories, the public would like them very much.

Mimesis: the underlying literary principle. Lit. in both genres = depiction of reality.

In 18th cent. criticism, one had to depict the general laws of science (rather than be specific), for science was seen as the imitation of nature and its laws.

Abram. wanted belles lettres to fulfill the same function: imitation of the social and cultural, world.

Combined 18th cent. style with 19th cent. Russian populism.

Problem of satire: books which contain open criticism of the people are more effective than those which praise righteousness.

Thinking of Bilinsky.

Abram. knew contemporary popular German novels: Karl Emil Franzos, Spielhagen, Auerbach -- mixed natural and romance elements.

Mendele's autobiographical note in Sefer Zikaron: (1889)

an apologia to Hebrew readers for having become a Yid, writer begins with great somberness: quotes Eicha.

Hosea: Yiddish a whore whom he decides to care for.

Book of Esther: Yid. pleases him but she must be purified for a long time.

Yid has allowed strange men (alien elements) into it.

Mendele's piece was written 25 years after his initiation to Yiddish.

Sholem Aleichem does the same thing: in 1908/9, he writes about his initiation into Yiddish -- in Russian! (in Dos Sholem-Aleykhem-Bukh). The rationale: why not write in Yiddish if I think in it while writing Hebrew? Also, discovered that most Jews couldn't understand Hebrew.

Abram. is a contemporary of S-A's father, who in the memoirs is the one who wants him to write Hebrew. S-A's conflict was not an inner one. But Miron thinks that Abram, like Bialik, thought in Hebrew, thus the conflict ran deeper.

Similarities Between Abram. & Rabin.

Both assumed a persona which had to do with shame. Elementary discovery that if one writes in Yiddish, one is understood (S-A saw Tsederboym's Dos Yudishe Vokhnblatt).

In "Di ibergekhapshe briv," S-A developed a madman persona which seems to be a direct continuation of Mendele's Yisrolik the Madman. S-A was unaware of this.

MENDELE: THE MAKINGS OF A PERSONA

Dos kleyne mentshele: the Mendele monologue develops in stages. First theme develops, then -- "nit dos bin ikh oysn..." Latter phrase emphasizes the monologue quality of the story.

Coleridge: The Cultivated Mind - recalls the past in terms of regulated patterns of cause and effect.

Uncultivated mind - recalls the past in terms of coincidental images.

Miron thinks one should not only look at how clever Mendele is, but how uncultivated he is. He thinks analogically rather than logically. Therefore, when Mendele says its besides the point, it is the point; mind quick and sharp but uncultivated.

Semblance of disorder which is the sign of lack of cultivation.

Avrom Takif is never disorganized.

Why? Because Mendele is supposed to be speaking, while Takif is writing.

Abramovitsh didn't sign his letters "Mendele" but also didn't like to be referred to as Abram in print. The two were divided. He wouldn't let himself go without a mask in Yiddish. In Hebrew he allowed himself to be unmasked.

S-A identified with the S-A persona.

Frishman, probably the most important of the early critics, criticized Mendele for being an uncultivated writer. No mention of Abramovitsh.

In 80's - 90's, still referred to as Abramovitsh, but later the name is forgotten. S-A thinks of him as "the small-town Socrates," which leads us to believe that much of what was written about him was fallacious.

S-A would write friendly Yiddish letters to Abramovitsh but the latter would reply coldly in Russian or Hebrew. From 1884 onward, S-A tried to establish a grandfather-grandson relationship.

1888: financial success of S-A's Folksbibliotek led Abramovitsh into playing along with the game.

1889: Intro. to Stempenyu = real beginning of the myth.

Analysis of Dos Kleyne Mentshele

Gives date in order to lend immediacy and credence.

He's direct about mercantile interests.

Sort of choreography in Abramovitsh's work:

- groups of people
- 3 groups become 1; 1 becomes 3
- constant movement

I Archetypical situation: Mendele is out of the community. *Picaro comes from the World.*

- he's the traveller coming from the world
- confronts Jewish congregation
- he faces it as a monolith, but it's much more fluid, forming and reforming itself

Point of overhearing: Says he's also a Jew

NOTE: whenever he does something morally suspect, he explains it as a characteristic of a Jew, as opposed to being fit for a normal human being.

cf. Mapu

Much overhearing in this work:

- Avrom Takif overhears all sorts of things
- connection between Takif and frame story
- explains Takif's behaviour as Jewish, as national in a pejorative sense

II Second Stage: Stranger deceptively mingles with the crowd; he looks Jewish; others begin to touch him and look at his things.

The implied norm is outside of this Jewish world.

The three men all lie -- difference between what one is and what one pretends to be.

Takif: discrepancy between truth and lies is reason for his death.

Outside consciousness of Mendele: the world exists only as it expresses itself in speech.

How the introduction relates to the main story:

Almost all Abram.'s stories happen in three places.

1. BESLUDE: childhood section, very small (=no people).
2. Tsviatshitz: center of the story; works as meshores.
3. GLUPSK: independence

* The progress of the protagonist is always the movement from a small distant place to a center of Jewish life, to a city (Odessa, Leipzig).

Takif can explain his stupidity as a child by the fact that he grew up in a small town.

the bad things that happen in a small place are still human; don't have the depersonalization of the city.
story divided into small comic episodes, each ending with a small catastrophe.

Part I: Hero is thrown from one person to another

Part II: He moves freely

BILDUNGSROMAN: shows how a person discovers the world and himself thru a confrontation with society or societies and thru movement.

ERZIEHUNGSROMAN: (possibly a sub-division of above) has more to do with the formal process of education; where writer has a theory of education in mind, showing how this doctrine is vindicated, usually negatively, where the hero is not being raised in a certain way

Section I: Conventional Jewish education: talmud-torah, apprenticeship. Fails in everything.

Section II: Now begins real education, thru eavesdropping. First, he learns a morally correct approach from Gutman, but this doctrine is undermined when he sees how unsuccessful Gutman is. Only when he goes on to Shteynharts is the doctrine vindicated because the latter is successful.

Then he moves on to Varger. Everything he says about him is in educational terms. The true education.

The educational principle becomes tsuheren.

Irony: he's learning the wrong system, the doctrine of how to become a kleyn mentshele.

UPSIDE DOWN ERZIEHUNGSROMAN.

Section III: On the one hand Takif sees the system of Varger undermined because the hero himself is unhappy. Then the true system is finally vindicated when Takif realizes that Gutman was happy. This leaves him no way out. He must die.

Abramovitsh is saying: Don't think that people without a formal education are not educated. They are undergoing education by themselves.

If conventional education fails, one must revert to self-education.

Direct reflection of his letter on education.

Once Abramovitsh has nothing else to say about education (i.e. in Glupsk), he has nothing else to say. Thus the last part is meager.

This is the voice of a dead man speaking.

STRUCTURAL COMPARISON OF DOS KLEYNE MENTSHELE & DOS VINTSHFINGERL

Both begin with legendary or imaginary motifs which, in the course of the story become very real.

In each case the protagonist does not realize what the left motif is until very late in the game.

Initially, the kleyn mentshele motif represents the search for a reflection of humanity, of human communication. Later the idea changes and it becomes a symbol of the lack of humanity.

Vintshfingerl, initially unreal, becomes real. But the development is positive rather than negative as in previous novel.

Structural similarities

- (1) Both stories are supposed to be documents, written not by a professional writer but by a Jewish protagonist born in a small town; a Jew who develops into something else.
- (2) Both are biographies with educational intentions.
- (3) Both are really introductions to something else: Vintshfingerl is supposed to be an intro. to some kind of popular encyclopedia. Similarly, KM is supposed to be an introduction to an educational revolution in Glupsk.
- (4) Both writers are now removed from society they portray. Itskhok Avrom is removed by death. He was not ready to do these things when alive. He could only do it when removed from the context. In Vintsh, the hero is also removed, tho he's neither mad nor dead. He can judge, has a perspective.
- (5) Narrative falls into three parts:

<u>VINTSHFINGERL</u>		<u>KLeyn Mentshele</u>
Kabtsansk	a small town like	Beslude
Glupsk	bigger center like Barditshev	Tsviatshits
Leipzig	urbanization, like Odessa, Warsaw	Glupsk
	a. childhood, dependence on culture	
	b. adolescence, struggle for independence	
	c. independence with movement	

How movement is motivated:

- VINTSH: movement to Glupsk is unintentional (father); movement to Leipzig is partly intentional.
- KLEYN: move to Tsviatshits is unintentional (khazn) while move to ~~Kaptsk~~ Glupsk is intentional.

Polarity:

- KLEYN: Gutman vs. Shteynharts & Varger. Neg. wins because it is vindicated.
- VINTSH: Litvak (+) vs. Kaptsansk system of wishful tinkering. Hersh tries to implement it. Here the pos. wins because it is vindicated.

Narrative technique:

- (a) lively narration based on comic technique and episodic structure:

<u>VINTSH</u>	<u>KLEYN MENTSHLE</u>
a. Reb Shloyme & visit of ushpizim	
b. Batlonim	tailor
c. Wagon from Kaptsansk to Glupsk	khazn
In both cases, c. serves as a moving force, taking protagonist from small place to bigger place.	

- (b) psychological inner conflict: confrontation of 2 educational systems; consciousness of protagonist like a battlefield
- (c) homily (sermon); effectiveness of narrative falls sharply after first part.

DIFFERENCES

I The meaning of education in the two stories:

- חֲרָעָרָא פֿיל: education is moral education — Judaic morals
 פֿרײַזשעל: intellectual; ability to improve life thru culture is what's central.

II The tension between myth & reality: פֿרײַזשעל

- a) Reality: we begin with a poem on the world of Kabzansk
 reality of utter poverty
 nothing one can do to improve oneself
 the town is a parasite of Glupsk
 story of Reb Shmelke is possible only in an empty town
 - b) Myth — for a place to be real, it must have a myth
 either how it was founded: Glupsk is Rome, the Jewish Aenied, founded by demi-God Hercules
 — or as in Kabzansk, visit by fathers of the nation who also left in it a farcical grail, the פֿרײַזשעל or leather bag with coins
 — Shmelke is not really wealthy, he's lucky
 — myth of money
 — visit by creatures not of this world = a cruel joke about the foundation of a hasidic dynasty
 — Shmelke was barren, foundation thru promiscuous intercourse by visiter, like Romulus & Remus
 — but the residents of Kabzansk live the myth
 — as they go to Glupsk they talk about what they would do with the magic ring &/or the money.
- myth & reality playing against each other
 - the duality is the meaning of the whole thing
 - the image is consistently poetic
 - uses cataloguing to portray generality
 - story of Reb Shmelke is a ritual with them

MENDELE'S INTRODUCTIONS

Basic common features:

Real character: his function is to establish literary veracity & that its purpose is non-literary

→ Ian Watts The Rise of the Novel

- the cult of sensibility: want to have direct emotional effect
- began with Richardson's Clarissa.

- Gothic novel also often portrayed as being found in a chest somewhere.
- cf. Sartre's La Nausée
- used for a long time by writers with a provincial background
- * - Heimatskunst = regional lit. where writers considered experts on a specific area
- in 19th cent. German lit.
- Berthold Auerbach: Jewish author who influenced Abram.
- Abram, then, is really a regional writer

technique of literary veracity in 19th cent Yid. lit.

צפאָפּלע : used an intro. in all his 5 surviving "operas";
intro in verse where he states that the story is true

- also in פֿאַרשטעלונג

פֿאַרשטעלונג : v.g. we can be story or event. $k'>10 = k'01>$

פֿאַרשטעלונג : in a plagiarized article from Lillienblum

- autobiography more imp. than fiction

- key is usefulness

פֿאַרשטעלונג : in פֿאַרשטעלונג talks about the history of a town.

|| YIDDISH, LIKE OTHER LATE-COMERS WHICH HAD NO ROMANCES TO REJECT, HAD TO GO BACK TO FOLK TRADITIONS.

- Mendele knows how imp. these things are to readers, as in 1st version of פֿאַרשטעלונג where he mentions Bore-bukh & 1001 nights.
- Maskilim saw their struggle against Hasidism as the struggle of truth vs. fancy.
- Maskilim understood power of fiction as a corrupting power
- Mapa was probably the only maskil who cared to differentiate between true fiction - colorful but didactic - and false fiction - supernatural.
- everyone else felt that only scientific discussions did any good.
- in Hebrew, at least the lang. was considered something inherently good.
- with Yiddish, had to strengthen the veracity
- veracity yes, but also a need for fiction.

- BILDUNGSROMAN - full version of התהוות הגיבור o.k.s
- forming of hero, his formative years
 - usually, a writer trying to portray the whole culture

- ERZIEHUNGSROMAN - the earlier works
- concentrates on mechanisms of education
 - usually portrays neg. aspects of educ. but the right way is implicit
 - often, the writer supplies a detailed theory of education.
- every BILDUNGS. contains rudiments of ERZIEHUNGS., but education is only one aspect of the hero's development.
 - ERZIEHUNGS. would tend to be less long-lived, because its literary merit would be limited
 - as Abram. went on to write, ERZIEHUNGS. → BILDUNGS.

FUNCTIONS OF THE PERSONA

1. The idea of developing the continuity of Mendele in time
 - eventually, we get direct references from one story to the other.
2. The Balzacian oeuvre
 - both Abram & Rabin conceived of their work in a Balzacian way: each indiv. work, though a separate entity, was still conceived of as part of a larger whole.
 - the idea came to S-A in 1888 when he wanted to write a Balzacian Human Comedy
 - cf. Wolf Rabinovitch's account about discussion with S-A on Balzac
 - 1902: S-A conceives of Kasrilevke for 1st time
 - S-A then reworked earlier works with Kasrilevke as the Shtetl.
3. Idea of S-A is based on that of Mendele
 - have real fantasy world which needs the commentary of a SA or a Mendele in order to be validated
 - if reader does not accept persona's consciousness as valid - nothing else is.

סדרת סיפורי פישקע

I. The "True" Stories

- 1) Main story: how Fishke leaves Glupsk with the orphan
- 2) Mendele's account of seeing Fishke before & after his marriage
- 3) סדרת הנישואין : Fishke's marriage
- 4) Reb Alter's story about the fair
- 5) Beyle's story - included within Fishke's.

II. How they are integrated

- 1) One explanation - this version really isn't integrated
- 2) Story falls into two even parts : 5 chaps & 5 chaps.
 - Fishke appears in Chap. 6
 - first five are preparation for 2nd part = Fishke & Beyle's stories
 - each part orchestrated differently

<u>PART ONE</u>	<u>PART TWO</u>
hard atmosphere of physical discomfort; spiritual aridity	Nature sings hymn to God musical image; even Mendele & Alter join in to pray - this happens just before F. enters
hard satire & farce Alter's attempt to marry 2 boys - marriage dehumanized - sexual aspect almost insignificant, let alone emotional	comment on Part I how Fishke married because a dinner was waiting; Fishke = part of a fantasy of almost-monsters Beyle = symbol of pure sexuality
	story concentrates on marriage, love, sexual relationship. Now Fishke is a human being and we accept him as such.

MENDELE'S DUALITY

- says he feels a stupid Mendele (the evening, lyric M.) and the smart Mendele (the one who faces facts & is sardonic about them).
- thru this duality the meaning emerges
- we can look at things from light of day, but we must also look at the person, look at the work in light of the human being.
- careful construction: plot & sheer causal sequence of parts are switched
- Mendele is needed to tie the pieces together
- Sardonic Mendele: in the things he says to Alter & Fishke

A. Mendele the Bookseller: he doesn't cease to be that, but sometimes he transcends it

B. Mendele is ageless: always 50-ish; he cannot change his profession because it's the basis of his art
[when Abram. was older and still writing these stories, the character was an anachronism - no more אשרתו - אשרתו]

C. Mendele's function as editor

1. First version of אשרתו אשרתו: Takif mentions M. at the end of his will, as having technical know-how of printing and as being a traveller
2. Second version: Mendele is the artist, Takif is his raw material
3. While in אשרתו Mendele was unwilling to tamper with Takif's text, by אשרתו, he is the connoisseur of what Jews like - see his willingness to interfere with the text; asks אשרתו to write notes
4. Intro. to אשרתו אשרתו: says he found ms. with pgs. missing; says he mixed in a few words of his own. We must assume that missing pgs were written by Mendele.
5. אשרתו אשרתו: he writes in, or "edits" - others who do the same thing, call themselves authors

* Growing technical importance of Mendele

- what is usually an appendage in a European novel grows into a central theme in the Yid. novel.

השקפה כללית

- Mendele overhears, to his own purpose; just what Takif did when he reached Glupsk
- When Mendele is called to the Rabbi and sees how happy he is, he says that all of life is based on fooling people
- the world is like a market place
- proof-text: when the angels come to earth, they eat.
- Rashi spiritualizes the text by saying that they merely pretend to eat
- Mendele picks this up to prove that everyone, even angels, must cheat & lie.
- * - Takif's monologue on how not to be a little man is framed by Mendele's monologue, who is a little man himself
- to tell the truth, you have to be dead
- the Mendele-figure undercuts the moralism of the story
- he almost always demolishes the protagonist.

השקפה כללית

- in more than one way, what Mendele does is to contradict what he wants to do.
- Hershele ends with an impassioned speech about science
- then - enormous deflation: Mendele talks about \$
- Mendele says the book may be great, but without money, he won't publish it
- in the beginning, Mendele thought he had found another שבת-הראשונה, which is what Orthodoxy read
- ∴ he's knocking both the Orthodoxy and the Haskalah for their dry books.
- Mendele's technique: take on two opponents.
- Mendele as the heretic & deflator grows and grows
- his introductions, from now on, are formal & rhetorical
- Hebrew / Yiddish technique from עליונות-tradition & השבת-הראשונה
- ∴ the story becomes the commentary
- from now on, most of Abram's works begin with glory of God - like השבת-הראשונה - using the traditional formula with an ironic purpose.

cf: השבת-הראשונה השבת-הראשונה השבת-הראשונה > Book of Job

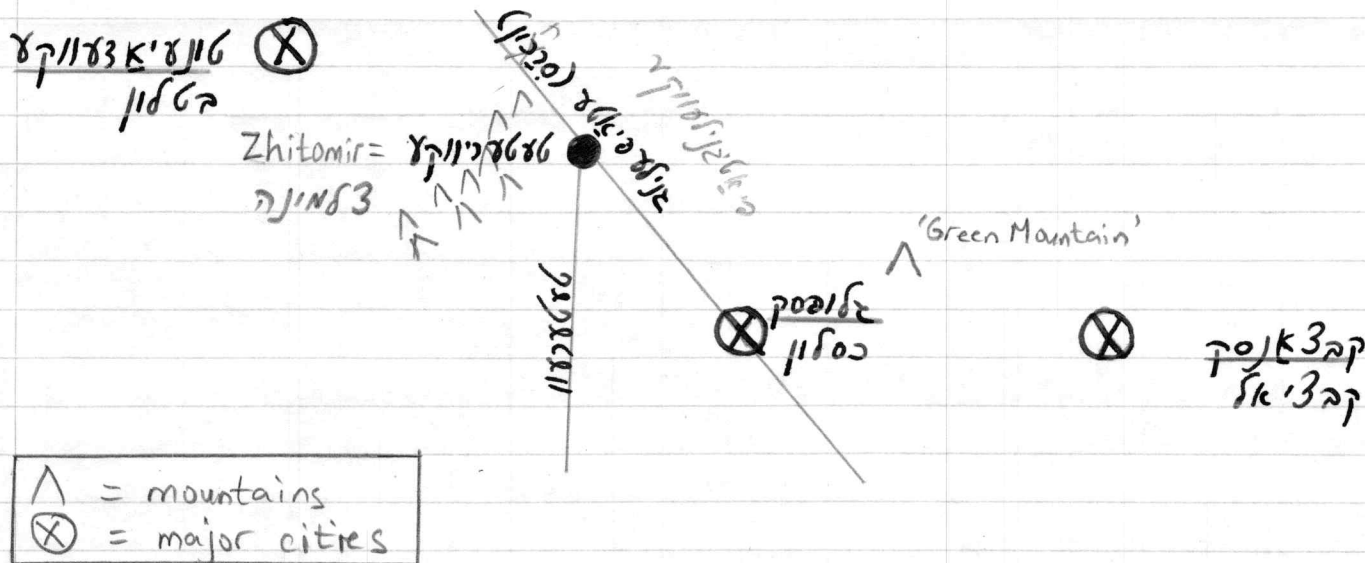
Mendele can be deflating when talks about the protagonist (רבינו), but he can be lyrical when confronting the readers.

- diff between man & animals : man is a book-reading animal
- Senderl tricks Mendele by taking 20 or so Haskalah books when he knows that 'סג"ח is also Haskole book
- Mendele tricks readers too by title page

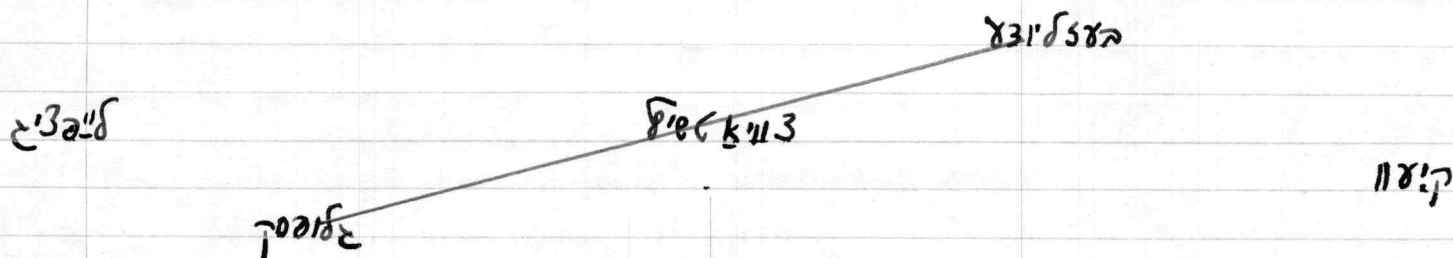
"MENDELE" = EVERYMAN

1. German - Jewish texts of 17th cent : $\text{קטן} - \text{מגן}$
 $\text{סג"ח} = \text{diminutive of } \text{קטן}$
2. 1879: Intro to רבינו פ"ב א"ב
 - long autobiographical note from which we learn nothing
 - Abram: very careful not to make Mendele a character with too distinct a personality
 - diff from Walter Scott's Jedidiah who is very particularized
 - he has something of the chorus about him: the conversation is lively, but the comment is general.

THE MENDELE GEOGRAPHY



- the Gnilepyate [=stinking] River actually runs into Barditshev
- is a tributary of the Teterov
- the so-called "זקניו" on the Green Mt. were the famous robbers of Barditshev
- all of Mendeley's Hebrew names are taken from the Bible



- in some Hebrew stories, Warsaw is mentioned, but it's called Bersheva.
- the outer circle are called by their proper names
- in inner circle, place names are contrived
- so Bersheva, though far from centre of Barditshev, is within inner circle, because it's a Jewish town
- Warsaw = the largest Jewish community in Czarist Russia
- Barditshev = 2nd largest

Polish
census

- 1764 : still small shtetl around a church - monastery - nunnery complex which was already then a holy centre - relics - commerce. 1,220 Jews.
- 1789 : 1951 Jews. Already hasidic centre. Leyvi-Yitskhok died there 1810.

- 1847 - no census for a long time, because city captured by Russian 23,160 Jews.
- 1861 - just 2 yrs before second Polish Rebellion
60,000 Jews in Greater Barditshev
- cf. vol. one of מלחמת המלח's for description of city in 1850's
- 1863 - city never recovered from the blow of the rebellion
it became known as a desperately destitute town
- more than 25% of Jewish community live off charity
- population explosion: as in Warsaw and to a lesser degree in Odessa
- Barditshev became the Jewish capital of the Ukraine
- all processes of dehumanization took place there
- not a typical Jewish town in the 19th cent.
- cf. Lower East Side came to mean later

WHY THE SHETEL WENT BANKRUPT

- cf. Abram. הגלות והשואה '3 which was like the discovery of America for them
- behold, in the Ukrainian plains, Jews had a better life, and what's more, they needed הגלות והשואה '3 to teach them Yiddishkeit
- people swarmed there in droves.

Change of economy in Russian Empire

Early 19th cent

- feudal society
- small towns = centres of tiny economic societies

Industrialization

- small towns left high & dry
- by-passed in economic exchange between town & country
- peasant no longer went to weekly fair (Mon & Thurs) where Jews made their livelihood
- peasants went to bigger fairs or merchants bought directly from the peasants

- cf. Peretz's הגלות והשואה '3 and (1892) הגלות והשואה '3
- whole lit. about person who returns to the shetel

THE MAKING OF GLUPSK

While Kapstansk remains static, Glupsk is presented differently in each work - because it was the center
- why did it become the city of stupidity?

Early Stages

I
1864 רשעונון פ'סך - not much is said; center, big city
1865 פ'סך פ'סך

II
1868 פ'סך פ'סך - same Glupsk of א'סך פ'סך
included within the polarity of big / small town
- here Glupsk is smaller place, Tsalmon, larger
א'סך פ'סך > originally meant "darkness" from folk etymology,
פ'סך פ'סך but later came to mean "beautiful landscape",
the lily [Zhitomir] as compared with Glupsk [Barditshev]

א'סך פ'סך - Glupsk big & seething; almost every form of crime

Two diff. conceptions:

1. The town of stupidity
2. the city of dehumanization (=his experience in Barditshev).

- though Abram. combines the 2 conceptions, they never merge → either one or the other.

Two Categories of stupidity

1. community of silly people
for whom the only proper metonymic description would be that of stupid animals
2. a MC phenomenon
at a certain stage Abram expected individual well-off Jewish merchants to leave the community in favour of א'סך פ'סך

[here Miron discusses Mahler's analysis of the maskilim & merchant.

1. The Simple People - Maskilim cared for them, but felt that their rational choice was being blocked by their leaders when the leaders change, so will they
2. The Corrupt People - hypocrites in the eyes of Maskilim
Maskilim at the top of the list: א'סך פ'סך

3. Simple Balebos - Maskilim had no way of dealing with him, because he was both a Hasid and a merchant, i.e. eminently rational
- of many references to a hasidic merchant Halperin (died in early '60's) in Linetsky's works [= Shtandhaft?]
 - Aksefeld regarded commerce highly

Efrayim in פ'פ'נ'ל נ'ק'נ'

- a big merchant who opposes נ'ב'ט'נ'
- ∴ he must be stupid
- ∴ his stupidity will be seen in commercial terms
- sure enough, Efrayim is ruined (the ג'ר'ס is to blame)
- but a Maskil saves him in the last minute

פ'ר'פ'ס'ע'פ'נ'ל - further development (2nd version)

- Abram sees Jewish commerce as a parody of rationality while goyish commerce is highly rational

Sarah in פ'פ'נ'ל נ'ק'נ'

- first נ'ר'ס' - Mendele tried to portray
- modeled on Serkele
- wants to throw out Maskilic works because they are still sheymes

III

Ksalon (=Glupsk) as a community in stupid

1. Cattle incident

- developed in metonymic way
- cattle stand on roofs of houses

2. Bathhouse

- sweating is a Jewish thing
- becomes central in Fishke
- dirty intimacy
- people with cankers are carried into bathhouse on Hoshana Rabba
- Fishke can't take the depersonalized modern bathhouse of Odessa, so he goes back
- physical intimacy → loss of privacy

- in Glupsk, people live together, huddled in a steamy atmosphere, in their own element - thinking its the world
- is this the essence of their stupidity? their provincialism?
- mainly its the fraternizing of the town; your physical behavior is entirely free

IV

Topic '3 (1869)

- in a letter to Binshtok of 1864, Abram. expresses a changed attitude to Jewish bourgeoisie
- loses his maskilic faith in them
- furious at the rich

Act V: the street people = 1864

- Barditshev beginning to deteriorate after 2nd Rebellion
- Mendele tried stop this deterioration at its roots
- but the Shtandhafts of town refused to listen

cf Max Weinreich's chapter in Bilder...

Turning point: Glupsk → town of the slaughterhouse

Topic '3

Introduction

Topic - '33

- beyond pale of ordinary human perception
- legend of Alexander the Great crossing an eagle

lists of places

- poor people of Glupsk write to Mendele describing their horrible situation
- publication: the one last thing they can think of

Tax Collection

- no longer in hands of individuals
- Kahal takes over: huge corruption

Three Historical Stages

1. Old Baal-Takse Stage: tax taken from individual & given to Kahal
2. Act II: artisans yell but are helpless; disintegration within the regime
3. New stage initiated in Act IV

New Rulers

- Shtandhaft - member of old knufie
- Shinder
- Frekhnman
- Nosn Shifres

Act V: description of life under this new stage

- Abram. father had been a baal-takse (Stage I)
- to protect his father, must show that what followed was much worse
- aristocracy no longer important, get underworld characters
- real terrorism in Act V

FAÇADES: for 1st revolution, must have traditional facade; for 2nd - maskilic facade

Two dramatic languages

- CHORIC: Acts I, II & parts of IV

- Knufye saying *pr'ge'kō 'w*
- Act II develops like antiphony
- Spodek + Chorus
- Piavkin + Chorus — he has the #
- Chorus & Chorus

- DIALOGUE and MONOLOGUE: I, III, IV, V

- style of intellectual dual
- Jewish learning vs money

different styles indicate changes in time

- CHORIC — time of consensus
- DIALOGUE — when hands changing

The Critics

- Frischman: A Hegelian triptych out of Mendele

1860's: Maskil pure and simple

1870's: Time of obvious conflict between Artist & Maskil

1880's: Modified his maskilic tendencies to become much more artistic

2. Niger: Comedy is better than satire
dissatisfied with Takse & Binyomin because it is satirical

* 3. Miron: Abramovitsh was an artist from the beginning
some of his ideological works are his most brilliant; influenced by 19th cent Positivism

Idea of Di Takse

- Abram. interested in the genesis of a brutal situation
- not just an invective
- main factor in play: techniques in which he brings out his dianoeia (Aristotelian) - sum total
- in what sense is Veker true to his name?
- he himself must go thru a long process of awakening

Act I (c. 1845)

Spodek: a synecdoche for Jewish learning

Learning = profits: basic equation of this act

Spodek is the actual cover under which Piavkin & Knufie will exploit the Takse

Alien element: Veker & Pikholtz

Style: mono/dialogical

Act II (c. 1850)

victory of aristocratic regime

Piavkin (who brings the money) is the real power behind Spodek
the pivot of the act is his arrival with enormous amount \$

Outsiders here: Glasners - perform same function as Pikholtz & Veker in Act I: explain why what is happening is inevitable

Style: ~~monie~~ choric

Act III (1854-5)

Aristocratic regime is on the wane

Act opens with Shinder & Knechtbarg, not w. Spodek
Piavkin is the connecting link between them & the Knufie which does the dirty work

Since the setting is now the place where meat is being sold, we see how these people are dirty

- style: choric + mono/dialogical
- Act IV Main figures: Shtandhaft & Nathan Shifres have Veker in new stage of understanding in many ~~at~~ ways this act parallels 1st Act
- Act I By the end of the act, almost back to the beginning
- In a way, not part of the play
Takes us into the streets, away from knutie to practical matters
without this act Abram couldn't make his point

[Act IV, Scene 6]: biggest generalization of the play
Dialogue between Shtandhaft & Shifres
Jews are like mosquitoes: they buzz, but if you stick out your hand they disappear

Shifres: put a string in the street & demand pay to cross, they will pay

This gets to the centre of what Glupsk is.
If someone is stuck on a drainpipe, half the town will come running, but no one will bring a ladder

Glupsk: stupidity & passivity

- They talk big, but when it comes to something they run
- in many ways this play is a continuation of Rival's Grünspan (1828)
 - dissociation of sensibility: they don't try to establish any connection between perception and action.
 - Veker leaves at the end because there's nothing to be done
 - Veker's speech is not the answer to the play, but rather the preface, the combination of Mendele & the decision to publish the play
 - Abram. not interested in people here, but in the historical representation of conflict as he understood it
 - an historical epic: no real conflict or drama
 - a prose narrative in dialogue; scenic chronicle
 - the focus is on a general situation
 - the development of a metaphor: learning = \$

1873 שבת 1873

- mentioned in Mendele's diaries 7-8 yrs earlier
- these diaries were destroyed in Nazi invasion of Odessa
- fragments published by 7'00"אקטב
- 1855/6 Abram. planned a story אברהם אברהם 1855/6
- unusual narrator: young man who was allegedly sent to school by Berl the Madman
- in what sense is Berl mad?
- has strange ideas about the Beshamikedesh, that it was a remnant of paganism.
- Berl thinks pop. science more important than mythologies
- respected the Besht more than the Gaon
- no one respected the Bible & תנ"ך more than Maskilim
- since Vorobeytshik cannot be trusted, it seems, at least, that Abram. had a hero in mind who went beyond the Maskilim in some ways (in considering the Bible mythology) & not quite up to them in other ways (Besht vs. Gaon).
- Berl was supposed to be such an original thinker, given vent to such secret & radical ideas, that he seemed crazy

1871: decided to write a cycle of stories about a madman: אברהם אברהם 1871

- an introduction supposed to be for Mendele
- a new category of stupidity
- first he develops an historical view of Hassidism
- Hassidism released fantasy; because of its powers old authorities were destroyed → allowing new powers to come
- this dialectical approach against accepted Maskilic views
- secondly he argues against superficial Maskilim
- probable motivation:
 - 1) wanted to work on a level higher than that of a Mendele - more commensurate with own level
 - 2) wanted to develop critique of תנ"ך thru the Madman
- wanted a Maskilic Gluski, and for this Mendele wouldn't do; he was good for undermining traditional Judaism but not good enough for an overt criticism of Haskole.

(1878) י'ס"ח / כ"א / אלול

- for those critics who believe in Abram.'s artistic ability from the beginning, Masoes is a pinnacle ;
- the last work of the first part of his career
- for those who only believe in the 2nd half of his work, Masoes is a transitional work.
- 1897: decided to translate it into Hebrew as his contribution to First Zionist Congress
- subtle anti-Zionist comments in Hebrew

Benjamin I : Benjamin of Tudela 12th cent

Benjamin II : Yosef Israel ; called himself Binyomen 2nd
to be known as a world traveller
left Moldavia in the 40's
spent 10 yrs. in Middle East looking for lost tribes
1858 - his book published in German
1860's - went to America & wrote Drei Jahre in Amerika

- Miron thinks that Benjamin Disraeli was the looming figure in Abram's mind.
- the emphasis by Hebrew press on the fact that Jews were opening worlds got on Abram's nerves
- their emphasis on Disraeli & Rothschild being Jewish
- Sombart's theory of Capitalism - caused by Jews.
- Abram. tries to look at Jewish life against a background of what is happening in the world at large
- colonization of new worlds - great wealth
- in comparison, the Jewish movement looks pale, indeed
- Binyamin: Abram's reaction to Imperialistic Capitalism in 19th c.

INTRODUCTION

- mock epic or heroic
- establishes a set of epic norms against which Binyamin will be mentioned
 1. midrash of Tu B'Shvat
 2. Alexander the Great
 3. Exodus

- Mendele says of himself that he girds his loins
- already part of Homeric pattern
- refers to himself in same ironic way he refers to Binyomin
- reference to Hebrew writers whose littlest finger is broader than his loins
 1. subtle mockery
 2. allusion to Solomon's son Rehoboam

מנדעל - רפ"ק - י"ג

Mendele is the chef - he'll make a better dish than Binyomin could have done:

1. either Jews are so clever that they don't need the full version
2. or/and they're so stupid that they cannot even understand Binyomin's story

Text Structure

- supposedly written by two different authors
- a typical device; cf Fishke, Vintsh
- in Fishke, there is basically no interlacing
- things are interrelated though quite distinct
- in final version of Vintshfingerl:
 - begins by interweaving
 - eventually Mendele assumes role of omniscient author
 - this kills the rest of the novel
 - explains why ~~A~~ Abram never ended it.

Binyomin

- ① two or more elements woven into one entity
- ② Binyomin - Mendele ping-pong relationship lies at the heart of the novel's esthetic merit

Two kinds of quotations

1. Where Mendele is not quoting Binyomin
2. Where Mendele is quoting Binyomin's autobiography
 - a) excerpts from parodical heroic autobiography
 - b) " " " " travelogue (at end)

- 2a) written by someone who fully recognizes his own importance
 - opening in Hebrew shows that he regards the work as a

52 - sign of sorts

- cf אין אן ארט where narrator does not feel that importance but writes nonetheless.
- Joseph Dan's studies about biographies of Alexander the Great written in 16th - 18th cent. in Hebrew
- Mendele uses parodic quotations from these biographies in a rather unfair way
- Binyomin does the writing for Mendele where the former probably doesn't understand
- Binyomin's dream about Alexander the Great & the snake
 - Alexander = Czar
 - Pipernoter = Khapers
- other quotations, where old Yiddish is not interjected, are of a different type: realistic, too casual to be included in Binyomin's book.

Something happens to Mendele in this work:

- 1) Certain places where he is the mock-heroic narrator
 - 2) Abram wants him to be truly poetic; Mendele is sentimental; Abram. is serious
 - 3) elements from אין אן ארט and אין אן ארט
 - 4) seems to be naive narrator
 - 5) moralizing, formalizing narrator
 - 6) more direct satirist
- Mendele is now the actor, playful, changes his voice
 - still reliable, but as a performer from whom one expects changes
 - this is an important switch from his previous status as a definable character.

Transitional Years

1879-1884 : couldn't write

1873-1878/9 : years between Kliatshe & Binyomin

- 1/2 DN and other articles on nationalism
- ספ"ן : important source on his notions of Jewish peoplehood
- translations of Psalms & Zmires
- Abram. develops a new appreciation of Hebrew & Old Yiddish
- in the 60's, whatever smacked of OY was ridiculous to him
- but as he faced the translation of the Bible & holy texts, he returned to OY and rendered it in syllabic metre & rhyme
- use of old style which was not meant to be parodic
- unlike Lefin who had tried to capture the spoken idiom of the day (these translations, except ספ"ן, were almost unknown).

(1902) ספר חסד

- very late short story
- published as one in a series of מחזות נאמן
- original version in Yiddish - unusual
- since there was virtually no Yiddish press in 1890's, Abram wrote most of his short prose in Hebrew
- 1899 : founding of Zionist weekly ציון
- analogical, metonymic structure
- not narrated by Mendele, in fact מחזות נאמן is dedicated to Mendele's horse and narrator identifies himself as being one of the נאח סוף who had pulled hairs from the horse's tail.
- one of the few instances of Abram writing sans Mendele

In Hebrew version: says he's writing this story for older people who can recapture child-like state.

- without this ability, one cannot be an educator
- it is the ability of the child to perceive the inhumanity of the Jewish community which makes the child deviant & which causes him to be almost raving mad at the end

Last Stages

- 1) 1899-1909 : Preparation of Jubilee & final editions
- desperately tried to finish 'J'osef's' and couldn't
 - by 1911 first 3 vols. of final works appeared

- 2) strain of memory : rarely indulged in personal reminiscences earlier

- 1899 : began writing on"n n' n'le for Der Yudel
- also began writing smaller pieces of this nature
- had nothing to do with Mendele
- narrator is now to be taken much more seriously than Mendele

- in 1902, while preparing final version of seck's '3, saw new possibilities which he had not previously tapped
- planned a whole new project : n'n n'n n'o
- tzhp okz, then, is a meeting of seck's '3 and on"n n' n'le
- ∴ satiric element is still present
- chap. one is a parody of sh' alk; last chap - of ten.

on"n n' n'le

- lacks structure
- no extrinsic norms sustained for satiric effect
- Jewish life as valid as any other
- reading on"n n' n'le we see how much of Tunexaderke & Kaptsamsk were based on Kapul'ye
- both towns are aspects of what Abram thought of Kapul'ye:

Tunexaderke : slothful, just stay & vegetate
only mad people leave it (Binyamin)

Kaptsamsk : leaving an everyday occurrence
more historical
always being destroyed
symbolizes the vulnerability of
the shtetl

TUNEYADEVKE VS. KAPTSANSK

Homeric simile : an extended simile; as it develops the vehicle becomes more important and the tenor less so.

Appearance of a stranger

For Kaptansk : opportunity to get something

For Tunevad : a frightening thing; don't want anything to do with him

Intellectual life:

Kaptansk - summer scenes juxtaposed with winter

Tunevad - surrounded by nature - a sarcastic idyll
only spring & summer scenes
don't hear of people hungry there

Messianic Birthplace Conversations

Kaptansk - in the bathhouse

- n'x must come; there is no other way
- interwoven with money matters
- everything begins & ends with the archetypal legend of the town
- visit of Ushpizim & wealth of the Gvir
- for all we know, he isn't rich at all
- Hershele's faith in miraculous riches

Tunevadke - they play with Messianic idea

- not even a mythic truth they dream about
- their crisis consists of the fact that a new policeman captures a goat
- portrayed as a group of children
- only in Binyomin is town portrayed idyllically

see M. Spektor's n'y'zki n'y'r about the Jewish slave trade

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