

History as Structural Principle

[Revolution of 1905]

Not so much the political as the societal dimension

- fierce generational conflict; All bets are off

First World War: Concerning Yiddish Literature in Poland: WW I = great upheaval

- V Expulsion from Tereshpol Minor
 R. Dan burns his MSS: falling into the abyss
 - VI Oyzer enlists
 - What's his motivation for fighting?
 - What does he learn that he didn't know before?
 - Does the experience change him in any way?
 - Focus on anti-Semitism; almost no mention of the battles
 - Victory/defeat will not change fate of the Jews
 - VII Oyzer returns; recaps Book I
 - [373, 398] perfunctory descriptions
 - [375] heightened rivalries; focus on human responses
 - [377] lust & mental activity cease
 ∴ not interesting!
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WWII

- X Brings whole family together for the last time
 - Adele sent back to die
 - Oyzer burns his MS—just like grandfather
 - [605] war is boring

Holidays as Structural Principle

General Principle:

Oldest trick in the book!

- Birthday parties, reunions, shivahs
- Philip Roth: The Counterlife, American Pastoral
- Shabtai: Goldman's father's shivah

The Family *in situ*

- Patriarchal structure
- Petty rivalries, power plays, intrigues

Tradition & Modernity

- Is this mere formality? Formalism?
- Are they merely going through the motions
- Or does tradition still have staying power?

Ethnographic

- How it was done in the Old Country
- Distinguish between rich/poor; UC/LC

I. Hanukkah [65-78]

1. Moskats: sons & daughters-in-law (playing bingo)

Meshulam & Pinye play chess

[gambling permitted on this holiday]

Oyzer forgot it's hanukkah [70]

Meshulam furious w/Abram

2. In Bialodrevne Court [79-87]

huge influx of Hasidim

seems to auger a comeback

arrival of Meshulam

rebbe refuses to emerge; filled w/despair = from Peret 2

lighting the candles [84-85]

Q: What is the purpose of this visit?

A: to force his will upon Hadassah!

3. Seance at Hertz Yanover's w/Hilda Kalischer [105-9]

Gina sees it as a farce

Abram is there too

[Hilda will later marry a merchant from Lodz & settle down]

All 3 groups & their respective (empty) rituals; relativizes, flattens

II. PURIM [191-96]

1. An ailing Meshulam alienated from whole family
2. His moment of lucidity [193]
3. Abram's Purims: **sanctioned parody** of the past
4. vs. fallen state of present w/Ida

III. Weddings

1. Adele to Oyzer [203]

as reported in a letter to her mother

trying to give it a positive spin

2. Hadassah to Fishl [215-16]

as reported to Adele by Royze Frumetl

giving it the worst possible spin

Q: What do they have in common?

A: Grotesque spectacles, devoid of real joy

VII. SABBATH

1. Finkel & Dinah's [405-10]
 - seat of true piety
 - 1 of his children becomes a Braslaver [406]
 - another fringe group; underscores messianic urgency
2. Fishl & Hadassah's [410]
 - estranged husband-and-wife; she wants a divorce
3. MOTSA`EI SHABBAT
 - Al tira Ya'akov [414]

VII. HANUKKAH among Lower Classes [431-35]

1. Bashele & Chaim Leib; Shosha
 - Kopl returns from NY
 2. revisits Card Playing Society
 3. Shosha's WEDDING to Simon Mendl [464-66]
 - strictly halachic but everything is off
 - Kopl forces groom to dress up, comes late himself
- HALUTZIM

IX. The Hanukkah Ball

1. announcement in the paper [474]
 - catalogue of acculturation
 - parody of pretense at secularism
2. Hadassah & Oyzer get ready [484-85]
3. mob scene [486]
 - Hadassah's dress gets ripped; loses Oyzer: her panic
4. world of masquerade [487]

*Abram = Heshulem
Ball Purim*

IV. High Holidays

[1. could have exploited Tisha b'Av but chose not to]

2. YOM KIPPUR [284-87]

Reb Dan a refugee in Warsaw--communion w/Jews, God

3. SUKKOT [295]

as seen thru Janek's eyes [!]

4. Hol Hamoed

Leah's marriage to Moshe Gabriel breaks up [300]

5. SIMHAS TORAH [304-9; 316]

approaching German front

antics of hasidic shtibl

great revelry, parody. good cheer: mock invasion

[309] Fishl's lonely holiday

Dacha calls him to recite Kaddish

1. 10 Days of Penitence: **Oyzer** having sex w/Hadassah daily
[314]

2. Kol Nidre [315-16]:

Oyzer/Hadassah meet daily

Sexual abandon on Yom Kippur! [315]

Realizes full extent of his sin

3. SIMHAS TORAH: Adele pays him a visit

[319] they too have sex

Kopl's Card Playing Society "Ansche Zedek" [323-28]

VI. FUNERALS

Dacha & Joel die on the same day [348]

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critique of Hasidic shidduh

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Abram = Meshulam
Ball = Purim

5. Abram's state of total confusion [488]
6. dances w/intoxicating woman who = Black Manya! [490]
7. meanwhile, Oyzer meets Barbara
8. bittersweet finale [498]

Q: What's this doing here?

A: Carnivalizes the entire ritual cycle, political drama, dangerous liaisons

X. PASSOVER TO ROSH HASHANAH

Noah's Ark [567]

1. Seder in rented bakery [574-78]

Leah gets down to work

Haggadah speaks to everyone [578]

2. Rosh Hashana

Warsaw is being bombed

Oyzer-Heshl wandering the Jewish Quarter on his last legs

Fervent davening in Baildrevne shtibl

- Nyunye praying there: despairs of his faith in Haskalah
- Leah/Avigdor risking life & limb to feed the Hasidim
- Masha returns, dressed in black
- Reb Arele's sermon

Reb Meshulam's house reduced to rubble

Braslaver shtibl

- Menashe Dovid goes into the mikveh
- Ecstatic prayer

Oyzer-Heshl returns to sacred texts

Halutzim take history into their own hands

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