

Trying to research the acceptance of Grade's prose was an eye-opening experience for me. I was unable to find anything in the Yiddish press about any of his books even though much of his work was serialized there before publication in book form. This was due to the lack of indexing of the Yiddish press. I could have looked through hundreds of issues of newspapers for articles, but chose not to, because I lacked that kind of time. I was unable from the catalogue to get places of publication and names of publishers for all the books. That's the sorry state some of this material is in.

reviews
Di Tsukunft?
Di Goldene
Keyt?

also
after her
death in
thousands

It's interesting to observe how G had to publish in the major Yiddish centers of the world in order to be printed. Vilna, Paris, Buenos Aires, NY., Los Angeles, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem. Most books were also privately funded. For most of his life, this great Yiddish prose writer was unable to write a book and then merely send it off to an editor. It would be easy to become very emotional about this issue.

At YIVO, I was more fortunate, for Dina Abromovitch had a small folder of clippings from a few English newspapers and magazines, copies of programs from two ceremonial dinners honoring Grade, and short letter from Mrs. G. She assisted me to locate the material which I summarized below, which really tells us that:

Grade's prose was uniformly very well received in Jewish/English journals like Moment, Midstream, Commentary. He was extremely favorably reviewed by Elie Wiesel in NY Times, a quote I often saw in other articles.

In fact there were no critical reviews of his works per se, although there was a huge controversy between his former translator, Curt Leviant and Mrs. Grade plus friends/defenders of Mrs. G.

Praising Grade's literary merits, Leviant found fault with Mrs Grade's personality and with her collaborated translations of her husband's work. She made many responses in print to his criticism

There was also controversy at the time of G's death since Mrs. G did not report the death and even denied that it had occurred (see below) until after private interment took place. There was a great cry of outrage about this, which can be evidenced to some degree in the articles below. I was attending my first summer session in the Columbia-Weinreich summer program and recall (1) Pesakh Fishman taking another student and myself to a memorial for Grade (2) and wondering all about it, since I had never read or heard of Grade. The service was very sedate but feelings ran very high and I heard then (and since then) many negative things said about Mrs. G

(3) That summer, I read - in English- for the first time *The Well and Seven Little Lanes* They knocked me out, (to paraphrase Holden Caulfield's juicy vernacular., almost as good as Yiddish) Later I read all his other works both in English and in Yiddish. In Yiddish they knocked me out even more.

I cannot understand why (except for *My Quarrel with H.R.*) he is not studied in classes. I have been told this is because: (1) he is too difficult, what with all that Hebrew and Yeshiva stuff, and philosophizing (2) that he is a light weight and merely a popular writer (whatever that means) (3) that he is outside the canon, (4) that his books are not available .

Hebrew Univ
edition for
students

Biographical Summary:

Khaym Grade (1910 - 1982) Born in Vilna and educated in several yeshivot including musar, which was most influential; also studied 7 years with Hazon Ish before entering secular world as poet. Associated with Yung Vilna literature group in early 1930s. Escaped from Vilna as Germans entered, but . Mother and first wife slaughtered by Nazis. Found refug during WW2 in Soviet Russia. Returned to Poland 1946 for 6 months; departed for Paris with second wife for two year stay. Arrived in US in 1948 and began writing fiction after age of 40. Serialized in Jewish Newspapers: Morgn-Jirnal, Tog-Morgn, and Forvirts. Interpreter of Vilna pre WW ! urban and yeshiva life .

Where blanks occur re publishers below, I was unable to obtain the material.

Poetry and Novels.

Yo 1936

Musernikes 1939 Vilna

1969 Jerusalem (Yiddish) (With *Mayn Krig mit H.R.*)

1970 Jerusalem (Hebrew)

Dayres 1945 New York

Pleytim 1947 (Written in USSR 1941-45) Buenos Aires, Tsentral farband fun poylishe yidn in argentina

Af Khurbis 1947 Lodz,

Farvaksene vegn 1947 Paris, Folks farband ,

Der Mames Tsvie 1949 New York

Bevuer

Shayn fun Farlashene Stern 1950 Buenos Aires

My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner

Published originally in Der Yidishe Kempfer 1951

Translated by Milton Himmelfarb, Commentary 1954

Anthologized in *A Treasure of Yiddish Literature* - (Howe) 1955

(With *Miserniks*, 1969 in Jerusalem. See above) ✓

Di Mame's Shabosim (Part 3 of this novel called *Di Zibn Geslekh* was published as *The Seven Lanes* See below)

Yiddish - 1955 Chicago, Farlag L. Stayn, ✓

English- 1986 see below

Hebrew, 1958, Tel Aviv

Der Shulhoyf ✓

Yiddish- 1958 ✓

(Only one story *Der Brunum* translated in English as *The Well* 1967)

Di Agune

Yiddish 1961 Los Angeles, Yidish natsionel arbeter farband ✓

Hebrew 1962

English 1974 N.Y. Bobbs, Merrill Curt Leviant, translator

Der Mensch fun Fayer 1962 N.Y., CYCO

The Well 1967, Jewish Publication Society Translated by Ruth Wisse
(originally *Der Brunim in Der Shulhoyf*)

Tsimekh Atles ✓

Yiddish, 1967 Part 1. Los Angeles, Yidishe Natsiunel Farband,

1968 Part 2 ✓

Hebrew 1968 Tel Aviv

English as *The Yeshiva* 1976- Part 1 N.Y. Bobbs Merril Trans. C. Leviant
1977- Part 2

Oyf Mayn Veg tsu Dir 1969 Tel Aviv, L. Peretz Farband

Seven Little Lanes

English 1972 N.Y. Bergen Belsen Memorial Press Trans. C. Leviant

(With *My Quarrel with H.R.*)

Di kloyz un di gas ✓

Yiddish 1974 New York ✓

(Three novellas from this published in English as *Rabbis and*

Wives: See below)

Stume Mingen ✓

Yiddish 1976 N.Y. Farband brider shulzinger

Rabbis and Wives

3 novella in English 1981 N.Y. Alfred A.Knopf. trans.

My Mother's Sabbaths, A Memoir

English N.Y. 1986, Translated Channa Kleinerman Goldsmith and Inna Hecker Grade.

Encyclopedia Judaica

a rare interpreter of yeshiva life in modern Yiddish literature
photographic accuracy, objectivity of daily life of yeshiva student
lyrics to his mother among the most outstanding in Yiddish; permeated with
love and respect for her.

Der Shulhayf contains some of the finest prose of the post-classical
generation.

Book Reviews

My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyenner:

Judaism, Summer 1972. Edward Alexander, professor of English, Committee
on Jewish Studies, Univ of Washington in Seattle

Beyond a very long detailed retelling of plot (12 pages) Mr. Alexander said:

the work consisted of a philosophical dialogue between elements of faith
and doubt in writer's own soul. (Interesting. This confirmed by wife in
article dated

it had tremendous dramatic force

it presented terrifying quandries of our time.

Aguna

1. One chapter from newly translated book published in Jewish Heritage
with introduction by Curt Leviant, translator.. He says:

KG is one of our greatest living Yiddish writers and distinction of being
excellent in two genres: poetry and fiction.

says *Aguna* is magnificent.

(2) Reviewed on 9-1-74 in NY Times (?) by Elie Wiesel. Good, clear, brief, accurate review of the plot. He said:
that KG had not been given the proper recognition by the American public as befit an author of his abilities.

that he was the most authentic Yiddish novelist living.

discuss
that in vision and scope he was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, living Yiddish author.

Wiesel hoped that the uninitiated non-Jewish reader would be able to understand this profoundly Jewish novel, for Grade's universe, he said, was closed to external events and no openings existed in it to outside world.

The Yeshiva. (Tsemakh Atlas)

(1) Jewish Frontier, May 1978, Fishl Kolko

Along with review of plot, the reviewer said:

the book was a great contribution to Anglo-Yiddish literature.

Grade was the greatest living Yiddish poet and novelist

little was known about this aspect of east European life

panoramic view of how yeshiva functioned as well as exploration of daily life of students.

great translation by Curt Leviant

Reply to review dated Aug/Sept 1978 by Ida Cohen Selavan, Ph.D
She corrects error about real identity of fictional character in the book.

(2) Judaism, Winter 1978 Moshe Moskowitz, Asst. Prof. of Heb. Studies, Rutgers Univ. 5 1/2 page review. Very detailed..

After good brief plot summary, Muskowitz gave background of founding and aims of musar movement and its corruption. Musar stressed torah steady, good deeds, compassion, critical self examination within bounds of cohesive Jewish community. Disciples went too far. Became harsh masochistic ascetic movement. Also said:

book is a breathtaking tale. Professional and compassionate understanding of man's vulnerability to own instincts. Grade shows greed, lust, self-glorification, petyness.;

Khaym Grade was one of the most important Yiddish writers of our time.
Poet as well as novelist

Specialized in exploring inner life of East European Jewry between two world wars. This was a period when such modernizing forces as secularism, socialism, zionism were in active and ugly conflict with one another. No other writer rendered that world and its conflicts more vividly or with more intimate authority than K. G. in *My War with HR.* (see above)

Articles

.1. "Chaim Grade's Jews" *Midstream*, Febr. 1985, titled by Curt Leviant, Assoc. Professor of Hebraic Studies, Rutgers Univ, and translator of *The Agunah*, *Seven Little Lanes*, and *The Yeshiva*.

Angry attack on KG's wife for not informing world of author's death until three days had passed and G had already been buried with only handful of onlookers, half of whom hardly knew him.

In review of "The Rebbetzin" Leviant suggests the main character Perele is scheming, egoistic bitch modeled after KG's shrewish real life wife. It is an intemperate, unprofessional remark by an obviously deeply wounded man. Dont know if that excuses him, however. Leviant finds this novella lacking in conflict and drama and author is too distanced from action .

He likes "Laybe-Layzar's Courtyard" . Compares it to Russian masters Grade so admired. Large gallery of characters in circumscribed setting. Personalities mesh and rub against each other. Bruegel-like .Finds resolution at end too pat.

"The Oath" , last of three novellas, is briefly summarized without comment.

Faults KG for reconciled endings in all his works which are unrealistic. Must amend our view of KG as a realist. Also faults him for recycling same characters over and over.

Says translation seems superb but checking against the Yiddish original he find town names have been Polonized out of keeping with Jewish spirit. Also many incorrectly translated eg halb-fargoyisht doesnt mean "half - Christian" but assimilated, acculturated. and tam doesnt mean fool.

Wonders how Inna Grade could list self as co-translator when she cannot read Yiddish, and only learned to speak it after Grade brought her back from Russia. She also knows no Hebrew and is estranged from Hebraic,

Talmudic/Aramaic and Jewish scholarly tradition which infuses Grade's work.

Book adds to KG's stature as epic Yidish writer who creates an entire world of Lithuanian Jewry much as Sholem Aleykhen did for Russian Jewry. Less humor than SA but more spirituality and rage.

Letters to Editor of Midstream 5/85

(1) from Inna Hecker Grade re above article

She writes:

that Chaim Grade rejected Leviant as his translator for the inferior translations of his three major masterpieces, *Aguna*, *Seven Little Lanes*, and *The Yeshiva*.

that Grade trained her to work on his translations.

that she heard Grade tell Leviant he was happy with the translations she and Harold Rabinowitz undertook in their home under the author's personal supervision.

from Lewis H. Weinstein. (not identified) re same article. He said: Leviant's articles contain falsehoods. Families in this country are permitted private funerals as was the case with Justice Louis D Brandeis.

Mrs. Grade reads Yiddish extremely well. She knows some Hebrew and is not estranged from the Jewish scholarly tradition which infuses G's work.

her brilliant translation of *Rabbis and Wives* was a factor in its selection by the Pulitzer Prize Committee for first runner-up.

(3) from Ashbell Green, Vice President, Sr. Editor, Alfred A Knopf, Inc.

He said they are distressed by Leviant's attack on Grade. Mrs G was a full participant with Rabbi Harold Rabinowitz whose name Leviant curiously omitted from his article, in the translation of *Rabbis and Wives*, and her knowledge of yiddish and of G's language and style caused to her be given credit of the translation.

2. "In Praise of Chaym Grade" Commentary, April 1977. Ruth Wisse (Following publication of first volume of *Yeshiva*). She said:
G. one of fines contemporary Yiddish writers.

the yeshiva is an obsessive subject of his

My Quarrel with H>R> is brilliant confrontation between Jewish believer and Jewish secularist.

this same argument is taken up again in The Yeshiva. It is the grandest novel of several that he wrote in U>S>

G is the only secular writer read and appreciated by the orthodox. *how do we know important tho?*
G animates skillfully certain classical arguments and issues in Jewish scholarship, both in this book, in The Aguna, and in final chapter of The Well.

Y is a superabundant work charged with the moral obsessiveness like Dostoyevski.

The Yeshiva has greater psychological depth than his previous works.

The ends of book I is faulty. This probably due to problems in book 2. in which Reb Shaye steps into breach between ZA and CV and effects harmony. It is a wistful resolution which is dramatically unconvincing and historically dubious. (Compare similar remarks by Leviant and opposing position by I. Knox above.).

G's greatness in confrontations between husband and wife, father and son etc.

Best when his characters remain "triumphantly unreconciled."

Article also contains much social history about Young Vilna Writers.

3 "A Writer in Search of An Audience", Present Tense, Summer '78, Morton Reichel, senior writer for Business Week. He said:
Since arriving in US in '48, G author of 7 books of prose, 5 volumes of poetry and countless newspaper and magazine essays all eulogizing pre-Nazi world of religious Jews, scholars, functionaries in Poland.

Among Yiddish writers, G has status of literary heavy weight.

He has received almost every literary prize in this country and abroad (except Nobel Prize- my note)

has been compared to Dickens (morality), Bellow (humanity), and Faulkner (skill in weaving philosophical and narrative action).

conflict between TA and Reb Abraham Shaaye. Latter in best tradition of rabbis, passive benevolence, like modern psychiatrist;

TA, brooding, guilt ridden, not sure God exists.
finds unresolved oedipal problem in TA.;

praises translation by Curt Leviant.

(3) Congregational Monthly May 1977 Irving Malin
Poor plot summary. My impression was Malin did not understand the book.
Perhaps this is why one year later the same journal had another review of
the book. Or perhaps it was that second volume had been published.

Reviewer says:

Grade stresses formation of character. Underlines moral choices and ethical
alternatives.

"Thus the book is less interestd in demons than in the snares of daily life,
he is far removed from Isaac Bashevis Singer.";

says he likes book but says there is a conflict between epic form of
narration and pages of introspection (which he compares to Dostoyevski).
and between open bustling world and solitary consciousness.;

"book is a gift to read patiently and to be treasured".

(4) Congregational Monthly May 1978 , Israel Knox., philosophy professor at
NYU. (Was once my philosophy professor for several classes at Ohio
University in 1946-47)

Began with excellent, lengthy description of Musar movement in relation to
Haskala.

Knox gave fine plot summary.

Said it was magnificent novel. Especially liked the reconciliation at the end
of the book between TA and Rabbi Shayye and quotes it. Compare this with
Wisse and Leviant articles below.

Said it was excellent translation.

Novella in Magazine

"Di Rebetzin" translated by Ina Hecker Grade, wife of KG and Harold
Rabinowitz Commentary, Oct. '82. Introduction by Ruth Wisse who said:

But as far as American Literary establishment concerned, virtually unknown.

Has been acclaimed as major literary talent by I. Howe , Maurice Samuels, Elie Wiesel.

differs from SA and I.B. Singer in use of more formidable themes. novels of ideas that examine ethical and legal qualities in Jews and confrontations between orthodox and secular values.

weightier themes makes it more difficult to translate esoteric talmudic references.

quotes Wiesel as saying that G's yiddish is more meditative and reflective than Singer's which is concrete and naturalistic

Mrs. G learned Yiddish after marrying G. She can't read it. This restrict her ability to translate.

Curt Leviant saw *The Wall* in English and called N.Y. Times Book Review to tell them that a major Yiddish author was on the scene.

Books published in English did well.

Singer knows more English than G and better able to assist or do own translations.

4. " The World of Chaym Grade". Moment, Oct. '80. Richard Shepard, cultural news reporter of N.Y. Times.) He said:

G considered by many connoisseurs to be the finest, most Jewish of Jewish writers living today.

he writes of conflicts between man and his soul.

until recently, little known to English-speaking world.

to be finest most Jewish of Jewish writers today.

only Jewish writer to be honored by three institutions that represent the major approaches to Judaism in America (J.T.S.; Yeshiva Univ.; Hebrew Union College.)

Only comfortable within Jewish orbit. Almost despite himself that his admirers, including Leviant arranged to have his work more widely appear in English. Fears he will not be understood. Its a world rather than a style he fears will not be understood.

much of interview devoted to KG's comments on writing.

5. "The Poet of Pain and Suffering" 5-8-83 (translated from Yiddish) wrote rich, artistic, complicated figures. in prose works.

feel the poet in his prose works.

depicted rich past of Jewish life in Vilna .

deeply rooted in Yiddish tradition and life.

his work will remain for generation after generation.

6. A Wife Reminisces" Moment, Oct. '86 Inna Hecker Grade She said: KG was displeased by Leviant's translations of his books (Aguna, Yeshiva, and Seven Lanes He forbade her from making further effort to have his work translated and published in English. She disregarded his instructions and spoke with Knopf's professional editor Ashbel Green , Christian whom Grade reluctantly agreed to meet. Grade was thrilled to discover Green was of old puritan and presbyterian stock and that a "New World Man" would be editing his manuscript about Jewish rabbinic life. Grade came to believe that his work was not for Jews alone because his work was deeply rooted in the Bible. Mrs Grade was co-translator with Harold Rabinowitz and others of Rabbiis and Wives, and My Mother's Sabbaths.

Death Notices:

7-1-82 N. Y. Times. Richard F/ Shepard (cf article above) KG died of heart attack 6/26/82 in Montefiore Hospital. Wrote searing poems of loss of Yiddish civilization. Refers to Wiesel's comments in '67 review of Aguna

describes him as short, hypnotically articulate man in word and in gesture. Reluctant to have work translated for fear in English his words would not resonate with particular sense of east European Jewishness that he dedicated himself to recording.

two volumes yet to be published in English (R & W. M.M.S)

private services yesterday (Note: Sheperd attended the services according to another news report. See below)

Morning Freyhayt. 7/4/80

G. died 6/26/82. On previous 6/30/82m The Forvets said the tragic news of his death was held secret for unknown reasons. That paper did not know if burial had been held or was to be held still. On 7/2 the Forvets reported that they discovered on 6/30 that burial had been the previous day. Also that only 4 people attend the burial, two editor/translators, a rabbi and a friend of Mrs. G. They reported further that the editor of the Forvets, Shmuen Veber on 7-28 reported the following story: On 7-28, 2 days after G's death, the newspaper heard of G's death and called Mrs. G to verify. She said that it was only gossip; that G was still in a clinic and that the next week he was sending in another chapter. She denied report of the hospital that he was dead.

She said, also, that she was flying to Boston to be with G for a new heart operation.

The Frayhayt said all that she said was thought up, because the hospital confirmed G's death on 6-26.

7-11-82 Jewish Weekly . Elenore Lester
considered by many to be the most powerful Yiddish writer of contemporary era.

resisted translation into English til recentl years. Thought his style would be lost in translation, and thought complexity of east European religious world which he described would be too obscure to interest American readers.

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