

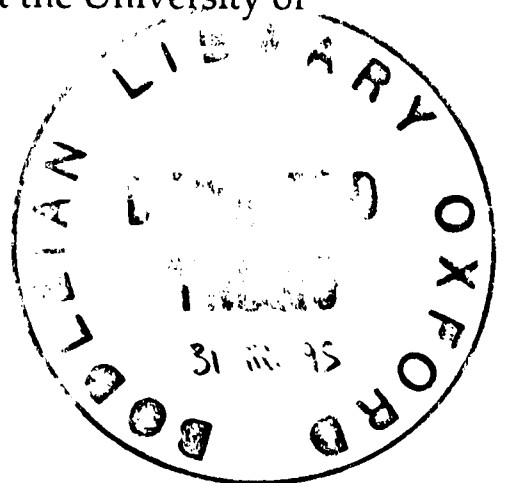
Unifying Elements in European Jewish
Fiction 1890-1945:
Between Disillusion and Destruction ¹

Dafna Clifford

St Cross College

Michaelmas Term, 1993 [i.e. 1994] ^{TT}

¹Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of
Oxford



Abstract

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This study seeks to identify and describe the characteristic elements of European Jewish fiction during the period 1890-1945. Writings that deal with overtly religious themes or which have Zionist publicistic tendencies have been excluded and emphasis is placed on works with settings that are similar to those to be found in contemporary European fiction by non-Jewish writers. In order to provide a broad comparison, the study incorporates representative literary material by Jews from both Western and Eastern intellectual traditions, and includes texts in the three major languages of artistic expression in these communities: German, Yiddish, and Hebrew. On the basis of this material, it is argued that, in three respects at least, there is an identifiable unity in secular Jewish writing. Firstly, there is a thematic preoccupation with thwarted idealism, which is elaborated in a complex interaction among such themes as social alienation, ambivalence in interpersonal relationships, political altruism and impotence. Secondly, there is a consistent treatment of the characterisation of women, the development of their relationships to men, and the role of the family. Finally, there is a special reliance on the literary device of irony, in both its verbal and situational forms.

The introductory chapter provides historical background and gives a general outline of the thesis. Subsequent chapters are organised as a sequence of thematic and stylistic comparisons; firstly between representative texts from Eastern and Western Jewish communities and finally between the writings of a Jewish and a non-Jewish author, in an analysis of the use of irony in the works of Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Mann. The German texts studied are *Der Weg ins Freie* by Arthur Schnitzler, *Junge Frau von 1914* by Arnold Zweig, Kafka's *Das Schloß*, *Georg and Ginster* by Siegfried Kracauer and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* by Joseph Roth. The Yiddish writings are *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* and *Khaver Nakhmen* by I.J. Singer, *Tsvishn emigrantn*, *Nokh Alemen* and *Mides-hadin* by Dovid Bergelson and *Di gas* by Yisroel Rabon and the Hebrew texts are *Nokhah hayam* and *Hayey nisu'im* by David Vogel.

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Extended Abstract of Thesis

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This study seeks to identify and describe the characteristic elements of European Jewish fiction during the period 1890-1945. The investigation is confined to works whose specifically Jewish character may not be obvious at first sight. Thus writings which deal with overtly religious themes or which have Zionist publicistic tendencies have been excluded, and emphasis is placed on works with settings that are no different from those to be found in novels by other European writers. To provide a broad comparison, the study incorporates representative literary material by Jews of both Western and Eastern Europe, and includes works written in the three major languages of artistic expression of Jews in these communities: German, Yiddish and Hebrew.

The aim of this comparative study is to show that, in three respects at least, there is an identifiable unity in secular Jewish writing. Firstly, there is a thematic preoccupation with thwarted idealism, which is elaborated in a complex interaction among such themes as alienation, ambivalence, altruism and impotence. Secondly, there is a consistent treatment of the characterisation of women, the development of their relationship to men and the role of the family. Finally, there is a special reliance on the literary device of irony, in both its verbal and situational forms.

The introductory chapter provides historical background and gives a general outline of the thesis. Subsequent chapters are organised as a

sequence of thematic and stylistic comparisons: firstly, in Chapters 2-6, between representative texts from Eastern and Western Jewish communities and finally, in Chapter 7, between the writings of a Jewish and a non-Jewish author.

Chapter 2 analyses three pieces of imaginative fiction: *Der Weg ins Freie* by Arthur Schnitzler, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* (*The Family Karnovski*), a Yiddish novel by I.J. Singer, and the Yiddish story *Tsvishn emigrantn* (*Among Emigrés*) by Dovid Bergelson. Character and plot development reveal a concern with the increasingly hapless dependence of solitary individuals on society at large. The analysis reveals a shared literary concern with the central role of the family. The sense of isolation and rejection in the world outside the family, combined with the reduced security which the family is able to provide, results in a markedly similar portrayal of psychological vulnerability in the wide range of character types appearing in the works analysed here. Not only do the characters evince similar vulnerability; they also react to the pressures under which they live in similar ways. In the writings of all three authors, the primary effect of change is the undermining of the family unit with the resultant disorientation and alienation of the individual family members. The degree of personality dysfunction of the central characters is shown to depend on their distance from their family of origin.

Chapter 3 looks at fictional accounts of the impact of the First World War and the Russian Revolution on male-female relationships in Jewish communities on both sides of the Yiddish-German language divide. It aims to identify a common perspective in two novels, one in Yiddish, *Khaver Nakhmen* (*Comrade Nakhmen*), by I.J. Singer, and the other in German, *Junge Frau von 1914* by Arnold Zweig. The Jewish women depicted by Singer and Zweig differ radically from their men, who find themselves incorporated, for the first time in their lives, into a community enjoying the greatest public

support, a war-time army. Indeed, it is precisely the behavioural changes caused by the men's exposure to the military ethos, with its emphasis on brutality, authoritarianism, and the necessity to ignore personal standards of morality, which deepen the women's isolation at the very time when the practical burdens of their daily lives increase.

These two novels have a similar formal structure, both dividing into a man's story and a woman's story. In both cases, the male plot deals with the man's attempts to divest himself of his socially unacceptable Jewish identity by merging into a male group where the emphasis is on physical action and obedience to a code of mindless ruthlessness completely at odds with the character's previous mode of thought. In the women's plots, however, the female protagonists submit physically to their war-time destiny but are determined not to lose the personal integrity associated with their pre-war life. In both novels, the responses to the changing mores of society diverge along gender lines, despite the linguistic and cultural differences of the two writers. Left to survive as best they may, the women develop a parallel existence to that of the men, without, however, effecting a Copernican shift in their psychological universe. That is, even in their absence, the men remain central in the minds of the women: central in their minds, but orthogonal to their lives.

Chapter 4 focuses on the female characterisation in four works, two in Yiddish, and one each in Hebrew and German: *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* by I.J. Singer, *Nokh alemen (When All Is Said And Done)* by Dovid Bergelson, *Nokhaḥ hayam (Facing the Sea)* by David Vogel, and *Das Schloß* by Franz Kafka. Female characters are introduced as mothers, wives, lovers, and daughters. The works provide a comparison of the roles assigned to female protagonists by male writers of different nationality, education, emotional temperament, and religious sensibility. Similarities in the presumptions of social role, personality configurations, and degree of intellectual ambi-

are shown to be strong despite differences in the degree of realism apparent in these texts. The chapter identifies one of the dominant recurrent themes in Jewish writing of this period, that of failed domesticity, with its hint of the unsuccessful Jewish courtship of non-Jewish society. All four texts show male protagonists unable to maintain satisfactorily functioning relationships with the women to whom they look for comfort and support.

Chapter 5 explores another major theme in Jewish fiction, that of the altruistic individual who identifies with the suffering of others, but is unable to help them, or indeed, himself. The focus here is on three works where the syndrome of altruism and impotence shapes the narrative: *Di gas* (*The Street*), in Yiddish, by Yisroel Rabon, *Hayey nisu'im* (*Married Life*), in Hebrew, by David Vogel, and *Georg*, in German, by Siegfried Kracauer. All three texts are semi-autobiographical novels written partly under the influence of the general economic insecurity of the 1920s, and partly under the pressure of intensified anti-Semitism in the authors' countries of residence, Poland, Austria, and Germany respectively. Language itself is an issue in each of these works, whether or not the language of composition is spoken by all the characters (*Georg*), by some of the characters (*Di gas*), or by none (*Hayey nisu'im*). In each novel the language of composition emphasises the psychological barriers between the protagonists and the milieu in which they seek to survive. The characters move without hesitation from one city or country to another whenever life becomes economically and psychologically untenable, and find that each, rather than improving their circumstances, further undermines their already precarious equilibrium.

Chapter 6 examines the sense of irony in three works by writers of Jewish origin. The unintentional irony which colours the novels of Dovid Bergelson and Joseph Roth, *Mides-hadin* (*Strict Justice*) and *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, is contrasted with the meticulously calculated irony of *Der Weg ins Freie* by Arthur Schnitzler. In *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, the vi-

olent disruptions in the personal lives of the authors, brought about by the Civil War and pogroms in the Ukraine, and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, are shown to create a form of self-betraying irony that subverts the message which the writer consciously seeks to convey. Schnitzler, though profoundly disquieted by the deterioration in the social and political position of Austrian Jews, maintains full control over basic structural elements in his novel in a way which eludes Bergelson and Roth.

The final chapter is a comparison of the use of verbal irony in Jewish and non-Jewish writing. The choice of subjects for ironic treatment and the choice of words in which irony is expressed are contrasted in the writings of Thomas Mann and in two novels, *Ginster* and *Georg*, by a German writer of Jewish origin, Siegfried Kracauer. Narratorial situations which the non-Jewish and Jewish author treat with irony are identified. In Kracauer's work, where nearly every sentence is ironic, the security provided by non-ironic sentences is largely absent, as is the security provided by an uninvolved narrative voice. In Mann's writing, irony generally issues from a voice separate from the action. In *Ginster* and much of *Georg*, the irony seems to come both from the protagonists and from somewhere else, an echo perhaps of the ambivalent position of the Jew in European society.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

*Freiheit ist immer nur die
Freiheit der Andersdenkenden*
Rosa Luxemburg

This study seeks to identify and describe the characteristic elements of Jewish contributions to European fiction during the period 1890-1945. The investigation is confined to works whose specifically Jewish character may not be obvious at first sight. Thus writings which deal with overtly religious themes or which have Zionist publicistic tendencies have been excluded, and emphasis is placed on works with settings that are no different from those to be found in novels by other European writers. To provide a broad comparison, the study incorporates representative literary material by Jews of both Western and Eastern Europe, and includes works written in the three major languages of artistic expression of Jews in these communities: German, Yiddish and Hebrew.

The aim of this comparative study is to show that, in three respects at least, there is an identifiable unity in secular Jewish writing. Firstly, there is a thematic preoccupation with thwarted idealism, which is elaborated in a complex interaction among such themes as alienation, ambivalence, altruism and impotence. Secondly, there is a consistent treatment of the

characterisation of women, the development of their relationship to men and the role of the family. Finally, there is a special reliance on the literary device of irony, in both its verbal and situational forms.

The importance of language

In the minds of Western European writers of Jewish origin, the ability to create works of art in a non-Jewish language, and the degree of familiarity with the surrounding culture which that ability presupposed, set them apart from Eastern European artists still using 'Jargon', as the Yiddish language was contemptuously known by those who refused to consider it a real language. Consequently, although German-language writers could understand key Yiddish words in Jewish jokes, they could not read Yiddish prose, written as it is in the Hebrew alphabet, and would not have done so in any case, because of their fear of being associated with what they considered a primitive stage of cultural evolution which they were proud to have surpassed.

The position of Yiddish writers in this period is most eloquently described in a charming phrase of the Russian Jewish historian, Simon Dubnov. At the end of the nineteenth century, a belief in the possibility of a new synthesis between humanism and nationalism took hold among some sections of Eastern European Jewry, inspiring a Yiddish literary renaissance which continued until the Second World War. The guiding principle behind this Yiddishism was 'uffrishn dem goles', a spiritual 'wash-and-brush-up of the Diaspora' (Dubnov, 1938, p.287). Hebraists, of course, had their own agenda, which ultimately aspired to normalise the Jewish people by settling them in Palestine. In their view, the attempt to restructure and revive Jewish life in the Diaspora was as doomed to failure as the ever-increasing efforts to achieve full political and social equality in

the countries of the European exile. Since mainstream Hebrew literature withdrew, psychologically, if not always physically, from the struggle to find local solutions to the problems confronting Jewish writers in Europe, the only Hebrew writer who appears in this study is the one who used Hebrew as if it were a European language, David Vogel.

When a writer chooses to work in a Jewish language such as Yiddish or Hebrew, the expectation is that the tensions between his Jewish protagonists and the non-Jewish surrounding culture will be treated with a degree of frankness not available to someone writing in a non-Jewish language for a primarily non-Jewish readership. This is especially true when the protagonists, as so often in the literature of this period, are individuals facing difficulties in social integration familiar to the authors and many of their readers. In the Jewish-language texts, the protagonist's identity is typically that of a secular Jew, well acculturated to non-Jewish society. Even when the language of the text is Yiddish or Hebrew, it is clear that, in certain circumstances, the main Jewish characters speak Polish, Russian, German, or French. In Bergelson's *Nokh alemen*, a novel examined in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the author indicates that the protagonist, Mirl Hurvits, regularly speaks Russian with her better-educated contemporaries. In I.J. Singer's *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, which is discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, the character Georg Karnovski is explicitly said to speak no Yiddish at all, even with his mother, whose broken, inadequate German is the symbol of the estrangement between herself and her assimilationist husband. The fact that, even in Jewish-language texts, the 'real' spoken language is, to a greater or lesser extent, a non-Jewish European language, is the first sign of unsuspected similarities between Western and Eastern European Jewish writing. Conversely, it is of equal significance that the central characters in the German-language texts, even when they are not identified as Jewish, are obsessed by an unsatisfied need for social acceptance. Al-

though the German of authors and protagonists is flawless, symbolising the determination of both to make their way in a non-Jewish milieu, this linguistic badge of successful acculturation does not, in fact, make the struggle against rejection any less bitter than that which is brought out in Yiddish and Hebrew literature. Accordingly, it is never completely obvious which language a writer of Jewish origin should write in. Because of the anomalous historical situation of the Jews in Europe, no decision about which language to write in can be considered wholly neutral. Every choice implies psychological investment in one particular identity, and the rejection of other identities, which it might, perhaps, have been wiser and more realistic to pursue. Even the question of whether to write in Hebrew or Yiddish was not completely neutral.

Yiddish, the spoken language of the Jewish masses in Russia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Galicia, and the Bukovina, was not, until the modern period, the literary language of male readers. As Shmuel Niger (1959, p.53) points out, Yiddish is perhaps the only language in world literature in which the writers, predominantly male, wrote for a largely female readership. This is because the traditional educational system excluded women from the prestigious studies of religious texts in Hebrew and Aramaic. Consequently, from its earliest beginnings before 1500, until 1864, the year when Mendele Moykher Sforim published his first book, Yiddish served as medium of education, consolation, and entertainment for women and uneducated men. During the fifty years between 1864 and the First World War, considered the classic period of modern Yiddish literature, the three great Yiddish writers, Mendele, Sholem Aleykhem, and I.L. Peretz, described the Jewish community and the typical Jew. Subsequently, the emphasis on depiction of social reality shifted to an evocation of the Jewish intellectual in his troubled social isolation. Whereas previously, the characters portrayed in Yiddish literature had been an integral part of the

Jewish community, and the problems explored in the course of the narrative were familiar and comprehensible to the Jewish collective, the fiction of the second generation of modern Yiddish writers was concerned with the dissonance between the individual and his environment.

In this respect, the Hebrew novel and short stories of David Vogel, though written in the most venerable Jewish of languages, are perfect examples of European Jewish literature. Vogel's work is fully taken up with the author's passionate interest in 'the narratorial mediation of consciousness' (Alter, 1988, p.70), and has none of the outward trappings of the Hebrew fiction of his contemporaries. There is, for instance no trace of Zionist influence on plot or characters in *Hayey nisu'im*, although the novel was partly written in Palestine during the year the author spent there. More significant, however, is the absence of what Shaked calls 'Jewish social situations' and 'Jewish mental processes' (Shaked, 1992, p.97). In the sense of supportive family or communal structures, this is certainly true, but it is precisely the creation of characters whose lives are bereft of such traditional structures that is the quintessential feature of 'Jewish mental processes' in European Jewish literature of this period.

Vogel, an intensely reclusive, not to say depressive personality, kept himself on the margins even of the group of Jewish writers who were his mainstay of human contact in the various cities of exile in which he spent his life after leaving his native Satanov. Besides a Hebrew diary kept during the First World War, when he was just beginning his career as a poet, we have very few explicit statements of Vogel's views on the existential position of an artist who turns his back on the only Hebrew-speaking territory in the world, despite the extraordinary linguistic demands involved in writing complex and subtle prose narratives at a time when Hebrew had not been a spoken language for two thousand years, and was only just being developed into a medium suitable for the depiction of modern

life. While doggedly refusing to write in his own mother-tongue (Yiddish), the vernacular of the culture in which he was educated (Russian), or the languages, admittedly more difficult for him, of the countries in which he made his home (German and French), Vogel refused to make concessions to his readership by depicting positive Jewish heroes or negative non-Jewish characters.

Vogel's commitment to the Hebrew language is, therefore, all the more remarkable when one considers the centrality that the concept of style had in his view of himself as an artist. In a lecture given in 1931, he insists on absolute faithfulness to the artist's own individuality as the precondition for any 'new and original vision of the world' (Vogel, 1993, p.16). He remained faithful to his own unique individuality, ignoring Jewish national themes in his writing, regardless of the fact that he thus marginalised himself in a literary group that was already marginal. Between the 1853 publication in Russia of the first Hebrew novel, *Ahavat Tsion*, by Avraham Mapu, and the First World War, Hebrew literature flourished in Poland and Russia. After the war, Soviet animosity curtailed Hebrew writing in the old centres in Russia. At the same time, the government of the new Polish Republic set in force oppressive political and economic restrictions designed to keep Jews out of higher education and to exclude them from the mainstream of Polish national life. As Hever notes (Hever, 1989, p.335), the country's intelligentsia, which constituted an important part of the world's Hebrew readership, often chose to settle in Palestine, rather than remain in the hostile social climate of Poland. Moreover, the forcible isolation of the Hebrew-reading public in the Soviet Union from the rest of Jewish culture in the wake of the Russian Revolution gave further impetus to Zionist thought in Hebrew letters, and underlined more strongly the difference between Vogel's deeply personal, European point of view, and the Jewish national consciousness of other Hebraists of his generation. Implausible

though it may seem at first, the choice of Hebrew did not guarantee Vogel an obvious constituency. Paradoxically, even in the most indisputably national Jewish language, he retained the classic Jewish position of being both inside and outside the majority culture.

The decision by a Jewish writer to use one language rather than another, therefore, has ramifications far beyond the obvious linguistic ones. Not least, the decision to write in a non-Jewish language is a statement of the artist's belief in his right to claim cultural recognition from a society which may not share this belief. There is also the implication of a willing, if not eager, renunciation of a set of cultural values shared with the Jewish people. Regardless, however, of the differing existential commitments of particular writers, the legacy of Jewish history was inescapable for all. As a result of centuries of parallel existence alongside their non-Jewish neighbours, Jewish communities all over Europe developed a distinctive cultural system, and it is to this culture that the writers considered in this thesis were heir. As successive generations became ever more painfully aware that they could never realise their full artistic and intellectual potential so long as they remained within the confines of the traditional Jewish community, they were also gradually forced to realise that the wider, non-Jewish world would tolerate them at best conditionally, and occasionally not at all.

The world outside

Because of the mass emigration from Tsarist Russia, which began to disrupt Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement significantly in the 1880s, and which continued regularly until the consolidation of Bolshevik power in the Ukraine in 1919, Eastern European communities suffered a steady demographic, economic, and cultural decline. The world outside the small

Jewish towns thus became increasingly attractive to Jewish youth even before political emancipation and social acceptance were plausible expectations. With the more ambitious and better educated sections of the younger generations eager to leave the shtetl and necessarily looking for role models other than their parents, family structure weakened. These processes are clearly reflected in the imaginative fiction of the time, in which most of the protagonists are young men on their own, trying to establish themselves in a non-Jewish environment mystifyingly obdurate in its hostility to them.

The weakening of the traditional Jewish family forced the solitary individual into a greater dependence on society at large. But what were these societies like, viewed from a Jewish perspective? Belief in Jewish integration in the community of nations was based on the acquisition of civic and political rights in Germany and the Habsburg Empire, a process only completed in 1871. The Communist ideology of the Soviet Union seemed to promise an end to the routine pogroms and institutionalised anti-Semitism which had been a characteristic feature of Tsarist rule. In Poland, the position of the Jews was, in principle, made more secure by the signing of the Minorities Treaty in 1919, although the Polish authorities found ways of circumventing its terms. When Józef Piłsudski came to power in 1926, the Jews were persuaded by his rhetoric that they might acquire full rights as Polish citizens, but such optimism was unfounded and conditions worsened after Piłsudski's death in 1935.

In Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914*, which is discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, the author shows that German Jews were totally committed to the war effort but also nervous in the face of popular prejudice that they were determined to keep their own sons away from the front. In 1916, the Minister of War, von Hohenborn, ordered a Jewish head-count in every army unit, the results of which were never published, so as not to disturb

the widespread impression that the Jews were not doing their duty to the Fatherland. In fact, 100,000 of the 550,000 Jews living in Germany served in some branch of the armed forces between 1914 and 1918; 12,000 died. The majority of German Jews no longer thought of themselves as exiles from the Promised Land waiting to return home with the advent of the Messiah, but believed rather that they had found a homeland in Germany. Their identification with German culture was intense and profound. Even so, the 'Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens' together with the 'Verband der deutschen Juden' issued an appeal on 1 August 1914, exhorting German Jewry to give the lie to popular doubts about their devotion to the national cause by excelling themselves in military bravery and financial generosity to the war coffers. This is the historical background against which Zweig sets *Junge Frau von 1914*. Current events having made such an apologia more or less irrelevant, Zweig is expressing his bitterness at the falsification of the truth about the German-Jewish relationship: it is not the Jews who are lukewarm in their enthusiasm for Germany, but Germany which has failed to appreciate the loyal contribution of its Jews.

Because of the upsurge in virulent anti-Semitism in the aftermath of the First World War, when the defeat was, in the popular mind, blamed on the Jews who had 'betrayed' the Fatherland, it is important to remember the extreme delicacy and complexity of the psychological situation of the Jews in Germany in the 1920s. Jewish intellectuals became eager to renew and deepen their understanding of the Jewish religion, to read literature pertaining to Judaism, and to acquaint themselves with the details of Jewish history, a subject they had previously avoided out of fear that such an avowed interest would call their absolute commitment to Germany into question. To this end, the 'Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums' in Berlin promoted scientific research into Judaism, while in Frankfurt, the 'Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus' founded in 1920 by Franz Rosenzweig aspired

to modernise the traditional *bes hamedresh* or study-house, where for centuries Jewish scholars had pursued endless disputations about the meaning of the laws governing Jewish life as set out in the Bible and the Talmud. Rosenzweig's vision of modern Jewish scholarship included discussion of non-Jewish themes as well as problems associated with current events in contemporary Germany. Siegfried Kracauer, whose two novels *Ginster* and *Georg* form the basis for the analysis of verbal irony in Jewish texts in Chapter 7, participated in the programme of the Lehrhaus. Among the young intellectuals who were attracted to the Lehrhaus, there was great interest in trying to understand the Jewish experience in Europe within the framework of sociology. Erich Fromm, for example, wrote his doctoral dissertation in 1922 on the subject of Jewish law from the perspective of the sociology of Diaspora Jewry. Kracauer too, though he never wrote another novel after 1934, continued the sociological work he had done in Germany before his emigration. His analysis aims to bring into clearer focus those aspects of the German mentality already present during the Weimar Republic which made the nation receptive to the ideology of National Socialism. German films from 1918 to 1933 were, according to Kracauer, permeated with invaluable clues about this mentality. His book, *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film* (Kracauer, 1947), approaches the almost intractable problem of understanding Hitler's Germany by using popular film culture as a form of psychopathological documentation.

In discussions of the political, cultural, social, and economic situation of European Jewry in the generations between the Emancipation of the Jews in Germany (1871) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867), and the Second World War, it is customary to chart the process of psychological detachment from the Jewish community, previously the central reference point in an individual's life, and subsequent reattachment to the host society, in three stages: acculturation, integration, and assimilation. Inevitably,

this process is reflected in the texts that are the focus of this study. They will not, however, be analysed as a function of their position in one or other of these categories, since the underlying assumption of my attempt to arrive at a new understanding of Jewish writing in this last phase of a significant Jewish presence in Europe, is that all three categories are, to some extent, deceptive. Although it is now recognised that the German-Jewish symbiosis was never the *folie à deux* imagined by German Jews, in that Germany never wanted its Jews as much as its Jews wanted Germany, close reading of imaginative prose written in all the lands of Jewish residence reveals a similar delusion shared by Jewish writers even in the least propitious circumstances, such as Stalinist Russia.

In short, the terms acculturation, integration, and assimilation are useful more as subjective evaluations of the distance travelled by a Jew from his background, than as measurements of social acceptance by the surrounding non-Jewish civilisation. The term 'assimilated Jew' is, in any case, never used flatteringly by non-Jews, but is standard usage for the ultimate opprobrium reserved by members of the Jewish community for those who try to opt out of Jewish destiny. Schnitzler, for the middle-class Jews of Vienna, in *Der Weg ins Freie*, Zweig for their Berlin counterparts in *Junge Frau von 1914*, and I.J.Singer for the Communist activists of Poland and Russia in *Khaver Nakhmen*, illustrate the essential truth of the point made somewhat contentiously by Joseph Roth (1989, vol.2, p.842): 'Der rasierte Jude trägt nicht mehr das Kennzeichen seines Volkes. Er versucht, auch wenn er es nicht so will, so auszusehen, wie einer der glücklichen Christen, die man nicht verfolgt und nicht verspottet.'

Accordingly, when comparing a wide range of texts in German, Yiddish, and Hebrew, it is important to look also at the environments which inspired the Jewish literature of the period. One must therefore look closely at Poland, which was, in the words of Ezra Mendelsohn (1989, p.2), 'the

leading cultural and political (if not financial) force in the Jewish Diaspora'. Jews had been living in Poland since the twelfth century, when the persecutions fomented by the Crusades shattered the stability of Jewish life in Germany. Eager for capital for the development of Polish lands, and in order to make themselves independent of their turbulent nobles, Polish kings invited Jews to settle on Polish territory, and kept their promises to protect Polish Jews for more than two hundred years. The sixteenth century was again a terrible time for German Jewry, caught between the warring Protestant and Catholic factions. Migration into Poland increased once more. The Jews ran all aspects of the economy for which there was no other social group to take responsibility. Without the Jews, the Polish social structure would have consisted of land-owning nobles favouring an indolent life-style, and peasants in a state of serfdom. Capital and entrepreneurial skills were therefore supplied by the Jews and other foreign groups, especially Germans. Jewish rights were protected by royal charter. On the west bank of the Dniepr, the Jews worked for the Polish nobility colonising and Polonising the peasants. Jews collected taxes, managed the nobles' estates, ran the inns, flour mills, the lumber business, tanneries, dealt in horse-trading and luxury goods.

In 1648, the Ukrainians, led by Bogdan Chmielnicki, rebelled against Poland. But the pogroms instigated by Chmielnicki shattered the stable Jewish communities, and there began a long, slow period of decline. With the onset of the massacres came the migrations, first, westwards into Prussia and Germany, and southwards to Moravia, then to Vienna, once residence restrictions were lifted in 1848. From the period of the Enlightenment, the Jews not only wrote in the languages of their various European lands, but acquired new, non-Jewish concepts. Although Jews had previously created literature out of the confrontation with other cultures, Hellenism, Islam, Spain, and Renaissance Italy, they had written

from within Judaism. Now, for the first time in the long history of the Diaspora, Jewish writing was not at odds with the basic tenets of the dominant civilisation. On the contrary, it was at odds with the tenets of its own civilisation. By the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, Jews no longer saw themselves as being essentially the same people as their forebears who had always been, in the words of Zygmunt Bauman (1989, p.38), 'simultaneously concrete objects of daily intercourse and exemplars of a category defined independently of such intercourse.' This is the definition of their social situation that the characters portrayed in Jewish literature of this period are trying to escape. The texts analysed in this study are the chronicle of the variety of their attempts at escape, and the similarity of their failures.

Stages of Alienation

Chapter 2 sets the tone for the thesis. Examination of three works of narrative prose by authors from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds reveals a common set of preoccupations, narrative situations and structure, and a unified point of view, in imaginative fiction written by writers of Jewish origin across Europe. The works studied are: *Tsvishn emigrantn* by Dovid Bergelson, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* by I.J. Singer and *Der Weg ins Freie* by Arthur Schnitzler.

Three factors determine the nature of European Jewish literature between 1890 and 1945. These are the desire of the younger generation for integration in the countries of their birth and concomitant rejection of parental role models; the attempts to replace the family of origin with an alternative taken from the majority society, and to establish stable erotic relationships; and the failure of both attempts, entailing some degree of personality disintegration of the protagonist. Further, the degree of person-

ality dysfunction is seen to depend on the distance of the central characters from their family of origin. This distance is measured psychologically and geographically.

The first stage of alienation is represented by Mirl Hurvits, the central figure in Bergelson's early novel *Nokh alemen* and the subject of detailed analysis in Chapter 4. Mirl lives at home with her parents in a shtetl in the Pale of Settlement during the last years of Nicholas II. Intelligent, educated, and disaffected with shtetl life, she is barely on speaking terms with her parents. She tries to settle in Kiev, but feels lost in the Russian city. Marrying for money in order to save her parents from ruin, she soon leaves her husband, returns home, quarrels with her widowed mother, offends her old friends, and drifts away from the shtetl, to an unknown destination, possibly taking her own life.

Heinrich Bermann in *Der Weg ins Freie* embodies the second degree of alienation. Living in Vienna alone, as his family of origin have not made the move to the Imperial capital, his emotional security depends on his ability to charm the surrounding non-Jewish world into accepting him despite his Jewish identity. This identity is in no way comparable to Mirl's, because Mirl speaks Yiddish as well as Russian, and is still conscious of needing a Jewish environment, despite her rejection of the shtetl. All the characters with whom she has close contact are Jewish and she speaks with them in Yiddish, whereas Bermann communicates even with the other Jewish characters only in German. Bermann, who is painfully aware of being a Jew in a culture which is palpably hostile to him, draws less strength from his Jewishness than from his conviction that he has as much right as a non-Jewish Austrian to consider himself an integral part of the land where he was born and educated. Nevertheless, his complete inability to make the dominant society accept him ultimately destroys his psychological equilibrium, making him bitter and obsessed,

so that in the eyes of even his least prejudiced Austrian friend, Bermann assumes the identity of exactly the Jewish stereotype he had devoted all his talent and energy to avoiding.

The third degree of alienation is represented by the Karnovskis in *Dimshpokhe Karnovski*. Although they are no longer in their native environment, but have moved from a Hasidic-dominated Polish shtetl to the German Imperial capital, from obscurantism, as they perceive it, to Enlightenment, they still live as a family. The position of the Karnovskis within German society is, to begin with, more precarious than that of Mirl or Bermann, since they are, objectively, foreigners in Berlin, whereas the first two were subjectively foreign in Russia and Austria. By the third generation, Yegor Karnovski is half German and half Jewish, objectively alien and unassimilable to the Germans, and therefore subjectively alien and loathsome to himself. Yegor therefore decides to kill himself, but before he dies, he manages to return home to be treated – and perhaps saved – by his father.

The fourth and ultimate degree of alienation is found in Bergelson's short story, *Tsvishn emigrantn*. Here, the two protagonists, a Yiddish writer from the Ukraine, and a Jewish refugee from the Ukrainian pogroms of 1918-1919, meet briefly in their solitary Berlin exile. The refugee, driven mad by his inability to avenge the loss of his family who have been killed in the Civil War, turns in his despair to the writer. Bergelson posits that the last relationship to survive the destruction of war and revolution, the pressure of exile and the dismemberment of stable communities, is that between the nation and its writers. The writer is only sustained by his mission to chronicle the national destiny, and the scattered survivors of shattered families look to the writer to present their case to international public opinion. The story concludes, however, with the writer recording not only the murder of the refugee's parents, but also the latter's suicide.

Tsvishn emigrantn thus documents Bergelson's observation that an individual cannot survive the double loss of family and homeland. This is especially true as Bergelson describes characters who, unlike the Karnovskis, are not cultural immigrants. They have no ideological commitment to the new society, but are, on the contrary, still so emotionally tied to their past that they cannot adjust to an unfamiliar language and way of life. Although they want only to retain their previous identity, they cannot, because all the factors defining that identity have been removed. In all four texts considered in this chapter, the characters suffer from a discrepancy between their identity and that which is acceptable in their chosen environment. In all cases this discrepancy is caused by their Jewish origins, but the damage to the individual personality varies as a function of the strength of family attachment.

The Changing Role of Men and Women; The Impact of War

Chapter 3 looks at the literary portrayal of Jewish family life in Poland and Germany during the First World War, and the Soviet Union in the years just after the Revolution. The texts compared are I.J. Singer's *Khaver Nakhmen* and Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914*. The underlying assumption of both novels is that men and women have separate destinies which overlap in certain prescribed and predictable ways, especially when the men demonstrate their practical reliance on the women, and the women, their emotional dependence on the men.

Singer and Zweig show very clearly how war throws new burdens of responsibility onto the women, while removing the source of their livelihood and moral support. For Jewish men, on the contrary, war offers hitherto unknown opportunities for integration into mainstream society by performing military duty, engaging in political activity, and offering

economic services to the state.

These two novels have a similar formal structure, both dividing into a man's story and a woman's story. In both cases, the male plot deals with the man's attempts to divest himself of his socially unacceptable Jewish identity by merging into a male group where the emphasis is on physical action and obedience to a code of mindless ruthlessness completely at odds with the character's previous mode of thought. In the women's plots, however, the female protagonists submit physically to their war-time destiny but are determined not to lose the personal integrity associated with their pre-war life. In both novels, the responses to the changing mores of society diverge along gender lines, despite the linguistic and cultural differences of the two writers. Left to survive as best they may, the women develop a parallel existence to that of the men, without, however, effecting a Copernican shift in their psychological universe. That is, even in their absence, the men remain central in the minds of the women: central in their minds, but orthogonal to their lives.

Having no option if they are to survive, but to become more innovative and competent in worldly matters, the female protagonists, Lenore Wahl in *Junge Frau von 1914* and Khanke and Sheyndl Ritter in *Khaver Nakhmen*, confirm their commitment to Jewish family values. If there is a 'problem of finding a home for the Jewish imagination', in the evocative phrase which haunts Norich's study of I.J. Singer (Norich, 1991, p.21), it is a male preoccupation, for the locus of the female imagination is the home. In sharp contrast to the alacrity with which the central male characters abandon traditional constraints, and seize the chance to escape the confines of an unpopular minority identity, the women redouble their efforts to maintain a stable environment, even if it is only the micro-environment between four walls.

Images of Women

Chapter 4 is divided into four sections, each of which examines the portrayal of a female character of either primary or secondary importance. Four novels are studied: I.J. Singer's *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*; Dovid Bergelson's *Nokh alemen*; David Vogel's *Nokhah hayam* and Franz Kafka's *Das Schloß*. When a female character is marked by intellectual ability, accomplishment, or ambition, her fate is complicated. Erotic relationships typically end unsatisfactorily for both male and female protagonists. This is of crucial significance since Jewish writing of this period focuses on the socially alienated individual who sees two ways of realising the goals of social integration and acceptance. The first is through some form of direct contact with the surrounding culture, expressed in professional activity. The second depends upon the successful formation of sustaining and sustainable emotional ties. With the exception of Mirl Hurvits in *Nokh alemen*, the main characters are male, and the ties they seek to form are with females. Because of the precarious nature of the protagonists' relations with the outside world, failure in the cultivation of intimate relationships throws them back entirely on their own resources. This causes unbearable stress to their already fragile, disoriented personality structures, and these works have a correspondingly sombre conclusion.

In *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, Singer portrays a wider range of female characters than are found in the other three novels analysed in this chapter. This is important because he shows the lives of working class and middle class, Jewish and non-Jewish women in small-town, urban, and country settings, albeit with the emphasis largely on Berlin. In addition to painting a broad social canvas, the novel achieves depth of analysis by tracing the development of different roles in Jewish family life, and artistic cohesion, by associating most of the female characters in one way or another, with

male members of the Karnovski family. The main categories, those of wife, mother, and Communist activist, demonstrate the interaction between the expectations of traditional Jewish communal life, the pressures exerted on the family unit by the opposing forces of political emancipation, education, and anti-Semitism.

The third section in this chapter examining various images of women in Jewish imaginative writing examines the destiny of Gina Bart in Vogel's novella *Nokhah hayam*. Unlike the protagonists in Kracauer's novels, *Ginster* and *Georg*, who are not said to be Jewish, but whose entire characterisation in terms of social situation and mental processes strongly suggests their origins, the main characters in *Nokhah hayam* are Jewish and convincingly European without especially trying to be. With Gina, Vogel has written a character study where the central psychological conflict is precipitated by a sexual encounter rather than by the confrontation between traditional Jewish culture and modern European civilisation. Nevertheless, Vogel offers an original perspective on the European Jewish condition, in his portrayal of the interaction between youthful characters who are rootless, cut off from their past and floundering in unsatisfactory erotic relationships, a familiar subject in secular Jewish writing of this period.

Without any Jewish characters, written in a non-Jewish language, *Das Schloß* is, nonetheless, a compendium of the major identifying themes which dominate Jewish literature of this period. The protagonist, K., is single, cut off from his previous life and determined to gain recognition in a new environment. Moreover, he is obsessed, to the exclusion of all other interests, by his need for social acceptance. Entering briefly into a tactically astute, romantic alliance with a local woman, Frieda, and then carelessly destroying the home they manage to set up, K. sabotages the alternative family which held the only promise for the realisation of his most cherished ambitions. From this point on, his existence degenerates

into an endless round of antagonisms with figures of authority associated with the Castle, from whom, it is hinted, the recognition and acceptance he wants could have been obtained, simply by his staying with the local woman.

Thwarted idealism

Chapter 5 explores one of the dominant themes in Jewish letters in the first half of the twentieth century, the need for radical social reform. In the three novels considered here, *Di gas* by Yisroel Rabon in Yiddish, *Hayey nisu'im* by David Vogel in Hebrew, and *Georg* by Siegfried Kracauer in German, the satisfaction of this need is expressed not in terms of specific political programmes, but by the example of altruistic protagonists repeatedly demonstrating, at the most personal level, their conviction that the solution to the intractable problems facing society must start with basic changes in the way individuals relate to one another. Each in his own idiosyncratic way, the narrator of *Di gas*, and Rudolf Gordweil in *Hayey nisu'im*, resembles a *bahaltener tsadik*, one of the *lamedvav tsadikim*, the legendary Thirty-Six Good Men whose identity is unknown, without whom, according to Hasidic teaching, the world could not continue to exist. *Georg*, the main protagonist of Kracauer's novel of that name, is not himself a *bahaltener tsadik*, but believes in their existence, and yearns for the spiritual comfort to be found in such a redeeming presence. The passion of the characters' commitment to personal social involvement is equalled only by the drama of their failure to alleviate human suffering, and by the spectacularly self-destructive mismanagement of their own lives.

Chapter 6 continues to explore the theme of thwarted idealism which runs through much of early twentieth-century Jewish fiction. The analysis focuses on the interaction between altruistic ideals and the sense of

temporal and spatial dislocation experienced by Jewish protagonists in a rejecting environment. Three novels are compared, one Yiddish, *Mides-hadin* by Dovid Bergelson, the others German, *Die Flucht ohne Ende* by Joseph Roth and *Der Weg ins Freie* by Arthur Schnitzler.

The first, *Mides-hadin*, shows the Jewish population of the Ukraine trying to come to terms with the new Bolshevik regime. The second, *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, chronicles the vicissitudes of a half-Jewish protagonist from Galicia, Franz Tunda, who does not want to return home after the war because his native province has become part of the Polish Republic. Nor can he settle in Vienna, since he is German-speaking, but not German. At home only in the former multi-ethnic Habsburg Empire, he feels there is no place for him in the Austrian Republic, where the only really acceptable identity is German and Catholic. While the characters in *Mides-hadin* have not been displaced geographically, as has Franz Tunda in Roth's novel, they are forced by the ideological demands of the Revolution to renounce every aspect of traditional Jewish family, communal, and religious life. This amounts to a cultural and economic displacement equal to that faced by Tunda, but more severe than that faced by the Jews in Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie*.

The self-defeating rhetoric which characterises *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* has its origins in the programmatic intent of both works. With this novel, Bergelson sought to persuade Ukrainian Jewry, not only that Bolshevik success meant the irrevocable end to the old way of life, but that Soviet power was to be welcomed because it would bring the social justice which is the traditional object of millennial Jewish longing. *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, though not such a blatant instrument of propaganda, has a social and political message it hopes to put across on the basis of its claim to be a dispassionate 'Bericht', rather than purely imaginative fiction.

In both cases, the authors' deepest convictions and lightest prejudices

infiltrate the text. Roth, for example, is unable to control his misogyny and fails to sustain a tone of balanced reportage, thereby destroying the credibility of his 'report'. Bergelson, intellectually determined to put forward the Bolshevik case, still retains profound respect for Jewish values, as well as a forbidden national attachment to the Jewish people. The writers' ambivalence towards their material then becomes interwoven with the text itself, and takes on an ironic form, an unconscious irony which is beyond the control of the author.

Der Weg ins Freie is also a study of the 'psychology of foreignness' (Avins, 1983, p.177). Schnitzler explores political, social, and economic factors, demonstrating their psychological influence on the Jews of Vienna at the turn of the century. Two sets of reactions are presented, the nervous hypersensitivity of the Jews, and the brutal hostility of the surrounding population. Paradoxically, the Jewish characters suffer the same sense of dislocation, of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, as those in *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, albeit in a much more attenuated form. There is even a suicide attempt because one character feels trapped by the Jewish identity which he cannot escape, and which he sees as an absolute barrier to the social acceptance he craves. Schnitzler, however, is not part of the problem. The conscious irony which he employs in *Der Weg ins Freie* is shown to enhance, rather than damage the structure of the work, which gains in balance, coherence, and artistic impact. Thus Schnitzler retains control over his material so that, at all times, the irony in the text represents his comment on the proceedings, rather than a revelation about the author.

Irony in Jewish and Non-Jewish Narrative Fiction

In order to put the specific uses of irony in Jewish writing into sharper focus, Chapter 7 compares the works of a non-Jewish ironist, Thomas Mann, with those of Siegfried Kracauer. Kracauer's imaginative fiction, although it consists of only two novels, has not received the attention it deserves. Neither *Ginster* nor *Georg* is available in translation for an English-reading public, and nowadays Kracauer is virtually unknown as a novelist. Indeed, Kracauer's novels are ideally suited to represent this historical period because they portray German reality from a covertly Jewish perspective, and have been largely forgotten by posterity.

Comparison between Mann's vision of Germany and Kracauer's, as revealed in the types of individuals and social situations which are depicted ironically, shows that there are areas where both writers are moved to social criticism or self-defence. These areas have to do with representatives of social institutions which lack any appeal for either writer, such as the army and military doctors. However, even when the targets are the same, the ironic treatment has nuances which expose the fundamental differences in the Jewish and non-Jewish positions in German society.

Effectively placed outside mainstream society because of his experience as a homosexual in a homophobic environment, Mann was forced into a perspective on German society characterised by some of the psychological distance of a Jew. Nevertheless, his literary irony is directed against more personal targets, and is less wary. Verbal irony in Kracauer's work is rooted in the Jewish sense of group exclusion and fear of institutions whose power can still be directed against the individual Jew who has dissociated himself from the Jewish community.

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis is the extraordinary similarity in themes and rhetoric, which characterises the imaginative fiction of writers of Jewish origin working in Yiddish, German, and, in one notable case, Hebrew. If one examines the backgrounds of the writers whose works appear in this study, one would not predict, for example, that the same motifs would dominate the narratives of individuals as disparate as those of the eminent German journalist, Dr. Siegfried Kracauer, and Yisroel Rabon, the Polish-Yiddish poet of the poorest Jewish area of Lodz. When, however, we compare *Georg* by Kracauer with *Di gas* by Rabon, we find that in both cases the narratives consist of a series of encounters between a protagonist struggling against increasing social marginalisation, and representatives of various sections of the majority society. All the encounters end in defeat and rejection for the protagonists, who, astonishingly, nevertheless maintain their belief that the necessary restructuring of society along more humane lines is still possible. In fact, an obsession with social justice is one of the quintessential identifying characteristics of Jewish writing in this period, finding its way even into such an intensely private, apolitical novel as Vogel's Hebrew novel *Hayey nisu'im*.

Although the Jewish cultural system was no more uniform throughout Europe than the non-Jewish, the longing to be part of European civilisation was so general among the Jewish writers born in the last decades of the nineteenth century that, paradoxically, they created a unified body of literature in their separate countries of origin. This can be identified as Jewish precisely because of the preoccupation with a certain set of themes and the use of specific literary devices in underlining those themes. It is not, therefore, surprising that the plots of Jewish prose narratives in the first half of the twentieth century are marked by the determined efforts of

youthful protagonists, portrayed either as being hopelessly at odds with their parents, or without family altogether, engaged in a variety of unsuccessful attempts to find an alternative family. 'Alternative families' come in two basic forms: recognised social institutions and erotic relationships. The first includes the national army of the protagonist's country of residence, a political party (usually Communist or unspecified left-wing party whose strong social platform the character finds reassuring), a religion (not Judaism), or professional success in a prestigious or influential profession. Erotic relationships among the main protagonists in Jewish fiction of this period are noteworthy for two reasons: they are uniformly unsuccessful, and they represent the last hope of psychological stability and serenity for the central character. Jewish literature is therefore caught in a curious dual tension characterised by contradictory sets of values. On the one hand, there is the astonishing lucidity of psycho-social analysis, the passion for social justice, and indefatigable zeal for restructuring national institutions and human behaviour along ever more civilised lines. And on the other, there are the repeated, banal misunderstandings between men and women, portrayed in highly stereotypical ways. Failure in this area condemns the individual, already distressed by his insecure social status, to unbearable extremes of despair, which in turn leads to personality disintegration. I believe that I have shown this to be the rule rather than the exception in the texts analysed in this study.

Chapter 2

Stages of Alienation

From shtetl family to solitary émigré

*Mein ganzes Leben ist
ein großes Heimweh*
Gustav Mahler

Introduction

In the early part of this century until the outbreak of the Second World War, Jewish writers in Central and Eastern Europe strove to express the feelings of unease which permeated the personal and intellectual life of the community. Character and plot development in their narrative fiction reveal a preoccupation with the increasingly hapless dependence of solitary individuals on society at large. The sense of isolation and rejection in the world outside the family, combined with the reduced security which the family is able to provide, is the central experience of Jewish writers of this period, and results in a similar portrayal of psychological vulnerability in the wide range of character types appearing in the works analysed here. In the words of Trommler (1966, p.64): 'Die äußeren historischen Ereignisse [...] sind nur Bestätigungen des inneren Geschehens, das sich im Bewußtsein der Menschen abspielt. Geschichte wird hier zur Bewußtseinsgeschichte.'

Not only, however, do the characters evince the same vulnerability, they also react to the pressures under which they live in similar ways. As we shall see, this is true whether or not the characters are implicitly or explicitly designated as Jewish, or even if their characterisation depends upon their not being Jewish.

Three pieces of imaginative fiction are examined in this chapter. One of the texts is in German, *Der Weg ins Freie*, by Arthur Schnitzler and the other two are in Yiddish: a novel *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* (*The Family Karnovski*) by I.J. Singer and the story *Tsvishn emigrantn* (*Among Emigrés*) by Dovid Bergelson. The analysis will focus on the influence of the changing social environment on personal behaviour, and identify the principal literary invariant: the central role of the family. It will be argued that, in the writings of all three authors, the primary effect of change is the undermining of the family unit with the resultant disorientation and alienation of the individual family members.

The protagonists of Jewish narrative prose are motivated by an unbridgeable distance between themselves and their past, exacerbated by a sense of social rejection and a longing for acceptance so intense that it distorts all aspects of their lives, or in Peter Loewenberg's telling phrase, the Jew's 'verzweifelter Wunsch nach Anerkennung' (Loewenberg, 1979, p.457). The texts under consideration here are shaped by the protagonists' continuing search for an 'alternative family' to replace their own unsatisfactory family of origin. Attempts to find such a 'family' are made by forming attachments to political parties, various national armies, professional colleagues, social and religious movements other than Zionist or Jewish, membership of cultural élites and the acquisition of personal fame.

The Authors

Though Bergelson and Singer shared a language, they had no shared set of political beliefs, or even a common vision of the destiny of the Jewish people. Bergelson, a native of the Ukraine, believed that the two non-Russian centres of Yiddish literary activity in the early part of the twentieth century, Warsaw and New York, could not provide a cultural environment in which modern, secular Yiddish literature could flourish. Polish Jewry he considered to be dominated by a retrograde, religious outlook, and he predicted that Yiddish literature would cease to be produced in New York as soon as the immigrant generation mastered English. Since that left only Russia with a large enough Jewish population to offer realistic prospects for the future of Yiddish letters, he urged Yiddish writers to submit to the dictates of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and was himself among the first to do so. Thus Bergelson's writing became increasingly distorted by the need, as he perceived it, to be allowed to live and publish in the Soviet Union, so that only his early, pre-Revolutionary work is unmarred by the contradiction between the desire to write simultaneously for the Jewish people and the Communist Party. On 12 August 1952, along with the other Soviet Yiddish writers who had survived the Second World War, Bergelson was shot on Stalin's orders.

Singer, however, who had been briefly convinced by revolutionary argument, left Warsaw for Kiev in 1918, but had seen enough of Soviet reality by 1922 to predict with extraordinary accuracy, in his novel *Khaver Nakhmen*, the pitiless way Jews would be rewarded for their loyalty to Russia. Like Bergelson, Singer was a rationalist who received the Jewish education that was traditional for the sons of religious parents, but later rejected the religious milieu in which he had been brought up. And like Bergelson, Singer was deeply preoccupied by the question of where, if

anywhere, the Jewish people should live in order to ensure their physical and spiritual survival. His personal answer was America, although he did share some of Bergelson's misgivings as to whether the Jews would ultimately fare any better there than they had in Europe. Singer died in New York in 1944.

Schnitzler differs from both in that his chief concern was not about choosing an environment where Jewish culture could flourish, but how Jews could remain in Austria and have their contributions to national culture accepted by the non-Jewish majority. A rationalist who, unlike Bergelson and Singer, was not steeped in Jewish learning, Schnitzler was ambivalent about being Jewish but nevertheless wrote with unreserved contempt about his Jewish compatriots who tried to deny their identity. Religious observance in Schnitzler's childhood was confined to the Day of Atonement, celebrated by his parents to please his maternal grandmother. He did not have a Bar Mitzvah on his thirteenth birthday, but was married in a synagogue, and was divorced by means of the Jewish divorce decree, the 'get' (Wagner, 1981, p.20). On a personal level, the recrudescence of Austrian anti-Semitism experienced by the author led him to insist that his son Heinrich study Hebrew at school. Schnitzler's writings, especially *Der Weg ins Freie*, the play *Professor Bernhardi*, and his autobiography and diaries, are distinguished by a profound and subtle analysis of the psychological damage he observed among Viennese Jews from the 1880s until his death in 1931.

For Bergelson, the connection between this sense of personal disorientation and the changes taking place in the outside world was clear. Young, educated Jewish intellectuals were particularly vulnerable to a sense of emptiness and lack of purpose following the failure of the 1905 Revolution in Russia. Years of pogroms in the Jewish towns of Bergelson's native Ukraine had culminated in the Kishinev massacre of 1903, leaving young

people, like Bergelson himself, caught between the narrow horizons of the shtetl, which no longer offered a viable way of life, and the great Russian cities with their implacable hostility to Jews. In 1897, Grand Duke Sergei expelled practically the whole Jewish community from Moscow. Pogroms recurred so regularly they were likened to 'the winter snow' (Sachar, 1930, p.373). By the end of the century, Jewish economic and social life had been severely damaged. The census of 1897 revealed the extent to which Russian Jewry had become pauperised under Tsarist rule. On average, a fifth of the community required communal aid at Passover and in Odessa and Vilna it was one in three (ibid., p.372). Bergelson was therefore writing about a generation struggling to grow into maturity in an emotional twilight-zone, where Jews continued to live according to traditional patterns, but in an environment where the past was visibly disintegrating around them, and the only way out, into Russian society, was blocked.

This awareness of the purposelessness of their lives, coupled with a sense of inertia, and an inability to find a role as secular Russian Jews, dominates the characters in Bergelson's writings until the revolution of 1917. After the revolution, a Yiddish writer had to decide whether it was more likely that anti-Semitism would remain a constant of any Russian regime, or whether a new era might really have dawned for millions of Soviet Jews. Bergelson inclined first to the former premise, and emigrated, and then to the latter, and returned from Berlin to live permanently in Moscow in 1934. Since his professional life after the Russian Revolution increasingly became a matter of trying to follow the Party line, while persistently claiming that the writing produced under this pressure was exactly what was needed for the great masses of Yiddish-speaking Jews, it has become accepted wisdom that Bergelson's finest work was produced before the upheavals of 1917. Nevertheless, despite his declared intention to be a 'Soviet' writer, and the obvious attempts to produce formulaic,

'anti-bourgeois' work, his earliest stories and novels are linked to the rest of his work by an ineradicable belief in the family as the irreplaceable stabilising force in the life of the individual. Only the degree of anger or benevolence with which the portrait of the Jewish family is drawn, varies considerably. This in turn is a measure of Bergelson's own shifting sense of isolation, vulnerability, optimism, or despair.

The strength of family cohesion and loyalty also distinguishes Bergelson's pre-1917 writings not only from his later work, but from the other texts I shall consider here. Despite the estrangement of the protagonists from themselves, their friends, families and marriage partners, the immobility into which the characters are locked is mitigated by the remnants of family solidarity and the still unbroken confidence which the characters retain in the environment into which they were born.

Arthur Schnitzler: *Der Weg ins Freie*

For all their irritations and dissatisfactions, Bergelson's characters are not marked by the ravages of self-loathing which characterise the young intellectuals of Jewish Vienna in the pre-1914 writings of Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931). His novel, *Der Weg ins Freie*, written between 1905 and 1908, portrays a Shtetl-Vienna where Jewish characters are related to each other by ties of blood, marriage or friendship in a structure familiar from Bergelson's stories set in the small Jewish towns of the Ukraine. Indeed, Georg von Wergenthin, the most important non-Jewish character in *Der Weg ins Freie*, notes irritably that he is constantly being reminded by one Jewish character or another that all the Jewish families in the novel are related to each other (*Der Weg ins Freie*, vol.1, p.661). As Rozenblit (1983, p.147) has shown, 'the Jews of Vienna practised similar professions, lived in the same neighbourhoods, attended school together, and married each other.'

Moreover, through their professional activities, they formed associations 'which made it possible for most Viennese Jews to enjoy a Jewish social life.'

In Vienna, the liberal political climate of the 1860s and 1870s had tempted the Jews to believe that relinquishing their religious identity was not an unreasonable price to pay for integration into Austrian society. The victory of the openly anti-Semitic Christian Socialist party, and the election of its leader Karl Lueger as mayor of Vienna in 1895, put paid to these aspirations. In reality, integration was never more than partial and the disappointment in the unkept promise of Emancipation was correspondingly bitter. The Viennese Jews described by Schnitzler have lost even the vestige of psychological autonomy which permits Bergelson's characters, who are no less melancholic and pessimistic than those of Schnitzler, to retain their fundamental personal dignity. Anti-Semitism is not explicitly discussed in Bergelson's depiction of his lost generation, whereas the increased hostility of which Jews were conscious in Austria, after Lueger had been in power for ten years, is analysed at length in *Der Weg ins Freie*. Schnitzler sees it as a major factor in the emotional deformation and behavioural aberrations of his Jewish protagonists. The impasse in which Austrian Jews found themselves at the turn of the twentieth century is succinctly formulated by Le Rider (1990, p.213) in his recent study:

En exigeant (et en obtenant bien souvent) des Juifs l'«euthanasie» de leur identité religieuse, et en leur refusant néanmoins l'émancipation intégrale et immédiate qui aurait sans doute facilité leur intégration, le libéralisme allemand et autrichien a exposé le programme d'assimilation à un double péril: les Juifs allemands et autrichiens ont beaucoup sacrifié de leur identité pour entrer dans la culture allemande, et pourtant ils sont restés condamnés au statut du 'Gastvolk', 'peuple hôte', soumis au bon vouloir du peuple d'accueil. La conquête des libertés et de l'égalité des droits restait illusoire puisque dans le même temps l'image archaïque du ghetto juif était entretenue par les restrictions et les disparités des législations en vigueur.

In order to show the various forms of division which anti-Semitism was causing among established Viennese Jews, Schnitzler gives illustrative roles to the members of two families, the Golowskis and the Ehrenbergs. For both families, the cornerstone of their existence is their involvement in the intellectual and cultural life of the city. The members of the younger generation, as Willi (1989, p.95) has observed, are especially eager to distance themselves from the image of the Jewish 'Geldmenschen', while the parents try to avoid exposure to criticism by avoiding public debate on politically sensitive issues. Therese Golowski's decision to embark upon the career of a Socialist party agitator is therefore especially alarming for her parents. Moreover, the prison sentence which she soon receives further shatters her family's sense of living in a secure and predictable world. Her brother, Leo Golowski, continually goaded during his military service by the anti-Semitic taunts of his commanding officer, then does the unthinkable by killing the officer in a duel.

One of the special nuances of the Austrian duelling code was that Jews had been declared *satisfaktionsunfähig* in the *Waidhofener Beschluß* of 1896. This was a document drawn up by the Austrian student convention to publicise its official position on the eligibility of Jewish students to participate in the ritual duels which were an integral part of upper caste life in the Habsburg period. According to this Waidhofen Resolution, Jews were held to be inescapably and irredeemably lacking in honour, and were consequently forbidden to seek retribution from non-Jews for insults or offences to their person (Wistrich, 1989, p.217). In his autobiography *Jugend in Wien*, written between 1915 and 1920, and not published during his lifetime, Schnitzler sheds light on this matter. He reveals that in the years before this historic decision, Jewish students, increasingly subject to slights and insults from non-Jewish students, had taken to defending themselves pre-emptively by going on the offensive, and had become extremely

effective duellers (*Jugend in Wien*, p.152):

[...] müde, die Unverschämtheit und die Beleidigungen der Gegenseite erst abzuwarten, traten sie ihrerseits nicht selten provozierend auf, und ihre immer peinlicher zutage tretende Überlegenheit auf der Mensur war gewiß die Hauptursache des famosen Waidhofener Beschlusses, mittelst dessen die deutsch-österreichische Studentenschaft die Juden ein für allemal als satisfaktionsunfähig erklärte.

It is this phenomenon which Leo Golowski illustrates, as well as the point made by Beller (1989, p.192), that 'the admirers of the German "Volk" had been excluded by the very group who should have been their closest ally, the German national intelligentsia.'

The most fascinating question posed by the interaction of Jews and non-Jews in *Der Weg ins Freie* is to what extent Schnitzler subscribes to the theory that anti-Semitism is a function of Jewish behaviour, and can be regulated by behavioural modification. Does he really see anti-Semitism 'as largely a psychological problem of the Jews' (Segar, 1971, p.80), or is he aware that it is a 'social problem, rather than an individual problem of good conduct' (Lewin, 1948, p.200)? In actual practice, of course, the distinction is often blurred, as is evident both from the way in which Leo Golowski's challenge to his anti-Semitic commanding officer is phrased, and Breitner's subsequent comment on this linguistic formulation (*Der Weg ins Freie*, p.925):

Gestern, Herr Oberleutnant, sind Sie mehr gewesen als ich, jetzt sind wir vorläufig einmal gleich – aber morgen um die Zeit wird wieder einer von uns mehr sein, als der andere.

'Etwas talmudisch' – remarks Breitner, a character described by the narrator as 'objektiv und getauft'. But why would Schnitzler describe a Jew who has been baptised in order to escape the relentless Austrian anti-Semitism of the time as 'objective and baptised', since the tendency in such cases is for the individual to try to divert attention from his own

origins by becoming more aggressively anti-Semitic than the anti-Semites? In order to understand this ambiguous, if not illogical construction, one must refer to Schnitzler's private vocabulary. In his autobiography he uses the phrase 'mit der falschen Objektivität des Renegaten' (*Jugend in Wien*, p.154). 'Renegat' is Schnitzler's word for a Jew who converts to Christianity to make his own life easier. In the author's experience, these 'renegades' make hostile statements about Jewish culture, religion, and people, as if their prejudiced remarks actually constituted objective truth. Breitner is such a 'renegade'.

In the catalogue of possible reactions to the humiliation of social rejection presented in *Der Weg ins Freie*, the most extreme is that of Oskar Ehrenberg. Oskar is a failed 'renegade' in that he does not actually convert to Catholicism because to do so would mean being disinherited by the father on whom he is financially dependent. Without therefore daring to renounce his Jewishness formally, Oskar hits upon a ruse which he hopes will allow him to circumvent the problem altogether. He pretends in public that he is not Jewish. To demonstrate the extent of the self-loathing generated in the younger generation by the social and political climate in which they live, Schnitzler has Oskar raise his hat ostentatiously whenever the young man passes a church. On one occasion, he is caught in the act by his father, who berates his son for dereliction of family loyalty and lack of self-respect, and slaps him on the face. Since his son is at that time wearing the Kaiser's uniform, the incident is interpreted by the deranged young man as a public attack on the Monarchy, and he acts accordingly. Although Oskar Ehrenberg survives the bullet he puts through his head, the grotesqueness and horror of the event only deepen the gloom with which the intelligent Jews among the novel's characters view their situation.

This complex syndrome of Jewish self-hatred and self-disgust, as an internalisation of the relentless contempt with which they were treated in

Austria, is epitomised in the novel in an anecdote told by the Jewish writer, Heinrich Bermann, about a Jew on a train who behaves with scrupulous civility to the gentleman seated opposite him, until it becomes clear that his travelling companion is also a Jew, whereupon the first Jew puts his feet up on the second Jew's seat, sighing with relief, 'esoj'. The second Jew is piqued and mortified, but cannot enforce conventional manners once his identity has been revealed. This *esoj*, meaning here 'so that's how it is', is the only Yiddish word in the text, and is used in a context which touches upon the essential contradictions between the pretensions and the realities of the Viennese Jewish middle classes. Superficially, the anecdote implies that Jewish behaviour is not up to local standards, that Jews only pretend to be more civilised than they actually are, and are relieved when there is any opportunity for them to revert to type. It therefore suggests that the surrounding majority population is justified in regarding Jews unfavourably, and in seeking to exclude them from polite society. More significantly, however, the anecdote shows Jews more at home in each other's company than with the Austrians who reject them anyway, but whose approval and acceptance is vital for the survival of a minority group like the Jews. Most importantly, the introduction of a Yiddishism in a context in which the characters exhaust themselves trying to prove that they have nothing special in common with each other, and should not be associated together in the popular Austrian mind as a sub-culture separate from that of the majority, reveals a tacit awareness of Jewish self-deception unique to this passage.

Although he knew that his friends, especially Richard Beer-Hofmann, expected him to produce the definitive commentary upon the *Esoj-Thema* in *Der Weg ins Freie*, Schnitzler also knew that he would be unable to do so, and lets Bermann explain why: 'Die Sache ist viel zu kompliziert um überhaupt erledigt zu werden. Sogar innerlich ist es unmöglich' (*Der Weg*

ins Freie, vol.1, p.757). Georg von Wergenthin, who, as a Catholic Austrian aristocrat, is not used to spending his mental energy on defending himself against rejection, usually finds Bermann's obsession with the problems of being a Jew in Austrian society gratuitously irritating and alienating. Occasionally, however, he has a glimmering of an insight into what is really involved, and once, instead of simply condemning Heinrich yet again for being so prickly and difficult, Georg realises that 'reine Beziehungen auch zwischen einzelnen reinen Menschen in einer Atmosphäre von Torheit, Unrecht und Unaufrichtigkeit nicht gedeihen können' (ibid., p.730).

A medical doctor by training, and the son of a celebrated laryngologist, Schnitzler practised medicine for many years simultaneously with the pursuit of his literary career. He considered his judgement to be genuinely dispassionate, and devoted himself to the quasi-clinical observation of the Jewish problem, focusing his attention on the social and psychological aspects of the question, while ignoring the religious dimension completely. Although there are religious Jews in Bergelson's stories and novels, there are none among the main protagonists in either his or Schnitzler's work.

On the other hand, Schnitzler did attend the funeral of Theodor Herzl, whom he knew personally. Indeed, it has been suggested that Leo Golowski, 'the handsome Zionist [is] evidently the author's back-handed tribute to Theodor Herzl' (Wistrich, 1989, p.600). Zionist arguments do appear in *Der Weg ins Freie*, though only for the purpose of being opposed. For example, Bermann is not interested in going to Palestine, and old Ehrenberg, who has Zionist inclinations, visits the settlements there but comes back disappointed. As Zionist theory is notable for its absence in Bergelson's work, and none of the central protagonists of either Schnitzler or Bergelson is religious, the psychological burdens of the characters of both writers are the same. They are all left to confront the exigencies of their position without the comfort of religion or Zionism, armed solely with the resources of

their own intelligence and imagination.

I.J. Singer: *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*

In addition to the nuances of alienation depicted in the Jew living with his own family in a traditional Jewish town, and the Jew living with his own family on their native, if hostile soil, there are many new forms of alienation experienced by the émigré Jew, still living with his blood relations, but in a foreign country. This is the situation of the protagonists of *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, by I.J. Singer (1893-1944). Published in 1943, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* stands as the summation of Singer's evaluation of the unforeseen implications that the Haskalah, the 'Jewish Enlightenment', was to have for the history of European Jewry. In a family saga covering three generations, Singer shows how misguided was the conviction that the substitution of modern Western modes of thought and behaviour for the traditional Eastern European Jewish way of life would enable the impoverished masses of the Jewish people to enjoy the fruits of European civilisation while preserving contact with Jewish religious sources.

To this end, Singer endows Dovid Karnovski, his representative of the Haskalah ideal of acculturation through education, with the noblest intellectual attributes. 'Haskalah', often referred to as the 'Jewish Enlightenment', is the general term applied to the remarkable cultural renaissance which took place in central and eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. It began with a renewal of interest in Hebrew, and developed into a profound humanism with the ambition to remove the Jews from their isolation and to familiarise them with European culture. The *maskilim*, as the adherents of the Haskalah were known, were usually intellectually emancipated individuals with sharpened critical faculties, inspired by the Haskalah motto 'let there be light', and were unsympathetic to the prevailing view that Jew-

ish education should be a religious exercise or spiritual discipline rather than a means of furthering the development of intellectual and artistic abilities (Sachar, 1930, p.385). Dovid Karnovski, the archetypal *maskil*, believes he has succeeded in finding the correct balance between *yidntum* and *daytshum* because he learns to speak German perfectly, never utters a word of what he regards as his debased native language, Yiddish, dresses in the current Western fashion, but continues to practise the Jewish religion, albeit in the Reform version considered unacceptable by the observant relatives who have remained in his native Polish shtetl. An ardent disciple of Moses Mendelssohn, Karnovski is repelled by what he sees as the narrowness and futility of traditional Polish Jewish life, and moves to Berlin, the better to follow the Haskalah slogan framed by the Hebrew poet J.L. Gordon, 'be a Jew at home and a man in public'. The scandalous manner of Dovid Karnovski's departure from Melnitz, his native town, foreshadows the impossibility of the Haskalah dream to which he is ideologically committed: standing in the *bes-medresh* where his father-in-law, a respected town notable, has always prayed, Dovid Karnovski is discovered by his fellow congregants to be praying not from the *sider* used by everyone else, but from a *Haskole sider* with the commentary printed on the same page as the Torah, 'Di tume zayt bay zayt mit kedushe' ('pollution side by side with holiness'). In other words, it is already too late to extirpate modernism because it has entered the community through the younger generation who will devote their lives to propagating its tenets, thus assuring the demise of traditional belief and practice. In the initial confrontation between an older and a younger generation, where the older is perceived by the younger to reject new ideas without taking the trouble to understand them, and to disregard younger people's views which may be worthy of attention and respect, we find a pattern that is repeated again three times in the course of the narrative. The relatively light-hearted tone of this passage is, how-

ever, unique. It contains a play on words, the purpose of which is only secondarily to expose the ignorance of Dovid Karnovski's distinguished father-in-law, who fails to grasp that the dangerous homonym of the Yiddish word 'beer' is in fact the Hebrew word for Biblical exegesis, 'be'ur', enunciated according to the rules governing the pronunciation of Hebrew words in Yiddish. The 'khumesh' referred to here is Moses Mendelssohn's 1783 translation of the Pentateuch with his Commentary, which, although largely based on traditional exegesis, did introduce a number of modern concepts, and emphasised aesthetic aspects of the biblical text. Since the Hasidic rabbis were perfectly aware that it was Mendelssohn's intention to wean the masses of unenlightened Jews away from traditional Judaism, they were duly irate at young Karnovski's temerity in bringing a copy of this infamous work into their bastion of traditional Judaism (*Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, p.7):

Moishe Mendelssohns khumesh – hot er genumen shrayen un shpayen, – Moishe Desers 'bir', khilul-hashem! In bes-hamed-resh hot zikh ufgehoybn a murml, a geroysh [...] – Moishe Desers treyfe-posl, – hot der rov gefayert, vayzndik mit a finger in Dovid Karnovskis khumesh, – azoyns iz nokh in Melnits nisht gehert gevorn... ikh vil dem berliner meshumed nisht araynlozn tsu mir in shtot [...] Leyb Milner iz geshtanen a tsetumtler. Mit a tales mit a zilberner atore, mit a sheyner, vayser bord un briln geramt in gold, a yid a hadras-ponem un a bekoved-gelasener, hot er nisht ongehoybn tsu visn, vos der rov fayert azoy af zayn eydem un vos azoyns di tsekokhte yidn viln fun im aleyn.[...] Epes hot dergreykht tsu zayne oyern dos vort 'bir', ober vos far a min bir dos iz un vos hot bir tsu ton mit im un zayn eydem, dos hot er nisht bagrifn.

Moishe Mendelssohn's edition of the Pentateuch, [the rabbi] began to shout and spit, – Moishe Dessauer's 'beer', this is sacrilege! In the prayer-house a loud murmur had become audible [...] – Moishe Dessauer's filthy rubbish, – thundered the Rabbi, pointing a finger at Dovid Karnovski's khumash, – Such a thing has never been heard of in Melnitz... I will not allow that Berlin apostate in my town [...] Leyb Milner stood there in confusion. With a silver-edged prayer-shawl, a handsome white beard and gold-rimmed spectacles, a Jew of stately appearance and a calm, dignified manner, he had

absolutely no idea why the Rabbi was lashing out this way at his son-in-law, and what these overwrought people wanted from him. [...] True, the word 'beer' had reached his ears, but what sort of 'beer' it was, and what 'beer' had to do with him and his son-in-law, he couldn't imagine.

But Leyb Milner is only Karnovski's father-in-law, not his father, who is never mentioned in the narrative, and it is significant that their quarrel, though it marks a definitive rupture between them, lacks the bitterness that is the distinguishing feature of the relations between fathers and sons in this novel. The primary purpose of this opening scene of the novel is to establish the obstinacy and self-destructiveness with which both sides in the dispute refuse to see the other's point of view, and prefer to tear the family and the community apart rather than show any spirit of conciliation. In each generation there is a history of chronic misunderstanding between father and son, in which the son feels psychologically abandoned by his father, whom he punishes by retreating ever further from the Jewish community. If Judaism were associated solely with the father, dissociation from any or all of its manifestations would be a simple solution for the younger generation to adopt. Since it is not, the tension in the narrative comes from the fact that rejection of the Jewish religion, and the refusal to be associated with other members of the community, not only result in a loss of personal identity, but aggravate the individual's problem of his own rejection by non-Jewish society.

Without the support of the communal institutions of the Polish Jewish town Dovid Karnovski had found so suffocating, he cannot offer his son, Georg, enough of a Jewish education to enable the boy to take pride in his own identity. Georg is therefore more vulnerable than his father to the prevailing anti-Semitism, and utterly unable to support his own son, Yegor, when the precarious security Jews had enjoyed in Germany suddenly vanishes in 1933. In Yegor, the split between the two halves of his identity

into German and Jewish is not the result of ideological fervour as it was with his grandfather, or of ignorance and indifference as with his father, but of the fact that his mother is German. Yegor is Singer's warning of the terrifying consequences attendant upon the Jewish compulsion to lose themselves in other cultures. With his mother's blue eyes, the only part of his physiognomy he can bear to contemplate, and his father's dark, curly hair and prominent nose, his sickly adoration of his mother and ferocious hatred of his father, Yegor is the completely self-hating Jew whose self-image is so poor that he finds no anti-Semitic utterance, however patently absurd, too improbable to be believed. Gilman places his reading of *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* under the aptly-titled heading, 'The Language of the Mad', and goes on to say that 'the act of writing sensibly about mad Jews becomes the writer's proof of the intactness of the writer's Jewish identity' (Gilman, 1986, p.362). This statement is equally true of Bergelson writing about Mirl as for Schnitzler and the cast of self-hating Jews in *Der Weg ins Freie*.

Even though Yegor is only half-Jewish, receives no Jewish education, and has no positive associations with that part of his identity, he is still unable to deny absolutely every connection with the Jewish people. He is the product of his father's inconsistency and naïveté. Georg has Therese convert to Judaism, so that according to Jewish law, not only German prejudice, Yegor is Jewish, but the maternal image she provides is wholly Aryan. Yegor is circumcised, but in an operation performed by his father, without any religious ceremony. Singer shows that Georg fails Yegor culpably by not accepting the reality of Jewish life in the diaspora where belonging to the Jewish people is determined by the interdependence of Jews upon each other regardless of whether an individual feels himself similar to other Jews. The hatred which he should feel for his oppressors, he turns upon himself in line with the classic model of self-hatred among

members of minority groups outlined by Lewin (1948, p.194). From the specific hatred Yegor feels for his father, and the general hatred of which the Jews are increasingly the object, he cobbles together a crippling self-loathing which undermines his sanity completely. Yegor is destroyed by his attempts to find an 'alternative family' in German society. He can never rid himself entirely of the Jewish half of himself, but the Jewish part of his identity is too weak to afford him any psychological protection from the ravages of anti-Semitism.

Yegor is merely the most extreme among a large number of characters in *Nokh alemen* and *Der Weg ins Freie*, whose personalities are threatened with disintegration for similar reasons. The particulars of his case are so grotesque because the message of *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* could not help but be more pessimistic than that of novels written before the First World War. In the sections describing David Karnovski's initial years in Berlin, however, there are the same constants as in the earlier works: the tensions of a disappointing marriage in the parents' generation; mutual misunderstanding and antipathy between fathers and sons; weak mothers who are perceived as having no significantly useful contribution to make to their children's lives; the family which is no longer a bulwark against the outside world, and the resultant vulnerability of the younger generation, followed by the desperate attempts of the latter to replace their inadequate family with a functional alternative.

While Bergelson and Schnitzler are not explicit about the causes of the unhappiness in the marriages of their protagonists' parents, Singer ascribes the tensions in the marriage of Dovid and Leah Karnovski to their different reactions to the challenge of adapting to their new environment. The two sets of reactions become paradigms of two opposite and equally unsatisfactory responses to the situation of the immigrant, and contribute to the inability of the parental generation to transmit the positive aspects

of their original culture to their children. Leah, completely satisfied by the daily routine of a Polish Jewish wife and mother, feels no inner need for any aspect of German civilisation, and is even rather repelled by what she sees in Berlin. However, the community which provides Leah with everything she wants is implacably at odds with Dovid's intellectual and cultural ambitions. Their son Georg is then obliged to create a synthesis out of these two conflicting views of the ideal modern Jewish identity, and, when this proves too difficult, is left with a relation to his parents marred by resentment and mutual misunderstanding, as well as an uneasy and insecure relation to the outside world.

Dovid Karnovski's determination to integrate fully into the life of his adopted country is symbolised by his devotion to the German language and his rejection of Yiddish. This rejection of Yiddish as a language becomes extended to a rejection of his wife and the whole of the traditional Polish-Yiddish culture she embodies. For Leah Karnovski, who never masters German grammar and syntax, and is not too certain of her vocabulary either, the alienation she feels in Berlin encroaches ineluctably upon her home and love for her husband. As a symbol of his commitment to Germany, David Karnovski takes to making love to his wife in German, about which Leah does not dare complain to her husband, but the author paraphrases her reflection (*Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, p.20): 'Zi filt nisht keyn emesn tam fun libe in di fremde daytshe verter.' She feels no real love in the foreign German words. Moreover, her only other possible refuge, the synagogue, which seems to her more like a bank than a prayer-house, is merely another source of disgrace and frustration, since it is not done in Berlin to sigh and complain to God in the manner of unsophisticated Polish Jews, and, in any case, Leah finds that she cannot pray at all if she must concentrate on not embarrassing herself and her husband by addressing God in Yiddish as 'tate ziser' ('sweet father'). Estranged from her husband

and son, mocked by the Rabbi's wife and other local wives who would normally have been expected to provide her social contact outside the home, far from her beloved parents and sisters, Leah represents the immigrant for whom the exchange of cultures has no advantages.

Between the extremes of rejection of the past and alienation from the present, Singer proposes one successful compromise: Solomon Burak. Also an émigré from Melnitz, the Karnovskis' native town, Burak contrives to build a prosperous clothing business in an exclusive section of Berlin while keeping his links with the past. Burak resolves the tension between past and present, between *yidntum* and *daytshtum* by rigorously assigning each to its proper place. By maintaining this distribution, *yidntum* to his heart and *daytshtum* to his pocket, Burak is spared the agonies of Georg Karnovski for whom being German is an emotional as much as a practical necessity. Solomon Burak, who is at peace with himself and the world, is also at peace with his wife and children, who are, in their turn, at peace with each other.

This harmony is expressed by the Buraks' continued use of Yiddish as the language of communication, not only among their immediate family, but among all the émigrés who congregate in their home on Ite Burak's open-house days. Not the least of Solomon Burak's achievements is the lucidity with which, despite his own material success, he assesses the illusory nature of the social acceptance and personal security the assimilationists claim is theirs in Germany, although it may fairly be asserted here that Singer is abusing the novelist's privilege of hindsight. Burak is Singer's refutation of the Haskalah ideal. The only untormented character in the novel, he earns his living successfully in the non-Jewish world, but shares neither Dovid Karnovski's need for intellectual underpinning in his religion, nor non-Jewish acceptance in his social life. Sustained by a strong, instinctive loyalty to the traditional forms of Judaism, Burak remains a Jew

in private and a Jew in public, presumably an example of the retrograde creature an assimilationist such as Walther Rathenau had in mind when he described Berlin Jews in the startling phrase 'Auf märkischem Sand eine asiatische Horde' (quoted in Loewenberg, 1979, p.461). Although Burak is hurt and angered that the rebuffs he receives in the course of his struggle to earn a living in the large, impersonal city, are as often from native Berlin Jews as from German non-Jews, he is not damaged by his experiences because his self-image is not dependent on the approval of a social group which is determined to exclude him whatever he does. Singer underlines the fact that it is the simple, unpretentious Polish Jews who are wise enough to notice the truth about German society that the brilliant and distinguished Karnovskis refuse to acknowledge, that neither money nor professional success can provide the social acceptance they crave, but they are still offended by the contempt with which they are treated (*Dimshpokhe Karnovski*, p.27):

Der oylem est mit hanoe di heymishe vetshere un hert oys di zaftike mayses fun balebos, ale zayne derfarungen un tsores, vos er hot gehat oystsushteyn fun di goyim un zeyere hint in der tsayt ven er iz aropgekumen do aher un arumgeshlept zikh mit der valize hoyzirn, biz got hot im geholfn un er hot zikh arufgearbet un er ken lakhn fun yeke nar. Fun di goyishe yekes geyt der oylem iber tsu di yidishe yekes, vos punkt vi di goyim kenen zey a fremdn yid af di oygn nisht zen un voltn a poylishn in a lefl vaser dertrinkn.

The audience eats the homely evening meal with pleasure, and listens to the pointed stories the head of the house tells about all the experiences and troubles to which he was subjected by the Germans and their henchmen when he first arrived in Berlin, and went peddling from house to house with his suitcase, until God helped him, and he was able to work his way up, and now he can laugh at the German fools. From the non-Jewish Germans, the conversation moves over to the Jewish Germans, who, exactly like the non-Jews, can't bear the sight of a foreign Jew, and would gladly drown a Polish Jew in a glass of water.

Dovid Bergelson: *Tsvishn emigrantn*

But the overwhelming 'defeat of exile', in Joseph Roth's phrase, 'die ewige Niederlage des Exils', is to be found in its most acute form in the last piece of writing I shall consider, Dovid Bergelson's story *Tsvishn emigrantn*. Published in 1928, *Tsvishn emigrantn*, like *Nokh alemen*, *Der Weg ins Freie* and *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, explores the psychological consequences of the failed search for an 'alternative family'. It is one of the stories that Bergelson wrote during his exile in Berlin and unlike much of his fiction of this period, is actually set in the German capital. In Bergelson's early novel *Nokh alemen*, the central figures make desultory attempts at inserting themselves into mainstream Russian society. Although these all fail, the characters maintain a measure of equilibrium by moving back and forth between the small Jewish towns and the great Russian cities, whenever they find life too stultifying in the former, and too unwelcoming in the latter. For the protagonist of *Tsvishn emigrantn*, who has fled to Berlin in order to escape the attacks against Jews which occurred throughout the Ukraine during the Civil War of 1918-1919, the loss of family is complete. Like Leah Karnovski, he is from a small town, and proves unable to find a place for himself in the seething city, 'in der keseldiker shtot'. Unlike Leah, and unlike any of the other protagonists in the works discussed in this chapter, the tragic hero of *Tsvishn emigrantn* is not suffering from an aggrieved sense of being misunderstood by members of a nuclear or extended family, or from the damaged self-image resultant upon arbitrary exclusion from the society into which one is born. He is really alone in a hostile world. Bergelson's own home had been ransacked during the Civil War pogroms, and as twists in the plot of this story progressively reveal, the whole narrative is a vehicle for discussing the psychological situation of the solitary émigré in an alien metropolis.

Tsvishn emigrantn, a story-within-a-story, has two narrators. The first, a Yiddish writer, uses third-person narrative to describe the night a wild-eyed stranger bursts into his rooms in order to borrow a revolver with which to avenge the murder of his family at the hands of 'pogromtshiki'. The second narrator, a young man who remains nameless, recounts his own story to the Yiddish writer in the first person. The young man's desperation is attributed to his being bereft of close relatives as well as of immediate family. He is described as functioning on a rudimentary level, and entirely dependent on the remnants of his former life to provide him with an identity. He attempts to win the sympathy and confidence of the narrator, in whom he hopes to find the support and encouragement of a surrogate family. In order to dispel the impression that he is merely a dangerous madman, he cites recommendations of himself from a vanished world, in the form of indirect address that is a distinguishing feature of Bergelson's style of dialogue (*Tsvishn emigrantn*, p.192):

Er gedenkt mikh gut fun der heym. Er hot gekent mayn zeydn
un ken mir gleybn afn vort.

He remembers me well from home. He knew my grandfather,
and can take me at my word.

Here we see that in as far as an attempt is being made to imagine a viable life for the writer and his reader, *Tsvishn emigrantn* is representative of the early phase of Bergelson's exile before he abandoned hope in surviving outside his native land. Later, he began to make drastic artistic compromises with a view to cajoling the Communist Party of the Soviet Union into allowing him to return to Moscow as a publishable writer. In this text, however, before deciding that the loss of the will to live is a foregone conclusion for the solitary émigré, Bergelson is still trying to envisage circumstances that might give adequate meaning to the struggle of the isolated individual. To this end, he posits an intensified symbiotic

relationship between the writer and his public, in which, because neither has any better alternative, each serves as a form of substitute family for the other. For the lonely immigrant who has lost his bearings completely, the only solution is to seek out a writer (ibid., p.198):

Ikh hob mir ongehoyn ibereygn: tsi iz nisht faran do keyn yidishe gezelschaft, azelkhe, vos velt mir geholfn. Ikh hob a trakht gegebn: iz fort, khotsh emetser – efsher shrayber? Shrayber, hob ikh getrakht, zenen vi der gevisn fun folk. Zey zenen zayne nervn, zey shteln for zeyer folk far der velt, fun di verk fun shrayber vel men nokh dem visn, viazoy hot in zeyere tsaytn gelebt zeyer folk.

I began to think: is there not some Jewish society here which could help me. Then I thought: there must be someone – perhaps some writers? Writers, I thought, are the conscience of their nation. They are its nerves, they present their nation to the world, from the works of writers will it be known afterwards how their nation lived during their lifetime.

In this passage, Bergelson is expressing the view that a written memorial to the solitary émigré's suffering is the best that can be hoped for. Unfortunately, the émigré himself cannot be helped by this record, because his personal disorientation is so extreme that he will take his own life before the book is written.

The outcome of the narrative, the young man's suicide, illustrates Bergelson's eventual conclusion that the writer cannot save his nation. He cannot save even one person; he can merely record the demise of those in a situation similar to his own. In this case, the attentive ear of the writer in the story is not enough to prevent the would-be assassin from hanging himself instead of avenging the murder of his family. Utterly demoralised by his inability to overcome the hopelessness he feels in the strange city, incapable of making a life for himself outside his own country, where he knows that he is not wanted either, the young man describes his state of mind in a letter to the narrator (ibid., p.199):

Ikh hob gefunen an oysveg [...] Ikh hob farshtanen di gantse zakh: ikh bin an emigrant...tsvishn emigrantn...ikh vil es mer

nisht.

I have found a way out [...] I have understood the whole matter in its entirety: I am an émigré...among émigrés... I don't want to be that anymore.

Conclusion

This chapter looks at three novels and a short story written by authors of Jewish origin between 1908 and 1943. The dates of publication as well as the narrative settings, from Tsarist Russia, Habsburg Austria, and Congress Poland, through the Ukraine of the Civil War and Soviet periods, to Weimar and Nazi Berlin, provide a representative coverage of the European Jewish experience of the first half of the twentieth century. All three works, *Der Weg ins Freie*, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, and *Tsvishn emigrantn*, have protagonists which are drawn from the younger generation. In each case, although more subtly present in *Tsvishn emigrantn*, the role models offered by the parents are rejected as inadequate and the young protagonists find themselves without guidance in their dealings with the wider non-Jewish world.

Besides rejecting the option of adopting their parents' value-system and way of life, the young are also portrayed as resentful of what they see as insufficient understanding and encouragement from their parents. The first way the protagonists choose to mark their disappointment in, and disapproval of their parents, is to distance themselves from the practice of the Jewish religion and ties to the Jewish community. This tendency is common to all groups, despite important differences in social class, level of education, country of residence, and regardless of whether the language of expression is Yiddish or German. Although reacting with varying degrees of exasperation, resentment, and resignation to the unsatisfactory relations with their family of origin, the young people who are the focus of attention

in these texts all have a desperate longing for unconditional acceptance by society at large. At the heart of the three narratives under discussion, therefore, is the unsuccessful search for a viable 'alternative family'.

Membership of the cultural élite in the protagonists' country of birth or residence is especially looked upon as a guarantee of inclusion in just such a 'family', from which they will no longer have to fear rejection, in Hannah Arendt's phrase: 'der Ruhm wurde ihnen, den politisch und gesellschaftlich Heimatlosen, die Heimat' (quoted in Willi, 1989, p.106). Georg Karnovski, with his serene confidence in the durability of his German identity, as opposed to his confused, vestigial commitment to Judaism, incarnates the Jew for whom fame does indeed provide a safe haven. With the rise of Nazism, however, Georg does come to understand that the precarious balance he had achieved between loyalty to his Jewish heritage and advancement in contemporary Germany was based on the principle of unilateral, suicidal self-abnegation. But, most significantly, he is forced to acknowledge that the referent society does not allow the Jew to define his own identity. On the contrary, by acting on the assumption that if he only abandons enough of the customs and traditions which have historically identified the Jew in his own eyes, the non-Jewish majority will make parallel concessions, the Jew succeeds merely in permanently marginalising himself. Abels discusses Schnitzler's astute analysis of the conflict facing the Viennese Jewish intellectual of his time in terms which are applicable to the protagonists of *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, as well as those of *Der Weg ins Freie* (Abels, 1982, p.90):

Das Problem der Juden, das Schnitzler meint, besteht in den durch den Antisemitismus verstärkten Antinomien, die es gerade dem jüdischen Intellektuellen so schwer machten, die zum großen Teil durchaus als anachronistisch durchschauten Elemente der jüdischen Tradition zugunsten einer gefährvollen Assimilation aufzugeben. Denn der Versuch zu einer Assimilation, die nicht auf die Befreiung von Dogmen jeglicher Couleur, sondern auf Leugnung der eigenen, durch die Herkunft mit-

geprägten Vergangenheit [...] käme einem zutiefst suizidären Verlangen gleich.

Suicide is, indeed, a solution found in these works by both central and secondary characters in whom the sense of homelessness has become unbearably intense. The search for a home is accompanied by nuances of despair which increases with the geographical and psychological unavailability of the family of origin and the degree of rejection by the majority population. *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* ends with the attempted suicide of Yegor Karnovski, and Singer is careful not to make it clear whether the belated application of Georg Karnovski's paternal love and medical skill can still suffice to save the boy's life. *Der Weg ins Freie* contains the suicide attempt of Oskar Ehrenberg, another instance of self-hatred, and the most dramatic example of the consequences to the younger generation of the partial emancipation of their parents. The Ehrenberg family, in which the bitter conflict between father and son arises from the latter's rejection of the Jewish identity that is still deeply cherished by the former, is a paradigm of the hostility and misunderstanding that occurred because the residual loyalty to Judaism of the older generation 'was no longer sufficient for the new generation, forced to live between two worlds and two cultures. The inherent duplicity of their situation produced for a whole generation of socially and spiritually uprooted young Viennese Jews a sense of inner conflict, imposture, and despair' (Wistrich, 1989, p.541). The Golowski family, on the other hand, represents the alternative possibility, where the children reject the status quo to which their parents cling, Therese by joining the disreputable Socialists, and Leo by adopting the Zionist perspective on the daily humiliations the Austrian Jews agree to ignore. And *Tsvishn emigrantn* concludes with the suicide of the young would-be assassin, who is incapable either of avenging the murder of his family or of making a new life for himself ^{without} the support of close relatives and homeland.

Chapter 3

The Impact of War

The Changing Role of Men and Women

*Die Juden widerlegten das Sprichwort,
das da sagt, der dritte gewänne,
wenn zwei sich stritten. Die Juden
waren der dritte, der immer verlor*
Joseph Roth

Introduction

Jewish writers, in German and in Yiddish, were profoundly affected by the major social and political changes which took place in Europe during the inter-war years. Although arguably less subject to the psychological ravages of self-abnegation and self-loathing characteristic of semi-assimilated Jews in Germany and Austria, Yiddish-speaking Jews, especially those still integrated into Polish Jewish communities, were even harder hit by the socio-political disintegration and economic destruction of the war. For Jewish communities on both sides of the Yiddish-German language barrier, the effects of the First World War and the Russian Revolution were perceived as both dangerous and liberating. Dangerous, in that the Jew became even more visible as a distinct element in an otherwise homogeneous national war effort, thereby becoming the target for renewed and intensi-

fied popular hatred; and liberating in so far as the weakening of the old social order created expectations of an improved society that might favour the Jews' integration and social acceptance in their countries of residence.

In the general turmoil of war and revolution, Jewish women found their status dramatically revised. Equipped only with the pre-war attitudes and behaviour patterns that had accustomed them to positions of subservience and dependence, women of all social classes found themselves obliged to respond to the demands of a new reality. Unlike men, who could exchange established social structures with publicly validated replacements such as the army or a political party, women were forced to create their own substitutes for the social frameworks and support systems that had been removed.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify a shared perspective in two novels, one in Yiddish, *Khaver Nakhmen* (*Comrade Nakhmen*) by I.J. Singer and the other in German, *Junge Frau von 1914* by Arnold Zweig. The Jewish women depicted by Singer and Zweig differ radically from their men, who find themselves incorporated, for the first time in their lives, into a community enjoying the greatest public support, a war-time army. Indeed, it is precisely the behavioural changes caused by the men's exposure to the military ethos, with its emphasis on brutality, authoritarianism, and the necessity to ignore personal standards of morality, which deepen the women's isolation at the same time that the practical burdens of their daily lives increase. Left to survive as best they may, the women develop a parallel existence to that of the men, without, however, effecting a Copernican shift in their psychological universe. That is, even in their absence, the men remain central in the minds of the women: central in their minds, but orthogonal to their lives.

One reason for choosing these two novels is the remarkable formal similarity they share, both dividing into a man's story and a woman's

story. In each case, the male plot deals with the man's attempts to divest himself of his socially unacceptable Jewish identity by merging into a male group where the emphasis is on physical action and obedience to a code of mindless ruthlessness completely at odds with the character's previous mode of thought. Nakhmen Ritter, a religious scholar immersed in the traditional Jewish way of life, becomes a militant Communist activist, and Werner Bertin, a writer and intellectual, spares no effort to become a German soldier of ordinary brutishness.

The women's plots, on the other hand, present a pattern altogether different from that of the men, as the female protagonists are characterised by a physical submission to their war-time destiny transfigured by a determination not to lose the personal integrity associated with their pre-war life. Because two sets of responses to the changing mores of their own societies diverge along gender lines, the characters in *Junge Frau von 1914* and *Khaver Nakhmen* illustrate a view of the relations between men and women common to Zweig and Singer despite the linguistic and cultural differences of the two writers. This view holds that men and women exist in separate realms, with separate destinies that overlap because of the men's practical reliance on the women, and the women's emotional dependence on the men.

The Texts

Khaver Nakhmen, first published in New York in 1935, is a proletarian anti-Bildungsroman illustrating Singer's despairing thesis that the Jewish masses are incapable of learning from experience. Changes in the political system by which they are governed, Singer believes, do not relieve them of the persecutions to which they are subject by virtue of their status as a nation without a country. *Junge Frau von 1914*, published in 1931, is a po-

litical novel in which Zweig focuses despairingly on the semi-assimilated German-Jewish middle class. In both novels, despite the differences in social milieu, language of expression, educational attainments and professional expectations, and most significantly, degree of integration into the majority culture, the protagonists' reactions to social change are divided along gender lines. The women's responses include a passive acceptance of the principles upon which society is ordered, and an indifference to wider social and political issues, coupled with a ferocious determination to overcome current crises with the minimum damage to the fabric of their daily lives. It is the intensity of their concern to survive with the family unit intact which inspires the women to venture outside the framework of their pre-war lives, and to take the initiative in situations which would previously have been considered beyond their spiritual and physical capacities. Furthermore, their determination to survive is marked by an insistence upon the enduring value of pre-war Jewish ethical traditions, and a continued identification with the Jewish people as a whole.

The women's line of narrative mostly runs parallel to that of the men, and intersects it infrequently and inconclusively. The male line of the narrative is distinct from the female in two ways: in their struggle for survival, the men not only reject specifically Jewish moral values and forms of behaviour, but also seek to dissolve their own personal identity in the anonymous mass of the surrounding non-Jewish population. As none of the women is in standard, recognised employment, there is also no sub-culture to which they might aspire to belong. Sheyndl, who supports Khanke, sells bread illegally on the pavements of Warsaw; Khanke looks after her child, and Lenore, a former student, has an annuity from family money. Nevertheless, the characters of both sexes are described with a neutrality which allows the reader, at least in the early stages of the narrative, a dispassionate view of the men's attempts to divest themselves

of their past in order to create a new future, while the women try to salvage enough remnants of their past to give coherence to their lives in the present.

I.J. Singer was a leading figure in Yiddish culture in Warsaw in the 1920s and New York between his emigration in 1933 and his death in 1944. Because of his existential commitment to Yiddish letters, all his characters are portrayed from a Jewish perspective. Arnold Zweig was born in Glogau, Silesia, in 1887. In 1923, he settled in Berlin which is the setting for his novel *Junge Frau von 1914*, published only two years before his emigration to Palestine in 1933. His attempt to become absorbed in Palestine was ultimately unsuccessful, and in 1948 Zweig returned to Germany, this time to East Berlin, where he lived until his death in 1968. As Reich-Ranicki (1977) points out, Zweig's concern was to unify in his writing the two facets of his spiritual heritage which he considered most valuable, Prussian discipline and Jewish morality. Zweig, therefore, presents his characters from the dual perspective of a German and a Jew, yet the concluding points of both novels are the same in that Jewish protagonists of every social class and degree of cultural sophistication are betrayed and rejected by whichever social group they trust. *Bildung* does not protect the educated Jew, since Hugo Wahl is betrayed by the educated classes (government and army), and working-class solidarity does not include the Jew within its compass, as Nakhmen Ritter is rejected by the Communist Party to which he sacrifices every vestige of personal morality and happiness.

While the structure of *Junge Frau von 1914* reveals the destabilising effect of the First World War on the relations between men and women in the German Jewish middle classes, in *Khaver Nakhmen* this effect is observed among the poorest strata of Polish Jewry. In both cases, however, it is the difference in the psychological functioning of men and women that is explored in the course of the narrative and that gives the texts their distinctive shape, with their double line of plot weaving separately through

the same territory. The narrative territory through which Nakhmen Ritter wanders is that of unconditional belief in political slogans. The central theme of the male half of the plot is the gullibility of a Jewish Everyman who is prepared to let himself be exploited to self-extinction by the Communist Party, because his need to believe is greater than his capacity for accepting the truth about the idols in which he has invested his faith. For this reason, the male half of the narrative registers negative emotional development. On the other hand, although Nakhmen does not become wiser as a result of his experiences, both his sister Sheyndl and his common-law wife, Khanke, do learn to adjust their behaviour in order to deal more effectively with the reality of the situations with which they are confronted. Thus the two parallel lines of the plot continue their separate trajectories to the end: Nakhmen is expelled from the Soviet Union, tossed into a no man's land between Russia and Poland, with no legal access to either; Khanke, Sheyndl, and the rest of the family are in Warsaw, abandoned to a fate which is not specified in the body of the text.

The tension in the novel is generated through the conflict between Nakhmen's activities on behalf of the Polish Communist Party, and the ruin which his supposedly redemptive activities bring upon himself and his family. Nakhmen believes that these activities, despite their obvious illogicality and devastating effect on his own life and the lives of other Jewish workers, are the design of an infallible Party hierarchy, and that if he is only unquestioningly obedient enough, his efforts will bring redemption to the Polish working classes. With the same tenacity with which Nakhmen carries out the destructive orders of his Party Leader, the ambiguous Jewish demagogue Comrade Daniel, Sheyndl and Khanke endeavour to protect not only themselves, their children and younger siblings, but also Nakhmen himself from the devastation his ideological commitment brings on all of them. The women take upon themselves the

responsibility for feeding and educating their two small sons, both illegitimate, many young sisters, and later, Sheyndl's alcoholic husband. The women's persistent belief in the value of life, despite the precariousness of their own existence, is emphasised by their unhesitating acceptance of the responsibility for sustaining new life. In contrast to the positive attempts of the women to maintain the stability of the family, and by extension, of society generally, the male characters are entirely taken up with the acquisition and maintenance of power. The male characters who never acquire any personal power, Nakhmen Ritter, and his father, Mates Ritter, experience the same fate as the women, in that control over their own lives is in the hands of more ruthless and successful men.

Both Singer and Zweig, in their portrayal of women in a period of historical transition, depict characters whose response to the radical social changes brought about by the First World War is devoid of the ideological enthusiasm distinguishing their men. In their struggle to survive, the women are preoccupied by the minutiae of their daily lives, and indifferent to the political factors that affect their living conditions. The men, for their part, are not concerned with the material and psychological reality of the women and children, but are wholly absorbed in the historical flow of the times in which they live. Nevertheless, the women succeed in creating and sustaining life, whereas the final result of the men's activities is war, death, and destruction. Nakhmen Ritter's belief in the Communist Revolution as the sole means of transforming his social position from that of disenfranchised outcast is shown by Singer to preclude the exercise of moral judgement in the same way as Werner Bertin's desire to be integrated into the German army is shown by Zweig to be incompatible with pre-war patterns of ethical behaviour.

In addition, the women face their altered circumstances with two disadvantages not shared by the men: they have no active role in the production

of those circumstances, and no philosophical commitment to their continued existence. Sheyndl's social position in her native town becomes untenable when she becomes pregnant following rape by a soldier with whom she had fallen in love. Subsequently, she makes a disastrous marriage on the mistaken assumption that her husband will be able to provide more satisfactorily for her family than she can, as she is illiterate and without professional qualifications. Nor is Khanke in control of her destiny. She is unable to prevail upon Nakhmen to marry her when they have a child, unable to persuade him to limit his activities on behalf of the Communist Party while they are in Poland, in order to avoid arrest and torture, and when they try to settle in the Soviet Union, she fails to induce Nakhmen to modify his behaviour enough even to provide himself and his family with living conditions equal to the level of penury they had known in Warsaw. Similarly, when Lenore Wahl, the heroine of *Junge Frau von 1914*, becomes pregnant after being raped by Werner Bertin, she also is left to deal with the consequences without the help of her lover. Since Lenore's well-being is of overriding interest to no one but her brother, the message in *Junge Frau von 1914* as in *Khaver Nakhmen* is that only a woman's immediate family accept responsibility for her, not her husband or lover. This being the case, it is just as well that their philosophical disengagement from the events which befall them frees the women to experiment with new techniques for dealing with situations for which nothing in their prior education had prepared them. It is, moreover, remarkable that they are able to do so without rejecting the ethical bases of their former lives.

The men, however, who feel that they are actively implicated in the events in which they take part, rapidly abandon the moral code which had previously guided them. During his first days as an apprentice baker, Nakhmen has difficulty in overcoming the feelings of guilt he experiences as a result of breaking the ancient commandments of the Jewish religion by

which he had lived as a 'yeshive bokher', but he soon loses every vestige of piety, and later reacts with hostility to Khanke's wish to give their son a traditional Jewish upbringing. Though the women are portrayed as emotionally dependent on the men they love, they are, in effect, autonomous, if only because they see the men only rarely, are not supported by them financially, and do not share their ideological commitments. Singer and Zweig both make it clear that it is the men's culpable naivety which threatens the stability of the family, especially of the Jewish family, because it is the men who believe that adherence to one political creed or another will ameliorate the otherwise intractable problems of the Jewish social position to the point where Jews will finally be accepted as equals by the majority population. In this sense, *Junge Frau von 1914* and *Khaver Nakhmen* both illustrate the thesis which Singer elaborated in an essay entitled 'A 2000 Year Error', first published in New York in 1939, containing the theoretical formulation of the principles that underlie the novels written during the last decade of his life. The male protagonists in *Junge Frau von 1914* are also partisans of the 'goles teoriye', the 'exile theory' that explains Jewish history, according to Singer, in terms of 'opgenarte hofenungen', 'disappointed hopes' (Singer, 1975, p.292):

vos khotsh zey hobn shoy'n antoysht, hot men zey ale mol
banayt in yedn dor un vider zikh antoysht.

which, despite the fact that they proved deceptive, were revived
in every generation, and again proved disappointing.

Further (ibid., p.295):

Alts iz shoy'n geven, un alts iz shoy'n geven a durkhfal, vayl
di grunt-hanokhe fun der eksistents fun a folk on a land iz a
falshe. Di goyim hobn nisht gevolt, viln nisht, un veln keyn
mol nisht veln onerkenen di yidishe goles-filosofiye, veln nisht
ayngeyn afn shidekh, vos bloyz der yidisher tsad vil im. Di
goyishe kaleh vil nisht dem yidishn khosn.

Everything has been tried, and everything has been a failure,
because the basic premise of the existence of a nation without

a land is false. The non-Jews have never wanted, do not want, and will never want to recognise the Jewish exile-philosophy, do not want to accept the match which only the Jewish side wants. The non-Jewish bride does not want the Jewish bridegroom.

The specifically Jewish overtones of the men's gullibility in these two works have to do with what Singer identifies in his essay as a perverse determination not to learn from experience (ibid., p.299):

Tsvishn di umzinikste gloyberayen zeyere iz [...] der gloybn vider a mol un ober a mol in di vos hobn zey shoyn on a shir mol genart. Zint yidn zaynen in golus hern zey nisht uf tsu gloybn ale mol afs nay in naye tsaytn, in progres, in tsivilizatsye, az nokh dem umglik veln zikh onhoybn gliklekhe tsaytn biz in der eybikayt arayn.

Among the most nonsensical of their beliefs is[...] the ever renewed belief in those who have countless times deceived them. For as long as Jews have been in exile, they have never stopped believing in new times, in progress, in civilisation, in trusting that after the disaster, happy times will begin and will endure forever.

In *Junge Frau von 1914*, the male half of the plot, presenting the experience of two generations of German Jews, furnishes the evidence for Zweig's version of Singer's 'goles teoriye': Lenore Wahl's father, the wealthy Potsdam banker Hugo Wahl, is forced to reconsider his lifelong German patriotism just at the moment when his prospective son-in-law, Werner Bertin, is discovering with joy that the Kaiser's uniform can be unexpectedly useful in camouflaging a socially awkward Jewish intellectual identity. The part of the plot involving the younger generation charts the process of assimilation of Lenore's lover from thoughtful, sensitive poet to common soldier indistinguishable from any other recruit in the German Imperial Army.

Developments in the lives of the older generations, however, chronicle the reverse process, in which Lenore's father and grandfather gradually realise that their belief in Germany is a potentially fatal error. They typify the semi-assimilated Jews who, as David Sorkin describes, have for generations regarded the German state as a 'trustworthy institution' (Sorkin,

1987, p.63); hence the disillusionment is not theirs alone, but is suffered by German Jewry as a whole. Furthermore, the tardily acquired wisdom of his elders also serves to expose the dangerous futility of Bertin's youthful optimism. Hugo Wahl, a typical representative of German Jewish upper middle-class thinking, is at first flattered when he is asked by the German High Command to help finance the Imperial war effort, seeing in this request a long-awaited official acknowledgment that Jews are finally being recognised for what they really are, namely the equals of all other German citizens from whom they differ only in the small particular of their religious affiliation. When he is also required to support, along with other wealthy Jewish notables, a government resolution authorising the enforced expulsion of all Jews in the territories occupied by German troops, and he realises that this expulsion is just a first step to sending these Jews to their death, the Prussian patriot experiences the shock Singer summarises in the phrase 'opgenarte hofenungen'.

What interest do the women express in the ideological convictions of the men? They do not mention them directly. At the infrequent points where the lifeline of the women intersects that of the men, the interactions are primarily sexual. The women are left to struggle alone with their emotional and material dereliction. Khanke, Sheyndl Ritter, and Lenore Wahl devote all their energies to finding ways in which they can adapt to new situations without jettisoning the moral bases of traditional Jewish life. Sheyndl, however, with her strong character and sense of mission to look after her family as her mother had done before her, accomplishes her task with an assiduity and perseverance which make her the untitled heroine of the novel, particularly in view of the torments to which she is subjected by her husband, Menashe Becker.

Menashe Becker is another of the male characters in *Khaver Nakhmen* whose refusal to accept reality when it differs from his dreams destroys

himself and those around him. Unable to forgive Sheyndl for having had a lover by whom she had a child before she met him, Menashe continually harasses Sheyndl, rapes her, drinks compulsively, and gambles away the wages he earns as a baker, leaving Sheyndl to support the family by selling bread illegally on the streets. Menashe is characterised synecdochically in terms of his eyes, which are said to become even weaker and redder during his blindly jealous, drunken rages, but as soon as he becomes completely blind, Menashe's personality is transformed by a profound inner vision into the true nature of the human condition, and he is thenceforward characterised by the docility with which he accepts his blindness, and the unprecedented generosity he shows to Sheyndl and her family.

The success Sheyndl Ritter has in achieving her ambitions is contrasted with the grandiosity of her brother's failures. Like Menashe, Nakhmen is also a baker by trade, but abandons his professional activities on behalf of his own household in favour of 'brengn di geule', bringing redemption to the Polish working class, and finishes as one of the Jewish revolutionaries who were in the words of Leonard Schapiro (quoted by Shindler [1987, p.2]): 'as much the victims of the Russian Revolution as its instigators'. The Party is here embodied in the ambiguous figure of the Jewish demagogue Comrade Daniel, thus underlining the element of Jewish complicity in the destruction of the fabric of Jewish life. It is Comrade Daniel who increasingly requires his loyal subordinate Nakhmen to act against the dictates of his own conscience. Comrade Daniel, who is cynically aware that his constituency is not composed of intellectuals, but of women and semi-literate workers, is careful to deliver his fiery oratory with his shirt half unbuttoned, and to incorporate 'authentic' spelling mistakes in the slogans he composes for Nakhmen to carry during political demonstrations.

Unaware of the contempt with which he is manipulated by Comrade Daniel, Nakhmen fails to extricate himself from the Communist Party.

Having repeatedly suppressed his doubts as to the morality of the Party commands he follows, Nakhmen eventually becomes so disorientated that he loses his identity completely, and is finally unable to prove who he is to the Communist authorities whose cause he has served with a lifetime of blind allegiance. His unwillingness to recognise the reality behind the appearances of Party propaganda, is, however, just short of absolute. He can see that Khanke's criticisms of Soviet life are accurate, but he cannot regain the psychological autonomy which he has surrendered to the Party, without which he is forever incapable of adjusting his ideas to fit the reality of his own experience. Erosion of his self-respect follows upon his abdication of responsibility for the ethical quality of his own deeds. Gradually, as Nakhmen's behaviour becomes more and more at odds with his understanding of the morality of his situation, his actions become increasingly self-destructive. His consistent failure to defend any of his principles when they are in conflict with Party instructions means that he is unable to react appropriately to the blatant enormity of Comrade Daniel's declaration that the Party is not, after all, interested in people, but in the Revolution (*Khaver Nakhmen*, p.196): 'Uns geyt nisht in di menshen, nor in der revolutsiye!'

Consequently, the male half of the narrative is taken up with the infliction of physical and psychological pain, within either a domestic or a political framework. Nakhmen is arrested and tortured at length, in Poland as well as Russia. Parallel repetitions of scenes containing equivalent pain and humiliation occur in a domestic context, usually one which is explicitly sexual, where the women experience the same helplessness as Nakhmen during his political interrogations. The despair that his Party Leader causes Nakhmen in their 'dialogue de sourds' is implicitly compared to the despair Nakhmen causes Khanke by his deafness to her pleas to him to show some interest in her, in their child, and in their home. Nor

is it Singer's point that Nakhmen is destroyed because of his simplicity and lack of political acumen. Despite his superior education and greater success within the Party, Comrade Daniel is ultimately destroyed by the same mechanism as Nakhmen. However, the point Singer does stress is the vital difference between the dismissive treatment Nakhmen receives from the Party he has served obediently, and the steadfast loyalty reserved for him by his family, regardless of his neglect of them. The devotion shown by Sheyndl and Khanke has an added resonance because it is a continuation of a tradition which has already been presented in a positive light in description of the previous generation. Nakhmen's mother, Sarah Ritter, represents a certain image of the traditional Eastern European Jewish woman whose every gesture is informed in equal measure by poverty and piety. She is characterised entirely in terms of her humility and devotion to her husband, whom she exists to serve (*Khaver Nakhmen*, p.14):

Mit oysgehorevete, blase hent hot zi aropgenumen dem shvern
zak fun mans pleytses un mit a breg fartekh opgevisht im dem
shvays fun shtern.

With pale, work-worn hands, she took the heavy sack from her
husband's shoulders and wiped the sweat from his brow with
the corner of a handkerchief.

Figuratively as well as physically, Sarah removes the burden of care from her husband, for whom her love and the observance of the commandments of the Jewish religion are unique sources of happiness.

Although forced by the exigencies of the war to take initiatives which would have been unthinkable for the generation symbolised by Sarah Ritter, Sheyndl, Khanke, and Lenore resemble her in their conception of their role as women, which they see as requiring them to adapt to men over whom they have little if any influence. When Sheyndl falls in love with the Romanian soldier Soloveichik, she allows herself to be used by him, despite his essential brutality and his indifference to her. Soloveichik's

animal magnetism, like Menashe Becker's spiritual blindness, is evoked by means of synecdoche. Both are characters of secondary importance who make brief, but telling appearances at crucial points in the narrative. Little time is spent on their characterisation, but their functions are vital to the development of the plot, and must therefore be instantly apparent to the reader. Accordingly, Soloveichik's hairy hands come to stand for his whole repellent but fascinating person. In this case, the hairy, vigorous hands hint at his predatory intentions, and belie the blandness of his 'sheyne reydl', the smooth talk, which Sheyndl is astute enough not to believe (*Khaver Nakhmen*, p.93):

Di hent zayne zaynen rirevdike, geshikte, vi bay a kuntsn-makher. Di royte bintlekh hor af zey un di gele zumershprenklekh makhn zey enlekh tsu lapen fun a fartsukendiker khayeh. Epes vi horike bashefenishen, fremde tsum gantsn kerper, krikhn zey fun di zelnerishn arbel aroys. Umetum zaynen zey ful. Sheyndl hot moyre far zey, ober zi ken nisht bayshteyen di varemkeyt vos flit fun zey, dem koyekh.

His hands are vigorous, adroit, like those of a conjurer. The bunches of red hair with which they are covered make them like the paws of a twitching animal. Like hairy creatures, alien to the rest of his body, they creep out of his soldier's sleeves. They are everywhere. Sheyndl is afraid of them, but she cannot resist the warmth which flows from them, and their strength.

Sheyndl recognises that Soloveichik radiates a quality which is irresistible to her, but does not allow herself to be misled about his sincerity (*ibid.*, p.95): 'Tief in harts bay zikh hot zi gevust az der fremder yung nart zi.' ('Deep in her heart, she knew that the alien youth was deceiving her.') She maintains her integrity and her sanity by not relinquishing her critical judgement of her own actions. Nevertheless, she does not try to escape the danger the soldier represents for her, because an ineradicable part of the nature of the women Singer describes is their readiness to submit to what they perceive as their destiny. In the women's half of the narrative the tension comes from their shifting attempts to find an equilibrium between

the two poles of their nature, the will to survive and the habit of submission. The result is that the women exercise considerable ingenuity in order to survive within a set of circumstances determined by their men, without, however, contemplating the possibility of creating living conditions suited to their own needs. This is the pattern adopted by the female characters who are portrayed as admirable. The two women who attempt to take control of their own lives, Mates Ritter's second wife, and Reyzl Ritter, are depicted negatively as selfish, overbearing, and immoral. Sheyndl's passivity is the female animal counterpart to the soldier's male animal aggression (*Khaver Nakhmen*, p.95-96):

Sheyndl iz gegangn a gehorkhzame nokh dem yung. Vi a khaye, vos in der tsayt fun rayfkayt, geyt fartoybt biz zi gefint nisht ir min, azoy iz di ufvakhendike moyd gegangn tsu ir goyrl.

Sheyndl followed the young man obediently. Like an animal which walks around in a daze when it reaches its period of maturity, until it finds its mate, so did the awakening young woman go to her fate.

Nevertheless, Sheyndl's submissiveness is associated in the text solely with her sexual encounters with men. Otherwise, she is increasingly described as goal-oriented, inventive, and enterprising. It is Sheyndl, instead of Nakhmen, who not only organises the celebration for the circumcision of Khanke's son, but who selects someone to defend Nakhmen when he is arrested for subversive political activities, and who pays her brother's legal expenses out of her own earnings. Like Menashe Becker in the period of his metaphorical blindness, Nakhmen Ritter is prepared to destroy himself and those closest to him, rather than accept that existing reality does not conform to his wishes. Khanke, however, does modify her behaviour in accord with changing circumstances. After Nakhmen's first arrest, Khanke is proud of the contribution which she personally has made to the Revolution, since it was she who first introduced Nakhmen into

the Party. Subsequently, she tries to persuade him to give up his political activities, and is horrified at his refusal to consider the needs of his family on a par with those of the Party (*Khaver Nakhmen*, p.186):

Zi iz umruik vegn Nakhmen, vos er kumt nisht aheym. Zi iz geven in shrek, tsi er iz nit arestirt amol. Der bloyzer gedank, az er zol arestirt vern itst, ven zi darf im azoy noytik hobn, ven zi trogt fun im a kind in ir layb, hot gemakht klapn shneler ir harts.

She is uneasy because of Nakhmen, that he doesn't come home. She is terrified that he might have been arrested. The mere thought that he might be arrested now, when she needs him so badly, when she is carrying his child in her body, makes her heart beat faster.

Khanke's fidelity to Nakhmen parallels Nakhmen's faithfulness to the Party. In the distinction between the two forms of loyalty can be summarised the themes of each half of the narrative, for Nakhmen is the dupe of the Party in general, and of Comrade Daniel in particular, while Khanke maintains her constancy to Nakhmen without pretending to the slightest confidence in his political perspicacity. Khanke sacrifices neither her personal integrity nor her Jewish identity to ideological illusion, whereas Nakhmen sacrifices both. In the scenes of attempted discourse between Nakhmen and his Party Leader, there are echoes of the dismissive arrogance with which Nakhmen treats Khanke when she points out the destructive effect Communist ideology is having on the fabric of their family life (*Khaver Nakhmen*, p.189):

'Vos-zhe', hot er gefregt mit kas, 'zol ikh dir efsher koyfn laykhter af shabes, makhn kidesh far dir un zingn zmires, ha?' Khotsh Khanke hot gornisht gefilt dem unzin fun azelkhe zakhn, hot zi es nisht zugegebn.

'What?!', he asked angrily, 'do you think I should buy you candlesticks for Friday night, say blessings for you over wine and bread and sing songs of praise to God?' Although Khanke did not think such things at all ridiculous, she did not say so.

In a parallel scene in the male half of the narrative, Nakhmen pleads in vain with Comrade Daniel not to insist on calling a strike among the Jewish bakers of the city, the sole effect of which will be the ruin of Jewish livelihoods. Despite his pathetic eagerness to believe that slavish self-abasement will induce the Party to forgive his Jewish origins, Nakhmen is still able to perceive the sinister implications in the Party's blithe willingness to sacrifice Jewish workers, especially when that decision is taken by one Jew and implemented by another. Comrade Daniel's character and destiny are marked by the same contradictions, wilful blindness to reality, and ultimate self-destructiveness as Menashe Becker's and Nakhmen Ritter's. A cultivated upper middle-class Jew, Daniel chooses to overlook the fatal contradiction between Party rhetoric and reality, the reality being that the Polish Communist Party will not allow him to work among non-Jews. Comrade Daniel represents the delusions of the educated Polish Jews as Nakhmen does the illusions of the uneducated. Although they consciously deny the obvious bias against them on the part of their party bosses, Daniel and Nakhmen can never feel safe enough within the Party fold to behave conscientiously towards the Jewish working-class families who form their constituency. In the new, alternative family of the Communist Party, acceptance for the Jew is always provisional, and the sine qua non of professional advancement is the individual's continual readiness to betray those closest to him. Consequently, both Nakhmen and Daniel develop a fratricidal attitude towards the Jewish community. *Khaver Nakhmen* is permeated with the disgust and disillusion Singer took away with him after three years' involvement in Yiddish literary and cultural life in Kiev and Moscow, where, from 1918 to 1921, he experienced the distance between the claims of the Revolution and the reality of daily life in the Soviet Union.

Yet viewed from Berlin, from the perspective of the Wahls and the Bertins, the landscape of *Khaver Nakhmen* is the very heartland of im-

mutable, traditional Judaism. It is therefore important to note that the same processes of self-delusion and communal disintegration are shown to occur simultaneously in both settings. The difference is rather one of nuance than of substance, since there is no attempt to gain direct access to majority society in either country. In Poland, social integration, it is hoped, will be mediated by membership in an extremist political party, and in Germany, by a revered national institution. Gershom Scholem's observations on the historical error made by German Jews in their struggle for social acceptance is therefore equally valid for certain elements of Polish and Russian Jewry (Scholem, 1987, p.77): 'The Jews struggled for emancipation, not for the sake of their rights as a people, but for the sake of assimilating themselves to the peoples among whom they lived. By their readiness to give up their peoplehood, by their act of disavowal, they did not put an end to their misery; they merely opened up a new source of agony.'

The symmetrical plot structure of both *Khaver Nakhmen* and *Junge Frau von 1914* suggests that women's lack of interest in abstract ideologies is balanced by their belief in the value of life as such. Although the continual descriptions of the details of the poverty, hunger, and physical pain suffered by the protagonists in *Khaver Nakhmen* create a tone which is almost unremittingly bleak, the word 'likht', light, is used in conjunction with the birth of children for whom there is no indication in the text that their future will be any less dismal than that of their parents. Nevertheless, when Nakhmen is born, Sarah exclaims 'er iz sheyn vi a likht', and at the birth of Khanke's son, Sheyndl says that he is 'a yung vi a likht'. Despite the bitterness of their own lives, the women sustain their belief in the value of life. Moreover, the humanity of the women is set in sharp contrast to the cruelty of the men by the juxtaposition of two sets of events in which the same degree of emotional intensity is present, but in opposing contexts.

Descriptions of extreme physical pain occur in the female half of the narrative in scenes of childbirth, and in the male half, in scenes of torture during political interrogations. Rozhansky (1975, p.18), in his introduction to an anthology of Singer's writings, expresses the view that:

In tokh iz Singer a pesimist, vayl durkh ale verk zayne geyt – durkh di tragishe derkentenish, az der yokhid in zayn kleyn lebn iz fun onheyb on farmishpet. Der gerangl endikt zikh troyerik, un dokh dermutikt der doziker gerangl dem leyener, vayl tsvishn durkhfal un durkhfal iz do der kheyn un di hanoie fun veln lebn. Der viln, der kharakter, un di perzenlekhkayt zaynen dos blut fun dem gerangl.

Essentially Singer is a pessimist, because the tragic awareness that the individual in his little life is doomed from the outset, runs like a thread through all his works. Though the struggle ends sadly, this struggle encourages the reader, because between failure and failure, the charm and the pleasure of life subsist. The will, the characters and their personalities, are the lifeblood of the struggle.

This statement is especially relevant to the condition of the female characters in *Khaver Nakhmen* and *Junge Frau von 1914*, in as much as only the male characters are explicitly said to experience moments of unmitigated happiness: Mates Ritter every week on the sabbath, Nakhmen Ritter during his first May Day parade in the Soviet Union, and Werner Bertin when he realises how much he enjoys the sense of 'Kompanieehre' that is part of his role as a soldier. The women, however, who are given nothing specific to encourage them in their daily struggle, still manage to retain an ungrudging generosity towards others. Sheyndl's reaction is to accept her fate without complaint (*Khaver Nakhmen*, p.127): 'Zi hot zikh untergevorfn ir goyrl, vos iz gekhasmet, vi shtendik.' ('She submitted to her fate, which was sealed, as always.') Furthermore, as the voice of the omniscient narrator makes plain, Sheyndl decides to care for Khanke out of pure good-heartedness, because the younger woman is not married to Nakhmen. Not being Khanke's sister-in-law, Sheyndl is under no moral

obligation to feed, clothe, and house her. Sheyndl's goodness is especially evident in the scene where Khanke gives birth to Nakhmen's son (*Khaver Nakhmen*, p.126):

Khotsh zi aleyn hot nisht gekrekhtst ba brengn ir eygn kind af der velt, khotsh zi aleyn iz nisht af keyn bet gelegn, keynem nisht gehat arum zikh, a khuts di kets fun kammerl, hot zi rakhmones gehat af Khanke in ir vayberishn tsar un ir mit a klor hantekh gevisht dem shvays fun shtern.

Although she herself had not moaned while bringing her own child into the world, although she herself had not lain on a bed, had had no one around her except the cats in the little room, she took pity on Khanke in her womanly sorrow, and wiped the sweat off her brow with a clean handkerchief.

The selflessness and passivity which are the dominant characteristics of the women in *Khaver Nakhmen* are also decisive in motivating the actions of Lenore Wahl in *Junge Frau von 1914*. Here too, the double strands of the narrative divide along gender lines which run parallel to each other. More limited in scope than Singer's novel, *Junge Frau von 1914* encompasses only the first three years of the First World War, whereas the chronological duration of the events presented in *Khaver Nakhmen*, though unspecified, appears to cover the period roughly between 1890 and the mid 1920s. Zweig's interest in Lenore Wahl is focused on the process by which she learns to overcome the passivity which is a product of her natural inclination as well as a habit inculcated by the delicate pre-war education she has received. By the end of the narrative, Lenore has not only learned to take enough initiative to survive in the new social conditions created by the war, but to enjoy doing so to the point where she does not even regret the passing of the old order.

Nonetheless, Lenore continues to exhibit a docility towards her lover, Werner Bertin, long after she has learned to deal more effectively with the outside world. Despite her anger with him, she does not confront Bertin with her anguish over her illegal abortion and the distress his attitude

causes her throughout the period of her convalescence, nor does she seriously contemplate leaving him, and in that, too, Lenore is identical to Sheyndl and Khanke. The wartime setting of *Junge Frau von 1914* allows Zweig to observe Lenore's reactions at a time when the nation is polarised with a rapidity which accentuates the vulnerability of certain sections of society. Among the most vulnerable members of German society Zweig places women and Jews. His concern is to demonstrate that the primary effect of war is to extinguish moral judgement. The distorting effects that result are felt not only in national political life, but in the most intimate closeness of private individuals.

Consequently, Lenore is handled like a volunteer in a literary experiment, the purpose of which is to study how a well-brought-up young woman reacts to the transformation of a familiar and friendly environment into a zone of hostility and danger. Significantly, Lenore herself is absent from the first chapter of the novel, which is taken up with a lengthy description of Werner Bertin's state of mind. This indicates the central truth in Lenore's life: she cannot begin to develop her own identity until Bertin has been removed from the picture.

When Lenore does appear for the first time, in the second chapter, it is to announce her preoccupation with Bertin, and simultaneously to define the standard against which the subsequent alterations in his behaviour will be measured. Thus it is emphasised that Bertin's pre-war relations with Lenore were distinguished by his unfailing considerateness towards her. The progressive erosion of this quality is charted from the moment when Lenore hears the complaint of her friend and mentor, Paula Weber, about the deterioration, brought on by contact with military life, in the behaviour of Paula's lover. Neither Lenore nor the reader suspects at this point that Paula's experience will prove to be the blueprint for the entire female half of the narrative of *Junge Frau von 1914* (p.22):

‘Hier eben beginnt vielleicht unser Fehler, Lenore. Wir sollten sie nicht zu lang aus den Händen geben, sie verwandeln sich in zwei Tagen. André war nicht sechs Wochen in Ostpreußen bei seiner Schipperei [...] aber er kam mit Manieren zurück – mit Manieren! [...] solche Ausdrücke hatte er inzwischen gelernt; und wie er plötzlich den Herrn spielte! Er warb nicht mehr um mich, er kommandierte, er dachte, ich hätte Schlafzimmersdienst. Oh,’ und sie lachte plötzlich klingend auf, ‘was für Augen er machte, als er auf dem Diwan im Wohnzimmer übernachten mußte, der gute Mann, bis er wieder begriffen hatte, wie man sich einer Dame nähert, mit der man nicht verheiratet ist! Nein, es tut ihnen nicht gut, zu gleicher Zeit gedrillt und aufgestachelt zu werden, den Herren der Schöpfung.’

Unlike Sheyndl and Lenore, Paula Weber does not allow herself to be raped, and her character, which is less passive and submissive in relation to her lover, permits her rapidly to repair any damage to her friendship with André. But Lenore reacts otherwise to a similar incident with Bertin, and it is her struggle to overcome her passive dependence on Bertin, and to forge a functioning identity for herself against her own instincts, which is the subject matter of the female half of the narrative. Her extremely limited success is, perhaps, ultimately a reflection of the upper-middle-class environment which supports her materially while isolating her psychologically. Lenore, an educated young woman, is given to introspection and analysis of her situation in a way which would be impossible for the women in Singer’s work, in which the capacity for analytical thought is not ascribed to females, and where the morality and efficiency of feminine activity are attributed to instinctive processes. Lenore, however, is not instinctively inclined to adapt to the changes war has brought about in human behaviour. As she gradually comes to redefine her own identity, consequent upon her experience of rape, pregnancy, and abortion, she does so in terms of the war, referring to herself as ‘wir Geschlecht von 1914’. Lenore’s use of this phrase implies recognition of the ambivalent nature of the accomplishments of her generation: they are not only more effective

than their parents, especially than their mothers, in defending themselves against the new realities, they are also more intrepid in transgressing their own finer instincts in order to do so.

The reader is first introduced to Lenore in a setting where her initial incapacity to deal with change is brought into sharp relief. Having gone with Paula Weber to retrieve Bertin's effects from his former lodgings, Lenore is stunned when the landlady refuses to admit that the carpet which Lenore herself bought for Bertin's room ever existed. Rather than insist on her right to have her possessions returned to her, Lenore retreats from the argument, and concurs with the landlady that no carpet had ever lain in that room. It is up to the robustly realistic and unsentimental Paula to explain the mechanism whereby a previously decent and honest woman can now justify to herself behaviour which she would have considered inexcusable before the war (ibid., p.23):

'Es ist Krieg, Lenore', bemerkte Paula Weber mit weiser Miene, 'die Männer nehmen im Feld auch, was sie brauchen. Sie nennen es requirieren, ein Fremdwort deckt alles Peinliche zu. Da der Werner unmöglich mit gerolltem Teppich auf dem Bezirkskommando angetreten ist, requirieren eben jetzt die Frauen.'

It is precisely her lack of natural talent for the manipulations and machinations necessary in wartime which makes plausible Lenore's struggle to overcome the crisis in her personal life, brought on by the war, without abandoning the ethical basis of her relationship to Bertin.

Bertin's ambition is, on the contrary, to absorb the German military ethos as rapidly as possible, regardless of whether that entails abandoning his pre-war sense of individual responsibility for his actions. This process of inner transformation occurs even before he has donned his uniform. As soon as he receives his call-up notice, Bertin, whose civilian status is that of poet and dramatist, begins to recast Lenore in an image more appropriate to the new icons of the times. In his fantasy, she suddenly becomes first of

all 'ein preußisches Mädchen, in Potsdam aufgewachsen', then 'eine Frau, die ihn liebte', and never the woman he loves.

The essential differences in their attitudes towards each other are most apparent in the crucial event of the novel, the rape. The continuity in Lenore's personality is expressed in her reaction to Bertin's violence. Her response is still based on pre-war assumptions about the rules governing inter-personal relations in civilised society, and have not yet been altered to fit her new circumstances as a soldier's lover. Frightened and ashamed, she first tries to defend herself, but gives up when she encounters greater physical force than she can counter. Bertin, who is deformed by his ambition to act the part of the conquering soldier, hisses commands in a pseudo-military way before raping Lenore. In losing an accurate sense of his own identity, he completely forgets who Lenore is. Accordingly, he suffers no remorse. Even after the episode is over, and he sees the distress he has caused her, Bertin cannot bring himself to apologise in an adult fashion, but retreats into another borrowed persona, this time, that of a little boy, and tries to avoid the responsibility for the deed of a man by pretending he is really only a child. Lenore, however, already has made too great an emotional investment in Bertin to envisage living without him, regardless of his behaviour towards her. Her method for ensuring that her love survives the vagaries of Bertin's unreliable personality is tacitly to take charge of the relationship. The rape scene concludes, therefore, unpredictably, with no blame attaching to Bertin, and Lenore's extraordinary promise to herself (*Junge Frau von 1914*, p.80): 'an ihr sollte es nicht fehlen.'

Effectively, Bertin adopts the stance which Norich (1986, p.35) describes as being representative of the typical Singer protagonist who is 'a character who denies his past in order to adopt a larger view of the world, and is therefore unable either to come to terms with his destiny or to protect himself effectively'. In this observation we find the key both to Nakhmen

Ritter's impulse to dissolve into the international proletariat, and Werner Bertin's euphoria at being included in the 'Kompanieehre' on an equal basis with every other member of his army unit (*Junge Frau von 1914*, p.64): 'Der geistige Mensch war nicht mehr einsam, erste Quelle des Glücks.' Since this sentiment cannot, however, be shared with a woman on the home front, and Lenore does not wish to submerge her identity in a mass of anonymous strangers, she quickly comes to resent Bertin's attempts to depersonalise her as the army has depersonalised him. The imagery used to characterise the ethical standpoint of the soldier who has been stripped of ethical and physical responsibility for himself is transferred from the military to the erotic sphere in a long passage of *erlebte Rede* transmitting Bertin's thoughts (ibid., pp.42-43):

Sie würde von Mal zu Mal einen verjüngten Freund wiederfinden, einen kräftigeren, einen Mann. Zum Teufel mit der übertriebenen Angst, ihr könne in seiner Umarmung etwas zustoßen! Man müßte nicht immer voraussorgen, vorbeugen, sich mit Schutzmaßnahmen panzern. Ein Soldat hatte Vertrauen in seinen Stern, oder er durfte sich einsargen, gleich beerdigen lassen. Und eine Frau, die ihn liebte, vertraute ihm und fragte nicht lange, ob er sie auch schütze.

This is the realism in which Paula Weber had sought to instruct Lenore in the first days of the war: Bertin has learnt to requisition. Moreover, he assimilates the sexual relationship between Lenore and himself to a military campaign in which he plays the role of the commanding officer and she takes the place of the common soldier. Before he rapes her, Bertin's external resemblance to a typical Prussian soldier is completed, and he then adjusts his manners to suit his uniform (ibid., p.43): 'Mit polternden Stiefeln, die Feldmütze auf dem kurzgeschorenen Haar, springt ein weissgekleideter Armierer aus dem Eingang von Witwe Jerichows Haus. Vom Rücken her unterscheidet er sich in nichts von seinen Kameraden.' This is an example of the apotheosis to which Scholem refers when he writes (op.cit., p.80):

'The unending Jewish demand for a home was soon transformed into the ecstatic illusion of being at home.'

None of the major recent studies (Reich-Ranicki, 1977; Midgley, 1980; Wiznitzer, 1983) has dealt with the changing image of women in Zweig's work. This combination of physical submission to one's destiny and psychological determination not to become divorced from one's previous identity is the common denominator among the women in *Junge Frau von 1914* and *Khaver Nakhmen*. When Lenore repeats the phrase which Bertin has composed as a summary of his attitude to the dichotomy between ethics and duty which the war has intensified, she transposes his original formulation from the conditional to the declarative. Instead of 'ich würde meine Last auf mich nehmen', which he fails to do when the crucial moment comes, Lenore declares, with simple accuracy, 'Ich habe meine Last auf mich genommen' (*Junge Frau von 1914*, p.186 and p.189). Like Sheyndl and Khanke, Lenore has no quarrel with the existential principle underlying her predicament – her fundamental passivity towards her man. She objects to the consequences of her submissiveness, but still believes that she should subordinate herself to Bertin, though preferably in more favourable circumstances.

In both *Khaver Nakhmen* and *Junge Frau von 1914* the women's compulsion to subordinate themselves to their men runs parallel to the men's desire for subservience to worldly power, to which the men surrender their spiritual and physical autonomy in a manner reminiscent of the way the women find that their lives have meaning only when acknowledged as worthy by their men. From this structural parallelism along gender lines in both texts it becomes clear how both authors assess respective male and female abilities to modify their ideas and behaviour in accordance with the requirements of historical reality. Although the women do not become psychologically disorientated through disillusion-

ment with political and social ideals, neither are they portrayed as serious investors in ideological commitment. Women neither seek nor gain access to established centres of power or influence. They are therefore excluded from the activities which are most important to their men, but compensate for this exclusion by steadfast loyalty which provides a measure of continuity in the fragmented lives of both the men and the women.

Chapter 4

Images of Women

*Kein Gespenst überfällt uns in
vielfältigeren Verkleidungen als
die Einsamkeit, und eine ihrer undurch-
schaubarsten Masken heißt Liebe*
Arthur Schnitzler

Introduction

In previous chapters it has been argued that much of Jewish writing is influenced by the invisible force of the family. In any literary study based on this premise, there comes a moment when it is imperative to examine the images of the women represented in the texts. The focus of attention in this chapter will therefore be the female characters that appear in four works, two in Yiddish, and one each in Hebrew and German, by writers of Jewish origin from widely divergent backgrounds: *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* (*The Family Karnovski*) by I.J. Singer, *Nokh alemen* (*When All Is Said And Done*) by Dovid Bergelson, *Nokhah hayam* (*Facing The Sea*) by David Vogel, and *Das Schloß* by Franz Kafka.

Di mishpokhe Karnovski, published in 1943, is set in Berlin, as well as in Singer's native Poland and adoptive New York. *Nokh alemen*, published in 1913, has as its setting Bergelson's native Ukraine in the years following

the failed revolution of 1905. *Nokhah hayam*, a long short-story written in 1932, is set in a small fishing village in the south of France. This work, with its Jewish language and non-Jewish subject matter, differs from *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, an affirmation of traditional Jewish values written in a Jewish language, and *Nokh alemen*, an unsentimental critique of the dying shtetl, written nevertheless in Yiddish. *Das Schloß*, categorised by Shaked (1992, p.65) as 'foreign language' Jewish fiction, is written in German, about non-Jewish characters and subject matter. As for the setting of *Das Schloß*, in a fascinating and strangely moving piece of literary-forensic research Wagenbach (1965) locates Kafka's Castle in his father's native village of Wossek, Bohemia. Written in 1922, and incomplete at the time of Kafka's death, *Das Schloß*, an allegorical novel, is stylistically distant from *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, which is deeply engaged social criticism in a realistic mode. *Nokh alemen*, although also a novel of social criticism, is written in the impressionistic manner developed by Bergelson, which was new to Yiddish fiction of the time.

In all four works there is an abundance of female characters functioning as mothers, wives, lovers, and daughters. As all four novels are written by male authors, it is worthwhile considering the roles assigned to the female characters by writers of different nationality, education, emotional temperament, and religious sensibility. Does the characterisation of female protagonists vary markedly from novel to novel? In this most personal of realms, is there much individuation, or, on the contrary, are the similarities of approach to the assignment of roles, to the understanding of women of different social levels, personality configurations, and degrees of intellectual ambition, more apparent than the differences?

What is striking about the women who appear in these novels is how irritating they are to the men with whom they are involved. Except in the scenes of attempted or successful seduction, interaction between the

sexes is marked by a barely suppressed annoyance on the part of the male protagonists. The females respond with a tacit acknowledgment of their guilt as eternal petitioners, while continuing to make intermittent stabs at eliciting a friendly word or expressing a personal opinion. This is as true for the younger generation of Karnovskis depicted by Singer (Georg and Therese), as for the older (Dovid and Leah). It is equally the case with Mirl Hurvits' parents, Gittl and Reb Gdalya, and with Mirl herself and her various suitors. Her husband, on the other hand, is endlessly tolerant of her tedious whims and morose temper, so that Mirl appears ungrateful and unreasonable for not submitting cheerfully to a husband who repels her physically and exasperates her with his conventional ideas on the organisation of their family life.

Mirl, for all her intellectual pretensions, has only one exceptional ability. This she shares with the sensuous, non-intellectual Gina Bart, namely the capacity to fascinate men. With the exception of Elsa Landau in *Dimshpokhe Karnovski*, a matter we shall return to shortly, none of the female characters in these works of narrative fiction has been invested with more than a limited supply of talent or ambition. Since the plots deal with the struggles of the male characters to live at peace with themselves while making their difficult way in the world, the relatively banal, unimaginative depiction of the women is directly related to the frustration of the male characters with their female counterparts, and by extension, with marriage and family life. In none of these texts is there an example of a well-integrated, serene female personality outside the confines of the role of the traditional Jewish wife and mother as represented by Ite Burak in Singer's novel. It should be noted, however, that it is not enough for a woman to decide unilaterally, as Leah Karnovski does, to maintain a traditional home for the household to retain its dignity and equanimity. The use of German, a 'foreign' language in the Karnovski home, is seen by Singer as

the root cause for the alienation from self (Dovid Karnovski) which erodes the love within the couple (Dovid and Leah Karnovski), and ultimately destroys the family by encouraging the children to despise their parents' culture (Dovid and Georg Karnovski). Finally, ignorance of one's own true identity thoroughly weakens the individual's strength in the face of popular prejudice, and the end is self-loathing and self-destruction (Yegor Karnovski).

Women, although inextricably caught up in this process, are unable to influence the decisions which determine the course of events in their own lives. Ite Burak is successful as a wife and mother not because she persists in speaking Yiddish at home, but because Solomon Burak is not tempted by the lure of assimilation, and supports his wife's endeavours to live according to their traditional value system. His definition of German-Jewish symbiosis is purely economic, and he is under no illusion, even during his most prosperous years, that the security which seems to be permanent is anything but provisional. Not desiring social integration, he is not emotionally vulnerable to rejection, and his secure sense of identity allows him to view his wife positively, in marked contrast to the Karnovski men who, in their confusion about who they are, project dissatisfaction with themselves onto their wives. Burak's continued use of Yiddish symbolises both his psychological autonomy and his self-respect.

The decision about how much cultural identity to sacrifice in the hope of gaining social acceptance in non-Jewish society is the preserve of the male protagonists, but they are at a loss to create a coherent identity for themselves. Accordingly, the women, who are portrayed as emotionally and financially dependent, are even less autonomous than the men to whom they are attached, and consequently become objects of resentment for failing to contribute to the realisation of the men's dreams and ambitions. This sense of male frustration with their women is expressed narratively

by the division of the female characters into those who are submissive, but too weak to provide intellectual support for their men, and those who are intelligent, even professionally competent, but whose centre of interest is elsewhere than on the men who solicit their attention.

Of the four texts considered in this chapter, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* contains the greatest number and variety of female characters. All this novel's characters however, are relatively, though not entirely, conventional, and drawn from a sample of reality in which the view of the family is that the woman's primary and secondary commitments are to her husband and her children respectively, and the husband's primary concern is for himself, his secondary concern for his children, and his tertiary object of interest is his wife. More significantly, the central protagonists, who perceive their families of origin as providing inadequate emotional support, are all searching for a replacement family to provide the security necessary for their further personal development. Parents do not serve in this respect as acceptable role models, and indeed are conspicuous by their absence from K.'s life, and for the acrimony produced by their every utterance in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* and *Nokh alemen*. In this respect, Gina Bart is different, as she explicitly attributes a positive influence to her father, and counteracts feelings of anxiety by thinking of him in the family home. Gina is, however, otherwise typical of these characters who are obsessed with a need to define themselves and to find a framework of social norms that will not exclude them.

Equally, it is the women who fail to form permanent attachments to men, Mirl Hurvits in *Nokh alemen* and Elsa Landau in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, who are imbued with the same sense as the male characters, of being less able to live normally than others they see around them. Otherwise, the female characters are notable for unhappiness which is attributed not to the social, political, or economic circumstances of their lives, or sim-

ply to existential anguish, as it is with the male characters, but to the treatment meted out to them by their men. Therese Karnovski, for example, is much happier in New York, despite poverty and social isolation, because Georg is wholly dependent on her as he never was during the years of his professional success in Berlin. In the four sections of this chapter we shall look at the range of female characters and the manner in which they are presented in each of the four works under consideration. We wish to show that there is a consistent vision of the role of women both within the family and in society as a whole: a vision which militates against satisfactory relationships between the men and women concerned.

I.I. Singer: *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*

The subject of Singer's novel *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* is the 'two-thousand-year-old error' he wrote about in the famous essay of that name (Singer, 1939), that is, the mistake that Jews made in continuing to believe, generation after generation, and despite all incontrovertible evidence to the contrary, that they could someday expect to be accepted as welcome residents in other peoples' countries. Even though the relations between the male and female characters are therefore not involved in the novel's central argument, they do represent a sizeable portion of the narrative.

Although the women in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* conform largely to the conventional social types of their time, they are drawn with fine attention to detail of psychological motivation and response to their environment. The female characters fall into two categories: the intellectual and the non-intellectual. Singer's creation of a gallery of limited and unsurprising female portraits is elevated by the counterpoint, however muted, of the women's own thoughts running parallel to the explanations of their conduct voiced by the narrator, or the judgements of the male characters to

whom the women relate most closely.

Leah Karnovski, the wife of Dovid Karnovski, founder of the 'enlightened' Karnovski family of the title, is apparently nothing but a simple-minded, over-emotional, under-educated, pious wife and mother. When her husband decides to remove himself and his young bride from their native Polish *shtetl*, he does not consult her about his decision, and she naturally follows him without expecting any thought to be given to her preference for remaining in an environment in which she is happy, and in which she would like to raise their family. Leah's subsequent failure to flourish in Berlin, her progressive estrangement from her husband, her inability to gain the respect of her son, her rejection by the Berlin Jewish ladies who should have been a reliable source of social contacts for her, result in isolation, unhappiness, and loss of self-respect, which are ascribed by her husband to her dim-witted reluctance to recognise the superiority of German culture and to make it her own. Dovid Karnovski is content to blame Leah for not embracing the German language, along with German customs and manners, with the enthusiasm recommended by the maskilic teachers who had inspired his own break with traditional Judaism.

Not only is Dovid indifferent to the fact that the longer Leah lives in Berlin, the more alien she feels; he refuses to help mitigate her suffering by socialising with the only people who alleviate Leah's loneliness, the unassimilated group of Yiddish-speaking Polish Jews unofficially headed by Solomon and Ite Burak. Ite Burak, who is very like Leah Karnovski in outlook and life-style, exemplifies the happiness which might have been Leah's had Dovid been less interested in impressing the Germans with his Germanness, and more interested in her. Leah does, however, have enough character to visit the Burak household secretly, during her husband's long periods of absence on business trips, just as later, against Dovid's express wishes, she will visit Georg Karnovski and his wife and son, after Dovid

and Georg have quarrelled definitively over Georg's marriage to a non-Jewish woman.

Implicitly, however, Dovid is blamed for Leah's unhappiness, and, by extension, for the perturbed household in which Georg grows up, and for the resultant confusion in his mind about how to relate to women, which leads to his own ill-conceived marriage and its destructive effect on the third generation of Karnovskis. Stubborn and arrogant, Dovid does not pause to reflect, until it is too late, that the dual message he believes he is transmitting to his son is being received, not as 'be a Jew in private, and a German in public', but as 'being German is universally valid and desirable, whereas being a Jew is a question of personal taste'. Nevertheless, misguided as he is, Dovid Karnovski is saved both from crippling low self-esteem and suicidal admiration of German civilisation because he, and especially his wife, are still rooted in traditional communal and family structures. Leah does not disintegrate totally, since she remains close to her parents, relatives, and friends, even though her husband is barely on speaking terms with any of them.

If Leah Karnovski represents the willingness of the older generation of women to live entirely in the shadow of husbands and children, Elsa Landau stands for the attempt by intelligent young women to escape the circumscribed destiny of their mothers by devoting their time and energy to the foundation and furtherance of a career. Moreover, she is so free of complexes about her Jewish identity that she never touches on the subject in any way. Elsa is therefore unique among all the characters in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* in that she organises her life without reference to the past, either the Jewish or the female past. Symbolic of her modernity is her commitment to the Communist Party, to which she sacrifices her considerable abilities exactly in the way she had intended to avoid by refusing to marry Georg Karnovski (*Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, p.146):

'Ikh hob di partey' – hot zi gezogt mit a hartkayt in ir ton –
'zi nemt mir tsu alts, lozt gornisht iber far mir. Farshteyst,
gornisht.'

'I have the Party' – she said with a hardness in her voice – 'the
Party takes everything, and leaves nothing for me. Nothing,
you understand.'

Elsa's voluntary sacrifice of her personal happiness in favour of blind obedience to the will of the Party invites comparison with Singer's other fanatical Communist character, Comrade Nakhmen in the novel *Khaver Nakhmen* published in 1938. The comparison is instructive, for the attempt to see in Elsa Landau a female equivalent of Comrade Nakhmen founders on an essential difference Singer incorporates into the psychological structure of his male and female characters. Even though Nakhmen neglects Khanke, his wife, for many years, the assumption is that Khanke's devotion to Nakhmen is as passive and as limitless as Nakhmen's devotion to the Party. Furthermore, Elsa's superior intelligence and education (she is a medical doctor before the First World War) do not procure her the self-confidence of Nakhmen, a baker in casual employment, who takes it for granted that Khanke will unfailingly make her needs and convictions subservient to his. Indeed, despite his professional respect for Elsa, Georg makes it clear that he will not tolerate any division of her attention between himself and the Party (*ibid.*, p.147):

'Mayne vestu zayn' – hot er gezogt hays – 'bloyz mayne. Un ikh
vel dikh tsu keynem nisht lozn gehern...bloyz tsu mir. Herst,
bloyz tsu mir.'

'You will be mine' – he said ardently – 'only mine. And I won't
let you belong to anyone else...only to me. Do you hear, only to
me.'

In choosing the Party, Elsa knows she is renouncing Georg completely, whereas Nakhmen gets both Khanke and the Party, plus a son, and when the Party fails him, he still enjoys the absolute devotion of his family. Elsa loses Georg, and then has nothing when historical events turn against her.

Singer does portray men and women as equal in the sense that Georg has as little influence over Elsa as Khanke over Nakhmen. The difference is that while Elsa's youthful independence, when she is repelled by the thought of a 'pust lebn fun a vayb un muter' ('the empty life of a wife and mother', *ibid.*, p.147), and exhilarated by the fact that she is entrusted by the Party with responsibilities rarely offered to a woman, is punished by long years of loneliness, and Nakhmen's is rewarded by the devotion of his family. It is impossible not to notice Singer's admiration for this one female character who, unlike any of the other women in the novel, conforms neither to the stereotype of the subservient housewife nor to the fashionable image of the loose woman, but whose intellectual acuity is matched by her determination to devote her abilities to the benefit of humanity. From the portrait of Mrs. Basheva Singer in the collection of her son's childhood reminiscences published posthumously under the title *Fun a veit vos iz nishto mer*, we can see that there is much of Singer's mother in Elsa. Basheva Singer was a remarkable intellectual of such extraordinary character that, even as a small child, Singer was aware of his mother's uniqueness. Of the couple formed by his parents, Singer writes (*Fun a veit vos iz nishto mer*, p.33):

Tate-mame voltn geven a tsugepaster por, ven di mame volt
geven der tate, un der tate – di mame. Ober der fal iz geven
farkert.

My parents would have been a well-matched couple if my
mother had been my father, and my father – my mother. But
actually it was the other way round.

When Singer describes his mother's terrible loneliness in the provincial village where she was surrounded by simple, uneducated housewives with whom she had nothing in common, he uses the same words as he does for Elsa (*ibid.*, p.37): 'Zi iz geven aleyn, elent, aynzam' ('she was alone, wretched, lonely'). Of his father's intellectual curiosity and reading

habits, Singer says 'Er is geven mer mensh fun harts vi fun moyekh' ('He was more a man of feeling than of brain', *ibid.*, p.33). The passages describing in precise detail his mother's erudite passion for the most abstruse, learned volumes wholly beyond the reach of his good-natured, but lazy, unintellectual father, also evoke the scenes between Georg and Elsa when Georg is overwhelmed by Elsa's unremitting scientific curiosity, awesome competence, and social conscience (*ibid.* p.35):

Mayn muter iz geven, vi ir foter, der bilgorayer rov, a groyse bal-takhlisnitse, a zorgerin, a tsveyflerin, a kopmensch, vos hot tomid getrakht, arayngedrungen in zakhn, faroysgezen zakhn, lib gehat tsu fartifn zikh in inyonim, arufvarfn af zikh dayges, trakhtn fun menshn, vegn der velt, vegn got un zayne drokhim, fartifn zikh in yeder zakh. Mit eyn vort, zi iz geven durkhoys intelektual, a yidene mit a mansbilishn kop.

My mother was, like her father, the Rabbi of Bilgoray, a thoroughly practical person, a worrier, a doubter, someone who used her head, who was always thinking, penetrating deep into problems, predicting things, who liked to probe into matters, to take it upon herself to worry, to think about people, about the world, about God and his ways, to consider everything profoundly. In a word, she was an intellectual through and through, a woman with a man's mind.

Singer had therefore witnessed at close quarters the marriage of a woman with an analytical, inquiring mind to a man whom she loved, but who was indisputably less intelligent than herself, and gives the relationship between Georg and Elsa this imbalance. Throughout their friendship and courtship, Georg is overwhelmed by his sense of Elsa's superior professional gifts and personal maturity. Nevertheless, Elsa has a composite, somewhat contradictory nature. Her scientifically objective cast of mind, inherited from Singer's mother, sits ill with the unquestioning commitment to a belief system inherited, along with her red hair, from his father. Melekh Ravitch recalls a meeting with Mrs. Singer in 1934 in Warsaw, when she was in her sixties, during which her open-minded curiosity about everything, the sharpness of her intellect, in such complete contrast

to her appearance as a poor, provincial, shrivelled, elderly Jewish matron, made an indelible impression on him (Ravitch, 1945, pp.94-6).

Through Elsa Landau, Singer expresses his real evaluation of women's position in Jewish society. By allowing her to refuse to marry Georg, whom, after all, she loves, even as his mother loved his father, he spares his heroine the bitterness of his mother's lifetime of intellectual frustration. However, the loneliness and regret visited upon Elsa in her later years suggest that an intelligent woman cannot have a satisfactory life. She must sacrifice either the emotional happiness which is unattainable without marriage and children, or bury all her talents and interests, and abandon hope of enjoying the conviviality of like-minded friends and colleagues. While he is listing the differences between his parents, Singer dwells upon the contrast between the pleasure afforded to his father by the endless discussions typical among Hasidic followers of the same charismatic teachers and community leaders, and the desperate unhappiness caused to his mother by her complete social isolation. Having experimented, courtesy of Elsa, with offering his mother a destiny better suited to her temperament, he concludes that an intelligent Jewish woman cannot be happy whatever she does, because half of her innermost needs and longings will always remain unsatisfied.

The narrative of *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* is divided in its concern between the lack of mutual understanding between Jews and Germans on the one hand, and men and women on the other. Merciless in his pursuit of unexamined ethnic stereotypic assumptions, Singer might be supposed to bring the same lucidity to bear on his treatment of misapprehensions among the latter as among the former. Ultimately, however, the two cases are not fully parallel, and that is because the Jewish situation in Europe is resolved not by the accretion of wisdom, humanity, and tolerance on the part of the Europeans, or even of a more profound and realistic perception of their own self-deceptions on the part of the Jews, but because of

the simple existence of America. The 'yidishe bodnlozikayt' ('Jewish rootlessness'), the cause of Jewish vulnerability and defencelessness, ceased to exist as an implacable natural law when Singer contemplated America. In the words of I.I. Trunk (1944, p.153):

Amerike iz geven eyn groys hofn un eyn vilder gloybn in der meglekhkayt fun ale meglekhkaytn.

America was a great hope and a wild belief in the possibility of all possibilities.

Trunk does point out that unreserved enthusiasm for America as the sole provider of a political, cultural, and economic climate in which the evil spell of two thousand years of European Jewish suffering could be broken, had to be subject to the proviso that the American Jewish experiment was still too new for any permanent conclusions to be drawn. Nevertheless, for Elsa Landau, although America rescues her from the Jewish historical predicament, there is no equivalent 'psycho-sexual America', however provisional, to rescue her from Georg's need to dominate women, from his inability to be at peace with himself unless he has a woman who is blatantly submissive, doting, inferior. Elsa, who is much clearer in her mind about Georg's motivation than he is himself, is able to formulate his essential flaw (ibid., p.148):

Er [Georg] darf a froy, vos zol zayn hundert protsent vayb un shklafin un mame tsu zayne kinder.

He [Georg] needs a wife who will be one hundred percent woman and slave and mother to his children.

It is Singer's accomplishment to show that the extraordinary adulation to which women accustom Georg Karnovski cannot be the entirely rational product of his real personality. The psychological constructs revealed in his own thoughts make it apparent that beneath his outward charm and professional competence he lacks a moral value system, and that,

where woman are concerned, he has exaggerated feelings of inferiority compensated by a brutality verging on the sadistic (ibid., p.148):

Vi in di ershte studentn-yorn hot er zikh gefilt kleyn, nishtik un mindervertik in onzen fun der royt-horiker sheyner froy, vos hot im genumen, ven zi hot gevolt, un im avekgevorfn, ven zi hot gevolt. Der gedank, az a froy hot im bazaytikt, nokh dem vi zi iz geven zayne, hot baleydikt zayn menerishn shtolts. In zayn bokherishn lebn iz er geven der, vos hot in azelkhe faln avekgevorfn dem tsveytn tsad. Iz er geven der, ba vemen vayber hobn gebetlt libe, gedrot, untertenik geven, geveynt. Itst hot es a froy geton mit im, un er hot zikh gefilt derniderikt, gekrenkt.

As in his early student years, he felt small, worthless, and inferior in the presence of the beautiful, red-haired woman, who had taken him when she wanted, and thrown him away when she wanted. The thought that a woman had put him aside after having been his, offended his masculine pride. In his bachelor life, he had been the one who, in such cases, had dismissed the other party. He had been the one from whom women had begged love, threatened, been submissive, wept. Now a woman had done it with him, and he felt humiliated, insulted.

Georg's lack of empathy with Elsa, combined with his insufficient insight into the motivations behind his own behaviour, ensures not only the failure of his relationship with Elsa, but the unhappiness of his marriage to Therese Holbeck. The issue of Georg's marriage to a non-Jewish German nurse is confused by the use of America as a *deus ex machina* that sets to rights a relationship which had its origins in Georg's wounded vanity, and which was foundering on his success as a gynaecologist-obstetrician to the upper echelons of Berlin society in the 1920s and 1930s. Therese is the most extreme example in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* of female characters who are extensions of the men they love. That she has no viable identity of her own, but is described as 'farloyrn' and 'untertenik', as well as 'oykh nisht sharf af der tsung' (ibid., p.158), makes her irresistible to Georg, just embarking on a career tailor-made for a man with a limitless need to feel his power over terrified, dependent, grateful, and submissive women. Here

is Georg's initial impression of Therese. He is excited by her physical submissiveness, so extreme that it conjures up images of slavery in his mind. In this passage, there is no explicit narratorial criticism of Georg's choice of bride, but the insistence on Therese's weakness as a foil for Georg's strength recalls Elsa's earlier analysis of Georg's character, and also serves as a reminder that Elsa had been a much-admired instructor of Georg's in medical school. Despite his sexual prejudices, she retains his personal and professional respect, whereas Therese is a nurse, a professional and social inferior (ibid., p.158):

Doktor Karnovski zet dem boyg fun ir veykhn meydlshtn kark,
vos zet oys vi ba a shklafin in ir untertenikayt, un er filt zikh
mansbilsh gehoybn far ir.

Doctor Karnovski sees the curve of her soft, young girl's neck,
which looks like that of a slave in her submissiveness, and he
feels himself as a man, superior to her.

In order to redress the balance of power which had been overturned by Elsa's self-confident manner of referring to Georg slightly mockingly as 'Junge' (in German in the Yiddish text, as a reminder of the language of communication between them) Georg loses no time in addressing Therese as 'Kind', and in further undermining her poor self-image by mocking her whenever he speaks to her in front of their hospital colleagues. Georg's conviction that, as a man, he must dominate any woman with whom he is involved, has been undermined by Elsa's composure in the face of his demands. After Elsa has rejected him, Georg finds Therese irresistible not only because of her continual self-abasement in his presence, but because he identifies with her in that part of himself which is helplessly submissive, and the pity she evokes in him is the pity he feels for himself. Singer takes care to emphasise Georg's unawareness of his compulsive need to compensate for the sense of helplessness which was revealed in his inability to control Elsa, by placing the relevant information in the possession of the

omniscient narrator (ibid., p.159):

Keyner in Profesor Halevis klinik, nisht di shvester, nisht di doktoyrim, hobn ongehoyn tsu farshteyn farvos Dr. Karnovski hot genuimen arumgeyn mit shvester Tereze. [...] Dr. Karnovski aley'n hot es oykh nisht farshtanen.

No one in Professor Halevi's clinic, neither the nurses nor the doctors, had the remotest idea why Dr. Karnovski had begun to go around with Sister Therese. [...] Dr. Karnovski himself didn't understand.

From his own thoughts it is clear that, never having understood why he insisted on marrying Therese in the first place, Georg is equally unprepared for the time when, inevitably, she bores him, and he looks for erotic and intellectual stimulation elsewhere. Intriguingly, Georg Karnovski quickly forgets whatever he had learned from his experience of Elsa's character and accomplishments, and settles down to live in conformity, not with what he knows to be women's true potential, but with the prejudices of his father (ibid., p.186):

Er [Dovid Karnovski] hot keynmol keyn hoykhe meynung vegn vaybershn min nisht gehat, vayl er hot gewust zeyer nisht-bashtandikayt, zeyer laykhtzin, zeyer lebn nisht mit kop, nor mit harts.

He [Dovid Karnovski] had never had a very high opinion of the female sex, because he knew their instability, their flightiness, their tendency to live not with their head but with their heart.

In the descriptions of Georg's behaviour as an accoucheur at the height of his powers, Singer uses a gushing tone characteristic of romantic fiction which is not evident elsewhere in the writing, in order to convey the extraordinary authority and prestige enjoyed by the male head of a gynaecology clinic. Singer shows us an important discrepancy between the attitude of Georg's patients to the doctor they idolise ('er iz getlekh', 'he is divine'), and his authoritarian, unsympathetic conduct towards them. The women, entirely dependent on Georg's ministrations to relieve their pain, anxiety about their babies, and fear of their own death, have to make

do with a curt 'ruhig sein, nur ruhig sein' (in German in the text) from the doctor whose attention they so desire. Georg's fantasy of sexual domination is given ample satisfaction during the exercise of his professional duties, more indeed than would be possible in any other career.

Moreover, his capacity for self-deception does not decrease with time, and when he becomes entangled with the intelligent, sophisticated wife of the publisher of an influential Berlin newspaper, he is as mystified by Frau Moser's power over him as he had been by his attachment to Therese. Unaware that his need for wholly submissive, inferior women has been at least partially satisfied by his marriage and career, Georg does not grasp that he again wants a woman who is more than a helpless, grateful child. Explicitly formulating his regret at the sexless quality of his relationship with Therese, Georg attributes his waning interest in his wife to her lack of fire. 'Fire' is associated in the text with Elsa, with her fiery red hair and political oratory. Georg never develops enough insight into his own desires and reactions to admit to himself that he married Therese as a response to the blow to his pride caused by Elsa's rejection, and that once his self-confidence has been restored by the daily exercise of power over powerless women, he has no further need of Therese.

Nevertheless, Georg remains with Therese. *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* is about family. It is based on Singer's conviction that the family unit is more important than the individual members of which it is composed, and that even the most improbable and undesirable of alliances must be preserved once there are children involved. That is why Elsa's punishment, her long years of regret at having lost Georg, is so severe. Elsa's probity in all her dealings does not earn her the contentment that is reserved for Georg Karnovski. Again without understanding how he has become the lover of a woman who does not really appeal to him, Georg drifts into a semi-public affair with Frau Moser. Though somewhat repelled by her grotesque

erotic perversity, he nonetheless recognises the erotic power exerted by a vibrant intelligence which is the antithesis of Therese's asexuality. This line of the narrative is abruptly truncated by historical events, and the consequent need of the protagonists to overlook their personal differences in order to concentrate all their mental energy on the question of physical survival. Perhaps it is for this reason that Singer chooses to overlook the confusion and inadequacy in Georg's sexual relations that so closely mirror his inadequate grasp of the implications of Jewish history, and his confused self-image. Despite Georg's neglect of a woman he should never have married in the first place, and his disastrous mishandling of his only son, he is rewarded in the final scene of the novel by being returned to the centre of his family's reconciled love.

Not so Elsa. Elsa is punished for placing personal ambition above family. Singer employs a strange locution to capture the specific nuance of Elsa's loneliness in middle age: 'zi iz elent un vayberish aleyn' 'she is miserable and alone as a woman' (ibid., p.251). It is clear here that the judgement pronounced on Elsa Landau is that a woman's 'beger nokh rum' ('desire for fame') merits the ultimate retribution, a mid-life craving to be submissive and obedient to a man (ibid., p.252):

Vi gliklekh volt zi zikh gefilt tsuzamen tsu zayn mit im, Georgn,
tsu zayn a vayb im, gehorkhzam un afile untertenik, abi nisht
aleyn, nisht eynzam.

How happy she would feel to be together with him, with Georg,
to be a wife to him, obedient and even subservient, anything
but alone and lonely.

Elsa's history illustrates the impossibility, as Singer evidently saw it, for an intelligent woman to fulfil both her need for a visible role in society and her longing for a satisfying private life. Even though the examples of his mother and his elder sister, the talented writer Esther Kreitman, had revealed to him the inconsolable anguish of a woman forbidden to fulfil

the potential of her innate gifts, in Elsa he shows a remarkable woman who nonetheless decides that a family without a career is preferable to a career without a family (ibid., p.253):

Zi hot getribn dos glik fun zikh [...] Zi hot dervaytert alemen fun zikh, [...] nisht gevolt farshklafn zikh, zayn fray. Ober zi fult zikh nisht gliklekh mit ir frayhayt. A last iz zi ir [...] Vi umzinik iz dos lebn fun a froy aleyn in di shpetere yorn, vi trukn un pust.

She had driven happiness away [...] She had distanced herself from everyone, [...] not wanted to enslave herself, to be free. But she isn't happy with her freedom. It is a burden to her [...] How senseless is the life of a woman alone in her later years, how dry and empty.

In order to take the full measure of Elsa's fate, it would be necessary to find an unmarried male character, and to examine what Singer does with him. In fact, the only unmarried Jewish males are widowers, and the non-Jewish Dr. Zerbe is a homosexual. Jeannette Walder is an elderly spinster, but she devotes her life to her father; that is, her existence may be sad, but it is not senseless, because it has the value of taking place within the family. Since intellectual and sexual attraction are missing from all the marriages in the novel, the Walder household diverges from the norm only in that there are no young children. Apart from Elsa, and we have seen what happened to her, there is no example in the text of a woman who is anything but obedient and subservient. Frau Holbeck, Therese's mother, is a servant first to her husband, and then to her Nazi son. During her husband's lifetime, she keeps her objections to her many unwanted pregnancies to herself, just as she maintains a discreet silence in the presence of her son on what she perceives to be the iniquities of Nazi anti-Semitism. Rebeka Karnovski, Georg's sister, loses her identity completely when she marries, and is shown to be engaged in a grotesque denial of her own considerable talents, which she projects onto her undistinguished husband. Singer has, as Anita Norich points out, a weakness for depicting conflictual situations

and polarised attitudes (Norich, 1986, p. 144). This weakness is never more pronounced than in his portrayals of the tensions between men and women. Difficulties in mutual comprehension caused by dissimilarities in education, professional, social, and sexual expectations, are shown to be compounded by an incorrigible tendency to prefer obstinate silence to open discussion. Georg and Therese secretly blame each other for their son's poor physical and mental health, but avoid saying so, for fear of touching upon issues that might prove dangerous for their marriage.

Examination of the numerous female characters in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* shows that, in Singer's view, there is often an irreconcilable contradiction between the demands of society, especially of Jewish society, and the personal requirements of individual women, even of conventional, uneducated women without exceptional intellectual gifts or ambition. He suggests that a woman's best chances for happiness are not only to be a wife and mother, but to be married, like Ite Burak, the solitary example of a happy woman, to a man who is generous and devoted to her, and with whom she is temperamentally well suited to live. Other female characters such as Leah Karnovski, Therese Karnovski, and Frau Holbeck, conform to the stereotyped image of a wife and mother, but their self-sacrifice and efforts to please their husbands pass largely unnoticed, and certainly do not earn them their husbands' love. Superficially, Frau Moser seems to be the unique case of a woman who pleases herself, but in reality she behaves as she does only because she has her husband's tacit permission to do so. He simply allows her to have a new lover the way Solomon Burak allows Ite to have a new hat. In its treatment of women's issues, the novel corresponds to Ravitch's definition of the literary aims of the writers of Singer's generation in the Warsaw of his youth in that it is 'veltlekh un natsional-kulturel', influenced by the secular, non-Jewish world, but dependent for its full significance on Jewish culture and history (Ravitch, 1975, p.164).

The images of women in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* relate solely to the family. Any manifestation of commitment to a competing enthusiasm, in as much as there may be a risk to the primacy of the family unit, is shown, not only as punishable, but as the product of misguided thinking which the woman herself will come to regret. Moreover, except in the early stages of courtship, the female characters in Singer's imaginative world are not shown to be sexually interesting to the men on whose abiding goodwill they depend. Nevertheless, the passionate conviction at the heart of the narrative, that the survival of the Jewish people depends on the capacity of the Jewish family to overcome all internal divisions in the face of external hostility, guarantees women a permanent place in their men's world, even if it^{is} not necessarily the place of their own choosing. Singer's vision of the female destiny is sombre. He describes two main categories of woman, the intellectual and the non-intellectual. Although he places most of his female characters in the latter category, he does not believe that there is safety in numbers, as even the most self-sacrificing, undemanding, and unambitious women are shown to be powerless to win their husband's love, without which their lives have no meaning. An especially cruel fate, however, is reserved for the intellectual woman, who is doomed to unhappiness, even if she is fortunate enough to be the object of her husband's love.

Dovid Bergelson: *Nokh alemen*

A study of the images of women in the imaginative fiction of Central and Eastern European writers of Jewish background in the first half of the twentieth century would be greatly diminished without the figure of Mirl Hurvits. Mirl is the main focus of attention in Bergelson's novel *Nokh alemen*, the publication of which in 1913 confirmed the author's reputation among Yiddish literary critics as the writer of his generation with the most

cultivated and refined style. In her appraisal of *Nokh alemen*, Korn explains that the profound impression made by Mirl on Yiddish readers of the time was due in part to the fact that, in Yiddish and Hebrew literature before the First World War, the hero of a novel or story was typically a man. There were women in the text, but usually in a secondary role, and female characters were chiefly designed to emphasise 'di hoykhe kvalitetn fun man' ('the exalted qualities of the man', Korn, 1962, p.16).

The originality and interest of *Nokh alemen* lie in Bergelson's use of a woman to represent a generalised historical predicament that would usually have been represented by the existential crisis of a male figure. In his summary of the themes that dominate Bergelson's work in his pre-Soviet period, Reyzin (1928, p.350) writes:

Kimat in ale zayne romanen un noveln schildert Bergelson dem untergeyendikn [...] lebnshteyger fun der ukraynish-yidisher shtot un shtetl [...] mit der umbafrikter yugnt, vos lebt iber di apatye fun di yorn nokh der ershter revolutsye, di gaystike pustkayt fun der yidisher inteligents, velkhe iz opgerisn fun di gezunte vortslen fun an eygener svive un tsankt in der fremder velt fun der nit-yidisher kultur.

In almost all his novels and novellas, Bergelson depicts the vanishing way of life of the Ukrainian Jewish town and city [...] with its dissatisfied youth that is experiencing the apathy of the years after the first revolution, the spiritual emptiness of the Jewish intelligentsia, which is torn from the healthy roots of its own environment, and is withering in the alien world of non-Jewish culture.

With Mirl, Bergelson created an image which embodied all the contradictory elusiveness of a particular type of contemporary woman so successfully that the novel became known popularly as *Mirele*. This type, which, even at the time of the novel's publication, represented only a small percentage of Jewish women in the Russian Empire, nevertheless did become, in Korn's words, the symbol of a whole era. Mirl is an educated intellectual in her twenties, caught between her revulsion at having to live

out the pattern of life of claustrophobic and exhausting domesticity that was considered the pre-ordained destiny of females of her generation, and the indolence of an attractive, spoilt, only daughter of an upper-middle-class home, who cannot bring herself to find a satisfying interest in life by pursuing a career, when she can meet her financial needs by marrying well. Mirl enters into a disastrous marriage to Shmuel Zaydenovski, a man who repels her, in order to cover up her father's embezzlement and avert his threatened bankruptcy,

The novel's bleak tone, created by repetition of insistently negative vocabulary, intensifies the magnitude of Mirl's sacrifice, because she is not close to her parents, and the new unhappiness of her marriage will not be offset by a decreased sense of alienation inside her family of origin. Mirl, her family and friends are described in the narrator's voice as simply 'troyerik' (sad), or 'more-shkoyredik' (melancholy); their environment is 'tunkl' (dark) and 'broydik' (filthy); life is 'pust' (empty); and most evocatively, their whole attitude is one of 'kharote-pustkayt', a neologism combining the two dominant psychological motifs of the narrative, regret and futility.

In addition to a carefully restricted vocabulary designed to portray contemporary young Jewish intellectuals in shades of gloom and defeat, Bergelson employs a number of literary techniques to create and maintain the sense of alienation among the characters of *Nokh alemen*. He uses dream descriptions and written correspondence, both delivered and undelivered, to distance his characters from external events and interpersonal relationships. Nowersztern (1984) has suggested that the same purpose is served by Bergelson's idiosyncratic use of dialogue in which the speakers address each other in the third person instead of the second. However, as has been pointed out by Even-Zohar and Shmeruk (1981), Bergelson faced a major difficulty in transmitting the speech of his characters in di-

rect discourse: by 1905, they would have been speaking Russian among themselves rather than Yiddish. As a way round this obstacle, Bergelson conveys his characters' thoughts predominantly by means of long inner monologues. Only when the dramatic requirements of a passage make it absolutely imperative for one character to address another directly, do they do so. Normally Bergelson creates the impression of natural conversation by giving a character certain key-words in Russian – mostly insults such as 'durok!' (fool) or 'ti smishnoy!' (you're mad), and continuing the rest of the sentence in Yiddish in the third person (*Nokh alemen*, vol.1, p.61):

Lipkis gefint nisht doszelbe, vos zi?... Ale mentshn zaynen shoyt eygentlekh tsu alt un tsu klug af vayter tsu lebn. Tsayt iz shoyt efsher, az ale zoln zey vos gikher oysshtarbn, un af zeyer ort zoln geborn vern naye.

Does not Lipkis feel as she does?... Everyone is really too old and too clever to go on living. Perhaps it is time for them all to die off, and for new people to be born and to take their place?

Direct speech is, however, used from time to time with great subtlety, particularly in order to highlight a rare moment of intimacy between two characters, or even to expose, as in the following passage, the illusory nature of a belief in the possibility of true closeness and understanding among these characters. When, for example, Mirl Hurvits flirts outrageously with several suitors, and then suddenly notices that she has tormented the lame student Lipkis to the point where he might well leave her, she turns to him and addresses him exceptionally, not as *er*, but as *du* (*Nokh alemen*, vol.1, p.45):

Ze nor? S'zol shoyt zayn di dembene veldlekh, zol es shoyt zayn? Keyner hot nisht bamerkt, vi zi iz denstmol mit Lipkis af 'du' gevorn un im bay zayn poshetn nomen rufn ongehoyn.

Just look! Surely those can't be the woods already? Nobody noticed how she adopted a familiar tone with Lipkis then, and started to call him only by his name.

Naturally, the impression of closeness that Mirl is trying here to create is deceptive. She is not in love with Lipkis, and none of the characters in

the novel, however much they try, succeeds in forming an enduring erotic relationship.

The extreme complexity of Mirl's character, as Slotnick fully demonstrates in her doctoral thesis (Slotnick, 1978), is brought into relief by Bergelson's narrative technique, which includes the superposition of observations made by innumerable other characters in her entourage, both of her own age and of an older generation. In addition, the details of her self-image are transmitted by her own thoughts, dreams, and letters, in addition to conversations reported in the voice of the omniscient narrator. The cumulative impression gained is of a woman not less intelligent than, for example, Elsa Landau, but, unlike her, lacking any sense of purpose, and educated to passivity. This passivity is the single most obvious feature distinguishing Mirl from those of her male counterparts who are also uncomfortably aware of the lack of a central, organising principle in their lives. All of the men who are in love with her – Velvl Burnes, her first fiancé, the Hebrew poet Herts, the student Lipkis, Nosn Heler, with whom she has two clandestine love affairs, her husband's nephew Montshik Zaydenovski, and her husband, Shmuel Zaydenovski – though too weak to provide Mirl with the signpost she wants to give her life an acceptable direction, are all professionally active in one way or another. Indeed, especial mention is made of the fact that Velvl Burnes leaves the shtetl when he sees Mirl walking with Lipkis, withdrawing to his brewery outside town, where he redoubles his efforts at work in order to overcome his dismay at having lost her. Similarly, Shmuel Zaydenovski leaves town and buries himself in work when Mirl leaves him. Even Lipkis, to whom Mirl has no formal attachment, deals with his experience of unrequited love by devoting himself to his university studies in Kiev, and by undergoing an operation to repair his lame foot. Herts simply returns to Switzerland. Having settled there some years before, he would not have remained in

the shtetl even if Mirl had not dismissed him, but would have taken her abroad with him. In short, despite their real disappointment at losing Mirl, all the male characters are shown to have lives of their own which will continue to be viable without her.

Mirl, on the other hand, has no viable life. This is associated partly with the passivity she retains from the traditional female role she otherwise rejects, and partly with her unconventional tendency to evaluate amorous proposals in relation to her existential search for meaning and direction in life, rather than on the basis of any sentiment she might have for a particular individual. It is also worth noting that Mirl's observations of the world around her have led her to conclude that she is isolated, not so much because of what she believes, as because of what she says. She discerns that love plays a much less important role in life than it is said to, and resents being alone in openly admitting this unfashionable truth (*Nokh alemen*, vol.I, p.186):

Zey veysn shoy'n, dukht zikh, fun aza langer tsayt, az libe iz nisht der iker. Yederer far zikh veys es, un zogn nisht oys.

They all know it anyway, it seems to her, have known it for such a long time, that love is not the main thing in life. Everyone keeps the knowledge to himself, and doesn't let on.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the novel is the uncertainty in the characterisation of Mirl as to whether she is supposed to be exceptional for her age and sex, or simply supremely representative of her kind. This uncertainty is never fully resolved. Indeed, it is never really made clear whether she is essentially a positive character at all, because her subjective experience of suffering is finely balanced by descriptions of her increasingly aberrant behaviour. After the final separation from Shmuel, the death of her father, and her mother's departure abroad, Mirl returns yet again to her shtetl, where she no longer has a home. Overcome by a loneliness so desperate that she is indifferent to the pained embarrassment of her

hosts, she forces her way into a party given by the sisters of Velvl Burnes, Mirl's first fiancé. He and his family, prominent in their small town, have not forgiven Mirl for publicly shaming them by abruptly breaking off the engagement without any explanation. Mirl's behaviour in this scene is entirely out of keeping with her usual haughty reserve, and marks the final stage of her emotional disorientation before she disappears from the shtetl, leaving every aspect of her former life behind.

In the end, the only insight into Mirl's condition which seems plausible to her is that of the poet Herts (*Nokh alemen*, vol.II, p.109): 'Mirl iz an iber-gangspunkt' (Mirl is a transition point). Despite Herts' slightly mocking tone, his words probably go the furthest towards clarifying why Mirl is incapable of the flexibility and realism necessary to avoid the hopeless impasse in which she finds herself. Unlike the other female characters who have roles of primary importance within the narrative structures in which they appear, Elsa Landau and Gina Bart, and even the myriad female characters of secondary importance, Mirl Hurvits is portrayed ambiguously, with her fine points evenly matched by a tendency to emotional instability. On the one hand, the narrative is constructed like a game of chess, in that every move Mirl makes to extract herself from a paralytically depressing situation is blocked by another move on the part of her social milieu, forcing her to think of something else. In this way, she goes from being engaged to be married at seventeen, to breaking off the engagement, through a series of erotic relationships of varying degrees of tepidity, life in a small Jewish town, a large Russian city, a period of university study, marriage, abortion, and divorce, and at only twenty-four, is already firmly check-mated.

On the other hand, the narrator's early judgement of Mirl, that she is 'tsufil farklert un kaprizne' ('too absorbed in thought and capricious', *Nokh alemen*, vol.I, p.41) is never revised, and is only reinforced by her

subsequent actions. However, a negative verdict on the whole of Russian Jewish youth as pronounced by a sour, semi-religious cousin of Shmuel Zaydenovski, also caught half-way between the traditional Jewish past and the secular Russian present, offers the possibility that Mirl's perverse behaviour is actually in keeping with that of her contemporaries: 'Az bay uns konen nit zayn keyn gezunte tipn' ('there can't be any healthy individuals among us', *Nokh alemen*, vol.II, p.34). This could be taken to form part of a convincing exculpation of Mirl's unhealthy outlook, especially when considered in conjunction with her own uncertainty about the specific unhappiness of women who are constitutionally unable to conform to a role imposed on them without regard to their personal preferences. Is Mirl, therefore, a forerunner, capable of formulating a widespread dilemma ignored by men, and passed over in silence, even by intelligent women? 'Di froy iz a mentsh tsi neyn?' ('Is a woman a human being or not?') she asks herself while reading a book entitled 'Di froy in ale tsaytn' ('Woman through the ages', *Nokh alemen*, vol.II, p.101). Or, on the contrary, is it merely the fact that she is too spoilt and self-obsessed, too accustomed to indulging her 'bas-yekhidesdike kaprizne' ('capricious, only-child') whims and fancies, which prevents her from getting on with normal life like everyone else? Had she been from a more modest home, Korn suggests, Mirl would not have wasted her time worrying about the 'iker', the meaning of life, but would have rapidly channeled her energies into becoming a dentist, hairdresser, or midwife in one of the large Russian cities, as many girls from the small Jewish towns were doing at the time (Korn, 1962, p.18).

At the crucial turning-point in the narrative Bergelson chooses a narrative technique which permits Mirl to demonstrate her own powers of analysis. In a passage of *erlebte Rede*, Mirl observes shrewdly about herself: 'Nor zi, [...] zi iz aleyn umgliklekh un toyg nisht tsu keyn shum arbet' ('But she, [...] she herself is unhappy and unfit for any sort of work at all',

Nokh alemen vol.II, p.124). This is Mirl's indication that, from her point of view, her decision to sell herself to Shmuel Zaydenovski as a means of escaping genteel poverty and of rescuing her father from bankruptcy is the only option open to her because of her chronic depression. At this point, however, one must note that Mirl's judgement is not always reliable, most significantly in the matter of selfless affection. She seems genuinely unaware of the changes wrought in Shmuel by the failure of their marriage, and continues to see him as weak and foolish even when he has matured enough to defend her against his mother. Mirl's tragedy is not that she is an intelligent woman trapped by the soul-destroying expectations of society, but that she does not recognise the tenderness of which she is the recipient, and behaves as if she were surrounded solely by incomprehension and ill-will. Her mother, mother-in-law, and Shmuel's female relatives are hostile to her, but Shmuel comes to accept her as she is, without asking anything in return. Montchik too, is prepared to offer her unconditional financial and moral support, and Nosn Heler and the poet Herts abandon her only after she repeatedly offends them by exploiting their feelings for her in order to get them to spend time with her, without even pretending to reciprocate their interest.

Mirl is surrounded by a remarkable degree of understanding and acceptance, considering her intolerance towards everyone else. Even at her most unprepossessing, at the Burnes sisters' tea party, she attracts the attention of a student who has heard all the worst gossip about her, but who still thinks of marrying her because he is impressed by her obvious independence of mind as well as by her beauty. Mirl's failure to appreciate the goodwill and intelligence of her admirers is linked to her depression, which receives the fullest possible attention in the course of the narrative. It is the treatment of her state of mind, complete though it is, which paradoxically makes it even harder for the reader to assess her character and

comportment (ibid., p.42):

S'iz geven azoy shver un ekeldik af der neshome, glaykh me
volt nemen di harts un es ingantsn in epes brudiges ayntunkn
[...] a naye vokh, a viste vokh, a puste vokh.

Her soul was so heavy and nauseated, as if someone had taken
her heart and completely submerged it in some filthy substance
[...] a new week, a desolate week, an empty week.

This is one of many similar passages in which Bergelson seems to be
describing Mirl's state of mind authoritatively and in detail. For example,
the sentence most typical of Mirl's thoughts is (ibid., p.119):

Zi hot gefilt di pustkayt fun di teg, vos zaynen avek, mit der
pustkayt fun di, vos veln zikh fun morgn on tsu tsien onheybn.

She felt the emptiness of the days which were gone, with the
emptiness of those that, from tomorrow, would begin to vanish.

In fact, the motto of the novel could well be (ibid., p.123):

Ot filt zi shoyt fun aza tsayt, vi vokhedik pust s'goysent ir
bas-yekhidesher lebn.

She has been feeling for such a long time that her ordinary and
empty life, the life of an only child, was ebbing away.

Nevertheless, in a passage in which the narrator comments on the dis-
gust Mirl feels after she finally allows Shmuel Zaydenovski to consummate
their marriage, it is clear that Mirl is meant to be a typical young woman
at least in one respect (ibid., p.8):

Un fil kale meydlekh, vos veysn nisht, vos zey viln, hobn, vi zi,
gemeynt, az zey hobn khasene af katoves, af dervayl, un hobn
mit zeyere nit gerotene khsonim demselbn tnay oysgenumen.

And many brides, who don't know what they want, have, like
her, believed that they were having a pretend marriage, just
temporarily, and have made the same stipulation with their
unsuccessful bridegrooms.

The 'stipulation' that Mirl has had written into the marriage contract
is that Shmuel should not expect to live with her as man and wife. In her

hopelessly unrealistic expectation of somehow being able to be married to a man who repels her physically, while still living as if she were single, Mirl is said here to conform to the norm for many women of her generation, even though the determination with which she extricates herself from this situation may be exceptional. Nevertheless, it is worth noting the ambiguity of tone in the narrator's voice. It is not entirely clear whether there is not some censure attached here to the brides 'who don't know what they want'.

When compared with her contemporaries, Mirl does not stand out as an isolated rebel or eccentric. The wife of the local photographer, Rozenboim, known as 'di Rozenboimikhe', is a ready subject for the town gossips because she spends her time playing the guitar, and is rumoured to have lived, before her marriage, in one of the great Russian cities with an officer. The midwife Shats appears even to Mirl to lead a strange existence. Another young woman, Montshik Zaydenovski's sister, has her heart set on becoming a singer, but her brother, who controls the family finances, judges that her voice is not good enough to justify the expense of training. In a conversation in which the candour and spontaneity are all Montshik's, he relates to Mirl his sister's despair at her dependence on a blood relation who does not respect and love her enough to accept her decision about what is most necessary for her in life, simply because he is too limited to understand. This is, of course, Mirl's dilemma (*Nokh alemen*, vol.I, p.61):

An eygener bruder, zogt zi, volt zi badarft unterhaltn un ir mitfiln, un er, lo day vos er filt ir nit mit, nor er vil ir tseshtern dem gantsn ideal fun ir leben.

Her own brother, she says, should support her and sympathise with her, and he, not only does he not have any sympathy for her, he wants to destroy the whole ideal of her life.

From the information we receive about the authenticity and intensity of Mirl's suffering, in conjunction with the few comparisons presented

between Mirl and the other young women in the town, we may deduce that Mirl is exceptional in the degree of her stubbornness and consistency. Lyuba Lipshits, who resembles Mirl in many respects but who conforms more closely to the canons of socially acceptable propriety, is dismissed by another character as having completely lost her own identity within a few years of marriage, and as having declined from being a lively, intelligent, socially active young girl to nothing but a doting wife and 'wet nurse'. Lyuba herself, from whom some sympathy might have been expected, remarks of Mirl (*Nokh alemen*, vol.II, p.84):

Vos hot men do tsu klern? Far keyn normaln menshn ken men shoy'n Mirlen gevis nisht rekhenen.

What is there to think about? Mirl certainly can no longer be considered a normal person.

Lyuba's summation of Mirl's defective personality is formulated in terms which are perfectly congruent with the impression already gained by the reader. This impression is confirmed by a subsequent aside on the part of the narrator (*ibid.*, p.107):

Un vegn zikh trakht zi dokh fil; zi iz fun tomid on gevoynt fil vegn zikh tsu trakhtn.

And she does think a lot about herself; she has always been accustomed to thinking a lot about herself.

This is more than just a neutral statement of fact. The narrator, by means of a seemingly off-hand remark, is suggesting that a basic personality trait predisposes Mirl to react to existential difficulties by disregarding the many advantages she has in life, while humourlessly exaggerating out of all proportion the negative aspects of her domestic arrangements. Lying in bed day after day, she thinks obsessively about herself, and of the places she might go if she leaves Shmuel. Although nothing attractive occurs to her, she dismisses the whole question with the comment (*Nokh alemen*, vol.II, p.50): 'sayvisay: erger vi do kon ir shoy'n nit in ergets zayn' ('in

any case: she can't be worse off anywhere than she is here'). While this statement doubtless reflects the inner tension which torments her, as an objective evaluation of the reality of her socio-economic situation it does not fit the facts.

In short, Mirl is not wholly admirable, and in this she differs from Elsa Landau, who is shown as courageously taking the best option available to her. As for Gina Bart, she is above being ruffled by judgements of her behaviour which do not have their base in her system of moral values and expectations, and the narrator and other characters share her respect for herself as the sole arbiter of the vital decisions in her life. Mirl, then, has in common with other women of her generation a persistent if imprecise longing to do something with her life besides being the wife of a man she does not love, and the mother of children she does not want. Where Mirl does indisputably differ from her many colleagues in the novel who are incorrigibly gloomy, rebellious, or eccentric, is in the ambiguity of what she represents. Ultimately, there is no satisfactory answer in the text to the question of Bergelson's attitude towards Mirl's predicament. Should she, despite overwhelming family and social pressure to conform to a way of life for which she has no appetite, and notwithstanding the limitations of a very conventional education, still have found a way to know what she wants? Is Mirl condemned in Bergelson's mind for not being enough of a conformist, or too much of an adventurer? Given that the underlying assumption of the narrative is that Mirl should be married, as indicated by the fact that the plot is taken up with recounting the number of times she attempts to satisfy this social requirement, and the equal number of times she is shown to be less committed to the relationship than the man with whom she is currently involved, the evidence is against her.

If, however, we look at the passages describing the psychic pain Mirl suffers as a result of her alienation from her parents, from the town in which

she was born and bred, from her inability to form supportive friendships with women her own age, and with the way she squanders the potential for friendship with a number of men, we can find evidence of a classic clinical depression containing all the requisite elements of poor self-image, paralysis of will, and physical self-neglect (ibid., p.57):

Gantse teg iz zi in shtub gezesn, getrogn eynem un demzelbn koytik roytlekhn un tsekhrastetn khalat mit emetsns a por groyse mansbilishe shtekshikh, zikh ongeton in otdi bgodim nokh bald, vi zi iz arum elf azeyger inderfri fun bet ufgeshtanen, zikh dem ponem nisht gevashn un di hor nisht farkemt, zikh in estsimer af der kanape avekgeleygt un zikh fort gematert un gelitn funem altn gedank: 'oyb zi vet beemes nisht gefinen keyn mitl, viazoy fun otdem itstikn lebn nitsl tsu vern, iz dokh shoyn farfaln alts.'

She sat in the house for days on end, wearing the same dirty reddish, unbuttoned dressing gown, with a pair of someone's large, man's carpet slippers, putting these clothes on as soon as she got out of bed, at around eleven o'clock in the morning, not washing her face and not combing her hair, lying down on the sofa in the dining room, and torturing herself further with the same old thought: 'if she really can't find any means of getting free of this present life, then everything really is lost.'

As has already been shown, the narrator, to a large extent, presents Mirl's 'self-isolation and refusal to communicate' (Slotnick, 1978, p.104) as unpleasant character traits which she could attempt to mitigate in order to improve her own situation. Her own lack of enthusiasm is unpleasantly reflected back to her by her surroundings. At a small gathering, for example, at the home of the midwife Shats, the only person with whom Mirl tries, albeit clumsily and unsuccessfully, to establish a tentative friendship, she finds herself seated next to three young women. No conversation ensues. Mirl is alienated and unhappy. The girls' silence not only offends her but intensifies her conviction that life in the shtetl is intolerable, that no one likes her or understands her, and that her life is uniquely meaningless and unbearable. The narrator comments (*Nokh alemen*, vol.I, p.173):

Di meydlekh [...] ale dray zaynen zey umetik gezesn lebn Mirlen af der sofke, vos lebn der nisht geheytsster hrube, un ale hobn zey zi, Mirlen, vi ignorirt. Baleydikn zi hot keyne nisht gevolt, nor tsu redn mit ir hobn zey shoyn oykh nisht gehat vegn vos.

The girls [...] were all three seated unhappily next to Mirl on the sofa near the unheated stove, and all three were ignoring her. None of them wanted to insult her, but they also had nothing to talk to her about.

This type of behaviour is, however, by no means unfamiliar to Mirl, who is accustomed to being ignored by her mother, Gitele Hurvits (ibid., p.85):

Di shvaygndike Gitele hot zikh keyn rir af der kanape nisht geton un zikh tsu ir afile nisht umgekukt.

The silent Gitele did not shift her position on the sofa at all, and did not even look at her.

Gitele, described as 'giftik', is particularly poisonous to Mirl, with whom she is habitually sullen and uncommunicative. That Mirl is psychologically orphaned is as carefully established as her alienation from the men and women of her own generation. In *Nokh alemen*, Reb Gdalye is the quintessential Bergelson father, the widely-revered repository of Jewish learning, the early object of Mirl's most sincere love which turns to pity as a result of painful revelations about unsuspected weaknesses, and finally, the embodiment of all the aspects of a pious, bourgeois, traditional Jewish childhood which the protagonist believes he must reject in order to secure a place in the current Russian social scheme. Consequently, Mirl's father does originally inspire her respect and affection, but the disclosure of his financial chicanery, and the abject way he reacts to public knowledge of his embezzlement operations, fill Mirl with disgust, and force her to realise, that she no longer loves him : 'Ot hot zi shoyn nisht lib afile im, dem tatn irn' ('Even him, her father, she doesn't love any more', ibid., p.124).

Nevertheless, Reb Gdalye's death merely provides a socially acceptable explanation of an essential component of Mirl's precarious state of mind which predates her father's physical demise. Elsa, it should be remembered, enjoys a closeness to her father unknown in the Karnovski household, and models herself on him to the extent of joining his profession, remaining single, and becoming politically active in the causes of which he most approved.

Mirl herself, however, tends to attribute her extreme physical and psychological debilitation to her marriage, although she was perpetually unhappy before she met Shmuel Zaydenovski. Even so, it is true that before her marriage she was not so depressed as to neglect her physical appearance, and it is indeed because of her beauty, rather than because of her intelligence or personality, that virtually all the men who meet her fall in love with her. It is, however, more a measure of her present despair than an accurate assessment of what she was actually like as a girl, that she supposes that divorce from Shmuel Zaydenovski will bring her the peace of mind which has so far eluded her (*Nokh alemen*, vol.II, p.100):

Vart [...] zi vet dokh itst vern tsurik vi meydlyays [...] un ir iz gevaksn epes a gefil fun gezunt un koyekh [...] zi hot a kvitsh geton, derfilndik in zikh di fartsveyyorike Mirl.

Wait [...] she will surely go back to being the way she was as a girl [...] and a feeling of health and strength grew in her [...] she gave a little squeak, feeling within herself the Mirl of two years previously.

Despite the ambivalence in the text about Mirl's real significance as a woman, her function within the context of the historical circumstances of Russian Jewry in the years before the Revolution is more certain. When Mirl makes the eighteen-hour train journey from Kiev to her native town after her father's bankruptcy, and wanders through the empty house from which the bailiffs have removed all the familiar furniture, her impressions of her abandoned home echo the images of 'Di toyte shtot' ('The Dead

City'), the story which had been the initial source of her interest in the Hebrew poet, Herts (ibid., p.144):

Nor amol zaynen do geven menshn, un itst iz do keyner nishto. Fun eyn kheyder in tsveytn zaynen ofn di tirn; [...] Zi, Mirlen, bamerkt do keyner nisht. Keyner shtelt zi nisht op un vert mit ir kumen nisht freylikher. Epes iz do shoyn, dukht zikh, shpet un nokh alemen, nor di menshn? Vuhin zaynen zey fundanen ahingekumen, di menshn?

But once there were people here, and now there is no one. The doors leading from one room to another, are open; [...] No one notices her, Mirl. No one stops her and is suddenly happier because she has come. It seems that here it is too late and that it is all over and done for, but the people? Where have they all gone, the people?

'Di toyte shtot' as a metaphor for the Russian Jewish town, and as a vehicle for conveying a sense of the distance between Mirl and her surroundings, occurs in an article Bergelson wrote many years later (Bergelson, 1930, p.438):

Ven ikh bin gekumen in der yidisher literatur, hot men gehalten in eyn bazingn dos shtetl. Ikh ober hob gefilt, vi es iz eng di luft, vi shtinkendik zi iz inem goysedikn shtetl. Ikh hob gefilt, az der frierdiker dor iz faroremt. Mirele in *Nokh alemen* hot nisht vos tsu nemen keyn yerushe fun ir foter. Un es iz narish tsu meynen, az es handelt zikh bloyz vegn materyeler yerushe. [...] Men hot badarft geben dem opgang in yidishn lebn.

When I came to Yiddish literature, it was the fashion to do nothing but sing the praises of the 'shtetl'. I, however, felt how putrid and suffocating it was in the dying town. I felt that the previous generation was impoverished. Mirele in *Nokh alemen*, has no inheritance from her father, and it is foolish to think that it is only a question of a material inheritance. [...] It was time to give the valedictory address to Jewish life.

The novel's early reputation notwithstanding, the originality and interest of *Nokh alemen* do not lie, therefore, only in Bergelson's character study of his heroine. In her psychologically orphaned and bankrupt state, in her inability to form stable erotic relationships, her pervasive sense of social malaise and alienation, her sense of historical perspective, and in her

absolute lack of any specific programme likely to extricate her from the impasse in which she finds herself without quite understanding how her life has slipped so far out of her control, Mirl resembles the male protagonists analysed throughout this study. She has fewer traits conventionally ascribed exclusively to females than Elsa Landau or Gina Bart, or for that matter, Frieda.

For a female character of the first importance, Mirl bears a closer resemblance to male characters such as Georg, Rudolf Gordweil, or even Heinrich Bermann, which is why it is remarkable to have her at the centre of narrative focus in *Nokh alemen*. In a letter to Shmuel Niger written in December 1912, after the first chapters of *Nokh alemen* had appeared in the first volume of the collection *Fun tsayt tsu tsayt* in Kiev in 1911, and before the book was completed for publication in 1913, Bergelson expresses mild surprise at the recent passion in Russian Jewish intellectual circles for debate on Jewish themes, and says that this is reflected in his new novel (Bergelson, 1952, p.96). Mirl, a contemporary of Bergelson's in 1911, has the honour of representing his views on all the subjects of intense concern to him at that time. Since her behaviour is motivated by her forlorn obsession with the lack of any place in Russian society for non-religious, educated Jews who have outgrown the shtetl, and she is chiefly characterised by the distance she maintains from the men and woman who seek to approach her, especially by the extraordinary detachment and inaccessibility which mark her demeanour with her husband and lovers, Mirl conforms to all the requirements of a Bergelson hero. *Nokh alemen* is the only one of Bergelson's major works to have a woman as the main protagonist. As a female character, however, Mirl is underused. In the end, the effectiveness of Mirl's portrayal derives from the incorporation of themes that preoccupied Bergelson generally, without reference to the particularities of a feminine perspective.

David Vogel: *Nokhah hayam*

The range of women depicted in *Nokh alemen*, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, and *Das Schloß* does not include anyone else like Gina Bart in *Nokhah hayam*. When the works considered in this study are examined with the specific intention of categorising and evaluating the ways in which male authors of the period 1900-1945 perceived and represented women in their society, we find that although the texts offer a very wide selection of female types, they do not contain any female whose central concern is the relationship between her own moral principles and the expression of sexual desire independently of money and social status. Comparison of the differing characterisations of the central female and male protagonists of *Nokhah hayam*, Gina and Adolf Bart, will enable us to formulate a theoretical explanation for the failure of emotional relationships between men and women that is a ubiquitous, recurrent preoccupation of these works. The nature of the intrapsychic conflict which haunts Gina, and the absence of any comparable conflict in her husband, indicate in a compact form the asymmetry on both the affective and erotic levels which typifies the couples in this literature. This asymmetry is shown as intrinsic to their relationship, and is not a product of the insecurity felt by Jews among Gentiles.

Nokhah hayam, a Hebrew novella of fifty-eight pages, was written by Vogel in 1932. It was never published as a book in his lifetime. Peri (1990) lists two previous editions of *Nokhah hayam* in his explanatory notes to Vogel's collected shorter prose. In 1934, the novella was printed in *Sefer hashanah shel Eretz-Yisrael* (*The Land of Israel Year-book*). In 1974, the publishing house, 'Hakibbutz hame'uhad' reprinted the text under its imprint 'Siman kri'ah', using the 1934 version. The 1990 version represents the first publication of the novella in which no censorship has taken place. In 1934, Lahover, the 'Year-book' editor, tampered with the text in order to

remove phrases and sentences he found too sexually emphatic or explicit in passages describing the physical characteristics of female characters, or relating their erotic behaviour and responses in the course of the narrative (Peri, 1990, p.351). Since the subject of *Nokhaḥ hayam* is both emphatically and explicitly sexual, with the focus on the experience of the central female protagonist, careful pruning of erotic descriptions of her can only obscure the meaning of the text. Unlike his novel *Ḥayey nisu'im*, the shorter fiction of David Vogel is not yet available in translation. A brief summary of the plot and characters of *Nokhaḥ hayam* will therefore follow.

Summer, 1931. A young couple arrive at Cros-de-Cagnes, a small fishing village near Nice, on the south coast of France. They are Jewish, from Vienna. She, Gina, is known as Madame Bart, though it is suggested by another character, that this may be a courtesy title. He, Adolf Bart, is referred to solely as Bart, even by Gina. They rent a room for an indefinite period of time in the home of Madame Bermont, a voluble, colourful local personality, and unusually for the village, French. Gina and Bart go to the beach, where they meet a mixture of holiday makers and local residents, mostly Italian. Bart's attention is caught by Marcelle, a French student nurse. Gina fascinates Chichi, an Italian casual labourer. Chichi is invited to join Gina and Bart in Stefano's café, which he does, although he and Stefano have quarrelled. A Japanese summer guest invites Gina to dance. Chichi shows signs of jealousy, which are not lost on Bart. Marcelle appears in the café, to the delight of Bart, who engages her in conversation.

Bart is increasingly enchanted by Marcelle. Chichi makes wild declarations of passion to Gina, who finds him slightly touching, rather sinister, and very grotesque. Bart falls ill, the result of a midnight swim with Marcelle and some of the other guests, though not with Gina. Marcelle visits him in his room in the guest-house, where he seduces her. At the same time, Gina is spending the day in Nice. Unknown to her, Chichi has

followed her. She is horrified to have him pestering her, but agrees to let him accompany her on her walk around the city. After a while she has enough of him, and sends him on his way. With a few minutes to spare before catching her train back to the village, Gina goes into a café. Here she is observed by Erwin Kraft, another tourist, who is captivated by her, and offers to drive her home. Later, at a party upstairs in Stefano's café, Chichi confronts Gina with her attachment to Kraft. He is rebuked for his insolence. As the evening wears on, there is an ugly scene, in which Chichi feels humiliated, and seeks to assert himself by punching the Japanese, drunk at the time, in the eye. Marcelle develops symptoms of a lung disease, and disappears from the beach and the usual social gatherings of the summer crowd.

One evening, Gina, bored with the daily drinking sessions in Stefano's café, goes for a walk. Chichi again forces his attentions upon her, and in a mood which she cannot adequately explain to herself, she accepts his sexual advances. Returning to the room she shares with Bart, she is unable to speak to him about what has occurred. Overwhelmed by confusion and self-disgust, Gina decides to return alone to Vienna, offering no explanation to Bart, except to say that until she learns to live with herself, she cannot live with him. In the meantime, an Italian beggar and his two children have started to perform in front of Stefano's café. Stefano objects to their presence among his guests, and Chichi intervenes on behalf of the beggar. Stefano and Chichi, who are already enemies because of a previous quarrel, come to blows, and Chichi stabs Stefano. Fearing reprisals from the police, Chichi leaves the area, after a formal leave-taking from Gina and Bart. Gina takes leave of a reluctant Erwin Kraft. Bart implores her to stay with him, but she refuses. Gina leaves Marcelle with instructions to console Bart in his solitude. Gina takes the train for Vienna.

The structure of *Nokhah hayam* is in many ways typical of Vogel's prose

works. First of all, the narrative setting, a small fishing village on the south coast of France, is entirely non-Jewish. We are led to assume that at least the central figures are Jewish because of one casual remark about the style of make-up and dressing of a young woman being 'ta'amah shel shiksa' ('the taste of a non-Jewish woman', *Nokhaḥ hayam*, p.10). In Vogel's rough draft of the story, this village is identified as Cros-de-Cagnes, in which the inhabitants at that time were predominantly Italian (Peri, 1990, p.332). Apart from Gina and Adolf Bart, no other characters are specified as Jewish, although we are informed about the identity of several Italians, an Englishwoman, a couple of French girls, and two Japanese. Kraft, who falls in love with Gina towards the end of the novella, notices her German accent immediately, but is told only that she is from Vienna, and about him we learn only that he is wealthy and in the throes of a divorce in Germany. Again, as is usual in Vogel's prose works, there are no Jewish families or institutions present, so that the drama between Bart and Gina, and even more, within Gina herself, is played out against a background, which, on a social level, evidently corresponds to the characters' cosmopolitan tastes, but which also exposes their psychological isolation and vulnerability.

In addition to the non-Jewish aspects of the setting, the theme of sexual relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish characters is familiar from Vogel's novel *Hayey nisu'im*, written in 1930 just prior to *Nokhaḥ hayam*. That Vogel is really interested in Gina and Marcelle, the two most important female protagonists, as individuals, and not as stereotypes, can be seen from the parity with which he develops their characterisation, avoiding all clichés based on French or Jewish national prejudice. Vogel is not side-tracked by any considerations other than the nature of the attachments between Gina and Bart, Bart and Marcelle, and Gina and Chichi.

Gina is not viewed from Bart's perspective except at moments when they are together and his opinions of her are directly relevant. Gina is

not depicted as an appendage of Bart: as Peri points out in his notes, she leaves Bart not because she can no longer live with him, but because she cannot live with herself: 'kol zman she'eyni yekholah lihyot 'imi bekhfifah ahat, eyni yekholah lihyot gam 'imkha' ('as long as I can't live with myself, I can't live with you either', *ibid.*, p.336). Her encounter with Chichi has undermined basic certainties about herself, and she has somehow to come to terms simultaneously with a sense of alienation and repugnance towards herself, and the knowledge that her sexual capacities had always been different from what she had permitted herself to believe.

Throughout Vogel's works, the body is seen as something separate and alien. In Gina's case, however, her attitude to her own body undergoes a radical transformation from being something that fills her with satisfaction, to a source of loathing and despair. Nothing in her presuppositions about fleeting sexual encounters such as the one she has with Chichi has prepared her for the horror she feels at herself. On the contrary, having complacently assumed that she would consider herself to have been raped, and to view her violator with appropriate revulsion, she now discovers that it is she who has initiated the contact with Chichi. Gina's distinction lies in her need to find an intellectual framework within which to understand her complicity in actions she continues to condemn, while remaining lucid enough to realise that she is still capable of committing them. Her intellectual honesty forces her to accept a new version of her desires and principles, which no longer automatically excludes sexual contact with strange men who are not even sympathetic or attractive to her. Vogel does, however, scatter clues to the ambivalence of his characters' attitudes in the areas of conflict he specifically wishes to deal with in a given work. In the novel, *Hayey nisu'im*, for example, Rudolf Gordweil allows himself to become intermittently aware of the dangers posed to him by his wife's duplicity, but is continually paralysed by his habit of quickly repressing

any awareness that might lead to an acceptance of the need to take action. Nor is appropriate action taken by Gina to prevent the confrontation with herself and the destruction of her much-prized relationship with Bart, who passes socially as her husband, even if Chichi's accusation is correct and they are not married. Gina's musings in a passage early in the narrative clearly indicate a predilection for certain tastes which are not, as yet, fully defined, but which are already referred to as 'maḥshevet zadon', 'a wicked thought' (ibid.,p.15):

Hamezonot vehayayin havarod maskhu le'ut ne'ima be'evar-eyhem, vetekhef ligmar hase'udah 'alu el ḥadram shebadyota harishonah lehinafesh. Hitpashtu venish'aru 'eyromim, shney gufim nehedarim, tse'irim, revuyey shemesh veyam. VeGina hashvah lah maḥshevet zadon, shetov hayah, ilu nimtse'ah 'imahem 'akhshav af Marcelle hanifle'ah, ve'ulay 'od ishah aḥat yafah, kan, tokh zu ha'aflulit haklushah, hamevusemet reyah tamrukim umey koloniah vehashofa'at edey ḥemdah mehamemim... Aḥen mi tikken lev enosh!

The food and the rosé blended a pleasant tiredness in their limbs, and directly the meal was over, they went up to their room on the first floor to rest. They undressed and remained naked, two magnificent bodies, young, drenched in sun and sea. And Gina had a wicked thought, that it would be good if the splendid Marcelle were with them as well, and perhaps one other beautiful woman, in this semi-darkness, perfumed with the scent of cosmetics and eau-de-Cologne and suffused with overwhelming vapours of desire... Who can truly fathom the human heart!

The last sentence, in the narrator's voice, contains the vital clue to the narrator's perspective on the rest of the proceedings, and therefore may be taken as an indication of how we are to understand Gina. The verb 'tikken', with its shades of meaning from 'to measure' in the sense of 'to estimate', to the more assertive 'to plan', colludes discreetly with Gina's uncertainty as to whether she can either take the full measure of her desires, or plan what to do with them. Typically, Vogel's central protagonists simultaneously know, and refuse to acknowledge, certain essential truths

about themselves. Peri amply proves the case for Gina's encouragement of Bart's affair with Marcelle, although it should be mentioned that Gina is never specifically aware of what takes place between them, and her fantasy of sharing the French girl with Bart is never realised.

Indeed, in the difference between Bart's joyous reaction to his seduction of Marcelle, and Gina's devastation by her acceptance of Chichi's advances, lies Vogel's comment on the difference between male and female sexual psychology. Bart is disconcerted neither by his attraction to Marcelle, nor by his consummation of his desire for her. In an interior monologue, Bart congratulates himself on his good fortune in possessing the perfect wife. However, his first impulse after deciding that Gina is an inestimable treasure, is to ascertain how long Marcelle will be staying in the south of France, and how much longer he will therefore be assured of her company. Like Gina, who senses Bart's interest in Marcelle, Bart sees Chichi's obsession with Gina, but is confident that he has nothing to fear from that quarter: 'Lo Chichi ha'ish veyatik mimenu et Gina!' ('Chichi is not the man to take Gina away from him' *ibid.*, p.19).

Bart is more straightforward than Gina, but also less self-critical about himself. He wants Marcelle, but does not consider that a sufficient cause for Gina to leave him. On the other hand, he wants Marcelle only for himself and for his own reasons, and does not imagine sharing his wife with either another man or woman. He is also conventional enough to assume that Gina could not be seduced by someone they both find ridiculous, and with whom, even without his lurid, hyperbolic Neapolitan mannerisms, Gina would have nothing in common. Differences in social class are sketched in lightly, but it is made clear, without unseemly emphasis, that they are of decisive importance. Marcelle is a nurse, a piece of information which elicits a reaction of surprise from Bart, who confesses that he had taken her for a young woman of independent means. On the afternoon she finally

submits to Chichi, the two items of information offered about Gina are that she is wearing a strawberry-coloured silk dress with large earrings, and that she whiles away the time by going into an expensive perfume shop. Chichi, who finds life too restricted in his native Italy, lives from casual labour on the French side of the border.

The fact that Chichi is an uneducated odd-job man of no fixed abode, and Gina is a grande bourgeoisie on indefinite holiday, determines the tone that each adopts with other. Chichi addresses Gina with elaborate respect, while insisting that his fascination with her, ennobled by what he believes to be the sincerity of his feelings, gives him the right to more consideration from her than the difference in their social conditions would otherwise allow. Initially amused and flattered by the directness and primitiveness of his compliments, Gina soon begins to vacillate between pity for his obvious distress and disquiet at the unpredictability of his reactions which are based on a set of assumptions she finds alien, repellent, and grotesque (ibid., p.23):

Chichi herim elehah 'eynav.

– Mutav shelo titshaki.

– Kakh! Ata oser 'alay!

– Ani miNapoli, Madam!

Chichi zarak tsur katan ba'avir.

– Etslenu beNapoli kortim et harosh!

– Ah!

– Kortim et harosh – shanah Chichi.

– Shapir, uvkhen?

Chichi shatak.

Chichi raised his eyes to her.

– You had better not laugh.

– Really! You are telling me what to do!

– I am from Naples, Madam!

Chichi threw a small stone in the air.

– In Naples we cut people's heads off.

– Ah!

– We cut people's heads off – Chichi repeated.

– Terrific. And what else do you do?

Chichi was silent.

It is not difficult to see from this exchange why Bart was not worried by Chichi's attentions to Gina. Until the last few pages of the narrative, it appears that Vogel is telling a fairly banal tale about the slightly deranged behaviour provoked by strange surroundings, the relaxed atmosphere of a Mediterranean beach, and the absence of constraints associated with regular employment, peer pressure, and family responsibilities. In this context, Bart's dalliance with Marcelle, and Chichi's pursuit of Gina, are hardly unusual. Indeed, that is their particular significance.

It is Vogel's singular accomplishment is to have created a credibly banal world, in which the Jewish characters not only do not behave differently from the non-Jewish characters, they are not even tormented by the question of whether they are being judged by a separate set of criteria. Vogel has written a modern European story, containing the artefacts of the period, such as jazz and early petrol pumps, drenched in a Mediterranean sun that, in the Hebrew literature of the inter-war years, is more typically associated with Palestine. Indeed, *Nokhaḥ hayam* contains perhaps the first mention in Hebrew belles lettres of a 'mash'eyvat benzin adumah', a red petrol pump, set by the side of a dusty 'kvish le'umi', 'route nationale' (ibid., p.41). Furthermore, in order to give the greatest verisimilitude to his characters' behaviour in a language whose venerable antecedents had not required an expression for the concept 'juke box', Vogel produces the marvellous phrase 'lekalkel et avtomat hanginah', 'to feed the juke box' (ibid., p.42), where the verb 'to feed' is not the obvious choice based on the common root for eating in the unusual sense of instant consumption of food, but a word meaning 'to feed', with the longer term connotation of 'to nourish and sustain', associated in Jewish liturgy both figuratively and literally with God. It is also perhaps worth noting that Vogel's inventiveness in creating new Hebrew expressions when necessary, and his willingness to translate useful Yiddish and German idioms into Hebrew, did not prevent

him from retaining Russian versions of words with alternative Western forms. Thus he does not trade in his native 'avtomat' for 'automat'.

The elements out of which Vogel has constructed *Nokhah hayam* are not those generally found in contemporary Hebrew writing. Zionist themes are notable for their absence, as are Jewish cultural issues. Moreover, the narrative perspective Vogel uses here differs significantly from that of the Yiddish and German-language fiction of the time, in that the experience of social rejection and the fear of further rejection are not issues. Consequently, the desire for social acceptance is not voiced or enacted by the Jewish characters. The plot develops without reference to the theme of the vexed relations between the individual and society, or indeed to anything but the psycho-sexual explorations of the persons concerned. In so far as a character like Gina is the focus of interest in a piece of Hebrew fiction written in 1932, she is remarkable. European Jewish writers who wanted to write on worldly subjects without any specifically Jewish national, religious, communal, or cultural content, did not deliberately make the effort to work in a language that was not their mother tongue, and which, moreover, still lacked the vocabulary with which to conjure the very events, thought processes and behaviour patterns they wished to describe. Vogel's vision of the function of Hebrew literature in a European setting is unique, and his decision to write about a double adultery without moralising, and to deal with a young woman's discovery of unpredicted aspects of her own sexuality from her point of view, illustrates the imaginativeness of his vision.

Gina receives an altogether more adult treatment than Mirl Hurvits, Elsa Landau, Frieda, or for that matter, any of the peripheral female characters in *Nokh alemen*, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, or *Das Schloß*. Like Mirl Hurvits and Elsa Landau, Gina is not the psychological appendage of a male character, and has no aptitude for maternal and wifely pursuits, but

unlike them, no excuse is made for her. Elsa's unconventional life is justified by her superior intellectual gifts, and Mirl's is comprehensible on the basis of the interaction between her neurotic personality and the historical circumstances with which she is confronted. Bergelson does not present the erotic component in Mirl's love affairs or marriage in positive terms of her passion for any individual. Indeed, she appears to have no desire even for the men she chooses herself, Herts and Heler, and the insurmountable revulsion her husband's physical presence inspires in her is, of course, the reason she finally leaves him.

Thus we are left with a female protagonist whose renown is based on her so-called 'emancipated' life-style, to whom no erotic feelings as such are attributed. Since, moreover, the portrait of Shmuel Zaydenovski is of a husband considered by his entourage to be excessively forgiving, indulgent, and sensitive to his wife's needs, an opinion with which the narrator concurs, the question arises in the reader's mind as to whether Mirl is not too negative and unreasonable. Elsa Landau, who is independent enough to spend the night with Georg Karnovski before he is shipped off to the front, has multiple excuses for her behaviour. She is an intellectual, a physician, a Communist, and not least, wholeheartedly in love with a soldier about to be sent into combat. Singer's real judgement of Elsa is apparent, not in the one night of love with Georg, but in the fact that she is sentimentalised to the point where she never loves another man besides Georg.

Vogel's characterisation of Gina, however, takes place from a perspective more dispassionate than that of Bergelson or Singer. The only aspect of her sexual adventure with Chichi she deems worthy of attention is her own evaluation of what has happened to her, why she allowed it to happen, and what the future implications are for her life, either alone or with Bart. She is further distinguished from Mirl, Elsa, and Frieda by her ability

to keep her own counsel. Gina's refusal to relate the incident of her sexual encounter with Chichi to Bart parallels her husband's reticence about clarifying to Gina the nature of his relationship with Marcelle. She does not allude to any of the psychological problems created by the episode with Chichi, except to reiterate her conviction that until she can live with herself, she cannot live with Bart. This is the crucial point in the narrative, when Vogel shows that Gina, though superior in moral sensitivity, is inferior to Bart in two vital respects, autonomy and maturity. She is appalled by the implications of her own sexual feelings; she fails to prevent herself from being embroiled in a situation which forces her to behave in a way that conflicts with the dictates of her conscience and tarnishes her self-image; and most devastatingly, she does not even know what the dictates of her conscience actually are, or how a realistic self-image should differ from the one she has always had.

The internal contradictions in Gina's behaviour receive precise formulation not from the commentary of the narrator, but in the mental synopsis of her position she gives herself. Lucidly, she locates the crucial point, not in the event itself, which she considers essentially forgettable, but in the question why she did such a thing without any reason (*ibid.*, p.45):

Harey zeh lo hayah ela tsad samui shel mahutah, samui af mimenah 'atsmah, sheba feta' lidey gilui be'emtsa'ut gormim yed'uim. Ki lo hame'ora likhshe'atmo hayah hashuv kan. Oto efshar hayah ulay limhok, levatel 'al-yedey shikheha. Ulam ha'uvdah shehi haytah 'alulah lekhakh, bli shum nimuk, stam, rak mipney sheha'erev yafeh vehamish'ol shomem ve'eyzeh geve matsui leyadah – zu 'asuyah haytah lehotsi adam midato. Harey eyn hi rasha'it afilu lehitka'es 'al adam zeh she'etslah, lekhalot bo hamatah. Vekhi madu'a hayah 'alav lehamits et hahizdamnut?! Hen hu ohev otah! Lo, eyn ashem kan zultah! Ve'otah ksilut sheba'inyan, oto timtum vehoser-ta'am! Yekholah haytah lirok bifaneha 'atsmah!

This was merely a hidden side of her real nature, hidden even from her herself, which had suddenly come to light as a result of certain contributing factors. For it was not the event as such

that was important here. It would be possible to erase it, to blot it out by means of forgetfulness. But the fact that she was capable of doing such a thing, without any reason, just like that, only because the evening was pleasant, and the path deserted, and some man happened to be by her side – that was enough to drive one mad. She couldn't really even be angry with the man who was with her, to vent her fury on him. Why should he have missed such an opportunity?! After all, he loved her! No, there was no guilty party here other than herself. And the sheer folly of the whole business, the stupidity, and meaninglessness. She could spit in her own face!

Vogel's originality lies in the objectivity and accuracy of Gina's self-analysis. The parallelism between Bart's single sexual episode with Marcelle, and Gina's with Chichi, gives the narrative a formal neatness which should not induce one to overlook the functional differences between the two occurrences. In *Nokhaḥ hayam*, the individual's attempts to express his own preferences are not curtailed by fear of anti-Semitic reactions from the non-Jews with whom the Jewish characters interact. The secret of Marcelle's appeal to Bart is her 'otherness', which he encapsulates to himself in the words (ibid., p.27):

zu ha'elah hazarah, hareḥokah meḥayekhah kemerḥak melo
kadur-ha'arets vehakrovah kdey maga yad.

this is the foreign goddess, who is as distant from your life as
the whole planet earth, and as close as the touch of a hand.

Marcelle is irresistible to Bart because of her 'otherness', by which he means not only the fact of her non-Jewishness, but her whole light-hearted, uncomplicated approach to life. Contact with this otherness is for him an experience of such purity and intensity that in the few moments he has had with Marcelle, Bart is convinced that he has known all the happiness allotted to him in life, the entire quantity of which would normally be eked out over many years. The reaction which parallels Bart's is not Gina's to Chichi, but Chichi's to Gina. Marcelle, a student nurse with lung trouble, is described in idealised form as a 'foreign goddess'.

Chichi, on the contrary, does not benefit from any idealisation at all. He is consistently portrayed as socially embarrassing, uneducated, and unattractive, in every way the opposite of the embodiment of an ideal world to which Gina might yearn to belong. It is he who idealises Gina, utilising a register of religious imagery similar to Bart's, in order to express the purity of his feelings for her. After he has made love to her, he bends reverently over her hand, kissing it as if it were 'an object of holiness' ('hefets shel kedushah', *ibid.*, p.45). This parallel between Bart and Chichi on the central issue of the narrative presents a male mechanism for avoiding the moral implications of adultery, a mechanism which is not available to Gina. She is simply not able to maintain that the question of adultery is irrelevant when higher principles are involved. The dismissive mockery with which Chichi is viewed from Gina's perspective is mitigated only by her nervous sense of his underlying brutishness, represented synecdochically by reference to his excessively large, powerful teeth.

Sexual choice in *Nokhah hayam* is made by the male characters, regardless of social class, exactly as in *Nokh alemen*, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, and *Das Schloß*. Vogel does not go so far as to create a female character who serenely makes her own sexual choices, but in Gina, his imagination reaches as far as a situation where a woman falls into a sexual trap with someone who repels her because she has not admitted to herself that she does not know what to do with her sexual desire. In a study of the failure of erotic relationships, Vogel's work charts the same course of events, but goes slightly further in not condemning the female protagonist to a life without love (Elsa and Mirl), or to a succession of opportunistic liaisons (Frieda).

The love between Elsa Landau and Georg Karnovski ends because Elsa is convinced that Georg would insist in having children, and on her giving up her career to look after them. Georg's marriage, in which he

is the dominant partner, and secretly maintains a poor opinion of his wife's charm and intellect, does not, however, fare any better than his association with Elsa, in which she had the upper hand. The marriage between Dovid and Lea Karnovski is painfully unsatisfactory because of the overtly low esteem in which Dovid holds his wife, and his refusal to find any means of taking pleasure in her company. Mirl's infatuation with Herts, her various flirtations, and her marriage to Shmuel Zaydenovski, are destroyed by her lack of belief in herself and in the men who love her. She is inhibited from actively seeking to exercise her talents, and continues to limit the ways in which she relates to men to the secretive, provocative, and accusatory. Frieda is intellectually inferior to K., as well as morally suspect to him, and her obvious abilities are tainted even further in his eyes by the relentless domesticity of her ambitions. *Nokhah hayam* is alone in positing the hypothesis that both members of a couple might be of approximately equal strength of character, intelligence, and mutual commitment.

Franz Kafka: *Das Schloß*

In this last section we turn our attention to Kafka's *Das Schloß*. As an allegorical novel, *Das Schloß* has none of the concerns of social realism characteristic of the texts we have considered so far. Nevertheless, despite belonging to a different literary genre from *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, *Nokh alemen*, and *Nokhah hayam*, *Das Schloß* has a familiar thematic absorption with a variety of questions stemming from the issue of marriage and family life. But perhaps most significantly for the purposes of this study, a number of critics have found that the central characters and relationships are presented substantially enough to permit comparison with those in realist texts (Robertson, 1985, p.219). In his analysis of the ways in which K. functions within the text, Sokel (1964, p.459) makes this point clearly:

Indem er die objektive Gültigkeit, die Wahrheit, seines Erlebens verteidigt, beschützt K. auch die realistische Erzählform, die sich immer deutbarer Motivierungen ihrer Gestalten bedienen muß, um das Gefühl einer Mimese der empirischen Wirklichkeit zu erzeugen.

Sheppard also counters the argument that the reader cannot tell what the other characters are thinking and feeling, because the narrative is told entirely from K.'s limited viewpoint, with the observation that narrative perspective in *Das Schloß* is subtly altered as the reader moves back and forth between immediate access to K.'s thoughts in direct speech, to information received about K. through reported speech. As Sheppard points out, the reader identifies more closely with K. in the former case than in the latter. And even 'when the reader hears K. speak directly, his acquired knowledge that K.'s point of view is not necessarily the only one possible invites him to measure K.'s estimates and opinions against other possibilities of interpretation that are unobtrusively inherent in the total situation in which K. finds himself' (Sheppard, 1973, p.24).

Das Schloß reveals the contradiction between Kafka's personal theoretical commitment to marriage and family life as the supreme source of existential meaning, and the patent failure of his protagonists to pursue this ideal with resolution. The expression of Kafka's position on family life is well known (Kafka, 1953, pp.209-210):

Heiraten, eine Familie gründen, alle Kinder, welche kommen, hinnehmen, in dieser unsicheren Welt erhalten und gar noch ein wenig führen, ist meiner Überzeugung nach das Äußerste, das einem Menschen überhaupt gelingen kann.

Such idyllic perceptions stand starkly in contrast with the fate of the male characters who inhabit Kafka's fictional world. The failure to achieve perfect domesticity is a dominant theme in all the texts considered in this chapter, as well as in the other works analysed with different points of emphasis elsewhere in the thesis. The male characters strive constantly to

form stable erotic relationships which they consistently prove themselves unable to establish, despite the shared implicit agreement on the absolute centrality of harmonious domestic life. This similarity is too striking to be due merely to biographical contingencies. It needs to be explained in terms of the Jewish context shared, to a greater or a lesser degree, by all the authors in question. There is therefore a strong suggestion that, regardless of the background and personal feelings of the author, the relationship between men and women as depicted in Jewish writing is often a metaphor for the relationship between Jews and the non-Jewish world which surrounds them.

We will start by considering the interaction between the protagonist and the environment, and the role assigned to the sexual partner in this confrontation. The essence of K.'s struggle is his battle for recognition and acceptance in a place where he is a stranger. Since he is, within the framework of the narrative, the only stranger in the Castle's vicinity, his personality embodies the quintessence of strangeness for the local inhabitants, and naturally elicits strong reactions from them. Bödeker (1974, p.120) notes that K.'s earliest reflections on his potential future in the village are tinged, not with the joy of discovery, but with the anxiety of not belonging:

Er fühlt sich bereits bei seiner Ankunft im Dorf 'verlassen', denn 'zu den Bauern gehöre ich nicht und ins Schloß wohl auch nicht'. Er kommt 'aus einer ganz anderen Welt', ist 'überzählig und überall im Weg', hat 'auf nichts Anspruch'.

By explicitly designating K. as a stranger at the outset of the novel, Kafka has the advantage of a short cut that circumvents the need for diagnosis of depression caused by alienation from a rejecting environment. He can also dispense with descriptions of the affective and behavioural ways in which the depression manifests itself, as well as with a prognosis of its anticipated course of development, with which much of the plots of *Di*

mishpokhe Karnovski and *Nokh alemen* are taken up. In this sense, *Das Schloß* may be said to start where the other two finish, because Kafka can legitimately assume that K. will be largely viewed with suspicion by the people he needs to accept him, and indeed, K. does not blame them for doing so, unlike Mirl Hurvits and the Polish and German Jewish characters in the Berlin sections of *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*.

Moreover, Kafka makes no excuses for K., whose abrasive manner, and peculiar mixture of arrogance and hypersensitivity, like that of Mirl Hurvits or Heinrich Bermann in *Der Weg ins Freie*, are a luxury that can be ill afforded. Even though it is so obviously against his avowed determination to integrate into village life, K. systematically alienates those elements of the local population whose support might be useful, Gardena, the Assistants, the Teacher, and of course, Frieda, while publicly demonstrating his friendship with those who can do him the most harm, Amalia and Olga. Again, as with Mirl, Georg Karnovski, Gina Bart, or Heinrich Bermann, there is evidence presented both for and against the argument that more effort by K. could have enabled him to maintain a stable erotic relationship. If, for example, K. were actually as ruthless as Frieda accuses him of being, he would have disguised his real indifference to her, and concentrated his energies on not losing her, marriage to Frieda being the single most obvious way to realise his dream of social integration and his goal of access to Klamm, Frieda's previous lover. Instead, he makes no effort to ensure her loyalty, and after providing her with the excuse for leaving him, refrains from any word or gesture of unmistakable tenderness that might cause her to return to him. If K. does not marry Frieda, he will not marry any one else in the village either, because the abyss between his words and his deeds indicates that the rationale behind his decision to marry is intellectual rather than emotional.

K.'s failure to achieve his stated goal of marriage, while admittedly precipitated by his neglect of Frieda on the night he spends with the Barnabas girls, thus raises the question of the limits of compatibility between men and women as a fundamental conviction of Kafka's that takes precedence over his otherwise sincere dedication to the ideal of family life. Because the underlying assumption of the novel is that the needs and expectations men and women have of each other are, for the most part, mutually antagonistic, and therefore impossible to fulfil in equal measure for both parties, the narrative emphasis in *Das Schloß* is not merely on the failure to develop an enduring relationship, as it is in all the other works considered here. The meditations in *Das Schloß* on the reasons why Frieda and K. must inevitably disappoint each other have a potential significance beyond their use in understanding Kafka. They appear to suggest a useful model for understanding the thought processes of disaffected couples in other works, where analysis of the pervasively corrupting influence of extant power structures on the intimate sphere of sexual relations is beyond the scope of the novel. For this reason, even though Singer, Bergelson, Vogel, Schnitzler, Zweig, Kracauer, Roth and Rabon do not define the causes of the erosion of love in the metaphysical terms used by Kafka, the quality of the relations between the male and female characters in their imagined worlds shows that the same principles are at work.

Kafka's novel is relevant to a study of European Jewish literature, although his primary objective is not to use fictional characters in a geographically precise setting as a means of debating the psycho-social effects of the Jewish historical situation on contemporary individuals. The narrative of *Das Schloß* nevertheless achieves the same polemical effect as works with more obviously realistic ambitions. This is because *Das Schloß*, despite its abstract, *Märchen*-like form, is engrossed in portraying the Jewish preoccupation with limiting social rejection and mitigating the effects of

psychological isolation. At the same time, the novel probes the distorting effects on the expression of love within the couple, caused by the economic and political imbalance between men and women. Kafka does not imagine his protagonists pursuing different goals from those of the characters in the novels containing culturally specific social criticism. On the contrary, the goals that pertain to the relations between the sexes are the same, as is the failure to achieve them. Since, however, Kafka's exploration of the same themes, and his arrival at the same conclusions, is formulated in the manner of pure inquiry in which the philosophical meditation takes precedence over the requirements of plot development and narrative flow, close reading of *Das Schloß* provides insight into the patterns of destructive behaviour described naturalistically by the other writers discussed in this study. In *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, *Nokh alemen*, and *Nokhah hayam*, male and female characters are shown to behave in ways that presuppose a mutual lack of understanding, but the exact nature of this presupposition is not investigated as it is in *Das Schloß*.

There are three main aspects of the love affair between K. and Frieda: K.'s confusion about his real feelings for Frieda; the effect that K.'s abrasive and obstinate personality traits have for the course of their love; and the author's underlying belief in the inherent, irremediable impossibility of establishing an enduring commitment between men and women on the basis of equal and reciprocal understanding and devotion.

If we examine the evidence relevant to each category in turn, we shall see how K.'s project of finding peace of mind through marriage and family life with Frieda is undermined in ways pertinent to our analyses of the failed domesticity that is the hallmark of all the works discussed in this thesis.

Frieda does indeed fall in love with K. 'with the rapidity possible only in a male fantasy' (Robertson, 1985, p.261). Although the event is flattering to

K.'s vanity, its real significance lies in the revelation that K. thinks nothing of embarking upon a decision of such crucial importance as the choice of a wife in an almost utterly unreflective way. Given that domestic life is the central value in *Das Schloß*, and that even the godlike figure Klamm appears to go uncharacteristically out of his inscrutable way to encourage K. to settle down with Frieda by writing twice personally to him, the weightiness of the decision itself contrasts strongly with the lightness with which it is taken. Thus we see, at the very beginning of the narrative, that an occurrence which seems to be wholly positive for the protagonist is in fact symptomatic of the author's ambivalence towards the value about which he is ostensibly unequivocal. If we compare the intellectual effort K. puts into sorting out his administrative affairs, with his perfunctory approach to his life with Frieda, we have further evidence that K.'s commitment to conjugal love is only shallow.

Does the text allow us to be sure that K. actually loves Frieda? Reiner Stach, in his study of the interplay between sexuality and political power, maintains that K. finds Frieda useful as a means to an end (Stach, 1987, p.182), but does not love her. In one passage, however, K.'s musings do reveal a sincere attachment to Frieda, although it is important to recall that he never tells Frieda herself that he loves her (*Das Schloß*, p.241):

[...]und im Grunde handelte es sich ja nur um Frieda, denn alles andere kümmerte ihn ja nur mit Bezug auf sie. Deshalb mußte er diese Stellung, welche Frieda einige Sicherheit gab, zu behalten suchen, und es durfte ihn nicht reuen, im Hinblick auf diesen Zweck mehr vom Lehrer zu dulden, als er sonst zu dulden über sich gebracht hätte.

K. appears here in the most favourable light in which he is ever shown. These are not, however, the only lines in the text which are open to the interpretation that K. may indeed want Frieda for herself, and not solely 'als Machtmittel', as a means of reaching the Castle. Unless it is entirely bluff, K.'s astonishing assertion to Jeremias that 'Nur Lügen konnten Frieda

mir abwendig machen' (*Das Schloß*, p.374) does imply that K. sees himself as a normal lover who has won his beloved with his love and dedication. Nevertheless, had K. taken the trouble to think seriously about the emotional and intellectual affinities that are missing between Frieda and himself, before deciding to live with her, he might not have drifted into a situation where he could so readily be accused of deception, exploitation, and general duplicity.

Nothing, however, could alter the fact that K. is a stranger whose papers are not in order, and whose tactless, uningratiating manner is likely to restrict the success of his social integration into village life. Consequently, K. would always be vulnerable to charges of opportunism in seeking to marry a local girl who had done remarkably well for herself by her own efforts. In addition, the task of comprehending K.'s motives in expropriating Frieda from Klammm is further complicated by the insight he has into the limited power of attraction she exerts over him as a woman. Although there may simply be an irreconcilable contradiction between K.'s need to wrest whatever he wants from the Castle, and Frieda's need to trust him, it is also true that K. is aware of feeling closer to other people in the village than he does to Frieda. When reflecting on the ease with which he communicates with the Barnabas girls, he admits to himself that he might not have found it so difficult to reconcile the demands of his private obsessions with living in harmony with another person, had that person not been Frieda (*Das Schloß*, p.279):

[...] daß er hier Menschen fand, denen es [...] sehr ähnlich ging wie ihm selbst, denen er sich also anschließen konnte, mit denen er sich in vielem verständigen konnte, nicht nur in manchem, wie mit Frieda.

In addition to an obsession with the Castle, what K. has in common with the Barnabas girls is the condition of being an outsider with a stubborn, non-conformist temperament which assures that his psycho-social

marginalisation will remain permanent. K. cannot readily be integrated into any unit larger than one, for that would require him to relinquish some measure of autonomy, and that is fundamentally too threatening to be possible in any but the most extraordinary circumstances. In Sheppard's view, 'because K. does not understand what marriage can mean, for most of *Das Schloß* he proves incapable of exercising the tolerance, good humour, self-restraint, and patience which it demands' (Sheppard, 1973, p.174). This is true, but it should also be noted that Frieda is glaringly uninteresting intellectually for K, who is quick to point out to her that the only ideas he ever hears from her are those she repeats verbatim from Gardena. K.'s low opinion of Frieda's intelligence appears to be vindicated by the feebleness of her reaction to K.'s self-defence when she complains to him of all the ways in which he has abused her love. Without making any effort to discuss the important issues separating them, she merely sighs in exhausted confusion, and murmurs, 'Es ist so schwer, sich zurechtzufinden, K.' (ibid., p.251). Olga, on the other hand, orates for a hundred pages, during which time K. makes only brief remarks. He listens spellbound to Olga, after having already spent much longer talking to Amalia than had been his intention when he told Frieda that he had to go out, but would be back as soon as possible. At this turning-point in K.'s life, the narrator's only comment is 'K. nickte, an die Heimkehr dachte er jetzt nicht' (ibid., p.272).

Significantly, Kafka allows this decisive moment in the narrative to pass quietly, almost as if he is embarrassed by the tacit admission that K. secretly harbours a goal more precious to him than love, family, or social role. From this point on, K. will accept, with a new equanimity, the consequences of his decision to do without Frieda, for in renouncing her, he knows that he has irrevocably altered his position with the local power hierarchy. The limits of K.'s opportunism are reached when it becomes clear, even to him, that his temperamental affinity to society's outcasts is greater than even his

considerable compulsion to wrest some form of official acknowledgement of his right to exist as he is.

If the will of the Castle, as encoded in Kamm's second letter to K., is really for Frieda and K. to settle down together, and K. sabotages the chance of happiness the Castle has designated for him by neglecting Frieda and persisting in his efforts to reach the Castle authorities in person, that would be, as Robertson says, the tragedy of accessible happiness sacrificed to misguided ambition (Robertson, 1985, p.255). This would imply that with more humility earlier on, K. could have spared himself the loss of Frieda, and most crucially, the bleak future entailed in that loss. Although lack of humility is indeed one of K.'s more obvious personality traits, it is perhaps as well to remember K.'s conversation with Pepi, in which he gives his own version of why Frieda left him (*Das Schloß*, p.480):

Ich kann bei weitem nicht so genau, wie Du, [Pepi] erklären, warum Frieda mich verlassen hat [...] Das ist leider wahr, ich habe sie vernachlässigt [...] ich wäre glücklich, wenn sie zu mir zurückkäme, aber ich würde gleich wieder anfangen sie zu vernachlässigen.

Of the two points that K. makes here, one shows that he is not entirely the dupe of blind impulses – he knows that Frieda left him because he neglected her – and the second, that there are still aspects of the matter which he prefers not to go into – his assertion that he understands less than Pepi about why Frieda really left him. His admission that he would be happy if she came back, but that he would nonetheless immediately begin to neglect her again receives no further elaboration. The reasons which escape K., however, and of which Pepi certainly can have no inkling, are those which explain K.'s failure to take personal responsibility for becoming a normal member of society, with or without official approval by the Castle.

It seems perfectly clear that K. does not really want Frieda. Nothing in his behaviour indicates the contrary, and the only verbal statement affirming that the basis of his attachment is emotional and not political, is the quotation previously referred to (*Das Schloß*, p.241): 'und im Grunde handelte es sich ja nur um Frieda, denn alles andere kümmerte ihn ja nur mit Bezug auf sie.' This we may take to be K.'s attempt to overcome his own reluctance to take a step which is a social and economic necessity rather than an inner imperative. In this respect, K. is closer to Mirl Hurvits than to any other male character. Not only are the attractions of an alliance with Shmuel Zaydenovski exclusively social and material, but a shrewd marriage is for Mirl, as for K., effectively the only guarantee of personal status and security. It may also be, however, that K.'s 'own unalterable selfishness and self-centredness' (Sheppard, 1973, p.206) do not provide an exhaustive explanation for K.'s philosophical acceptance of the loss of Frieda and of his own social suicide.

Certainly, K. is selfish and self-centred. In expecting Frieda to put his preferences first, K. is not restrained by consciousness of his own dereliction of duty. He is angry with her for sending one of the assistants he detests to fetch him from the Barnabas household, and even though he, K., is at fault for staying out all night, he frames his reproach to her in his own mind as 'Frieda, die doch seinen Willen kannte'. That is, he is particularly furious because she has done something she knew would displease him, although his own actions are not constrained by his knowledge of what will please and displease her. He omits to do the former, and hastens to do the latter. Instead of staying with her at her most vulnerable moment, when she confesses her love for him, and her doubts about the sincerity of his commitment to her, he rushes away to visit Amalia and Olga. The Barnabas girls, for whom Frieda, in her conventional, conformist way, shares the hatred common to all the villagers, are still valid objects of her

jealousy. Since K. is, however, indifferent to the reality of Frieda's desires, he does precisely what is necessary to offend her, and nothing to reassure her that she has not made a mistake in sacrificing her formerly secure social position in order to satisfy what she describes as her need to be with him (*Das Schloß*, p.399):

Wie brauche ich Deine Nähe, wie bin ich, seitdem ich Dich kenne, ohne Deine Nähe verlassen; Deine Nähe ist, glaube mir, der einzige Traum, den ich träume, keinen anderen.

The question of fulfilling implied wishes not formulated as an explicit request or command is discussed from the male point of view by Hans Brunswick, who, despite his youth, knows the one secret of successful interpersonal relations which would dramatically improve K.'s prospects of marital stability and social integration (*ibid.*, p.228):

Denn das habe die Mutter am liebsten, wenn man ohne ausdrücklichen Befehl ihre Wünsche erfüllt.

K. follows a policy of deliberately ignoring the wishes of the women with whom he has contact. This contrary behaviour is a noticeable feature among male protagonists in the other texts analysed in this study. Among the most obvious examples are: Nakhmen's sneering objection to Khanke's comforting religious observances; Gordweil's fateful rejection of Lotte's love for him; Heinrich Bermann's confused and callous treatment of his mistress; Georg von Wergenthin's refusal to offer Anna convincing evidence of his commitment to her; Werner Bertin's rape of Lenore directly after she expresses fears of an unwanted pregnancy; Dovid Karnovski's persistent use of German with his wife, despite her requests that he speak Yiddish with her .

On one occasion, however, K. succeeds almost inadvertently in transforming a hostile reaction into an amicable one by the simple expedient of an apology. Gardena and K. are having one of their interminable arguments on the subject of Klammm. Gardena, who was briefly Klammm's

mistress more than twenty years previously, uses the prestige this fact still gives her, as a tool with which to bludgeon K.. Just when she is engrossed in criticising K. mercilessly, K. suddenly changes his tone and politely excuses himself for having expressed himself in such a way as to cause a misunderstanding. Gardena, who is probably K.'s most dangerous enemy, not least because she actively works to separate Frieda from him, does an immediate about-face, and retracts her previously menacing and unyielding statements. The message here for K. is that it might be surprisingly easy to mollify even his most intractable ill-wishers. That K. is not inclined to alter his established behaviour patterns, even when it is in his own best interest to do so, reflects, of course, the rigidity of his personality. With more wisdom and flexibility, K. could perhaps relinquish his obsession with the Castle and its personnel, and still achieve his ends, by making more friends than enemies among the local population.

Ultimately, K. is passive when faced with Frieda's loss, and active in the meaningless pursuit of his Castle dreams, not only because he 'does not want satisfaction, he wants eternal striving' (Sheppard, 1973, p.134), but because of his perception that their personal happiness will depend more on their position within the prevailing social power structures than on their feeling for each other. Frieda too, is passive, accustomed as she is to behave in the way expected of females and to do no more than acquiesce in male desires. She does not make any vigorous attempts to keep K. because she is too dependent on social approval to go against the system by herself. Intuitively, however, she does wonder if she and K. might not be better off elsewhere, and asks him to leave the Castle village with her. But K., having only recently made the decision to become an émigré, is determined to remain where he is, and to make a success of his life in what for him, is already an alien land. On the whole, it is a land with a pitiless, inflexible social system, where only small, relatively superficial

improvements occur. Frieda regains her old job as a barmaid. Artur and Jeremias cease being employed as K.'s minders. Pepi is demoted to the level of chambermaid. The Barnabas family remain pariahs. Those upon whom fortune has smiled continue to prosper in one guise or another, but the unblessed have no alternative but to accept that their unsatisfactory destiny is irremediable. Gardena's description of Kamm's remorseless rigidity is true for society as a whole (*Das Schloß*, p.133):

Den welchen man vergessen hat, kann man ja wieder kennenlernen. Bei Kamm ist das nicht möglich. Wen er nicht mehr rufen läßt, den hat er nicht nur für die Vergangenheit völlig vergessen, sondern förmlich auch für alle Zukunft.

Naturally, however, as K. is an outsider distinguished from the other characters by the cultural baggage he brings with him from elsewhere, he might well have ignored the prevailing cynicism and made the one obvious statement that would induce Frieda to stay with him, but he never does. This suggests not only that he does not want her, but that he accepts that as a temperamentally incorrigible outsider, he could not realistically hope to keep Frieda, whose love would not survive protracted exposure to aspects of his personality which nothing in her limited experience and intelligence have prepared her to comprehend. A straightforward expression of his love for her is therefore significantly absent from his final account of the reasons why she should not leave him, and is replaced by the curious assertion that none of his character flaws matters because she loves him. An alliance with one of the Barnabas girls, his only option for an erotic relationship based on mutual compatibility, would condemn him permanently to the state of isolation and alienation from which he is trying to escape. Having recognised that there is no remedy for his problem, since he can change neither society nor himself, K. tacitly admits that he can never attain what he wants, by agreeing to combine a temporary liaison with Pepi, with continuing futile attempts to batter at the Castle's walls.

As K. gradually elicits more information about the manner in which erotic contact is initiated under the Castle's aegis, a picture of the social norms governing the way love is pursued becomes steadily clearer. From this picture it emerges that relations between men and women are permeated by a profound cynicism in which the colonialist attitudes of the men are matched by the self-abasement of the women. In this world, it is an embarrassing nonsense even to contemplate marriage based on the sincere love and respect of two individuals who consider themselves to be unique and irreplaceable for each other. Love relationships in the orbit of the Castle are controlled by the existing power hierarchies. Within this structure, women are politically and economically powerless except in so far as they enjoy the protection of a male official of superior status. In fact, women are by definition so lowly that they automatically love all officials who want them, however briefly (*Das Schloß*, p.311):

Wir aber wissen, daß Frauen nicht anders können, als Beamte zu lieben wenn sich diese ihnen einmal zuwenden, ja sie lieben die Beamten schon vorher.

Women love the power to which they have no access other than through sexual contact with officialdom. The reality of social convention supersedes the reality of personal feeling here to such an extent that there is no longer any point in trying to penetrate behind the facade of docile female compliance in order to ascertain whether a given woman genuinely loves a particular man, or whether she is just doing the only job open to her as best she can. K., who inclines to the view that the latter is generally the case, never fully loses his suspicion of Frieda. For this reason, K. is ill-served by his paranoia, as Frieda is sincere in her love for him. She is simply not strong enough to keep K.'s interest focused on her, and leaves him because she is jealous of the attention he pays to the Barnabas girls, not because he has no status to confer on her.

Contrary to the usual pattern of male-female unions in the novel, it is K. whose treatment of Frieda leaves him open to widespread accusations of sexual opportunism. In this way, Kafka shows that the psychological consequences of social marginalisation can be similar for social groups whose behaviour patterns would not otherwise be expected to converge. The sly unscrupulousness of women is explicable, if not justified, by their disenfranchisement. Stach lists the personality distortions to which women in this social system are vulnerable, but the description is actually less fitting for Frieda than for K., whose tragedy it is to be subject to female humiliation without the resources or skills for making the most of his inferior social position (Stach, 1987, p.131):

Der Status sozialer Entrechtung gebietet allerdings Verzicht auf offene Konfrontationen; an deren Stelle treten die Finessen kalkulierter Nachgiebigkeit. Weiblicher Widerstand erscheint als 'heimtückisch', 'charakterlos' im doppelten Sinne; Musil beschrieb ihn einmal indirekt als 'nachgiebig, hinterhältig und zäh'.

In fact, the psycho-sexual ramifications of this political and economic disenfranchisement can be fully appreciated only by contrasting the behaviour of the female inhabitants of the village with that of the male officials of the Castle. Klammm, the most senior Castle official to appear in the narrative, is not impeded in the exercise of his *droit de seigneur* over the local female population by being evidently a coarse brute. Frieda does not hesitate to accept his sexual invitation, and is even said by K. to be still in love with Klammm, despite the man's obnoxious personality. Olga explains (*Das Schloß*, p.308):

Hast Du nicht selbst gehört oder es erzählen hören, in welchem Ton Klammm mit Frieda verkehrt hat? Von Klammm ist es bekannt, daß er sehr grob ist, er spricht angeblich stundenlang nichts, und dann sagt er plötzlich eine derartige Grobheit, daß es einen schaudert.

Indeed, in order to take the full measure of the customary self-abasement of which Frieda's behaviour is typical, one need only compare Sortini to Klamm. Sortini, a relatively minor official, addresses himself to Amalia in a way she finds offensive, but as Olga informs K., Klamm's method of summoning women is considerably worse (ibid.,p.310):

Ach, Klamm würde sich gar nicht die Mühe geben erst einen Brief zu schreiben.

But if he ever did (ibid., p.153):

Wenn Klamm einen zarten Brief schreibt, ist es peinlicher als der gröbste Brief Sortinis.

As Boa (1990) demonstrates in her analysis of the Fragmented Woman in *Das Schloß*, Kafka's vision of male-female relations was blurred by the standard inability to conceptualise any individual woman as being comfortably designed for both sensuality and maternity. Accordingly, the female characters in the novel conform to the dichotomy of stereotypic casting in the roles of wife/mother or whore. It is precisely this dichotomy which beleaguers the characterisations of the women in *Nokh alemen*, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, and *Nokhaḥ hayam*. The roles which are assigned to the female characters by the male characters inhibit the development of aspects of the woman's personality which are not of direct use to the man. So Elsa is forced to decide between marriage and a career, and Leah Karnovski to renounce the sensual side of her nature when her husband reduces her to an anonymous sexual object by insisting on making love to her in German, a language she cannot speak, and in which he cannot express his deepest feelings. That Dovid Karnovski has a stronger emotional attachment to his son than to his wife, is revealed by his continued, grudging, inadvertent use of Yiddish to give vent to his anger and distress concerning his son's behaviour. Mirl, having rejected the roles of wife and mother, finds that there is nothing else available to her, and Gina is appalled to discover that

the erotic component in her nature disqualifies her for marriage, that is, for civilised society.

As for Kafka, incontrovertible proof of the inherent abjectness he ascribes to women may be read from the derisive remarks about the lordly Castle officials made by Pepi. Pepi is, of all her female colleagues in the narrative, the one whose role is exclusively that of whore. She is the incarnation, in Stach's phrase, of 'absolute Verfügbarkeit', for whom 'die Oberfläche ist das Wesen' (Stach, 1987, p.97).

In a moment of candour, Pepi refers denigratingly to the officials in K.'s presence. Sensing in him a being as congenitally powerless as herself, she is not worried about revealing her true opinions to him. This is the sole example of such honesty on the part of a socially inferior female about a socially superior male, and is possible only because K. is not threatening to Pepi. Quite the opposite, he is rather sympathetic, because he is not in competition for the same niche in the socio-sexual scheme of Castle power hierarchies, but he is a male, and as such, maintains the illusion that he can still better himself. From Pepi's perspective, however, K. resembles her more than he does the males of the Castle or the village. This is because of the unlikeliness that he will ever achieve success, emphasised by his 'feminine' choice of indirect means of furthering his aims, especially his propensity for relying on promiscuous sexual adventure as a means of gaining social status (*Das Schloß*, p.457):

Wahrhaftig, es sind hohe Herren, aber man muß kräftig seinen Ekel überwinden, um nach ihnen aufräumen zu können.

If it is Pepi, sluttish as she is, who is given the honour of articulating the functional rapport between power and morality within the realm of the Castle, it is evident that, in Kafka's estimation, the probability of honesty between men and women is low. Nor is Pepi subsequently glorified for her momentary honesty. Her identifying characteristic remains as it was, her

willingness to become the possession of any Castle official, for however brief a time. Women who are more refined or more intelligent than Pepi (Frieda, Gardena, Olga) are viewed as deceiving either themselves or the world. They persist in maintaining the socially requisite fiction that their love for the representatives of official power is genuine, or that they would at least know better than to reveal their true feelings. Since only the outcast Amalia and the vulgar Pepi appear to speak the truth, the nature of Kafka's suspicions about K.'s real chances for domestic happiness becomes clear. In a society where a woman of average decency cannot afford to think the truth, much less to express it openly, K.'s actions must inevitably be motivated by the unalterable conviction that women are powerless in precisely those ways which render them unreliable as the sole repository of his trust and affection.

Of course, women are not completely powerless in Kafka's imaginative world. They do have a power of their own, though descriptions of it attract analyses containing a certain amount of semi-mystical piffle. Literary discussion of Kafka's attitude to women can result in phrases which may seem to our ears unacceptably outmoded. But as implausible and offensive as the phrases are, they remain unavoidable in a portrayal of women's position in society at the time. For example, in Stach's account of the sexual exploitation rife in Castle power politics, we find (Stach, 1987, p. 146):

Ist das die Schuld der Frau? Die Föhlung, die sie zu den Organen des Gerichts hält, ist die des Begehrens und des Eros, gewiß: sie kann nichts anders sein, weil das Weibliche einen anderen Modus sozialer 'Beziehung' nicht kennt. So transformiert die Frau das Versprechen von Hilfe in den Versuch erotischer Verführung, beides ist ihr ununterscheidbar [...]

This receives further elaboration in an observation on the approach-avoidance conflict generated in the male by the seduction-contempt syndrome from which he cannot escape (ibid., p.207): 'Verachtung weiblichen

Denkens und Verführtsein durch weibliches Geheimnis'. In the same passage, Stach locates woman's power more precisely in the belief Kafka shared with Freud that 'weibliche Erkenntnis nicht nur dem Unbewußten entspringt, sondern [...] Erkenntnis *vom* Unbewußten ist.' That is, woman is, by her nature, very close to primary process, and it is only through contact with a female, that the male can have direct, experiential knowledge of psychological processes about which he would otherwise be able to learn solely within the limits of his intellectual capacities. Finally, intellectual contempt is extended to the whole of the female person by the conviction that even the positive qualities woman does have, do not accrue to her as a result of individual effort or merit, but are mysteriously bestowed upon her in the inventive form of a long-term loan, in what is perhaps best described as a psycho-sexual life peerage (ibid., p.186):

Weibliche Macht ist nicht Fähigkeit, sondern Eigenschaft, nicht erworben, nicht erkämpft also, sondern verliehen auf Lebenszeit.

Nevertheless, this formulation of K.'s position, caught between wanting to marry and have a family, and placing a value upon women which is too low to make the project feasible, can also serve as a model for understanding the disaffection among the amorous couples in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, *Nokh alemen* and *Nokhah hayam*.

Conclusion

In our search for recognisable characteristics of Jewish writing, we have identified the theme of failed domesticity with its hint at the unsuccessful courtship of non-Jewish society. Since all the texts have male authors, and are written from the perspective of a male narrator, it is impossible to understand this process of failed domesticity without reference to the female

characters with which the male characters form erotic relationships. Differences of language, style, setting, and genre notwithstanding, the range of female characters presented, and the configuration of the relations between the male and female characters pictured in all four texts, belong demonstrably to the same set of assumptions with their concomitant expectations, and disappointments.

Kafka alone dismantles the psycho-social mechanisms controlling interpersonal relations between his male and female characters. Bergelson, Singer, and Vogel are content to document the genesis, development, and disintegration of emotional relationships chronologically, without explicitly formulating their own theories to explain the erosion of love that vitiates the unions of most of the couples they portray. Even though they are not entirely intellectual prisoners to conventional thinking about women, all four writers implicitly agree on marriage and the nuclear family as the only conceivable refuge for the Jewish protagonist. Significantly, this is not necessarily the case for the female Jewish protagonist, as we have seen with Elsa Landau, Mirl Hurvits, and Gina Bart.

Male characters are created to a recognisable pattern. First of all, they are bereft of emotional anchorage in their families of origin. Irresolvable tensions are either incorporated into the body of the narrative as in *Nokh alemen* and *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* or implicitly assumed to exist because of the absence of anyone to whom the protagonist can turn in his desperation as in *Nokhah hayam* and *Das Schloß*. Then they are shown to be adrift in society at large, struggling to come to terms with earlier rejections, bracing themselves for the onslaught of future rejections they fully expect to come. And in the narrative background, anti-Semitism is a contributory cause of the protagonists' chronic anxiety even before the rise of Nazism and the Second World War. In this highly fraught state, where the central protagonists' nerves are already frayed by the mental effort required to

cope with psychological exile from their culture and family of origin, compounded by the uneven struggle for integration into non-Jewish society, male characters are sent out, by their authors, to find their life partner. Unencumbered as they are by accurate knowledge of the being whose spoor they are following, it is hardly surprising that they are unable to communicate with the creature once they have it in their possession.

Reasons for male inability to maintain satisfactorily functioning relationships with the woman to whom they look for comfort and support are not explicitly given, beyond the fact that emotional intimacy, necessarily based on mutual trust, does not survive the woman's offended perception of being undervalued and/or neglected. Conversely, none of the texts contains an example of a male character whose personality disintegrates because he fails to form adequate social contact, despite the solidity of his family life. In short, the figure of the Jewish male protagonist is portrayed as defeated in his erotic relationships by a lack of skill in dealing rationally with women. At the same time, however, ineradicable popular prejudice against him ensures that he will find no viable alternative to marriage and the establishment of his own zone of safe space within a family of his own creation.

Chapter 5

Altruism and Impotence

*Wenn auch keine Erlösung
kommt, so will ich doch jeden
Augenblick ihrer würdig sein*
Franz Kafka

One of the major recurrent themes in the fictional works of European Jews writing in the first half of the twentieth century is that of the altruistic individual who identifies with the suffering of others, but is unable to help them, or indeed, himself. This chapter focuses on three works where this syndrome of altruism and impotence shapes the narrative: *Di gas* (*The Street*) by Yisroel Rabon, written in Yiddish, a Hebrew novel *Hayey nisu'im* (*Married Life*) by David Vogel, and *Georg*, by the German author, Siegfried Kracauer. Kracauer did not, of course, consider that he was creating Jewish literature, unlike Rabon and Vogel, who wrote in Jewish languages for an exclusively Jewish readership. The works are chosen to represent the writings of individuals of widely differing social backgrounds, born and educated in different countries, using different languages for their artistic work, linked only by a Jewish identity which had different meanings for each of them.

Superficially, the lives of the three authors were similar in one respect. They each lived for some period of their lives as socially marginal figures in

more or less unremitting penury. Rabon was born in 1900 in Gawróczow, a shtetl in the district of Radom in Poland, with the name Yisroel Rubin, which he altered to Rabon in order to avoid confusion with a distinguished Jewish scholar writing at that time under the name of Y. Rubin. Brought up in Balut, a suburb of Lodz where the inhabitants were largely impoverished Jews, Rabon lost his father early, and lived in the direst conditions of poverty and homelessness. About Rabon's death there are varying accounts. Between 1939 and 1941, Rabon lived in Vilna, and it is most likely that he was shot by the Nazis in Ponary in 1942 after the dissolution of the Vilna ghetto (Okrutny, 1973, pp.409-413). He published under a number of pseudonyms, sometimes in the 'shund' genre. 'Shund' (roughly, 'trash') was the name given to Yiddish stories and novels, much of it serialised regularly in daily newspapers and other periodicals, where the writing did not shun melodramatic plot effects, hyperbolic passages, and erotic scenes serving no obvious purpose in terms of narrative development. Shmeruk (1986) details the characteristics of the genre and Rabon's practice of it in his comprehensive introduction to *Di gas*. Rabon also wrote stories and poems for the newspapers *Haynt* and the *Lodzer Tageblatt*, not all of which have been found, or verified as his. No definitive bibliography has as yet been established for him. His first novel *Di gas* appeared in 1928, and his second *Balut – roman fun a forshtot* (Balut – novel of a suburb) in 1934. From 1936 to 1939 he was editor of a literary journal, *Os*, in which he published stories, essays, poetry, and his own translations of European poets.

Born in Satanov, Podolia, in 1891, David Vogel was, like Rabon, a vagabond, only in grander style. In 1909-1910 he left Russia for Vilna, where he was arrested for not having done his military service. He was then sent back to his native Satanov, and imprisoned. In 1912 he again left Russia, this time for Vienna. In his article 'David Vogel kemesaper', Gavriel Moked observes that Vogel was deeply tormented until the end of

his days by psychological and financial insecurity. Lonely and unhappy, Vogel gave the hero of his novel, *Hayey nisu'im*, the feelings of bleakness and estrangement in an urban landscape which had characterised his own early years in Vienna. With the outbreak of war in 1914, Russian citizens in Vienna were arrested, but Vogel was exceptional in his satisfaction at being held in detention. The advantages of having guaranteed food and shelter outweighed for him the obvious disadvantages of internment. A lifelong reluctance to hold down steady employment, coupled with the habit of rejecting work found for him by well-meaning friends, meant that Vogel was perennially unable to support himself, and later, his wife and daughter. Like Rudolf Gordweil in *Hayey nisu'im*, Vogel could not restrain himself from continually attempting to borrow money from his friends, and was perpetually distressed at the way this habit soured his friendships. In 1925 he left Vienna for Paris. Except for the year 1929-1930, which he spent in Palestine, Vogel remained in France until his final deportation and death in 1944. His wife and daughter survived the war.

Siegfried Kracauer was born in 1889 in Frankfurt am Main, where he was educated at the Philantropin, a well-known school of the time which was maintained by the Frankfurt Jewish Community. As his widowed mother's sole support, and in order to assuage her anxiety about his future livelihood, Kracauer acceded to her wishes, and devoted his energies to preparing for a career which did not appeal to him. He recorded his experiences, largely unhappy, working for a firm of architects during the First World War in his first novel, *Ginster*, published in 1928. In 1920 Kracauer abandoned his architectural career in order to work as a freelance writer for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*'s 'Feuilleton'. The following year he began work full-time employment as editor of the 'Feuilleton'. The years of his editorship in Frankfurt represent the only period in Kracauer's life when he enjoyed a measure of financial security while pursuing his chosen

profession. He also occasionally wrote about specifically Jewish themes, such as the controversial Organisation of German Jewish Nationalists, and rising German anti-Semitism. In 1930 Kracauer became the Berlin editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*'s 'Feuilleton' in Berlin, but was removed from his post in 1933. The two-year campaign to force him to sever his connection with the paper is described in his second novel, *Georg*. This was to be the last piece of fiction Kracauer wrote in German. It was also his last novel. For the rest of his life, Kracauer devoted his creative energies to sociological essays, analysing, with particular emphasis on the film industry, the ways in which the realia of modern urban civilisation reflect the spiritual malaise of the twentieth century. Though begun in Frankfurt in 1928, *Georg* was not completed until 1934, when Kracauer and his wife had already spent their first year of exile in France, and was never published during the author's lifetime. In 1941 the Kracaues were finally able to leave France for New York, where, despite continuing material difficulties, they decided to remain after the war. In 1947, Princeton University Press published the book for which Kracauer is best known, and which he had written in English, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Kracauer died in New York in 1966.

Georg, *Di gas*, and *Hayey nisu'im* are all semi-autobiographical novels written partly under the influence of the general economic insecurity of the 1920s, and partly under the particular pressure of intensified anti-Semitism in the authors' countries of residence, Germany, Poland, and Austria respectively. The case of David Vogel is further complicated by the fact that *Hayey nisu'im* is set in Vienna, and reflects the events and emotions experienced by Vogel during his first years there, but was actually written in Tel Aviv and Paris. The manuscript of *Hayey nisu'im* survived the war, buried in the garden of the elderly Frenchwoman in whose house Vogel was living when he was deported to a concentration camp. After the war, the painter

Avram Goldberg found the manuscript, along with the rest of Vogel's poetic legacy, and passed it on to the literary scholar, Shimen Halkin. In 1985 the manuscript arrived at the Genazim Institute in Tel Aviv, and in 1986 Shaked and Peri published a new edition of the text. *Georg*, though also completed in Paris, is, however, entirely German in conception. Curiously, although *Di gas* is confined to Lodz, the location in which the narrative unfolds is Lodz, and the novel is impregnated with the atmosphere of Rabon's native city, his bleak conclusions extend to Polish Jewry in general, to neighbouring Russia, Romania, and Hungary, and even further, to France, where his protagonist is refused a job as a coalminer because the French employers have given instructions not to hire Jews. He portrays European Jews as leading a marginalised existence everywhere, and Polish Jews as particularly disenfranchised outcasts who will never be allowed an integrated place in contemporary Polish society. The characters in the fiction of Vogel, Rabon, and Kracauer pursue parallel itineraries. They move without hesitation from one city or country to another whenever life becomes economically and psychologically untenable, and find that each successive move, rather than improving their circumstances, increasingly undermines their already precarious equilibrium.

Written in Tel Aviv and Paris in 1929-1930, *Hayey nisu'im*, with its Viennese setting, its exuberant use of Freudian teaching, its unbiased integration of non-Jewish characters into a Hebrew-language text, lack of religious interest, and absence of concern with Zionism has much in common with the German-language writings of Jewish authors of the period. Vogel did consider translating *Hayey nisu'im* into German, but he was urged not to do so. Rising anti-Semitism in Austria seemed to make such a step inadvisable, in light of the provocative nature of the narrative, which deals with the marriage between a sadistic Austrian Baroness and a masochistic Jewish writer. The result is a work which is a bridge between the Yiddish

writing of the period, written by Jews about Jews, and German literature written by Jews, in which Jewish concerns may be intermittently present, or completely absent, as in *Georg*, but whose readership is not intended to be exclusively Jewish. Vogel, a Hebrew poet, novelist and diarist, did translate some of his own poetry into his own native language, Yiddish, and was in contact with Yiddish writers, especially during his Vilna period. Beneath the Hebrew of *Hayey nisu'im*, a Yiddish linguistic substructure is occasionally perceptible, and many of Vogel's neologisms are created as translations from Yiddish expressions. The only longer work of his in Yiddish, however, is the semi-autobiographical novel written in 1942, after his release from French internment. The novel is available only in Hebrew translation.

On one level, *Di gas* and *Georg* have greater affinity with each other than with the Hebrew-language work *Hayey nisu'im*. In the 1920s, Yiddish was still a living language spoken by millions of native speakers, while colloquial Hebrew was in the process of formation, and was largely spoken and written by those for whom it was not their first language. Added to which, the characters in *Hayey nisu'im* are not represented as using Hebrew. The extraterritoriality of Hebrew, however, makes it a uniquely pliable medium for exploring the Jewish situation in Europe, as it is a language free of the usual connotations of perceived Jewish rejection by non-Jewish society. The use, therefore, of Hebrew to describe the lives of non-Zionist, non-religious characters who are portrayed with only a single oblique reference to the fact that they are Eastern European Jews trying to pass unnoticed in the Vienna of the 1920s, marks an attempt to remove the psychological and interpersonal conflicts of the protagonists from the obvious framework of anti-Semitism, and to offer an explanation for their behaviour from a wider perspective. Kracauer seeks to achieve the same effect by emphasising that Georg is not Jewish, that his malaise is German,

human, the result of a situation which is pressingly relevant to all Germans. In this way, Kracauer tries to suggest that the sense of social exclusion which torments his protagonist cannot simply be dismissed as a Jewish problem, and therefore of no concern to a wider German public. Similarly, in *Di gas*, the Yiddish of the text accurately reflects the thoughts and speech of the Jews only when they are speaking to each other; it is not, of course, the language the Jewish characters are in reality using in conversation with the surrounding Polish population. Moreover, the only employment the narrator finds depends on his ability to speak Polish fluently. In all three cases, the language of composition of the work emphasises the deeper psychological barrier between the protagonists and the milieu in which they seek to survive.

Inversely, however, it is also apparent that existing psychological differences create barriers which not even a supposedly common language can overcome, and this is the essential factor substantiating the hypothesis that despite personal and national variations in form of expression, the experience of the characters in *Di gas*, *Hayey nisu'im*, and *Georg* is ineluctably Jewish. Compared with that of *Di gas* and *Georg*, in which the language of the text corresponds at least partially to the reality being described, the language of *Hayey nisu'im* has the function of describing an intermediate reality in which characters originally from an Eastern European environment, like that of *Di gas*, are currently struggling to survive in a world similar to the Germany of *Georg*. It is therefore especially significant that Georg's social interactions leave him with as bleak a sense of isolation and rejection as those of Rudolf Gordweil and the narrator of *Di gas*. When Georg speaks, he is ignored as completely as if he were invisible, or misunderstood so thoroughly that he might as well be speaking a foreign language. Most distressing of all for Georg is the frustration he experiences as a journalist with a particularly strong commitment to improving

the living conditions of his countrymen. This initial commitment to social justice increasingly becomes an obsession with the subject of German moral reconstruction, which Georg sees as taking precedence over the obvious, but conventional, political and economic tasks facing the country. Despite his uncertainty as to the precise form such a moral reconstruction should take, Georg invests the subject with the spiritual and metaphysical intensity reminiscent of the Jewish belief in *tikun haolam*, in 'correcting' the world. The root of the word *tikun*, meaning 'to correct', recalls the whole range of prayers known as *tikunim*, designed to be said on a wide variety of occasions. The aim of these prayers is to correct cosmic, historical, or personal situations which have gone wrong, particularly according to the theological convictions and traditions of the Kabbalah. The whole tone of *Georg* is that of a secular *tikun*; Georg's attempts to communicate the ideas that are so important to him, so many unanswered prayers, are regularly met with incomprehension. Indeed, on the rare occasions when he feels that he has finally been understood, an altercation quickly ensues. Georg's psychological reality is, therefore, strikingly similar to that of the main characters in *Hayey nisu'im* and *Di gas*, although no plausible reason why this should be so is given in the text.

This psychological reality, which is expressed by continual verbal misunderstandings, is linked to a theme which is common to *Di gas*, *Hayey nisu'im*, and *Georg*, that of the modern *bahaltener tsadik*, the righteous person whose saintliness is barely remarked by the world, and who may even be unaware himself of his special mission on earth. Georg haltingly tries to explain this concept, without using the specific expression, to an unreceptive audience at an elegant dinner party in Frankfurt. In the face of incomprehension and hostility, during a discussion of possible cures for the social ills plaguing Germany, Georg argues against the purely materialistic view of life implicit in the remarks of the other guests. Only a

profound change in the way that individuals deal with each other can lead to a change in society. As a model for this radically different and humane way of thinking, feeling and behaving, he describes the character of the *bahaltener tsadik*, adding that only his belief in the existence of such people offers him consolation for the spiritual distress which is the hallmark of contemporary German society (*Georg*, p.360):

‘Es gibt solche Menschen’, erklärte er, unfähig sie zu beschreiben. ‘Und alles hängt davon ab, daß sie existieren. Sie kümmern sich nicht um die schlechten Einrichtungen, und lassen die guten hinter sich zurück. Sie sind mehr als sämtliche Einrichtungen. Sie sind wirklich vorhanden und keine Figuren. Und ein Glanz geht von ihnen aus, der für jeden erkennbar sein muß.’

However, unlike their counterparts in traditional Hasidic tales, the modern *tsadikim* are lacking in the power granted by the divine spark, and are doomed to suffer without being able to perform the miracles needed to alleviate human distress. In *Hayey nisu'im* and *Georg*, this impotent altruism is concentrated in the central protagonists, Rudolf Gordweil and Georg, whereas in *Di gas*, it is fragmented among several characters, although most strongly represented by the anonymous narrator. Georg stands half-way between the fully identified Rudolf Gordweil and the completely anonymous narrator of *Di gas* in that he is always referred to semi-anonymously by his first name, his surname never even being mentioned. Most of his social contact, however, is of the formal kind requiring him to use the title ‘Herr’, ‘Frau’, or ‘Doktor’, plus a surname, and which would oblige his interlocutor to address him with similar formality. In a novel where scrupulous attention is otherwise paid to realistic detail, this glaring deviation from the probable indicates an ambiguity about Georg’s identity. Georg represents both himself and a *bahaltener tsadik*, and his suffering is thus divided equally between himself and the surrounding world. In all three cases, this empathic suffering is experienced with an intensity which

inhibits the characters' ability to live their own lives, while their own emotional disorientation prevents successful intervention in the lives whose distress they wish to mitigate. The dynamics of all three novels are based upon an initial perception of the meaninglessness of life, 'die Leere der hinfließenden Zeit' (Mülder, 1985, p.85), and the consequent need to find a framework into which meaning can be fitted. Georg, Gordweil, and the narrator of *Di gas* are melancholics whose loss of belief in the values which were held to give stability to individual and social life before the First World War has resulted, first, in an impulse to denounce the inadequacies of belief systems currently considered to be social panaceas, and second, in a psychic disorientation which makes them indecisive and ineffectual in the relationships most important to them. Gordweil, for example, fails to recognise that the source of Lotte Bodenheim's unhappiness is his own apparent indifference to her; Georg is at a loss to understand any of the men or women to whom he is attracted and who have power over him; and the narrator of *Di gas* consistently misinterprets the real nature of Lyuba's attentions to him.

I.I. Trunk (1949, p.69), himself a Jew from Lodz, emphasises the exceptional universality of Rabon's sympathies, which he attributes in part to the author's Lodz background:

In kegnzats tsu ale poylishe yidn hobn di lodzer yidn gehat in zikh zeyer veynik fun der tipisher poylischer yidishkayt. Zey hobn nisht gehat dos mindste fun der romantisher un veykher provintsialkayt fun poylishe yidn. Lodzer yidn zaynen geven yidn, vos zeyer gantser psikhisher mehus iz geven di abstrakte vaytkayt fun epes an umbashtimter shtokhim-lozikayt. Lodzer yidn zaynen geven velt-yidn in fulstn zin fun vort. Zey zaynen oykh geven romantiker, nor romantiker fun veltisher grenets-lozikayt.

In contrast to all other Polish Jews, Lodz Jews had very little of the typical Polish Jewishness. They had not the least bit of the soft, romantic Polish Jewish provinciality. Lodz Jews were worldly in the fullest sense of the word. They were Jews whose entire psychic essence was the abstract distance of unbounded

territoriality. They were romantic as well, but with the romanticism of a world without borders.

Rabon, Vogel, and Kracauer share the outlook described here, specifically, an openness to people whose external circumstances are remote from their own. This exaggerated ability to identify with others, especially with their sorrows, when translated into literary form, produces characters with an irresistible inclination towards altruistic suffering. Gordweil is acutely aware of Lotte's suffering, but does not see that he is the cause of it. Indeed, it is the unbearable remorse he experiences after her suicide which forces upon him the realisation that had he acknowledged his true feelings for her earlier, he could have prevented her death and secured his own happiness. In other words, the quality of distress the modern *tsadik* is called upon to alleviate is of a psychological complexity not susceptible to the relatively mechanistic miracles of former times, when it was enough to light a fire in winter for a poor widow, or to get a fish on the Sabbath table of a hungry family. In addition, the contemporary *tsadik* may well find that his primary difficulty is in rectifying the circumstances of his own life. Gordweil, for example, will not allow himself to accept the truth either about his wife's destructiveness or his own self-destructiveness, and therefore remains prisoner in a marriage which destroys him. By the same token, despite his alarming inability to form satisfactory relationships, Georg hopes that by becoming a journalist on a prestigious newspaper, and by winning support for his view that spiritual regeneration must precede political change, he will be able to influence the national debate on the need for radical alteration in the social structures of the Weimar Republic, and in so doing, will help to improve the lot of Germany's citizens. His appointment to the *Morgenbote* is, however, the product of a misunderstanding, moreover, a misunderstanding of a linguistic nature, as Georg's first newspaper article is printed because the publisher reads

into its political intentions which Georg did not have. Although he is not Jewish, and is not thinking, speaking, or writing in a language foreign either to himself or his interlocutors, Georg's desire to be of service in public life, and his need for social acceptance, are thwarted by repeated misunderstandings and rejections in his professional and personal life, to the extent that in his own search for spiritual orientation, Georg can find only one way to describe himself to the Catholic priest Pater Quirin, ' "Ich stehe außen,[...] ich bin nur von außen." Es war ihm zumute, als ob er an einer Außenwand emporkletterte, und immer wieder herunterfalle' (Georg, p.308).

Like Rudolf Gordweil in *Hayey nisu'im*, and the narrator in *Di gas*, Georg cannot understand the world as others do, and is 'von der Sehnsucht nach Gewißheit verzehrt' (Georg, p.301), consumed by a longing for certainty which undermines every attempt to gain a secure place in other people's reality. In the midst of a gathering of convivial writers, intellectuals, and social activists by whom Georg would like to be understood and accepted, he reflects despairingly: 'Er ahnte ihre Gesichter, helle, unausgefüllte Flecken, die miteinander verschwammen, und wurde wieder wie so oft schon von der Empfindung überwältigt, daß das, was er meinte, für die anderen bedeutungslos war. [...] Wie allein er doch war' (Georg, p.360). Referring to the 'gesteigerte Rezeptivität' of Kracauer's earlier fictional creation, Ginster, Mülder (1985, p.131) makes a point which is equally valid for the protagonists of *Hayey nisu'im*, *Di gas*, and *Georg*: an extreme spiritual hypersensitivity, far from enriching an individual life in solely positive ways, effectively removes the possibility of shared experience by transforming commonly observable reality into a private world furnished with intensely-lived events and observations which cannot be adequately communicated because they are not perceived by anyone else in the same way, 'so erlebt er Vorgänge, die anderen als selbstverständlich

erscheinen, gleichsam in Zeitlupe, nimmt Dinge, die diese übersehen, wie unter dem "Vergrößerungsglas" wahr'. Characters like those created by Vogel, Rabon, and Kracauer are disconcerting because they are aware of layers of meanings in the trivia of daily life. Their sensitivity is translated in awkwardness which alienates those around them, making stable and secure relationships impossible to attain. Schröter (1980, p.24) elaborates: 'Die fundamentale Erfahrung, um deren Beschreibung, Verständnis und Bewältigung es Kracauer in all seinen Arbeiten geht, ist die Geschiedenheit des Menschen von der Welt.'

In the same manner, the lack of just such a 'Sinngestalt' in *Di gas* produces an identical syndrome of social fragmentation and individual isolation for which the presence of intense empathic suffering and impulsive altruism provide the motivation, but not the means to bridge the distance between individuals. The pale girl, Lyuba, whose imprecise identity encompasses that of guardian angel, writes extensively to the narrator about the inconsolable unhappiness which knowledge of his suffering causes her, but then refuses to meet him, and disappears without trace once she has delivered her second letter to him. In fact, *Di gas* is constructed almost entirely of episodes, the essence of which is the altruistic suffering experienced by one character on behalf of another. Strangely, given the nearly paralysing intensity of the emotion expressed, there is no attempt to formulate an analysis of society as a whole. Rather, Rabon offers us a series of snapshots of Lodz society which recall David Frisby's observation in his study *Fragments of Modernity*, that Kracauer develops a form of prose snapshots, of 'Momentaufnahmen' in order to perform an 'acute deciphering of the topology of modern metropolitan life' (Frisby, 1985, p.110). This absence of a more systematic approach to the question of the spiritual homelessness depicted in *Di gas* was considered by several critics in the 1920s and 1930s, to lend a superficial quality to Rabon's writing, most

notably by Vaynig (1930, p. 14):

Yisroel Rabon dringt nisht arayn tifer, nor er zet di shildn, dos gevelb drinen zet er nisht, er geyt nisht arayn ineveynik. Er zaml't on a sakh anekdotishn material, ober er sintizirt nisht. Der eyntsiker sintez iz er aleyn, beshas er geyt iber der gas un zaml't di eyntselne kolirte shteyndlekh in tash arayn.

Yisroel Rabon does not penetrate more deeply, he sees only the signs, but not the building within, he doesn't go inside. He collects a lot of anecdotal material, but he doesn't synthesise. He himself is the only synthesis, when he goes along the street, collecting coloured stones, and putting them in his pocket.

Vaynig also remarks upon the pathos which is an inescapable attribute of all the episodes in the novel: (ibid., p.16): 'With Rabon, a sadness hangs over everything, everything is dipped in a heavy gloom, whether the themes, or the people he meets.' Niger (1929, p.210), however, agrees that there may indeed be a certain superficiality to Rabon's writing, but explains it in terms of the preoccupation of the post-war generation with chronicling their epoch :

Es hobn zikh gevizn nit azoy mayses-dertseyler, vi shrayber fun khronikes. In a khronik iz di hoyptzakh di pasirung, in a mayse – der farloyf, der ritm fun di pasirung. Azelkhe mayses, mayses, vos zaynen sheyn derfar, vos zey vern dertseylt, nit derfar, vos zey hobn pasirt ... Yisroel Rabon's kheyshek tsu dertseyln un tsu dertseyln un vider tsu dertseyln, vert nit obgeshvakht fun keyn shum andere kavones.

There have (recently) appeared not so much story-tellers as writers of chronicles. In a chronicle the main thing is what happens, in a story – the way it happens, the rhythms of the events which take place. Stories which are good because they are being told, not because they happened ... Yisroel Rabon's desire to tell a story, and to tell a story, and to tell a story again is not weakened by any other intentions.

The impotent, altruistic suffering of the characters, their interest in, and their capacity for conceptualising an abstract, universal human condition beyond the limits of their personal experiences are ascribed by I.I. Trunk (1949, p.71) to the effect of the special Lodz atmosphere.

In assessing the critical consensus on Rabon's work, that his narrative qualities extend to a visionary compassion, but do not hide an intellectual superficiality, it is useful to compare Rabon's own description of his writing method with the conclusions arrived at by his critics (Niger, 1929, p.211):

Geyendik, shraybt er, afn gas, in hits un shtoyb, adurkhgebrent in der heyser zun, hot mir gekont stam aynfaln, azh fun der hoyler hoyt, an oyserst vilde geshikhte, in velkher ikh bin geven farmisht. Di dozike vilde un nisht-geshtoygene geshiktn hobn mikh gepakt mit aza shtarkn koyekh, az zey hobn mikh in alts gemakht vargesn. Oft zaynen zey arayngefloygn in mayn moyekh tsu etlekhe mitamol, nisht loyt a seyder. Eyne geendikt, hoybt zikh on a naye, neyn, eyne hot tsum sof arayngeplontert a tsveyte. Di tsveyte, a drite, u.a.v. Vi di mayse fun toyznt un eyn nakht.

Going, he writes, along the street, in heat and dust, burnt through by the hot sun, a completely wild story in which I was involved might suddenly occur to me, out of nowhere, for no reason. These wildly improbable stories made me forget everything else. Often they could come into my head a few at a time, without any order; one would finish and another would start – no, the first could finally tumble in on top of a second, the second on a third, and so forth, as in *The Arabian Nights*.

Of Kracauer, too, it has been argued that the shape of his narrative is determined by the lack of a central idea, and that he flits, not so much from story to story, as from phenomenon to phenomenon. The end result is, however, the same, because the disparate phenomena in *Georg* are connected to each other in the same way as in *Di gas*, that is, by the unifying consciousness of the main character. In Frisby's words (1985, p.118): 'There is nothing absolute that exists unconnected to other phenomena and that possesses validity for itself. The price paid for this eternal wandering between phenomena is necessarily connected with something negative: with the thinker's lack of a central idea. The thinker is incapable of indicating any direction in which our life should flow.'

The shape of the narrative in *Di gas* reflects the process described by Rabon above. The episodic nature of the plot is noted by Goldkorn (1962,

p. 129):

Bekhlal ober iz di konstruktionele un kinstlerish-psikhologishe zayt genug khaotish, ibershvomen fun groysn shtrom gesheenisht, stsenes, epizodn, vos folgn eyne nokh di andere, ober folgn nisht dem literarishen imperativ fun harmonisher kompozitsye.

Altogether, however, the constructional and artistic-psychological side is rather chaotic, submerged in the great stream of event, scenes, and episodes which follow hard upon each other, but which do not follow the literary imperative of harmonic composition.

Nevertheless, a nameless, often shadowy, narrator prevents the novel from fragmenting into a mere collection of digressions and in each episode, the central characters serve to illustrate the Jewish struggle for social integration into the new Polish Republic.

That Kracauer's own literary technique, which produces in *Georg* a similarly exclusive concentration on the supposedly superficial minutiae of modern life, corresponds to a deliberately selected intellectual framework, and is not a sign of intellectual inadequacy or lack of aesthetic rigour, is made clear by the author himself (Zohlen, 1980, p.78): 'Die Oberflächenäußerungen gewähren ihrer Unbewußtheit wegen einen unmittelbaren Zugang zu dem Grundgehalt des Bestehenden. An seiner Erkenntnis ist umgekehrt ihre Deutung geknüpft. Der Grundgehalt einer Epoche und ihre unbeachteten Regungen erhellen sich wechselseitig.' Of all Rabon's literary critics, Niger is most aware of the element of impotent empathy. According to Niger (1929, pp.211-212), therefore:

Zayne eydele gefiln, zayne poetishe shtimmung vern nokh tifer, er shtoyst zikh on on a vant fun elentkayt, ober er vert nisht tsebrochn [...] leheypekh tsu andere dertseyler fun der nokh-milkhome tsayt, git er zikh op mit dem hunger fun der neshome, nit mit di droysndike heslekhkaytn fun der naket-un-khorev gevorener velt. Es zaynen do di im mise nefashes, ober nit zey interesirn im, nor di eydele gayster, di shtile neshomes, vos zaynen gefangn in dem engn un shmutsikn shteyg fun leben.

His noble feelings, his poetic mood become deeper the more he comes up against a wall of misery, which does not, however, break him [...] in contrast to other writers of the post-war period, Rabon concerns himself with the hunger of the soul, not with the external hideousness of the world which has become naked and ravaged. There are ugly types in his stories, but it is not they who interest him, but rather the nobler spirits, the quiet souls, who are trapped in a narrow, sordid way of life.

Trunk (1949, p.76) adds that:

Ale zayne hoypt-heldn zaynen vagabundn un heymloze in der naketer heymlozer velt.

All Rabon's main protagonists are homeless vagabonds in the naked, homeless world.

This type of noble-spirited hero, not fully of this world, as described in *Di gas* by Rabon, also bears a striking resemblance to the author himself as remembered by Goldkorn (1963, p.37):

Epes gaysterdiks iz geven in zayn shtil shlaykhendiker figur, in zayn in-trans-farzunkene ponem. Di oygn farankert in vayte, tife zeungen. Der tsiniker iz farvandlt gevorn in a naiv dikhter-kind, vos yogt zikh nokh sheyne mirazhn. [...] Iz Rabon der bazinger, der bakloger fun farloyrene...di birgers fun der unter-velt.

There was something ghostly about his silent, stealthy figure, about his face sunk in a trance, the eyes enclosed in deep, distant visions, the cynic was transformed into a naive poet-child, chasing beautiful mirages. [...] Rabon is the singer, the mourner of lost souls ... of the citizens of the underworld.

However, a common denominator is embedded in this series of episodes in which Rabon presents the destiny of these citizens of the underworld. Acts of spontaneous altruism characterise the major episodes in the novel, with the exception of the chapter dealing with the Japanese who meets the Galician Jewish deserter in Harbin, and forces him to stand in a booth in the middle of China, reciting passages from holy books for the spiritual benefit of groups of Chinese Christians. In the first chapter of *Di gas*, the narrator has cause to remind a former soldier who had served

with him in the war, that the narrator had saved the fellow's life by sharing his own meagre rations with him. In the second episode, the narrator saves the life of a small child who is about to be hanged by a demented Polish cobbler who is also the narrator's landlord. The result of this act of generosity is that the narrator becomes homeless, and spends the rest of his time in Lodz unsuccessfully trying to find another home. That the narrator's mother was also selfless and ineffectual is brought out in the story he remembers from his twelfth year, when his mother pawned her silver Sabbath candlesticks and silk shawl in order to pay a Polish doctor to treat her young son when he was ill. The narrator recalls the brutal, humiliating way the doctor dismissed his mother for not having enough money for him, and how his mother and he had to beg in order to pay the expenses of the return journey home. Most intensely, he remembers his mother's silent tears in response to his own unanswerable request for food.

There are also compassionate, forgiving non-Jewish female figures in the novel. One is the Polish woman who allows the narrator to carry her basket home for her and who gives him money for his effort, although she had initially been frightened by his rough appearance. She befriends him, and is the only wholly non-imaginary woman to do so. Another altruistic woman is Ela, the Hungarian mistress of the Jewish athlete Jason. Although Jason abandons her suddenly without warning, she later does everything in her power to save his life, and subsequently pays with her own life for her generosity. Jason sells himself to a rich merchant's daughter, surreptitiously passing the money on to the tubercular dwarf-clown Doli, in order to enable him to treat his tuberculosis and support his widowed mother and deaf-mute sister.

In its most romanticised form, however, this altruism appears in the guise of the ambiguous, beautiful young lady who writes to the narrator,

and haunts his imagination in a way which the text does not entirely clarify. The letters she writes may be real, they are signed Lyuba, and she does appear several times in the cinema where the narrator is working, once even touching his shoulder. Nevertheless, the narrator himself suggests that she may be only a figment of his imagination, a projection of his loneliness and alienation (*Di gas*, p.168):

Efsher hob ikh in gantsn a toyes gehat? Efsher hob ikh mir ayngeredt, az men trakht fun mir? Minastam genart mikh azoy mayn eynzamkayt un mayn obgesheydkayt af der velt?

Perhaps I was completely mistaken? Perhaps I only convinced myself that someone was thinking about me? Probably my loneliness and complete isolation from the world deceived me.

And further in the same passage:

Dos blase meydl mit di rakhmonesdike oygn. Un modne! oys dem blik irn hob ikh gezen, az zi ken ale mayne bahaltene vinklen fun mayn elnt, vos ligt af mayn neshome vi a barg.

The pale girl with the compassionate eyes. How strange! From her glance I saw that she knows all the hidden corners of my desolation, which lies on my soul like a mountain.

But it is in the second letter which the pale girl either writes the narrator, or which is the product of his own fantasy, that the theme of helpless altruistic suffering is explicitly stated (*Di gas*, p.168):

Tayerer! Ikh hob dikh gezen shlofn af dergas untern regn. Inem fentster bin ikh geshtanen a halbe nakht un gekukt af dir vi du, elnter un tayerer, bist gelegn af der gas af der shteynener trep un geshlofn. Ikh hob gezen dayn mid ponem, vos iz gepatsht gevorn fun vint un regn. Ikh hob gezen vi du bist gegangen vi a gayst, vi a geshpenst iber di gasn ... af dayne oygn, af dayn ponem un fun dayne erlekhe neshome! Ikh hob dikh gezen vi a heymlozn hunt arumgeyn in park ... ikh hob gezen vi du host a kleyn meydele gevolt gebn dayn letst gelt, vayl ir kinderish tmimesdikayt hot ufgehoybn dayn harts ... Dayne verter, vos du redst in kino ba di filmen, dertseyln azoy klor un farshtendlekh fun dayn farveytikt, mid harts. Ven ikh her dikh redn dakht zikh mir, az in dayn shtime klogn ale di, vos hobn nisht keyn heym, ale, vos vandern iber di shtet un veynen mitn regn vos geyt iber zeyere kep. Veystu nisht, az du, nor du, bist

di neshome fun zey? Veystu nisht, az dayn blut iz der vint fun
harbst, ven di velt hot keyn ru nisht?

Dearest! I saw you sleeping on the street in the rain. I stood half
the night at a window and looked at you, dear, unhappy soul,
lying in the street, and sleeping on stone steps. I saw your tired
face, beaten by wind and rain. I saw how you walked those
streets like a ghost, like a spirit ... In your eyes, in your face, and
on your hands, I saw your soul, your honourable soul! I saw
you walk around the park like a homeless dog ... I saw how
you wanted to give a little girl your last bit of money, because
her childish innocence cheered your heart ... Your words, the
words you speak in the cinema explaining about the films, tell
so clearly of your pained, exhausted heart. When I hear you
speak, it seems to me that in your voice is the plaint of all the
homeless, of all those who wander through cities and cry with
the rain falling on their heads. Do you not know, that you, only
you, are their soul? Do you not know that your blood is the
autumn wind, when the world has no peace?

This is a description of a *tsadik* whose righteousness is in inverse proportion
to his belief in the possibility of alleviating the suffering of which he is so
powerfully aware. In the next sentence, Lyuba, as she signs herself, turns
from her observations about the narrator, to a statement about herself,
identifying herself with his existential commitment (*Di gas*, p.169):

Ikh veyn iber yedn elntn mentsh, iber yedn hungerikn kind un
af alts, vos iz elnt. Ikh bet got, az nokh mayn toyt zol ikh mikh
nisht gefinen tsvishn di gliklekhe un zate, nor tsvishn di, vos
hobn gelitn un geranglt zikh af undzer erd.

I weep over every wretched human being, over every hungry
child, and for everything which is in misery. I pray God that
after my death, I will not find myself among the happy and well-
nourished, but among those who have suffered and struggled
on our earth.

According to the principles expressed in these passages, it would have
been logical for Lyuba – the name itself meaning ‘love’ – to meet the
narrator, and to match her need to love with his need to be loved. In fact,
she does just the opposite, and vanishes without trace, after delivering
the letter to him, which indicates either that she is, indeed, no more than
a creation of his own mind, or that she feels powerless to do more than

indicate her sympathy from afar. Nevertheless, the pale girl is the most eroticised form this abstract, altruistic suffering takes. There is, however, an even more exalted form of selfless, tormented love which is personified by a character in a story the poet Viktor Vogelnest leaves behind after his suicide. This character addresses her lover as 'brother', and in a story entitled, with obvious irony, 'Home', reaffirms in the final episode of the novel, the message of irremediable, cosmic homelessness for which the Street itself is a metaphor (*Di gas*, p. 232):

Veys, bruder, az groys, gor groys iz di velt, un gey, bruder, oys
ale ire shtegn un vegn, vestu di heym nisht gefinen, vayl zi iz
nishto in der velt.

Know, brother, that the world is large, immeasurably large, and
if you go all through it, you will not find a home, because there
is no home in the world.

The irremediably homeless individuals about whom Rabon writes, are the same about whom Kracauer and Vogel write, that is, all those who are, in the narrator's words (*Di gas*, p.233):

Di ale, vos zenen fremd geboyren af der velt un farlirn in fremd-
kayt zeyere groye teg.

born estranged from the world and waste their grey days in
alienation.

In his comprehensive introductory notes to Vogel's collected poetry, Pagis (1971) writes of Vogel: 'Afilu me'atsmo hu menutak.' (He is cut off even from himself.) The main protagonists of *Hayey nisu'im*, Lotte Bodenheim and Rudolf Gordweil, are as isolated and alienated as a number of characters in *Di gas*: the narrator and the pale maiden, the Jewish athlete Jason, the clown Doli, and the painter in the municipal night shelter. Georg, in a privileged, middle-class version of homelessness, seeks refuge in his tiny newspaper office 'in dem er sowohl der möblierten Verlassenheit zu Hause wie dem Vernichtungswillen der hellen Straße entging. Hier lebte

er, für alle Menschen erreichbar und doch vor ihnen allen geschützt' (*Georg*, p.383).

Gordweil also spends a few nights in the Viennese beggars' hostel, when he is thrown out on the street by his wife, and the street becomes for him too, a metaphor for spiritual as well as physical homelessness. In addition, Gordweil's existential alienation has the same tinge of impotent empathic suffering as that of the characters in *Di gas* and *Georg*, the extreme case of which is his acceptance of his wife Thea's child, which, although he pretends otherwise, he knows is not his, since she tells him repeatedly that he is not the father of the child he loves so much.

Whereas the construction of *Di gas* is linear, with one independent episode following another, and that of *Georg* follows a logical chronology from the time Georg's first article is printed to the days just after he has been removed by his newspaper publisher to a position of less influence in Berlin, the shape of *Hayey nisu'im* is revealed only gradually as the complex interplay between Gordweil's empathic anguish, personal isolation and sado-masochistic dependence on Thea become apparent. Vogel widens the split in Gordweil's consciousness as knowledge of certain facts about himself and his existence become increasingly difficult to suppress in the protagonist's own mind. The opening scene in the novel prefigures the two major events in the narrative, Gordweil's murder of Thea and the suicide of Lotte. Gordweil's emotional vulnerability to the personal sorrow of total strangers becomes evident when he passes a crowd watching the police fish the body of an eighteen-year old girl out of the Danube, and stops to listen to the comments of the assembled by-standers about the suicide (*Hayey nisu'im*, p.11):

– Ha dor shel yameynu! [...] 'omdim kulam al 'keresh-hakfitsah',
hakol hefker lahem. O shememitim aherim, o shememitim et
'atsmam. Etmol dakar babayit shelanu gam ken shakhen ehad
et ishto. Be'etsem hayom dakar'otah! Kheref-'ayin hayta meta,

ha'aluvah. Lo tsiytsah afilu.

– Today's generation! [...] they are all standing on a 'spring-board', nothing has any value for them. Either they kill other people, or they kill themselves. Yesterday a neighbour in our house also stabbed his wife to death. In the middle of the day he stabbed her! She died instantly, poor thing. Didn't even make a sound.

The determining factor behind the events of *Georg*, *Di gas*, and *Hayey nisu'im* is whether or not the protagonists enjoy the peace of mind conferred by stable employment. The narrator in *Di gas* looks for work, and does find occasional employment, but is soon out of work again, and unable to find anything at his pre-war level of occupation. Georg's alarm at being shunted sideways inside the newspaper organisation for which he works is compounded by his recognition of the far-reaching implications for the future of his career as a journalist inherent in the sudden change in his employer's attitude towards him. Gordweil, on the other hand, is once briefly employed, but for the most part is not, and is financially dependent on his wife. This financial dependence exacerbates his psychological dependence, and further contributes to his deterioration. His wife humiliates him sexually in increasingly perverse ways, and seeks to destroy him as a man and a writer: she slaps him, carries him around like a baby, emphasising her strength and his weakness, and tears up the manuscript of the story he manages to write when she is away from home. Gordweil attributes his psychological isolation to his physical insufficiency. Catching sight of two workers in the road, he not only compares their bodies to his, but fantasises about the satisfaction they must have from life generally, compared with his own perpetual gloom (*Hayey nisu'im*, p.16):

Oto rega ra'ah et 'atsmo kemenudah, kemutsah miklal hame-sayim lekiyumo shel 'olam. kekhol eylu she'aynam mesugalim le'avodah gasah mepe'at he'ader hakoḥot ha gufani'im, ra'ah davkah bezu et haderekh lesipuko hashalam shel ha'adam. Gordweil nityatsev merahok vehibit bekin'ah el ha po'alim.

Lo, im halalu vaday shelo haya yakhol lehitharot! Shalah mabat meزالzel begufo hatsanum vehakatan, shenidmeh lo ke'asui rak 'atsabim umoah levad, venitak mimkomo.

At that moment he saw himself as a pariah, excluded from all those contributing to the existence of the world. Like all people who are unfit for physical labour because of a lack of strength, he saw precisely in hard work the way to man's complete satisfaction. Gordweil stood at some distance, and watched the workers enviously. No, he would never be able to compete with those men! He shot a contemptuous glance at his own small, thin body, which seemed to him to be made up entirely of nerves and brain, and moved off.

Moreover, Gordweil is confusedly aware that the pleasure he derives from the pain and humiliation Thea inflicts on his body are somehow at the source of her power over him. On one occasion, when she bites his arm viciously, and he is stunned with shock and pain, he dimly acknowledges to himself that he secretly wishes the pain would increase, and would go on for ever (*Hayey nisu'im*. p.39):

Yahad 'im zeh bikesh Gordweil shematsav zeh yehe' nimshakh le'eyn tikhleh, shemakh'ovo yitgaber pi'elef, yamit oto lehalutin.

At the same time, Gordweil wished that this situation would continue for ever, that his pain would increase a thousandfold, would kill him altogether.

Gordweil's masochism, the key element in determining his fate, is most fully treated in his relationship with women. It is also apparent elsewhere in his way of life, starting with the penury in which he is trapped. Gordweil's interest in paid work is tepid and sporadic. Whereas the narrator of *Di gas* is desperately poor because society refuses him the dignity of gainful employment, Gordweil's poverty is self-inflicted. This crucial aspect of the character's bizarre behaviour is inadequately explained, perhaps because it is a painful reflection of Vogel's own circumstances. We know that, like his creator, Gordweil is a writer (Thea destroys his precious manuscript in one of her moments of gratuitous vindictiveness), but it is not made clear

whether he is uninterested in paid work simply because of his literary ambitions. Furthermore, when Thea's baby is born, Gordweil is perfectly happy to spend all his time looking after the child, even though his social contacts are reduced to nursemaids and young mothers he meets in the park.

Gordweil's progressive disintegration raises questions about the relative share of external contingency and inner necessity in determining his fate. Dangel (1985, p.90) suggests that in the case of a passive individual, such as Gordweil, to whom the same distressing incidents seem to recur, it is not that his fate is repeating itself but that the repetition of similar unfortunate patterns is in itself destiny :

Wir verwundern uns über diese ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen nur wenig, wenn es sich um ein *aktives* Verhalten des Betreffenden handelt [...] Weit stärker wirken jene Fälle auf uns, bei denen die Person etwas *Passives* zu erleben scheint, worauf ihr ein Einfluß nicht zusteht, während sie doch immer nur die Wiederholung desselben Schicksals erlebt [...] Nicht dasselbe Schicksal wiederholt sich, sondern die Repetition gleicher, unglücklichen Konstellationen ist selber schon Schicksal.

Gordweil is not only unable to take any initiative on his own behalf, he is incapable of refusing to be led where he does not want to go. He is, for example, amazed at himself for agreeing to go home with Heidelberger, whom he loathes, when he had only just refused a similar invitation from his friend Vrubichek, whom he likes. He feels himself acting against his own volition, and wonders if he is not 'driven by a hidden force': 'Nidḥaf bidey shilton samui' (*Hayey nisu'im*, p.311). On the other hand, he also thinks that 'in the end, an individual's happiness comes from within himself and not from the outside': 'Sof-sof galum oshro shel adam bo gufo ve'eyno ba min haḥuts', *ibid*, p.240).

The tension between these contradictory convictions is present in all Gordweil's encounters with other people, but never more so than when he

is with Lotte Bodenheimer, as for example in the following passage (ibid., p.211):

Elah shebo-barega zeh hitil mefaḥed mishum-mah shelo yit-malet mipiv eyzeh dvar-havay sheyikalkel et hakol, kfi shekvar eyra lo bematsavim shonim v'im bney-adam shonim. Vekey-van shekvar 'alah bo paḥad zeh, yada miyad shelo yinatsel me'amirat hashtut. Lefeta' af yadah beveyrur mah sheyomar. Vedavkah davar zeh 'asur hayah lo lomar 'akhshav [...] Lesof lo yakhol shuv lishlot be'atmo.

But at that very moment he began to fear that some stupid remark which would spoil everything would escape his lips, as had already happened to him in other circumstances with other people. And because this fear had already risen in him, he knew immediately that he would not be able to avoid saying something silly. Suddenly he even knew quite clearly what he would say. And it was precisely what he absolutely should not say now [...] Finally he was unable to control himself any longer.

Although he has lost control of himself, Gordweil is not without direction. Thea controls him, by issuing commands as if to a dog, and Gordweil obeys automatically. In the cafe, when some men at a neighbouring table enter into conversation with his wife, Gordweil finds himself making a hysterical scene of which he is deeply ashamed. Unable to stop shouting of his own volition, he desists immediately, and retires without a murmur as soon as Thea orders him to do so. Nevertheless, whenever he has a moment of lucidity, and knowledge of the reality of his situation penetrates his consciousness, he denies the truth, and sets about repressing it again. As his personality increasingly disintegrates, he is forced to redouble his efforts to bridge the split in his mind, but his unwillingness to accept his murderous hatred of Thea continues to block access to his conscious mind, and even when he has the knife in his pocket, he cannot recall what he was planning to do with it (ibid., p.319):

Ve'etsba'otov hithadku svivo kebe'avit. Kebarak tasah veḥalfah bemoh'eyzo zikah bayn ular zeh uvey'n dvar-mah shelo yadah tivo, ulam keheref-'ayin yarad ke'eyn masakh venish'arah bo

hargashats'ar'ar lehishamet mimenu davar hashuv bevaday,
shekarov hayah lehitgalot.

And his fingers closed round it (the knife) convulsively as if in a spasm. Like lightning there flew through his mind some connection between this knife and something else, the identity of which he did not know, but instantly a sort of curtain fell over his mind, leaving in him a feeling of sorrow that something which was certainly important had eluded him, just as it was about to be revealed.

Later, when he is reflecting on the course his life has taken, Gordweil refers explicitly to (ibid., p.321):

Kol mah she yadah tamid be'omek nafsho, velo natan lo la'avor
saf hakarato.

Everything he had always known deep in his soul but had not allowed to cross the threshold of his consciousness.

The experience of this partial expression of unwanted information, which Vogel notes in detail, is occasionally reminiscent of the hallucinatory state of mind described by Rabon, and the specific point made that the images do not appear to him one *after* the other, but rather one *next* to the other, is identical to Rabon's own description of what he experiences when stories come to him, especially when the split in Gordweil's mind gives him the sensation of being two people at once (ibid., p.56):

Kol zeh ra'ah Gordweil kemistakel min hatsad, ke'ilu nikhpal leshnayim: ehad mistakel ve'ehad shokhev holeh [...] hamahazeh lo'arakh yoter mimahatsit haregah, hadvarim lo nir'u lo bezeh ahar zeh, elah bivat-ahat, kiveyakhol, zeh etsel zeh.

All this Gordweil saw as if observing from the side, as if he had been divided in two, one person watching and one lying ill [...] this vision lasted no longer than half a minute. These things did not appear to him one after the other, but rather one next to the other.

The reference to 'lying ill' directs the reader's attention to a possible pathological interpretation of events which is also an interpretation of the narrator's own experiences in *Di gas*.

In *Hayey nisu'im*, Gordweil's ineffectuality is linked to a psychic repression of information which then continues to exert a controlling influence over the individual's behaviour. Thus, Gordweil knows that Thea is systematically unfaithful to him, but represses the knowledge, just as he knows that Lotte loves him, and that he loves her, though he does not allow himself access to that knowledge until the shock of her suicide has removed the layer of repression concerning his feelings towards her. It is only after Lotte's death that Gordweil allows the knowledge that he has always had of Thea's sadism to penetrate his consciousness, and with it comes the realisation that his masochistic dependence on her cannot be broken as long as she is alive, and that in order to save some remnant of himself, he has to kill her. From the very beginning of his relationship with Thea, Gordweil has known the truth about her character and habits, and has only partially been successful in his attempts at repression (*ibid.*, p.68):

Tea haytah lo, lo, levado, bevaday! ... (behozkah hikhnia eyzeh sfekot, shehithilu megikhim mipinot afelot shebinafsho.) [...] Nu, ve Dr Ostwald, lemashal? ... Hitsliaḥ safek lehitparets lefeta' pit'om lithum hakarato.

Thea was his, his alone, of course! ... (he violently suppressed the doubts which began darting out of the dark corners of his mind.) [...] Well, and Dr Ostwald, for example? ... a doubt succeeded suddenly in bursting into the realm of his consciousness.

The verb 'lehitparets' – to burst into, or out of, reveals a powerful emotion which the adverb 'bevaday' – of course – has sought to conceal. Gordweil does, however, have moments when he is perfectly aware of the mechanism of repression employed by his mind (*ibid.*, p.108):

Mishum shenafsho haytah soledet mipney ha'emet habehirah, umishum shehayah bo dvar-mah takif mizu ha'emet, she'ikayv ba'adah lefales lah derekh l'hakarato.

Because his soul revolted against the plain truth, and because there was something in him which was stronger than this truth, something which prevented it from making its way into his consciousness.

This 'something stronger than the truth' is Gordweil's fear of the truth. In Elsbeth Dangel's analysis of this condition referred to as 'Die Ohnmacht des Ichs', she quotes a relevant passage from Arthur Schnitzler's *Buch der Sprüche* in which this unbridgeable separation between feeling and understanding leads to decomposition of the personality (Dangel, 1985, p.73):

Daß Verstand und Gefühl, auch bei gelegentlicher scheinbarer Übereinstimmung und Versöhnung, völlig getrennten Haushalt führen, diese Erkenntnis ist die Atmosphäre, in der die Handlung des modernen Dramas vor sich geht; was Kleist als die 'Verwirrung des Gefühls' bezeichnet [...] könnte man ebenso gut 'Verwirrung des Verstandes' nennen.

And further (p.73):

Das Bild vom 'getrennten Haushalt' trifft eine Grunderfahrung der Jahrhundertwende, die von den Zeitgenossen in den verschiedensten Variationen verklärt wird. Allen liegt die Dekomposition des Individuums zugrunde, die Zerlegung des 'weiten Lands' der Seele, dessen Regungen nicht mehr als einheitlich und kontinuierlich wahrgenommen werden.

The decomposition of the individual, of the narrator in *Di gas* as of Gordweil in *Hayey nisu'im*, is charted by Rabon and Vogel in the stages in which the characters recognise themselves less and less in their own actions. For the narrator in *Di gas*, this process is reached when he asks a bemused passer-by to confirm that a pair of woman's eyes keeps appearing and reappearing in different shop windows up and down a city street. According to Dangel (1985, p.15), 'Was sich hier vorschiebt ist eine 'Seelenprovinz', die zwar mit Bewußtsein wahrgenommen, aber nicht dem eigenen Willen zugeordnet werden kann.' For Gordweil this point is reached when he pretends that he does not hear Thea and Heidelberger in the bed next to his. These two narrative turning-points are constructed as if with cinematographic effects in mind, as is the moment when the painful recognition is forced upon Georg, not only that he has lost Beate, but that he has lost

her to his most annoyingly successful professional rival. The language used to evoke the images and sensations experienced by all three protagonists at these moments of unbearably intense emotional receptivity could also serve as instructions for a purely visual presentation of the events described. Georg, for example, is in the opera house, idly glancing round at his fellow members of the audience, when he sees that Beate, who had inexplicably rejected his invitation for that evening, is sitting with another man (*Georg*, p.402):

Aus Georg wich jedes Leben. Unfähig ein Glied zu rühren, blickte er starr auf die beiden herunter, die ihm den Rücken zukehrten und nichts von seiner Gegenwart ahnten. Die Gier, mit der er ihr Bild einsog, bewirkte, was sonst nur durch ein Opernglas zu erreichen gewesen wäre: daß sie, zwei ferne Figürchen, aus ihrer Umgebung heraustraten in ein blendendes Licht rückten und sich so stark vergrößerten, als würden sie ganz in die Nähe geschoben. Wie in einem Guckkasten hatte Georg sie vor sich.

The two scenes of equivalent importance in *Hayey nisu'im* and *Di gas* also receive their visual effectiveness from the interplay of light and shadow to highlight strong emotional reactions in the manner of the black and white cinema of the 1920s. A heightening of emotion accompanied by the sudden assimilation of vital, if unwanted information, is conveyed with equal cinematographic force in *Hayey nisu'im* by the sole point of light in the bedroom, Gordweil's glowing cigarette. As he waves the cigarette agitatedly in the impenetrable darkness covering himself, Thea, and Heidelberger, the outlines of Gordweil's true situation gradually become apparent to him. Similarly in *Di gas*, the eyes of the pale girl suddenly illumine the winter evening, glowing and receding incorporeally, mocking and tantalising the narrator who chases after her up and down the pavement, his increasing desperation emphasised by the stolid progress of his fellow pedestrians through the dark street.

The tantalising world of human happiness eludes the protagonists of *Di*

gas, Georg, and Hayey nisu'im, characters with an uncontrollable propensity for identification with every form of human suffering, however remote from their own immediate experience. For example, when Gordweil visits a woman he barely knows in a mental asylum where she is being kept against her will, and hears one of the patients singing, he is moved to an indescribable intensity of compassion; he is, of course, unable to help even one woman to be released from the abusive captivity in which she is held (*Hayey nisu'im*, p.113):

Vedavka oto shir 'aliz 'asah 'alav kan roshem medake beyoter,
k'ilu nitbat'u ah bo bilvad kol tsa'aram ve'enutam shel holim
elu veshel kol ha'enoshut kulah.

And precisely that cheerful song made the most depressing impression on him, as if all the sorrow and sadness of these patients and of the whole of humanity were contained in that song alone.

And later, sitting with his brother-in-law, an Austrian Baron with a taste for torturing small animals to death, Gordweil responds to Freddy's account of his personal worries as if they were his own. In this context, Gavriel Moked (1964, p.55) illumines Vogel's work with insight into the strange contradiction between the realism of his descriptions and the unreality of the effects achieved:

Hayom-yom ha 'stami' rahok milehaknot leVogel tehusat mutsakut o muhashiut. Adrabah, davka hayom-yomi haser et-slo kol otan tekhnut shel mutsakut umuhashiut. Mitokh kakh gam hate'ur hare'ali beyoter, kegon shel hashmalit o shel 'aniyim bevet hamahseh, mekabel 'im kol hare'alizm shelo – eyzeh gavan 'artila'i o siyuti shel 'i-mesuyamut'. Hesignon medayek kan bifratim re'alistiim, akh hu rahok militsor avirah shel kiyum hativot mutsakot shel mamashut. Kol ha'atsamim kayamim umeshakhne'im bekiyumam, akh eyn hem elah helek 'artila'i me'eyzeh tohu.

Ordinary daily life is far from giving Vogel a sense of solidity and tangibility. On the contrary, it is precisely 'everyday life which lacks all those qualities of solidity and tangibility. For this reason, even the most realistic description, of a tram, for example, or of poor people in a public doss-house, takes on,

with all its realism – an abstract or nightmarish ‘indefiniteness’. The style is precise here with realistic details, but it is far from creating an atmosphere of the existence of solidly tangible entities. All the objects exist convincingly, but they are nothing more than an abstract part of some chaos.

Perhaps for this reason Gordweil remains curiously aloof, despite the intensity of his emotional involvements. He mysteriously fails for two years to understand the reason for Lotte’s nervous distress, while at the same time sympathising with her unhappiness. Gordweil continually absorbs human suffering, and expresses his reactions in words which echo those in the second letter of the pale maiden in *Di gas* (*Hayey nisu'im*, p.192):

‘Aluvim hem ha'anashim me'od, le'amito shel davar. Ro'eh atah adam, shehu bari likh'orah, vetsa'ir, va'afilu 'aliz [...] Ve-hineh mafti'im otkhah mabat ehad, tenu'ah ahat, shelo mida'at haba'alim vehem metanim lekha 'al petsa'av hasmuyim yoter mividuyim arukim. Haserah hemlah ba'olam. Lo zu hagasah, hatarhanit, ki im hatsnu'ah, ha'ilemet, zu she-mefakah yashar minefesh lenefesh, lelo dibur-peh ve'af bli tnuah, veshebah bilvad nihumim ve'idud ... ulay yiga'el ha'olam behemlah zu ...

People are really wretchedly unhappy. You see a man, who is apparently healthy, young, even happy [...] And suddenly you are surprised by a look, a gesture, unbeknownst to the person himself, which reveals more to you about his hidden wounds than would long confessions. The world is lacking in pity. Not the coarse, bothersome kind, but the modest, silent kind, which flows from soul to soul, and which alone gives consolation and encouragement. Perhaps the world will be redeemed by this pity.

The two themes of the divided consciousness and altruistic, though ineffectual universal compassion, are woven together in the last scene of *Hayey nisu'im* when Gordweil finally realises that he has known from the beginning all about Thea’s destructiveness and Lotte’s love. Moreover he realises that he has suffered in vain with all sorts of people, but neglected the person most important to him. Rabon, who was not interested in the subtle observation of psychological states of mind, nevertheless transmits the same moral by means of his visionary tales. In both cases the combi-

nation of ineffectual altruistic suffering and social isolation lead to an even greater personal alienation and disintegration.

Conclusion

This chapter looks at the ways in which the 'transcendental homelessness' (Frisby, 1985, p.117) of the inter-war years is treated by three writers of Jewish origin. Unexpected similarities both in the psychological and behavioural profiles of protagonists of widely different backgrounds are examined, and the literary techniques by which these similarities are conveyed are analysed. Central to the thematic preoccupation of the novels *Georg* by Siegfried Kracauer, *Hayey nisu'im* by David Vogel, and *Di gas* by Yisroel Rabon, is the identification by the protagonists of their own sense of alienation and rejection with a wider social phenomenon, that of the need, as they see it, for a moral regeneration of society. The main characters in all three cases are further united by a wariness of all the currently fashionable social, political, and religious theories, as well as by a belief in individual acts of selflessness as the means by which to transform the human condition. Indeed, despite the social, political, and intellectual dimensions of their anguish, they are also linked by their signal inability to propose a coherent means of alleviating the distress of which they are so preternaturally aware, while their lack of a satisfactory spiritual framework dooms their own attempts at personal and social salvation to failure.

It is not, however, merely the similarities in their characters' destinies, or their uniform indifference to Judaism and Zionism, the latter especially noteworthy in a Hebrew novel of the period, which suggests that these works belong to the same genre of Jewish writing. More telling is the preoccupation with narrative situations involving the repeatedly frustrated efforts of socially marginal characters to achieve a satisfactory degree of

integration in their environment. In addition, the main characters in all three works extrapolate from their personal sense of social exclusion to a belief in the need for a profound moral restructuring of society as a whole. Characters of secondary importance, however, who are portrayed as comfortable within society as it is, are left to advocate standard political, religious, or economic programmes. Hence, there is an inner cohesion linking the narrative perspective of these three novels which transcends the differences in their language of composition, the underlying assumptions about the readership to which the novels were addressed, as well as the disparities of nationality, social class, level of education and professional occupation of their central protagonists.

Chapter 6

The Force of Ambivalence

*Es gibt Ideen, denen man
nicht entrinnen kann. Man
engagiert sich, wenn man ja
sagt, wenn man nein sagt, und
wenn man gar nichts sagt.*
Theodor Herzl.

Introduction

Before the First World War, European Jews were divided into two geographically and culturally distinct communities. In the East, the majority of Jews continued to observe their own religious traditions, socially and politically isolated from the surrounding non-Jewish populations as they had been for centuries. In the West, Jews had moved into middle-class society, entering the professions and acquiring a certain measure of social respectability. Aspirations to social integration in the East, primarily among young educated Russian Jews, were frustrated by increasing rejection following the failed revolution of 1905. The process of Jewish assimilation in the Habsburg empire was impeded by intensified anti-Semitism resulting from popular hostility to the influx of Jews escaping from the East, as established Jewish communities disintegrated in the wake of the First World War and the Russian Revolution.

The raw material of much of the Jewish imaginative fiction of the 1920s consists of the working and reworking of situations in which the protagonists find themselves dislocated spatially and temporally. Jewish authors explored ways in which a satisfactory life might eventually be reconstructed in an epoch and an environment which had become spiritually alien. Nowersztern (1981) uses the expression *chronotopic displacement* to describe the wide range of human response to drastic and irresistible alterations in a previously stable environment. In Nowersztern's terms, the *chronotopos* is the time and place to which a person belongs both spiritually and physically. Chronotopic displacement refers not only to the obvious ravages of enforced exile, but to the more subtle changes of behaviour and development presented by individuals when radical political change in their native environment leads to their social exclusion.

Dislocations of these two kinds form the subject-matter of the novels to be dealt with in this chapter. *Mides-hadin* (*Strict Justice*), was written in 1926 in Yiddish by the Ukrainian-born novelist Dovid Bergelson (1884-1952). It portrays the attempts of small Jewish communities scattered across the Civil War battle zone of the Ukraine to come to terms with the new Soviet regime. *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, written in 1927 by Joseph Roth (1894-1939), concerns the apparently aimless wanderings of the hero, Franz Tunda, across Europe and the Soviet Union. Both the novels attempt to obey artificially imposed conventions, ideological in the case of Bergelson and stylistic in the case of Roth. Bergelson's purpose is to convince his Jewish readership that they have no option but to accept that their lives must henceforth be organised in the best interests of the Communist Party. Roth's objective is to observe and record dispassionately Tunda's reactions to post-War daily life. The technique of dispassionate observation is one of the basic tenets of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* literary movement with which Roth was closely associated in the 1920s.

Whereas the human suffering which is the focus of Bergelson's and Roth's attention derives from the alteration of a chronotopos by war and revolution, in the third novel the dislocations are psychological, brought about by overt expression of anti-Semitism among the majority population. *Der Weg ins Freie*, by the fin-de-siècle Viennese author, playwright and physician Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), has two main narrative strands: the first is a love story between two non-Jewish protagonists; the second is a description and analysis of the psychological effects on Viennese Jews of the open hostility to which they had become subject. The Jewish characters are shown to be floundering in an altered political environment in which they increasingly fear social exclusion and loss of legal rights.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literary repercussions of varying degrees of dislocation experienced by the author. It will be argued that when the displacement is severe, as it is for both Roth and Bergelson, the author becomes ambivalent towards the causes that he is espousing. Unintentionally, the writings become coloured by irony, subverting the message which the author wishes to convey. Such unconscious and unintended irony will be termed self-betraying. It will be contrasted with Schnitzler's controlled use of irony in the meticulously calculated social criticism of *Der Weg ins Freie*.

What, then, is the connection between chronotopic displacement and ambivalence – that is, between being exiled spiritually or geographically from one's home and adopting beliefs about which one has misgivings? The need to survive, to be recognised as a citizen of a community which tolerates one's presence, where one is allowed to work and to participate on equal terms in communal life, forces the individual to compromise on issues that might otherwise be non-negotiable. In situations where value-systems and profoundly cherished beliefs conflict with prescribed behaviour patterns, the individual may briefly profess sincere conversion

to the new ideology, as does Tunda in Soviet Russia. If, however, the oppression is protracted, with no end in sight, psychological alteration of a radically self-contradictory, self-destructive nature may occur. In such cases, even when the author insists through his protagonists and narrators that previous allegiances have been thoroughly repudiated, there is a suggestion that forbidden longings remain, and the new identities do not fit comfortably.

How does this self-betraying irony receive literary expression? Inadvertent political bias and sympathy for characters whose behaviour does not favour the advancement of the novel's thesis steadily undermine the overt message of the narrative, and bring about the development of an anti-programme: the refutation of the argument which it was the novel's original intention to propound. The entrenched contradictions inherent in the social status of Jews in European societies, whereby no amount of personal commitment to their country of origin could ever ensure their wholehearted acceptance by the majority population, predisposed Jewish writers to view their surroundings simultaneously from within and without. In her analysis of the ironic treatment of the characters in Roth's narrative fiction, Mathew (1984, p.24) has argued that the author's personal disillusionment and insecurity have produced an ambivalence towards all value systems which leads to the infiltration of ironic perspectives. Bergelson and Roth both suffered a psychologically debilitating crisis of identity produced by the loss of their homeland followed by years of exile. In this chapter it will be argued that *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* are so deeply marked by authorial ambivalence towards their subject matter that the authors' intentions are subverted by self-betraying irony. It is the focus of the novels which differs, so that Bergelson unconsciously undermines his political programme, and Roth, his literary programme.

Dovid Bergelson: *Mides-hadin*

In *Mides-hadin*, plot and character are rooted in Jewish small-town life of the Ukraine, where Bergelson was born in 1884, and where he lived through the Revolution, Civil War and pogroms of 1918-1919, until his emigration to Berlin in 1920. The story centres on the character of Filipov, who has been sent as the representative of Bolshevik justice to a small border outpost and charged with putting an end to the smuggling of people and goods across the Russian-Polish border. In the early stages of the plot development Filipov is presented as a shadowy figure, much talked about but unseen. He suffers from a mysterious illness which eventually brings him face to face with Dr. Babitski, a former revolutionary who has lapsed into political passivity. Babitski's faded revolutionary zeal provides a foil for the character of Yuzi Spivak, a former member of the Socialist Revolutionaries who is awaiting execution for smuggling. Spivak's salvation in a dramatic conversion from Socialism to Communism (and this despite his petit bourgeois Jewish intellectual origins) provides the climax of the first half of the story. In the second half of twelve chapters, Bolshevik justice is seen in action against its enemies to provide 'the final judgement of history against those who refuse to see the light' (Slotnick, 1978, p.242). Chief among these enemies are the smugglers of the Golikhovke shtetl, political ideologues of various persuasions including Social Revolutionaries and Whites, drunken peasants, religious individuals and hooligans. The book concludes with Filipov's self-sacrificial death in the cause of the Revolution. *Mides-hadin* was written in Berlin in 1924-1926, and serialised in the literary journal *In Shpan* (*In Harness*) in 1926 before its 1929 publication in book form in Vilna. As the contemporary Yiddish literary critic Niger (1930, p.156) observed:

Der tsvek fun dem zhurnal iz geven ayntsushpanen di yidishe shrayber in dem sovetishn vogn. Der ershter iz in shpan avek

Bergelson aleyn.

The purpose of the journal was to harness Yiddish writers to the Soviet waggon. The first to be harnessed was Bergelson himself.

Bergelson had been in exile in Berlin since 1920. During the pogroms which devastated the Jewish community in the Ukraine during the Civil War, his home had been ransacked, and his personal archives destroyed, including manuscripts he had been working on for several years. Despite bitter memories of the early days of the Soviet regime, Bergelson was unable to adjust to living abroad, and in 1926 he not only visited the Soviet Union, but declared that he considered himself a Soviet writer and recognised the dictatorship of the proletariat. In a probing analysis of the dilemma facing post-Revolutionary Russian Yiddish writers, Markish (1926, p.316) wrote:

Natirlekh hot men gekont foroyszen, az der gantser emigrirter oylem vet zikh sof-kol-sof muzn oyskereven mitn ponem – af mizrekh, tsurik aheym. Un in der ershter rey, shriftshteler. Shriftshteler, vos zeyer literarisher goyrl iz farbundn mitn goyrl fun bashtimte kultur-traditsyes, mit bashtimter kultur-atmosfer, fun breyte horepashne shafndike masn, shriftshteler, vos zenen farurteylt in a fremder atmosfer far der tsayt fartriknt tsu vern.

Naturally, one could have foreseen that the whole of the emigration would finally have to turn its face eastwards, towards home. And first of all, the writers. Writers, whose literary destiny is tied to the fate of particular cultural traditions, to a particular cultural atmosphere, to the toiling creative masses, writers who are condemned to premature silence in an alien atmosphere.

Bergelson pulls fiercely at his literary yoke. Precisely because he felt unable to survive as a Yiddish writer outside Russia, he decided to come to terms with the Soviet regime, and to make willingly, every artistic, moral, and intellectual compromise required of a Soviet writer. Nevertheless, as *Mides-hadin* is the first of his novels written with a deliberately ideological bias, it is riven with contradictions. His description of Soviet life, for

example, is unremittingly harsh. Even for Filipov, the idealised Communist hero and martyr, life is unpleasant: the suppurating carbuncles on his neck, while they may also be a metaphor for the open wound of the bourgeoisie on the body politic of Soviet Russia, as suggested by Slotnick (1978, p.141), are a physical torment to the Commissar, and no doubt contribute to the intractability and unpredictability of his temper. Moreover, as if Filipov's torn boots, unspeakable food, and lack of military reinforcements were not bleak enough, the Jews in the villages scattered across the Civil War zone are shown to have every reason to despair at the arbitrariness and ruthlessness of the Soviet decrees now governing their lives. For a character like Babitski, who resembles a typical Roth hero by virtue of his social marginality and his determination to maintain that distinction, the Revolution has made life impossibly difficult. Not only has the physical, cultural, social, and economic environment around him changed beyond recognition, but the people he has always known have become unfamiliar and unreliable, a fact which Babitski captures in an oft-repeated epigram which punctuates the doctor's reflections on the new reality (*Mides-hadin*, p.231):

Hayntike tsaytn az du konst a mentshn fun nekhtn, heyst es
nokh nisht az du konst im haynt.

These days, if you knew a person yesterday, it doesn't mean
that you know him today.

Not only Babitski's marginality aligns him with the typical Roth hero, but also his gift for understanding a situation in which he is condemned to suffer helplessly, because he is unable to believe in a solution or to act on any belief.

In this context, Slotnick (1978, p.330) points out that for Bergelson there is a metaphysical dimension to the problem of convincing sceptical individuals of their ideological obligation to recognise 'the force of order'

which now exists amidst the existential chaos which was previously the subject of his writing. This force of order is 'the dictatorship of history', and the task of the individual is to admit that he must obey the dictates of history, despite its obviously repellent aspects. The plot of *Mides-hadin* is therefore designed to show the Jews in the small Ukrainian towns in the Civil War battle zone coming to understand this abstract truth, specifically, the political thesis of historical determinism and communist truth. The message is, however, negated by Bergelson's method of characterisation. Filipov, ostensibly Bergelson's declared positive hero, is portrayed as less sympathetic than the representative of the doomed bourgeoisie, Babitski. Of Filipov it is said that his iron purpose is to serve the 'severe justice' of history (*Mides-hadin*, p.240), but at the same time the omniscient narrator, explaining Comrade Filipov's administrative rules, juxtaposes without comment two pieces of information which illuminate each other: the first, that wives and mothers are never allowed to visit their men in his prison more than once a week, and the second, the Commissar's own statement that the women should not complain about the visiting regulations, since he, Filipov, has not seen his mother in eighteen years. Bergelson thus creates the suspicion that what at first sight seems wanton harshness on the part of the Bolshevik leader may in fact be just that, and not at all a decree of the forces of history. Although Filipov is himself physically and emotionally no less vulnerable than the Jews he intends to subjugate, the *mides-harakhmim*, the compassion which traditionally balances the concept of justice in Jewish thinking, is conspicuously absent in his repertoire of thought and gesture. By extension, it is therefore implied that the other brutal measures which are being forced on the population are based on nothing more than a small, but perhaps not insignificant biographical detail in the life of an ordinary man. Filipov's supposedly inalienable right to mete out 'cold justice' is at once undermined, and with it, the principle

of the extension of Bolshevik rule.

Nowersztern (1981, p.viii) argues persuasively that 'in Bergelson's work there is created a distance which results from an interaction between two factors whose existence is certain, although their nature is at times insufficiently defined'. In this case, the distance is between Soviet power and the Jewish masses, and is created by a combination of factors: Filipov's isolation in his room, where he remains inaccessible to the local people; the fact that he comes from somewhere else and has no particular interest in the local inhabitants over whose lives he now holds sway; his harshness to Comrade Sasha, who is devoted to him; and most of all, on the linguistic level, his use of Russian, which sets him apart from the surrounding Yiddish context in which he is placed, and which he has been sent to subjugate. In addition to speaking a different language, Filipov has disagreeable speech mannerisms even in his own language. He speaks in short, staccato phrases, like rounds of rifle fire, and expresses his contempt for the people who come to see him with the sneer: 'you must be joking!' Slotnick (1978, p.300) also finds that the 'shortness and alienness of the Russian phrase expresses Filipov's harshness towards everyone, his quality of severe justice' and that 'the brevity and the foreignness underline the distance of Filipov from the other characters'. This is in keeping with Nowersztern's observation (1981, p.viii) that 'from both the physical and emotional standpoints, Bergelson's protagonist is usually cut off from his family and primary environment. Thus his closest link with his surroundings, which would anchor him firmly to them, is totally lacking.'

Filipov is indeed without any close ties, and his sole ambition is to implement Bolshevik justice. Bergelson presents us with a narrative whose purpose is to demonstrate the irrefutability of the Bolshevik claim to administer justice in the name of the abstract concept 'History'. At the same time, he depicts the representative of this irrefutable justice as a strange,

lonely man with pustular bandages on his neck, growling out monosyllabic orders for Jews to be arrested, interrogated, and executed for reasons which are not made intelligible, but must be accepted as an article of faith. Although, as Slotnick (1978, p.304) argues, *Mides-hadin* is a novel 'in which people and events are evaluated precisely in the light of a higher truth', even the members of the community who do come to recognise this truth, and who convert their lives into instruments of its will, are shown to be deficient in the qualities of humanity, personal insight, humour, and flexibility which characterise Babitski.

Bergelson's ambivalence towards this ideological reorientation is most poignantly evident in his presentation of Babitski. In this regard, Niger (1930, p. 158) concurs that Bergelson's attachment to characters representing the pre-revolutionary past is stronger than to those representative of the Soviet present:

Zayn hoypt-teme iz nokh alts: dos lebn vi es iz, nit vi es zol zayn. Di alte, nit di naye velt vert fun im originel un maysterhaft geshildert. Di alte velt azoy vi zi iz formirt gevorn in der epokhe, velkhe 'iz likvidirt sotsyal un ekonomish', velkhe iz oysgeshlosn fun Bergelson's kunst-teorye, iz ayngeshlosn in zayn kunst.

His main theme is still life as it is, and not as it should be. The old, not the new world is described by him in a masterly, original way. The old world, as it was formed in the period which has been 'socially and economically liquidated'. Yes, it is precisely the 'vanished era' which is excluded from Bergelson's artistic theory, but which is included in his art.

The earlier novels, notably *Nokh alemen* and *Opgang*, are richly peopled with characters who, like Babitski, have their origins in the educated Jewish middle class from which Bergelson himself came. They too are often lonely, lacking in purpose, seeking vainly for a meaning to their lives, and caught with equal unease between the crumbling world of the traditional Jewish small towns and the large Russian cities. Nevertheless, in the pre-revolutionary stories, when Bergelson was not writing to a programme, the

characters have an integrity which is greater than the sum of their weaknesses, however deplorable. Because Babitski's function is to demonstrate the sincerity of Bergelson's antipathy to bourgeois individualism and idealism, the doctor has the misfortune to receive incoherent treatment at the hands of his creator. The Hamletism which torments the main protagonists in the pre-war novels is also a chief identifying attribute of Babitski, who is marked as well by pessimism and misanthropy because of the mutual incomprehension now separating him from his former friends. All this is consistent with earlier Bergelson characterisations. What is new is the aspersion which is suddenly cast on Babitski's motives, contradicting everything else we are told about him. The effect created is that of an attempt to defame the social class and system which produced him, but the attempt is inept, and reveals a profound disquiet on the writer's part as to the real meaning of Soviet justice. This occurs in the scene where Babitski perceives that his own loss of status is a direct consequence of the acquisition of power by the representatives of Bolshevik power. Requested by Filipov to examine the women prisoners and to attend to their illnesses, Babitski is unwilling to offer his assistance, despite the ethical requirements of his medical calling. The implication here is that the Revolution has unmasked the truth about the doctor's debased character, and that far from deserving to enjoy our sympathy, he should be vilified for his selfishness (*Mides-hadin*, p.83):

Er iz mitamol geven tsufridn, vos er iz ba zikh in di oygn a kleynitshker, un vos mit dem moyde zayn in zayn eygener kleynikayt koyft er zikh oys funem ol, tsu kumen do emetsn tsu hilf.

He was suddenly pleased that even in his own eyes he was such a nobody, and that, having admitted his own total unimportance to himself, he could extricate himself from the burden of coming to the aid of anyone in the prison.

The overt message in this passage is that Babitski is lacking in compassion, and is prepared to abrogate the ethical code to which he, as a physician, should feel himself bound. Moreover, his behaviour is doubly reprehensible, because his moral degradation encompasses a preference for his own humiliation over the obligation to help the sick. The covert message is, however, quite different and particularly disquieting, since the irony is that Babitski is right. He has become a nobody in the new order of things, and genuinely cannot help anyone else, let alone himself. In describing a society that has become so atomised, and so dangerous that individuals who have devoted their lives to the goal of helping others can no longer do so, when so many require help, Bergelson is expressing serious reservations about the Revolution and its 'justice'.

Notwithstanding the novel's avowed purpose of demonstrating Bergelson's acceptance of the 'higher truth' of the 'cold justice', the revulsion he feels for this form of justice is more powerfully expressed than his faith in it. Something of the intensity of this revulsion comes out in the verbal irony with which a chorus of minor characters representing received Jewish opinion hint that Filipov's superhuman mission is shown to be bogus by his all-to-human frailty and that justice without compassion is so alien to Jewish thinking as not to be justice at all (ibid., p.75):

Iz ot ver iz krank? pkhe! der sheliakh fun der geshikhte.

So who is ill? ... ugh! none other than the messenger of History.

The use of the Semitic component term for 'messenger', with its echoes of the missing complement 'God', evokes a tangle of associations ultimately leading to the conclusion that Filipov, whatever his power over Jewish life and death today, is only a prophet of yet another false god, this time called 'History'. The question then becomes not how to convert people to belief in the new god, but how to balance the outer concessions essential for the preservation of life under the Soviet regime with an inner preservation

of psychological identity. It is therefore especially in the characterisation of Babitski that Bergelson's ambivalence towards the subject matter of the narrative is apparent. Initially, the doctor is portrayed as a spiritual relative of earlier protagonists such as Mirl Hurvits, the poet Herts, and the midwife Shats, in *Nokh alemen*, and Khayem-Moyshe in *Opgang*. He lives in a tumbledown house on the edge of town, at some distance from the other inhabitants and he is described as being 'a mentsh a zaytiker' (a marginal character), and 'a mentsh, vos kon zikh nisht aynordenen' (a person who cannot fit in, *Mides-hadin*, p.77). The advent of the Revolution forces him into a relationship with society which it is against his instinct to pursue (ibid., p.77):

Er, der doktor, iz aruf af epes a modner fur, af velkher er hot beshum oyfen aruf nisht gevolt – a fur fun der revolutsye.

He, the doctor, had got onto a strange conveyance, which he by no means wanted to get onto, a Revolutionary conveyance.

Babitski's destiny, once the Revolution has caught up with him, is meant to appear inevitable. Unfortunately, the assessment of his actions in the first part of the narrative is positive, so that when Babitski's behaviour becomes repellent, it does not do so gradually, nor in a way which develops convincingly out of character traits which have already been delineated. The incongruous suggestion made here that Babitski is a self-pitying snob, when we have seen him as a conscientious physician wholly devoted to the good of his fellow men, startles the reader into wondering whether the narrator has simply made an uncharacteristic mistake. Or are we not, perhaps, dealing with an unreliable narrator whose utterances should be regarded generally with suspicion? (ibid., p.82):

Un vayl er hot nisht gevolt moyde zayn, az rakhmones filt er itst tsu zikh aleyn, hot er deriber bald a trakht getun, az es iz a rakhmones af ot di vayber un vi nor er hot es a trakht gegeben, azoy bald hot er derfilt, az er, der doktor, vos shteyt on a zayt fun ot dem alem, iz laytish ... biz gor laytish, vehoraye – er hot dokh rakhmones.

And because he didn't want to admit that the pity he felt now was for himself, he turned his thoughts to the women [prisoners] and how it was a pity about them and as soon as this thought occurred to him, he thought further how he himself, the doctor, standing apart from all of this, was decent, tremendously decent, and the proof was precisely his pity.

Self-deception has not otherwise been one of Babitski's characteristics. This is clear from the respectful tone of the narrator's voice when reporting Babitski's knowledge of the identity and movements of individual Social Revolutionaries and the certainty of his own punishment in the event of the capture of any of the 'class enemies' known to him. There is no suggestion at this time that the doctor is himself betraying the Revolution, rather that his present courageous behaviour will be impossible to maintain, given his isolation and powerlessness. Moreover, the arch-Bolshevik sin of 'laytishkayt' – a composite of bourgeois taste and manners – attributed to him here is a deliberately damaging assertion, quite out of keeping with his unmaterialistic way of life and the fact that he is known to be bringing up his mentally handicapped son alone. Indeed, the later negative imputations about Babitski's moral worth contradict all the previous information about his generosity to local Jews of whom he is not particularly fond. He is, for example, discreet about the illegal political activities of the dentist Galaganer, whose secret involvement in a Social Revolutionary organisation he could easily have betrayed. Nor does he reveal that Yuzi Spivak is involved in smuggling people and goods across the border, but contents himself with pondering ironically on the danger to his own position, compromised as it is by his travelling alone with Spivak (ibid., p.49):

Aderabe, mit dem bavayzt er ambestn, az er iz doktor Babitski – er kon keynem nisht, nor im ober konen ale, az me bagegnt im geyn tsu fus, leygt men im tomid for a bisl untertsufohn. Nor dos alts iz logish, shoynt tsu tif logish ... a?

On the contrary, by this means he best proves that he is Doctor Babitski – he knows no one, but everyone knows him, and when they see him going somewhere on foot, they always offer him a lift. But all this is logical, indeed, only too logical ... isn't it?

Furthermore, it is Babitski's analysis of Filipov and of the Revolution, couched in mordantly ironic terms which are, in Shternberg's wonderful phrase, 'ethically high and zoologically low' (Shternberg, 1987, p.148), that accurately predicts the Commissar's subsequent behaviour. Before Babitski has even met Filipov, the doctor extrapolates from the information transmitted by the town gossips about the way the Communist leader has refused medical treatment for the boils on his neck, to the pitilessness he will show to the local population (*Mides-hadin*, p.59):

A mentsh, vos batsit zikh vi a gazlen tsu zikh aleyn, iz vi kon er zikh shoy'n batsiyen tsu mentshn, vos faln arayn tsu em in di hent?

A person who treats himself like a brute, how can he be expected to treat people who fall into his hands?

And further (*ibid.*, p.75):

Un gedakht hot zikh dem doktor, az Filipov is krank mit a tshikave nokh nisht gevezene naye krenk, a krenk, vos ken kumen nor af a mentshn vi Filipov – a mentsh, vos az er heyst emetsn shisn, helfn nisht keyn shum khokhmes, vayl nisht er heyst shisn – es heyst di geshikhte.

And the doctor reflected that Filipov was sick with a strange sickness, a new, hitherto non-existent sickness, which could befall only a man like Filipov – for when he orders a person to be shot, nothing can help that person, because it is not Filipov who has ordered the execution, it is History.

Babitski's irony is at the expense of the peculiar brand of Bolshevik hypocrisy which pretends that its political executions, unlike those of all other politicians, have an exalted purpose. In this way, the portrait of Babitski is integrated into the double message of the whole novel, and itself becomes a bearer of that message, namely that the moral representatives

of the Soviet regime are no less indifferent to the people's welfare than was the pre-Revolutionary bourgeoisie (ibid., p.90):

Vayl er [Babitski] iz itst on zayn heskem getsvungen tsu tun der revolutsye a shlikhes un tsi er vil yo, tsi er vil nisht, muz er itst folgn di revolutsye un deriber vet er in di kamern batrakhtn di kranke glaykhgiltik un keltlekh, vi keltlekh es batrakht zey di revolutsye mit ale ire Filipovs.

Because he [Babitski] is forced against his will to do a service for the Revolution, whether he wants to or not, he must obey the Revolution and will therefore examine the women in the prison cells, coldly and indifferently, as coldly as the Revolution with all its Filipovs.

At one point, the pro-Soviet omniscient narrator echoes the feelings of the local people whose lives have been shattered by the Bolshevik decrees regulating commerce and individual freedom of movement. With regard to the widespread incomprehension as to why certain activities constitute a crime under the Revolution, and now carry the death penalty, we read (ibid., p.83):

Nisht ale gleybn nokh, az far zeyere aveyres kumt zey shtrof, af azoyfil zenen nokh ba zey di aveyres nay.

Not all of them yet believe that they deserve to be punished for their transgressions, so new are the transgressions still to them.

Shmuel Voltsis, for example, who has worked hard all his life in the town sawmill, and now finds himself victimised by the 'workers' party', is also given over to bitter thoughts on the irony of this unjust 'justice' (ibid., p.236):

Gearbet ale yorn azoy shver ba Berezovskin af der zegmil iz ot hostu dir, plutsem itst, ven a nash-brat iz gor gevorn a shtikl meykhes

Worked so hard all those years at Berezovsky's sawmill and suddenly that's what you get when one of the lads becomes a big shot.

One character does, however, make the transition from past to present, but before he is converted to the Bolshevik cause, his reactions are typical

of those of the rest of the Jews. While in prison for his implication in clandestine Social Revolutionary activities, Yuzi Spivak contemplates the fact that if the real face of the Revolution is indeed Filipov, then he will be shot by the very workers' movement to which he has dedicated his life (ibid., p.138):

Em, Yuzin, vet dan tseshisn di zelbe arbeter-bavegung, velkher
er iz fun zekhtsn yor on geven greyt optsugebn zayn lebn.

The same workers' movement, for which he has been prepared
to give his life since the age of sixteen, will shoot him, Yuzi.

Here Bergelson implicitly asks what can be the future of a political movement which kills its own most fervent adherents. As a consequence of his conversion, Spivak's life is spared at this juncture, but his freedom is bought at the price of his commitment to whip the Jews into line, and to be merciless with them if they fail to conform, that is, at the price of psychological divorce from his own identity.

The narrative tone in the section relating Yuzi Spivak's transference of allegiance to the Bolshevik side registers an ambiguity about the nature of Soviet crime, acknowledging that crimes have been committed, since the prison cells are full, but simultaneously conveying a doubt as to whether the actions which are being punished really are criminal. Yuzi, in his cell, ponders the chain of events which has brought him and his cell-mate, Pinke Vayl, to the point where they are about to face a firing squad, and concludes that the Soviet regime is guilty: first it produces Red Army Pinke Vayls, and then it catches them at the border as if they were criminals. A further irony of the Revolution is that while it claims to be the saviour of the working classes, it kills every vestige of human feeling in ordinary people. Yuzi Spivak is aware of the changes in himself brought about by the weeks he has spent 'in the hands of the Revolution' (ibid., p.101):

Vi a geshosener hot er [Yuzi] nisht gehat keyn mindstn mitgefil
far Pinken, vemen geshosn tsu vern shteyt ersht for.

like one who has already been shot, he (Yuzi) had not the slightest feeling for Pinke, who was still waiting to be shot.

The reason for the sudden increase in the number of people needing to be shot is given by Filipov himself. In Filipov's formulation, the Jews are like mice eating a hole in the corner of a bag, through which disappear the nation's vital provisions (ibid., p.70):

Di revolutsye – hot er gezogt – iz vi a zak. Mir shtopn im un shtopn, un ir zayt do ba der grenets, vi di mayz. Ir est a lokh in same ek – alts funem zak shit zikh oys

The Revolution – he said – is like a sack. We keep filling it and filling it, and you are on the edge, like mice. You eat a hole right in the corner, and everything in the sack pours out

Bergelson shows that it may well devolve upon the mice to accept the dictatorship of history, but they nevertheless have their own opinion on the matter, and see their activities at the corner of the bag as necessary for their material survival. The subject of material survival expressed in the image of a sack of grain also evokes the Hebrew saying from the *Ethics of the Fathers* 'im eyn kemakh eyn torah, im eyn torah eyn kemakh' – 'without bread there is no learning, without learning there is no bread'. Since 'Learning', in traditional Jewish practice, is indissolubly linked to profound reflection upon the problems of social justice, the lesson here for Bolshevik ideologists is that they themselves are destroying the essential conditions for creating an equitable society. The serious criticism hidden in this image are reinforced by the metaphor of the 'edge', which implies that there is a centre, and that Filipov is in it, but simultaneously undermines the 'centre' by acknowledging the importance of the periphery.

Joseph Roth: *Die Flucht ohne Ende*

Die Flucht ohne Ende was published in 1927, the year following Joseph Roth's extended travels throughout the Soviet Union, and is in part a

record of his impressions of the effect of the Revolution on the lives of the Soviet people. In addition, it is also a clear statement of the conundrum of Roth's own destiny, the inability to identify sufficiently with either Western or Eastern Europe, and thereby to find an adequate replacement for the milieu which vanished in 1918, when his native Galicia became part of the Republic of Poland. Born in Brody, and educated in Lemberg (later Lwów) in the German language, Roth could never consider himself Polish. Nor, however, could he, having been brought up as a Jew in a corner of the Habsburg Empire with a dense Slavic and Jewish population, integrate into an ethnic-German Austrian Republic. Roth's personal chronotopic displacement and its reflection in his writings have been much noted in analyses of his work, and are exhaustively documented in the biography by Bronsen (1974a). Bronsen (1974b, p.127) further draws our attention to the fact that the origins of Roth's irritable criticism of all aspects of modern life lie in the exile forced on him when the Austro-Hungarian Empire ceased to exist. Like the Ukrainian Jews in *Mides-hadin* during the Russian Revolution, Roth experienced the transformation of his native land into alien territory, so that whether or not he physically remained where he was born, he was spiritually exiled, either in a Polish Galicia or an ethnic-German Austria. Never again able to find a place where he could be integrated psychologically, he became increasingly unable to tolerate the distress of alienation from life around him. In 1920, having spent two years with limited success trying to make a place for himself as a journalist in post-war Vienna, Roth left Vienna for Berlin. He never lived in Austria again, and never had a permanent home, but spent the rest of his life moving around Europe, living in hotel rooms. In 1933 Roth moved to Paris, where he remained until his death in 1939.

In common with Bergelson and Roth, the Jews in *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* suffer displacement from the time and place in which

they were previously comfortable. During the chronological period of the narrative in each case, the protagonists struggle in various ways to adapt to the changes imposed upon them by historical events beyond their control. In *Mides-hadin* the characters have had their customary way of life destroyed by the October Revolution and Civil War. Part of their confusion stems from the fact that they are still living on their own territory, but separated forever from their past by the Revolution. The displacement in *Die Flucht ohne Ende* is more obvious: the central character Franz Tunda is separated from his past not only by the First World War, in which he fought as a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army, but also by his years in Russia, where he witnesses the social upheavals brought about by the Soviet regime, and later by exile in Paris. In addition to the geographical and temporal alienation central to the thematics of both writers, there is a common programmatic intent. Roth indicated the programme of *Die Flucht ohne Ende* by appending the words 'Ein Bericht' to the title and introducing a fictive narrator who asserts that he is recounting a true story based on documentary materials (*Die Flucht ohne Ende*, p.391):

Im Folgenden erzähle ich die Geschichte meines Freundes, Kameraden und Gesinnungsgenossen Franz Tunda. Ich folge zum Teil seinen Aufzeichnungen, zum Teil seinen Erzählungen. Ich habe nichts erfunden, nichts komponiert. Es handelt sich nicht mehr darum, zu 'dichten'. Das wichtigste ist das Beobachtete.

This claim by the author to have done no more than produce an objective report is one of the fundamental conventions of the Neue Sachlichkeit literary movement with which Roth was associated during the 1920s. Von Wilpert (1955, p.506) defines Neue Sachlichkeit as the literary movement created around 1920 in opposition to Expressionism, which the younger generation considered outmoded. Their rallying cry was 'Put subjectivity behind you!' The definitive tone was set, however, by Kisch with this ebullient definition of the theoretical inspiration behind Neue Sachlichkeit writing

(Kisch, 1924, p.viii): 'Nichts ist verblüffender als die einfache Wahrheit, nichts ist exotischer als unsere Umwelt, nichts ist phantasievoller als die Sachlichkeit und nichts Sensationelleres gibt es in der Welt als die Zeit, in der man lebt!' This definition, which corresponds to Roth's own views, would cover the case admirably for *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, were it not for the key phrase 'unter Verzicht auf subjektive Bewertung'. Roth's powerful emotional involvement in his material, and his ambivalence towards the major social and political points of reference, subvert any attempt to avoid subjective valuation, while reinforcing other basic qualities of Neue Sachlichkeit writing, such as 'erbarmungslose Skepsis und desillusionierte Ironie' (von Wilpert, 1955, p.506). The basis for the scepticism and irony which permeate *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* is the protagonists' 'Unbehaustsein'. Tunda's homelessness is a condition which Roth treats ostensibly with 'hard realism' (Mathew, 1984, p.73). In *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, however, this 'documentation through narrative,' a key element of Neue Sachlichkeit, is not fully realised because of Roth's obsession with the distance between appearance and reality, and his own sense of having been excluded from the only reality he could ever want. As a result of Roth's inability to sustain a tone of balanced objectivity, the text is marked by a capricious jumbling together of fact and opinion.

For example, the announcement that the narrative convention the writer will be following in order to chart Tunda's peregrinations will be that of a 'report', means that the first anomalous statement will probably pass unnoticed. This occurs on the first page of the novel. In a rapid pen-portrait, Roth conveys the information that a character named Baranowicz wears a beard and is taciturn: '[...] ein schwarzer Bart verpflichtete ihn [Baranowicz] zur Schweigsamkeit' (*Die Flucht ohne Ende*, p.393). One accurate piece of information – the man is bearded – is used as the causal determinant of a second, observable fact – he is reserved in speech. Using

the former as an explanation of the latter is whimsical, and whether or not it is a charming stylistic mannerism, it is arbitrary enough to make the reader wonder what kind of a 'report' this is actually going to be.

It soon transpires that this is a kind of report in which the author's prejudices demonstrably stand in the way of coherent characterisation. Baranowicz, whose entire way of life is as remote as possible from contemporary urban concerns (ibid., p.393), 'lebte von Jagd und Pelzhandel, lernte die Spuren der Tiger im dichtesten Gras erkennen, die Vorzeichen des Sturms an dem furchtsamen Flug der Vögel [...] kannte die Gebräuche der Waldjäger, der Räuber und der harmlosen Wanderer, liebte seine zwei Hunde wie Brüder und verehrte die Schlangen und die Tiger.' Every year, Baranowicz appears in the same unnamed town, where he does his shopping. He exchanges bits of wild animal for the only necessities he cannot provide for himself, ammunition, tea, tobacco, and schnaps. And what else? Newspapers, 'um sich auf dem laufenden zu halten'. Roth can imagine a man whose only human contact is once a year in a brothel, who lives among wild animals and is as inarticulate as an animal, whose requirements in terms of daily diet and intellectual stimulation are as reduced as those of an animal, a twentieth-century European described in a sentence where the word 'tiger' occurs twice, but Roth cannot imagine that such a man might not be a newspaper reader. Roth was, of course, a working journalist.

Die Flucht ohne Ende may well be presented as a 'report', but we have seen that it is one which has been composed by a reporter with emotional blind spots which preclude real objectivity. Indeed, in having the central character, Tunda, address himself directly to the author by means of a letter (p.429 – 430), Roth seems to be playing games with the boundaries of fiction and reality that are hardly in keeping with *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Roth's irony at the expense of his contemporaries was offered freely and

to no one's particular advantage. Koester (1982, p.51) summarises Roth's criticism of the societies available to him in the words:

Wurde der Mensch im Osten von der sozialistischen Ideologie tyrannisiert, so hat er im Westen die ihm vom Stand zugeteilte Rolle zu spielen.

The conviction that appearances are deceptive, and that everything in Nature and man is suspect (Mathew, 1984, p.146) is a recurrent theme of *Die Flucht ohne Ende*.

Roth died before completing work on a novel, *Erdbeeren*, which incorporates elements of traditional Jewish life in Galicia treated from an idyllic perspective. In Bronsen's estimation (Bronsen, 1974b, p.127):

Roth, der sein ganzes Leben von der Sehnsucht nach einer Welt erfüllt war, zu der er nicht im Widerstreit leben mußte, ersann sich mit dieser Schöpfung [the novel-fragment *Erdbeeren*] ein kauzig-wundersames Nirgendwo, dem die großen Erschütterungen von Wechsel und Umbruch erspart bleiben und in das die störende Wirklichkeit nicht eindringen darf. Zu seinem Geburtsort Brody war er im Geist zurückgekehrt, um von dorthier einen Ort anzuvisieren, wo es niemandem schwer fällt zu leben.

Bronsen touches here on the essence of the suffering in *Mides-hadin* as well as in *Die Flucht ohne Ende*: the characters find that life is too hard to be lived.

The character Tunda in *Die Flucht ohne Ende* takes his analysis of the Soviet paranoia further than Bergelson, although they both judge it to be fundamental to life under the new regime. In a letter to his 'friend' Joseph Roth, Tunda precisely captures the state between resignation and expectation evoked in *Mides-hadin* (p. 429):

Du fragst, ob ich in Rußland heimisch war? Ich lebte in den letzten Monaten in einem Zustand, für den es keinen Namen gibt, weder im Russischen noch im Deutschen, wahrscheinlich in keiner Sprache der Welt, in einem Zustand zwischen Resignation und Erwartung. Ich stelle mir vor, daß die Toten einen Augenblick lang in dieser Situation sind, wenn sie das irdische Leben aufgeben und das andere noch nicht begonnen haben.

Roth then uses a phrase which describes the paradoxical state of a supposedly transitional phase of personal insecurity which imperceptibly hardens into permanent anxiety. Tunda writes: 'Ich lebte [...] in einer ganz bestimmten Vorläufigkeit, die kein Ende hat' (ibid., p.429). This is the chronic distress created by the Bolshevik administrative methods familiar to the Jews in *Mides-hadin*, which Bergelson, unlike Roth, sought to justify.

As the years which Tunda is said to have spent in Russia are those covered by the narrative in *Mides-hadin*, the dehumanisation and atomisation of society delineated in Roth's journalistic report in *Die Flucht ohne Ende* are mirrored in the Yiddish novel. While Bergelson does not shy away from describing daily Soviet reality very much as Roth does, he does, however, refuse to draw the same negative conclusions about the implacable cruelty of Soviet ideology and its inherent indifference to the masses of separate human lives continually sacrificed in order to maintain the system in place (ibid., p.429):

Du weißt nicht, ob Du ruhig in Deiner Lage verbleiben wirst. Es ist möglich, daß Du bald, im nächsten Augenblick verschoben wirst [...]. Das schlimmste ist, daß Du fortwährend beobachtet wirst und nicht weißt, von wem [...]. Alle sagen Dir gleichmäßig Genosse. Alle nennst Du gleichmäßig Genosse. Aber Du wähnst in jedem einen Beobachter und weißt gleichzeitig, daß jeder Dich für einen Beobachter hält. Du hast kein schlechtes Gewissen, Du bist ein Revolutionär, Du hast keine Beobachtungen zu fürchten. Dann fürchtest Du zumindest, daß Du für einen Spitzel gehalten würdest. Du bist harmlos. Aber weil Du Dich bemühen mußt, harmlos zu erscheinen, merken die anderen Deine Bemühungen. Du hast dann Angst, sie könnten Dich nicht mehr für harmlos halten.

Momentarily accepting Revolutionary paranoia on its own terms, for the sake of argument, Roth creates a striking image later in the same passage, to express the unbearable quality of life to which the individual in such a situation is condemned (ibid., p.430):

Denn man muß voraussetzen, daß die Revolution, von lauter Feinden umgeben, keine anderen Möglichkeiten hat, ihre Macht

zu sichern, als die, jedes Individuum zu opfern, wenn es nötig ist. Stelle Dir also vor: Man liegt jahrelang auf einem Altar und wird nicht geschlachtet.

Roth's description of life in Soviet Russia could serve as laboratory instructions for the production of experimental neurosis: the individual's actions and reactions are artificially disconnected from the response he receives from the environment upon which his survival depends, and as he becomes increasingly anxious to restore the link between his comportment and the treatment meted out to him, he becomes prey to a state of chronic suspicion and disorientation (*Die Flucht ohne Ende*, p.430):

Du hast zum Beispiel eine Pflicht außer acht gelassen und erwartest eine sehr unangenehme Folge. Aber es geschieht entweder gar nichts oder etwas sehr Angenehmes. Dabei weißt Du nicht, ob sich die unangenehme Konsequenz nicht in der Maske einer angenehmen gezeigt hat. Du traust weder Deinen Erfolgen noch Deinen Mißerfolgen.

This journalistic report, disguised as a letter, transmits, in terms of Neue Sachlichkeit conventions, the same information as does *Mides-hadin* by means of traditional narrative techniques. The essence of both is the socially disruptive effect of the psychological insecurity induced by the practices of the Communist regime (*Mides-hadin*, p.42):

A tsaytele – vet er funanderlakhndik zikh tsu ir (Khaverte Sasha) zogn – az far visn vegn epes khapt men itzt shmitz glaykh vi far tun.

What a time – he would say laughing bitterly to Comrade Sasha – when you get the same beating for knowing about something as for doing it.

Disillusionment with the Soviet Union represents part of Tunda's obsession with his sense of *Unbehaustsein* for which Roth found solace in writing. Natonek (1975, p.75) suggests that Roth is compelled to write by a spiritual vacuum which he has no other way of filling: 'Was bleibt einem Dichter anderes übrig, der nicht an den Fortschritt und nicht an eine sozialistische Zukunft glaubt?'

Mathew emphasises that Roth's ambivalence is the specific generating force behind the irony which marks all his work. A jarring mixture of self-aggrandisement and self-pity in the narratorial voice of *Die Flucht ohne Ende* can occur suddenly in an apparently neutral passage about Tunda, as in the extraordinary remark 'Von allen Tränen, die man verschluckt, sind jene die köstlichsten, die man über sich selbst geweint hätte' (*Die Flucht ohne Ende*, p.396). Or later, when Tunda's battle exploits in the Ukraine during the Civil War are being recited, it is said that he 'erschoss Verräter und Überläufer und Spione' and 'Er stillte den Durst mit Blut', at which point 'Seine Kameraden begannen ihn zu lieben' (ibid., p.406). This unexpected admission exposes the truth about Tunda's tragedy, his unsuccessful search for an alternative family. This motif is, as we have seen, one of the identifying characteristics of European Jewish writing at this time.

Roth is equally unselfcritical when writing about women, which he does with a palette restricted to varying shades of desire, jealousy, and contempt. His confusion about his own identity, his sense of exclusion and powerlessness, are recorded in his imaginative fiction in the envy, jealousy and self-pity which preclude genuinely objective characterisation of members of the social groups with which he was most hopelessly entangled, but leave ample room for expression of an ironic attitude towards them. This ambivalence is expressed in a unique combination of dispassionate tone and idiosyncratic selection of detail which slants the perspective in such a way that it is not immediately obvious that Roth has actually given us the narrator's highly subjective opinion of people and their behaviour, and not an objective account at all. About the Austrian middle classes Roth writes with visceral envy and dislike. For example, the hypocrisy of one well-to-do gentleman is exposed trenchantly in a sentence 'Er ließ sich niemals die Stiefel von einem seiner Diener ausziehen, er benutzte aus

Gründen der Menschlichkeit den Stiefelknecht' (ibid., p.129). He annihilates middle-class girls collectively, with the same lack of inhibition (ibid., p.460):

Die einzige Konzession, die sie an die Wirklichkeit machen, sind ihre Turnübungen jeden Morgen um sechs Uhr. Da heißt aber das Turnen auch nicht Turnen, sondern Eurhythmie. Sonst kämen sie sich bei jeder tiefen Kniebeuge beschmutzt vor.

For the German Jewish middle classes, in their fear and contempt for the Polish Jewish masses, Roth reserves an especially ironic barb (ibid., p.442):

Den Numerus clausus gegen ausländische Juden hatten die einheimischen Juden durchgesetzt, die behaupteten, ihre Vorfahren wären schon vor der Zeit der Völkerwanderung absichtlich mit den Römern an den Rhein gekommen. Es sah beinah so aus, als wollten die Juden sagen, ihre Vorfahren hätten den Germanen erlaubt, sich am Rhein anzusiedeln, weshalb die dankbare Pflicht der heutigen Deutschen wäre, die rheinisch-römischen Juden vor den polnischen zu bewahren.

This series of snide and sarcastic remarks does not belong on a page supposedly intended for the recording of objective observation, and makes it plain that the *Neue Sachlichkeit* programme failed to provide a suitable form for subject matter which touched Roth at a deep level. From 1930, he abandoned *Neue Sachlichkeit*, and ceased to regard it as a possible technique for any of his further novels.

However, the structural contradictions of *Die Flucht ohne Ende* reveal something more significant than the inadequacy of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* credo as an artistic framework for Roth's material. They suggest that the real meaning of the last line of the novel, 'so überflüssig wie er war niemand in der Welt', is not to be found solely in the historical circumstances of the Central European Jew, but in Tunda's personal refusal to allow others to rely on him. Specifically, Tunda does not understand the causal link between his attitude to women and his sense of 'Unbehaustsein'. If, by the end of the narrative, Tunda has become unwanted and unneeded

anywhere in the world, it is because he has worked, with more consistency than he evidently realises, to make himself superfluous. After the Civil War, Tunda's lover Natascha goes off briefly with someone else. Outraged, Tunda has the energy to go after her with a view to beating her and bringing her back to him. But when she returns by herself, ill, and he has to look after her for eight days, he quickly decides to end the relationship. In this commentary on Tunda's attitude to love, Roth is in full control of his irony; although Tunda does not understand why his feelings change, the narrator clearly does (ibid., p.411):

Sie blieb acht Tage im Bett, Tunda bediente den Spirituskocher. Wer diese Tätigkeit kennt, wird wissen, daß keine andere wie sie geeignet ist, auch sentimentale Männer zur Kritik zu erziehen. In diesen acht Tagen wurde Tunda seiner Liebe, die sich in Kochen verwandelt hatte, einfach müde.

Later, in conjunction with a fleeting attachment to another woman, Tunda reflects (ibid., p.424):

Die Frauen, die uns begegnen, erregen mehr unsere Phantasie als unser Herz. Wir lieben die Welt, die sie repräsentieren, und das Schicksal, das sie uns bedeuten.

Bergelson's protagonists, riven as they are by the author's ambivalence towards the political ideology he had officially committed himself to espouse are, like Roth's hero, condemned to be overcome by a sense of their own superfluity because they prefer a false representation of reality to the truth. Tunda destroys his relationships with real women because they do not conform to his erotic 'programme', to his delusional female image. In *Die Flucht ohne Ende* as in *Mides-hadin*, the struggle to produce a commitment to a programmatic belief is only partially successful. The sense of loss in relation to the past is too great, and the scepticism about the ideologies on offer too serious to be stifled entirely, hence the uncontrollable emotional ambivalence which receives its literary expression in the form

of irony. Tunda is drawn to the West, and tries, after leaving Russia, first to settle in Vienna, then in Paris. Nevertheless, his perception of Western culture and Western values as spiritually bankrupt prevents his psychological integration into any of the countries enjoying the political freedom absent in the East, where he had previously found among Jews and Slavs a spiritual quality lacking in the West. For Tunda, as for Babitski, 'all the familiar things in life and in nature have become alienated, and one feels like a stranger in what was till now one's own home' (Mathew, 1984, p.139). The result is a 'ceaseless war between phantasy and longing on the one hand, and cold reason on the other' (ibid. p.159).

The historical settings of *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* in a transitional period which Magris (1975, p.203) has called 'ein nicht-vorhandener Nullpunkt zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft', form the perfect background against which both writers can project their ambivalence towards their material. Magris observes that, once outside the shtetl, the Jew loses his individual identity, and is forced, in order to survive, to master the art of deception, defined as 'die Kunst, Jude zu sein, aber nicht wie ein Jude zu sein' (ibid. p.207). This aphoristic formulation covers the situation of the Jews in *Mides-hadin* whom Bergelson portrays as alternating between a stubborn refusal to conform inwardly, and a capitulation to the Bolshevik value system, which not only does violence to traditional Jewish ethical practice, but also obliges the convert to distance himself irrevocably from all those still maintaining an attachment to the Jewish community and its traditions. The consequence of Bergelson's ambivalence towards the overt message of his text – that the 'higher truth' of the dictatorship of History must supersede all other loyalties – is that it is not the official hero, Filipov, but Babitski who surreptitiously remains in the reader's memory as the dominant positive hero of the novel. Babitski is, in the words Bronsen uses for Tunda, 'der beispielhafte Antiheld dieses zwielichtigen Daseins – der

überflüssige' (Bronsen, 1974a, p.209).

It is precisely the superfluity of their protagonists which causes their creators evident pain. The dilemmas of the characters in *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* reflect the awareness of both writers that European Jewry was caught in an impasse between a vanished past and the deceptions of the Revolution. Roth's preface in the original edition of *Die Flucht ohne Ende* (quoted by Koester, 1982) contains this statement:

Die Völker vergehen, die Reiche verwehen. Aus dem Vergehenden, dem Verwehenden das Merkwürdige und zugleich das Menschlich-Bezeichnende festzuhalten ist die Pflicht des Schriftstellers. Er hat die erhabene und bescheidene Aufgabe, die privaten Schicksale aufzuklauben, welche die Geschichte fallen läßt, blind und leichtfertig, wie es scheint.

This is what Bergelson has done for the Jewish population of the small Ukrainian towns which form the setting for *Mides-hadin*, as well as what Roth has done for the Jewish citizens of the Habsburg Empire left inconsolable by its dismemberment. Roth explicitly refuses to accept the 'higher truth' of the Revolution, and close examination of *Mides-hadin* reveals that Bergelson's conscious determination to embrace the Soviet system is defeated by reservations deeply embedded in the text. Although neither Bergelson nor Roth deludes himself that the Jewish past with its specific integrity can be resurrected, Trommler (1975, p.287) sees in Roth's treatment of Tunda's Russian experience 'einen der wenigen, vielleicht letzten Zugänge zu einer ursprünglicheren poetischen und individualistischen Lebenshaltung'. Roth and Bergelson share not only an initial inclination to believe in the salutary properties of the Russian Revolution, but also a disappointment with the subsequent reality, which Roth, as a foreign observer, can accept with greater equanimity. Moreover, the final impression left in the reader's mind is that the ideological standpoint of both novels is very similar. This is due in large measure to the status of Tunda and Babitski as outsiders. The difference between Babitski and Tunda is that

the former is placed firmly within the Soviet orbit, whereas Tunda lives in the West, and though profoundly influenced by the Russian Revolution, 'diese Prägung als innere Lebensform, nicht als geographische oder politische Kundgebung betrachtet' (Trommler, 1975, p.287).

Conscious Irony

In her study on the concept of the 'West' and its influence on the depiction of Russian identity in Soviet literature between 1917 and 1934, Avins (1983, p.125) writes: 'the shattering of forms was a literary as well as a social issue' in post-Revolutionary Russia. The necessity to devise a new form of novel, and to point German and Yiddish prose in a new direction, which existed for expatriate writers like Roth and Bergelson in the 1920s, was not an imperative for Schnitzler in 1908. He is therefore better able to preserve the rhetorical balance of the text. *Mides-hadin*, *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, and *Der Weg ins Freie* are all studies of 'the psychology of foreignness' (ibid. p. 177), and in all three cases, the psychological and political components are portrayed as inextricably interrelated with each other. What distinguishes *Der Weg ins Freie* from the other two is that the equilibrium maintained among the arguments representing opposing points of view demonstrates Schnitzler's distance from and control over his material, whereas in the other two novels the irony renders the central thesis unclear and ambiguous. In a text full of ironies at every linguistic and narrative level, the central irony has to do with the contrast between the expectations aroused in the reader by the title *Der Weg ins Freie*, and a fictional reality deliberately constructed so as to reveal that the path through life upon which his characters are embarked leads, not to freedom, but around in a long circle towards the original point of departure.

This point of departure is established early in the exposition of the first

chapter, with the introduction of Willy Eissler, a minor character who typifies the Jew who accepts his Jewish identity with good humour, and even a certain shy pride, but who, because of the alacrity with which he is wont to defend Jewish sensibilities against any possible affront, seems neurotic to non-Jews. Within minutes of a chance meeting with the central non-Jewish figure, Georg von Wergenthin, Eissler has made two remarks containing references to Viennese anti-Semitism. More significantly, Eissler's conversation refers solely to perceived anti-Semitism, which is presumably the justification for Wergenthin's assessment of Eissler as 'ein Mensch [...], der ununterbrochen eine Stellung verteidigte, wenn auch ohne dringende Notwendigkeit' (*Der Weg ins Freie*, p.643). Here Schnitzler is boldly putting his cards on the table, for the question whether the Jews exaggerate the quantity of real prejudice inhibiting the progress of their daily lives is debated throughout the novel in terms which suggest that it might just be the case that the Jews are overly susceptible and see offence where none was intended. That this point does not, however, carry the day, is attributable to a further reflection of Wergenthin's, immediately exposing his unconscious prejudices about the component parts expected in a Jewish identity (*ibid.*, p.643):

Er [Georg] empfand es, wie schon öfters, als beinahe sonderbar, daß Willy Jude war [...] aus Willy aber hatten Anlage, Liebhaberei und eiserner Wille das täuschende Ebenbild eines geborenen Kavaliers gebildet.

Equilibrium is again maintained when Schnitzler does not allow prejudice and ignorance to be seen as the exclusive property of non-Jews, and has Doktor Stauber remark provocatively (*ibid.*, p.661):

Und übrigens, [...] weiß der Herr Baron gewiß, daß alle Juden miteinander verwandt sind.

Although Georg is characterised very much as the slightly dim-witted aristocratic dilettante, he is intelligent enough to recognise that he is be-

ing baited by Doktor Stauber, and is predictably irritated. In this passage, Schnitzler shows how even the least prejudiced of Vienna's non-Jews cannot help being exasperated by what seems to a non-combatant like a morbid, often truculent, self-absorption (ibid., p.661):

Georg lächelte liebenswürdig. In Wirklichkeit aber war er eher enerviert [...]. Wo er auch hinkam, er begegnete nur Juden, die sich schämten, daß sie Juden waren, oder solchen, die darauf stolz waren, und Angst hatten, man könnte glauben, sie schämten sich.

Schnitzler maintains the balance of doubt as to whether the Jews are really the recipients of affronts to their nervous sensibilities grievous enough to account for their suspicious tenseness, in artistic as well as personal matters. The underlying assumption is that their behaviour is indeed inappropriate, but that it is virtually impossible to decide if it is the inappropriateness of Jewish behaviour which alienates decent Austrians, or if it is the ubiquitous, more or less overt hostility towards the Jews which causes them to behave inappropriately. For example, the résumés of Heinrich Bermann's two plays, recently produced in Vienna, are given in the narrator's voice, and are ambiguous as to the literary merit of Bermann's work, but the assessment seems to be rather more negative than positive. On the other hand, the criticisms formulated in Georg's mind, as well as his recollection of his brother's dismissive remarks about Bermann's theatrical gifts, are couched more in terms of personal innuendo than of aesthetic criteria. Rounding off the only section in the narrative that concentrates specifically on the written work which is, after all, the *raison d'être* of the playwright's life, with Graf Schönstein's witticism at Bermann's expense, is surely meant by Schnitzler to signify that the Jewish artist in Austria has to contend with a certain type of critical reception which ignores the work as such, and makes much of the identity of the writer (ibid., p.667):

Er [Georg] erinnerte sich nur [...] daß Graf Schönstein geäußert hatte, wenn es nach ihm ginge, dürften Stücke von Ju-

den überhaupt nur von der Budapester Orpheumsgesellschaft aufgeführt werden.

The Jew continually finds himself unable to assess his real flaws and abilities, since his work is not being judged on its merits alone, but on the basis of one aspect of the identity of its creator. Consequently, the Jews tend either to overvalue or undervalue themselves. Georg reacts with exasperation to the fact that Heinrich Bermann is sometimes offensively arrogant, and at other times, unable to assuage his self-loathing by any amount of self-denigration. From the characterisations of the many Jews in *Der Weg ins Freie*, a portrait of a society emerges in which the Jews' self-image corresponds to the distorted view they receive projected back to them by the environment in which they live. The problem for the Jews is to measure how much of this image of themselves is generated by their own qualities, and how much by the mentality of the majority population. Because they never see themselves in any other, radically different environment, the Jews in Schnitzler's world never succeed in determining how much of their identity is really theirs, and how much is imposition, which is why all the countless arguments in the novel on this subject are tinged with despair, and why the discussions have to be constantly repeated. The answer is unknowable. The role of Georg von Wergenthin is ostensibly to be that of the antithesis of the Jew, the carefree young aristocrat, whom fortune has permitted to develop to the fullest extent of his potential, precisely because he is freed from the exhausting waste of mental energy the Jews spend on talking about, and suffering over, the irreconcilable conflict between their desire to be accepted as equals by the society into which they were born, and the grim determination of that society not to accept them. In reality, Georg is a chronic dilettante, no better able to realise his artistic and human potential than the Jews who get on his nerves, and with whom he displays curious psychological similarities. He

is, for instance, unable to accept anything at face value, and like the Jews he meets on his peregrinations around Vienna, superimposes negative meaning onto positive experience, of which this complicated reaction to Leo Golowski is typical (ibid., p.715):

Er [Leo] sagte das in seinem gewöhnlichen, liebenswürdigen, fast naiv klingenden Ton, der Georg immer wieder gefangen nahm, aber in der Erinnerung für ihn einen Beiklang von Ironie, ja von Falschheit zu bekommen pflegte.

Georg von Wergenthin and Heinrich Bermann, the central pair of protagonists, although apparently destined to interpret life in ways diametrically opposed to each other, actually conduct a conscious dialogue in which, as in an aria, they alternate between singing the same melodic line with different words, and singing different melodies with the same text. In a scene at the heart of the novel, in which Georg becomes impatient with Heinrich for ignoring the tranquil beauty of nature, and harping instead on his dislike of a party of anti-Semitic, nature-loving cyclists, Georg first thinks irritably: 'Was will er eigentlich [...]. Wäre es ihm sympathischer, wenn hier eine Gesellschaft von polnischen Juden säße und Psalmen sänge?' (ibid., p.714). Immediately afterwards, however, Georg suddenly recognises why it is that Bermann and the other Viennese Jews are chronically tense and hypersensitive, and expresses this insight more succinctly than any of the Jews manages to do anywhere else in the course of the narrative. Until now, Georg and Heinrich have been circling each other in mutual attraction and repulsion, certainly, but most of all, in mutual incomprehension. The similarity between their two identities is fleetingly revealed, and Georg is able, just momentarily, to see the world through Jewish eyes (ibid., p.722):

Und eine Ahnung stieg in Georg auf, wie schwer gerade diesen Besten, von denen Heinrich sprach, denen, in deren Seelen sich die Zukunft der Menschheit vorbereitete, eine Entscheidung fallen mußte; wie gerade ihnen, hin und hergeworfen zwischen der Scheu, zudringlich zu erscheinen und der Erbitterung

über die Zumutung, einer frechen Überzahl weichen zu sollen, – zwischen dem eingeborenen Bewußtsein, daheim zu sein, wo sie lebten und wirkten, und der Empörung, sich eben da verfolgt und beschimpft zu sehen; wie gerade ihnen zwischen Trotz und Ermattung das Gefühl ihres Daseins, ihres Wertes und ihrer Rechte sich verwirren mußte.

These reflections are provoked by the uncharacteristic simplicity with which Bermann expresses the pain of knowing that he may be rejected at any moment by fellow citizens to whom he would prefer to feel nothing but goodwill. The thought develops from an interior monologue, through a brief verbal interchange with another Jew, Leo Golowski, to an exposition of the ambivalence Bermann feels about himself as an Austrian Jew. He is exasperated and saddened in equal measure by the arrogant complacency of the 'deutschnational' cycling club who are certain of their right to determine Heinrich's identity for him (ibid., pp.719):

Heinrich fühlte anfangs gegen seinen Willen, wie manchmal solch wohlfeiler aber unvermuteter Freundlichkeit gegenüber, gleichsam sein Herz aufgehen. Sofort aber besann er sich, denn er wußte ja, auch dieser junge Mann war nur von der Milde des Tags, dem Frieden der Landschaft wie berauscht; in der Tiefe der Seele war auch der ihm feindselig gesinnt, gleich all den andern, die so harmlos an ihm vorbeispazierten. Und er verstand es wieder einmal selbst nicht recht, warum der Anblick dieser sanftbewegten Hügel, dieser verdämmernden Stadt ihn so schmerzlich süß ergriff, da ihm doch die Menschen, die hier zu Hause waren, so wenig und selten etwas Gutes bedeuteten.

'Gräßliches Volk,' meinte Leo [...]. 'Und solche Kerle,' sagte er [Heinrich] [...] 'bilden sich dann noch ein, daß sie da eher zu Hause sind als unsereiner.'

Finally, Georg's insight into the genesis of the neurotic aspects of Jewish behaviour is balanced by the unexpected serenity with which Heinrich declares himself to be at peace with a situation he normally finds unbearable (ibid., p.757):

Manchmal ist man ja wirklich daheim, trotz allem, fühlt sich hier so zu Hause, – ja geradezu heimatlicher, als irgendeiner

von den sogenannten Eingeborenen sich fühlen kann. Es ist offenbar so, daß durch das Bewußtsein des Verstehens das Gefühl der Fremdheit in gewissem Sinn wieder aufgehoben wird.

It is Schnitzler's particular triumph in *Der Weg ins Freie* that all the instances of ambivalence towards the major themes of the novel are balanced one against the other in such perfect equipoise that it is not only impossible to tell exactly where the author stands, but also inconceivable that without the benefit of hindsight, and with only the amount of information available in 1908, anyone could do better than the author and his characters in unravelling the historical, political, and psychological confusion which prevent the Jews from finding a way out of their impasse.

Summary and Conclusion

In both *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* chronotopic displacement has resulted in a loss of authorial control expressed in the text through unconscious irony. This irony, which is ever present structurally and verbally in both novels, is the natural vehicle of expression for the ambivalence felt by Bergelson and Roth towards their present milieu and the opportunities offered for the reconstruction of a life in which the elements most vital to them might exist once again. The structural disarray indicated by the self-betraying irony of the two works produced in exile in the 1920s, when contrasted with the carefully controlled conscious irony of *Der Weg ins Freie*, published in 1908, in the city where Schnitzler was born and died, is strikingly paralleled by the degree of chronotopic displacement suffered by the authors. Despite the insecurity felt by Jewish communities before the abolition of the Russian and Austrian monarchies, the prevailing social orders of Eastern and Western Europe did at least provide an environment of minimal stability for Jewish writers. Nevertheless, in his autobiography *Jugend in Wien*, Schnitzler repeatedly refers to the demoralising effect of

Lueger's rhetoric on the Jews of Vienna, describing painful incidents of anti-Semitism which marred his own years as a medical student. Wistrich (1989) documents the activities of the Christian-Social administration in stripping away basic civil rights from the Jewish community and in manufacturing a climate in which anti-Semitism became respectable and normal. He provides a detailed account of Jewish reaction to these attacks in the creation of communal organisations such as the Österreichisch-Israelitische Union which sought to encourage interest in self-defence among the often apathetic and intimidated Jewish population.

During the decisive years between 1905-1908, when *Der Weg ins Freie* was written, and 1926 and 1927, the dates of publication of *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* respectively, the stability of literary forms, exemplified in Schnitzler's work, was shattered, as was the stability of political forms in Russia and Austria. The chronotopic displacement that is the chief identifying characteristic of Roth's and Bergelson's protagonists is also the main subject preoccupying their creators in their own lives as a result of the physical and psychological disturbances caused by the First World War and the Russian Revolution. Although the debate about the future position of the Jewish population in Vienna takes place in an atmosphere of exasperation at the increasingly overt hostility Jews have to face in daily life, not all the Jewish characters in *Der Weg ins Freie* are as nervously overwrought as Heinrich Bermann, and some of them, such as Frau Ehrenberg and her daughter Elsa, manage to convince themselves that they live nearly as normally as non-Jews. In *Die Flucht ohne Ende* and *Mides-hadin*, however, the sense of security, such as it is, which forms the element of cohesion not only among the Jewish inhabitants of Austria, but also between certain Jews and non-Jews, has been forcibly removed by historical events, and the consequent atomisation of individuals within a fractured social structure is mirrored in the extreme degree of alienation

and confusion of the characters inside the fractured structure of the novel itself.

Despite the position of *Mides-hadin* in the Bergelson canon as the first of his major works to be tailored to fit political criteria, we find that the portraits of the Bolshevik leaders and party adherents are less attractive and convincing than those the party condemns as class enemies. Bergelson's abiding affection for personalities who incorporate in their behaviour the pre-Revolutionary Jewish ethical value system, infiltrates the narrative of *Mides-hadin*, thus rendering the novel ineffective as the Communist propaganda tool which it was designed to be. Bergelson needed to be unfair to those of his characters representing such anachronistic categories as traditional Jews and unreformed intellectuals, in order to prove his fidelity to the Soviet cause; but despite sporadically hostile characterisation and defamatory phraseology, the balance of favour in *Mides-hadin* is with characters whose mentality still reflects their pre-Revolutionary education. Among the multiple ironies which refute the thesis of the novel, the first has to do with the concept of justice, specifically, of Soviet justice. While there are many individual statements proclaiming the inevitability and inescapability of this new form of justice, Bergelson organises his material in such a way as to lead the reader to infer that the terrorisation and killing are unjustified, and that the motivation of the executioners, based as it is on their own psychological quirks, is open to question.

Nor, in *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, have the tenets of Roth's programme of Neue Sachlichkeit objectivity been fully observed. According to the declaration of literary principle which Roth places at the beginning of his work, his intention was to report impartially on whatever he observed. His own prejudices, however, come between him and his resolve, and the tone and manner of his writing reflect an unacknowledged bias against the Western European middle classes in general, and against women in particular. The

author's own sense of rootlessness and despair over-determine the tone and texture of the novel: the description of Tunda's *Unbehaustsein*, with all its consequences in terms of disrupted, unsatisfactory personal relationships, places excessive emphasis on the insufficiencies of the environment and of the men and women with whom Tunda comes into contact. Roth's uncontrollable frustration finds its outlet in an ironical treatment of plot and character that transgresses the Neue Sachlichkeit tenets of impartiality.

Intentionally or not, irony plays an important part in all three novels. In a variety of ways, an opposing and concealed commentary intrudes upon overt primary statements. As has been pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, Jewish writers seem predisposed to ironic perspectives. Arguably, this is a reflection of the Jewish social position where the individual wishes to feel himself inside society but the majority population sees him as outside. For Bergelson and Roth, the discordance between their desire for acceptance in the country about which they write and the reality of rejection is so extreme, that control over their literary creations eludes them. The authors' ambivalence and the resultant sense of irony in the texts, serve to convert what might have been routine exercises in political or stylistic conformity into lasting works of literature. Sweeping aside the ineffective advocacy of the authors, both *Mides-hadin* and *Die Flucht ohne Ende* have great power, the power of conviction wrested against their creators' will from the sources of their inspiration.

Chapter 7

Irony in Jewish and Non-Jewish Narrative Fiction: A Comparison

*Von der Sehnsucht
nach Gewißheit verzehrt*
Siegfried Kracauer

Introduction

The failure of Ludwig Börne, who converted to Protestantism in 1818, to attain the acceptance by German society that he so ardently desired, provides important background to a discussion of verbal irony in Jewish letters in the twentieth century. As Gilman (1986, p.162) remarks: 'Why can he [Börne] not hide even in the church? Because he is inherently a Jew, at least in the eyes of the Christian world. And he is a Jew because he bears the stigma of the new language of the Jews, not Yiddish but irony. In rejecting the language of the Jews [...] he has accepted a new mode of discourse for himself, but it is precisely this mode of discourse that becomes identified as Jewish. It is the ironic tone of the observer as foreigner.' Heinrich Heine's poetry and prose, permeated with irony, offers further early nineteenth-century evidence of the literary effects produced

when an ardent sensibility faces the demoralising refusal of society to allow the Jewish writer, even when baptised, anything but an outsider's identity.

Is verbal irony used in a distinctive manner in twentieth-century Jewish narrative fiction? At first glance, few literary questions appear as easy to answer. Indeed, the common reaction, that if a writer is ironic he must be Jewish, has given rise to a corrective impulse to deny that there are specifically Jewish characteristics in European writing, and to overlook the distinguishing thematics attributable to the historical position of the Jews in Europe. In order to avoid discreditable religious or racial slurs, Kwiet, Grimm and Bayerdörfer (1985, p.8), for example, make the admirably civilised assertion: 'Hätten die Berufsantisemiten nicht auf die Rolle der Juden in den Künsten, in der Literatur und im Journalismus hingewiesen [...] so gäbe es keine Möglichkeit, aus der Qualität oder dem Charakter ihrer Werke auf ihre religiöse Zugehörigkeit zu schließen.'

The essential defining characteristic of the European writers of Jewish origin who are considered in this thesis is not, in any case, religious. Rather, it is a complex state of mind composed, in roughly equal parts, of a fervent desire for full acceptance by their fellow countrymen, the experience of rejection and humiliation because of the ineradicable traces of their Jewish identity, continual fear of such rejection, even when this fear is suppressed or denied, and the inextinguishable belief that the surrounding world, however obsessively anti-Semitic it might seem to be, must ultimately still have room for a Jew who has voluntarily made his first allegiance to the non-Jewish society in which he resides. It is this last element which sustained the vast majority of Jewish writers who did not choose the Zionist option, but remained in Europe and produced the highly diversified imaginative fiction in which an identifiable body of Jewish literature can nonetheless be discerned. In this period, therefore, even Jewish writers of imaginative fiction have something of the sociologist about them because

of their position of participant observer within the societies they analyse. This is one important unifying factor in texts of different languages that might otherwise be assumed to have nothing essential in common. Another vital factor linking the texts considered in earlier chapters of this study is that the targets of social criticism all impinged on the lives of their respective authors. The subject matter of these works is taken from contemporary issues which threatened either to reverse the process of integration into the dominant society, as in *Der Weg ins Freie*, *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, *Hayey nisu'im*, *Nokh alemen*, *Khaver Nakhmen*, and *Das Schloß*, or to curtail the very existence of Jews in Europe, as in *Di mishpokhe Karnovski*, *Di gas*, *Georg* and *Junge Frau* von 1914.

The Authors and the Texts

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the use of verbal irony in two novels by a German writer of Jewish origin, Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966), and to contrast Kracauer's choice of subjects for ironic treatment and the choice of words in which irony is expressed, with those of a non-Jewish German writer, Thomas Mann (1875-1955). The aim will be to identify the narratorial situations which the Jewish and non-Jewish authors treat with verbal irony, and to establish a link between the writer at a particular phase of his development and the environment in which he works. It will be argued that the frequency and acerbity of verbal irony in narrative prose is associated with the author's sense of rejection by the society into which he wishes to be more fully integrated.

In 1933, Siegfried Kracauer left his native Germany for Paris, where his second and last novel *Georg* was completed in 1934. It was never published during the author's lifetime. His first novel was published in 1928 in Berlin, without the author's name, but merely with the title

Ginster – von sich selbst geschrieben. These novels belong to a category of irony in which verbal wit is used as a means of self-defence and social criticism. The main targets of this criticism are representatives of the social strata to which the protagonists aspire to belong. Individuals who can bar the protagonists' professional advancement or social acceptance are typically singled out for ironic treatment, such as Ginster's employer in the architect's office where he works during the early years of the First World War, and his commanding army officers after he is conscripted; or the newspaper publisher responsible for Georg's dismissal, and the politically powerful Catholic priest who is initially friendly, then cool towards Georg.

For the purposes of comparison, Thomas Mann is a suitable representative of establishment German-language culture, not least because he is also considered the supreme ironist in twentieth-century German letters. There are no European Jewish writers who enjoyed authority and prestige comparable to that of Mann, or who were as widely respected as cultural ambassadors of their native land. Mann has much in common with this group of writers by virtue of having reacted robustly during the Hitler period to the quintessentially Jewish experience of social marginalisation, persecution, and expulsion from his home.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, European writers of Jewish origin were exposed, both as artists and citizens, to endemic anti-Semitism. Full participation in non-Jewish society was to remain restricted by insuperable antipathy and suspicion towards them on the part of the majority. As the younger generation distanced itself from Jewish communal life, their writings became marked by their confrontation with two forms of rejection, the personal and the impersonal, rejection that really takes place, and that which is constantly feared.

Verbal irony can be used by the narrator or the characters of the novel. If it is expressed by the characters, then the characterisation must be com-

patible with the ironic style of speech. The type of individual chosen as the central character in works of 'Jewish' fiction is, from a subjective standpoint, seamlessly acculturated in the dominant society. On the other hand, he is also socially isolated, with a strong, unfulfilled desire to be understood, valued, and accepted by those around him. In sharp contrast with the main protagonists of Mann's narratives, there is nothing obviously 'wrong' with the characters in Jewish fiction. Nor are they obviously different from the other characters with whom they come into contact. The whole point is the mysterious rejection of people who see themselves as indistinguishable from their fellow citizens. In Mann's narratives, characters who are socially isolated are either grotesquely deformed (little Herr Friedemann), of repellent aspect and personality (Tobias Mindernickel, in the story of the same name, the distinctly unappetising Detlev Spinell in *Tristan*); or deformed, repellent, and evil (Cipolla in *Mario und der Zauberer*). If they are deformed, they may well resent their social marginalisation, and seek revenge as best they can. If they are forced to exist on the margins of society not because they are physically unacceptable, but because they are intellectually or psychologically different from the general run of humanity, they interpret their distinctiveness as providing ample reason for them to be perfectly self-satisfied, if not frankly conceited (Felix Krull in *Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull*), or are sustained by belief in the unique moral significance of their religious calling (Moses in *Das Gesetz*).

It is therefore apparent that verbal irony in fiction written by German authors of Jewish descent for a general readership conforms to a pattern unlike the one we find in the works of Thomas Mann. In its classic form, it occurs in Kracauer's novels *Ginster* and *Georg*, where the irony is woven into the action so closely that practically every sentence is ironic. In *Ginster* and a large part of *Georg*, the security provided by non-ironic sentences that can be contrasted with ironic ones is absent. In addition, the security

provided by a narrative voice separate from the action is also missing. On the whole, Mann enjoys both forms of security because his irony generally issues from a narrative voice separate from the action. When it does not, as in *Felix Krull*, security is provided by the reassuring knowledge that, after a lifetime of reflection, Mann is serenely in control of his subject matter. If one is trying to grasp the elusive essence of Jewish literary irony, Kracauer is ideal in that he clearly represents the opposite tendency to Mann. In *Ginster*, and in the first half of *Georg*, irony seems to come both from the protagonist and from somewhere else. This uncertainty seems to be the hallmark of Jewish texts. Towards the latter part of *Georg*, however, where events in the narrative parallel recent powerful personal experiences from which Kracauer does not yet have the necessary emotional distance, the writing takes the form of much more straightforward condemnation of German society. At one point, Georg says flatly, albeit, naturally, to himself (*Georg*, p.289): 'Der Krieg ist vorbei, und die Menschen werden unablässig weitergequält.' Later, during his confrontation with Communism, when his sense of being utterly alone and misunderstood has become unbearable, he tries in vain to explain the basic, irremediable flaw in all collective thinking to the local Party philosopher and propagandist. Georg expresses his existential anguish directly, without any of the extended metaphors or flourishes of witty irony which are usually inseparable from his style of thinking and speaking (*ibid.*, p.445): 'Ich sage: der Mensch stirbt doch nicht im Kollektiv, sondern allein. Also steht er außerhalb des Kollektivs.' Nothing could encapsulate the European Jewish experience between the political emancipation culminating in the 1860s and the destruction of European Jewry in the 1940s more tellingly than these statements. Transposing as they do the bitter personal loss of his livelihood, language, home, and homeland into a generalised concern for humanity, Georg's words reflect both the extraordinary spiritual value-system developed by the Jews

during 2000 years of exile, and the inextinguishable longing of his generation to be part of the dominant society of the countries in which they were born.

Verbal Irony: Thomas Mann

Verbal irony in the narratives of Thomas Mann differs from that in the writings of Kracauer not in terms of motivation but of target. The will to ridicule personalities who are antipathetic to the narrator is the same, but the objects chosen are not society's gate-keepers. Rather, they are outcasts whose marginality, it is implied, is the inevitable consequence of their repulsive physique or unconventional independence of mind. Jewish writers tend to ironise individuals as representatives of a social system, while Mann ironises individuals because of their particular oddities. Perhaps Mann's most illuminating contribution to a study of the similarities and differences between Jewish and non-Jewish verbal irony is the way in which the presence of such irony can be seen as a measure of the author's progress from the experimental, bohemian fringe of German literature to its centre. His early literary work is marked by the psychological distance which is also the hallmark of European Jewish writing. The essential distinction here is that Mann's 'detached vision' (Reed, 1974, p.23) was not imposed on him from the outside, but was part of a transitional stage in his development as an artist. Indeed, Reed suggests that the plethora of verbal irony in Mann's early work is there almost by default, because he had not yet acquired the technical means to write any other way, and that as soon as he did, the verbal irony was much reduced (ibid., p.55).

Mann's early identification with social outsiders was something he clearly saw as a phase to be outgrown; in Haug's words, 'Problematik wird es auch in Zukunft geben, aber sie ist nicht mehr tödlicher Ernst,

sondern ein Thema, mit dem man spielt' (Haug, 1969, p.1). Being Jewish in twentieth-century Europe does not, however, constitute an adolescent phase that could be outgrown. The logical progression from Bohemian to 'Meister' made by Mann is not an option for a Jewish artist, because even a Jewish 'Meister' is still, in the public perception, first and foremost, a Jew. Since the Jewish identity cannot be overcome, Jewish writers could not expect the same degree of social integration and public respect as could Mann. For this reason, it is especially significant that despite his apparent social advantages, Mann was much exercised precisely by the subject of 'the precariousness of the Artist's claim to dignity and public respect' (Reed, 1974, p.154). This has to do with the attitude he took to his homosexuality, and his decision to cultivate the public persona of a married man and paterfamilias. By doing so, Mann made himself into a concealed outsider, effectively as Jewish as a non-Jewish writer could be. The fact that his irony is nevertheless different from Jewish irony, even from contemporary German-Jewish irony, is all the more telling. Although Mann's own unease is presumably displaced on to *visibly* 'deformed' people like Friedemann and Cipolla, we can see that being a homosexual in marriage is not the exact equivalent of being a Jew among Germans if we try to ascribe the particular combination of lucidity, humour, and resignation with which Kracauer describes Ginster's perception of his position in society to any of Mann's characters: 'Hätte Ginster sich um Gleichberechtigung bemüht, so wäre er erledigt gewesen' (*Ginster*, p.32).

An emotional investment in the fate of rootless individuals is, nonetheless, a striking point of similarity with Jewish writers. Curiously, Mann defines 'rootless' in a way that closely resembles Bergelson's critique of the Russian shtetl in the years before the October Revolution, only the German accusation is directed at the younger generation, and the Yiddish at the older. Consequently, Mann emphasises filial dereliction of duty while

Bergelson contends that, with no suitable patrimony from their fathers, Jewish youth had to look elsewhere for structure and meaning to their lives. As early as 1896, Mann elucidated his view of the dilettantes among his contemporaries in a way which is just the opposite of the reality for Jewish youth in the period from the Emancipation to the Second World War: 'Diese Entwurzelten, die fast immer letzte Ausläufer ihrer Rasse sind, die ererbte Kräfte, geistige und materielle, verzehren, ohne sie zu vermehren, entartete Spätlinge, deren Väter einst wahre Arbeit verrichteten [...] losgelöst von allen Traditionen, untüchtig, unfruchtbar, können und wollen sie nichts als genießen' (Schröter, 1964, p.42).

The dismissive reference here to the artist as a decadent parasite who squanders the solid capital amassed by his hardworking, thrifty fathers is, however, based on an opposite set of assumptions and prejudices to that of Mann's Jewish contemporaries, who often considered themselves superior to their forebears simply because modern European society seemed superior to traditional Jewish society. Nor must it be forgotten that the very fact of being published and read by a non-Jewish public was in itself a singular accomplishment for a writer of Jewish origins, especially if his ambitions centred not on recognition by the Jewish community, but by the wider population of his country of residence. As Sander Gilman has impressively documented (Gilman, 1986), the superstitious belief that the Jew was inherently incapable of producing true German, even when the evidence on a written page seemed to prove the contrary, persisted in Central Europe until the Second World War. Popular conviction, never far from the surface of public consciousness, that the Jew possessed a hidden language which he wielded with sinister intent, continually undermined the position of Jewish writers in non-Jewish societies, making it difficult for a Jewish writer even to affect to despise either his profession or any success he might have in it. This unassuageable status anxiety is a vital

element in the characterisation of the writers Bermann and Nürnberger in *Der Weg ins Freie*, of Werner Bertin in *Junge Frau von 1914*, of Rudolf Gordweil in Vogel's *Hayey nisu'im*, as well as of Georg. Schnitzler (1981) makes this point about the reception of his own work in a diary entry of 29.1.1919, despite having had many years of popular success: 'Mißverstanden wurden nämlich alle Künstler von Rang; – der Grad, – die Betonung – und die Lauheit der 'Verstehenden' ist eben doch zum allergrößten Teil nur aus meinem Judentum zu erklären.'

Nevertheless, since the motivating impulse of irony lies in the sense of an unsatisfactory relation between the individual and the world, it would be surprising if there were not some overlap in character and situation in Jewish and non-Jewish narratives. And indeed, Haug describes the protagonist of Mann's novella *Der Bajazzo* as 'gesellschaftlich heimatlos' (op.cit., p.8). One could hardly wish for a more succinct description of the fundamental problem of all the protagonists in the Jewish texts of the period, from Rudolf Gordweil in *Hayey nisu'im* to K. in *Das Schloß*, from the narrator in *Di gas* to Heinrich Bermann in *Der Weg ins Freie*. In fact, one is led to ask whether there are any novels or stories, including the propaganda pieces such as *Mides-hadin* of Dovid Bergelson (see Chapter 6), in which the central characters are not 'gesellschaftlich heimatlos'.

It is this question which one must try to answer, however tentatively, in order to isolate the essential criteria defining European Jewish literature. For this reason, sufficient insight into the fundamental distinguishing characteristics of Jewish writing can be obtained only by comparing imaginative fiction by writers of Jewish descent with comparable non-Jewish texts. The examples presented here are not intended to contribute to a comprehensive analysis of Thomas Mann, but rather to illustrate the essential differences in approach to verbal irony underlying certain rhetorical and thematic similarities among writers of Jewish and non-Jewish origin.

‘Die Lebenswahrheit, auf die der Dichter verpflichtet ist, [...] ist von Natur ironisch’ (Mann, IX, p.856). As a literary credo, Mann’s dictum would appear to apply admirably to contemporary Jewish writers. In fact, it almost does better for others than for himself, because the characters who receive the most ironic treatment by Mann are not the common run of humanity. On the contrary, they are social outcasts who cannot accept their fate, and have recourse to extreme forms of behaviour to release the tension within themselves created by consciousness of their exclusion from society. A variant of the physically freakish type of character which features in the early stories, and which achieves its most memorable form with Cipolla in *Mario und der Zauberer*, is that of the metaphorical freak. To this category belongs Spinell in *Tristan*. Bert, the narrator’s eldest son in *Unordnung und frühes Leid*, may also be assigned to this group, not because he is lacking in artistic sensitivity, but because he refuses to satisfy his father’s unacknowledged bourgeois ambitions. At seventeen, Bert decides to leave school without any academic qualifications, and to pursue his dream of becoming a performance artist of some unspecified variety. Because Bert embodies the indifference to conventional society that is the mark of the true artist, he is an outcast from Dr. Cornelius’s affections and approval, even though he has interiorised the belief that all normal burghers are the sworn enemies of Beauty, and in Spinell’s phrase, represent ‘den ewigen Gegensatz und Todfeind der Schönheit’ (Mann, VIII, p.254).

While the ironic tone of Jewish writing may be said in a straightforward manner to betray ‘the observer as foreigner’, in a more convoluted way, the same is also true for Mann. Böhm argues persuasively (Böhm, 1991, p.56) that Mann’s covert homosexuality is a factor of major importance in his life work. It is of particular interest here to consider that Mann’s sexual orientation was a major source of the concern with ‘abnormality’ which he projected onto his characters. Accordingly, just as there are ‘invisible’

Jewish thematics in certain texts which can be seen as inadvertently Jewish despite the author's quite different agenda, there are invisible homosexual thematics in Mann's work. In general, Mann favours situations which are theatrical, extreme, even grotesque, and yet still within the grasp of his reader's imagination. At the Italian holiday resort where the narrator of *Mario und der Zauberer* and his wife take their two small children for an evening's entertainment by a magician of unspecified credentials, the atmosphere in the hall where Cipolla is about to perform is of an almost unbearably febrile intensity (Mann, VIII, p.695):

Es ging hier gradeso merkwürdig und spannend, gradeso unbehaglich, kränkend und bedrückend zu wie in Torre überhaupt, ja mehr als gradeso: dieser Saal bildete den Sammelpunkt aller Merkwürdigkeit, Nichtgeheuerlichkeit und Gespanntheit, womit uns die Atmosphäre des Aufenthalts geladen schien.

Cipolla proves to be a hideous, alcohol-sodden hunchback with a gift for performing mass hypnosis in public by fixing the victim of his choice with his irresistibly piercing gaze and cracking a whip. Clearly an instrument of devilry rather than popular entertainment, this is no ordinary whip, but a 'Reitpeitsche mit einem Klauengriff', a riding whip with a claw-shaped handle. In the narrator's word, an 'Unhold', the hypnotist Cipolla misuses his gifts to demonstrate that he can control the will of healthy people who might otherwise be in a position to show their contempt for him. Following Böhm, we might see here an instance of 'invisible homosexual thematics' (Böhm, 1991, p.83): 'Für die Untersuchung eines Werks, das verschweigt, aus welchem permanenten Krisenzustand es hervorging – hier dem Konflikt zwischen homosexuellen Verlangen und dem Lebenmüssen in einer antihomosexueller Kultur – verlangt das Wissen um diese Hintergründe eine Strategie der "permanenten Verdächtigung".' Furthermore, obedience to this exhortation to permanent vigilance is soon rewarded by an awareness of the equivocal nature of the narrator and the implicit irony with

which he is treated. Apparently convinced that he is effortlessly superior to the proceedings, which, as he keeps repeating, he is attending for the benefit of the children, the narrator cannot admit that the evening's entertainment is anything but suitable for small children, and that he himself is fascinated by Cipolla.

With Böhm's phrase, 'Der Künstler als Außenseiter, der Außenseiter als Künstler' (ibid., p.133), we are reminded that being a successful artist gave Mann the chance to overcome the revulsion society felt for homosexuals. Indeed, Böhm's list of the typical attributes of Mann's protagonists recalls many characters in Jewish fiction, such as Rudolf Gordweil, the narrator in *Di gas*, Ginster, and Georg: 'Krankheit, Weichheit, Impotenz, Mangel an Selbstvertrauen, gesellschaftliche Ohnmacht, Überreflektiertheit, Rollenunsicherheit' (ibid., p.165). The insistent presence of these characteristics in Mann's literary creations impels Böhm to speak of 'versetzter Selbsthaß', a startling echo of the Jewish self-hatred surveyed by Gilman. There is certainly a great deal of hatred in the mocking eulogy of Gustav von Aschenbach towards the end of *Der Tod in Venedig*. In this single-sentence paragraph of thirteen and a half lines (Mann, VIII, p.521), ostensibly extolling the writer's achievements as his life draws to a close, the word 'Ironie' occurs in line six, neatly marking the turning point where suspicion hardens into certainty that every word in this list of Aschenbach's glowing accomplishments is not uttered in a spirit of praise but of utter derision. If one were looking for evidence that Mann is not averse to kicking someone who is down, this passage would do nicely. Dripping irony from every word, the narrator juxtaposes a description supposedly meant to evoke the writer's past glory, 'Meister', 'Künstler', 'der Hochgestiegene', 'der Überwinder', 'Ruhm', 'geadelt', and 'Stil', with the reality of Aschenbach's sleazy appearance, the shifty glance in a face covered in make-up which grotesquely accentuates his ageing features, his once-famous mind

unhinged by the pressure of frustrated homoerotic passion. The projection of private shame onto a fictional character for the purpose of public condemnation, as if that would somehow exonerate the author, shows that Mann was, though to a lesser extent than a Jewish writer, an outsider in need of overcoming public hostility. By comparing Mann's approach to certain motifs and situations with the treatment of similar material by a contemporary writer such as Siegfried Kracauer, who writes from a German, not a Jewish standpoint, we can isolate basic underlying attitudes and beliefs which are specific to Jewish writing, and leave their trace in narrative prose, even when there is conscious avoidance of any signals which might alert a non-Jewish readership to the Jewish origins of the author.

Jewish Characters and Themes in Non-Jewish Texts

A question of inevitably intense and enduring concern to Jewish writers, that of the position of the Jew in society, is often notable for its absence in European Jewish literature. This is the case in both of Kracauer's novels. Two of Mann's stories, *Wälsungenblut* and *Das Gesetz*, however, confront this question directly. *Wälsungenblut*, which Mann refers to as 'eine Judengeschichte' in a letter to his brother Heinrich on 20 December 1905, antedates *Das Gesetz* by more than three decades. In the intervening period, Mann argues in a letter, in English, to Lucy Adler on 25 October 1940, the situation of German Jews has changed so radically that it is no longer possible to imagine the author's state of mind when he wrote the story (Lesér, 1989, p.154): 'The story of The Blood of the Walsungs [sic] must not be thought of in terms of present day conditions. It was written thirty-five years ago, when anti-Semitism was rare in Germany and when a Jewish setting for a story had no particular significance...If you happen

to have read the preface to the Stories of Three Decades [sic] you may have noticed that in the preface to the book I mentioned that *The Blood of the Walsungs* [sic] was a study of the mores of Berlin and had as its theme the isolation-motif. Certainly the story contained in it no deliberate impugning of any race or people, and for anyone to arrive at such a conclusion is quite erroneous.'

When one considers the picture of German-Jewish reality that emerges equally from the academic study of anti-Semitism by Pulzer (1988) and from the famous autobiography *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* by Wassermann (1921), and then compares the stereotypic images of the Jews in *Wälsungenblut*, it seems possible that Mann was being slightly disingenuous in this letter, and that the choice of a Jewish setting for a story was never a matter of 'no particular significance'. While *Wälsungenblut* does have as its theme the 'isolation-motif', it is not a 'study of the mores of Berlin' in general, but of Jewish Berlin in particular. The same narrative, with the same Wagnerian references, but with a German family as protagonists and a Jewish suitor for the daughter, would produce an entirely different resonance. For this reason, Mann's story bears a surprising resemblance to the many Jewish texts in which the children of the immigrant generation are ashamed of their parents' origins, accents, speech mannerisms, and lifestyle, while lacking their parents' talent for self-sacrifice and hard work.

In *Wälsungenblut*, the older generation finds consolation for continued social marginalisation in the sheer number, costliness, and unexpectedness of its material acquisitions. Herr Aarenhold takes it for granted that there are limits to German tolerance of a man of his background, but is somewhat exercised by the knowledge that his own children identify less with their father than with German culture, and do not question their right to despise him (Mann, VIII, p.384):

Er [Herr Aarenhold] wußte, daß sie einig gegen ihn waren und daß sie ihn verachteten: für seine Herkunft, für das Blut, das in ihm floß und das sie von ihm empfangen, für die Art, in der er seinen Reichtum erworben, für seine Liebhabereien, die ihm in ihren Augen nicht zukamen, für seine Selbstpflege, auf die er ebenfalls kein Recht haben sollte, für seine weiche und dichterische Geschwätzigkeit, der die Hemmungen des Geschmacks fehlten....

Salomon Ehrenberg, the prosperous Jewish paterfamilias in *Der Weg ins Freie*, is similarly despised by his son Oskar, but does not feel that material possessions and the social position they afford him are compensation for the loss of his son's loyalty and affection. Essentially, the difference between the portrayal of the older Aarenholds and the Ehrenbergs is one of narratorial perspective. The contemptuous fashion in which Herr Ehrenberg is treated by his son is shown by Schnitzler to stem from the latter's pathological self-hatred, itself a product of the demented anti-Semitism that was increasingly characteristic of Austrian life. From the transcription of Herr Aarenhold's own thoughts in free indirect discourse, we are made aware that the man's self-contempt is mitigated by a degree of self-assertion (ibid, p.385):

Er war ein Wurm gewesen, eine Laus, jawohl; aber eben die Fähigkeit, dies so inbrünstig und selbstverachtungsvoll zu empfinden, war zur Ursache jenes zähen und niemals genügsamen Strebens geworden, das ihn groß gemacht hatte ...

Earlier in the same passage he confesses, astonishingly, 'er war nicht ohne Schuldbewußtsein ihnen gegenüber', when everything his family have, they owe to him. Aarenhold is characterised from the outside, like an animal described by a zoologist. It is not that he is lacking positive qualities; he has an unquenchable enthusiasm for life, and despite his vulgar taste, his inextinguishable will to survive and humble appreciation of his good fortune inspire fleeting admiration and tenderness even ⁱⁿ his own children. Nor is it the case that Ehrenberg, Dovid Karnovski, or Mirl's father Gda-

lye Hurvits in *Nokh alemen*, all Jewish fathers rejected as role models by their children, have fewer negative qualities. Nevertheless, they are culturally and psychologically plausible in a way that Aarenhold is not. The pompous, pseudo-jovial 'jawohl' after his pathetic denunciation of himself as a 'worm' and a 'louse', a verbal flourish useful for maintaining the tone in the ironic treatment of this character, indicates a lack of self-respect which is not the tormented self-hatred of Jewish characters in Jewish texts precisely because of the absence of pain.

Pain is equally absent from the character development of the central protagonists, Siegmund and Sieglind Aarenhold. These nineteen-year-old twins love each other exclusively 'um ihrer erlesenen Nutzlosigkeit willen' (ibid., p.394). Having absorbed the lesson implicit in the heroic Germanic names bestowed upon them by their parents, their ambiguous position in German society well illustrates the truth of Baumgart's observation (Baumgart, 1964, p.45): 'Doch erst wenn die Figur mit einer besonderen Situation widersprüchlich zusammentrifft, kann die Ironie wirklich spielfähig werden.' The contradiction here is between the twins' contempt for their Jewish heritage, their total immersion in German language and culture, on the one hand, and the perception of them by German society as non-German, on the other. Their behavioural quirks, pretentious and exaggerated style of dressing, social isolation and ultimate incest, are the consequences of this initial, irresolvable contradiction. In the original version of the story, after the incest, Sieglind asks Siegfried what will happen now about her fiancé, Beckerath. Siegfried's answer was: 'Nun, was wird mit ihm sein? Beganeft haben wir ihn, den Goj' (Fischer, 1978, p.236). At the request of Oskar Bie, the editor of the *Neue Rundschau*, Mann altered the line to read: 'Nun [...] dankbar soll er uns sein. Er wird ein minder triviales Dasein führen, von nun an.' In as much as Beckerath will not expect his bride to have a secret love affair with her brother, this is perhaps true, but the irony

in these words is reserved as much for the Aarenholds as for Beckerath. Although they are indeed wittier and brighter than the insipid aristocrat they have cheated, they lead an existence no less trivial than his. On the contrary, what characterises them is not profundity but arrogance and self-love. In Szondi's words (Szondi, 1978, p.237): 'Hinter dem Inzest steht also [...] der Hochmut. Im Hochmut wiederum äußert sich die Beschränkung der Liebe auf die Liebe zum Ebenbürtigen, die im Grunde Selbstliebe ist.'

Mann's other 'Judengeschichte' contains not only Jewish characters, but Jewish themes and rhetoric as well. Written during the winter of 1943 and published in 1944, *Das Gesetz* is more than simply a sympathetic portrait of the biblical figure Moses. It is a powerful statement supporting the moral right of the nation of Israel to exist, at a moment when such an affirmation had nearly become irrelevant. This Moses resembles the characters in 'Jewish' literature in his highly ambiguous social position, the suspicion and reserve with which he is regarded by both halves of his cultural heritage, his tormented insecurity about his identity, and the unresolved tensions he is thereby forced to live with. In terms of German Jewry of the 1940s, the most telling point about Moses is, of course, that he is at once a figure of unimpeachable antique venerability and a prototype of the split modern psyche struggling to forge a cohesive identity from the contradictory elements in his double inheritance. Nevertheless, Moses, as portrayed in *Das Gesetz*, is profoundly different from the protagonists of mainstream, that is, non-Zionist, post-Emancipation Jewish fiction, in that he chooses to make his allegiance primarily to the Jewish people, and only secondarily to social order and justice in the widest sense.

Whereas in 'Jewish' literature the central characters are remote from Jewish practice, the protagonist of *Das Gesetz* is archetypally Jewish from the perspective of both ancient and modern history. Indeed, Mann explicitly reinstates received tradition as the sole means of giving positive

meaning to the anomalous situation of the Jewish people as a nation without a land which has nonetheless retained a distinctive national culture. Furthermore, a distinguishing characteristic of 'Jewish' literature is that the main characters represent the antithesis of Mann's 'Ich-Kult' (Böhm, 1991, p.130). They are imbued with the traditional Jewish preoccupation with social justice, which they persist in superimposing onto the wider community in which they live, and even onto those who are either indifferent or hostile to the welfare of the Jewish people. Comrade Nakhmen's blind obsession with the cause of the international proletariat while neglecting to provide his wife and child with food in Singer's *Khaver Nakhmen* (see Chapter 3) and Georg's restless efforts, in the Kracauer novel of that name, to discover among his German contemporaries a recognisable concern with restructuring society along more humanitarian lines, are two among many examples which illustrate this point.

As we have seen in texts examined in other chapters of this study, a passionate concern for social justice is a dominant and recurring motif in Jewish literature of the period. In none of these works, however, is this passion for justice directed inwards, towards improving social structures within the Jewish community, but always outwards. Where the characters in 'Jewish' fiction aspire to improve the non-Jewish societies in which they live, protagonists in Mann's writing are absorbed by a personal need to understand the nature of the artist, and to define the role of the writer in society. Except for *Das Gesetz*, which has the extraordinary quality of being a 'Jewish' text in that it adheres closely to the plot, characters, and setting of events described originally in Hebrew in the Bible, an obsession with social justice is not one of the main characteristics of Mann's work. Mann mockingly caricatures the Jewish concern for social justice in the person of Naphta in *Der Zauberberg*, but paradoxically, he chooses a Jewish subject and setting in *Das Gesetz* when he wishes to write positively about the ideal

of social justice.

With a few important exceptions, Jewish writers in Germany wishing to be part of mainstream German literature, avoid explicit treatment of Jewish subjects. Strangely, this is a tendency which persisted even after their lives in Germany were finished. For example, although *Georg*, written in exile, is obviously the chronicle of a quintessentially German Jewish destiny, *Georg* is not said to be Jewish, and Kracauer does not place his protagonist's experience in the broader context of German-Jewish relations. Similarly, there is no indication that any of the characters in *Ginster* is Jewish. The narrative, which lingers lovingly on the minutiae of domestic routine in a lower middle-class family during the First World War, and is full of close and distant relatives familiar to the Jewish reader, cannot be about anything but a Jewish family. Indeed, despite the abundance of realistic detail pertaining to everything from the room-plan of *Ginster*'s family home to the behavioural quirks of his employer's wife's poodle, *Ginster* himself inhabits an unspecified twilight zone within German society. Since the fact of his being Jewish is suppressed, there is no other way to indicate the social niche occupied by his family. This is especially clear in the scene where Kracauer attempts to give a detailed account of the religious funeral of *Ginster*'s uncle without any mention of the religion in which he was being buried. Although the trappings of Christian burial are notable for their absence, and his bereaved mother and aunt never enter a church or consult a Christian clergyman, the narrative shows a family with a complete set of traditions who have their own rituals, but shies away from divulging who these people really are.

Even more glaringly absent is any treatment of the tremendous insecurity created in Germany's Jews by the intensification of anti-Semitism between 1914 and 1933, the period in which *Ginster* and *Georg* are set. The question whether the largely secularised Jewish community can still be

said to represent values different from those of the dominant culture is not touched on in Kracauer's fiction. These issues, which are not, of course, entirely ignored by the literature of the period, are central to the work of I.J. Singer as well as being implicit in *Junge Frau von 1914*, and are analysed with the most remarkable lucidity and thoroughness by Schnitzler in *Der Weg ins Freie*. On the whole, however, Kracauer is not unusual in transposing the problematics of Jewish existence onto narratives featuring ostensibly non-Jewish characters.

It is therefore curious to note how Mann takes the problems of ordinary life, and framing them ironically, gives them a Jewish dimension. In *Felix Krull*, the only Jewish presence is that of a banker who ruins Felix's father financially, thereby plunging Krull Senior into a fit of despair from which the good gentleman escapes by killing himself. This Jewish banker is mentioned only once, in a passage recounting the act of rapacity which precipitates young Felix into his career as confidence trickster (Mann, VII, p.319):

Im Verlauf eines solchen Abends jedoch entspann sich ein überaus böartiger und ernüchternder Wortwechsel zwischen meinem armen Vater und dem jüdischen Bankier [...] der, wie ich damals erfuhr, einer der verhärteten Halsabschneider war, welche jemals bedrängte und unbedachte Geschäftsleute in ihre Netze gelockt haben.

Needless to say, this equation Jew=banker=ruthless cutthroat/menace to society, without the addition of any other explanatory or mitigating circumstances, presents a stereotypic characterisation widely found in the writings of non-Jews and self-hating Jews, but not otherwise in Jewish prose in any language. Self-hatred in Jewish literature in Jewish and non-Jewish languages is a subject beyond the scope of this study, but it may be useful to mention here that there are Yiddish texts, like Bergelson's two-volume autobiographical novel *Bam Dniepr*, which exhibit the same

signs of self-loathing as the writings in non-Jewish languages analysed and documented by Gilman.

The Characterisation of the Protagonists

The narrative in *Felix Krull* is recounted in the first person by an unreliable narrator whom we are clearly meant to see through. The game is that the protagonist is a conceited boaster of quite breathtaking personal vanity (ibid., p.284): 'denn ich war überaus angenehm und göttergleich gewachsen, schlank, weich und doch kräftig von Gliedern, goldig von Haut und fast ohne Tadel in Hinsicht auf schönes Ebenmaß.' As an objective self-portrait, this is hardly credible, if only for the description of himself as 'god-like'. Though Felix is convincingly charming and amusing, he is unreliable in such obvious and predictable ways that the irony in his portrayal is not unsettling as it is in *Ginster* and *Georg*. On the other hand, the portrait of Felix does suggest a plausible homosexual fantasy. At the same time as this fantasy figure is being imagined, however, it is being mocked, because these words of inordinate praise come from Felix rather than a third party. *Felix Krull*, though begun in 1911, is essentially a late work and reflects the narcissism prominent in the later Mann. The first part of the novel, *Das Buch der Kindheit*, was written in 1911, and the manuscript then laid aside. Expanded by two more sections, but not completed, the novel was published in 1954 in its present form, and is the last of Mann's major works. By contrast, narcissism is a negative quantity in Kracauer's work. Few characters in literature can come as close as *Ginster* and *Georg* to feeling (and fearing) that they do not exist at all.

Felix's vanity about the comeliness of his person is linked to his pride in his superior aesthetic judgement. It is Felix's conviction that his taste is generally more exquisitely refined than that of anyone else in his sur-

roundings. In particular, it is infinitely more so than his father's, which is lower-middle-class and vulgar. This is the purport of the first chapter. Although Krull Senior, a much more mature and sophisticated version of the protagonists ironically treated in the early stories, does not have a physical handicap, he has a metaphorical one, his ghastly lower-middle-class bad taste. The connection between aesthetics and ethics is again implied, so that, when his father dies, although Felix pays lip service to notions of conventional filial piety, he cannot really be expected to respect or to mourn a man like his father.

Felix has psychological solidity: 'Ja, der Glaube an mein Glück, und daß ich ein Vorzugskind des Himmels sei, ist in meinem Innersten stets lebendig gewesen' (ibid., p.271). This is the antithesis of any central character in Jewish literature of the period. Felix continues to believe himself beloved of the gods despite objective misfortune; even a long prison sentence, no doubt well deserved, fails to discourage him or tarnish his beautiful self-image. In comparison with Felix's unshakeable self-confidence, we find that not even material security and worldly success can assuage the existential anxiety of characters such as Heinrich Bermann, Dovid Karnovski, Georg, Mirl, or the parents of Lenore Wahl. Nor do socially dispossessed protagonists echo Felix's glee that he is 'ein Gunstkind der schaffenden Macht und geradezu von bevorzugtem Fleisch und Blut' (ibid., p.309). On the contrary, the main characters in all the texts considered in this study hover, virtually without exception, on the brink of despair.

Felix reflects Mann's preoccupation with the complicated relationship between the artist's inner nature and his function in society. Recalling how his father had once taken him backstage to meet a celebrated actor whose theatrical performance had just given an entranced audience an experience of overwhelming rapture, Felix is overwhelmed with admiration: 'Müller-Rosé verbreitete Lebensfreude' (ibid., p.289). Off-stage and

without his make-up, as Felix notices to his horror, Müller-Rosé is coarse, hard-drinking, and covered in pimples. The irony in this scene focuses on the paradox of the fallible, possibly repellent, human being who is also a consummate artist. Empowered by his mastery of his art, he is able to create powerful sensations of beauty and happiness. Although the entire secret of the transformation of base matter into sublime art can never be fully known, it is, in scientific terms, a repeatable experiment, as is proved by the actor's enduring fame.

The joy of living is not, in any case, a concept which is singled out for special mention in the Jewish texts. Müller-Rosé is an analogue to Felix, who is likewise a fraud but has a good time and gives pleasure to others by displaying himself and his pseudo-talents, whereas characters in Jewish fiction have a good time only in moments when they can suppress their individuality. There are moments when certain characters are briefly at peace with themselves, but the spell is soon broken, and they revert to their usual state of anxiety. These occasions are, moreover, marked by ironic narratorial comment. We may think of Werner Bertin and Ginster when they succeed in merging invisibly with the other recruits in the German Army (*Ginster*, p.161): 'Ginster fühlte sich behaglich und hätte mit niemandem tauschen mögen'; Comrade Nakhmen at the May Day parade when he feels that he has been fully integrated into the Revolution; Georg, when he unexpectedly seduces Mimi at the Fasching party (*ibid.*, p.412): 'Ich habe wahrhaftig einen Ehebruch begangen, stellte Georg nicht ohne Genugtuung fest.' If we look closely enough at Georg's single moment of triumph, we find that the truth about him is hidden in the two words 'nicht ohne'. Were he really capable of unequivocal satisfaction, the comment would have been 'with satisfaction'. As it is, we see that Georg's inability to experience an unambivalent feeling about himself in relation to the outside world is equalled only by his inability to understand his exact relation to

others. In all conscience, he should not be congratulating himself for his 'adultery' with Mimi, given that her husband is hovering solicitously in the background, murmuring encouragement and reassurance in polite phrases such as 'don't mind me', and, indicating his wife, 'isn't she just adorable?!'

Georg's behaviour in this scene, the association in his mind between disguise and sexual success, is complicated by the fact that his desire for Mimi is motivated by her resemblance to Beate, the woman who has rejected him. Not only does he need to suppress his own individuality in order to fulfil his sexual ambitions – he arrives at the party wearing a black face-mask – but even his desire for Beate depends upon her wearing a Carnival costume which transforms her into an androgynous creature in which the male half excites Georg's erotic imagination no less than the female. At first glance, this total blurring of identity as a precondition for personal happiness, which is so representative of characters in Jewish fiction, would seem to be analogous to the situation of Müller-Rosé. After all, his gifts as an actor conceal his physical blemishes, and allow him to disguise his true identity in order to be adored by a public who would not otherwise revere him. However, the distinction must be made here between the actor's satisfaction at the success of his performance, which is shared by his grateful audience, and the pleasure of the characters in the Jewish texts when they escape their social isolation. Not only is this happiness entirely private, it must remain hidden, and would, by definition, disappear were its existence made explicit.

Family relations play an insignificant role in Felix's characterisation. His mother and sister are presented as utterly trivial (Mann, VII, p.279): 'und meine Mutter und Schwester machten auf der Promenade durch Übertreibungen in der Form ihrer Hüte von sich reden.' Ginster, the only child of a deceased father, lives with his mother, uncle, and aunt. Like *Felix Krull*, *Ginster* is a first-person narrative and a chronicle of the protagonist's

youth. Ginster, too, has occasion to refer to his family ironically. In Ginster's descriptions of his contact with his mother, there is a pathos which is wholly absent from the accounts Felix gives of his female relations, and indeed, both mother and aunt are obviously of central importance in Ginster's life. The opposite is true of Felix, as Curtius points out (Curtius, 1984, p.24): 'dem Sohn aber sind beide Frauen, Mutter und Schwester, gleichgültiger als andere Personen seiner Kindheit.' There is also an element of realism that is missing from the breezy, almost flippant superficiality of *Felix Krull*. When Ginster receives his call-up notice to join the German Imperial Army, his mother packs his suitcase for him as if he were a small child. Her love for her adored only son, overwhelmed by events beyond her control or understanding, cannot find suitable expression in new language designed to fit the new circumstances. She takes refuge in familiar, banal phrases, ignoring their enormous inadequacy, because using more appropriate words would make it impossible to mask the reality that she is not packing up her child for a school holiday, but for world war, and that it is not the suitcase key he is likely to lose, but his life (Ginster, p.129): ' "Endlich", sagte sie, "verliere nur nicht den Schlüssel".' Felix deals with the representatives of state authority in a confident manner. Both Ginster and Felix attempt to avoid military conscription on medical grounds. Felix devises a scheme to obtain unequivocal military discharge which depends upon his ability to give a convincing performance as an undiagnosed epileptic with hereditary alcoholic complications and imbecilic implications. Ginster relies on an excuse note from an expensive and unsympathetic doctor. The former relies on himself and his art; the latter on others and official bureaucracy. Both, however register identical treatment at the hands of the medical profession. Felix muses to himself on the doctor who is examining him (Mann, VII, p.434): 'Er schien meine Worte zu verachten und keines Eingehens für würdig zu halten.' The

dehumanizing nature of Ginster's examination is captured thus (*Ginster*, p.82): 'Verschiedene Zwischenbemerkungen Ginsters blieben unbeachtet, die Untersuchung hätte auch ohne ihn vonstatten gehen können.'

Ginster, who has no self-confidence, is intimidated by the military uniform he notices under the examining physician's white coat, and utterly fails to engage the interest of the heart specialist expressly chosen as most likely to find something significantly amiss. The tone of the entire scene is conveyed by a series of ironic comments in the narrator's voice, culminating in the dry observation (*ibid.*, p.83): 'In Anbetracht der über sein Herz zur Schau getragene Sorglosigkeit hielt er das Honorar für zu hoch.' While giving the impression of candour, spontaneity, and sincere patriotism, Felix effectively conceals his unconventional opinion about the relevance of National Service to real military needs. Ginster, on the contrary, is desperately anxious to appear as conventionally patriotic as possible, but merely succeeds in creating the suspicion that he is not at all seriously committed to the national cause. While trying to please his commanding officers and wearing the Kaiser's uniform, Ginster secretly maintains an attitude to the role of the military in international politics which would irrevocably identify him as an outsider in any society, especially during a world war (*ibid.*, p.90): 'Für Ginster war die feine Unterscheidung zwischen fremden und einheimischen Soldaten unfasslich.'

Here lies the difficulty of which Ginster is only too well aware. There is an insoluble conflict between Ginster's attachment to his home, which is Germany, and his sense of humanity as an indivisible whole, no part of which he can hate enough to kill. This is one of the 'basic situations' identified by Muecke as tending 'to function as ready-made containers [...] for irony' (Muecke, 1969, p.220). Although unquestionably loyal to Germany, Ginster's humanistic, supra-German ideas are not shared by the vast majority of Germans, and disqualify him in their eyes from being

considered an integral part of the German nation. Nor are they shared by Felix. Far from being burdened with internationalist or pacifist ideals, Felix determines, as Mann himself did, to shirk his patriotic obligations. But Ginster's 'Lustangst an der Anonymität' (Zohlen, 1990, p.337) condemns him to the position of outcast and beggar perpetually being rejected by society, and deprives him of the confidence to take the sort of bold initiative which comes naturally to Felix: 'es fehlte nicht viel, daß auch er sich für schuldig gehalten hätte', (*Ginster*, p.163) and: 'Er kam sich wie ein Bettler vor, dem die Passanten jede Gabe verweigern' (*ibid.*, p.34).

Hypocrisy and Irony

In its meaning of dissimulation or pretence, hypocrisy is closely linked to irony, with its roots in the cultivation of simulated ignorance. In an abbreviated form, the primary sources of character motivation in both of Kracauer's novels may be defined as the impulse to expose various forms of hypocrisy by means of verbal irony. While this impulse is not as strong in Mann's writing, it does exist, and provides revealing comparisons that increase the precision with which the differences between the narrative perspectives in Jewish and non-Jewish imaginative fiction can be delineated.

This broad category of dissimulation contains two major sub-categories. The first concerns behaviour patterns that conceal the common humanity of individuals from different social classes; the second, the extent to which individual experience can ever be communicable when the desire for mutual understanding is lacking. Kracauer's thinking on both these questions became increasingly pessimistic between the appearance of *Ginster* in 1928 and the completion of *Georg* in 1934, but even the earlier novel is distinguished by considerable pessimism. When the narrative perspective is that

of a character who is continually mortified by feelings of social neglect and rejection, the pain of defeat is quietly registered. In the army, for instance, Ginster's only friend is a factory owner named Ahrend. With connections in the right places, Ahrend is assured of a swift posting to a safer, easier job, and soon disappears from Ginster's company. While he is there, the two young recruits do manage a few fairly friendly conversations which, however, invariably distress Ginster, because of Ahrend's affected, upper class-speech mannerisms (ibid., p.135): 'Seine Stimme war zu vornehm, um sich zu erheben; [...] die Vollendung der Worte überließ er seinen Angestellten.' Moreover, these attempts at mutual reassurance in the alien military surroundings which neither enjoys, always end badly for Ginster, who feels himself dismissed, as if by an employer (ibid., p.138): 'Sie entfernten sich wieder von einander; das heißt, Ahrend verharrte abwesend an seinem Ort und überließ es Ginster sich zu bewegen.' These examples, two among an almost infinite selection in Kracauer's novels, illustrate the major forms of alienation Goffman lists in his excursus on alienation in social interaction (Goffman, 1970, p.105): external preoccupation on the part of the listener and self-consciousness or obsession leading to the embarrassment of the speaker. This is the model for Ginster's and Georg's failed encounters, whether professional or personal, and represents the core narrative situation which gives rise to verbal irony. One of Kracauer's most inspired illustrations of the way that language is manipulated in order to obscure, rather than clarify meaning, occurs in a passage listing the changes made by the army to standard German vocabulary and grammar. Ginster himself is the most sensitive and alert victim of the alienating effect these bizarre, compulsory alterations have on the private thoughts of the common soldier, as well as sabotaging any attempt at normal interchange with other military personnel. This process of weaning individuals from their civilian habits of self-esteem and direct contact to others is described

in a series of statements in which Kracauer creates a parody of military linguistic distortions as the most effective means of exposing the subversive political power over men's minds that comes with control over language (*Ginster* p.147):

Die Vorgesetzten waren lauter Herren, aber nicht geehrte wie in Briefen, sondern wirkliche, die einen Inhalt hatten, der aus ihrer Ranghöhe folgte. [...] Wenn die Vorgesetzten einen Kanonier mit Sie anredeten, meinten sie Es; was daraus hervorging, daß der Kanonier seinerseits ihnen gegenüber nicht zum Sie greifen durfte, sich vielmehr einer unpersönlichen Wendung bedienen mußte. Untereinander mochten sich die Kanoniere als Sies empfinden; das heißt, sie duzten sich, aber das Du war ein Sie. Dem richtigen Du näherte sich in gewissen Fällen am ehesten die Bezeichnung Sie an, die sich im Verkehr zwischen Ginster und Ahrend aufgedrängt hatte. Freilich konnte ihre Beziehung nur unter den gegenwärtigen Verhältnissen als intim aufgefaßt werden. Die ganze Grammatik war militärisch verändert worden.

Structurally, this section is typical of Kracauer's oblique method of underlining an important point. The opening sentence begins innocuously enough in a quiet narratorial voice, but rapidly changes tempo. An initial, only slightly eccentric sequence of words, 'The superiors were all gentlemen', suddenly catches the reader unawares because of the tension between the colloquialism of 'lauter Herren', suggesting immediacy, and the reflective tone of the whole sentence, suggesting detachment from Ginster's experiences. Of course the commanding officers are gentlemen; what else would they be in a society with the rigid social hierarchy and corresponding educational differences of the Wilhelmine Empire? And in such a hierarchy, where Ginster, for one, certainly knows his place, one would not expect these 'Herren', literally 'masters' as well as 'gentlemen', to be likened flippantly to the 'Sirs' in the formal 'geehrter Herr' salutation of a business letter. Some of these gentlemen/masters have so much power that they consider the men they command to be inanimate objects. The men themselves sense the presence of the inanimate pronoun 'it' be-

hind the officer's use of the normal form of polite address 'you'. All other degrees of relationship are thereby thrown out of balance, as the men become disorientated when words no longer mean what they should, and the emotions formerly associated with certain vocabulary, displaced by military fiat, have to be redistributed in ways which feel unnatural to the speaker.

The second main sub-category in the treatment of hypocrisy in *Ginster* demonstrates the way social control of symbols of conventional behaviour erodes the possibility of communicating real feeling. At the funeral of his much-loved uncle, Ginster is the only mourner not wearing a top hat. Family opinion has it that he must really be rather heartless to do such a thing. Short of dashing out in the middle of the funeral and buying a top hat, Ginster cannot convince his relatives of his genuine sorrow at his uncle's death, because (ibid., p.214): 'Edler Schmerz war der Gestalt nach zylindrisch.' These episodes illustrate the question which haunts Ginster and which is the subject of the novel: does society recognise real pain, real love, or only their officially sanctioned representations? In *Ginster*, therefore, the presupposition is still that truth is ultimately knowable, even when maliciously concealed. Kracauer's concern is with the paralysing and distorting effects of unexamined social conventions on individual behaviour, at their most obvious in the conduct of a world war.

In *Georg*, the earlier emphasis on wilful hypocrisy is gradually extended from the small-scale failures of interpersonal relationships which characterise Kracauer's first novel to the massive social injustice against selected individuals within a national community, which is the subject of his second. With the progressively darkening tone of the narrative emerge the modifications to the cautious optimism of *Ginster* which constitute Georg's deepest conviction that it is impossible to change society as a whole until individuals find the motivation and insight to change themselves (*Georg*,

p.357): 'denn er empfand einen Abscheu vor dem Gemeinschaftsgerede und glaubte ja wirklich, daß eine Gemeinschaft unmöglich sei, solange die Menschen sich nicht veränderten.' Verbal irony, absent in the statements of belief in the second half of the narrative, is heavily concentrated in the first half of *Georg*, which reads like a continuation of the earlier work, as indeed it was in terms of chronology of composition and stability of the author's personal circumstances. The basic premise here is that self-deceit and intellectual laziness are implicated in the manifestations of national callousness for which the private citizen cannot be allowed to refuse his share of moral responsibility.

In keeping with its broader political remit, *Georg* opens with a scene in which verbal irony is used to pinpoint the dangers of political credulity. Attending a meeting of pacifist activists where the guest speaker is introduced as the foremost representative of the anti-war movement in Germany, Georg is bemused by the disparity between the reputation of the star 'pacifist' as a daring prophet of peace, and the fatuous vapidness of his discourse. Even more disturbing is the awe in which he is held by adults who should see through him immediately instead of adulating him. Most sinister of all, however, is the discrepancy between the thoughtless behaviour of the rank and file pacifists and the loftiness of their trumpeted ideals. The consensus of the participants is that if children are allowed to play with toy soldiers, they will grow up to be warmongers. Accordingly, the meeting votes that the only effective way to prevent war is to forbid the manufacture and sale of toy soldiers. Frau Heinisch and Frau Heydenreich, the two main supporters of this motion, loathe each other and are virtually at daggers drawn. When the former boasts to the assembled company that she has never permitted her son to play with these pernicious objects, the audience applauds her thunderously. Kracauer describes the reaction of Frau Heinisch to public acclaim for her part in preventing

war in Europe (ibid., p.251):

Von so viel Anerkennung überschüttet, schickte Frau Heinisch wider Frau Heydenreich ein Lächeln aus, dem die Gewalt einer kriegsstarke[n] Kompagnie der soeben ausgerotteten Bleisoldaten innewohnte. Die Strafexpedition war von sichtbarem Erfolg gekrönt.

Failing to recognise that toy soldiers are not murderous, but those who command them are, the 'pacifists' leave themselves open to domination by those commanders. Far from accepting that only men are guilty of being psychologically receptive to war, Kracauer exposes the unacknowledged and uncontrolled envy and hatred of women, mothers, and children. He then shows how easily confused thinking among such individuals can be exploited by ruthless demagogues. Significantly, it appears to surprise none of the other participants at the meeting but Georg, that a supposedly serious pacifist discussion about the causes of war should begin by indicting toy soldiers and end with a proposal to ban the Bible (ibid., p.252): 'Fort mit den verbrecherischen Schriften!'. There is, of course, an obvious association between these 'criminal writings' and the Jewish people, including Kracauer himself, who were being driven from Germany by just such peace-lovers as those described in this scene. In a text ruthlessly pruned of overt Jewish references, exposure and condemnation of what was really being said at the time, 'fort mit den verbrecherischen Juden!', or in its colloquial form, 'Juden raus!' could only be attacked obliquely. The means of attack Kracauer has chosen here, as elsewhere throughout the novel, is verbal irony.

The narrative of *Georg* contains two central plot lines: Georg's journalistic career on the major liberal newspaper known here as the *Morgenbote*, and his intense, unsatisfactory personal involvement with Fred, a much younger man. Both these main strands of plot depend stylistically for their development on verbal irony, as do the elements of secondary impor-

tance, such as Georg's meetings with the representatives of Communist and Catholic power, his abortive friendships with the pacifists, and unsuccessful attempt to seduce Beate. For example, Georg's first article is published, much to his own astonishment, without his prior knowledge. In fact, it is only after a cursory glance at the paper reveals his name printed beneath the article he is in the process of reading, that he recognises his own views (ibid., p.267): 'Aus der Tatsache nämlich, daß der Name unter dem Artikel sein eigener war, hatte er sofort geschlossen, daß er selber der Urheber des Artikels war.' Kracauer has chosen to transmit the two messages central to the dialectical tension of the novel in an ironic statement. This apparently flippant observation has the serious function of linking Georg's precarious grasp of his own identity with the insuperable difficulties he has, both personally and professionally, in making himself understood by those who are important to him. Initially overjoyed at seeing himself in print, Georg is soon forced to realise that the article has been published because of a misunderstanding. Furthermore, the misunderstanding is of such an elusive, subtle nature that Georg cannot decide whether the editor genuinely does not understand the article, or is hypocritically pretending to believe that Georg has slyly written the opposite of what he means in order to reach a secret goal shared by himself and the newspaper. Either way, this first confrontation with the vagaries of editorial policy on the *Morgenbote* foreshadows the future course of Georg's association with the paper, culminating in his dismissal in 1933. Inevitably, Georg is dismissed in circumstances as murky as those surrounding his initial engagement, in which the determining factor is not the anti-Semitism of the recently elected Hitler regime, as it was in Kracauer's experience as Feuilleton editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, but the same nebulous insufficiency of human understanding that characterises all the interpersonal relations in Kracauer's work.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to outline the different ways in which verbal irony is used in Jewish and non-Jewish writing. To this end, we have looked at two German writers, Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Mann for whom verbal irony represents a stylistic element of major importance. The differences in the use of irony are heightened by the remarkable degree of commonality in the experiences and social background of characters in Kracauer's novels and Mann's shorter prose fiction. Moreover, because of the psychological stress caused by Mann's determination to maintain a very public persona while concealing his homosexuality, he was effectively condemned to experience much the same unease as an assimilated Jewish writer hoping to make his way in German society despite his ethnic origins. The aim throughout this chapter has therefore been to determine which narrative situations give rise to verbal irony, the identity and narrative function of the characters who express themselves in this way, and the narratorial perspective of passages containing verbal irony.

Jewish and non-Jewish verbal irony are shown to fall into two distinct categories. In the Jewish texts realistic descriptions of recognisable locations are the norm, the settings are mundane, and the roles assigned to the characters are within the personal experience of the author. In this reproduction of a European universe, verbal irony is associated with the anger and despair which accompanied the growing awareness that the Jewish dream of social integration into mainstream society was not to be realised. The writings of Kracauer show bitter criticism of existing Western European social structures couched in terms of verbal irony. In both western and eastern European Jewish literature of this period, the presence and nature of verbal irony is not just a measure of personal development, but is a gauge of the state of the relationship between the individual and society.

The non-Jewish category differs from the Jewish category in that verbal irony in the former is directed at personalities, whereas in the latter, it is directed at individuals as representatives of the established social system. None of the main characters in the Jewish texts is as bizarre as certain of Mann's creations. There are no grotesques like Cipolla, heroes like Moses, or even memorable eccentrics like Felix. On the contrary, the pages of *Ginster* and *Georg* are peopled with solid German citizens of all social classes, portrayed with minutely observed psychological realism. Further, Mann's penchant for unusual, theatrically dramatic plots inevitably reduces the space for social criticism in his imaginative fiction, whereas an obsession with radical reform of society along the most profoundly humanistic lines is among the chief characteristics of Kracauer's work. Accordingly, the figure of the perfectly ordinary individual, rejected by society for no obvious reason, which is such a commonplace in Jewish texts, is not an image favoured by Mann. Verbal irony in Mann's work reflects the writer's evident belief that qualities of character are more important in shaping personal destiny than membership in a larger social group. Indeed, the frequency and acerbity of verbal irony in Mann's writing decreased as he gained acceptance and acclaim from the bourgeoisie he had mocked in his youth. In Jewish literature, however, the period of youthful mockery never ends, and the authors are perpetually condemned to refine a perspective on society which combines both their fear of rejection and yearning for integration.

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