

der diejenige Konstellation erfaßt, 'in  
anz bestimmten früheren getreten ist',<sup>24</sup>  
tzeit und Gewesenem zu entziffern.

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'DURCH HEUTIGE SPRACHE UND KUNSTFORM WIEDER  
BELEBEN ...'  
EXPRESSIONS OF JEWISH IDENTITY IN GERMAN  
LITERATURE AROUND 1848:  
SALOMON KOHN, HERMANN SCHIFF, LEOPOLD KOMPERT<sup>1</sup>  
in memoriam Chaim Shoham (1936-1993)

FLORIAN KROBB

The European era of the Jews – to quote the title of the latest comprehensive study of the history of the Jewish communities in Europe since the disintegration of the Roman Empire<sup>2</sup> – is the history of a people in exile. Their increasing isolation as the only noteworthy non-Christian minority during the Christian Middle Ages had, amongst others, cultural, political, and linguistic consequences. Whether the reasons for Jewish isolation were, at one extreme, marginalisation by the Christian majority or, at the other extreme, adherence to Jewish traditions, the manifestations of separateness stretched to all aspects of life, from differences in clothing to the development of a different vernacular, Yiddish. Yiddish can be defined as being phonetically, lexically and syntactically based on German, yet including a large number of Hebrewisms and, in eastern Europe, Slavisms. While Yiddish in eastern Europe became increasingly independent of its High German roots and has to be regarded as a foreign language, in German-speaking central Europe it retained a greater dependence on German which gave it more the character of a German sociolect.<sup>3</sup>

With the advent of political emancipation of the Jews from the late eighteenth century onwards, some of the barriers dividing the minority from the majority community fell. Mainly as a result of the success of Jewish auto-emancipation following Moses Mendelssohn's lead, those parts of the Jewish community willing to participate in public debates and the nation's literary life adopted High German as their *véhiculaire* in order to overcome the linguistic division. Throughout the nineteenth century the active and natural use of Yiddish became increasingly confined to the Jewish communities in eastern Europe which retained a lifestyle unaffected

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of two papers presented at the Royal Irish Academy's National Committee for Modern Language Studies' Symposium 'Crossing Thresholds: Exiles and Immigrants in Literature, Culture and Society' on 12 November 1994 at Dublin City University, and on 30 November 1994 as part of the Public Lecture Series 'Voices of the Dispossessed in German Literature' at University College Cork. Mein herzlichster Dank gilt Sheila Watts vom Trinity College, Dublin, für ihre Orientierungshilfen im Gewirr der englischen Sprache.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Battenberg, *Das europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, Darmstadt 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Hans Peter Althaus, 'Soziolekt und Fremdsprache. Das Jiddische als Stilmittel in der deutschen Literatur', in *ZfdPh*, 100 (1981) [Sonderheft Jiddisch], 212-32, (here 213); cf. also Salomo A. Birnbaum, *Die jiddische Sprache. Ein kurzer Überblick und Texte aus acht Jahrhunderten*, Hamburg 1974.

by assimilatory tendencies for much longer than was the case in the west, that is, in Germany and in the Austrian parts of the Habsburg Empire.

In the west, however, just after the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, those Christian authors who rejected the Jews' claim for equality and denied their emancipatory success started to make use of elements of Yiddish or 'Judendeutsch',<sup>4</sup> first of all in drama, to re-emphasise the difference of the Jews. Complemented by allegedly characteristic gestures (a heavy movement of the arms and shoulders, hand rubbing) and by costumes and physiognomical features, these Jewish figures on stage very often became caricatures, 'Verlachgestalten'. One example of this tendency, Julius von Voß's *Der travestirte Nathan der Weise* (1804), is particularly striking, because it reversed the very epitome of tolerance and un-prejudiced dialogue (Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*) into its complete opposite. This play is a defamatory, ridiculing, stigmatising polemic of an overtly anti-Jewish character in that it labels the Jews as unfit to be admitted into the community of German citizens. The play is an anti-emancipatory show-piece, claiming that Jews remain different not only in terms of religion but also socially, culturally and mentally. At Nathan's very first appearance, as a reply to Daja's 'Maria Jesus! Nathan ihr schon da?', the protagonist says:

Nü wos – o wai ist das ä Willkomm ach?  
Hab ich dir doch nicht oft gegeben Geld  
Du sollst nicht dibbern von dem Tole ...<sup>5</sup>

This is a kind of mock 'Judendeutsch' which was probably never spoken in reality; it is a language made up of linguistic clichés and a terminology straight from the dictionary.<sup>6</sup> Vowel changes, such as the one from 'a' to 'o' as in the following line ('Mai wos ist aber dos?'), and inversions ('gegeben Geld') are amongst the most common indicators that what is spoken by a figure is meant to represent Yiddish. The constant repetition of interjections such as 'nü' and 'o wai' suggests wailing, whining and lamentation as part of the Jewish character. The vocabulary, particularly the words which would not have been understood by the average Christian theatre-goer (here: 'dibbern' = to talk, 'Tole' = Jesus, the crucified), contributes to the notion that something quite strange, even obscure (and perceived as potentially threatening) goes on in the Jew's mind.

This kind of language serves to support those aspects of the play which

<sup>4</sup> The use of 'Judendeutsch' as an anti-Semitic device is discussed in Mark H. Gelber, 'Das Judendeutsch in der deutschen Literatur. Einige Beispiele von den frühesten Lexika bis Gustav Freytag und Thomas Mann', in *Juden in der deutschen Literatur*, ed. Stéphane Moses and Albrecht Schöne, Frankfurt a. M. 1986, pp. 162–78.

<sup>5</sup> Julius von Voß, *Der travestirte Nathan der Weise. Posse in zwey Akten mit Intermezzos, Chören, Tanz, gelehrtem Zweykampf, Mord und Todtschlag*, Berlin 1804, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, 'Harlekinade in jüdischen Kleidern'? – Der szenische Status der Judenrollen zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Conditio Judaica. Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Hans Otto Horch and Horst Denkler, Zweiter Teil, Tübingen 1989, pp. 92–117 (here p. 104).

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<sup>8</sup> Althaus, 'S  
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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Debor  
37–74; *Jüdis  
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longer than was the case in the west, in the eastern parts of the Habsburg Empire. The turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century by authors who rejected the Jews' claim to literary success started to make use of the Jewish figure, first of all in drama, to re-emphasise the theme of tolerance and un-prejudiced behaviour, by allegedly characteristic gestures (broad shoulders, hand rubbing) and by the use of Yiddish, these Jewish figures on stage very different from the 'alten'. One example of this tendency, *Der Weise* (1804), is particularly striking in its complete opposite. This play is a polemic of an overtly anti-Jewish character, unfit to be admitted into the canon. It is an anti-emancipatory show-piece, not only in terms of religion but also in terms of language. Nathan's very first appearance, as a Jew, is marked by the phrase 'Ihr schon da?', the protagonist says:

um ach?  
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Fole ...<sup>5</sup>

which was probably never spoken in German. The use of linguistic clichés and a terminology of Jewishness, such as the one from 'a' to 'aber dos?'), and inversions ('gegeben' and 'indicators that what is spoken by a Jew'), the constant repetition of interjections of whining and lamentation as part of the Jewish idiom, particularly the words which are used by the average Christian theatre-goer (such as, the crucified), contributes to the Jewish figure in an even more obscure (and perceived as potentially more threatening) mind.

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*Posse in zwey Akten mit Intermezzos, Chören, Tanz, Musik und Scherzen*, ed. Hans Otto Horch and Horst Denkler, Berlin 1984, p. 104).

create a stereotype, giving rise to prejudice in the minds of the audience. Even in the brief excerpt quoted above, two major themes become apparent: the theme of money, the presumption that everything is for sale and that it is part of the Jew's mentality to buy everything – even his servant's choice of words; and secondly the theme of allegedly anti-Christian sentiment (the attack against the 'Tolle'), reiterating the medieval cliché of Jewish 'Verstocktheit' – stubbornness and obstinacy. A characterisation with such a tenor could have been achieved without the particular linguistic features mentioned. However, they contribute a realistic effect to the Jew's role and hence plausibility to the play. Thus the author lifts the discourse from an argumentative level to a more theatrical one – and achieves an effect which is emotional rather than intellectual. The difference in language is thus meant to reflect a difference in thinking and behaviour.

This was the kind of Yiddish register in literature and on the stage with which an educated German public would have been familiar during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer has shown how an anti-Jewish mode of impersonating Jewish characters was developed, 'durch eine abweichende Mundart und gewisse eigentümliche Gebärden', exemplified in the 1815 performance of Karl Borromäus Sessa's play *Unser Verkehr*.<sup>7</sup> Corresponding devices – including the use of artificial 'Juden-deutsch' – were frequently employed in popular literature at the time, for instance in some of the works of Wilhelm Hauff or of Johann Friedrich Sigmund Freiherr von Holzschuher who published his mock Yiddish pieces under the pseudonym Veitel Itzig Stern. They lived on in the dialogues of novels such as Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* and even found entry into role plays and charades in private living rooms and salons.<sup>8</sup>

The decades leading up to the 1848 revolution mark an important juncture in German-Jewish history and literature. The so-called 'Jewish Question' became part of the public debate on constitutionality and equality throughout Germany and in the centres of the Habsburg Empire. Furthermore, the 1830s and 40s were the first period of Jewish assimilation on a large scale, apparent in mass conversions to Christianity and in Jewish participation in bourgeois professions.<sup>9</sup> At the same time these decades saw the first attempts at re-defining Jewish identity in the changed circumstances.

These attempts prompted, in the 1840s, the emergence of genuinely

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Bayerdörfer, 'Harlekinade', p. 109, using the words of Julius von Voß's review of Sessa's piece.

<sup>8</sup> Althaus, 'Soziolekt und Fremdsprache', pp. 220ff.; on the role plays cf. Hans-Joachim Neubauer and Michael Schmidt, 'Rollenspiele. Antijüdische Kontexte des frühen bürgerlichen Lachtheaters', in *Theatralica Judaica. Emanzipation und Antisemitismus als Momente der Theatergeschichte. Von der Lessing-Zeit bis zur Shoah*, ed. Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, Tübingen 1992, pp. 85–114 (here pp. 88f.).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Deborah Hertz, 'Mischehen in den Berliner Salons', *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts*, 79 (1988), 37–74; *Jüdische Integration und Identität in Deutschland und Österreich 1848–1918*, ed. Walter Grab, Tel Aviv 1984; Jacob Toury, *Soziale und politische Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland 1847–1871. Zwischen Revolution, Reaktion und Emanzipation*, Düsseldorf 1977.

Jewish fiction of a new kind in the German language. Salomon Kohn, Hermann Schiff, and Leopold Kompert are three of the authors whose texts reflect, in very different ways, the search for a viable Jewish identity through the medium of German literature. In the year of the 1848 revolution all three published seminal texts: Salomon Kohn made several contributions to the first *Sippurim* collection in Prague; Hermann Schiff, using the pseudonym Isaac Bernays, brought out the novel *Schief-Levinche mit seiner Kalle* in Hamburg; and Leopold Kompert produced a collection of novellas called *Aus dem Ghetto*, which may have given the new genre of ghetto fiction its name. With respect to the way these texts reflect the Jewish situation of exile and diaspora and the considerable changes at the time under discussion, they can be described as embracing a large spectrum of ways of dealing with this situation: from the retrospective glorification of bygone ghetto life, by way of vehement attacks on Jewish backwardness as an attempt to overcome isolation and start complete assimilation into bourgeois society, to, in the third instance, an effort to reconcile Jewish traditions with the requirements of the modern world.

Many Jewish authors of the 1840s writing in German turned to historical or biblical subjects. In stories with the character of legends they tried to remind the assimilating Jewish community of their roots and the exile legacy of persecution and solidarity which all too readily could be forgotten in the post-ghetto circumstances of the nineteenth century. Others, like Heine in *Der Rabbi von Bacherach*, treated contemporary problems in historical disguise.<sup>10</sup> In the *Sippurim* collections, historical and legendary tales were presented to entertain and educate Jewish readers and become a 'Hauschatz des Judentums'. With the concentration both on historical subject matter and on narrative forms related to the legend and the folk-tale, Jewish authors chose genres which enjoyed great popularity at the time; after all, the first decades of the nineteenth century were the years when German fairy tales, ancient sagas and legends were collected and brought onto the literary market in huge numbers.

The first *Sippurim* collection was distributed in Prague in unbound numbers during 1847–8; later that year a bound edition followed, and in the 1850s and 60s four more collections were produced. As late as the first decade of the twentieth century (1909) a reprint of the popular and shortened 'Volksausgabe' was made.<sup>11</sup> The later 'Volksausgaben' contained much

<sup>10</sup> See Florian Krobb, "Mach die Augen zu, schöne Sara". Zur Gestaltung der jüdischen Assimilationsproblematik in Heines *Der Rabbi von Bacherach*, *GLL*, 47 (1994), 167–81.

<sup>11</sup> For more detailed information on the complicated publication history of the *Sippurim* collections and the 'Volksausgaben' cf. Florian Krobb, "Dina, was sagst du zu dem zuckrigen Gott?" Salomon Kohn und die Prager deutsch-jüdische Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Jüdische Autoren aus dem Bereich der Donaumonarchie*, ed. Hans Otto Horch, Sigurd Paul Scheichl and Mark Gelber, Tübingen 1996, pp. 7–24. The title explains the term 'Sippurim' and outlines the programme of this huge editorial undertaking: 'Sippurim, eine Sammlung jüdischer Volkssagen, Erzählungen, Mythen, Chroniken, Denkwürdigkeiten und Biographien berühmter Juden aller Jahrhunderte, insbesondere des Mittelalters.'



Kohn's *Sippurim* contributions were composed almost entirely in High German, often in quite a pompous style in accordance with the 'Zeitgeschmack' of the first half of the nineteenth century, as one sentence from 'Der Kadisch vor Col-Nidre' should suffice to illustrate: 'Rab. Mordechai warf sich gerührt auf's Knie, und dankte Gott aus der Tiefe seiner Seele'.<sup>18</sup> The registers used in direct speech are similar, disregarding the rank, social standing or religious affiliation of the persons speaking. The personages of Kohn's *Sippurim* stories include figures from all walks of life, from Jewish midwives to eminent scholars, and from gentile soldiers to the rulers of the Habsburg Empire. The question of how both Jewish and gentile people at the times in question really spoke is never asked. In 'Der Kadisch vor Col-Nidre' a Jewish trader who was later forced to convert to Catholicism and to become a soldier recalls the start of a journey with the words: 'Ich trennte mich ungerne von meiner theuren Familie, aber der Nothwendigkeit nachgebend, schied ich, ein peinliches Vorgefühl im Herzen, mit den nöthigen Vollmachten versehen, von meinem Vaterhause'.<sup>19</sup> This is standard written German, 'hochdeutsche Schriftsprache', without any linguistic indicator that the speaker and, for that matter, addressee are Jews. It is only in conversations amongst the dignitaries of the Jewish community that Yiddish words are used, technical terms with Hebrew roots referring to religious regulations, quotations from the Bible and the Talmud. These terms are explained in footnotes, and occasionally references to the original texts are given as well. On the issue of working on the Sabbath one character is reminded by the senior Rabbi: 'Ihr sollt ein Lamden ['Gelehrter, Gesetzkundiger'] sein? ein Am horez ['Unwissender'] seid Ihr. Wißt Ihr denn nicht, daß man bei Skanos Nefaschos ['Lebensgefahr'] am Samstage arbeiten muß?'<sup>20</sup> The descriptive passages and the dialogues are not designed to be realistic; instead they are idealised in two ways: firstly, the High German register underlines the Jewish claims to equality, indicating to the educated Christian German élite in Prague and beyond that the Jews have caught up with them in terms of language and culture; it is a means of overcoming isolation. Secondly, the subject matter and the religious terminology are meant to remind the Jewish readers of their roots and to reinforce their Jewish identity in times when this identity came under pressure. Thus the language – with its references to Yiddish and Hebrew technical terms in an otherwise highly stylised High German narrative – illustrates quite clearly the historical position of the texts at the crossroads of assimilation and self-preservation.

While Kohn draws on secular local history and legend for his early stories, Hermann Schiff chooses the Talmud as a source for modern, High

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85. In the book, the explanations in square brackets appear as footnotes.

re composed almost entirely in High German style in accordance with the 'Zeitgeist' of the nineteenth century, as one sentence from the text suffices to illustrate: 'Rab. Mordechai dankte Gott aus der Tiefe seiner Seele'.<sup>18</sup> The style is similar, disregarding the rank, social status of the persons speaking. The personages of the tales come from all walks of life, from Jewish peasants to gentile soldiers to the rulers of the land, showing both Jewish and gentile people at work and never asked. In 'Der Kadisch vor Colmar' the Jew is forced to convert to Catholicism and embarks on a journey with the words: 'Ich verlässe meine Familie, aber der Nothwendigkeit meines Vorgefühls im Herzen, mit dem ich mein Vaterhaus'.<sup>19</sup> This is standard German 'Schriftsprache', without any linguistic markers that matter, addressee are Jews. It is the personages of the Jewish community that are referred to with Hebrew roots referring to the Bible and the Talmud. These are occasionally references to the original practice of working on the Sabbath one day in the week: 'Ihr sollt ein Lamden ['Gelehrter, Wissender'] seid Ihr. Wißt Ihr was das ist? ['Unwissender'] seid Ihr. Wißt Ihr was das ist? ['Lebensgefahr'] am Samstage am Sabbat'. The dialogues are not only idealised in two ways: firstly, the Jewish claims to equality, indicating the Jewish elite in Prague and beyond that the Jews are equal in terms of language and culture; it is a secondly, the subject matter and the style of the Jewish readers of their roots in times when this identity came to be defined with its references to Yiddish and the highly stylised High German narrative. The historical position of the texts at the time of their publication is a matter of record.

al history and legend for his early Jewish history as a source for modern, High

German literature. With his volume *Hundert und ein Sabbat* (1842)<sup>21</sup> he tried to establish Jewish narratives as part of the great international tradition of story-telling:

Denn in der That ist die Ehre, welche man arabischen, griechischen, indischen, skandinavischen und allen möglichen Märchen, Mythen und Sagen angeeignet hat, sie unbeschadet ihres Charakters und ihrer Originalität als selbständige, deutsche Dichtungen zu behandeln, denen eines uralten, religiösen Volkes, das mitten unter uns lebt [...] bisher gänzlich versagt worden.<sup>22</sup>

The emancipatory claim is first of all implied in the title of this collection; but it is also apparent in the form of the book which, through its narrative frame (entitled 'Ein Genrebild aus dem heutigen Leben der Juden'), adheres to the European 'Novellenkranz' tradition from Boccaccio's *Decamerone* to Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* and Wieland's *Hexameron von Rosenhain*. In this case, the frame accommodates a particularly Jewish exposition of contemporary problems and social conditions between the extremes of traditional, orthodox, allegedly backward eastern conditions and the enlightened and assimilated western ones (bridged by one character's transposition from the former into the latter environment).

The tales themselves are again rendered in the High German style of the time. The use of irony in the narrative frame, however, includes references to the Yiddish language. The allusions to titles of sentimental novels from the eighteenth-century German tradition – a device used to ridicule the heartache of the frame's protagonist – include 'Die Leiden des jungen Gabriel Cohen' as well as 'Gabriel und Rebecca: Frisch, gesund und maschugge'.<sup>23</sup> The author even puns using Yiddish dialect pronunciation, for instance when an old Jew recollects the incident of being shown a figure of the god Amor by his thirteen-year-old wife-to-be:

Ich muß bemerken, daß ich damals kein sonderliches Deutsch sprach und meine Braut mauschelte nicht minder. – Weil ich nun sagte 'Ammohr' entgegnete meine Braut: Und Sie sind ein Chamor (Esel) als Sie sagen, daß das a Mohr is. A Mohr is schwarz.<sup>24</sup>

Through the use of irony the author distances himself from the Jewish language and culture of the past; the episode illustrates at the same time the distance bridged between a pre-assimilatory educational state of the Jews and the current situation in Germany. What seems to contradict the intention of the book – to emancipate a genuinely Jewish narrative tradition

<sup>21</sup> Hermann Schiff, *Hundert und ein Sabbat. Oder Geschichten und Sagen des israelitischen Volkes*, Erstes Bändchen [which was to be the only one, even though it only contained the stories of eight sabbaths], Leipzig 1842.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. iiiif.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

as worthy of wider recognition – only highlights the dilemma of defining a new, post-assimilatory Jewish identity in the modern world.

Schiff's negative attitude towards traditional Jewish life and culture is very much in evidence in his comic novel *Schief-Levinche mit seiner Kalle*, which he brought out in 1848.<sup>25</sup> (The title itself uses a Yiddish term: 'Kalle' is the Jewish bride, while 'Schickse' refers to the goy girl.) In it, a Christian painter chooses the beautiful ghetto Jewess Mariamne as the model for an altar illustration of the virgin Mary, and achieves his goal by conning the Jewess's fiancé into commissioning her portrait. The hilarious events which follow are the opportunity for Schiff to describe traditional Jewish life with bitter sarcasm, even pitying disdain. This is a text devoted solely to the depiction of contemporary Jewish life – and in that it is a novelty. Schiff uses the device of setting his story in a traditional orthodox Jewish environment – hence the 'Polish' in the extended title which must not be understood as a geographical designation; it simply refers to the eastern Jewish community with its un-assimilated, ghetto-like Jewish environment still intact. Schiff's critical view of traditional Jewish life includes the language spoken, which, on the occasion of explaining the Yiddish word 'plätten' ('um einen Platz am Tische eines Reichen betteln'), he calls 'verdorbenes Judendeutsch'.<sup>26</sup> The main target of Schiff's attacks is Jewish bigotry and superstition which he considers to be the main obstacles to political progress, productive dialogue between the religious groups and hence equality. (Though not the main focus of the author's attention, the Christians get their share of satire too.) Like Voß he uses the constant repetition of the exclamation 'Ah! Ah! Waihgeschrien!'<sup>27</sup> to characterise the Jewish mentality. This expression which could be regarded as typical of the diaspora – the situation of a people in constant danger from a hostile environment – reveals the absurdity of the Jewish position when the acute danger in the novel has been self-inflicted by the Jewish community through inflexibility and insistence on outdated and un-enlightened principles<sup>28</sup> (which have little to do with religion in Schiff's eyes: religion is not the issue here, but rabbinical fanaticism and superstition).

Even a brief look at one of the short chapters illustrates some points concerning the linguistic features which serve the author's intention. In the five-page chapter 'Der Gast' the scene is set for the turning-point of the plot, the contract between Schief-Levinche and the Christian painter to have Mariamne's portrait done. The guest is a Jewish beggar who – according to a time-honoured custom – rewards the landlord for his donation with a story or a word of wisdom, in this case the parable of the lazy

<sup>25</sup> Isaac Bernays [i.e. Hermann Schiff], *Schief-Levinche mit seiner Kalle oder Polnische Wirthschaft. Ein komischer Roman nebst Vorrede*, Hamburg 1848. On the meaning of the adopted pseudonym see Renate Heuer, 'Heines "Vetter" Hermann Schiff', in *Conditio Judaica*, ed. Horch and Denkler, Erster Teil, Tübingen 1988, pp. 214–35 (here p. 231).

<sup>26</sup> Bernays, *Schief-Levinche*, p. 158.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226f.

<sup>28</sup> Particularly in the chapter 'Rabbinische Weisheit', Bernays, *Schief-Levinche*, pp. 163ff.



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messenger. At the beginning of the chapter this custom is explained as 'ein Wörtchen sagen'<sup>29</sup> – a set phrase of obviously Yiddish origin. This contributes to the creation of a certain atmosphere by suggesting that what was really spoken was not High German, as represented in the text, but the Jewish dialect. In the reply of Israel, Schief-Levinche's father, to the storyteller, more linguistic signals contribute to this tone:

Dieß gebe ich Euch [...] nicht, weil ich Mitleid mit Euch habe, sondern, weil mir dies Wörtchen gefällt. Mehr als einen halben Gulden kann ich nicht geben für ein gutes Wörtchen. Warum? Ich bin nur ein polnischer Jude. Wäre ich aber Friedrich der Große, so würde ich Euch machen zu einem Lieutenant.<sup>30</sup>

This time, the technical term 'Wörtchen' does not appear in inverted commas, it is accepted as part of the speaker's register. The rhetorical question – 'Warum?' serves to re-create an allegedly Jewish habit of dialectically reasoning with oneself. The inversion in the last sentence ('machen zu einem Lieutenant' instead of 'zu einem Lieutenant machen') is by now familiar as a device suggesting Yiddish. In the ensuing dialogue between father and son, triggered off by the father out of anger over the half-guilder spent on the beggar, other features become apparent:

'Bei Tag und Nacht stehst du im bloßen Hemde.'

– 'Vaterlieb! Das schadet mir nichts, ich kann das vertragen.'

[...]

– 'Nun bleib nur zu Hause;' rief der reiche Israel. 'Du bist auch ein fauler Bote, welcher wahrsagt. Du wirst keine Geschäfte machen heut; und keine Geschäfte die ganze Woche.'

– 'Wie heißt? Ich werde keine Geschäfte machen? Ich bin Schief-Levinche, und wenn ich noch so sehr ein fauler Bote bin, mache ich doch gute Geschäfte.'<sup>31</sup>

The diminutive 'Vaterlieb' (the suffixes '-lieb' or '-leben' are frequently used pet names in Yiddish) contrasts comically with the heat of the exchange. The slight traces of 'Judendeutsch' – the inversion 'keine Geschäfte machen heut' and the interjection or rhetorical question 'Wie heißt?' for 'was soll das heißen?' – also contribute to the linguistic atmosphere. Apart from that, a dialogue of this kind could take place amongst members of any religious or ethnic group. The repetitiveness of the exchange, though, not only adds to the funny character of the scene, but again underlines the Jews' stubborn insistence on adopted positions, their intransigence and inflexibility. Here, in contrast to Julius von Voß's play, the ridiculing of Jewish ways is not bitter and does not stretch to a religious or political argument, but is intended to highlight the alleged backwardness and inap-

<sup>29</sup> Bernays, *Schief-Levinche*, p. 81.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85f.

propriateness of traditional ('Polish') Jewry in a way assimilated western Jews could identify with and laugh about. The manifestations of exile, isolation and self-isolation (including the different language) are the target of Schiff's satire (and the linguistic means employed to achieve the satirical effect); the aim of his satire, then, is to overcome whatever perpetuates separation and what keeps the Jews different. In this respect Schiff's comic novel reflects the situation of German Jewry in an assimilatory environment in a way distinctly different from that found in Salomon Kohn and the *Sippurim* collection. Schiff's reference to traditional Jewish life and outdated modes of communication serves as a reminder that these remnants of the past are counterproductive to the general goal of becoming increasingly indistinguishable from the members of the majority community. It implies, at the same time, a sense of superiority over traditional, backward Jews who, through their very presence, could endanger emancipatory progress.

Leopold Kompert's 1848 collection of novellas *Aus dem Ghetto* established its author as the leading writer of Jewish ghetto fiction in the German-speaking countries.<sup>32</sup> Throughout his adult life Kompert was politically active in various ways – as a member of school boards, deputy on the Vienna city council and so on. During the late 1840s he was campaigning in particular for Jewish rights and for the accommodation of Jews' special needs in any future constitutional or social framework. Though his literary texts are not overtly political – on the contrary, at first glance they strike the reader as almost a-political in their nostalgic concentration on a disappearing life-form – they have an implicit political function, in so far as the subjects of the stories, the inhabitants of the traditional Jewish settlements in Bohemia, the ghettos or 'Judengassen', are presented as human beings not different from the Christians in their daily lives, their family spirit, their values, problems and preoccupations and even in their spirituality and religiousness.<sup>33</sup>

Again, the stories are told in High German, some of them showing classical novella structures like a narrative frame and the concentration on an unusual and noteworthy event. Austrianisms characterise the dialogue just as much as Yiddicisms. However, several technical terms and Yiddish expressions similar to those discussed above are apparent here, and many words and terms are again explained in parentheses or footnotes. In the story 'Ohne Bewilligung', Resel Mireles – who had been living with her man without a formal marriage because the family was denied a marriage permit – has to confront the fact that her child would be called a bastard ('ein Bankert'). She expresses her feelings twice with the well-known lament 'Wehgeschrien!'.<sup>34</sup> Later she adopts a fighting spirit, a spirit of motherly love which demands considerable respect and brings home to the reader

<sup>32</sup> Leopold Kompert, *Aus dem Ghetto. Geschichten*, Leipzig 1848.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Florian Krobb, 'Die Welt ist etwas ganz anderes geworden. Nachwort', in Leopold Kompert, *Der Dorfgeher. Geschichten*, ed. Florian Krobb, Göttingen 1996.

<sup>34</sup> Leopold Kompert, 'Ohne Bewilligung', in Kompert, *Aus dem Ghetto*, p. 328.

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that the Jewess shares universal human feelings and hence has a right to be treated as a human being:

Liegts dir denn auf ['statt daran liegen.'] daß man dein Kind auf dem Rathhaus thut ein Bankert schelten? Und mein schmeckedig ['statt schmeckend, ein beliebtes Schmeichelwort, das man den Kindern gibt.'] Jüngel soll so heißen? Na, Jaikew, ich stell' mich eher auf den Thurm und schrei's herunter, daß es alle Leut' hören können. Die ganze Welt solls wissen, daß Resel Lederer ist ein ehrlich Weib und ihr Kind auch. Ich will mir das schon richten, und wenn ich bis zum Kaiser auf Wien müßt' gehen.' - - -<sup>35</sup>

And that is exactly what she eventually does. This character with all the Yiddish features of her language – the 'Wehgeschrien!' included – is designed to create sympathy and respect for her emotions and actions. The political application, a message assisted by the use of Yiddish elements, is to acknowledge the Jews' rights as human beings and grant them civil rights by scrapping humiliating measures like the restrictions on marriage.

In the story 'Der Dorfgeher' from the 1851 collection *Böhmische Juden* the contrast in register between the gentile educated classes and the Jewish speakers is introduced via the contrast between a Jew's language when addressing his family members and when writing to his Christian bride. Special terms like 'verhören' (which refers to an examination by the Rabbi on a Talmud passage) represent the Jew's own language. When the boy announces to his father that he is ready for his first 'Verhör' the latter replies:

Das heißt gered't, wie man soll reden [...]. Wenn du also willst und Lust hast, gehen wir morgen zum Vetter Rebb Jaikew, hörst Du gut? Zum Vetter Rebb Jaikew, zu dem großen Frommen, dem wirst du sagen: Vetter, verhört mich, mein Vater will nicht glauben, daß ich schon kann mein erstes Blatt Talmud. Das aber sag ich Dir, Benjamin Leben, bestehst Du so, wie ein rechtschaffen Jüngel, [sic] soll bestehen – kein Grafenkind auf der ganzen Erd' soll hernach ein schöner Röckel bekommen, als ich Dir machen will.<sup>36</sup>

In this Jewish family the pet form 'Leben' indicates real affection, and the same holds true for the diminutives 'Jüngel' and 'Röckel'. Even the inversions ('wie man soll reden') and the abrupt syntax, the rhetorical questions and interjections ('hörst du gut?') contribute to the effect of genuinely loving emotions. The simplicity of the father's feelings (which does not mean lack of reflection, knowledge or substance, as the conversation with his elder son – on political and religious issues of the day like the points of kosher food or the synchronisation of the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday – makes very clear) contrasts sharply with the son's language when writing to his bride, a highly artificial style obviously

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>36</sup> Leopold Kompert, 'Der Dorfgeher', in Kompert, *Böhmische Juden*, Vienna 1851, p. 10.

modelled on the sentimental register of letters prevalent since the eighteenth century: 'Musik! Musik! wo finde ich die Melodie, die meine Unruhe, mein planloses Sichgehenlassen hinwegbannt? Wie ein Räuber fall' ich mir oft selbst in den Arm und rufe mir zu: die Vergangenheit oder – das Leben!'<sup>37</sup> The artificiality of the language illustrates the inappropriateness of the option the Christian bride and her sphere can offer: complete assimilation and conversion. The other sphere, the genuine, warm climate in the ghetto household is the natural one for the Jew. By portraying the Bohemian ghetto Jews warmly and sympathetically – a portrayal to which the Yiddish elements of the language make a considerable contribution – Kompert tries to revalue Jewish mentality and traditions in a positive way. Their language and particularly those features which were ridiculed in other texts of the time are presented as a true expression of genuine kindness and family spirit.

A Yiddish revival was not intended by the German-Jewish authors during the first half of the nineteenth century. This was to come about only in the latter half of the century and originated less from the centres of German-speaking central Europe than from the Jewish communities in Poland and Russia. Those Yiddish elements which can be found in the texts discussed here are few and far between; however, they add considerably to the atmosphere and message of the respective books. They have to be considered as integral components of the High German narrative – like dialect or colloquial elements of various origins in the texts of other authors. The authors' aim was, as Hermann Schiff puts it in the foreword to *Hundert und ein Sabbat*, to give new life to past and contemporary subjects of Jewish interest 'durch heutige Sprache und Kunstform'<sup>38</sup> – and that means through the use of the High German literary language of the time, and narrative and formal devices taken from the German literary canon. Yiddish elements, as represented in the texts discussed, are part of this 'heutige Sprache und Kunstform'.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53

<sup>38</sup> Schiff, *Hundert und ein Sabbat*, p. viii.