

SHOLOM ALEICHEM: SELECTED WORKS WITH COMPLETE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

by

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PREFACE

This study represents a labor of love and arduous commitment on the part of the candidate. It involves, as well, the combined assistance, encouragement, inspiration and guidance of many individuals who have contributed their own gifts in making this dissertation meaningful to the writer.

I thank my mother and father, of blessed memory, in whose home I heard, spoke and read Yiddish, even before I read English. I am indebted to my father who taught me to read Yiddish, phonetically, from the "Forward", so that I have the facility to read the works of Sholom Aleichem in the original.

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## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Norman Cousins of the Saturday Review once said, "Give readers a book with people they care about and they will queue up to shake the author's hand."

That readers in many countries voiced their approval of Sholom Aleichem by applauding his readings, by buying his books, by including his works alongside the Scriptures in their meagre and precious luggage when they came to America -- all this revealed an affection for the author which continues to this very day. The mere mention of his name evokes a warm smile and a gentle comment "Ah, Sholom Aleichem"-----as those who have savored of his works trail off in a nostalgic reverie.

It is evident that the writings of Sholom Aleichem have served as a meaningful record of a significant era in the experience of East European Shtetl Jews during the latter years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. To the immigrant who left or was driven from his home in Voronke, Pereyeslav, Ekaterineslav or other typical towns, the books of Sholom Aleichem were optimistic and reassuring reinforcements, encouraging his people to face an uncertain future in an unfamiliar environment.

Sholom Aleichem has described life situations so that what is invented and fictional is at the same time of everyday possibility. His main characters, Tevye, Menachem Mendel and Mottel cling tenaciously to life and livelihood, albeit at times neither seems blessed with good fortune -- apparently sustained and guided by an abiding faith in their God, if not their fellow man. In Tevye's outpourings to the author, Sholom Aleichem's earlier readers saw the humor in their own miseries, frustrations and disappointments. In Sholom Aleichem's children, his readers recalled the puritanical austerity of their own drab lives. The welcome leavening of the harsh memories of deprivation was provided through vivid accounts of snatched and stolen pleasures, related with color and clarity. Sholom Aleichem's depiction of picaresque characters provided vehicles for his readers to embark on their own flights of daring and fancy. Although for those many in our own time unacquainted with Yiddish, much of the flavor and zest of the original has been diluted in translation, there is an underlying uniqueness which filters through and reaches the reader, listener or playgoer.

As is the case with all great writers, it must be the work of many critics to probe and to elucidate those

elements in the work of Sholom Aleichem which have contributed toward making him an outstanding artist in the realm of world literature. It is the hope of this writer that this critical taste can be furthered by providing a chronological outline of Sholom Aleichem's life and a chronological account of his literary output, listing, classifying, and describing the major works of each period. It is the hope of this writer that, in the process, certain patterns both literary and philosophical, will begin to emerge which may serve as a stimulus to critical inquiry of various kinds.

The two-fold purpose of this study, therefore, is to record as background the major biographical facts of the life of Sholom Aleichem and to analyze and evaluate the works of each period and to describe the genres, the themes of these works and their treatment.

The biographical procedure seeks to produce a chronological account of the salient facts in his life and in his writing career, outlining events in his publishing as well as his personal life, with particular focus on those factors which can be shown to have influenced Sholom Aleichem as a writer. This would include his home life and environment, the effect of the Haskalah and Zionist

movements, the trades and professions he followed, the state of his health and financial situation, the influence of his friends and literary colleagues and the impact of his reading.

The literary background is to include an account of Sholom Aleichem's work by periods: 1883-1899, 1900-1909, 1910-1916. The first period marks the time of his seeking and securing recognition as a writer in the Yiddish language, and his emergence as a part-time author. The second era covers the first decade of the new century, signalling full-time devotion to literary creativity, unencumbered by commercial pursuits. This is the time of prolific productivity until he is stricken with tuberculosis, with the resulting curtailment of his literary output. The last period is characterized by a lessening of activity, albeit the unremitting standards he set up for himself remain constant. In the account of these periods, all genres will be included -- the short story, essay, letter, novel, play. Elements of continuity, development and change will be noted, and a personal appraisal of his literary achievement will be offered.

Any discussion of previous research on Sholom Aleichem should include the biographical contribution of Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch by I.D. Berkowitz (1926), Samuel Niger's Sholom Aleichem und Sein Humor (1926), J.J. Trunk's Sholom Aleichem (1937), Maurice Samuel's The World of Sholom Aleichem (1943) and Marie Waife-Goldberg's My Father, Sholom Aleichem (1968).

Marie Waife-Goldberg's book is of importance in that it is a first-hand account of her valuable and perceptive impressions of her father, both abroad and in this country. The focus is on the biographical aspect of Sholom Aleichem rather than on a comprehensive literary evaluation of his creativity. The reader is brought face-to-face with Sholom Aleichem from the vantage point of his youngest daughter who possesses the sensitivity and skill to communicate the ethos of her father as a remarkable human being, as well as an artist. Despite the many enforced separations from her father, due to his prolonged illnesses, Marie Goldberg succeeds in filling in many significant gaps in biographical data unavailable up to the time her book appeared. It is a worthwhile opus



from his only surviving daughter, whose own vivid recollections have been bolstered by the scholarly research of her husband, B.Z. Goldberg.

Maurice Samuel provides a colorful and unique treatment of the milieu of Sholom Aleichem and his people. However, he offers no chronological account and systematic analysis of the life and work of his subject. J.J. Trunk, in his book on Sholom Aleichem, emphasizes the historical and psychological aspect of the East European Jew of Sholom Aleichem's shtetl, and concentrates on his interpretation of two of Sholom Aleichem's main characters in Tevye and Menachem Mendel as Expressions of Eternal Jewish Fate (1944).

The most elaborate treatment of the life of Sholom Aleichem is contained in Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch (1926) by I.D. Berkowitz, in Yiddish. This book, albeit charmingly illustrated with photographs, cartoons and other art work, is a potpourri of autobiographical notes, documents, letters, unpublished writings, reminiscences and impressions by relatives and friends. Berkowitz does not record completely and consecutively all of the facts of Sholom Aleichem's life which influenced his writings, nor does he provide a chronological account of his literary development.

(The book is written in Yiddish and Hebrew and has not been

translated -- thus it is inaccessible to many).

There is a need, which has as yet not been fulfilled, to provide a chronological account of Sholom Aleichem's life and work. The writer plans to make such a chronological study and to throw light on the elements which have sustained the appeal of Sholom Aleichem over the years.

Stanley Green and Howard Boyeroff, ed.,  
The Century Company, New York, 1942, p. 114

Sholom Aleichem, *The Story of Sholom Aleichem*,  
(London), New York, 1942, p. 114

Sholom Aleichem, "Sholom Aleichem's Last Laugh",  
*Journal of Jewish Studies*, New York, March 16, 1939, p. 7

Sholom Aleichem, *International*, New York, 1942, p. 114

CHAPTER II      BIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

Sholom Aleichem was born Sholom Rabinowitz in Pereyeslav, a small town in the province of Poltava, Russia. His date of birth has appeared in diverse accounts as February 18th,<sup>1</sup> March 2nd<sup>2</sup> and March 3rd<sup>3</sup> in the year 1859. The author's family celebrates his birthday on February 18th.<sup>4</sup>

Young Sholom grew up in Voronko, a small town (the Kasrilevke of his stories). His father, Reb Menachem Nachum, was pious and scholarly; his mother, Chaye Esther,

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Kunitz and Howard Haycroft, ed., Twentieth Century Authors, H.W. Wilson and Co., New York, 1942, p. 1144

<sup>2</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, (Yiddish), Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 3

<sup>3</sup> Sol Liptzin, "Sholom Aleichem's Jews Laughed", Congress Bi-Weekly, New York, March 16, 1959, p.7

<sup>4</sup> Encyclopedia Americana, International Ed., N.Y., 1963, p. 417

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was serious, hardworking and a firm disciplinarian.<sup>5</sup> There was little lightheartedness in this household. Levity found meagre enthusiasm; in fact, it was hastily submerged and effectively discouraged. The boy, nevertheless, found means of expressing his ebullience and giving vent to his devastating flair for mimicry and caricature. His keen mind absorbed and stored away everything he read and perceived. His "knack" for the dramatic and grotesque even at this early age caused him to break out from time to time in innocent mirth and mischief.

Sholom was an outstanding student in his cheder, writing at age ten a short treatise on the Bible and Hebrew grammar. "He has golden hands!" declared the rabbi of the local shul.<sup>6</sup> Thus spoke the first literary critic of this writer's craft. Young Rabinowitz continued to excel in his studies, preparing himself with diligence and performing with distinction on the occasion of his Bar-Mitzvah.

Shortly after Sholom's thirteenth birthday, the

<sup>5</sup> Nachman Meisel, Unser Sholom Aleichem, (Yiddish), Verlag Yiddish Buch, Warsaw, 1959, p. 9

<sup>6</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Funem Yarid (The Great Fair), Noonday Press, N.Y., 1955, p. 29

boy's mother was stricken with cholera and succumbed to this dread disease. Sholom and several of his brothers and sisters were sent off to stay with their maternal grandparents in Bohuslav. His grandfather, Moshe-Yossi, was a fervent and mystical Chassid; his grandmother, Gittel Zelde, a hopeless cripple who managed the family firmly but with understanding. Sholom's happiest days were spent in these surroundings, for his grandparents encouraged his remarkable sense of humor and approved of his light-heartedness.

Mottel, the orphan of Mottel Peyse, dem Chazans, came to life about this time in the impressionable mind of young Sholom. Mottel's startling "Hurrah, I'm an orphan!" was a reflection of Sholom's response to the warmth of the affection and compassion which enveloped young Rabinowitz to compensate for his recent bereavement.<sup>7</sup> Sholom was beset by ambivalent feelings. Consumed by genuine grief over his great loss, while basking in the outpouring of love at this time, the young adolescent was reluctant to leave when he was called back to his father's home.

Reb Nachum had taken to wife a woman who would minister to his large brood of children (a dozen, of which

<sup>7</sup> A.S. Gurstein, Sholom Aleichem, Melucha Verlag, Y., Moscow, 1946, p.55

Sholom was the third).<sup>8</sup> His stepmother's comprehensive vocabulary of invective and vituperation was extraordinary and it provided Sholom with authentic and colorful curses -- which he was to employ with skill and dexterity in his future writing.

Sholom enjoyed reading Hebrew, he was particularly impressed with the work of Abraham Mapu, author of Ahavas Zion, 1853, (Love of Zion). He patterned his own Hebrew novel, Bas Zion (Daughter of Zion), written during his Bar-Mitzvah year, 1872, on Mapu's Hebrew novel. Sholom continued his religious education and in 1873, at the age of fourteen, because of his splendid record, he received a scholarship to the local district secular school. At age fifteen, he read his first secular novel, Robinson Crusoe, which stimulated him to write Der Yiddisher Robinson Crusoe. This established Sholom Aleichem as an especially privileged personality in his own family -- excusing him from participating in all menial household tasks and winning him a special immunity from the occasional beatings with which his stepmother implemented her disciplinary program. To earn a livelihood at this time, 1874, Sholom's father Reb Nachum opened a small

<sup>8</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Great Fair, Noonday Press, 1955, N.Y., pg. 228

inn frequented by writers, actors and the town "intelligentsia". Here Sholom observed and listened to the discussions of several Hebrew writers, and was stimulated to continue writing in the Hebrew language, to the delight of his father - who hoped Sholom would become another Mapu.

Young Sholom's literary precociousness did not preclude normal adolescent adventures with Shmulik, the orphan, and Mayer Medventier, boyhood chums whose impact upon his interests and writing was significant and enduring.<sup>9</sup> Shmulik was given to fantasy and was an extraordinary and inveterate weaver of tales. He sparked Sholom's gift of story-telling. Mayer, son of the new Voronkover rabbi, was a clever impersonator, singer and actor.<sup>10</sup> Mayer later became, after his conversion to Christianity for professional reasons, the noted Russian actor Mikhail Vefimovich Medvedier of the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg. Sholom's interest in the theatre and its people stemmed in part from this association.

On June 28, 1876, at the age of seventeen, Sholom

<sup>9</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Great Fair, Noonday Press 1955, N.Y., pg. 14

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 32

Rabinowitz completed his schooling with honors and began earning money as a teacher of the Russian language. He became the tutor of twelve-year old Olga Loeff, daughter of Elimelech Loeff, a wealthy landowner, and retained this position until 1879. Teacher and pupil became enamoured of each other, which situation caused Mr. Loeff to take a dim view of Sholom and to dismiss his daughter's teacher-lover with alacrity. Sholom then sought and obtained the post of government rabbi (Rabbiner), so he might be in a position to marry. On May 12, 1883, Sholom, now twenty four and Olga, now nineteen, were married in Kiev. This alliance, truly a love match lasting a lifetime, brought happiness into the lives of Sholom Rabinowitz and Olga Loeff. To Sholom, it gave, as well, a perceptive understanding of women -- which is revealed in his literary treatment of female characters.<sup>11</sup>

Sholom Aleichem admits he wrote without a plan from the years 1876 to 1890. He read lyrical and narrative poetry, plays, novels, and patterned his writing on these literary forms. "I wrote every genre of literature that I read....I used to send my works to all the Jewish and

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Esther Lurie, "Sholom Aleichem und die Yiddische Froi", Zukunft, N.Y., 1916, ppg. 710-713, Y.



Russian periodicals and supplied the newspaper offices with fuel for their stoves".<sup>12</sup>

Among his many journalistic efforts, there were a few which were significant in that they hinted at themes and motifs which he would develop more fully in the years ahead. Solomon Rabinowitz's first contribution, in 1879, to the Hebrew periodical Ha-Zefirah appeared in the form of a letter in defense of the Jewish youth of Pereyeslav against the charge made by a correspondent in a letter to the editor that their knowledge of Hebrew and Russian was inadequate. Here, his understanding of the problems of young people and his awareness of the generation gap between parents and children were effectively articulated. Later on, this theme was presented in his play, "Tsuzait und Tseshprait" ("Scattered and Dispersed"), 1905, and achieved for young Jewish women an acceptance of their new role in a changing world, that all their own arguments had not achieved. Throughout his literary career, Sholom Aleichem was self-appointed spokesman for the young people of his time. And what is more important, his case on behalf of youth was so persuasive that the older generation was often won over.

<sup>12</sup> Melech Grafstein, Sholom Aleichem, Panorama, London, Ontario, 1948, p. 348

Sholom was close to the young in age, yet he had the wisdom and maturity to understand the attitude of parents.

Another journalistic contribution, this time in Ha-Melitz (1880), concerned military service. His thoughts on the subject of the draft were later enunciated in his monologue, "Funem Priziv", ("About Military Service"), a humorous treatise on the inflexibility of petty bureaucracy in the administration of draft regulations. Moreover, in the Mottel stories, one of the characters, Pinney, refers to the dread of the draft, saying "We are travelling to America not only because of the draft but in the name of independence and civilization".<sup>13</sup>

The theme of financial deprivation came naturally to Sholom Aleichem. Throughout his life he was aware of it, observing it at first hand all about him. As a result, he was militantly anti-poverty and showed genuine compassion for the beggar. His series of Yiddish articles, "Jewish Poverty in the Best Works of our Folkwriters" (1888), contributed to the Folksblatt, was a harbinger of his concern and constant involvement with poverty in general and the impoverished Jew in particular.

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Sholom Aleichem, Adventures of Mottel, Henry Schuman, N.Y., 1953, p. 140.

Sholom Aleichem's contributions to the Russian Hebrew and Yiddish press in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century were straws in the wind, indicating the direction of his talents and the focus of his feelings in the years ahead. These were early manifestations of attitudes which Sholom Aleichem was to develop in his later literary creativity. These journals provided not only a testing and a proving ground for the young writer, but made possible the many literary friendships which enriched Sholom Aleichem's life and influenced his writings. (See Appendix C and D)

Since the Hebrew and non-Jewish media were slow in accepting Sholom Rabinowitz's writings, the young man began to write in Yiddish for the periodical Folksblatt (1883) under the pseudonym of Sholom Aleichem. Sholom wanted to hide his identity from his father, whose literary hopes for his son were directed toward writers in the Hebrew language like Abraham Mapu. (Appendix B) Sholom's father's attitude towards Yiddish was not unique at the time since Yiddish was generally assigned to the vernacular.<sup>14</sup> Hebrew

<sup>14</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, "Language Maintenance and Language Shift: Yiddish and other Immigrant Languages in the United States". Paper read at Research Conference of Yivo and Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities, Yeshiva University, April 16-18, 1967.

In a study on Yiddish and other immigrant languages in the United States, Dr. Joshua A. Fishman is of the opinion that "for most

enjoyed greater prestige. Albeit Sholom Aleichem's Hebrew style had won praise from his literary colleague, David Frischman, Sholom Aleichem felt closer to Yiddish. Yet he praised Frischman's choice. "Don't pay attention to the fact that I write to you in Yiddish, please, do write to me in Hebrew".<sup>15</sup> To justify his own preference for Yiddish, Sholom Aleichem said to himself, "you think in the jargon -- isn't it better to write in Yiddish right on the spot?"<sup>16</sup> Thus, his first Yiddish story, "Tsvai Shtainer", (Two Stones, 1883) was so well received that the editor, Alexander Zedarbaum, asked for more. Mordecai Spector, co-editor of the Folksblatt, who was to become one of Sholom Aleichem's dearest friends, joined the editor in encouraging Sholom Aleichem to continue in the "jargon" language. The effectiveness of

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Yiddish speakers arriving in the U.S. between 1880-1920 there was no ideologized relationship between their vernacular and High Culture. Jewish High Culture was to some extent ideologized among the masses of ordinary people. The vernacular was not. The vernacular was not associated with the ideals, the glory, the past or the greatness of the Jewish people in the minds of its speakers.

15 I.D. Berkowitz, editor, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, (in Yiddish) Verlag Ykuf 1926, N.Y., p. 162

16 Sholom Aleichem, Menachem-Mendel, Y., ed. Shmuel Rodgansky, Yosef Lifschutz Fund, Yivo, Buenos Aires, 1963, p. 10.

Sholom Aleichem's use of the Yiddish language soon became recognized by philologists as well as literary critics.

Yudel Mark, eminent Yiddish scholar, believes

one must devote a lifetime to an analysis of Sholom Aleichem's multi-colored language. Let us hope such a Yiddish research scholar will appear who will make it his life's goal.<sup>17</sup>

Sholom Aleichem's devotion to Yiddish caused him to enter the arena of controversy regarding the relative merits of Hebrew and the "jargon" language. Implementing his posture as a staunch defender of the Yiddishists, Sholom Aleichem published the first volume of Die Yiddishe Folksbibliothek (1888), in which appeared the works of promising Yiddish writers as well as his own. It was through his involvement with this new publication that Sholom Aleichem met many of the outstanding Yiddish and Hebrew writers of his time. Abraham Ben Gottlober, Kalman Shulman, L. Lilienblum, A.S. Friedberg, Alexander Zederbaum, Abraham Zuckerman, I.J. Weisberg, M.A. Shaskes, Michael Gordon, Abraham Goldfaden, A. Zunser, M.I. Berdichevtzki,<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Yudel Mark, "Sholom Aleichem's Language" (in Yiddish), The Yiddish Language, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, Vivo, Sept. 1966, N.Y., p. 39

<sup>18</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, editor, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, y., Verlag Ykuf, 1926, N.Y., p. 183

and a host of others expressed their approval of this new literary contribution to the field of folk literature. On the other hand, the Hebrew writer, Y.L. Gordon, took issue with Sholom Aleichem, chiding him for his efforts in promoting the use of the "jargon" language in serious folk writing. Gordon wrote to Sholom Aleichem in 1888:

You write well in Russian and have magnificently mastered our literary language, Hebrew -- how can you surrender to the jargon? There is no doubt you possess a remarkable literary talent, our depressed brethren I know delight in your work, and you have the right to write in the dialect to your heart's content. However, it would be a sin to raise your children in the language; it would be like sending one's children out on the main street of St. Petersburg in their underclothes and shabby boots.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, through his correspondence with leading contemporary writers, Sholom Aleichem kept in contact with the literary milieu which, in this early period, was limited for him. In the interchange of ideas and opinions with such writers as Mordecai Spector, David Frischman, I.H. Ravnitzki, Chaim N. Bialik and Mendele Mocher Sforim, there was vouchsafed to Sholom Aleichem a glimpse into the philosophical thinking of recognized literary men who were to exert significant impact upon his writing.

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I.D. Berkowitz, editor, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Y., Verlag Ykuf, 1926, N.Y., p. 183.

Of all the literary men whose influence touched the life of Sholom Aleichem, the outstanding one was his literary mentor, Mendele Mocher Sforim, (1836-1917) whom he called "grandfather". Up to 1888, the two had not yet met; they had been corresponding, however, since 1872.

Sholom Aleichem's first Yiddish novel, Stempenyu, (1888) was dedicated to his zayde, although Mendele advised him against writing a novel about Jews. His mentor wrote to Sholom Aleichem:

I would advise you not to write any novels regardless of your taste and genre, and most especially because of the fact that if there exists in the life of our people any material for novels it is quite different from those of other people. One must comprehend it well and write differently.<sup>20</sup>

In other letters, Mendele urged Sholom Aleichem to work diligently and laboriously. He conveyed, as well, his conception of characterization:

I love to find in addition to a beautiful face, life, wit and thoughtfulness -- as in a live person. Beside an attractive exterior, a characterization must let me learn something.<sup>21</sup>

20

Sholom Aleichem, Die Yiddish Folksbibliothek: Ein Buch fur Literatur und Wissenschaft, Book I, Kiev 1888, published by Sholom Aleichem, Jacob Sheftel, Introd. page V, Y.

21

Ibid, page VII



This advice Mendele's disciple seemed to have heeded. Sholom Aleichem often gives no description of the physical appearance of his characters, yet the reader learns enough from the writer's treatment to employ his own imagination and senses in realizing the whole person.

Mendele's approval meant a great deal to Sholom Aleichem and the younger man sought his opinion at various times when he was unsure of himself. Sholom Aleichem wrote a piece called "Auto-da-fe", in which he tells of the fate of one of his novels as a result of Mendele's judgment. After Sholom Aleichem has read aloud to him lengthy excerpts of his book, Mendele asks: "Is there something cooking in the oven?" Sholom Aleichem thinks his friend is hungry. Refusing food, Mendele merely observes,

If there is a fire going, throw in the entire book and let it burn in the fire. This is <sup>22</sup> not your genre -- this is -- this is -- feh!

A more favorable evaluation by other critics awaited Sholom Aleichem's writings in epistolary style. His facility in this medium was no mere "happenstance". A prolific writer of letters which numbered in the thousands,

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Sholom Rabinowitz, Yiddishe Shreiber, Sholom Aleichem Folksfund, N.Y., 1919, p. 38, Y.



Sholom Aleichem provides, through his correspondence, an invaluable source of biographical material relating to his family, his work, his literary colleagues, his travels, his heroes and his critics.

There were three reasons for his voluminous correspondence: separation from his family in pursuance of a livelihood in commerce, the yearning for contact with his literary contemporaries and his desperation during his frequent illnesses to keep in touch with his beloved family and friends.

Sholom Aleichem's prolonged illnesses necessitated recuperative rest-cures and frequent separation from his family. While he was in Minsk, 1908, he suffered from a severe cold which turned into a serious respiratory infection; he spent the following six years off and on in Nervi, Italy.<sup>23</sup> Writing letters came not only as a matter of enjoyment and for the purpose of "small talk"; more often, it arose out of urgency and

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20th Century Biographies, p. 1144.

necessity. The constancy of his straitened financial status necessitated extensive travel throughout Russia, Europe and the United States with the resulting parting from his family. His letters, written for reasons of communication with fellow-writers and to bear the pain of frequent separations from his beloved family for health and economic reasons carried over into his literary craftsmanship.

To ease the pangs of separation, Sholom Aleichem wrote voluminously to his dear ones during his period of enforced isolation due to a severe pulmonary hemorrhage in 1908. His letters to his family included those written to his wife, Olga (Bibi), to his children: Ernestine (Tissie, later Mrs. I.D. Berkowitz), Sara (Liala, later Mrs. M. Kaufman), Emma (later Mrs. L. Feigenberg), his son, Misha, another daughter, Marusa (Musa, Marie, later Mrs. B.Z. Goldberg), and his son, Numa (Norman Raiben, the artist), to his sons-in-law, I.D. Berkowitz (Hebrew-Yiddish author and outstanding translator of Sholom Aleichem's work), Dr. Michael Kaufman (later a physician), and his prospective son-in-law, B.Z. Goldberg (expert on Russian Jewry, editor and lecturer), to his grandchildren, Tamara Berkowitz

(later translator of some of his stories), and Bella Kaufman (later author of "Up The Down Staircase"). His little notes to his grandchildren tell us among other things of his genuine love for young people and of his own reluctance to grow old and to be called "grandfather".<sup>24</sup>

Sholom Aleichem's naturalness in communicating through correspondence is apparent in his literary monologues. They are like letters, containing an opening salutation, an exchange of amenities, a concern over state of health and fortune, often a resume of past occurrences and a lively narration of the current state of affairs. Even the closing is like the conclusion of a letter. This style is typical of the monologues in which Tevye addresses himself to Sholom Aleichem. Thus, the author's effectiveness in communicating through letters is important because of the epistolary technique employed in such major works as Menachem-Mendel and Tevye.

Sholom Aleichem's letters reveal that as his family grew, from the time of the birth of his first daughter, Ernestine, in 1884, Sholom Aleichem was pulled in

<sup>24</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, ed., Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf Verlag 1926, New York, p. 139, Y.

two directions: his psyche yearned to write and his family obligations called for material sustenance. Giving up his position as government rabbi of Lauben, in 1883, at the insistence of his father-in-law, who wished him to take charge of his financial holdings, Sholom Aleichem continued to send feuilletons and letters to the Folksblatt. Upon his father-in-law's death in 1885, Sholom Aleichem had to devote an entire year to the administration of his estate. The management of his late father-in-law's holdings involved him in stock exchange transactions in commodities and securities, with the result that Sholom Aleichem's writing came to a relative stand-still. He became involved in commerce in Kiev in 1886, (the following year his second daughter, Sara (Liala) was born.) His experiences in the stock-market marked the genesis of the character of Menachem-Mendel -- the peripatetic hero of the Menachem-Mendel series, the dreamer who fancied himself a "wheeler dealer", and who, according to Trunk, was Sholom Aleichem's "alter ego".<sup>25</sup>

The year 1888, was a significant one for Sholom Aleichem. It was the time of the death of his beloved

<sup>25</sup> J.J. Trunk, "Menachem Mendel of Kasrilevkeh", Sholom Aleichem Panorama, ed. M. Grafstein, p. 27

father in whose memory he wrote a book entitled Blumen (Flowers), 1888, consisting of 18 poems. On the dedication page, the author wrote: "On the fresh grass of his blessed father - there lies this Bintel Blumen to his eternal memory from his son, the author".<sup>26</sup> This year his third daughter Emma was born in Kiev, about the time his first edition of Die Yiddishe Folksbibliothek went to press. Shomer's Mishpot (The Judgment of Shomer) appeared this year, 1888, condemning the inferior writing for the theater and reproaching his Jewish literary contemporaries for the low level of their dramaturgy. His novel Stempenyu was published in the Yiddish Folksbibliothek and won widespread acclaim. Yet the renowned I.L. Peretz withheld his acknowledgment at this time and continued to deny his approval for over twenty years. This fact came to light when Sholom Aleichem's son-in-law, I.D. Berkowitz met Peretz at the home of Isaac Dinesen in Warsaw. Peretz sent greetings to Sholom Aleichem, praising Stempenyu. Sholom Aleichem, overcome by the accolades as well as the subterfuge, exclaimed:

The momzer (a much gentler word than its English counterpart) read Stempenyu in the Folksbibliothek.

26

Sholom Aleichem, Bintel Blumen Y. (Poems without Rhyme), Berditchev; Jacob Sheftel, Publisher, 1888, p. 1

over twenty years ago. I have witnesses!<sup>27</sup>

It was then, too, that Sholom Aleichem visited Odessa for the first time, where he met J.H. Ravnitzki, with whom he had corresponded and who was to become Sholom Aleichem's most intimate friend. On a second visit to Odessa, 1888, Sholom Aleichem at last met Mendele Mocher Sforim whom he had long admired and whose friendship enriched his life.

After the birth of Sholom Aleichem's son, Misha, in Kiev, 1889, the second volume of die Yiddishe Folksbibliothek was published in 1890. It drained him of his savings which he had accumulated on the Kiev stock exchange and he was forced into bankruptcy. Transferring his family in 1889 to Odessa, he had to leave Russia to replenish his fortune. He spent some time in Paris, Vienna and Czernowitz (Bukovina). In the meantime, his mother-in-law, Rachel Loeff, paid all of his debts so he could return to his family in Odessa. He tried his hand once again on the Odessa stock exchange but lost the remainder of his fortune in securities. These manipulations provided costly material for his saga of Menachem-Mendel.

27

I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf Verlag, 1926, N.Y., p. 160, Y.

Sholom Aleichem's youngest daughter, Marie, was born in 1892 and the family returned to Kiev. Continuing to write at every opportunity, Sholom had to keep his hand in commerce to maintain his growing family. In one of his letters written when he was a broker on the stock exchange, he wrote: "Solomon Rabinowitz is four hours a day a big manipulator on the exchange but from 5 P.M. till 3 or 4 A.M. I am Sholom Aleichem".<sup>28</sup>

It is evident that when the writer was involved in literary creativity, he thought of himself as Sholom Aleichem, reborn, a new man who was fulfilling his destiny. That commerce was not only discouraging but distasteful, as well, was made abundantly clear by the author. He resented every precious moment that he was away from his work. Although there was meagre revenue from his writings, this did not deter him from standing at his lectern - deck every possible moment. Writing not only came easily to Sholom Aleichem; it provided much needed therapy against the frustrations and disappointments the author encountered in commerce.

28  
Nachman Meisel, Unser Sholom Aleichem, Verlag Yiddish Buch, Warsaw 1959, p. 11, Y.



Sholom Aleichem was becoming impatient. When asked, "'When do you write?'" he wrote to his friend Mordecai Spector in 1892:

My word, I hardly know myself. I write while walking, running, sitting in somebody's office, riding on the street car and while somebody is worrying me about an unhewn forest, a high-priced country estate, a factory -- that's just the time when the most beautiful images emerge. Yet you can't tear yourself away for a moment to put it all down on paper. Confound business! Confound everything! 28a

His wife, aware of her husband's despair and anxiety, sold her last article of jewelry as security for the publication of a third volume of Die Yiddishe Folksbibliothek. However, additional funds were needed and it became a financial impossibility to subsidize the publication. Fortunately, the appearance of a new Yiddish periodical, Yud, in 1899, provided a haven for Sholom Aleichem's further episodes of Menachem-Mendel and Tevye.

It was about this time that the character of Tevye was developing in Sholom Aleichem's creative activity. He wrote his first episode of Tevye der Milchiger (Tevye, the Dairyman) in 1894. It is the belief of J.J. Trunk that Tevye was the antithesis of Menachem Mendel and that Sholom Aleichem created Tevye to counteract the dreaming of the "Luftmensch", Menachem-Mendel, "to develop a picture of

28a  
A.S. Gurstein, Sholom Aleichem, Y.,  
Melucha Verlag, Moscow (1946) p. 25



Jewish life on a conscious plane".<sup>29</sup>

During the closing years of the 19th Century, from 1893 to 1899, Sholom Aleichem was involved in speculative transactions in grain, sugar, wheat and in traveling for business reasons. His writing was sparse, but included "Yaknehaz" (1894) a satire on the stock exchange of Yechupetz. The representatives of the Kiev stock exchange recognized themselves in Sholom Aleichem's characters and prevailed upon the Czarist censors to confiscate and ban the comedy, on the grounds it was sacrilegious.<sup>30</sup> The work was regarded as so damaging to the townpeople of Kiev that it was censored, withdrawn and confiscated by the Russian government. Sholom Aleichem bided his time and incorporated this work in his Menachem-Mendel series.

In Sholom Aleichem's earlier work, written during the Haskalah period and under the influence of the Enlightenment (Aufklärung), there appeared a kind of satire which sought to reproach rather than reform. In

<sup>29</sup> J.J. Trunk, "Menachem Mendel of Kasrilevkeh", Sholom Aleichem Panorama, ed. M. Grafstein, p. 27 Jewish Observer, London, Ontario, 1948.

<sup>30</sup> A.S. Gurstein, Sholom Aleichem, Melucha Verlag, Y., Moscow, 1946, p. 22

"Dos Messerl" (The Pocket Knife), Sholom Aleichem had scrutinized the austerity of a cheder youth's existence, where even a pocket knife was taboo. Sharp though his barbs might be at this time, Sholom Aleichem's understanding of the nature of satire was in harmony with Jonathan Swift's thoughts on the subject. Swift believed that satire is a sort of glass "wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's faults but their own".

In a revealing note of self-analysis, Sholom Aleichem wrote to his friend, I.H. Ravnitzki in 1886:

But when it comes to mocking, deriding, making sport of others, turning them into ridicule, making a veritable laughing stock of them, while at the same time entertaining the reader with my very banter -- when it comes to that sort of thing, I am in my element, at my very best.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, as time went on, Sholom Aleichem mellowed. As through a looking glass, brightly, reflecting the geniality of the author and his subjects who happened to be his counterparts, there appeared a Gemütlichkeit which reinforced the appealing ethos of the author and revealed the cherished image of his little people under varying

<sup>31</sup> Melech Grafstein, Panorama of Sholom Aleichem, S. Nizer "Sholom Aleichem Mirrored in Tevye", Jewish Observer, London, Ontario, 1948, p. 17.

circumstances. In a letter to S.M. Dubnow (1889) which attested to a change toward a deeper sense of compassion, Sholom Aleichem wrote:

As things now stand, I cannot bring myself to poke fun at people, especially in the life that I describe. I dig up and bring to light gems such as Pereleh (Yossele Solovey) or Rochele (Stempenyu).<sup>32</sup>

These novels, according to the author, introduced characters "created of uncommon matter, whose souls dwell in a far away world, a world of melody". (Yiddischer Volksbibliothek, II, p. 308).<sup>33</sup>

Sholom Aleichem's emphasis on didactic, sermonizing feuilletons, novels and plays in the early period of his writing, (1883-1900) was replaced by a growing optimism which is apparent in the development of Sholom Aleichem's work as he enters his period of greatest creative power. It continues and becomes more evident as he approaches his declining years and it is sustained until the end of his life. Although Sholom Aleichem's physical suffering is increased through his many illnesses and

<sup>32</sup> Melech Grafstein, Sholom Aleichem Panorama, Samuel Niger, p. 17, Jewish Observer, 1948 London, Ontario.

<sup>33</sup> The Jewish People, Past & Present Vol. III, 1952, N.Y., p. 185

indispositions, his outlook becomes more optimistic. It seems that his philosophy in regard to the wise and tragic sense of life has been expressed at a later date by the American writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, who commented:

Life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat, and the redeeming things are not happiness and pleasure - but a deeper satisfaction that comes of the struggle. Having learned this in theory from the lives and conclusions of great men, you can get a hell of a lot more enjoyment out of whatever bright things come your way.<sup>34</sup>

Sholom Aleichem illuminated those bright and precious moments with humor and understanding, giving hope and sustenance not only to the characters in his stories but to his readers as well. They loved his people because they believed and loved the author.

It was at this time that Zionism touched Sholom Aleichem's life. After the first Zionist Congress in Basel (1897), Sholom Aleichem translated Max Nordau's historic speech, "The General Situation of the Jews Throughout the World" into Yiddish. This pamphlet became one of the earliest introductions to modern Zionism to appear in Russia. It indicted the oppression to which Jews were subjected by most of the nations of the world. Moved

<sup>34</sup> Henry Dan Piper, "Scott Fitzgerald and Princeton", Princeton Alumni Weekly Vo. LXVI, No. 16 - 2/8/66, p. 9

by the passion of this pamphlet, as he was by the speech of Professor Max Mandelstamm, delegate from Kiev to the First Zionist Congress, Sholom Aleichem edited and translated Mandelstamm's Russian speech into Yiddish and it was circulated wherever Yiddish was spoken.

In his own characteristic style, Sholom Aleichem promoted Zionism through laughter. Answering a question with another question, the author queried in his pamphlet, "Why Do the Jews Need a Country?" (Achiasaf, Warsaw, 1898): "Why should it be just the Jews who do not need a land?"<sup>35</sup> This booklet became a manual of Zionism for Eastern Europe, winning recognition from Herzl's Hebrew secretary, Professor Michael Berkowicz, for its content and style.

Sholom Aleichem's interest and involvement in the Zionist movement exerted a significant influence upon his writing as well as on his way of life. His interest in the larger, national community of the Jew is evident in some of Sholom Aleichem's stories published in Die Welt, Zionist periodical of Theodor Herzl. It was through his contributions to this journal that Sholom Aleichem became

<sup>35</sup> Josef Fraenkel, "Sholom Aleichem the Zionist", The American Zionist, Vol. LVII, Sept. 1966, p. 21

known in Western Europe. It was at Zionist gatherings that Sholom Aleichem began to present his readings, since the oral presentations of his works formed part of the programming for the earliest meetings. It may well be that Sholom Aleichem reached out to audiences which had no access to his written work but who responded to the spoken word with enthusiastic acclaim. It has been said that "what we see, especially inside a book, we may ignore. What we hear, really hear, we feel, like a kind of music".<sup>37</sup> It was at these Zionist meetings that Sholom Aleichem gave his readings. At the Paris meetings, Sholom Aleichem met the young artist, Marc Chagall.<sup>38</sup> Another friendship which came out of performances at Zionist meetings was that of Sholom Aleichem and Mark M. Warshavski. The songs which these two created, Warshavski, the music, and the lyrics by Sholom Aleichem and Warshavski, were so appealing and characteristically folk language that they have been incorporated in the body of authentic folk songs. They celebrated the activities of everyday Jews, from lullabies to holiday "kugel".

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, Charles Townsend Copeland, Great American Short Biographies, Ed. Joseph Mersand, Dell Publishers, N.Y. 1966

<sup>38</sup> Marie Goldberg, Interview between candidate and Sholom Aleichem's daughter and son-in-law 10/29/65, N.Y.C.

Sholom Aleichem describes a typical Zionist gathering at which he appeared with his "find", Mark M. Warshavski:

As the gatherings consisted of extremely heated debates and dry speeches, there was a great need of some sweetness, some dessert. That dessert was at first supplied by my stories, to which were later added Warshavski's songs.... Having had their fill of debates, they would.... seat me at the head of the table and the serious, sour faces were quickly wreathed in smiles; upon the platform stepped Kasrilevke, and the audience felt in a very festive mood.<sup>38a</sup>

The beginning of the 20th Century marked the turning point of Sholom Aleichem's life. It was in 1900 that he renounced the world of commerce for the pursuit of the writer's craft. This is not to say that he became an habitué of literary salons. Unlike Peretz and other literary contemporaries, Sholom Aleichem could not afford the luxury of discussion sessions in coffee houses. Writing to him was not only a compulsion; whatever monetary gain he eked out of it was a financial necessity. His family was growing; in 1901 his last child, a son, Numa, was born. His literary productivity increased as well as his concern for the plight of his people.

Sholom Aleichem's devotion to the cause of Zionism

<sup>38a</sup> M. Grafstein, ed., Panorama of Sholom Aleichem, Jewish Observer, London, Ontario.

continued unabated and in 1904, he wrote a booklet entitled Dr. Theodor Herzl, which dealt with the Zionist leader's life, his work and his early death. It was illustrated and included a letter from Dr. Mandelstamm (translated into Yiddish from German by Sholom Aleichem).<sup>39</sup> This booklet described Herzl's funeral and the public's profound grief mixed with guilt that Herzl had not been treasured more. Sholom Aleichem believed that the real tragedy of the Zionist leader's death lay in the fact that before his coming, the Jewish people had had no real hero. Yet, during his lifetime, his value was not appreciated. Sholom Aleichem compared Herzl with Moses who had been harshly treated by his followers during life and revered and respected after his death.

As Herzl's passing saddened all Jewry, so did it affect Sholom Aleichem. He asked, in deepest desperation, "Is it true then that Israel has no luck?" A year later, Sholom Aleichem repeated this query in his reports to the New York Yiddish newspapers of the pogroms in Kiev in 1905.

39

Sholom Aleichem, Dr. Theodor Herzl, Odessa, 1904, Y. published by Heilpern-Schweitzer, p. 6.



Materially helpless, and depressed by the plight of his people, Sholom Aleichem wrote his own epitaph in 1905,<sup>40</sup> remarkably revealing the spirit of a writer who loved humanity and could laugh with his people at the irrelevances of man's existence.

Here lies an ordinary Jew

Who wrote in Yiddish, it is true;

And for wives and plain folks rather

He was a humorist, an author.

Poking fun at all and sundry;

At the world he thumbed his nose.

The world went on swimmingly,

While he, alas, took all the blows.

And at the same time, his public rose,

Laughing, clapping and making merry,

He would suffer, only God knows

Secretly - so none was wary.<sup>40a</sup>

Compelled to leave Kiev because of the antisemitic measures taken by the Russian government, Sholom Aleichem

40

I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Y., Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 67.

40a

H.H. Roback, Story of Yiddish Literature, Yiddish Scientific Institute, 1940, N.Y. p. 111

1903,  
 set forth on a European tour, combining platform readings  
 with Zionist activity. He met such Zionist pioneers as  
 Loebel Taubes in Austro-Hungary, Joseph Cowen in London,  
 Chaim Weizmann in Manchester. (1904)

Between the periods of pogrom, 1903 in Kishinev  
 and 1905 in Kiev, Sholom Aleichem had become acquainted with  
 the Russian writers, Maxim Gorky, Leonid Andreyev and  
 Alexander Kuprin. He carried on a correspondence with  
 Tolstoy, Chekhov and Karolinko, asking their advice about  
 a collection entitled Hilf (Help), put out for the benefit  
 of victims of the Kishinev pogrom. Tolstoy sent three  
 stories which Sholom Aleichem translated into Yiddish.

Sholom Aleichem's admiration for the Russian  
 writers and the Russian language had been expressed by him  
 on many occasions. He wrote about his affinity for the  
 language: "I spent a great deal of time studying the  
 language and when I left school, I dealt with Russian until  
 I made it my everlasting possession."<sup>41</sup>

Sholom Aleichem's admiration for the Russian

<sup>41</sup> I. Druker, Kritische Etudien, "Sholom Aleichem and  
 Russian Literature" (in Yiddish), Ukrainian Assoc.  
 for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Kiev,  
 1939, p. 5

writers was reciprocated, according to the letter he wrote to the Yiddish-American writer, Yankev Faller. In 1902 Maxim Gorky, Andreyev and Kuprin the greatest Russian critics of the foremost journals had praised him, comparing him with Gogol and Dickens.<sup>42</sup> Sholom Aleichem had been advised to follow Pushkin, Gogol, Ledmonton and Turgeniev. About Turgeniev, Sholom Aleichem wrote: "He is really a writer, a genius, an artist, a poet, a friend of humanity with aesthetic feeling, with soul, with taste".<sup>43</sup> It was this admiration for the realism of Russian writers dating back to the time he read voraciously all the Russian writers in the large library of his father-in-law, Elimelech Loeff, which had impelled him to write Shomers Mishpot deploring the decadence of Jewish literature and denouncing the hack writing for the Yiddish Theatre.

Preoccupied as Sholom Aleichem was with his humorous writing at this time, his anxiety about the plight of his people was a major concern. In this regard he wrote

<sup>42</sup> I. Druker, Kritische Etudien, Sholom Aleichem and Russian Literature (in Yiddish), Ukrainian Assoc. For Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Kiev, 1939, p. 5

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 13

to his Russian literary colleagues, asking them to protest against the undeserved mistreatment of the Jews in Russia.

In a letter to Alexander Ampiteatrov, May, 1911, Sholom Aleichem wrote:

May God forbid that I blame others (for Christian blood-libel accusation), and say that all Christians are bloodthirsty....However, if circumstances were reversed, and Jews accused Christians of ritual murders, I would be consumed with indignation.... However, if there does exist such a thing as ritual murder, it does not happen among those upon whom pogroms are perpetrated; it occurs rather, on the part of those who plan the pogroms. Can one term the work of the pogromists of Kishinev and other places less than ritual murders?<sup>44</sup>

Because of the precarious situation of his people, Sholom Aleichem's involvement with the Russian and Yiddish literary scene, of necessity, took on lesser importance to him after the Kiev pogrom in 1905. His immediate concern was to leave Russia and to tour Western Europe and the United States to seek newer outlets for his work and his lectures. Before the Kiev pogrom, Sholom Aleichem had hoped to establish his own daily newspaper in Odessa and he had travelled to St. Petersburg, Vilna and Odessa (1905) for that purpose but it came to naught. The same fate met his attempt to establish a Yiddish Art Theatre in Odessa with

44  
I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, (Yiddish), N.Y., 1926, p. 237

Jacob Spivokovsky and Sam Adler, for the Russian government interfered by refusing to license the enterprise.<sup>45</sup>

Seeking funds to finance his family's trip to America, Sholom Aleichem held readings (1906) in Lemberg, Cracow, Czernovicz, Tarnopol, Zlotchev, Buchotch, Brod, Tarnov, Koloomaia, Glinani and other little cities in Galicia and Bukovina. He was received with affectionate acclaim here as he was in Vienna, Roumania, Switzerland, Belgium, Paris and London. With just enough funds for ship's passage for his wife, himself and their youngest son, Numa, the trio set out for America in 1907 in the hope that the author might find more favorable avenues for his work.

Warmly greeted in the United States, Sholom Aleichem gave his readings in many cities. While in New York (1907) he adapted and produced his own two plays, Der Auswurf in Jacob Adler's Grand Theatre and Stempenyu in Boris Thomashefsky's People's Theatre. He contributed stories and articles to several New York newspapers, the Wahrheit, the Tageblatt and Amerikaner as well as to the Warsaw Unser Leten, Petersburgers Freind and Vilna Dos Yiddishe Folk. This prodigious amount of work and the strenuousness of his lecture tour taxed his health and he decided in 1909 to go

<sup>45</sup>

I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, (Yiddish) Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 365

back to Russia to be closer to the remainder of his family which had been left behind in Europe.

Back in Russia he went on with his speaking tours but the rigorous Russian climate aggravated his respiratory weakness and in 1908 he was stricken with tuberculosis. This condition made it necessary for him to spend the next five winters in Italy and his summers in Switzerland. Sholom Aleichem continued writing. (Appendix A) He sent contributions to New York and Continental newspapers and periodicals. (Appendix C) He wrote additional Tevye stories and the series Eisenbahn Geschichte. In 1909, the Warsaw Committee, consisting of his literary colleagues, J. Dinesen, Dr. G. Levin and A. Podleshevsky, bought the rights to his works from the former publishers and presented them to Sholom Aleichem. The books were re-issued in small volumes and received wide circulation, (several hundred thousand copies), affording the author a measure of annual security.

In the summer of 1913, he became part of a literary circle of Jewish writers in Germany. He gave several readings here as well as in Paris. And, from time to time, standing at his lectern-like writing table, he continued to write more Menachem-Mendel letters and Tevye

stories. (Appendix A) He edited the second enlarged edition of M.M. Warshafsky's songs, and on the occasion of David Frischman's literary jubilee, he wrote a glowing accolade to his beloved colleague.

The outbreak of World War I found Sholom Aleichem's family in Germany. Compelled to flee, they took the last train to Denmark where they were given shelter. Again, his financial reserve was too meager to take his entire family with him to America. Therefore, he left for New York with part of his family. Soon after his arrival in December of 1914, Sholom Aleichem was accorded an evening of honor at Cooper Union and several weeks later, he gave a reading at Carnegie Hall. To add to his feeling of achievement, he was given an annual contract by the newly established New York Tog. However, his good fortune was short-lived. His contract with The Day was not renewed for the following year. Yet another happening shocked him profoundly and, in all probability, had a devastating effect on his already failing health; that was the death of his beloved son, Mischa, who had been left behind in Denmark.

The author was keenly aware that time was running out and hastened to write as much as possible. After his son's death, he wrote his own last will and testament,

requesting that the anniversary of his death be observed by his son, sons-in-law, daughters and grandchildren getting together with good friends and reading the will. Requesting them to select one of his really joyous stories and to read it aloud in whatever language they understood, he desired his name to be recalled with laughter or not at all. His will provided for the financial well-being of workers and striving writers, as well as his own immediate family.

To Sholom Aleichem probably the most important of his writings was his autobiography, Funem Yarid (The Great Fair), October 1908, in which he wanted to:

relate his life story in literary form and to illuminate the entire mileu in which he lived - fifty years of Jewish life, all its movements, happenings, achievements, all of his known and secret personalities, great people and little people, the true Jewish 'fair' -- and in the middle, the folk artist, the keen observer with perceptive, enthusiastic and probing eyes.<sup>46</sup>

The urgency of writing his life's story had been expressed by Sholom Aleichem in a letter to his friend, Mordecai Spector, in 1895:

Since the best book is one's life and the best

<sup>46</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, ed., Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf Verlag, 1926, N.Y., p. 7, Y.



novel a person's life, my life is really rich in various episodes, characters and types; I am firmly determined to get to the writing of my autobiography.<sup>47</sup>

To be sure, his autobiographical work was an important assignment which he projected for many years. His death brought the writing to an end, after he had covered his twenty-first year.

Nevertheless, it contained enough about the author to indicate the influence of his life on his literary output. In Funem Yarid, the reader perceives many of the motifs which run through the work of Sholom Aleichem - his remarkable close relationship to the Almighty, his militant stance on poverty, his understanding attitude toward his non-Jewish neighbors, his unwavering belief in and understanding of young people, his humane treatment of animals, his basic optimism in the face of tragedy, and above all the use of humor as a coat of armor, as a protective cloak to fend off the onslaughts of anti-semitism and other slings and arrows of hostile fortune.

Racing against time, Sholom Aleichem endeavored to write as much as possible. As the end approached, his humor seemed more tender and his caricatures less grotesque.

<sup>47</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, ed., Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf Verlag, 1926, N.Y. p. 8, Y.

Sholom Aleichem retained the fey, bittersweet qualities which characterized his personality and his stories. His last reading took place on March 4, 1916 in Philadelphia before a thousand people. Again, his finances were reduced by the dishonesty of his arrangers. Soon he began to ail quite seriously and took to his bed. His fellow writers visited him and were invited to his last Seder at Pesach time. His strength and heart became weaker and his life ebbed at 7:29 A.M., Saturday, May 13, 1916. At his bedside were his wife, Olga, his daughters, Ernestine, Emma and Marusi, his surviving son Numa, his son-in-law, I.D. Berkowitz, his grand-daughter Tamara, B.Z. Goldberg (later his son-in-law), David Pinski, Pinchas Ruttenberg, and his sister Rachel.

Two hours later, his last will and testament was opened by Dr. I.L. Magnes, His many colleagues and friends kept an honor death watch for two days, at which time there were thousands of people to bid him farewell. His funeral took place on the 15th of May and the cortege was followed by hundreds of thousands of shopworkers. The funeral services were held in the auditorium of the Educational Alliance, where eulogies were delivered by many outstanding literary men. He was interred at Mt. Neboh in Brooklyn with

the thought of taking him back to Kiev after the war. After the Russian revolution this was no longer possible; he was put to rest in Mt. Carmel in Brooklyn in the Arbeiter Ring section where his last wish was carried out: "I want to be among plain working Jews, with the real people."<sup>48</sup>

The importance of Sholom Aleichem's biographical background in illuminating his writings presents a challenge which even the New Criticism, with its emphasis on the work itself, cannot wave aside. To be sure, the words may stand alone, entertain, enlighten, even move his readers to irrepressible laughter. Yet, the complete catharsis, resulting from laughter which springs from suffering, comes more readily to those who are familiar with the facts of Sholom Aleichem's life.

## II-Summary

The years from 1883-1900 marked the first period of the author's emergence as a published writer under the name, Sholom Aleichem, which he had been using as one of many pseudonyms. It coincided with a major event in his own life, his marriage to his pupil, Olga Loeff. Her father was now reconciled to the union, but requested his new son-in-law to give up his position as rabbiner and to devote his time to manage the many family holdings.

Sholom Aleichem was not averse to leaving his rabbiner post, since he experienced many frustrations in the position. Politically appointed, he was limited by Russian governmental restriction from implementing his innovative ideas in the Jewish community. Moreover, the image of the rabbiner among the Lauben Jews, themselves, received little respect and admiration. Since no rabbinical training was required and political influence was recognized in the appointment, Sholom Aleichem found minor rewards in his work. His outlet for his disenchantment with his achievements as rabbiner was to express his ideas for reform in the satirical tone of his articles in the Hebrew journals Ha-Melitz and Ha-Zefirah.

Although his writing time became more and more limited as he continued to manage Elimelech Loeff's

enterprises, Sholom Aleichem made use of whatever leisure moments he could find to read voraciously of the vast collection of Russian, Hebrew and Yiddish works which were part of his father-in-law's library. Among the Russian writers, he found one who influenced his early satirical and realistic writing -- Nikolai Gogol, whose social satire, Dead Souls had also inspired the artist Marc Chagall's sketches based on that book.

Mendele Mocher Sforim's work in Hebrew won admiration from Sholom Aleichem and he tried to copy his austere style and to maintain his high standards in his own contributions. His reading of Mendele's works led to a warm correspondence between the disciple, Sholom Aleichem, and the Master, or Zayde (grandfather), Mendele Mocher Sforim.

Among the Yiddish writers of the time, Sholom Aleichem found many of the themes which appeared in his own work. The concept of the "Luftmensch" was a popular theme in this early period. M.Z. Feierberg's short story "Le-on" ("Whither") dealt with the problem of rootlessness and the Jew between two worlds. I. Bershinsky described Russian-Jewish middle-class young people in rebellion against ghetto life in Without a Goal and Upstream. The theme of a shtetl child's rebellion against his austere environment and colorless

"cheder" life appeared in S. Ben-Zion's novel,

The Repressed Soul.

Thus, Sholom Aleichem's readings of these Russian, Hebrew and Yiddish writers left a significant imprint and exerted a marked influence upon the literary creativity of the author in this early period.

The events of the crucial year 1888 were significant in their impact on the life of the author as well as in their effect on the pattern of Sholom Aleichem's literary output. His father's death left a void in his personal life since there existed between father and son mutual love and understanding, particularly since the death of young Sholom's mother after his Bar-Mitzvah. Sholom Aleichem's dedicatory book of poems and stories, A Bintel Blumen, written as a memorial to his father, reveals a gentler tone in his writing and a deeper appreciation and compassion for the human condition.

In this year, 1888, Sholom Aleichem's new Yiddishe Folksbibliothek came forth, containing the work of outstanding writers, as well as some of Sholom Aleichem's own work. At this time, Sholom Aleichem visited Odessa and met Mendele Mocher Sforim with whom he had been corresponding

for many years since 1872. Sholom Aleichem's novel, Stempenye, which appeared in his literary periodical, Yiddische Volksbibliothek, was dedicated to "Mendele", who had advised his disciple against writing a "Jewish" novel. Another novel, Sender Blank, published during this year showed the influence of Mendele's admonitions. Shomers Mishpot (The Judgement of Shomer) denounced "hack" writing but applauded valuable writers like Mendele Mocher Sforim and others.

After this time of great activity in his personal as well as literary life, Sholom Aleichem had to relegate his writing to a secondary place while he sought more productive means of financial livelihood. However, his travels for that purpose, as well as his experiences, provided material for some of his works which began to emerge at the close of this early period -- his play, Yaknehoz, which blasted the Yechupetz stock exchange, dealt so satirically with the brokers that the government banned the work and confiscated it. Sholom Aleichem gathered material as well for his Menachem-Mendel stories and the first monologues of Tevye, der Milchiger.

The period from 1900-1910 represented the time of prolific productivity in Sholom Aleichem's literary output as well as involvement in world movements which Sholom Aleichem found compelling and relevant as a human being as well as an artist. Released from the demands of commerce, Sholom Aleichem continued to write stories of Tevye and series of letters between Menachem-Mendel and Sheyne-Sheindel. His many short stories dealt with the themes of generational conflict, the rootlessness of the Jew caught between ghetto life and city life, occupational and educational restrictions, among others. Sholom Aleichem is revealed in his work of this period as a Chassidic humanist who celebrated all that is beautiful, dignified and spiritual in Judaism. His oneness with God and his fellow man shone forth most particularly in the Tevye stories in a sort of Buberian I-thou relationship. Satire subsided as gentle humor tinged with pathos permeated many of his monologues and short stories of this period. Sholom Aleichem wrote voluminously in Yiddish at this time, with major success in the monologue and short story. This was the time, too, of Sholom Aleichem's interest and involvement in the Zionist Congress meetings which he had been attending as a delegate. At the various Zionist gatherings, Sholom Aleichem gave his readings and collaborated with M.M. Warshawski, writer of folk songs as editor of the lyrics



or writer of his own lyrics. Sholom Aleichem's writing in Yiddish continued unabated until the year of the Kishinev pogrom 1903 which changed the course of the lives of East European Jews. Sholom Aleichem was affected by these anti-Jewish onslaughts psychologically as well as economically. In connection with the literary anthology, Hilf (Help), Sholom Aleichem received three short stories from the Russian writer, Tolstoy. The Kiev pogrom in 1905 made Sholom Aleichem despondent and he wrote his epitaph which reflected the self-image of a simple man who endured great suffering in secret while he entertained everyone with his humor. In 1906, Sholom Aleichem visited New York where he was received with great acclaim. After a brief stay, during which time he witnessed the production of his plays, Stempenyu and Shmuel Pasternak, he rejoined his family in Geneva. In 1908, Sholom Aleichem was stricken with tuberculosis. Nevertheless, he continued his Menachem-Mendel correspondence, new Tevye monologues and Mottel episodes. At this time, 1909, some of his friends Isaac Dinesen, G. Levin and A. Podlishevsky, of the Warsaw committee to honor the author, bought the rights to Sholom Aleichem's work from former publishers and presented them to the author.

After 1910, Sholom Aleichem's health declined and his literary output lessened, although the quality of his humor remained optimistic yet merrily pathetic. The author continued writing his major stories about Tevye, Mottel, Menachem-Mendel and his autobiographical opus Funem Yarid (The Great Fair). The outbreak of World War I, in 1914, caused Sholom Aleichem to flee to neutral Denmark, where his son, Mischa, remained in a sanatorium. Upon the news of his son's death a year later, Sholom Aleichem wrote his last will and testament which revealed the writer's ethical concern for his less fortunate literary colleagues as well as a desire to be remembered with laughter. His death on May 13, 1916 completed the life of a remarkable writer whose life style was related to his writing and whose work revealed a philosophy that is relevant for all seasons.

### CHAPTER III. EMERGENCE AS A WRITER: FIRST FRUITS (1883-1900)

The period up to 1900 marked Sholom Aleichem's appearance as an occasional writer, full of promise, perceptive and critical, steadfast in his aims, yet plagued by indecision as to his proper genre. From the year 1883 to the turn of the century, Sholom Aleichem's literary output was limited by economics to part-time production.<sup>1</sup> Yet his mind was involved every waking hour and well into the night with creative mental activity.<sup>2</sup>

Sholom Aleichem's earliest published writings appeared in the form of periodic contributions to the various journals. Russian, Hebrew and Yiddish.<sup>3</sup> An analysis of the satirical tone of his early writings reveals that it was the "needle" rather than the scalpel that Sholom Aleichem wielded. He was the gadfly rather than the surgeon. His satire sought to arouse the conscience of his contemporaries, of the Jewish milieu or the Russian bureaucracy, to an

<sup>1</sup> A.S. Gurstein, Sholom Aleichem (Yiddish) Verlag Emes, Moscow 1946, p. 25

<sup>2</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, 1926, p. 5, Y.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 315

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awareness of inequities through humor rather than denunciation.

The essay was the genre most frequently used in the early period. His articles were attempted as answers to some provocative issues, such as the military draft, the education of Jewish youth and other vexing problems of the day. Since he was writing in Hebrew, he was restrained in mood by the holy aspect of the language itself. Thus, his contributions which appeared in the periodicals, Hamelitz and Ha-Zefrah were serious in tone, didactic, sermonic feuilletons.

In the Ha-Zefrah article (1879, no. 6) which dealt with Jewish education, Sholom Rabinowitz answered a correspondent who had called the Jewish youth of Pereyeslav ignorant<sup>4</sup> because they lacked facility in Hebrew and Russian. Sholom pointed out that the excellent achievements of the Jewish youth in the secular schools lent no credence to this indictment. In this article, the author used all of his persuasive powers. Couching his arguments in forceful and logical language, he served as counsel for the defense of the young Jews of his home town.

<sup>4</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, (Yiddish) Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 311

Several years later, at the end of 1881, Sholom contributed an article to Hamelitz (1881, no. 51) dealing with child-rearing and its relationship to military service. This was in answer to a proposal made by another contributor to this periodical that rabbis should not permit young Jews, eligible for the draft, to be married before they went into service. This evasion of military service, the other writer felt, was giving the Jewish community a bad name.

Sholom Rabinowitz, taking issue with this view, expressed his belief that the young men married early because they had no professions. Thus, they were compelled to look forward to being supported by their fathers-in-law. He advised more education and greater preparation in the professions, with a subsequent lessening of the need for early support.

Rabinowitz felt that it was the duty of the government rabbi to supervise the education of the young. He wrote in 1881 to his fellow rabbis, "Enough of sitting on your chairs and spending your time recording the dead and the living. How long will you cringe before your own sheep, who are bosses

<sup>5</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, N.Y. Y., 1926, p. 312

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 312

over you? How long will you serve servants?"<sup>7</sup> The author believed that rabbis should stimulate the building of private schools, talmud torahs and technical schools. Sholom reproached the rich men of the town of Lauben, who were building an expensive synagogue, at a time when poor children were running around barefoot and naked, with no place to be taught, and the ailing wandered out-of-doors, without hospitals where they might be restored to health.

In 1882, in Hamelitz, (No. 4 and 6), Sholom Rabinowitz wrote again about early marriage and military service. In a later article, he suggested a plan to change the old cheders, so that their educational processes might be relevant to the newer concepts of pedagogy and child psychology. Thus, through these Hebrew articles, Sholom hoped to precipitate many reforms. It was his firm conviction that the rabbi should become a more dynamic and active participant in sociological and educational changes. He felt that religious education needed modernization. He suggested a more realistic approach to the secular and professional training of Jewish youth so that they might become productive and self-supporting members of their

<sup>7</sup> A.S. Gurstein, Sholom Aleichem, Melucha Verlag, Emes, (Yiddish) Moscow 1946 p. 16

communities. It was quite obvious that young Rabinowitz was determined to use his talents to become an innovator in the role of rabbiner. Moreover, it was quite evident that his propensity for humor had to be submerged, since the tone of these Hebrew articles was polemical and quite somber. The nature of much of Sholom Aleichem's work during this period lacked the ebullience, the sparkle and the wild humor of the later works of the author.

Although, technically, Sholom Rabinowitz's Russian writing was stylistically superior to his Hebrew endeavors, and despite the fact that Sholom had utmost facility in the Russian language, he could not find in his Russian writing the aesthetic fulfillment which he derived from his Hebrew and Yiddish writings. To Sholom, language without a people lacked a soul. The author termed his own Russian story, Die Traumer, (published in Yevraiskaia Obozrenic, July, 1884), a pale reflection of Mendele Mocher Seforim's Mosaies Bineomin Hashlishi.<sup>8</sup> In Die Traumer, the author scoffs at dreams that are detached from life. Fishel Charif, the hero, lives in a make-believe world of illusion, based on the Bible, the Talmud and Hebrew poetry of the 15th and 16th centuries. Charif and Elie Tamevater are companions on

<sup>8</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, N.Y. Y., 1926, p. 313

this imaginary voyage as the Messiah and Eliahu Hanovi.<sup>9</sup> It is the interpretation of the critic, I. Druker, that

this dream world was an escape from reality and a release from the onslaughts of anti-semitism and persecution. These rootless people sought refuge and comfort in mystical dreams and constant anticipation of a miracle and a messiah.<sup>10</sup>

In his Russian work, Sholom Rabinowitz became the crusader of enlightenment rather than the artist: the reformer overshadowed the humorist. With the passing of the early years of writing, 1873-1888, and a lessening of his didactic tendency, a discernible effort toward greater artistry in the depiction of his characters was revealed. After Die Träumer, devoted to the study of a certain type of romantic in Jewish life, Sholom Rabinowitz began to deal less with the world of "escape" and more with portraying characters who coped with reality, like Rochele of Stempenyu and Tevey, the dairyman.

It was when Sholom Rabinowitz began to write in Yiddish, in 1883, that he felt comfortable, relaxed, and in his proper element. Under various pseudonyms, he was sending up "trial balloons," in the form of short

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 314

<sup>10</sup> I. Druker, Kritische Etudien (Yiddish), Ukrainian Assoc. for Cultural Relations, Kiev 1939, p.6



contributions, in Yiddish, to the few Yiddish periodicals.

Sholom Aleichem's first Yiddish story appeared in Zederbaum's Yiddishe Volksblatt. It was an autobiographical memoir entitled "Tsvai Shtainer" (Two Stones), 1883, dealing with the author's love for his wife, Olga. Of greater importance because of the critical acclaim with which it was received was the short story, "Dos Messerl" (The Pocket-Knife), 1887.<sup>11</sup>

In "The Pocket-Knife", the author skillfully delineates the character of an eight-year old cheder-boy, his innermost thoughts, his frustrations, his overwhelming yearning to possess a forbidden object, a little pen-knife. The austerity of a Jewish lad's existence is pointed up by the lengths to which the young narrator goes--whittling a feather to the keenness of a knife and sharpening the steel stay from his mother's crinoline. How vivid is the description of his scrimping and saving his kopecks to buy a knife, on time, from his friend, Shloimele!

With economy of description and conciseness of language, Sholom Aleichem depicts the father who snatches

<sup>11</sup> Sholom Aleichem, "Dos Messerl", Panorama of S.A., M. Grafstein, ed. Jewish Observer, London, Ontario, 1948, p. 99

the knife away from the youngster, saying: "A knife, a knife again. You lout, you should be sitting over a book instead".<sup>12</sup> In this one sentence, we learn the philosophy of pious Jewish fathers throughout Eastern Europe at the time-- the stubborn insistence on learning and the puritanical denial of extraneous interests that might distract young boys from that rigid discipline. That the process of learning is not always completely palatable may be gleaned from the name of the Hebrew teacher, Mottel Malchamoves (Angel of Death). Finally, the young protagonist, driven by desperation, steals a pocket-knife from a kindly boarder, aptly named Herr Herzenhertz. The young boy is guilt-ridden and eventually disposes of the stolen article by throwing it down the well. Bedevilled by nightmares and delirium, the boy is critically ill for two weeks. When he recovers, everyone is kind to him and unusually tender, even his father. The lad has a sudden impulse to kiss his parent. But then how can a Jewish boy kiss his father?

Enthusiastically commended by S.M. Dubnow (Kritikus), literary critic of the Russo - Jewish periodical, Voshkod. Sholom Aleichem regarded this story as the turning point in

<sup>12</sup> M. Grafstein, ed, "Sholom Aleichem Panorama", London Observer, London, Ontario, 1948, p. 99

his career. When this work, written in the so-called "jargon" was well received, he felt it was now his mission to be instrumental in establishing a Yiddish annual where he, secure in his new name, Sholom Aleichem, together with other Yiddishists, might find a literary home.

There was to be more than literary interest to engage the attention of his new journal. A renewal of research into the Jewish past, into Jewish education, into language and literature, was enunciated as a major purpose in the establishment of Di Yiddishe Folksbibliothek, in 1888. As editor, Sholom Aleichem attracted to the new periodical such contributors as Simon Frieze, Ben Ami, Menashe Margolis, Isaac Kaminer, Yehalel, David Frischman and other important writers, who doubtless, among other reasons, perhaps wished to be associated with an important new periodical under the aegis of a talented editor.

When the Hebrew writer, Isaac Kaminer, saw the calibre of contributors to Sholom Aleichem's Folksbibliothek, he wrote:

I looked through the list of contributors.....  
 I saw there not only the best Yiddish journalists, but also many Hebraists, the best writers in the sacred tongue. I also saw there some who had hitherto excelled in Russian. In short, they were all there, all our Jewish forces, the best representatives of our literature, and all of them speak one language, the

language spoken by the entire people.<sup>13</sup>

It was in this language, Yiddish, that Stempenyu, Sholom Aleichem's most representative novel of his early period, appeared in Di Yiddishe Folksbibliothek, in 1888.<sup>14</sup> Written in a romantic vein, there are, nevertheless, strong undercurrents of realism throughout. Stempenyu deals with the theme of the enslaved woman, whose thoughts, yearnings and actions are limited by the mores of her times, religion, and the folkways of her milieu. This novel deals, as well, with the folk talent which emerges from the depths of the Jewish people. In Stempenyu, the character Stempenyu, is a talented violinist. (In the novel, Yosele Solovei, the hero is a talented singer; in Wandering Stars, a talented Jewish actor). Stempenyu was the "hit" musician of the day---in Jewish circles---a sort of pied piper, whose personal virility and whose spell-binding performance on the violin left a string of broken-hearted females in his wake.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Niger, "Yiddish Literature", The Jewish People, Past and Present, Vol. III, Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks, N.Y., 1952, p. 187

<sup>14</sup> Sholom Aleichem, ed., Di Yiddishe Folksbibliothek, Y., Ein Buch Fur Literatur, Kritik und Wissenschaft, Bk I  
Publ. by Sholom Aleichem, J. Sheffel, Kiev. 1888

Sholom Aleichem describes the effect of Stempenyu's playing upon his listeners:

The people felt that their souls were leaving their bodies. They were dying slowly inch by inch, their strength drawn out of them by the magic of Stempenyu's playing.<sup>15</sup>

Rochele, a guest at a local wedding where Stempenyu is playing, has caught his fancy, while she, in turn, is magnetically drawn to him. Particularly vulnerable because of the apathy of her own husband, Rochele is enchanted by Stempenyu's music, as well as his undisguised admiration.

Sholom Aleichem's perceptiveness of Rochele's innermost thoughts may be rated with the finest writing of American and English authors. Indeed, it might be compared with James Joyce's understanding of Molly Bloom in Ulysses. Rochele's thoughts, as she contemplates her insensitive, sleeping, snoring husband, bring to mind the earthy, robust soliloquy of Mrs. Leopold Bloom. The two women, however, are worlds apart, in morality as well as milieu. Even in her wildest fantasies, Rochele's built-in censor would keep her from articulating the sordid, clinical self-analysis which

15 Sholom Rabinowitz, Stempenyu, tr. H. Berman, 1913, Methuen & Co., London, England, p. 40

is so characteristic of Molly Bloom. How restrained are Rochele's thoughts about her husband!

Oh, what a difference there is in you, Moshe-Mendel, to whom I betrothed myself not so long ago. That time you were so charming, and had such bright eyes. They seemed to dance themselves into my heart. Your glances were like flames to me..... . And what are you now? You are an altogether different man.<sup>16</sup>

Rochele remains romantic but pious, and when put to the test, resists the seductive blandishments of Stempenyu and his violin. Sholom Aleichem, commenting on her courage, hails her:

O daughter of Israel, now you have shown your virtue, your purity of heart, your strength in the time of temptation--the whole innocence of your Jewish soul! Here, when the hour of your trial is at hand, you showed your faithfulness and your sincerity.<sup>17</sup>

Within the frame of reference of her time and the limitations imposed by the age upon her sex, Rochele emerges the true woman of valor, whose honor is more precious than rubies.

Sholom Aleichem refers to the image of Jewish womanhood at the time with compassion:

The heart of the Jewish woman is a secret...and according to the traditions which are strongly adhered to in the villages and towns of the

16

Sholom Rabinowitz, Stempenyu, tr H. Berman, 1913, Methuen & Co., London, England, p. 72

17

Ibid, p. 259

Russian Pale, it is neither seemly nor desirable that any man should concern himself with the heart of a woman. It is as if she has no heart, no secrets buried in it.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Sholom Aleichem reveals his own values in his analysis of the character of Rochele. Her virtues are her religiosity, her introspectiveness, her self-discipline, her modesty, her fine aesthetic sensitivity and her profound respect for her family.

As for Stempenyu, the anti-hero of this novel, he brought sadness to those whose lives he touched. Sholom Aleichem describes his effect upon his listeners:

Stempenyu went on pouring his soul in the saddest, gloomiest melodies, so that a profound melancholy fell upon everyone who listened to him.....and Stempenyu? Who was Stempenyu at that moment? What was he? There was only a little fiddle and sweet, yet sad sounds--divine singing that seemed to fill the house from roof to cellar.<sup>19</sup>

For all his philandering and indiscretions, Stempenyu reaps his just deserts: A materialistic wife, Freidel, and a conniving mother-in-law are his portion.

The language of Stempenyu is rhythmic, rivalling

<sup>18</sup> Sholom Rabinowitz, Stempenyu, 1913, Methuen & Co., London, England, p. 97

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 181

the music of the novel's musicians in cadence. Rising and swelling, it reaches a climax, stops suddenly, leaving the dancers and the readers breathless:

And he (Stempenyu) poured out his soul in the most mournful cadences that grew softer and sadder each minute. Suddenly, he would be seized with a wild fit of temper, and he would play the most bizarre things, his tones growing louder and more stormy each moment, just as they had grown softer only a little while before. So extreme was his violence that it was not long before he was exhausted.<sup>20</sup>

...His playing was beyond compare when he was in this riotous mood to which one can give no name.<sup>21</sup>

In Stempenyu, the violin plays an important role.

This instrument is used time and again, in other works as well, as a recurring symbol. We find it in "First Love" of Sholem Aleichem's autobiographical work, Funem Yarid (The Great Fair), in his short story, "The Fiddle", and in several of the Tevye stories. Always, hovering about is a mystical "Yiddel mit dem Fiddel", rarely earthbound -- always on the wing--sometimes perching on the roof, but ever on the horizon.

Describing the impact and spell of the violin, the author writes:

<sup>20</sup> Sholom Rabinowitz, Stempenyu, 1913, Methuen & Co., London, England, p. 182

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 184



It would moan and wail and weep over its fortune as if it were a Jew. It was as if every note found its way upward from the deepest depths of the soul....Even the most pious Jew need not shed so many tears for the destruction of Jerusalem as the women were in the habit of shedding when Stempenyu played.<sup>22</sup>

Sholom Aleichem had indeed hearkened to the advice given him by his mentor, Mendele Mocher Seforim, to whom he had dedicated the novel.

Over any piece of work, dear grandchild, one must sweat and toil. One must work at chiseling every separate word to perfection. Remember what I say to you--one must keep on filing and chiseling.<sup>23</sup>

In defending his novel against anticipated critiques, Sholom Aleichem declared:

A tame story!....Am I to blame if amongst our people there are neither dukes or princesses? If amongst us there are only ordinary women and musicians, plain young women with no dreams of marvelous transformations and working men who live from hand to mouth?<sup>24</sup>

Stempenyu created quite a furor in Polish literary circles. Although the critics admitted that the novel had artistic merits, they expressed surprise at the very

<sup>22</sup> Sholom Rabinowitz, Stempenyu, 1913, Methuen & Co., London, England, p. 16

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 5

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 275

existence of a "Jewish" novel. The Polish critic, Hader Tokazhewicz, wrote in *Tigodnik Polski* (1888, no. 50).

A novel dealing with Jewish life, that is something new. Is it possible that erotic problems and emotional sentiments can loom as large among the ignorant Jewish masses as to form the subject of a novel? Can Jews who trade, deal deviously and cheat, have any room for romance, for erotic experiences and sentiment which have nothing to do with keeping an inn, usury and petty trading?<sup>25</sup>

Ironically enough, although petty trading on the stock exchange in Kiev and Odessa had become the lot of Sholom Aleichem because of the condition of his purse and the meagreness of his possessions, it was out of these adventures on the "exchange", that Yaknehoz and the Menachem-Mendel series emerged. The comedy, Yaknehoz, 1894, dealt with the Kiev stock exchange. The treatment was so realistic that the members of the exchange recognized themselves. Charging sacrilegious profanity, they prevailed upon the Czarist censors to confiscate the comedy and ban further presentation.<sup>26</sup>

In Menachem-Mendel, the correspondence between the

<sup>25</sup> Jacob Shatzky, "Slavonic Slant on Sholom Aleichem" S.A. Panorama, Jewish Observer, London, Ontario, p.55

<sup>26</sup> A.S. Gurstein, Sholom Aleichem, Meluche Verlog, Emers, Moscow, 1946, p. 22, Y.

hero, Menachem-Mendel, the speculator with both feet in mid-air, and his spouse, Sheyne-Sheindel, represents the epistolary monologue employed so effectively by Sholom Aleichem. Of the pair, Sheyne-Sheindel's letters are more colorful, replete with black-bile and invective.

The openings of Sheyne-Sheindel's letters observe all the conventions and amenities of a model friendly letter. The family is, invariably, according to the initial greeting, enjoying enviable good health. But, immediately, and dramatically, Sheyne-Sheindel lets her spouse have all the bad news with both barrels. All the curses which Sholom Aleichem learned from his stepmother are employed effectively and humorously in the characterization of Sheyne-Sheindel. The postscripts to the letters are concise, usually giving the heart of the message each is trying to convey. The letter itself is anecdotal and verbose, reflecting the character of the writer, establishing the setting and is steeped in ironic humor as a result of misinterpretation, actual or intentional.

In Menachem-Mendel, action is subdivided in terms of space. Menachem-Mendel is itinerant, travelling from place to place seeking his fortune, changing his vocation as he changes his locale. Sheyne-Sheindel, his wife, remains

in Kasrilevke with her brood of children and her parents. Menachem-Mendel is the Luftmensch, while his wife is practical and realistic. Menachem-Mendel is confronted by restrictions and limitations as to occupational possibilities and beset by enforced separations from his family in his efforts to eke out a livelihood. Dreaming impossible dreams, Menachem-Mendel goes from broker to agent to speculator, matchmaker, and writer.

It is the opinion of I.I. Trunk that Menachem-Mendel is Sholom Aleichem's alter ego.<sup>27</sup> Just as Menachem-Mendel went from occupation to occupation, from town to town, from dream to dream, so did Sholom Aleichem.

When Menachem-Mendel and Tevye lose money in the stock market, it is really Sholom Aleichem whose meagre funds have been dissipated. Tevye, the realist, and Menachem-Mendel, the dreamer, are just as vulnerable when it comes to speculating as their author, Sholom Aleichem. Menachem-Mendel is a composite clown-figure, an admixture of laughter and tears,<sup>28</sup> depicted in the same manner as Hotzmach,

<sup>27</sup> I.I. Trunk, Tevye and Menachem-Mendel, Cyco, N.Y., 1944, ppg. 285-287, Y.

<sup>28</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger, "Merry Pathos" by Moshe-Gross-Zimmerman, Yivo Literatur Gesellschaft, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1966, p. 252, Y.

veteran actor of Wandering Stars. Menachem-Mendel operates in a mobile, swirling milieu of wandering Jews, while the townspeople swarm about feverishly and desperately as if on a carousel, reaching for the elusive ring and more often than not missing it.

Structurally, Menachem-Mendel consists of six sections: "London" (12 letters, 6 from Menachem-Mendel in Odessa and 6 from his wife, Sheyne-Sheindel in Kasrilevke), "Papierlach" (12 letters, 6 from Menachem-Mendel in Yechupetz and 6 from Sheyne-Sheindel), "Millionen" (24 letters, 12 from Menachem-Mendel and 12 from Sheyne-Sheindel). The preceding three sections were written from 1892 to the turn of the century, the remaining three from 1900 to 1909. These were a "A Respected Profession" (10 letters, 5 from Menachem-Mendel and 5 from Sheyne-Sheindel), "Es Fiedelt Nicht", (correspondence from Menachem-Mendel) and "Schlim - Schlim - Mazel", the final letters from Menachem-Mendel to Sheyne-Sheindel. In the second part of Menachem-Mendel, Sheyne-Sheindel emerged a gentler, softer female and much more humorous.

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The plot and the character of Menachem-Mendel

29 M. Grafstein, ed., Sholom Aleichem Panorama, London Ontario, London, Observer, 1948, p. 196

remain static but the situations fluctuate like the stock market. Menachem-Mendel's mother-in-law serves as the oracle in their lives, predicting, admonishing, affirming, confirming, and, inevitably, offering pithy and sometimes searing post-mortems on the debacles which her son-in-law has precipitated.

After a fourth attempt to revive the Yiddishe Folksbibliothek in 1894 and subsequent failure due to lack of operational funds to continue publishing, Sholom Aleichem wrote very little, not only because he was involved in commerce, but also because of the dearth of Yiddish periodicals. It was only with the appearance of Yud in 1899 that Sholom Aleichem found a literary home for further Menachem-Mendel and Tevye stories. Although only four of the Tevye stories appeared in the early period, nevertheless some of Sholom Aleichem's major themes became in them abundantly clear. These themes, as well as the author's characterizations, are dealt with in an analysis of the Tevye stories in succeeding chapters.

Sholom Aleichem planned Tevye as a single chronicle, a saga of an East European Jewish family in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Each story is a separate informal narrative with its own climax and

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denouement. Although the point of view is limited in the monologue, with Tevye serving as first person principal, there is often an uncanny and intuitive element of omniscience, particularly in Tevye's I-Thou relationship to God, his Creator. Tevye is an extraordinary ordinary man, with dignity, a keen awareness of tragedy and an abiding sense of religiosity. Remarkably enough, many readers can recall a relative -- a father, uncle or Zayde -- who possessed these special and endearing qualities.

The opening story of the Tevye series, "K'tonti" (1894) consists of a letter from Tevye to Sholom Aleichem. It sets up the framework for the rest of the stories; most of the remaining deal with one or another of Tevye's daughters. From the outset, there is established the nature of this dairyman who, on the one hand, is full of humility and gratitude for the warm relationship between himself and the author, while he is, on the other hand, not at all timid about requesting favors of publicity and recompense for any resulting literary output.

The short story, "Modern Children" (1899) concerns Tevye's first daughter, Tzeitl and the conflict which arises when the tradition of arranged marriage comes to grips with changing mores of liberated youth. Tzeitl refuses to marry

the wealthy widower, Lazer-Wolf and her father has to rationalize his daughter's choice of poverty-stricken Mottel, an Anatevka tailor. To convince his wife, Golde, Tevye plays upon her superstition and invents the grotesque, ghoulish nightmare wherein his wife's grandmother, Tzeitl, appeared in a dream, urging the choice of Mottel Kamzoil as husband for her namesake. This apparition was soon followed by the appearance of Lazer-Wolf's deceased wife, Frume-Sarah, who predicts dire consequences of a marriage between Lazar-Wolf and Tzeitl. The outer Tevye continues to rationalize on behalf of his daughters. An example of a softening in Tevye's attitude is his remark, "So go complain about modern children. You slave for them, do everything for them! And they tell you that they know better. And... maybe they do..."<sup>30</sup>

Sholom Aleichem's colloquialism of style made his stories, written like oral conversation, admirably suitable for dramatic presentation. His Yiddish contained the robustness of Russian and the dignity of Hebrew. He sought after the precise word, adding synonyms, alternates and alliterative variations. He made use of colorful Yiddish

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Sholom Aleichem, The Tevye Stories, F. Butwin, Crown Publ. 1965, N.Y. p. 32



idioms and figures of speech, e.g. parever loksh (neutral noodle) or helfen vi a toiten bankers (as futile as reviving a corpse with cups). The quaintness and expressiveness of Sholom Aleichem's Yiddish idioms not only add zest to his dialogue but provide his Jewish readers with a feeling of nostalgia in recalling the language of their own families. In one sentence there appears the concrete word, the characteristic arrangement and figure of speech so representative of Sholom Aleichem's artistry with words. In Menachem-Mendel we find: "The wealthy, I will speak no evil of them, but may a real cholera befall them".<sup>31</sup> Sholom Aleichem felt that in writing one should not proceed with stiffness and pride, but with ease and naturalness. His advice to his younger colleagues was, "Talk plainly as plain people speak" (Yiddish Volksbibliothek, Kiev, 1888).

"What can be more honest and forthright, healthier and charming than to write, speak plainly as people talk?"<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger, (Yiddish), Yudel Mark, "Shreibt Sholom Aleichem Vi der Folk redt?" (Does Sholom Aleichem write as the People Speak?), Yivo Literaturgesellschaft, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1967, p. 246

<sup>32</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger, (Yiddish) Yudel Mark, "Is the sentence structure of Sholom Aleichem similar to the speech pattern of the people?" Yivo Literaturgesellschaft, Argentina, 1967, p. 243

The last decade of the nineteenth century does not yet give a completed picture of the humorist. In Stempenyu, Shomers Mishpot, "Dos Messerl" and in the early Tevye stories, there is still a vestige of the influence of Haskalah, of the Maskilim, and the austerity of his mentor, Mendele. It is in the next decade and a half that the satirist gives way to the uninhibited humorist. That may, perhaps, be the reason that the genre of the play was least represented in this early period. When Sholom Aleichem gave vent to laughter in spite of his suffering, the playwright in him came to the fore. This is in accordance with the philosophy of George Bernard Shaw who declared that

there is nothing that marks the born dramatist more unmistakably than his discovery of comedy in his own misfortunes almost in proportion to the pathos with which the ordinary man announces their tragedy.<sup>33</sup>

As he faced the twentieth century, Sholom Aleichem turned from faulting his people to praising them. From lecturing, he turned to laughter, from haranguing to cajoling. For the purpose, Yiddish was the ideal language, and the monologue provided the most effective genre. Sholom Aleichem's development indicated a lightening of didactic

<sup>33</sup> Leonard Feinberg, The Satirist, Citadel Press, N.Y., 1964, p. 121

tendencies and a discernible effort to understand and describe the scene "as it really is". He stressed universal values and applied the yardstick of ethics to himself as well as to his characters. His statements were no longer packaged in preachments; his themes were presented through humorous and ironic treatment. That there was optimism in the writing of Sholom Aleichem was apparent to all who read him. To Samuel Niger, the critic, there was a kernel of optimism even in the most pessimistic work of Sholom Aleichem. Where formerly, the author thought the world deserved to be reproached, he now realized all it really merited was to be comforted and forgiven. In this spirit, Sholom Aleichem resolved that it was his mission, in the days ahead, to bring laughter to brighten the lives of his people and to maintain a sense of balance in his own life. That the author brought joy to rootless people throughout the world is attested to by his growing popularity. That he alleviated his own suffering through his remarkable sense of humor is revealed by the tone of his comedy even during periods of excruciating physical pain and mental anxiety.

## CHAPTER III

Summary

In this early period of writing there were a number of developmental changes in the rhythm of Sholom Aleichem's work and there was an indication of the course of the author's future literary output.

Hebrew writing

The tone of Sholom Aleichem's work during the Hebrew period was somber, didactic and polemical. The style was ponderous and verbose. His themes concerned themselves with the need for reform in Jewish education, child rearing and the role of the rabbi as innovator in his community.

Russian writing

The writing was serious and imitative. Sholom Aleichem patterned his novel Die Traumer on Mendele Mocher Seforim's work. The theme dealt with a romantic, Fishel Charif, who could not cope with reality and dwelt and travelled in a world of dreams and unreality. Sholom Aleichem pointed up the human frailty of dreaming to escape reality.

Yiddish writing

The early Yiddish stories still reflected the austerity of the Haskalah period. "Dos Messerl" and

Stempnyu showed Mendele's influence. With the writing of Menachem-Mendel and Tevye, Sholom Aleichem surrendered to a lighter and more whimsical vein. He was becoming more effective in making a point through humor and irony than by making dogmatic demands and self-righteous statements.

Introspection began to yield to the extrovert in Tevye. The plots in the Tevye stories were more firmly structured, each narrative containing its own climax and denouement. In Menachem-Mendel, the plots were episodic. In the serialization of the Tevye stories, Sholom Aleichem began a sort of East European Forsyte Saga, with the kind of cliff hanging suspense inherent in a story which has yet to be concluded. The characters became household words and the language was true to the everyday conversational pattern of folk-speech. The short sentences, the staccato-type dialogue, the colorful idioms, the concrete word, the graphic figure of speech, the repetitiveness of alliterative synonyms were some of the elements which made the Yiddish style of Sholom Aleichem so vivid and expressive.

### Values of Sholom Aleichem

In his Hebrew writings, he feels it is his mission as rabbiner (government rabbi) to become an innovator in precipitating needed reforms. In his short story

"Dos Messerl," the author reveals his compassion for the suffering of a young boy because of inflexible restrictions and for his yearning for a relaxed and normal childhood. In Stempenyu, there is the understanding of a greater need for emancipation of women in a changing society. In Menachem-Mendel, Sholom Aleichem presents with humor the impractical figure of his dream-world alter ego, Menachem-Mendel, Sheyne-Sheindel and the author "lachen mit yastcherkes" (laugh on the wrong side of the mouth) at some of the disasters which are their lot. It is in Tevye, more than in any other work thus far, that Sholom Aleichem's basic values are manifested. In dealing with the generation-gap, the author stresses the importance of parental authority, yet respects the individuality of Tevye's children. His deep religiosity is apparent at every turn. This is not to say that he does not at times question the judgment of Divine Providence through Tevye, the Dairyman. And whether Tevye is dealing with his wealthy customers, his faithful horse, his Gentile neighbor or his loyal wife Golde, there is a gentle sense of optimism which sustains him through his trials and periods of stress and turmoil. It is this special quality of optimism which emerges towards the end of this early period and continues to permeate Sholom Aleichem's future writing and which may be the key to the

growing appeal of the author in the years ahead.

The first significant recognition of his work came in 1931 when he was elected to the position of...

...born with a sense of humor and a keen eye for the absurd. He has a way of looking at things that is both fresh and familiar.

...the quality of his work is such that it has become a part of the literary landscape of our time.

...the author's work is a testament to the power of the written word.

#### CHAPTER IV. SHOLOM ALEICHEM'S PERIOD OF POWER (1900-1910)

The most significant resolution Sholom Aleichem made in the new century was to renounce the world of commerce and to devote himself completely to writing. The casting off of the onerous burden of business involvement was reflected in his mood and in his writing. Even his tragic work revealed elements of gentle humor. Sholom Aleichem's state of mind and feeling of exuberance are disclosed in a letter (Passover week, 1903) to his good friend, Mordecai Spector, who, back in the 80's, had valued Sholom Aleichem's remarkable humoristic talent:

I confess to you, I feel new - born with brand- new strength. I can truly say I have just begun to write. Up to now, I just made myself foolish. I am only afraid that the years may, God forbid, not permit. I am so full of ideas and pictures that I am stronger than iron that I do not burst.<sup>1</sup>

Sholom Aleichem's creativity ran the gamut of literary movements. There was a touch of the Gothic romance in his short story, "The Enchanted Tailor", with its aura of mysticism and supernaturalism, in the changing of a she-goat to a he-goat, and the hocus-pocus of witchcraft which surrounds the characters of the tailor, his wife, the

<sup>1</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch (Yiddish) Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 198



inn-keeper and the rabbi. There is realism in the Tevye stories, in the vigor and earthiness of the narrative and the faithful recording of the speech patterns and behavior of the characters. Even in the romantic novel, Stempenyu, there was evident the use of "stream-of-consciousness", a device of modern realism. In recognizing Sholom Aleichem's versatility in this regard, Z.F. Finkelstein, German critic, describes Sholom Aleichem's writing as moving "between the border of naïve folk romanticism and modern naturalism".<sup>2</sup> As for the Yiddish writer's multifaceted genius, Finkelstein believes that:

under the mantle of a naïve story-teller is hidden the wisdom of a philosopher, and behind the sly laughter of a humorist, one perceives the immeasurable pain of the bleeding soul of a poet.<sup>3</sup>

Sholom Aleichem applied this very versatility and talent in writing in every genre during this period of greatest creativity.

In the genre of the short story, one of Sholom Aleichem's earliest and most popular tales is "The Enchanted Tailor" (1901).

<sup>2</sup> Z.F. Finkelstein, Stürmer des Ghetto (German), Safruth Verlag, Rath und Prager, Wien, 1924, p.131

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 131

"The Enchanted Tailor" is a romantic short story, told in the first person, narrated from the author's point of view. The author's intention is to convey the devastating effect upon a simple tailor of confusing and incomprehensible influences and suggestions to the point that the victim can no longer rely upon his own senses and must eventually succumb to the imaginary terror of the supernatural.

Shimmen-Eli, the tailor, lives with his wife and family in the town of Zolodievka, where he is president of the Tailor's Chapel and where he is constantly holding forth on many esoteric topics, misquoting the commentaries and the Midrash. The tailor's wife, Tsippa-Baila-Reiza, succeeds in convincing him of their need for a milk-goat. Two outstanding reasons are: Their neighbor Nechama-Brocha has a goat and Tsippa knows that Tema Gittel possesses two milk-giving goats and might want to sell one.

En route to his destination in Kozodievka, Shimmen stops at Oak Tavern, owned by his relative, Dodi. He confides his quest to Dodi as he imbibes a few drinks and promises to stop on the way back. Shimmen arrives in the town of Kozodievka where the goat is to be found. After a verbal tug-of-war and the use of reverse psychology -- the

tailor maintaining he really did not need a goat, the owner adamant about not desiring to sell -- they finally come to terms. Shimmen leaves, dragging the reluctant animal behind him.

On his way home, the tailor is overcome by the fragrance of the forest and suddenly, a voice whispers to him, reminding him about his promise to stop at Oak Tavern. Shimmen surrenders to temptation, revisits his kinsman and boasts about his purchase. Dodi had previously been annoyed by Shimmen's air of superiority and had mumbled: "You're a little too smart for your own good... You're showing off your knowledge too much. You'll get it from me yet, and you'll be sorry!"<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Shimmen dozes off, dreaming he is ripping a suit which his wife had purchased with profits from the goat's milk. He also imagines all the by-products resulting from his clever purchases. He awakes suddenly and rushes home with the goat. His wife impatiently takes the goat from him, returning post-haste, full of invective but with an empty milk-pail. By this time, Shimmen is

<sup>4</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Old Country, tr. F. Butwin, Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1946, p. 102

convinced he has been duped by the melamed and his wife, the previous owners of the goat. Once more the tailor sets out for Kozodievka. Again he visits Dodi at Oak Tavern and asks his kinsman to look after the goat while he enjoys a repast and a drink or two. Upon hearing Schimmen's tale of woe, Dodi questions the trickery of the seller of the goat, and suggests innocently that the tailor must have made a mistake in picking the goat. The tailor then takes the goat back to its owner and creates a scene in the cheder where he is greeted with laughter by the pupils and indignation by the melamed and his wife. The woman insists that they all go to the rabbi who will adjudicate the case. The rabbi, after listening to both sides, sends for the elders and leading citizens of the town and asks the tailor to repeat the story. Shimmen rambles on until he gets to the essence of the tale. Then the melamed's wife tells her story -- and to prove the truth of her assertions, she asks for a milk pail -- and milks the goat before their very eyes. Shimmen, bewildered, makes a hasty retreat to save his skin and decides to stop at the tavern to fortify his spirits. He decides not to tell Dodi the truth and says that the wrong goat was replaced by the proper goat upon his demand. Dodi feels that the tailor is not only a braggart but a liar, as well, and decides to switch the goats once more. After a

few drinks, the tailor begins to talk about magic, dybbuks, elves, evil spirits, sorcerers, gnomes, werewolves and other supernatural phenomena. It is clear that Shimmen suspects that some strange influences are afoot.

The tailor returns home and regales his wife with a fanciful tale of his masterful handling of the situation. His wife's main concern is the goat's performance, which she tests immediately and finds, to her chagrin, that her husband has been tricked again. She, too, suspects supernatural demons and declares the goat possessed. The tailor then takes the matter up with his Tailor's Guild -- they write a letter to the Rabbi and elders of Kozodievka, proclaiming the injustice perpetrated upon their townsman, Shimmen. On the way to his destination, Shimmen stops at the tavern of Hodel, who tells him more tales of witchcraft. These weird stories, plus the uncanny mood of the dark night, all contribute to the bedevilling of the poor tailor till he is almost out of his mind with fright and terror. Although he urges the goat to leave him, the animal is adamant in remaining, and Shimmen flees for his life into the night. The next morning, the townspeople find the tailor in a state of shock. As they wait for a doctor, the townfolk recall Shimmen's efforts for the poor and against the rich. The

members of the Tailor's Guild call an emergency meeting and go to their rabbi to complain. The rabbi has just received a reply from Kozodievka, implying that the tailor is a base slanderer and should be punished. They swear they had seen the goat give milk. Infuriated, the townspeople arrange to send a delegation to Kozodievka.

Meanwhile, the goat, tasting freedom, has disappeared into the "great blue yonder", the possessed tailor is near death, and the working men are off to do battle.

Finally, the author confides to the reader that the dénouement is not a happy one. Although the story had begun cheerfully enough, the ending is tragic. Sholom Aleichem wants to end the tale on a cheerful note since he wishes all his readers more opportunities to laugh than to cry. He ends this convoluted plot with the advice which has since become the hallmark of the author, "Laughter is healthful. The doctors bid us laugh".<sup>5</sup>

In "The Enchanted Tailor", Sholom Aleichem blends

<sup>5</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Old Country, tr. F. & J. Butwin, Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1946, p. 137.

a complicated plot with a mystical setting and describes the physical and mental breakdown of the character of the tailor through the power of suggestion. The focus is on the mood and atmosphere of the story. From the very beginning, the tone is set by the succession of strange-sounding and grotesque names of towns, rivers and districts: Zolodievka, Mazepevka, Haplapovitch, Kozodievka, Yampoli, Strishtch, Pisch-Yaboda, Petchi-Hvost, Tetrevez, and Yehupetz.<sup>6</sup>

The author's description of the tailor is one of the few instances when Sholom Aleichem actually gives the physical picture of a character. Here, in addition to the use of dialogue to round out the characterization of Shimmen-Eli, the author describes him graphically:

In appearance Shimmen-Eli was short and homely, with pins and needles sticking out all over him and bits of cotton batting clinging to his curly black hair. He had a short beard like a goat's, a flattened nose, a split lower lip and large black eyes that were always smiling. His walk was a little dance all his own and he was always humming to himself. His favorite saying was "That's life -- but don't worry".<sup>7</sup>

The tailor becomes a pitiful figure as his mind

<sup>6</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Old Country, tr. F.&J. Butwin, Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1946, p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p. 94

and body deteriorate, yet he assumes the ethos of an anti-hero as he continues to boast, lie and make libelous accusations.

The tailor's wife, Tsippa-Beila-Reiza is described as a Cossack in appearance and it becomes abundantly evident that she rules the roost in the household of the tailor. Dodi, the innkeeper is coarse and vengeful and is the prime culprit in the machinations which lead to the ultimate downfall of the tailor. The foreboding remarks of Dodi heighten the suspense although the reader is soon aware of the innkeeper's chicanery. Everytime the goats are interchanged, there is suspense, and the high points occur not only when the goat is tested and found wanting by the tailor's wife, but when the animal is milked successfully by the melamed's wife.

The language of Sholom Aleichem is effective even in translation, as we smell the odors, hear the sounds and taste the breads and milk products. As the tailor recalls

the odor of damp walls that dripped in winter and mold in summer; the odor of sour dough and bran, of onions and cabbage, of wet plaster, of fish and entrails; the odor of old clothes steaming under the hot iron...<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Old Country, tr. F. & J. Butwin, Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1946, p. 99



his senses are overpowered by the verdant forest fragrance and the bouquet of fresh country air.

The figurative language is vivid and colorful so that the reader can actually perceive the odors described by the use of metaphor, simile and onomatopoeic vocabulary. The senses of the reader, like those of the tailor, are overcome by the description of the fragrance of the forest, of his home, of the bedbug in the tavern, of the appetizing odors of baking with the by-products from the milk of the goat. There is an element of Galgenhumor (gallow's humor) throughout this bizarre tale which is probably the most complicated of all of Sholom Aleichem's short stories. Albeit it is usually regarded as a "farce", this story emerges as tragic in Sholom Aleichem's treatment of the bewitched tailor.

In the genre of dramatic monologue, "If I Were Rothschild" (1902) has elements of the essay in that it does not relate a story but permits a Hebrew teacher to enunciate and editorialize on such ethical principles as justice towards one's fellow man, the abolition of war and the elimination of money. The monologue is delivered by the melamed, in the first person. He speculates on the possibilities of unlimited affluence if he had the power and resources of Rothschild. He projects material provisions

such as clothing and adequate shelter for his family, as well as repairs in the synagogue and public baths, the elimination of the poorhouse and the building of a new infirmary, a Loan Association without interest, and a Dowry Fund for poor girls. He also envisions a Jewish Academy of learning for great scholars and sages -- all without tuition fees. Everything the melamed dreams about is directed towards the collective good. The teacher realizes that economic security lies at the basis of peaceful co-existence between individuals as well as nations.

Making a living leads to envy, envy leads to hatred, and from hatred there flow -- may the Merciful God save us -- all the evils in the world, all the misfortunes, all the unforeseen calamities, all the oppressions, all the slaughters, all the murders and all the wars.

The "hippies" of 1968 might find in this philosophy a remarkable harbinger of their own revolution of "love". Yet, herein lies the difference: The practical need of providing for the Sabbath brought the melamed back to earth: "But suppose there shouldn't be any money whatsoever in the world....where, in that event, would the Jews get the where withal for the Sabbath?"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> M. Grafstein, Sholom Aleichem Panorama, London, Observer, Ontario, 1948, p. 154

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 154

This overpowering commitment to the observance of the Sabbath -- the unchanging reality which recurs from week to week -- takes precedence over any Utopian dream. For Sholom Aleichem, through the teacher, it is abundantly clear that to render unto the Lord what is due to Him is the foremost consideration in the scheme of things.

"If I Were Rothschild" is an example of the type of monologue which proved to be especially suitable for oral presentation by Sholom Aleichem. Its brief, dramatic, build-up climbed heavenward to the climax of a moneyless existence and then catapulted down to earth with the twist "What about the Sabbath?" -- the awakening from the Utopian dream to the unremitting reality of religious observance. As Sholom Aleichem delivered this and other monologues before various Zionist gatherings, the power of living literature emanated from the lecture platform and reached out to thousand, many of whom may not yet have read his works.

In his short story, "The Miracle of Hashono Rabo", the author deals most skillfully with the theme of affirmation of faith by a simple man in a confrontation with a clergyman. The author tells the story in the first person

about Berel Essigmacher, an expert vinegar maker, who meets the priest for the first time at the railroad station.

Berel, or Berko, is determined to prove he knows much about locomotives, while the priest scoffs at the Jew's knowledge of machinery. Both mount the train and Berko instructs the priest in the operation of the machinery. Suddenly, to the amazement of both, -- the train begins to move. The train crew, left behind, wires stations along the way to watch out for a runaway train. As telegrams and rumors fly, the story becomes more and more fantastic. And as the plot unfolds, the theme emerges: the contrast between the priest's and Berel's attitude in time of danger.

Berel remains logical and calm: "Not that he was alarmed, he was simply upset by the fact that the locomotive should not behave as it should".<sup>11</sup>

The priest, on the other hand, becomes panicky and abusive. Although he has been reminded that Berel wishes to be called Berko, the priest keeps on calling him Yudko, Moshko, Hershko, Leibko and Itzko. And at the height of his terror, the priest resorts to invective, threatening Berel with physical harm. Speaking disparagingly of the value of

<sup>11</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1949, p. 222

Berel's life, the priest blurts out: "Your life, what good is your life? A dog like you!"<sup>12</sup> No longer does Berel remain calm nor can he remain silent: "Even if I were a dog you ought to feel sorry for me. According to our law even a dog mustn't be harmed. It's a living thing!"<sup>13</sup> Then Berel really reprimands the priest. It is undiluted irony that a simple vinegar maker gives a man of the cloth his "come-uppance" by posing a crucial question: "In the eyes of the Almighty in what way is my life any less important than any other life?"<sup>14</sup> -- And then, dramatically, spelling out the paradox of their attitudes towards man and God:

Look at the difference between you and me. I am doing everything I can to make the locomotive stop, that is, I have the welfare of both of us in mind; while you are ready to throw me out of here, that is, to murder a human being!"<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the tables are turned. Berel is delivering the sermon.

<sup>12</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, Pocket Books, N.Y., 1965, p. 223

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 223

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 223

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 223

He affirms his abiding faith in the Almighty who has been his strength. His lack of fear has been due to his unshakeable faith in the Divine Decree of Hashono Rabo which determines each man's fate for the coming year. Sholom Aleichem has Berel, the vinegar maker, teach a clergyman what it means to believe: that faith not only moves mountains but stops trains, as well.

Sholom Aleichem develops the plot of "The Miracle of Hashono Rabo" with suspense and high drama as he pits the character of Berel against the clergyman. Berel is more sharply drawn than the priest -- who remains nebulous and remote. Perhaps this is because the author has known many Berels and has observed them at closer range than he has priests. And to Berel is given the most telling retort in this story. In answer to the priest's observation that they were going to get killed anyway and they might as well jump off the locomotive together, Berko asks: "Where was that decided? What proof do you have? If God wants to -- Oh, Father, What He can do!"<sup>16</sup> With consummate skill, Sholom Aleichem tells this captivating story of the artless vinegar maker who remains calm until his faith in the

<sup>16</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, p. 224

Almighty is challenged. Berel, who merely wants to teach an itinerant preacher how to start a train, winds up by giving him a lesson in what it means to be a true man of God. With one fell swoop, Berel waves aside centuries of difference on both sides as he reminds the priest about the brotherhood of man: "Are we not alike? Do we not all have the same pedigree? Are we not all descended from the same man, Adam?"<sup>17</sup> Thus, Sholom Aleichem has, in "The Miracle of Hashono Rabo", been eminently successful in developing the theme of genuine religiosity through the story itself. Sholom Aleichem has, as well, enunciated his own religious values, including, perhaps, a pardonable portion of chauvinism in his sympathetic and sincere portrayal of Berel.

In this first decade of the new century, Sholom Aleichem continued the Tevye stories, and told about four of the dairyman's daughters, Hodel, Chava, Shprintze and Beilke. In the short story of "Hodel", Tevye is the narrator, first person principal. His primary concern is the marrying off of his beautiful daughters. Actually, there are seven daughters, but the Tevye series deals only with five.

<sup>17</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Old Country, tr. F. Butwin, Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1946, p. 379

Tzeitl is already married to Mottel, the tailor. Now, Hodel, whom Tevye describes as "of beautiful form and fair to look upon" also possesses an intellect. Tevye tells the author about a young man named Perschek, also known as Feferel, whom Tevye had given a lift in his wagon, and invited him to dine with the family. The young man soon becomes a regular guest and volunteers to tutor Tevye's daughters. Perschek is constantly railing against the wealthy and lauding the poor, particularly if they are poor workers. Meanwhile, Ephraim, the matchmaker, has a client who is eager to marry Hodel, and Tevye is persuaded to bring his daughter to meet the eligible bachelor. As Tevye is riding home that evening, Tevye meets the young couple, Hodel and Feferel, walking along. To Tevye's amazement, they announce that they are engaged to be married. Tevye cannot become accustomed to wedding arrangements without benefit of a matchmaker. Feferel tells Tevye the reason they are hastening the marriage is because the young man must leave soon for a secret destination. Shortly thereafter they marry and the groom leaves. Hodel reassures her father that her husband is working for the cause of humanity and workers. After a long period of time, Hodel learns that her husband is in prison. On the evening of Hashono Rabo, Hodel tells her father she must bid him



goodbye, perhaps for always. Tevye, in order to spare his wife the sad news, tells Golde that their daughter must go to Yehupetz for an inheritance. Hodel bids Tevye farewell at the Boiberik station as she says: "Goodbye, father, God alone knows when we shall see each other again."<sup>18</sup>

In the story of "Chava", Tevye, again the narrator speaking in first person, confides the story of his third daughter to the author. However, he pleads, "Let it remain between you and me....the pain is great, but the disgrace -- the disgrace is even ~~greater~~ greater".<sup>19</sup> Tevye tells the author about his relationship with the priest before the incident which involved Chava. They have been on friendly terms, greeting each other civilly and sometimes even comparing quotations from the Scriptures. However, in retrospect, Tevye feels the priest's smile was an evil portent of dire events to come. When the dairyman encounters Fyedka, the Gentile, talking to Chava, he questions her about the young man. Chava assures her father that Fyedka is a second Gorky. The name of the famous Russian author means nothing to Tevye; he is unimpressed.

<sup>18</sup> The Old Country, Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1946, p. 400

<sup>19</sup> Tevye's Daughters, Pocket Books, N.Y., 1965, p. 62

One evening, as Tevye is driving home, he encounters the priest who seems eager to talk to him. He tells Tevye that he is fond of the Jewish people, even though they are stiff-necked. "You know that I am not, God forbid, your enemy, even though you are a Jew".<sup>20</sup> He informs Tevye that his daughter, Chava, has come to see the priest for advice and instruction. Tevye is dismayed and furious that his wife, Golde, who seemed to be aware of what was going on had kept the news from him. She urges Tevye to visit the priest and plead with him to release Chava. The priest assures Tevye that no harm will come to his daughter but that her decision is irrevocable. Devastated, Tevye returns home and informs Golde that they are to imagine they never had a daughter; they are to consider Chava as dead. Soon thereafter, as Tevye is driving home from Boiberik, Tevye begins to think about Chava. Suddenly, his horse stops and as Tevye looks up, he sees his daughter, Chava. Tevye is tempted to talk to her, but he decides to move on. Chava, however, tries to restrain him and pleads with him to listen to her. Her voice haunts Tevye, as he continues on his way. Tevye is in the depths of despair at the end of this story and begs the author to forget about Tevye. "No more Tevye,

<sup>20</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's daughters, tr. by J. & F. Butwin, Pocket Books, N.Y., 1965. p. 75

In the short story, "Shprintze", Tevye confides to the author that the incident which involved Shprintze put all his former troubles in the shade. Tevye recounts his meeting with a wealthy widow and her son, while he is making his rounds with his wares. He invites the young man to his home for Shevuos. Aaronchik accepts the invitation, and is smitten with Shprintze. He declares his intentions to Tevye. The dairyman attempts to dissuade Aaronchik, telling him that he would be marrying out of his class. Tevye decides to speak realistically to Shprintze, telling her the young man is a ne'er-do-well. The girl defends him, although she admits his family is mercenary and insensitive. Soon, the young man's visits cease, and Tevye is summoned to Boiberik by the boy's uncle, who is determined to break up the romance. He is prepared to pay for it, since the family does not want Arnold to marry out of his class. Shprintze soon begins to languish and waste away. One evening, as Tevye was driving along, asking questions of the Lord and answering them himself, he passes a pond. The gathering crowd means there had been an accident. When Tevye sees his wife and

21 Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's Daughters, tr. by J. & F. Butwin, Pocket Books, N.Y., 1965, p. 75

children, he knows that it must be his daughter; and, indeed, in utter despair, Shprintze had committed suicide. Although this is Tevye's bitterest blow, it seems that the finality of death is accepted more philosophically by Tevye than the uncertainties and misgivings inherent in the stories of the first three daughters.

In the short story, "Tevye Goes to Palestine", the narrator, Tevye, tells the author about the death of his wife, Golde, and goes on to relate the story about his fifth daughter, Beilke, the only one whose marriage had been arranged by Ephraim, a matchmaker. The groom is wealthy Padhatzur, whom Beilke marries for security and material comforts, as well as for financial resources to aid her sisters. After a while, Tevye is summoned to Padhatzur's mansion and is told that it is not fitting, in view of the extent of his son-in-law's enterprises, that Tevye should continue to trade as Tevye the Dairyman. Finally, he suggests that Tevye pack up and go to America or even to Palestine, and gives his father-in-law money for the trip. As Tevye leaves, Beilke is dissolved in tears; she feels she is at fault. She attempts to explain away Padhatzur's shortcomings but Tevye is not convinced. He returns home, depressed and dismayed. As he tells the author of his

parting from his beloved horse, Tevye weeps, not only for himself, but for what might have been. Yet his closing words of the story are kindly:..... "Go your way in good health and give my blessings to everyone and bid everyone a kind farewell for me. And may all go well with you".<sup>22</sup>

While the theme and interpretation of man's relationship to his Maker remained constant in the writings of Sholom Aleichem, the theme of conflict resulting from a generation-gap between parents and children was undergoing changes because of societal and familial upheavals. In the East-European setting of the shtetl of the late 1890's and the early 1900's, traditional patterns of child-parent relationships were gradually becoming outmoded. The family, with the authoritarian father, the submissive mother, the obedient, unquestioning children, was slowly giving way to the home where the father, more and more restricted by occupational limitations, was compelled to be away from home for long periods of time. Children were reading more secular books and were meeting young people of their choice from outside the shtetl. Soon, they were defying any plan for pre-arranged marriage imposed by their parents.

<sup>22</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye's daughters, Pocket Books, N.Y., 1965. p. 110

Throughout the Tevye stories of the first decade of the twentieth century, as in "Modern Children", written at the turn of the preceding century, the main theme is the tragic conflict between parent and child, set against the backdrop of a changing of the old order and a yielding to the new. There continues to be, apparently, the same degree of unpreparedness and shock in Tevye as he is confronted by defiance of parental authority. The first instance of resistance to dictum had been that of Tzeitl in "Modern Children". Tevye could not seem to fathom that he had not been consulted about his daughter's alliance with Mottel, the tailor. "Do I still have the right to say something about my daughter, or doesn't anyone have to ask a father anymore?"<sup>23</sup> is Tevye's rhetorical question. Again, in "Hodel", when Tevye learns of his daughter's engagement to Feferel, the revolutionary, he wants to know: "When was the contract signed? And why didn't you invite me to the ceremony? Don't you think I have a slight interest in the matter?"<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, Pocket Books, N.Y., 1965, p. 28

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 47

The theme of frustration caused by a lack of communication between Tevye and his daughters comes through in the series of unanswered and unanswerable questions which he addresses to the Almighty, to Sholom Aleichem, as well as to his daughters. In 'Chava,' there is in addition to Tevye's feeling of indignation, a deep sense of hurt when he learns of his daughter's impending marriage, out of her faith, to Fyedka. Tevye's desperation is highlighted by a battery of questions, such as: "And who, may I ask, concerns himself with the fate of my child? It seems to me that I am still her father, am I not?"<sup>25</sup> Tevye was devastated by the apostasy of his daughter, Chava, and Sholom Aleichem conveys the implacability of Tevye, as the dairyman attempts to cut off all communication with Chava by treating her as if she were dead. This feeling is clearly understood by Golde, Tevye's wife, as she is told: "Get up, my wife, take off your shoes, and let us sit down and mourn our child as God has commanded.... Let us imagine that we never had a daughter named Chava...."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Selected Works (Yiddish) Tog, Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y., 1959, p. 127

<sup>26</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, Pocket Books, N.Y., 1965, p. 70

In the short story of Tevye's daughter, "Shprintze", still deeper tragedy results from the situation where children are dominated by the wishes of their parents. The relatives of the young man, Arnold, oppose his choice of Tevye's daughter, Shprintze, and prevail upon him to abandon any thought of marriage to her. Tevye, himself sees no propriety in this alliance, and, giving expression to the theme of status-gap between rich and poor, Tevye addresses Arnold with his characteristic interrogative statements:

What sort of bridegroom would you make for my Shprintze? And what kind of match is she for you? And most important of all, what kind of relative by marriage will I be to your mother?<sup>27</sup>

Victory for the parents is accompanied by catastrophe for the romance. Shprintze's way out is suicide, whereupon Tevye, sobered by the tragedy, begins to question his own position as a parent.

Thus far, Sholom Aleichem's Tevye has been resolute in his feeling of self-righteousness and has been secure within himself that his parental stance has been proper. After the death of Shprintze, however, Tevye becomes more resigned to the changing mores and to the right of children to determine their own destinies. In a valiant

<sup>27</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Selected Works (Yiddish), Tog. Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y., 1959, p. 153



effort to bridge the generation-gap, Tevye is becoming less critical of the decisions of his daughters, while his own judgments are subject to keener self-evaluation. As the dairyman responds to challenging situations and crises, the reader is aware of a changing Tevye in the story of "Tevye Goes to Palestine". After vain attempts to dissuade his daughter from marrying wealthy Podhatzur, Tevye rationalizes, philosophically:

Why should I come between these young people?  
 A lot you accomplished, Tevye, when you tried to arrange the marriages of your older daughters, you talked and talked. You poured out your wisdom and learning. And who was made a fool of in the end? Tevye, of course".<sup>28</sup>

Uttered in a tone of injured innocence, these questions seem to be on the wane -- Tevye is attempting to meet his children more than half-way.

In Tevye, the theme of man's relationship to animals emerges, as Tevye takes leave of his cherished friend, his horse. Tevye shares his thoughts, as he usually does at times of stress with the Almighty:

How cleverly you have fashioned your world. You have created Tevye and you have created his horse. And to both you have given the same fate. A man can at least talk, he can complain out loud, he

<sup>28</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Selected Works (Yiddish), Tog, Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, 1959, N.Y., p. 179

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can unburden his soul to another, but a horse?  
He is nothing but a dumb beast, as it is said:  
'The advantage of man over animal'.<sup>29</sup>

The figure of Tevye, despite his quaintness and droll humor, is essentially tragic -- in the sense that he is an ethnic Everyman. Tevye fits into the category described by the essayist, Roy Morrell, who believes that the place of a great hero is "sometimes successfully supplied by... the representative not of all mankind but of a large group".<sup>30</sup> Sholom Aleichem presents Tevye as a tragic hero whose awareness (anagnorosis) makes him so admirable. It is the remarkable way he copes with his tragedy which provides the leavening. Tevye has the capacity to perceive the illogicality of his misfortunes and the tenacious resiliency to bounce back because of his outlook and philosophy. Tevye continues, as narrator, to confide his woes to Sholom Aleichem, as he tells the stories of four of his daughters in "Hodel" (1904), "Chava" (1906), "Shprintze" (1907) and "Tevye Goes to Palestine (1909).

Whatever humor there is in these stories has a unique

<sup>29</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Selected Works (Yiddish), Tog, Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y., 1959, p. 194

<sup>30</sup> Roy Morrell, "The Psychology of Tragic Pleasure", Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. L. Michel and R.B. Sewall, Prentice-Hall, N.Y., 1963, p. 288

quality of laughter: It is as if it comes from too far down to be a joke. Tevye hints at the essence of this humor as he concludes the story of "Hodel" with their tearful parting, perhaps never to meet again. In a valiant attempt to change the mood, Tevye says to the author:

Do you know what, Mr. Sholom Aleichem? Let's talk about more cheerful things. Tell me, what's new with the cholera in Odessa?<sup>31</sup>

Ironically enough, what was going on in Odessa had some relevance; what was taking place in urban centers was gradually filtering through to the shtetl. Tevye's daughters were feeling the impact of the new role of women in a changing society and Tevye was feeling their resistance. Sholom Aleichem permits the reader to eaves-drop as Tevye deplores the new freedom of children vis-a-vis their parents. The author's narrative structure in the Tevye stories makes possible an aspect of role-playing. Sholom Aleichem is acting the role of silent psychiatrist, listening to the problems of a troubled parent, while the reader enjoys the role of unseen listener to a series of confessionals. The story line of these confidences reveals the confrontation between father and daughters, dealing not only with the

<sup>31</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Selected Works (Yiddish), Tog, Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y., 1959, p. 118

theme of generation-gap but, specifically, with changing attitudes towards arranged matches and the emancipation of women. As the narrative unfolds, Tevye, like many a parent, then, as now, tries to bridge the generation-gap by siding with the children -- except when the issue is conversion. Here he remains adamant and unyielding. Chava, who marries out of her faith, refuses to be swayed by her father and is mourned for seven days by her parents -- for she is regarded as if dead. There is a quality of timelessness in the nature of Tevye's remarks about Hodel's choice of a mate. Tevye could be today's parent, as he muses:

An excellent young man. All he needs now that he has a blouse over his trousers and wears his hair long is a harmonica or a dog to follow him, and then he would really be a beautiful sight.<sup>32</sup>

As for Shprintze, the stumbling blocks to romance are not set up by her own parents. This time, the boy's mother and uncle put an end to the proposed match; they feel the young man would be marrying out of his class. They deem Tevye and his kinfolk unworthy and offer to pay Tevye off. Earlier, Shprintze had recognized the boy's family for what it was, but had always defended the young man:

<sup>32</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, Pocket Books, N.Y., 1965, p. 50

Arnold is not a charlatan, father. He has a kind heart. He is a man with principle. He is surrounded by a house full of vulgar people who thhnk of nothing but money, money and more money.<sup>33</sup>

However, when Shprintze is confronted with the reality of the situation, she walks into the village pond and is drowned. Tevye is stunned and stricken, yet philosophical: "The world is still with us. You have to think of earning a living, and forget what has been".<sup>34</sup> The next daughter, Beilke, chooses to marry for money rather than love. To her father's pleas that money is worthless and that Hodel, although poor, is happy, Beilke replies:

Hodel grew up in a time when the world rocked on its foundations, when it was ready at any moment to turn upside down. In those days, people were concerned about the world and forgot about themselves. Now the world is back to where it is; people think about themselves and forget about the world.<sup>35</sup>

Beilke, more pragmatic than her sisters, marries wealthy Podhatzur, who likes to pretend his forbears were cultured and rich.

33 Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, Pocket Books, Inc., N.Y., 1965, p. 85

34 Ibid, p. 90

35 Sholom Aleichem, Selected Works, (Yiddish), Tog, Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y., 1959, p. 175

Tevye used the Scriptures in the manner that Sheyne-Sheindel quoted her mother, the Jewish Cassandra. There was a quotation for every occasion, pruned a little here, twisted a little there, but always articulated with an air of indisputable truth and documented wisdom. Thus, Tevye, quoting from the Holy Days' service: "Who shall be elevated and who set down", interprets it as "Who shall ride and who shall walk".<sup>36</sup> Tevye interprets the quotation from Genesis: "Striped, speckled and spotted, of all sorts", as "an abscess on a boil and a blister on top of the abscess".<sup>37</sup>

What Tevye seemed to lack in memory, he made up in piety. The Almighty was his chief Companion; there was constant communication going on, consisting mainly of a monologue by Tevye, with forceful, albeit respectful asides, addressed to the Almighty.

Readers of the 1890's came equipped with a frame of reference when they read Tevye. They were familiar with the authentic Biblical quotations or the Sayings from the

<sup>36</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger, Joseph Lifshutz Fund, Yivo Literaturgesellschaft, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1966 pg. 22, Y.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 52

Ethics of the Fathers. Feeling secure in their own knowledge, they could enjoy the malapropisms of Tevye so much more. For instance, "Where there is no bread, there is no learning", was interpreted by Tevye as "The Torah lies in the box and wisdom in the pocket",<sup>38</sup> while "Im k'vonim im k'vodim" (whether we're like children or like slaves) becomes: "People can do as well with children as without them".<sup>39</sup> Yet there is, still, for the reader untutored in Hebrew, a great deal of drama in the contrapuntal effect of Tevye's prayers to the Almighty and the simultaneous stream-of-consciousness of his exasperated and disenchanting thoughts. "Heal us and we shall be healed". ("Send us the remedy, we already have the ailment".)

Throughout the Tevye stories, in addition to addressing himself to the creator of the short stories, Sholom Aleichem, Tevye maintains an ongoing I-Thou relationship between himself and the Creator of Mankind. To Sholom Aleichem, Tevye is the narrator; of the Lord, Tevye asks rhetorical questions. And as Tevye pleads for

<sup>38</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger, Yivo Literaturgesellschaft, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1966, pg. 52, Y.

<sup>39</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, tr. J. & F. Butwin, Crown Publ. 1966, p. 92

forbearance from Sholom Aleichem, even more so does Tevye need reassurance from his Maker. Tevye's typical query, as he looks heavenward is: "Oh Heavenly Father, why does this happen to me? Am I not as good as others?" Then Tevye stops short and becomes counsel for the defense.

But that's enough. Of God you don't ask questions. If you are one of the Chosen People, you must see good in everything and say 'This, too, is for the best'.<sup>40</sup>

As Tevye's communication with the Almighty continues, he is more diplomatic in that he prefaces any complaint with words of praise: "All-powerful and All-merciful, great and good, kind and just, how does it happen that to some people you give everything and to others nothing?" Then, filled with self-reproach, Tevye says to himself: "Are you telling Him how to rule His world? Apparently, if He wants it that way, that's the way it ought to be".<sup>41</sup> Yet a great deal of the time, Tevye's relationship to the Almighty is most respectful, albeit relaxed.

So I talk it over with Him about the way he deals with me. He is .... a merciful Father, He has pity on me, but He shows me what He can do, too.

<sup>40</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Old Country, tr. F. & J. Butwin, Crown Publ. Co., N.Y. 1946, p. 25

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 32



So we must say that He is right and His judgment is right.... So, who am I to stand up against Him with my little brain and give Him advice on how to run this little world of His?<sup>42</sup>

These little exercises in declaration of faith seen to be Tevye's method of prayer. It is as if he is repeating the words of the old song, "Gott in Sein Mishpot iz gerecht" "(God is righteous in His judgment)". And in proclaiming the everlasting majesty and omnipotence of the Almighty, Tevye resolves his query: "How come?" with a positive statement of affirmation which is of undeniable comfort to him.

In his portrayal of the various characters in these stories, Sholom Aleichem used the Gogol quotation from "Dead Souls" as a guide.

It seems I am fated for a long time to walk hand in hand with these odd creatures of mine and to observe the great and tumultuous scene of life through revealing laughter and hidden tears.<sup>43</sup>

It is the realist, Tevye, who has become the most enduring of Sholom Aleichem's characters. Beneath the

<sup>42</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye Stories, Pocket Books, Inc., N.Y., 1956, p. 25

<sup>43</sup> M. Grafstein, ed., Panorama of Sholom Aleichem, London Observer, London, Ontario, 1948, p. 51

bucolic exterior, which is an admixture of innocence and guile, there is, basically, an ethical approach towards his fellow-man. Above all, there is an acceptance of God's Will and a philosophical sense of resignation in the present and trust in the future. Throughout, unyielding optimism looks forward to a more favorable tomorrow.

There is a duality in the character of Tevye. The inner Tevye is unchanging, retaining and clinging to the basic ethical values which constitute his traditional luggage. Tevye cannot conquer from without, so he copes from within, fortified by a tradition which gives omnipotence to the Almighty and authority to parents and which sets firm guidelines for children of obedience, compliance, respect, piety, honor and reverence. The outer Tevye, however, is not static. In his travels with his dairy products, Tevye meets all kinds of people. It sometimes occurs to him that his values are not always victorious. Tevye does not evoke pity, although he is beset by many tragedies. Because of his dignity in handling disaster, Tevye is an endearing Chaplinesque figure--with less pantomime and more talk. Possessing his own life style, Tevye has the nobility of an archetype. In no wise does he suggest the stereotype. He is too much of an individualist

to lend himself to the pejorative connotation of fixed and unyielding conformity suggested by the term, stereotype.

No matter how extreme the poverty in Tevye, there is no "crisis of belief". Sholom Aleichem transfers his own attitude of optimism to Tevye as the dairyman says:

I rely upon your noble character that you will do your utmost in Yechupetz that I may benefit from the proceeds of your book. I can really use it now that I have to marry off a daughter--perhaps two at once, if God will grant it.<sup>44</sup>

Tevye's spirit of optimism is analagous to the thought expressed by Dr. Joseph Sittler, professor of systematic theology at the University of Chicago:

For us, in our time, hope is not a disposition; it is rather a 'happening' that takes place when upon the ~~crossed-out~~ pages of the old we labor and dream within the anguish of the possible.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Tevye is hopeful as he says:

The Lord is indeed a Provider, governs the world with wisdom. As he sees me struggling for a piece of bread, He says to me: 'Tevye, you think it's all over with you, it's the end of the world?' Feh, you're a great fool! Soon you'll see that if God wills it, your luck will

<sup>44</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger, (Y) Jos. Lipshutz Fund, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1966, p.18

<sup>45</sup> Steven V. Roberts, "Ribicoff says nation's churches are not helping their neediest," The New York Times, Oct. 21, 1967, Sec. 2, p. 20

change and every corner will be brightened.... A Jew must hope, no matter what. What if meanwhile you are harassed? That's why we were created Jews! No wonder the whole world envies us!<sup>46</sup>

And Tevye's complaints to the Almighty were so tempered that they might be likened to the advice given by the Chasidic Rabbi Moshe of Kobryn, of the middle of the nineteenth century, who taught:

When a man suffers, he ought not to say: 'That's bad! That's bad!' Nothing that God imposes on man is bad. But it's all right to say: 'That's bitter!' For among medicines, there are some that are made with bitter herbs.<sup>47</sup>

Tevye muses, as he rationalizes and prays:

Oh, how we suffer, not like the rich men of Yechupetz who spend entire summers on their country estates, eating, drinking and bathing in luxury.... What does it matter to my horse if oats are cheap or expensive?...But, pooh, one does not question God!... And the aristocrats who say there is no God, how will they fare in the next world? One does not play around with Him. One must proceed delicately, addressing Him: 'Merciful, compassionate Father, have pity upon my wife and children.'<sup>48</sup>

The Tevye plots are developed in unit form, each

46 Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger (Y.) Yivo Literaturgesellschaft, Buenos Aires, Argentina 1966, pg. 22

47 Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidim: The Later Masters, Schocken Books, Inc. N.Y. 1948, p. 163

48 Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger (Y.), Jos. Lipshutz Fund, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1966, p. 24

story possessing its own sense of conflict, suspense, climax, denouement and resolution. It is the narrative power and language of Tevye which colors the action and holds the reader with the compelling fascination with which the Ancient Mariner held the Wedding Guest spellbound.

Sholom Aleichem, himself, deemed Tevye his best work in monologue form, sharing the opinion of his literary colleagues. In a letter to David Pinski, which Sholom Aleichem wrote from Lausanne, Switzerland on February 6, 1914, he said:

My friends, admirers and critics, who consider themselves connoisseurs, have discovered that the crown of my creativity is Tevye, der Milchiger;-- they say, in fact, that Tevye has a remarkable world outlook.<sup>49</sup>

In Sholom Aleichem's vocabulary there is a quality of colloquialism and idiom characteristic of spoken Yiddish. The author sketches what is outstandingly humorous in a character, rather than giving a detailed description of him. Tevye is reminiscing, recalling his daughter, Beilke, before her marriage:

Remember, you used to milk two cows at a time, and roll up your sleeves and cook a plain dairy borsht

<sup>49</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, (Yiddish), Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 250

or potato pancakes--and you'd say to me, 'Father, wash up!' That was the best tune!<sup>50</sup>

And in relating his meeting with Menachem-Mendel, Tevye confides to Sholom Aleichem:

May they have never existed, those little Jews who cast the Evil Eye upon me! Providence sent me a relative, Menachem-Mendel, a flyer, a destroyer, a loafer, a twister, a yesterday's day, may he not rest in a peaceful place. He found me and turned my head with dreams, without foundation in fact. Should you ask, how do I, Tevye, come to Menachem-Mendel? I'll tell you. It was so ordained.<sup>51</sup> Thus does Sholom Aleichem achieve effects which are "grotesque, bizarre, tender or lyrical".<sup>52</sup>

Except for some monologues which are philosophical essays, such as "If I Were Rothschild", Sholom Aleichem's stories are full of suspense, most of which emanates from the dialogue.

Some of the characteristics of Sholom Aleichem's style in the Tevye stories are evident to readers of Yiddish, e.g. his use of the dramatic present for past and future tenses, the use of "have" instead of "is" as auxiliary verb,

<sup>50</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Tevye der Milchiger (Yiddish), Yivo Literaturgesellschaft, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1966, p. 179

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 47

<sup>52</sup> Yudel Mark, Louis Finkelstein, ed, The Jews, Vol.II, Harper & Co. N.Y., 1960, p. 1212

the use of the coordinating conjunction "and" instead of subordinate conjunction,<sup>53</sup> the use of a singular verb with plural subject.<sup>54</sup> The author's use of the rhetorical question in rapid fire succession lends vitality to the monologue as it develops the characterization. (Tevye's addresses to the Almighty as well as his narrative to the author, complaining about his loss of authority as a parent). Sholom Aleichem was constantly refining his diction, writing down synonyms and alternatives and then using them in rapid succession, giving dimension to his description.

As a humorist, Sholom Aleichem displays great vitality and expressiveness in the use of figurative language. There is a skillful use of the concrete word, effective sentence arrangement and a masterful power of capturing the speech patterns of each character. This is what makes his characters so believable, so life-like, so graphic. This is what makes his monologues, originally written for silent reading, so suitable for oral

<sup>53</sup> Max Weinreich, "A Blatt Sholom Aleichem", Tevye der Milchiger, (Yiddish) Yivo, Argentina, 1966, p. 238

<sup>54</sup> Yudel Mark, "Is Sholom Aleichem's Sentence Structure the way people talk?" (Yiddish) Yivo, Argentina, 1966, p. 245

presentation. Having perceived this himself, Sholom Aleichem read these monologues at public meetings and communicated the power of living literature to a vast audience. He stimulated a larger readership and gave impetus to oral readings in intimate groups by amateurs as well as professionals.

Sholom Aleichem, in his own Republic (the name he gave to his immediate family circle), and Tevye realize tragedy when the family is separated: contentment appears simultaneously with the "togetherness" of Tevye, Golde and his daughters. Moral and ethical guidelines continue to be clearly defined. As in the life of the author, so is there no eroticism or perversion in the lives of the characters of Sholom Aleichem. In "If I Were Rothschild", Sholom Aleichem expresses the impossible dream of every idealist who envisions Utopia. His message is as relevant tomorrow as it was in the yesterdays about which Sholom Aleichem wrote.

This spirit of optimism for the future appears in Mottel Peyse dem Chazans, (Mottel, the Cantor's Son), 1907 Sholom Aleichem recounts the adventures of a boy who experiences the hardships of being a Jewish child in an austere society of many restrictions and pitifully few pleasures. From this milieu, Mottel is thrust into quite another setting and must cope with new conflicts and a



strange culture. What remains constant for him and his family is the economic pinch and the everlasting pall of poverty. In Mottel Peyse dem Chazans, Sholom Aleichem makes the character of Mottel the dominant factor in the story. Plot and setting are subordinated to this purpose, although they are contributing elements.

Sholom Aleichem's insight into the world of childhood illuminates his characterizations in Mottel Peyse dem Chazans. The chief character, Mottel, is a composite of Holden Caulfield, Toby Tyler, Huck Finn, Dick Whittington and a male Alice -- a sort of Alex in Wonderland (with apologies to Rev. Dodgson and Reb Sholom). Mottel is all the boy characters of Sholom Aleichem -- Shimek of "Song of Songs", Shloimele and the hero of "Dos Messerl". But, above all, he is the young Sholom Aleichem. Mottel spoke for all the young boys of his time and ever after. Those who dared to engage in adventure identified with him, and those who had been inhibited lived vicariously in his escapades. And the adults who read Mottel dreamed of what might have been, rejoicing in the success of his ventures and suffering with Mottel in his moments of crisis and trial.

Sholom Aleichem began writing Mottel Peyse dem Chazans in the first decade of the twentieth century (1907)

and kept writing about the boy's adventures until 1916, almost to the day of his death. The book is written in two parts: Mottel in Kasrilevka and Mottel in America. The first part takes Mottel, his relatives and neighbors through a variety of experiences, misadventures and ultimate success in traversing the frontier, so that they may leave this native shtetl, Kasrilevka, and embark for their "ultima thule", the answer to their prayers, America. The second part deals with the joys, frustrations, minor successes, and the trials and errors of adaptability in reaching the exalted state where the recent newcomer may regard the newer arrivals as "greenhorns". Mottel's rationale for loving his new country is pragmatic and valid as he explains:

America is a fine country for children. That's why I like it. No grownup dares touch a child with his littlest finger even. My brother, Eli, tried it... but the people around us said, 'that's not how you do it in America... it's not allowed to hit somebody smaller than yourself...' Try not to love such a country!<sup>55</sup>

In Part One, the mood is established at the outset with Mottel's feeling of sublime exultation as he is playing with the little calf, Menie:

And from my swelling breast a kind of song burst

<sup>55</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Adventures of Mottel, tr. T. Kahana, Henry Schuman, 1953, pp. 259-260

forth--much finer than those I sang with father on holidays at the altar, a song without words, without music, without melody--a kind of nature-song, a song of a waterfall, of running waves, a song of songs: Oh papa, oh father, oh everlasting G-o-d!<sup>56</sup>

Whenever Mottel's thoughts went soaring and his feet began to skip to the accompaniment of birdsong, there appeared, like an Avenging Angel, the figure of his brother, Eli who brought him back to earth with the judgment: "A boy almost nine years old, dancing with a calf! Back to the house, you rascal! You'll catch it from father!"<sup>57</sup> Thus, Sholom Aleichem conveys the same feeling he communicated in "Dos Messerl", when the boy's father scolds him for playing with the pen-knife: "You should be sitting with a book in your hands!" And the boy muses, "Dear Lord in Heaven, I, too, want to feel, I, too, want to see...."<sup>58</sup>

After the death of his father, Mottel looks to his brother, Eli -- who has now assumed the role of surrogate male parent -- for direction and guidelines. Mottel echoes his brother's words as he comforts his mother: "Today is a

<sup>56</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Adventures of Mottel, Henry Schuman, N.Y. 1953, p. 4

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, page 5

<sup>58</sup> M. Grafstein, ed., Sholom Aleichem Panorama, London, Ontario, 1948, p. 210

holiday, mama! Today is Shevuos, Mama! Mama, weeping is forbidden!...<sup>59</sup> Thus, the author conveys the impact of a holy day and the feeling that the continuity of religious observance takes precedence even over one's personal sorrows.

A fine collection of drawings inspired by the work of Sholom Aleichem, has been created by Frau Rahel Marcus-Schalit of Germany. She finds that in Mottel dem Chazans there are three main characterizations. Mottel's brother, Elihu, represents Menachem-Mendel and there are....

pale contours of all kinds of Tevyes, but the leitmotif of the book is the Jewish child, the Jew in the springtime of his life -- who wrestles with his temperament, shyness and humor of one whose life is just beginning.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, Mottel's understanding and maturity, at times, often point up the ingenuousness and naivete' of Menachem-Mendel and Tevye.

That Sholom Aleichem's works lent themselves so admirably to the artist's brush or sketchbook may have been

<sup>59</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Adventures of Mottel, Henry Schuman, N.Y. 1953, p. 22

<sup>60</sup> Frau Rahel Marcus-Schalit, Menschelech und Szenes, (German), 16 Zeichnungen, Klat Verlag, Berlin, 1922, p. 2

due to Sholom Aleichem's own artistic ability. An examination of the manuscripts of Sholom Aleichem's writings reveals an interesting talent. Wherever anything was revised, changed or crossed out in work, the author sketched or doodled a bird, a house, a flower --anything which would camouflage the error and decorate the revision.<sup>61</sup> This practice calls to mind a story told by the Dubner Maggid. It is related that a king possessed a large, beautiful, pure diamond which sustained a scratch. A gifted lapidary engraved, with superb artistry, a beautiful rosebud around the imperfection, using the scratch to make the stem.<sup>62</sup> So did Sholom Aleichem remove the flaw, embellishing the error and enhancing his manuscripts.<sup>63</sup>

Mottel dem Chazans was received with acclaim by eminent Russian writers as well as Yiddish critics. Maxim Gorky wrote of Mottel:

I read it through... I laughed and cried... a wonderful book! It sparkles throughout with such a genial, firm

<sup>61</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 319, Y.

<sup>62</sup> Ohel Yaakov, Genesis, Warsaw, 1928, p. 139

<sup>63</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 319, Y.

and wise love for his people.<sup>64</sup>

Samuel Niger analyzed the magnetic appeal of Mottel:

We love him because in him dwells the blessed strength which will pull the human being out of the swamp.<sup>65</sup>

After reading Mottel, The Russian critic, Amphiteatrov, likened Sholom Aleichem to Dickens and said of him:

A writer-psychologist who is able to laugh and cry with children with that hearty simplicity which springs from purity and sanctity... I urge all Russian parents who want the young generation to grow up with a sense of justice, and love for human friendship and equality, to let their children read the works of Sholom Aleichem.<sup>66</sup>

Sholom Aleichem made it quite evident that he had a soft spot in his heart for Mottel, who was as free from pettiness, snobbery, prejudice and bitterness as the author believed himself to have been as a boy. Sholom Aleichem confessed his partiality to the critic, Samuel Niger:

I was glad that you guessed Mottel was my favorite child. This is as true as the Torah. I have not yet finished with Mottel. Soon I shall return to him and to the other children as well.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 319, Y.

<sup>65</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Selected Works (Yiddish) ed. A. Vergeles, Melucha Verlag, Moscow, 1959, p.4

<sup>66</sup> Marie Waife-Goldberg, My Father, Sholom Aleichem, Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1968, p. 254

<sup>67</sup> C.S. Kazdan, "Sholom Aleichem, Poet of Childhood", Panorama, London, Ontario, 1948, p.32

Sholom Aleichem returns to the stories of the other children with simplicity and artistry. The short story "Greens for Shevuoth" is narrated in the third person. The story is about Avremchik, Moisechik and Dvorka, the tattered little children of Peiseh, the boxmaker and his wife who live in one miserable room with one little window, through which they can sometimes see the reflection of the sun. Father Peiseh is impoverished but cheerful; their mother is fastidious and a stern disciplinarian. Throughout this story, the theme of the austerity and monotony of a Jewish child's existence is clearly presented. Avremchik is the only one of the children old enough to attend cheder. He is their link with the outside world, bringing back news--all connected with cheder-life and learning. Avremchik knows the prayers for fruits of the tree and earth, yet has never seen them grow. From Avremchik the other two learned about heaven and earth and that on Shevuoth, the skies split open. The most exciting activity of the day was guessing what their father would bring home for them. This time, in honor of Shevuoth, Peiseh brings green, sweet-smelling grasses which he spreads over the newly-swept floors. Their mother continues to scold but their father -- he brings them everything. "There are so many things that Jews must have,

and they get them. Even greens... Even Greens...<sup>68</sup>  
 For his other children, there are more  
 delights. In his story, "A Page from the Song of Songs",  
 Sholom Aleichem tells the idyllic tale of young love. The  
 story is told in the first person by Shimek, about nine  
 years old and involves Buzie (diminutive of Esther-Libbe),  
 who is almost eleven. Having studied the "Song of Songs" in  
 his Biblical training, Shimek interprets his feelings in the  
 light of these beautiful verses. It is just before Passover  
 and the reader feels the impact of the holiday, as Shimek  
 sees the women washing and cleaning as the daughters of  
 Jerusalem mentioned in the "Song of Songs". Quoting from  
 this Biblical source, Shimek is transported to a world  
 transformed and enchanted. To impress Buzie, Shimek tells  
 her about the magic of Kabala -- and when challenged, the  
 boy replies that he learned it in Cheder. Buzie, in  
 the eternal manner of a maid with a man, teases Shimek  
 and laughs. Shimek, challenged, says something which hurts  
 her feelings. Just as Shimek wants to make up and to sepak  
 to her most tenderly, the spell is broken -- a loud voice  
 is calling his name. It is his mother, reminding him it is  
 time for synagogue. Yet Shimek lingers on, continues to  
 tell Buzie fanciful tales and soon realizes that his love  
 is returned. As Sholom Aleichem reveals the inextricability

<sup>68</sup>Sholom Aleichem, "Three Little Heads", The Old Country, Crown Publishers, 1946, p. 335



with which the daily life of a Jewish child is tied up with ritual and religion, he creates an exquisite story of young love expressed in terms of ancient and meaningful poetry. In spite of the austerity of his daily life, the cheder-boy has acquired the magic formula whereby every new experience becomes a "happening" of tremendous importance. For he can identify with kings and princesses, castles and magic mountains. Indeed, as the author comments: "What delights the Lord has provided for His Jewish children".<sup>69</sup>

The use of the poetic and lyrical language of the Bible in almost contrapuntal effect against the simple childish chatter of young children is most effective. That young Shimke can apply these verses to his own situation is even more remarkable.

It is dramatic irony that the genre of the play which was least successful during his lifetime, became most successful after Sholom Aleichem's death, reaching new heights with the production of "Fiddler on the Roof", an adaptation by Joseph Stein of the Tevye stories. From this spontaneous success came a renaissance of interest in the

<sup>69</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Old Country, Crown Publishers, 1946, p. 48

other works of Sholom Aleichem, those which had already been received with acclaim and accolades, but with limited exposure.

There has been criticism both favorable and unfavorable of the adaptation of the Tevye Stories in "Fiddler on the Roof" (1963), particularly with reference to some of the characterizations, specifically that of the rabbi, who is depicted more as a native of Chelm than of Anatevka. Nevertheless, the fundamental essence and lifestyle of Tevye is clearly projected. The musical play does the stories justice in that it does not change anything essential. The central light falls upon Tevye and the message which it illuminates transcends the limitation of geography and religion. There seems to be in "Fiddler on the Roof" a pervading universality which makes it perfectly proper for a Catholic group to select "Fiddler" for a theatre-visit.

If "Fiddler on the Roof", an adaptation of the Tevye stories, is an indication of increasing interest in the writings of Sholom Aleichem -- there may yet arise a Sholom Aleichem Repertory Theatre -- not only for Yiddish productions but in every language -- where all the dramatic monologues, dialogues -- all the wit and wisdom which engaged a limited

audience for so long may reach out to all -- affording not only entertainment, but an outlook on life, a code of ethics -- and above all an optimism and sustaining faith in the Almighty.

The impact of the author's message upon people far removed from Anatevka or Kasrilevka is described by Robert Gover in an article on a performance of Sholom Aleichem's work in Indianapolis, over fifty years after the author's death. Gover philosophizes on the reaction of a busload of Kentucky children to the performance:

What would they feel, what would they hear in these lines and see in these characters? Themselves, of course. Done up in different costumes, out of a different time and place, but themselves, nonetheless.<sup>70</sup>

These children laughed and wept, as adults and children have been doing all over the world. The power of people to relate to Sholom Aleichem is indeed not limited to his time, nor to his locale.

Indeed, even in China, a collection of Sholom Aleichem stories has been entitled, One Eye Laughs, The Other Eye Cries.<sup>71</sup> Thus, we see a sort of emotional Esperanto at

<sup>70</sup> Robert Gover, "Culture Comes to Indianapolis", The New York Times, 12/24/67, Magazine Section, p. 10

<sup>71</sup> B.Z. Goldberg, "Sholom Aleichem, Fifty Years Later", Jewish Book Annual, 1965-1966, p. 98

-- a language of the spirit -- which transcends  
riers of difference and communicates to all the essence  
a common humanity.

As Sholom Aleichem freed himself from business commitments to engage in full-time literary work the tone of his writing changed from sarcasm and caricature to optimistic humor and humanistic characterization. His major works, Tevye, Menachem-Mendel and Mottel were projections of his own personality. Menachem-Mendel was the "Luftmensch", Tevye, the realist, and Mottel, the youthful spirit which was the quintessence of Sholom Aleichem till the very end. The didactic tone of his writing changed as time went on and he turned from a stance of sermonizing to the depiction of a Buberian relationship of I and Thou between author and subject and above all between Sholom Aleichem and his own Creator.

Chastened by his own suffering, physical as well as economic, Sholom Aleichem seemed to become more understanding, more aware of his fellow men, their needs, frustrations and despair. His humor was his gift, to help them cope with their problems. No matter what, things could be worse, and Sholom Aleichem hastened to point out what the eventuality might be. If this were not possible, he changed the subject, as Tevye did after the departure of his daughter, Hodel. At a moment of despair, Tevye suggested that they

speak of happy things--like the cholera in Odessa.

One of the most significant works in the genre of the short story is the tale of "The Enchanted Tailor". A review of the plot of this convoluted narrative reveals elements of symbolism, surrealism, fantasy, comedy and tragedy. When the tale is ended, there is a question regarding the precipitating agent of the tragedy. Was Shimen-Eli "prank-prone"? Was it a flaw in the tailor's character or was it the chicanery of Dodi? Yet we cannot overlook cosmic implications. The mood and the setting give credence to all these possibilities.

Sholom Aleichem uses the monologue as a platform from which he may deliver a message. The tone, however, is no longer as sermonic as it was in his earlier writing. Sholom Aleichem develops his themes with humor as he does in "If I Were Rothschild", in advocating the elimination of money, yet dreaming of being "Lord Bountiful" in administering his largesse among the needy and the deprived. Two significant themes merge in this brief monologue: the overpowering commitment of an observant Jew to the reality of the Sabbath, and the dream of an economic Utopia which would make all men equal and abolish wars.

Again, in "The Miracle of Hashono Rabo", the theme of the impact of true religiosity on an observant Jew--this time Berel, the vinegar maker--is encased in a story which tests the faith of two men, one a simple man and the other a professional clergyman.

Many themes are developed in the Tevye stories as each of the dairyman's daughters confronts her father with a problem which is upsetting to Tevye's value system. Tzeitl challenges tradition by defying the pre-arranged match. Hodel marries the revolutionary, Feferl, disregarding plans formulated by Tevye and the matchmaker. In Chava's choice of a mate, more is at stake than the traditional match, for apostasy is involved in her marriage to the Gentile, Fyedka. Tevye has rationalized the marriages of Tzeitl and Hodel; Chava's alliance cuts her off from Tevye's family. The tragedy of Shprintze's misfortune, although greater than Chava's, finds Tevye accepting the finality of death more philosophically than the apostasy of his third daughter. In "Tevye Fuhrt kein Yisroel", the hurt against Tevye's dignity and equilibrium is more direct. His daughter, Beilke, and her husband, Podhotzur, suggest that Tevye leave his shtetl home, since his trade as a dairyman is not in consonance with their own status in life.

In Mottel Peyse dem Chazans, Sholom Aleichem treats the boy hero with the same tenderness he has shown towards all the youngsters who appeared in his children's stories. Various themes emerge in Mottel, particularly, the oppressive austerity of a Jewish child's life in a tradition-bound, adult-centered shtetl existence. To escape the harshness and drabness of their lives, these children are endowed by the writer with creative imaginations and a love for little things, animate and inanimate. Mortel's encounters with nature are described idyllically and poetically. Sholom Aleichem is at his most lyrical in his tenderness towards the little folk of his little people.

Of all the genres in this period, the play fared least favorably. Yet, the short stories which emerged in this decade contained dramatic action, while the dialogues and monologues lent themselves to dramatization because they were so highly adaptable to stage presentation. Sholom Aleichem's language was life-like and realistic and his characters took on full-bodied dimension as they engaged in identifiable pursuits and spoke in believable language.

In this period of greatest productivity, the quality of Sholom Aleichem's literary output and the impact of his philosophy on his people justified his faith in



self and the accolades which were his portion among his  
rary colleagues.

CHAPTER V. SHOLOM ALEICHEM'S DECLINING YEARS:  
FLOWERING BRANCHES ON A WITHERING TREE (1910-1916)

As Sholom Aleichem approached the closing years of his life, his mission as an optimistic humorist became a compelling goal. Although his work had, at the outset, been serious and satirical, it seems that the trials and disappointments he had endured refined the irony of his humor. The mischievousness, flair for mimicry, sense of the ridiculous, which were in his bones as a boy, came to the fore. His letters reveal this as do his writings. His comedy derived not only from his nature but from his experiences.

During this second decade of the twentieth century, Sholom Aleichem's thoughts kept going towards his plays. His role as a dramatist, up to this period, had been most frustrating. The only real successes came from novels which had been adapted as plays: Stempenyu, Shver Tsu Sein a Yid (from the novel, Der Blutiger Shpass), Blondjende Shtern (Wandering Stars.) His one act plays, Congratulations, Agents, She Must Marry a Doctor, People, and The Divorce, were popular with amateur theatre groups. Those who were connected with the Yiddish Theatre in the United States were in the forefront in recognizing Sholom Aleichem's gift for

the drama. Maurice Schwartz and his Yiddish Art Theatre saw merit in Sholom Aleichem's dramaturgy and performed his Tevye stories, adapted for the stage.

The play, Wandering Stars (Blondjende Shtern) adapted from the novel written in 1910, is a simple story of two talented young people and their roles as performing artists in a world far removed from their native Bessarabian Village. The girl, Rosa Spivak, has an unusually beautiful voice, which she uses, to her parent's delight, in singing such simple folk songs as "Rozhinkes und Mandlen (Raisins and Almonds), and Leo Rafaelski has theatrical talent and aspirations. Rosa and Leo are in love with each other and pledge their troth before they run away from home to join a theatrical troupe. When the company disbands, Rosa and Leo must go their separate ways, to seek further opportunities in the theatre. The girl achieves fame as a singer and becomes engaged to a violinist. Leo is converted to Christianity in order to attain the heights he seeks as an actor. After many years, Rosa and Leo meet and realize that they are still in love. The plot is simple and quite predictable, the high point arriving at the masterful performance of Leo Rafaelski in the classic play, Uriel Acosta, which is attended by his childhood sweetheart, Rosa Spivak.

The character of the heroine, Rosa Spivak, is more carefully and sympathetically drawn than that of Leo. Rosa is natural in her Jewishness and observes the ritual of Shivah after her father's death. The character of Hotzmach is a composite clown figure of the long - suffering actor who must yield to inferior roles. Rosa's parents represent a pious and provincial generation of shtetl folk, who equate the theatre with sinfulness. For them, it is enough for Rosa to use her talent in the chanting of cantorial duets with her father and the singing of folk songs on the holidays.

The language of Wandering Stars is the colloquial Yiddish of Sholom Aleichem and the audience is aware of the contrast between the simple, idiomatic, folk speech of Rosa's parents and the literary quality of the language as used in the theatrical performances.

Two years later, in 1912, Sholom Aleichem wrote the novel The Bloody Jest, later dramatized in 1914, and renamed Shver Tzu Zein A Yid (It's Hard to be a Jew), based on the ritual murder of Mendel Beilis. The story begins with a conversation between two school friends, one Jewish, the other Christian. Shneyerson, the Jewish boy, tells Ivanov, his Gentile friend, that it's most difficult

to be a Jew! Ivanov cannot believe it and urges his friend to make a wager, to exchange identities, and swear each other to secrecy for a year. They trade documents and credentials and apply for admission to the University. The real Ivanov, who is posing as the Jew, Shneyerson, finds lodging in the home of David Shapiro, his wife, Sarah, their daughter, Betty and their young son, Syomke. As the plot unfolds, the theme of antisemitism is manifested in the plight of a Jewish student who, despite a superior scholastic record, cannot achieve the educational goals which are within reach of the non-Jewish student whose grades are less than mediocre.

The real Ivanov, now posing as Shneyerson, becomes part of the Shapiro household, sharing with them their lot as Jews, with all its disadvantages, such as their need to present documents and passports to the police to establish residence. Mrs. Shapiro is charmed by her new boarder and hopes that her daughter Betty may become interested in him. Every now and then, suspense is established by certain inconsistencies in their boarder's behavior as a Jew. He lacks the knowledge of certain practices and is unaware of many restrictions against Jews. However, the real Ivanov manages to extricate himself out of every situation by

explaining that he has always lived among Gentiles in a Russian City. Ivanov cannot understand why he must register with a dentist in order to establish residence. He feels he needs advice, so he decides to send for his Jewish friend, the real Shneyerson. The friend arrives and delights Mr. Shapiro by his understanding of Jewish practices, as well as of all the restrictive laws against the Jewish people. Shneyerson notices Ivanov's interest in the Shapiro daughter, Betty, and tries to discourage any involvement between the two young people since he knows full well that Ivanov is Gentile. The infatuation becomes more serious and Ivanov presents Betty with a gold, jewelled bracelet for her birthday. Alarmed, Mrs. Shapiro questions Shneyerson about his friend's background. Mr. Shapiro returns from being interrogated by the police and complains to the real Shneyerson whom he believes to be Ivanov. He accuses the Gentiles of treating Jews worse than dogs or horses. Then they discuss the false accusation of the use of human blood for the Passover seder. Ivanov becomes confused, almost revealing his identity. However, Shneyerson pulls him out of the difficulty. When one of the guests suggests that young people might as well be realistic and take advantage of opportunities in a new free world, and not let some nonsense block the way, Betty, the proud Jewess, retorts:

For the sake of some nonsense, did you say? To renounce one's own people for the sake of a career-- you call this nonsense? To deny everything a person holds near and dear.... You call all this nonsense? .... A person doing this ugly thing for the sake of his own little interests, is more than a coward, a renegade, a traitor.<sup>1</sup>

Shneyerson, who is genuinely interested in Betty, begins to question Ivanov's intentions towards the girl. Ivanov is annoyed and feels Shneyerson may reveal their secret.

Meanwhile, the real Shneyerson is invited to be a guest at the Shapiro Passover seder. Shapiro has gone to the Rabbi to ask his opinion about inviting a Gentile. He has been informed that Ivanov has come to the Rabbi to be converted to Judaism. When the real Shneyerson arrives for the Seder, Betty questions him about his visit to the rabbi. Unaware of what has been happening, Shneyerson confronts Ivanov, whereupon the Gentile accuses the young Jew of being his competitor for Betty's hand. The seder is suddenly interrupted by the arrival of the police, who seek Shneyerson to accuse him of using Christian Blood for Passover. When the real Shneyerson sees the predicament of his Christian friend, he reveals the secret of the pact, and both of them are arrested. Ivanov rises to the occasion and declares, to his

<sup>1</sup> M. Grafstein, ed. Panorama of Sholom Aleichem, London Observer, Ontario, 1948, p. 256

everlasting credit:

If I were Shneyerson to the very end, it would give me great pleasure to sit in your place as the defendant. I would show them... who squeezed me all winter long, how stupid and ridiculous their story about ritual murder really is!

The theme of antisemitism, which is expertly dealt with in this work, makes it quite clear that it involved even more than second-class citizenship for Jews like the Shapiros. There was more than mental and economic cruelty inherent in the restrictive rules in these Russian towns of the early years of the twentieth century. Anti-semitism meant physical punishment and even death for the "cardinal crime" of having been born into the Jewish faith.

The device of role-changing has been employed in Franz Werfel's "Jacobowsky and the Colonel" and in Mark Twain's Prince and the Pauper. Unlike the figures of Sholom Aleichem's novels and short stories, the characters in his play must, of necessity, introduce themselves and develop their own characterizations through the dialogue and action. The conflicts in this play lead up to the climax at the Passover seder when the police come to claim the "Jew". The denouement is foreshadowed by David Shapiro's declaration that both will be released through the intervention of Ivanov's influential parent.



Perhaps Sholom Aleichem had a prophetic feeling that he had left Tevye and his other characters in capable hands, for he went back to the story of his life. This was a book whose time had come, for as the author said:

Finally the right time came. Before I had reached the age of fifty, I had the honor of meeting His Majesty, the Angel of Death, face to face. I was almost dispatched to that place whence one cannot write letters nor even send a greeting by messenger .... I said to myself, 'Now the time has come. Snatch the opportunity and write.... People who think they knew and understood you will turn up with cock-and-bull stories about you. Better do the job yourself, for nobody knows you as well as yourself'.<sup>2</sup>

As the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close, Sholom Aleichem began to think about the book which would embrace all of his thoughts, experiences and philosophy, his autobiography. This was going to be his masterpiece. All of his stories had been taken from his life. Now he would treat the whole of his life in an autobiography. As Sholom Aleichem declares in the preface:

I shall speak of myself in the third person: that is, I, Sholom Aleichem, the writer shall relate to you the true life-history of Sholom Aleichem, the Man, as unceremoniously as I can, without embellishment, or affection, as an impartial observer might tell it, an absolute stranger -- but still one who has been with the hero continuously, and had<sup>3</sup> passed with him through all the seven circles of hell.

<sup>2</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Great Fair, Noonday Press, N.Y. 1955, p. 4

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 4

In the dedication of his autobiography, Sholom Aleichem addressed his children:

Dear, beloved children, to you I dedicate my work of works, my book of books, the song of songs of my soul----- . Perhaps you, or your children, will learn something from it -- to love our people and to appreciate their spiritual treasures.... This would be the best reward for my faithful more than thirty years labor in our mother tongue and literature (New York, February, 1916)<sup>4</sup>

Sholom Aleichem's autobiographical novel, written in the third person, was planned as a Bildungsroman. As in his stories, so in his autobiography, memories of his childhood played a central role. The emphasis of the book is on the author's formative years, from the time of his earliest remembrance. Since the earliest years of a child's life are the most decisive in molding his behavior pattern and character, these reminiscences are of significant value. Sholom Aleichem's childhood is filled with his various relatives, friends, and acquaintances.

Sholom Aleichem's father, Reb Nahum Vevik, is beautifully described in this work:

A tall man with a broad, white, wrinkled forehead, a thin beard which seemed to smile, and a constantly worried expression! A man of means and an amateur

<sup>4</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Great Fair, Noonday Press, N.Y., 1955, p. 1

cantor, a scholar and a man well versed in the Bible, a pious man and a lover of Hebrew, a disciple of the Hasidic rabbi of Telma, and a secret admirer of the more "worldly" writers...., philosopher, arbiter, counsellor, chessplayer, and connoisseur of diamonds and pearls....<sup>5</sup>

The author tells of his own talent as a mischievous prankster and mimic and of the fanciful tales told him by his dear friend, Shmulik the Orphan. Sholom tells about his friend, Meyer Medvedefker, whose beautiful voice eventually took him to operatic heights (after conversion). The author's adventures with all sorts of animals, dogs, cats, horses, emphasize his love for the creatures. This is made abundantly clear in the Mottel, and Tevye series. Sholom Aleichem's collection of relatives, Uncle Nissel, Auntie Hodel, Uncle Pinney, Grandma Minde, his gallery of Hebrew teachers, all are drawn with deftness, and simplicity -- a few well-placed verbal strokes and the essence of the characterization appears.

Proceeding from childhood, the author tells of his adolescence, his first love, his mother's illness and death from cholera. And as the family mourns Chaye-Esther, the youngest children are sent to Boyuslav to their maternal

<sup>5</sup>  
The Great Fair, Sholom Aleichem, Noonday Press,  
 1955, p. 9

grandparents. Upon their return, Sholom dwells upon his impressions of his step-mother, whose use of invective made such impact upon the young boy, providing him with material for books yet to come.

Sholom's autobiographical narrative is basically authentic, and whatever liberties he takes serve as enhancements of actual occurrences. The book which the author hoped would cover a lifetime ended with an account of a severe illness at age twenty one. Almost prophetically, he says: "And he stood there reliving the past and, as he paused at the edge of the future, he bade his childhood farewell, forever"<sup>6</sup> And, indeed, shortly thereafter, he was to bid life, itself, farewell.

It was not given to him to complete the great work, Funem Yarid, which he had projected, but he provided enough of his early life to indicate that the child growing up into manhood would remain true to his basic instincts, to his ethical outlook, and to his abiding concern for his fellow-creatures. Of Sholom Aleichem, whose written life story ended with his youth, it may well be said, in the

<sup>6</sup> Sholom Aleichem, The Great Fair, Noonday Press  
N.Y., 1955, p. 306

words of Carl Sandburg, "If, when a man comes to die, he has a boy's heart, is that a bad thing?"

At this point Sholom Aleichem apparently felt he needed the remembered excitement and joyousness of his boyhood to ease the physical anguish he suffered from his debilitating illnesses. He found pleasure in resuming the stories of youth in the Mottel series, which he had begun in 1907, and continued writing until less than a week before his death. After a hiatus of five years, from 1908 to 1913, Sholom Aleichem continued the writing of his autobiography, Funem Yarid (The Great Fair). In both of these works, there is a remarkable admixture of the comedic and the tragic, with the accent on laughter and optimism.

Absorbed as the author was in continuing his autobiography, resuming the Mottel stories, and perfecting/<sup>his plays</sup> Sholom Aleichem continued to write more Menachem-Mendel stories -- and to serve as a sounding board for his devoted Tevye. Although Tevye remained the same, his life was changing, Golde was gone, his children had left, and his thoughts were directed towards Israel. Meanwhile, Sholom Aleichem was revising the Tevye stories, adapting them for the stage as Tevye's Daughters. In this regard, Sholom

Aleichem wrote a letter to the actor-producer, Jacob Adler. This letter, never mailed, informed the renowned "master" that he had been working on the Tevye stories for twenty years, always having in mind the portrayal of Tevye by the great Adler. Sholom Aleichem seizes the opportunity to rail against the theatre of the day, saying:

In my play you will not find the effects which they have been feeding the public so many years, no tear jerking scenes of children's cribs, crazy women, and disturbed maidens, who shriek as if in a madhouse, causing the entire Bowery to weep.... However, you will find a Jew, a father of five daughters, a plain person, a completely honest, suffering man, full of tragedy, yet who makes the listener laugh, not with scorn, but with merriment, with sympathy and compassion. The four acts are four separate tragedies and, together they form one long tragedy of life of a Jewish family.<sup>7</sup>

Sholom Aleichem continues, reassuring Adler that if he appeared in the part of Tevye, he would appear in a play worthy of him, and would create one of his most beloved roles. He would evoke healthy laughter, a compassionate sigh, an unforced quiet hidden tear. "I would like to think that this would be the crowning role of your long, artistic career".<sup>8</sup>

Albeit Sholom Aleichem directed his sights upon a

<sup>7</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 249, Y.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 250.

prominent performer for the part of Tevye, it seems that as the years went on, the character of Tevye became actorproof. Each performer brought his own interpretation, his own insight and his own method. From noted actors, like Maurice Schwartz, who projected the tragic figure of Tevye; Zero Mostel, who played a brash and earthy Dairyman; Herschel Bernardi and Harry Goz, with gentler delineations and Chaim Topol, a burly and lovable Tevye to those who are relatively unknown, the character of Tevye seems to be cherished individually by each interpreter and presented with unique understanding and profound sincerity.

Sholom Aleichem's health was failing; he was beset with many complicated ailments. Yet he held fast to life, and continued writing. However, the blow that devastated him was the shattering news that his son, Mischa -- who had remained in Denmark but planned to join his parents in California -- had died of tuberculosis, at age 26.

In his utter grief, Sholom Aleichem writes to his children, the Kaufmans, September 21, 1915:

Where does one find words or language? Mischa's last letter told of his longing for us and of his love. 'I bless the day when we can be reunited. At the very name of Mama my soul is overjoyed.' These were his

last words.<sup>9</sup>

In this letter, Sholom Aleichem, feeling his own end imminent, planned the contents of his last will and testament:

In my will I ask my children, if they wish, to say Kaddish for me. However, if they are not so inclined, they may, instead, remember me by gathering with the rest of the family. One of them is to read one of my works, even the gayest -- let my name be remembered with laughter, not tears, at my Jahrzeit.<sup>10</sup>

The will which Sholom Aleichem wrote is a document of profound philosophical and ethical implications. A reading of each section reveals, perhaps more lucidly than anything he had ever written, the ethos of the author -- his credo, his sense of charity, justice and humanity and perhaps least expected in such documents, an overwhelming sense of humor. Every motif of his works is reflected in this testament: his love for the "little" and impoverished, his concern about his literary colleagues, as well as all laborers, his scorn for pomp and extravagant ceremonials, his deep religiosity, his love for his family, his sense of values and throughout, a pervading air of optimism.

<sup>9</sup>  
I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, (Yiddish), Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 128

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid, p. 128



Sholom Aleichem imposed no demands or restrictions upon his dear ones; he suggested and advised. He was concerned with his good name and reputation and recommended payment of any debts he might leave behind. He urged harmony in familial relationships, he wished to be remembered with joy. Above all, he was solicitous of his wife's welfare. "My wish to my successors and my prayer to my children to protect Mama, to beautify her old age, to make her bitter life sweet, to heal her broken heart." He signed the will Sholom Ben Menachem Rabinowitz, Sholom Aleichem.

Thus, the blithe spirit who affirmed and said "Yes!" to life, made his farewells, and soon thereafter, on the 13th day of May, 1916, in an unpretentious apartment on Kelly Street in the Bronx, took leave of his family, friends and thousands whom he had cheered and comforted over the years. And in truth, according to his wishes, Sholom Aleichem is remembered with laughter. Moreover, perhaps beyond his expectations, his popularity has grown over the years, and his appeal has transcended the barriers of language, geography, religious background. It is the basic Menschlichkeit, the remarkable humanity of the man and the artist which is communicated.

In the second decade of the twentieth century Sholom Aleichem began to tie up the loose ends of his affairs and his literary output, and to devote himself to the completion of work which he had been planning for a long time. He sought fulfillment as a playwright of one act plays, as well as full-length dramas adapted from his novels, Der Blutiger Shpass (Shver tsu sein a Yid) and Blondjende Shtern (Wandering Stars).

Wandering Stars deals with young Jewish artists from a traditional provincial background who seek success in a changing world amidst changing values. The character of Rosa Spivak is drawn with sympathy and understanding, for her values are Sholom Aleichem's standards. She remains faithful to traditional Judaism although she must operate in a milieu which is far-removed from and alien to these values.

In the play Shver tsu sein a Yid (It's Hard to be a Jew), Sholom Aleichem deals with the theme of anti-semitism in Russia as it affects the lives of a family of Jews whose members seek equal status as citizens, students and human beings. The climate of fear which hovers over the lives of the Shapiro family heightens the suspense, while the game of

subterfuge played by the Jewish student, Shneyerson, and his Gentile colleague adds tension to their plight. The plot becomes complicated when the pseudo-Jew falls in love with the Jewish girl, and Shneyerson is torn between being true to his ethical values, and loyalty to his colleague with whom he had made a pact of secrecy. The climax takes place at the Passover seder when the police arrive to arrest the "Jew" who is accused of ritual murder, reminiscent of the Mendel Beilis case. The secret of the pact is then revealed but Shapiro assures all that Ivanov's father would exert his influence in resolving the conflict.

His major work in the declining years of his life was his autobiographical novel, Funem Yarid (From the Fair), which he had been planning as his masterpiece. From the use of first person in his monologues and short stories, Sholom Aleichem wrote about himself in the third person, as if he were an impartial observer, yet had been his most intimate confidant. This work, which was to have embraced the entire span of his life, related his story as far as his twenty-first year. However, his early basic instincts were harbingers of the enduring values which were important to Sholom Aleichem the man and the writer.

In spite of ailing health, the author persisted in

continuing his Mottel stories, the Menachem-Mendel series and the saga of Tevye, which he was dramatizing for stage presentation. However, tragic news of his son, Mischa's death dealt him a devastating blow from which he never fully recovered. He wrote his Will, which was an ethical document, revealing his values and his philosophy. He provided for the material and spiritual comforts of his own family, as well as those of needy writers. He advocated harmony among the members of his family, and asked to be remembered with joy and laughter. And, finally, he wished to rest among poor workers, with the "plain people" with whom he shared his creative bounty while he lived.

A study of Sholom Aleichem's work in the various periods reveals certain patterns in his characterizations, themes, style, plots and values.

In his characterizations, the author dealt with the internal man rather than with external description. Sholom Aleichem brought his Tevye or Mottel to life through conversation, mannerisms, thoughts, rather than by actual descriptions of their outward appearance. By depicting characters who were like his own townspeople--employing exaggeration, irony, even Galgenhumor (gallow's humor)--Sholom Aleichem reached a multitude of fellow Jews, whose suffering became bearable because they could laugh with the author at the realization that others "had been there, too". No matter how miserable, droll and misbegotten the character seemed, Sholom Aleichem endowed him with dignity and worth. Not only did the poor wretch emerge triumphant, but at one and the same time, the reader of that milieu sensed an identification, and felt redeemed. Because the character of the "little man" appeared believable and lovable, the reader, too, felt loved and worthwhile.

In his characterizations there is no doubt that

Sholom Aleichem plays favorites. When the pauper is pitted against the prosperous, the poor man becomes the "put-upon" innocent; the rich man emerges the villain. Paupers are never dehumanized; their souls remain untarnished and dignified. Children find a loyal champion in Sholom Aleichem, who idealizes them. In the confrontation between child and adult, the child retains his innocence, his naturalness, his love of life, his lovingkindness, while the adult appears insensitive, gross, hypocritical and unjust. While they are yet free from the guilt feelings imposed upon them by an adult world, the children of Sholom Aleichem laugh with all their hearts. The author's skill in communicating the essence of his character's personality, his psyche, his life style, emanates from Sholom Aleichem's own depth of perception, and his power of almost total recall, in achieving verisimilitude in characterization. The gallery of Sholom Aleichem's portraits discloses real people who are "tumbling" (busily active) in the manner of a Breughel painting. And, somewhere in their midst is the author, listening, smiling, taking notes, and being intimately involved.

Although his characters are verbose, Sholom Aleichem takes pains to select the precise word. He lets his characters ramble, yet he pulls them back briefly and

effectively. He lets them say just enough to establish their imprint and ethos on the reader. Then, suddenly, with one word or one sentence, there is a switch and change of mood, as in Kasrilevke story of "Restaurants". The story-teller goes into a kosher restaurant where he endures an enervating dialogue with the proprietor and his spouse in order to get something to eat. At long last, the food arrives, and as the famished customer is about to eat it, a woman enters the restaurant, lanky and one-eyed, her hand in her bosom and scratching her ear. And when a beggar approaches, asking alms for his falling sickness, the story-teller interrupts his "feast" and runs as if "pursued by a hundred demons".<sup>1</sup>

And in the character of the eighty-year-old patriarch, Reb Yozifl, Sholom Aleichem has created a shy and pious man fond of telling parables. In the story of his encounter with the contractor, the venerable rabbi approaches the wealthy man at an inopportune time and is greeted harshly. Moreover, when Reb Yozifl's announces his mission, the building of a "Moshav Zekenim" (Home for the Aged), the contractor, in a moment of fury, slaps the old man.

<sup>1</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Inside Kasrilevke, Schochen Books, Inc., N.Y., 1948, p. 36.

Whereupon--if one may borrow Sholom Aleichem's own use of the pun, the self-effacing Yozifl forgets his own hurt and with great aplomb replies: "I take this was meant for me. Now, my dear man, what are you going to give for the home for the Aged"<sup>2</sup>. Thus, Sholom Aleichem permits Reb Yozifl to save face and stay in character.

In his early works, such as "die Viboren" we meet the individual against the Establishment - little tailors, cobblers, coachmen, musicians, Hebrew teachers - poor people who are in conflict with those who are privileged by virtue of material possessions. In the novel, Tzuzait und Tzushprait, Sholom Aleichem describes the girl student, the artist, the modern socialist and on the other end of the spectrum, the old world fanatic, the poor woman, the "nouveau riche", the provincial and the cosmopolitan woman.

Sholom Aleichem presents all of the types he has encountered in his life: the talented artists, Rosa Spivak and Leo Rafaelski of Wandering Stars; the manipulators on the stock exchange where the author strove to eke out an existence and where he met Menachem-Mendel; the insurance

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Sholom Aleichem, Inside Kasrilevke, Schochen Books, Inc., N.Y., 1948, p. 126.



brokers in his play "Agenten", Sheyne-Sheindel, whose curses were authentically derived from Sholom Aleichem's step-mother, and others who are obsessed with particular "hang-ups", e.g. Reb Yozifl and his parables and Tevye and his Biblical quotations.

Among the main characters of Sholom Aleichem's works, Tevye appears as possessing the virtues of religiosity, love of family life, respect for learning, the championing of the cause of the underdog--be he man or beast. His weaknesses are his argumentative nature vis-a-vis the Almighty as well as his fellow-man, his built-in prejudice against the wealthy, and his everlasting insistence upon quoting from the Scriptures, employing Yiddish malapropisms in translating from the Holy tongue. Mottel is a young version of Tevye, with his disarming admixture of innocence and guile. Mottel's relationship to his Maker is channeled thru his love of every manifestation of nature. His normal mischievousness makes him believable and real, as he is liberated from the austerity of a Jewish boy's existence at every holiday time--when it is even forbidden to weep! Sholom Aleichem reveals Menachem-Mendel's weakness as a peripatetic "Luftmensch" who has great dreams about insignificant goals. In this character who falls

short of being tragic because he lacks the awareness (anagnorosis) of his plight as he is being buffeted about in his "wheeling and dealing schemes--Sholom Aleichem seems to be expressing his resentment that he, himself, was becoming a "Menachem-Mendel" in his pursuit of economic advantage.

Sholom Aleichem's leading female characters include Rochele, heroine of Stempenyu, a paragon of womanly virtue, pious, loyal to her marriage vows, strong in withstanding temptation; her only weakness is her romanticizing. Rosa Spivak of Wandering Stars is a talented singer who is natural in her Jewishness, traditionally observing the period of mourning after her father's death. Sheyne-Sheindel, wife of Manachem-Mendel, possesses vices which outweigh her virtues. A vituperative shrew, she vilifies her husband, while she looks to her mother for comfort, reassurance and prophecy.

The obstacles which confront Sholom Aleichem's characters are mainly social--the changing values in shtetl and city, the emancipated woman and the impact of the Pogroms. However, of all of Sholom Aleichem's people, Tevye was remarkable in his ability to cope with cosmic tragedy and maintain his dignity.

That Sholom Aleichem realized the importance of really knowing the characters he described was evident in his comments in 1889 in the second volume of his own *Folksbibliothek*, Y., (p. 307):

To write for the people and to converse with them in their own language, one must provide such pictures and portray such characters as are familiar. The heroes must come from the sphere of real people, really from the folk itself. And whoever knows our people is well-aware that heroes exist among our lowly in greater abundance than in our upper classes or our "intelligentsia".

In searching for Sholom Aleichem's plot structures, it is apparent that through the eccentricity of Sholom Aleichem's characters and their disregard of the world's logic, complicated situations often arise. To add to the pleasing confusion, there is an element of the game called "Can You Top This", as one story reminds the author and his characters of yet another, and the plots go far afield. The similar--thus, a story about a rabbi reminds the story-teller about another rabbi--yet the situation may differ and the whole thing may be so utterly irrelevant that it suggests the Yiddish idiom "a moshel tsibbele" (apropos of onions, that is to say, apropos of nothing). Yet paradoxically, all these unpredictable elements contribute to the reality and humor of the whole.

It is characteristic of Sholom Aleichem's plots, particularly in his early novels, Stempenyu (1888) and Yoselle Solovei (1889), that the action which takes place is sometimes mental rather than physical. Sholom Aleichem achieves psychological development and resolution of the dramatic conflict through the use of "stream-of-consciousness" technique.

The themes which recur throughout the author's work deal with the problems which arise from generational conflicts, the confrontation between the poor and the rich, the relationship between Jew and Gentile, the plight of the Jew in education and the professions, the role of woman in a changing society, the impact of religious observance on the shtetl Jew, the Jewish artist between two worlds. As Sholom Aleichem matured, he dealt with serious themes in a humorous fashion, communicating compelling statements palatably and indelibly. Throughout, the basic theme was the enduring thrust of man through pain, misery and despair with hope and dignity.

In his earlier work, Sholom Aleichem's style was belabored and formal. His humor was mixed with ridicule and

provincial satire. As he matured, his style became more flexible and colloquial. The language in his earlier work revealed the influence of German in the Yiddish vocabulary. Later, Sholom Aleichem discarded the German and Wahrheit became emes, Verzeihung became Moichl, Grossmutter became bobbi, er iz verrückt <sup>"</sup> gevoren became er iz gerirt. Sholom Aleichem endeavored to make his use of Yiddish more authentically folk speech. He deplored archaic usage, as well as the banalities of shund (hack) writers.

Just as his leading character, Tevye's attitude toward dealing with life changed as he dealt with his problems, so did the author develop various techniques of revealing these changes. Through the various plot treatments in the stories of Tevye's daughters, Sholom Aleichem revealed his own conception of life and disclosed his own values. Optimism prevailed in Sholom Aleichem's outlook on life. He was free from alienation; despite his suffering, his financial and physical distress, Sholom Aleichem continued to affirm life. Unimpressed by superficiality and pomposity, he sought and described what was worthwhile beneath the surface. Morality was highly regarded and ethical treatment of man and beast was cherished. The author's values became

guidelines to his readers because they respected him as a writer as well as a philosopher.

As evidence of the relationship which existed between Sholom Aleichem and his own people, in 1910, in Warsaw, a postcard was issued with the drawing of a monument which the city of Kasrilevke planned to erect in honor of Sholom Aleichem's 25th jubilee as a writer.<sup>3</sup> It depicted the author sitting on a bench holding a barefooted beggar in his arms, while he tickled the sole of the pauper's foot with his writing quill. The tenderness and love with which Sholom Aleichem embraced the little man and the compassion in the author's eyes made of this projected statue a sculpture which captured the poignancy of Michelangelo's "Pieta yet communicated the whimsicality of Sholom Aleichem.

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I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf, N.Y., 1926, p. 355. y.

## CHAPTER VII. SHOLOM ALEICHEM: AN APPRAISAL

Sholom Aleichem evolved and articulated what he saw as a meaningful philosophy in a world which, at times, seemed to him meaningless and illogical. His faith in the Almighty provided the magic ingredient which tipped the scales, giving him a measure of values and helping him to retain his sense of balance. This he tried to convey to his kinfolk -- not only those in his immediate shtetl circle, nor even in the wider Russian community; he reached out to every human being whom he regarded as having been created in the Divine Image.

The basic Biblical values were inherent in Sholom Aleichem's credo. He applied them in his own life and they were the yardstick of morality in his writings. Yet, they were tempered with understanding, humanity and compassion, and were interpreted in the light of a changing society. Respect for parents was fundamental. However, the need for the understanding of children became an imperative fact of life. Loving one's neighbor, particularly if he were poor, was fervently advocated, yet the wealthy man, whose resources were not purposefully employed, fared less advantageously. The author loved the beggar whom he depicted most

sympathetically, yet Sholom Aleichem was militantly anti-poverty. He was deeply attached to traditionalism and the aesthetics of observant religiosity, yet he was free from religious dogmatism.

He did not bear false witness against his neighbors; as a realist, any shortcomings he described were true. He sought to do justice to the virtues of the non-Jew. However, where there was "proof-positive" that antisemitism was at work, Sholom Aleichem brought it to light. And when antisemitism threatened the physical survival of the Jews, as in the pogroms, he cried out against the insanity himself and implored his Russian colleagues to raise their own voices, too, in righteous indignation.

Sincerity and courage were his hallmarks, in his writings as in his life. Whatever the genre, in essay, monologue, play, short story, there is no "credibility-gap." Whether couched in seriousness and polemics, or clothed in humor and laughter, Sholom Aleichem's sincerity makes everything seem believable and possible. Throughout, the essence of his humanity pervades the atmosphere and immediately there is a suspension of disbelief. The universality of Sholom Aleichem's humanity has filtered through to cultures as far removed from the shtetl milieu as



the Taj Mahal is from Tevye.

Sholom Aleichem's ethical approach to life was a recurring and consistent phenomenon throughout Sholom Aleichem's life. Although he had been thwarted and duped in some of his commercial endeavors, the author retained his trust in his fellow-man. Often he attributed the mischance to his own lack of business acumen and to his sense of strangeness in business "deals".

An appraisal of the course of Sholom Aleichem's work must note that when he wrote in the image of others, such as Mapu and Mendele, he was restrained by the austerity of these Maskilim. With the influence of Haskalah, there had appeared in his writing a tendency to preach. However, with the change from critic and satirist to humorist, there was a gentler projection of his philosophy through motifs which were developed with whimsy and playful irony. Sholom Aleichem's many works celebrated his affection for his fellow-man. His characters addressed themselves to him as if seeking the affirmation which was invariably forthcoming.

It was only when he divested himself of the obligation to conform, or to please his beloved father, that Sholom Aleichem wrote in a freer, more relaxed rhythm. It was when he began to write in Yiddish, in his comfortable,

epistolary style, that he succeeded not only in casting off the "onerous burden from his heart" (upzuschreiben dos Last funs Harzen)<sup>1</sup> but to emerge "as his own man" in achieving a special place in Jewish literature.

Sholom Aleichem's decision to use Yiddish as the language of communication was important to him as a writer. The language was closest to his consciousness for as he expressed it, he "dreamed" and thought in Yiddish. It was valuable, too, because it reached so many more readers than could the Hebrew and Russian which he had mastered. Not only was his language colloquial, but it captured the folk rhythm with its short, colorful phrases and skillful use of words taken from Russian, Hebrew and German. Sholom Aleichem's characterization through dialogue was masterful. His occupational background had trained his sensitive ear to the speech of the various trades and professions -- and the conversations had the ring of authenticity.

The author's use of interjections, verbal shrugs, innuendos, unfinished sentences, the use of the rhetorical question to reinforce his character's statements - all these

<sup>1</sup> I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Ykuf Verlag, 1926, N.Y. p. 55

are effectively used by Sholom Aleichem in his dialogues. Sholom Aleichem's colloquialism of style made his stories and monologues, written in the manner of oral conversation, eminently suitable for dramatic presentation. This was confirmed by the success of Sholom Aleichem's personal tours and readings on behalf of Zionism. It is noteworthy that the dialogues in his short stories prove more effective than in his plays, since, in the stories, the author's comments added to the interpretation of the works.

In tracing the course of Sholom Aleichem's literary development with regard to his themes, plots, characterizations, style and values in the three periods of his creativity, certain trends are evident.

Although Sholom Aleichem's vein changed from the polemical and satirical of the early period to an ironical and humorous vein in his later periods, the author's values and themes remained constant. These included his concern for the depressed and the deprived, his scorn for purposeless affluence and pomposity, his deep religiosity, his understanding of women, his love for animals and his abiding devotion to a normal family life. The author's plots changed from the complicated, and complex treatment of his early period to a simpler structure in his later work. His characterizations

changed from a tendency towards the caricatures of his early period to a gentler, more humorous treatment in the latter periods of his writing.

Sholom Aleichem's people may have been simple -- but they were regarded neither by him nor themselves as simpletons. Tevye possessed a folk wisdom which embodied an unquenchable optimism and unswerving courage. No matter what, Tevye was Captain of his Soul; to be sure, the Almighty was Master of his fate. And for Sholom Aleichem, the most important people in the world were the little people; these he did please, and mightily. Taking the emotions and behavior patterns of a people, the author related them to the ways of all mankind. His writings for and about his people were replete with Jewish values and attitudes. The irony of his humor which was sad but not sick, bleak but not black, gave courage and a reinforcement of optimism to those who were struggling to survive. In this struggle, Sholom Aleichem's people clung to the traditional teachings and ceremonies of their faith and Sabbath observance -- with fervor and with joy. To advocates of a newer morality which preaches biological survival "uber alles", these may seem out-of-date and irrelevant in an age of nuclear bombs and racial power. Yet the sense of isolation and alienation of

those who scorn the "old-time religion", which sustained Sholom Aleichem, is much more soul-searing than all the rootlessness and displacements of the Tevyes, the Reb Yosifels, the Mottels, and all the little people Sholom Aleichem met, described and understood.

It seems that Sholom Aleichem's effectiveness in communication through letter writing and the success of the literary output which was based upon it were manifestations of a singular phenomenon. The reader becomes aware of an I-thou relationship which is almost Buberian in its concept. Tevye speaks to an anthropomorphic Supreme Being almost in the same way that he converses with his literary author, Sholom Aleichem. Indeed, even his relationship to his horse is a person-to-person confrontation. Individuals are never regarded as mere objects or things. Perhaps it is this direct warmth of address in the writing of Sholom Aleichem that provides some of the magnetism which attracts so many who read him, as it was also the charismatic appeal of the man which drew such multitudes to him as a personality and attracted large audiences to his readings.

Something of Sholom Aleichem's mellow outlook and homely philosophy may be gleaned from the opening sentences of his autobiography, The Great Fair (p.3):

When a man starts out for a fair, his heart is full of hope.... But after he returns from the fair he has already made his bargains, accomplished his achievements. He is no longer in a hurry.

As an artist, the author listened to his characters, yet had the capacity to stand aside and see them objectively. There was never an air of superiority nor a feeling of condescension in his treatment of his people, no matter how forlorn, illogical or beaten they might be. As a living man, Sholom Aleichem participated in movements that arose out of the times and which affected his people. Whenever a cause, such as Zionism, became an urgency, Sholom Aleichem worked with all the integrity he possessed as a man, and with all the skill at his disposal as a writer. He was aware of the political and social problems of his day and he did not stand aloof from them. As devoted as he was to the people he described, so committed was he to the people who surrounded him.

As Sholom Aleichem's work is a reflection of his own life, so are the author's descriptions of great personalities fitting accolades to himself. Thus, this delineation of Herzl in the Hebrew journal, Hadar (no. 21, 1904) is an apt description of himself:

A good angel stood over his cradle and all good traits granted thousands of people she bestowed

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on this solitary individual.... a beautiful  
personality.... a soft tender soul, strong character,  
rare skill to dream and fantasize and a tremendous  
ambition to do such fanciful things that a man cannot  
attain.... and a joyousness and a tear and a power to  
travail and conquer, a strong will and the  
ingratiating charm to please the most important people  
in the world.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Dr. Theodor Herzl, (Yiddish),  
Heilpern Publishers, Switzerland, 1904, p. 6

## EPILOGUE

To take leave of this unique personality -- whose literary name, at one and the same time, signifies "hail" as well as "farewell" -- is not an easy matter. To have been steeped in the works and life of Sholom Aleichem has been a rare privilege. The wish to have done him the justice he deserves is an earnest hope as well as an open secret. Such a desire has been expressed by Sainte-Beuve:

When we think of great writers, we should ask ourselves what they would think of us. One quails before the notion of such a counter-scrutiny; and yet, however justly severe it might be, it would be tempered with qualities all too rare in our criticism: tolerance, independence, magnanimity.<sup>1</sup>

And, to be sure, Sholom Aleichem would administer whatever evaluations he made with encouraging optimism, with gentle grace and with fastidious taste, which characterized him as a remarkable writer and an extraordinary human being.

<sup>1</sup> Harry Levin, Contexts of Criticism, Harvard University Press, Boston 1958, p. 66



APPENDIX A

Important Dates in Life and Works of Sholom Aleichem

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1859	Sholom Rabinovitch born Feb. 18, in Percyeslav, province of Poltava. Father, Reb Menachem Nachum, Mother, Chaye Esther.		Haskalah movement (Enlightenment) made impact on Sholom's Father, a Maskil (adherent of Jewish movement of enlightenment and
1869	Outstanding student in Hebrew school (cheder). Won commendation from local rabbi, Reb Isaac, and monetary reward from Father.	Wrote short treatise on Bible and Hebrew grammar (unpublished.)	reader of neo-Hebrew literature, particularly work of Abraham Mapu, first Hebrew novelist). Enlightenment required intellectual and
1872	Bar-mitzvah; Death of Mother from cholera; Visit to maternal grandparents in Bohuslav, Kiev; Return home in Percyeslav after re-marriage of Father.	Wrote Hebrew novel <u>Bas Zion</u> (Daughter of Zion) patterned after Hebrew novel of A. Mapu. <u>Ahavas Zion</u> (Love of Zion, 1853)	social conformity by modernized Jewish religious and active use of Hebrew language. Haskalah paved way for Zionism.
1873	Entered Russian secular school on stipend. Worked in Father's inn.		
1874	Outstanding record as student.	Wrote novel <u>Yiddisher Robinson Crusoe</u> (unpublished)	

Date	Biographical Data	Related World Events
1876	Completed secular Russian schooling, began teaching Russian.	
1877	Became Russian tutor for Olga Loeff in Sovievka, Kiev.	
1879	Dismissed from teaching post upon employer's discovery of teacher-pupil infatuation.	First Hebrew correspondence published in Hebrew Journal, "Ha-Zefirah", (The Dawn), essay on youth of Pereyeslav.
1880	Elected to position of govt. rabbi (rabbiner) in Lauben.	Haskalah stimulated national and linguistic romanticism. In Russia, Maskilim (Those engaged in Haskalah) used Yiddish as well as Hebrew.
1881		Essays on education. For Hebrew periodical, "Ha-Melitz".
1883	May 12, married Olga Loeff; gave up rabbiner post.	Yiddish short story "Tzvai Shtainer" (Two Stones) for Yiddishes Folksblatt. Encourage by editor Alex. Zederbaum to write short stories, feuilletons, poems (under various
	Emergence as an acknowledged Yiddish writer (1883-1900).	

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
		Pseudonyms); feuilleton, "Die Ibergechopte Brief" (Intercepted Letters)	
1884	Birth of daughter, Ernestine(Tissie)		
1885	Death of Father-in- law puts author in charge of estate		
1886	Writing sub- ordinated to commerce	Wrote short stories. "Die Weltreise" (world journal) "Kinderspiel"; feuilleton, "Bilder Fun der Birditchsver Gass" (Pictures of a street in Berditcher)	
1887	Moved to Kiev, Second daughter, Sara (Liala) b.	Short story in Yiddish, "Dos Messerl" (pocket- knife) Publ. in Folksblatt under name of Sholom Aleichem favor- ably rev. by S.M. Dubnow (Kritikus) in Journal Voskhod. One-act play "A Bridegroom, a Doctor".	
1888	Death of father	Wrote novel,	

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
	<p>Reb Menachem Nachem; birth of daughter, Emma. Visited Odessa, met Mendele Mocher Sforim and other literary men with whom he had been corresponding. Issued first vol. of <u>Folksbibliothek</u></p>	<p><u>Sender Blank</u> Wrote book of poems, <u>Blumen</u> (Flowers). Wrote novel, <u>Shomers Mishpot</u> (Shomer's Judgment); novel, <u>Stempenyu</u>, publ. in <u>Yiddishe Folksbibliothek</u>, literary journal Sholom Aleichem founded.</p>	
1889	<p>Birth of son, Mischa; author financially bankrupt-family moved to Odessa.</p>		
1890	<p>Author and wife left family and toured Paris, Vienna, Vilna, BuKovina.</p>	<p>Second and last vol. of <u>Folksbibliothek</u>; novel, <u>Yossele Solovei</u>.</p>	<p>First meeting of Odessa-Palestine Committee in preparation for Zionist Congress.</p>
1891	<p>Mother-in-law paid off author's indebtedness. Author returned to Odessa.</p>	<p>Wrote essays for <u>Odesski Listok</u> and novelle, "Mein Bubbe's Roman" (My Grandmother's Romance).</p>	
1892	<p>Wife sold jewelry to finance publication of <u>Folksbibliothek</u>, Daughter, Marie, born. Author involved in stock</p>	<p>Wrote first of Menachem-Mendel letter series, "London", lullaby, "Shlof, mein Kind" (pseud. Shulamith). Cont.</p>	

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1892	exchange, part-time writer.	writing for "Hamelitz". Wrote for Odesski Listok.	
1894	Author in speculative transactions, travelling for business. Vain attempt to revive Folksbibliothek.	Satire, "Yaknehoz", censored and confiscated-possibly responsible for turning author from social diatribe to tragic-comedic blend in characterization of <u>Tevye, the Dairyman</u> ("K'tonti" short story) "Dos Grosse Gevins".	Dreyfus affair roused strong feelings re Jewish question and Zionism.
1897	Writing sparse; involved in Zionist activities.	Translated Max Nordau's historic speech "The General Situation of Jews Throughout Word" into Yiddish. Wrote two brochures: "Why Do Jews Need A Homeland?" and "To My Sisters in Zion".	First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, Herzl elected president.
1898	Continued Participation in Zionistic activities.		Zionist Congress in Basel, founded Jewish Colonial Trust.
1899	Lack of success in commerce decisive factor in determination to become full-time writer.	Two Tevye short-stories: "A Boidem" (Ceiling and "Heintige Kinder" (Modern Children) in <u>Yud</u> ;	Zionist Congress in Basel, dealt with problem of Hebrew culture.

Date Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1899	two letters from Menachem-Mendel, one-act play, "Mazel-tov".	
1900 Renounced trade for literary creativity; beginning of period of greatest writing power.	Wrote short stories, "The Clock", "Purim", "The Red Jews", "Chanakah Gelt", Collaborated with poet M.M. Warshawski in folk songs; read his own monologues at Zionist gatherings in Kiev and Belazerkov.	Zionist Congress in London, discussed Zionist propaganda.
1901 Last child, son, Numa b. Wrote voluminously in Yiddish.	Wrote short stories: "Dos Teppel" (Pot), "Gymnasieh" (H.S.), "Funem Priziv" (Military Service) Short story, "Rabchek", series "Ganz Berditfer" (later "The New Kagrilevke) short stories, "A Vershlerter Pesach" (An interrupted Passover) "Lag-Bomer", "Kleine Menschelesh" (Little Folk), "Naches fun Kinder" (Pride in Children), short-story, "A Maise un an Eck" (A Story Without Ending), later renamed "Der Verkinheveter	Zionist Congress in Baul. Estab. Jewish National Fund. for purchase of land in Palestine as perpetual property of Jewish people.

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1901		Schneider" (The Enchanted Tailor), Monologue, "If I were Rothschild".	
1902	Continued vast output.	Wrote short stories, "A Versherte Chasene" (An Interrupted Wedding), "Methusaleh" (A Jewish Horse), "Oif'n Fiddel" (On the Violin), "A Recovery Geese", critical article, "New Books".	
1903	Affected by pogroms psychologically and economically.	Contributed to literary anthology <u>Hilf</u> in and of Kishinever pogrom victims. Wrote short stories "Greens for Shavuoth", "Sacrifice", "Simchas Torah", "Pancakes for Chanukah", a series of holiday stories. Translated three Tolstoy stories in Yiddish for anthology, <u>Hilf</u>	Pogroms in Kishinev Zionist Congress in Basel - discussion of settlement in El Arish and Uganda.
1904	Hoped to establish own Yiddish daily newspaper in Odessa, travelled	Wrote brochure on Herzl, more <u>Menachem-Mendel</u> letters and <u>Teyye</u> stories. Wrote	

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1904	to St. Petersburg, Vilna and Odessa. Became acquainted with Maxim Gorky, L. Andreyer, A. Kuprin and other Russian writers. Met I.L. Peretz in Warsaw.	more short stories about Kasrilevke, Passover stories, Purim stories.	
1905	Continued readings in Vilna, Kovno, Rigo, Lodz, Latvia. Planned establishment of Yiddish Art Theatre in Odessa; Russian govt. interfered. After pogrom, author wrote epitaph and decided to go to America. Lacking funds, he made personal appearances in Austria, Rumania, Switzerland, Belgium. Personal appearances continue.	Play, "Tzusait und Tseshprait" (Scattered and Dispersed) presented in Polish and acclaimed. Warsaw Publ. Co. reprinted author's work in little volumes. Wrote one-act play, "Agenten". Wrote "Pogrom Bilder" (pogrom pictures), 42 letters for <u>New York Tageblatt</u> . Author wrote satirical lullaby about Russian royal family after Kiev pogrom.	Kiev pogrom. Previously, Bund had opposed idea in Jewish life. Now Bund adopted resolution demanding national cultural antonony for Jews, with Yiddish as nat. language. Orthodox joined Zionism through Mizrachi; labor group formed, Paole Zion. Tsar's October Manifesto, promising "freedom of conscience and speech --- and of association, immediately followed by wave of pogroms, incited by St. Petersburg Zionist Congress in Basle - Wolffsohn, Pres.
1906	Leaving most of family in Geneva,	Wrote Tevye story "Chavah".	



Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1906	Author sets out for America with wife and youngest son. Acclaimed in U.S.		
1907	Rejoins family in Geneva, met Hebrew poet, Chaim N. Bialek at Zionist Congress in Hague. Became fast friends.	Plays <u>Shmuel Pasternak</u> and <u>Stempenyu</u> produced in N.Y. Received mixed reviews; plays too literary for level of Yiddish theatre.	Zionist Congress in Hague decides to begin practical work in Palestine.
1908	Author suffers pulmonary hemorrhage; colleagues celebrate author's silver anniversary as writer (1883-1908). Went to Nervi, Italian Rivera to convalesce (Summers in Switzerland, winters in Nervi); encouraged by jubilee celebration.	Novel, <u>Der Oitzer</u> (Inheritor) Tevye story, "Shprintze" and novel "The Flood". New episodes of <u>Menachem-Mendel</u> , <u>Mottel Peyse den Chazens</u> , one-act play, "Menschen" (people). More of <u>Mottel</u> ; sold three volumes of his work to Jacob Litsky, Warsaw publisher.	
1909	Recuperating in Italy and Switzerland. Warsaw committee (Dinesen, G. Levin and A. Podlishevsky) bought rights to his works from former publishers and pre-	Another Tevye story, "Tevye Goes to Palestine", short stories "Two Dead Souls", "Song of Songs", series: "Railroad stories".	Zionist Congress in Hamburg - discussed consequences of Turkish revolution and establishment of cooperative

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1909	sent them to author.		settlement in Palestine
1910	Continued writing despite discomfort.	Wrote novel <u>Blondjende Shtern</u> (Wandering Stars), later dramatized; short stories, "Esther", "Passover in the Village", "Vi shain iz der Boim" (How beautiful the tree) "Kasrilevke in Yechupetz"	
1911	Corresponded with family, friends and literary colleagues.	Wrote "Auto-da-Fe", more holiday stories (Passover, Shevuoth, Purim.	Zionist Congress in Basel elected Warburg.
1912	Separation from family because of illness.	Wrote novel, <u>Der Blutiger Shpass</u> (The Bloody Jest), Passover story.	
1913	Severe bladder disease, prolonged illness. Spent summer in Germany; became part of literary circle of Jewish writers. Gave readings in Germany and Paris.	Wrote more <u>Menachem-Mendel</u> letters, Chanukah short story, "Cnards", "About a Hat" and "Three Funerals". Edited enlarged edition of M.M. Warshafsky's songs. <u>Stempenyu</u> appeared in English translation in London.	Zionist Congress in Vienna; decision to found Hebrew University in Palestine.

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1914	<p>On return to Russia received with acclaim by press and public. Toured Poland, Litz, Baltic region. Aware of impending war, author gathered entire family and fled to neutral Denmark. Lacks financial means to take entire family - took wife and youngest son Numa. Left son Mischa in Sanitarium in Denmark. Arrived in N.Y. December 12, 1914. Honored at Cooper Union and Carnegie Hall.</p>	<p>Wrote "Progress in Kasrelevke", continued <u>Mottel</u> stories, more <u>Tevye</u> stories. <u>Bloody Jest</u> (play) dramatized in Copenhagen.</p>	<p>Outbreak of World War I.</p>
1915	<p>Wrote last will and testament. Wrote <u>Funem Yarid</u> (The Great Fair).</p>	<p>Autobiographical novel, <u>The Great Fair</u>.</p>	
1916	<p>Last reading in Philadelphia at Metropolitan Theatre, March 4, before a thousand people. Fellow-writers joined his Seder at Pesach-time. Died May 13th. Funeral on May 15th,</p>	<p>Continued <u>Mottel</u> stories.</p>	

Date	Biographical Data	Work	Related World Events
1916	attended by 100,000 people. Services in auditorium of Educational Alliance. Interred at Mt. Neboh in Brooklyn, with thought of taking him back to Kiev after War. After Russian Revolution, no longer possible, he was put to rest in Mt. Carmel in Arbeiter Ring section.		

## APPENDIX B

### Literary Colleagues

1. Ben-Ammi (Mordecai Rabinowicz) 1854-1932, Russian-Yiddish author, lived in Odessa from 1864; organized first self-defense.
2. Berdichevtzski, M.I. Movement at time of Odessa pogroms in 1881. (1865-1921) - contributed to Sholom Aleichem's Folksbibliothek.
3. Bialik, Chaim N. (1873-1934) Hebrew poet-laureate of national spirit; close friend of Sholom Aleichem and his family.
4. Berkowitz, Isaac Dov (1885-1968) son-in-law of Sholom Aleichem. Hebrew translator of his father-in-law's works. Wrote Sholom Aleichem Buch.
5. Chekhov, A. (1860-1904) born Taganrog, Russia.  
World-famous short-story writer and dramatist.
6. Dubnow, Simon M. (1860-1941) Kritikus, wrote world history of Jews in German and history of Hasidim in Hebrew.

7. Friedberg, A.S. (Har Shalom) 1838-1902, Hebrew author, ed. Hebrew encyclopedia.
8. Frishman, David (1865-1922) Short-story writer, friend and admirer of Sholom Aleichem, admired his Hebrew style.
9. Frug, S.S. (1860-1916) Russian poet. Began to write in Yiddish in 1885 and later in Hebrew. Wrote ballads and satires.
10. Gogol, Nikolai Y. 1809-1852, Russian novelist born in Poltava. Best comedy, "Inspector General" "Dead Souls", powerful social satire inspired Chagall's sketches. First great master of Russian novel, founder of realism in modern Russian literature. Wrote: Taras Bulba and The Cloak.
11. Goldfaden, Abraham (1840-1906) Founder of Yiddish Theatre in Rumania wrote Shulamith, Bar-Kochba, Song, "Rozhinkes und Mandlan".
12. Gordon, Judah Leib (Yalag) 1830-1892, Hebrew poet, leading Maskil: wrote poem "Hakitzah Ami (Awake, My People). One of earliest writers of Hebrew novels. Style blend of Biblical and Talmudic.

13. Gordon, Michel (1823-1890) contr. to Folksbibliothek, humorous Yiddish folk-poems, influenced by Hashalah.
14. Gorki, Maxim (1868-1936) self-educated Russian novelist. One of most original and popular of modern Russian writers, forte' short story. Among works, "Song of Falcon", "Children of the Sun", "The Barbarians", "My Childhood", and The New Russia.
15. Gottlober, Abraham B. (Mehalel) 1810-1899, Hebrew-Yiddish author, wrote Zionist poems, dramas, history.
16. Kaminer, Isaac (1834-1901) poet. Themes: Israel's hopes and sufferings. Contributed to Folksbibliothek.
17. Lilienblum, M.L. (1843-1910) Hebrew author, Zionist pioneer, Haskalist; wrote autobiography ~~Errors of~~ Youth.
18. Mapu, Abraham (1807-1867), first Hebrew novelist, wrote Hypocrite 1857, first novel of contemporary Jewish life. Admired by father of Sholom Aleichem

who was delighted when his son patterned early work Bas Zion on Mapu's Ahavas Zion.

19. Mendele Mocher Sforim (Abramowitsch, Sholom-Jacob) 1836-1917, Hebrew-Yiddish author, mentor of Sholom Aleichem Publ. 3 vol. Natural history; collaborated with Bialik and Ravnitzki in translating Pentateuch into Yiddish. Helped shape Yiddish prose style.
20. Peretz, Isaac Leib (1852-1915), Yiddish author, contr. first Yiddish poem "Monish" 1888 to Folksbibliothek adherent of Hasidism.
21. Ravnitzki, J.H. (1859-1914) first Yiddish literary critic, ed. of Der Yud in Cracow 1899., published Sholom Aleichem short stories in publication.
22. Slonimsky, A.S. (1810-1904), editor and mathematician, founded Ha-Zefirah.
23. Spector, Mordecai (1858-1925), Co-editor of Folksblatt, creator of journalistic fiction, close friend of Sholom Aleichem.
24. Tolstoy, Leo N. (Count) 1828-1910, Russian novelist and social reformer. Author of: War and



Peace, Anna Karenina.

25. Turgenev, I.S. (1818-1883), Born Orel, Russia.  
 Banished because of liberal ideas, later returned.  
 Important novels: Fathers and Children, Liza,  
Smoke. One of greatest prose artists in Russian  
 letters. Read and admired by Sholom Aleichem.
26. Warshawski, Mark M. (1845-1907) lawyer, wrote folk  
 songs in collaboration with Sholom Aleichem. His  
 own most famous song "Oif'n Pripetchik".
27. Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarten) 1870-1927, Yiddish poet,  
 Yiddish version of Bible.
28. Zederbaum, Alexander (1816-1893), founded and edited  
Hamalitz, first Hebrew journal in Russia (1860)  
 ed. of Kol Mevasser, first Yiddish periodical in  
 Russian. Pre-Herzlion Zionist.
29. Zhitlovsky, Chaim (1865-1943), philosopher-essayist;  
 founded Jewish section of Socialist Revolutionary  
 Party (1885), stressing use of Yiddish as  
 language, edited Neie Leben (Nationalistic,  
 Yiddishistic and Socialistic).

30. Zinberg, Israel (1873-1943) Yiddish literary historian;  
wrote 8 vol. of history of Jewish literature from  
Middle Ages to Haskaloh.

31. Zunser, Eliakim (1836-1913) Yiddish poet, outstanding.  
"Badchen" (entertainer, specializing in  
improvisations at weddings and festivals).  
Haskalist and Zionist.

## APPENDIX C

### Leading Periodicals of Sholom Aleichem's Era

#### Hebrew

Ha-Melitz (The Advocate), ed. A. Zederbaum, political, literary, Haskalic, 1860, (Odessa).

Ha-Zefirah (The Dawn), ed. Slonmski, 1862, (Warsaw), political and Jewish news, Zionistic.

#### Russian

Voskhod (1881-1906), Leningrad, ed. G. Syrkin and A. Landau, Socio-political, belle-lettres.

#### Yiddish

Emes (Truth), Moscow, later communistic

Folksblatt (People's Paper), ed. Alexander Zederbaum; first periodical in which Sholom Aleichem used pseudonym, (1883)

Folksbibliothek (People's Library), 1888 ed. Sholom Aleichem, literary greats invited to contribute at generous fees.

Haint (Today) 1908-1939, Warsaw, Zionistic, scientific thrust.

Yiddishes Tageblatt (Jewish Daily), N.Y. 1885-1928, later merged with Morgen-Journal (ed. A. Zederbaum)

Yud (Jew), 1899, Cracow, ed. Ehasof, general news and literature; after other Jewish periodical

201  
folded, Sholom Aleichem sent Tevye and Menachem-  
Mendel stories to "Yud".

Zukunft (Future) 1892, social-democratic journal,  
ed. A. Liessin. Like "Forward", socialistic.

Publication suspended 1940 - revived 1941 by CYCO  
(Central Yiddish Culture Organization) to advance  
its philosophy.

## APPENDIX D

### Glossary of Foreign Words

Pg-Portuguese; Y-Yiddish; G-German; H-Hebrew

Ahavas (H) - love, dedication

Auswurf (Y) - scoundrel, outcast

Auto-da-fe' (Pg) - confession of faith, public execution

Bar-Mitzvah (H) - religious ceremony on thirteenth birthday

of Jewish boy, at which time he is deemed of

sufficient maturity to assume obligations of his

faith.

Bas (H) - daughter

Bildungsroman (G) - biographical novel, e.g. Wilhelm Meister

or Funem Yarid.

Bintel (Y) - bouquet, nosegay

Blondjende (Y) - wandering, straying

Blumen (Y) - flowers, blossoms

Blutiger (Y) - bloody, gory

Chasid (H) - disciple of Hasidism, celebrator of Jewish

religious rituals with joy - dancing and song;

Leader - Baal-Shem-Tov.

Chazan (Y) - cantor; of religious prayers

Cheder (H) - Hebrew school

Eisenbahn (G) - railroad, locomotive

## Glossary of Foreign Words

Feh (Y) - expression of distaste, disgust, revulsion

Fiedelt (Y) - plays violin

Froi (Y) - Woman, female, wife

Funem (Y) - from

Galgenhumor (G) - gallows humor, black comedy

Gemütlichkeit (G) - graciousness, congeniality

Geschichte (Y) - story, tale

Haskalah (H) & (Y) - movement of enlightenment, advocating active use of Hebrew language. Followers called "Maskilim".

Hilf (Y) - help (name of Journal issued on behalf of pogrom victims)

Jahrzeit (Y) & (G) - anniversary of death

Kaddish (Y) & (H) - prayer for deceased)

Loksh (Y) - noodle, macaroni

Luftmensch (G) & (Y) - impractical person, dreamer

Malchamoves (H) - angel of death

Mame-loschen (Y) - mother-tongue, native language

Melamed (H) & (Y) - Hebrew teacher

## Glossary of Foreign Words

- Menschlichkeit (Y) & (G) - humanity, decency
- Messerl (Y) - penknife, pocket-knife
- Milchiger (Y) - purveyor of dairy products
- Mishpot (Y) & (H) - judgment, decree
- Momzer (Y) - literally, child born out of wedlock,  
connotatively, rogue, rascal, mischievous fellow
- Nicht (Y) - no, not
- Papierlach (Y) - little papers
- Pareve: (Y) - neutral, food made of neither dairy nor meat  
products
- Pesach (Y) - passover
- Priziv (Y) - military service, draft
- Rabbiner (G) & (Y) - government rabbi elected by local  
district; rabbinical training no prerequisite.
- Schlim-Mazel (Y) - ill-fated, luckless, unfortunate
- Seder (Y) - Passover ceremonial meal, commemorating Exodus  
of Jews from Egypt
- Shevuoth (H) & (Y) - festival commemorating giving of the  
Torah (Law)
- Shpass (Y) - jest, joke

## Glossary of Foreign Words

Shtern (Y) - stars (of heavens and stage)

Shtetl (Y) - small Russian town

Shtainer (Y) stones

Shul (Y) - synagogue

Tag (Y) - day

Traumer (G) - dreamer

Tseshprait (Y) - dispersed, spread about

Tsezait (Y) - scattered, strewn

Unzer (Y) - our

Wissenschaft (G) & (Y) - knowledge

Yarid (Y) - fair, bazaar-market

Zayde (Y) - grandfather, endearing name given Mendele Mocher

Sforim by his disciple, Sholom Aleichem



APPENDIX E  
CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF  
SHOLOM ALEICHEM'S WORK - ANNOTATED

- 1879 "Letter to Editor", Hazefirah, 1879, no. 6, Hebrew.  
(I.D. Berkowitz, Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch (Y) Ykuf,  
N.Y. 1926, ppg. 311-313.

Rabinowitz defended Pereslav Jewish youth against charges of inadequacy in Russian and Hebrew language facility.

- 1881 "Education of Children", essay, (Hamelitz, 1881, no.51, Hebrew).

Rabinowitz, as rabbiner, urged intensive professional training for young Jews, thus lessening need for parental support and early marriage to evade draft.

- 1882 "Early Marriage and Military Service", article,  
(Hamelitz, 1882, no. 4, Hebrew).

Rabinowitz stressed rabbiner's role in promoting training of young men in purposeful professions, thus avoiding early marriage and fear of military service.

- 1882 "The Question of Hebrew Teachers", article,  
(Hamelitz, no. 6, Hebrew).

Rabinowitz urged reform of Hebrew Schools and teacher training in order to make religious education relevant to secular world progress.

- 1883 "Die Ibergechopte Brief" (Folksblatt from Oct. 26,  
1883 - July 11, 1884) # 42, 48, 51 (1883) # 7, 10, 11,  
12, 14, 17, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, (1884) Y.

Superficial observations on social life in various towns and hamlets, intermingled with sermonic statements and tinged with slight mockery. Imaginary correspondence between Reb. Leibele of the next world

and Reb. Velvele of this world, intercepted enroute by Sholom Aleichem.

- 1883 "Die Viboren", feuilleton, (Folksblatt, # 38, 9/28/83 (Y)).

First work under pseudonym of Sholom Aleichem, Satirical description of life of rabbiner in small provincial town. Shows warm relationship and loyalty of poor townspeople to elderly rabbiner.

- 1883 "Tsvai Shtainer", First accepted short story (Yiddishe Folksblatt) no. 26, 28, 30, July, 1883, Yiddish Petersburg, Russia.

Romantic, autobiographical tale, written before marriage to Olga Loeff, to whom story is dedicated. Tragic ending imaginary.

- 1884 "An Iberschreibung zwischen tzvai alte Chaverim" (Folksblatt) 1884, Y.

Correspondence between Sholom Aleichem and Shlez, the letter-writer.

- 1884 "Die Traumer, novel (Yevraiskale Obozrenie, July 1884 Russian).

Russian novel influenced by Mendele Mocher Sforim's Mosaies Bineomin Hashlishi. Hero, Fishel Charif, lives in world of fantasy; embarks on imaginary journey with companion, Eli Tamevater, as Messiah and Eliahu Hanovi.

- 1884 "A moshl mit a kulye shtroy" (A Parable of a Bundle of Straw), Dos Sholom Aleichem Buch, Y. Ykuf, N.Y. 1926, p. 349.

Shtetl rabbi precipitated concern and grief over deceased tailor by predicting similar fate for fellow tailors.

- 1884 "Hecher und Nidriger", short story, (Folksblatt, Y. 1884) 2 parts, I - In der Hoich; II - In der Nidrig. Story about two young Jewish intellectuals: one, Beckerman, from poor family, and other, Rosenfeld, son of wealthy man, and their confrontation with materialistic values of petty bourgeoisie.
- 1884 "Natasha" (supplement to # 35, 52 Folksblatt Y, 1884) short story, later renamed "Teibele". (Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem Y. Ykuf, v. 1, 1952, Buenos Aires) Orphaned Natasha, removed from sordid brothel surroundings, is taught by Michael Feldman to strive for truth and justice despite disenchantment in love.
- 1885 "Kontor geschäft", Folksblatt 1885, # 48. First appearance of Sheyne-Sheindel.
- 1886 "Bilder fun der Berditchever Gass", Feuielleton (Folksblatt, Y.) Precursor of Kasrilevke stories. Nostalgic reminiscences of characters and scenes in shtetl milieu.
- 1886 "Die Weltreise", short story, Folksblatt Y., later revised to "Der Ershter Aroisfor". Story about young birds who fly out into the wide world for the first time.
- 1887 "A Doktor", one act play, Folksblatt, Y. Six plays from Yiddish theatre, ed. I. Goldberg, Boston, 1913. Jewish mother's wish for match with doctor for her daughter.
- 1887 "Dos Messerl", short story, Folksblatt, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, N.Y. Folksfond, 1917-1925 (Y) v. VIII, 7-32.

Psychological insight into mind of Jewish lad who endured puritanical austerity of shtetl life which forbade possession of pocket-knife. Generational conflict between normal boy's yearnings and austere Jewish discipline.

1887 "Fervalgerter Brivel fun die Ibergechopte Brieu",  
Folksblatt, Y., 1887, no. 15.

First appearance of Menachem-Mendel although Sheyne-Sheindel appeared earlier in "Kontor geschäft", short story in Folksblatt, no. 48, 1885.

1888 A Bintel Blumen (Blumen), Oisgeklibene Verk, Y.,  
Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y. 1959, pp. 201-224.  
Jacob Sheftel, Publisher, 1888, p.1.

Ten little stories and poems written as a memorial to his late father, Reb. Nachum.

1. Funem Barg Sinai

Ten cheder boys climb high mountain, lie down among clouds, and feel close to the heavens, when their reverie is rudely interrupted by the sexton who brings them back to earth, figuratively and literally.

2. Dos Ibergeblibene Vandt

Rabbi implores visitor from Israel to describe the Wailing Wall. Children, bored by conversation, leave to skate on ice. Rabbi continues to deplore destruction and finally bursts into tears.

3. Avremel

Aged couple delights author with love and concern for each other.

4. Der Oitzer (Treasure)

Townspeople talk about treasure on other side of the mountain. However, unless there is harmony and unity among inhabitants, treasure will elude them and sink more deeply into the earth.

## 5. Ein Aizot

Beggar sits in front of synagogue counting his pennies, when wealthy count rides by in his coach, stirring up a cloud of dust and obscuring the rays of the sun. Beggar expresses indignation at nobleman's impertinence.

## 6. "Einteilen sich", short short story.

Upon the death of Kasriel, the water carrier and his wife, seven children are orphaned. Turmult arises when poor townspeople try to follow rabbi's advice to divide children among them.

## 7. "Two Souls"

Two children are born same evening, one to poor woman and other to wealthy. Twenty years later, poor one begs for death to end misery and suffering; rich one pleads for life, which is denied to him while death is postponed for pauper.

## 8. Ich Shem Sich

Close boyhood friends meet after many years. Wealthy one is cordial but does not invite less fortunate friend to his home because he is self-conscious about his wealth.

## 9. Eck Velt

"Cheder" boys meet Saturday afternoon at town wind-mill, which they decide is the edge of the universe. Adult calls youths back to reality.

## 10. Malach-Hamoves (Angel of Death)

Author tells of boyhood fear of Angel of Death. Later, he plays games with Angel, who urges him to make Will, while he keeps postponing it.

1888 "Bilder fun der Zhitomer Gass" (Folksblatt, Y.)  
feuilleton.

Nostalgic observations made by Sholom Aleichem while walking along streets of Zhitomer, as he recognizes

old acquaintances who seem to have changed.

1888 "Der Gett", play, Y. vol. I, Hoisfraind.

Comedy depicting efforts of mother-in-law, Sarah, to influence her daughter, Ethel, to divorce Mottel. Divorce proceedings end in reconciliation.

1888 "Die Yiddische Volksbibliothek: A Buch fun Literatur, Kritik und Wissenschaft, publ. by Sholom Aleichem, vol. I, Kiev, Jacob Sheftel, Berditchev, 1888.

Sholom Aleichem's experience in editing Volksbibliothek valuable in refining and reinforcing his own literary taste.

1888 Stempenyu, novel, Yiddische Volksbibliothek, v. I, 1888.

First "Jewish" novel, in honor of Mendele M. Sforim. Heroine Rochele remains loyal to her marriage vows despite temptation and ardor of musician, Stempenyu. Describes inner struggle of virtuous woman against worldly temptation, and ultimate moral triumph of chastity and piety.

1888 Reb Sender Blank, novel, Volksblatt, Y., later revised and retitled: Sender Blank and his Progeny (Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem,) Ykuf, Buenos Aires.

Satire on family conflict over father's inheritance, depicting true feelings of Reb. Sender's children as they attend his last illness.

1888 Shomer's Mishpot, (Berditchev, 1888, Y.) Novel in form of court trial, charging Shaikewitz (Shomer) with polluting public tase by shund (hack) writing.

Sholom Aleichem called attention to valuable writers like Mendele Mocher Sforim, Linetski, Goldfaden and Dick.

- 1890 Yossele Solovei, novel, Y., Yiddishe Folksbibliothek, V. II; Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, vol. II, Ykuf, 1952, Buenos Aires.
- Yossele, tailor's son, training to become chazan, longs for bohemian life of singer. Frustrated in love for Esther, Yossele is eventually "caged" by Perele.
- 1891 "A Happy New Year" ("G'mar Ch'simah Tovah"), short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, 1917-25, vol. XXIII.
- Sad tale of rootless youth, alienated, filled with self-hate, who converts to pursue career.
- 1892 Menachem-Mendel, epistolary novel, Y., "London", Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Buenos Aires, Ykuf, Vol. 3, 1952.
- Beginning of correspondence between dreamer, Mepachem-Mendel, and wife, Sheyne-Sheindel, reveals naivete' and impracticality of a "Luftmensch" and realism of his shrewish and vituperative spouse.
- 1892 "Shlof, mein Kind", lullaby (pseudonym Shulamith), Renanah Music Co., 1923, 5 ppg.
- Well known lullaby whose popularity has endured because of its tone of optimism and hope.
- 1894 Tevye der Milchiger, collection of short stories, Y., Sholom Aleichem Folksfond Ausgabe, N.Y., 1918.
- to  
1914
1. "K'Tonti" - letter from Tevye to Sholom Aleichem.
  2. "Dos Groisse Gevins" - Tevye rewarded for helping wealthy woman get home.
  3. "A Boidem" - Tevye's first encounter with Menachem-Mendel.
  4. "Heintige Kinder" - Tzeitl marries tailor.
  5. "Hodel" - Hodel marries revolutionary Feferel.

6. "Chava"- Chava marries Gentile, Fyedka.
7. "Shprintze"- Parental interference in match leads to tragedy.
8. "Tevye Fuhrt Kein Yisroel"- Beilke and Podhotzar urge Tevye to leave.
9. "Lach-lecho"- Tevye compelled to leave home by pogroms. Chava and widowed Tzeitl return.
10. "V'Halkalah"- Undeserved harsh treatment by local peasants results from government edict.

1894 Tevye series, "K'tonti", epistolary monologue.

Letter from the dairyman to Sholom Aleichem, expressing gratitude for author's interest and hinting at monetary recompense.

1894 Yaknehoz, play, (Hoisfraind, Y. Kiev. p. 172, Oislander N., Dramatische Schriften fun Sholom Aleichem, (Y). v. 1, Kharkov, Kiev, 1932 ppg. 229-315.

Realistic characterization of Yechupetz stock exchange brokers and satirical treatment led to government ban on charge of blasphemy uttered by hero, Shmuel Pasternak.

1895 "Groisse Gevins", short story, Tevye Series, Y. Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-1925, vol. V, ppg. 13-40.

Tevye, poor dairyman, receives reward of victuals and cow for giving ride to stranded wealthy women.

1895 Menachem-Mendel, Papierlach. Second series of letters, Hoisfraind; Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Y., Buenos Aires, Ykuf, 1952, vol. 3.

Continuation of letters from Menachem-Mendel, speculator on stock exchange to his exasperated wife, Sheyne-Sheindel.



- 1897 "Der Yiddisher Congress in Basel", Brochure, Y., Verlag Ehasof, Warsaw.
- Sholom Aleichem took positive stand on Zionism, believing it was solution to evils of economic and psychological rootlessness.
- 1899 "A Boidem", short story, Yud, 1899, Oisgevailte Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Tog-Morgen-Journal, N.Y., 1959, vol. 1, pg. 43, Y.
- Tevye's first encounter with Menachem-Mendel who involves him in worthless speculation which comes to naught ("Sich oislozen a Boidem").
- 1899 "Heintige Kinder", short story, Yud, 1899, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folkfond, 1917-25, vol. V, ppg. 67-91, Y.
- Tevye's first daughter, Tzeitl, refusing pre-arranged match, marries her own choice, poor tailor's apprentice, Mottel Kamzoil.
- 1899 "Mazel Tov", play, Yud, Y., Dramatische Schriften, by N. Oyslender, vol. 1, Kharkow - Kiev, 1932. p. 229-315.
- Bachelor Reb Alter, travelling bookseller, drinks too much and proposes to widowed cook.
- 1899 Menachem-Mendel, Millionen, Third series of letters in Voskhod; Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Y., Buenos Aires, Ykuf, 1952, vol. 3.
- Menachem-Mendel continues manipulations in hopes of garnering fortune which eludes him; his wife back home loses patience.
- 1900 "Chanukah Gelt", short story, Y., Oisgevailte Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Tog-Morgen-Journal, N.Y., 1959, v. 4, p. 27.

Youth describes delights of Chanukah, the candle lighting ceremony, the games, the traditional potato pancakes and the collecting of the Chanukah "gelt" from various relatives.

- 1900 "Der Zeiger" (Clock) short story, Y. Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, Vol. VIII, 63-75; Oisgevailte Verk, Y. Tog-Morgen-Journal, 1959, N.Y., p. 63.

Tale about a clock that strikes thirteen and begins to deteriorate each time it is repaired until its ultimate collapse.

- 1900 "In Haste", epistolary monologue Y. Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, Vol. XXII 17-32.

Menachem-Mendel becomes match-maker. He takes time off from his unsuccessful pursuits to spend Passover with his family.

- 1900 "The Purim Feast" short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, Vol. XXIII, PPg. 89-102.

Wealthy Uncle Hertz invites poor relatives to annual Purim feast which ends in disaster for young. Although envied and despised, Hertz's virtues are extolled upon his tombstone.

- 1901 "In Boiberik oif a Datche", Y., Yud, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, Vol. 12, pp.12-16.

Satire on life of Jewish bourgeoisie who vacation at the summer spas.

- 1901 "Meise ohn an Eck", later re-titled "The Enchanted Tailor" ("Verkisheveter Shneider"), Sholom Aleichem, The Old Country, Crown, 1946 and Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Sholom Aleichem Folksfond, 1917-1925, vol. XVI, 7-68, Y.

short story in supernatural setting of tailor bedevilled by trickery and superstition to the point of distraction.

1901 Mishegoyim, novel, Y., Zionist Weekly, "Die Velt"

Zionist Utopian novel, which influenced Theodor Herzl's novel Alt-Neuland.

1901 "Rabchik", short story, Y. Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Meises fun Yiddishe Kinder I, Vol. VIII, Sholom Aleichem Folksfond, N.Y. 1917-25.

Rabchik, a gentle dog, leads a wretched existence at the hands of peasants and, eventually, even fellow-dogs.

1901 "An Ungelelegter Briss", short story, Y., Verlag Bildung, Warsaw, 1901

Adventure of tragedy of the abandoned mother and the comedy of the female busy-bodies.

1901 "Dos Teppel", monologue, Y., Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y., 1959

Woman comes to rabbi with query regarding borrowed pot. Complicated narrative brings rabbi to point of complete exhaustion.

1901 "Gymanasie", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, vol. XXVIII, 173-193, 1917-25, N.Y.

Discrimination and antisemitism cause difficulties for Jewish couple who seek admission to college for their son.

1902 "A Yom Kippur Scandal", short story, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, vol. VI, p. 221, 211.

Shock of Yom Kippur transgression more powerful than loss of money.

- 1902 "Funem Priziv", monologue, der Yud, Hebrew Publishing Co., N.Y. 1909, # 15-17, p. 3.

Humorous monologue relating confusion resulting from altered names and attempted draft evasion.

- 1902 "Geese", short story, Y., Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y. 1959.

A monologue delivered by a woman who gives long-winded account of her involvement with purchase of geese, feeding, maintaining, slaughtering and rendering goose-fat for Chanukah.

- 1902 "If I were Rothschild", Y., monologue, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, N.Y., vol. VI, ppg. 129-133.

Utopian dream of Hebrew teacher who plans abolition of money, which he deems to be the source of all evil. The reality of providing for the Sabbath brings him back to earth.

- 1902 "Methusaleh", short story, Y., Oisgevailte Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, 1959, N.Y., ppg. 95-112.

A Kasrilevke horse endures series of misadventures until he is bought by a water carrier. Mischievous youngsters plague animal until he suffers tortured demise.

- 1902 "The Fiddle", monologue (Y), Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-1925, vol. 8, p. 33-61.

The writer's yearning for violin leads him to forbidden pursuits to get one--even to remove cedar wood from sofa to construct one, and to violate the Sabbath.

- 1902 "The Lottery Ticket", short story, ("Vigrishner Billet"), Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, vol. XVII, 7-50, N.Y., 1917-25.

Yisroel, the sexton, regards son, Benjamin, as a lottery ticket who will eventually be a Winner. Conflicts arise as Benjamin is driven to apostasy, and family mourns him as if dead.

- 1902 Yiddishe Schreiber (Y), 1902, Dialogue, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfund Ausgabe, N.Y., 1919, Dialogue between Yiddish newspaper and Sholom Aleichem.

Sholom Aleichem, as critic, wrote satire on plight of writer as he endeavored to maintain high literary standards, earn a living, and reach a multitude of readers.

- 1903 "An Easy Fast", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, Vol. XIII pg. 165-177.

Chaim Chaikin resents being beholden to his children for sustenance and abstains from eating as his form of protest.

- 1903 "Greens for Shavuoth", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. IX, ppg. 121-133.

Dreariness of impoverished existence of young family made fragrant and meaningful by holiday observance.

- 1903 "Home for Passover", short story, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, N.Y. vol. XXII, ppg. 33-57, Y.

Peasant ferries Fishel across the stormy Dnieper River. Jew fears for his life, as he longs to reach his home in time for Passover.

- 1903 "Kappores", short story, Y., Oisgevailte Verk, Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y. 1959.  
Revolt of fowl in effort to do away with traditional sacrifice ritual before Yom Kippur. Shtetl Jews present list of concessions but chickens are adamant.
- 1903 "Konkurenten", Competitors, short story, Y. Folkszeitung, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. XXVIII.  
Rivalry between two paupers to deprive each other of a livelihood.
- 1903 "Milchigs", monologue, Y., Sholom Aleichem's Oisgevailte Verk, Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, 1959, N.Y.  
Speaker holds forth on delectable dishes to be made from dairy products.
- 1903 "Pessele dem Rebbins", short story, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, V. VIII, p. 157-170.  
Story about short Rabbi and tall spouse whose marriageable daughter is courted and won by acceptable young man. Close relationship between father and daughter creates emotional leave-taking.
- 1903 "The Town of Tiny Folk", (Die Stadt fun kleine Menschelech), short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, v. VI, ppg. 9-17.  
Kasrilevke, the legendary town, patterned on the shtetl milieu familiar to Sholom Aleichem, is described with affection for its impoverished but colorful inhabitants.

- 1903 Tzuzait und Tzushprait, play, Yiddische Volkszeitung, Y., # 4-10. Oislander, N., Dramatische Schriften fun Sholom Aleichem, v. 1, Kharkov-Kiev, 1932 ppg. 270-293, 299-315.

First modern social piece in Yiddish. Ideological and political awareness caused male and female Jewish youth to seek independence and resist parental ties. Novel reflected changing worlds of parents and children.

- 1903 "Yiddische Shreiber", essay, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. XV.

Sholom Aleichem writes about literary and personal friendship with Frishman, Bialik, Ben Ami and Mendele Mocher Sforim.

- 1903 Aphorisms According to Hebrew-Yiddish Alphabet, Y., Sholom Aleichem Buch, ed. I.D. Berkowitz, N.Y. 1926, Ykuf, p. 348.

Maxims arranged according to Aleph-bet reveal author's wit and wisdom.

- 1904 "An Aytzeh", ("Advice"), short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vo. XXI, p. 71-91.

Young man, seeking marital advice, confuses and confounds his would-be advisor by irrelevant remarks and digressions.

- 1904 "A White Sacrifice", monologue, Y., Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, N.Y. 1959.

Woman begins tale about her own piety in insisting on white chicken for Yom Kippur sacrifice and goes far afield in relating personal problems.

- 1904 "Beim Doktor", monologue, Y., Petersburg Tog, 1904, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond Ausgabe, vol. monologues p. 97, Sholom Aleichem Buch, p. 334.

Patient recounts incident about extravagant merchant who is niggardly only in paying indebtedness.

- 1904 "Dos Neigeborene", short story, Hebrew, under title "Raizel" in Hazefirah," 1904.

An allegorical satire on Czarist government written in New York paper which was banned in Russia. Story appeared in Hebrew periodical under changed title "Raizel".

- 1904 "Dr. Theodor Herzl", essay, Y., Odessa, Heilprin-Schweitzer.

Herzl's life, his contribution to the Jewish people and his early death. Sholom Aleichem deplored inability of Jewish people to recognize Herzl as real hero during his lifetime.

- 1904 "Hodel", short story, Tevye series, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y. 1917-1925, Y. vol. V, ppg. 95-118.

Tevye's second daughter, Hodel marries revolutionary, Feferel, (Pertschik), following him to unpredictable but idealistic future.

- 1905 Agenten, play, published by Der Weg; Warsaw daily (Y).

Play about insurance agents who try to sell each other insurance policies has remained popular in Russia.



1905 Vetter Pinie Mit der Mume Raise (Y), der Weg. Warsaw.

Uncle Pinie represented Japan, while Aunt Raise symbolized Russia. Their children were the various classes under their jurisdiction. Story dealt with Russia's reverses in war with Japan.

1906 "Chava", short story, Tevye series, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y. 1917-25. vol. V, ppg. 121-140.

Tevye's daughter, Chava, marries Gentile, Fyedka, and is disowned by family who mourn her as if dead.

1906 "Its a Lie" (S'a Ligen), short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, N.Y., vol. XXI, ppg. 153-161.

The use of innuendo achieves character assassination of a wealthy family in Galicia. Native of town responds to inquisitive stranger by indulging in gossip.

1907 Der Auswurf (Shmuel Pasternak) play, Y. produced by Jacob Adler, Feb. 8, 1907.

Shmuel Pasternak is representative of group of Jewish brokers who speculate without resources or experience. Reveals foibles of bourgeoisie and idealism of Pasternak's children.

1907 Der Mabbul, novel, simultaneously printed in Warsaw paper Unser Leben and New York Wahrheit, 1906-1908. Later renamed Im Shturm, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Y., Ykuf, Buenos Aires, V. II, 1952.

Depicts impact of pogroms on life of Russian Jews with focus on their rootlessness.

1907 "Mein Bruder Elyes Getrank", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y. 1917-25.

Mottel's brother tries get rich-quick scheme with soft drink which ends in disaster because of polluted water.

1907 Mottel Peyse dem Chazans, novel (Fraind, Petersburg) Y., Continuation of Mottel in Yiddishe Velt, Vilna, 1914 # 6 ppg. 315-327; new edition of Mottel in America, N.Y., Wahrheit, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, vol. 4, 1953, Ykuf, Buenos Aires.

Story, through interconnected tales, of orphaned son of cantor, his travels and adventures enroute to and in America with a group of immigrants from his own shtetl.

1907 "Shprintze", Tevye series, Y., short story, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y. 1917-25, vol.V, 143-163.

Tevye's fourth daughter strives to marry out of her class. Alliance is thwarted by boy's relatives and Shprintze ends life by drowning.

1907 "Three Widows", short story, Y., Tageblatt and Freind, 1907.

Mood of tragedy in home of deceased revolutionary created by statement that description of grief would constitute profanity.

1907 Die Goldgreber (Der Oitzer), play, Y., Zukunft, N.Y. 32, 1927, 555-568, 618-623, 682-687.

Search for treasure brings out worst in townspeople; treasure inaccessible as long as inhabitants lack harmony and unity.

- 1908 "A Passover Expropriation", Y., short story, S.A. Verk,  
Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgale, N.Y. 1959.

Benjamin Lasteckka, richest man in Kasrilevke, cannot meet everyone's request for Passover funds. His own seeder is interrupted and meal is consumed by workers through bomb-threat.

- 1908 "A Premature Passover", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, v. XXII, 49-168, N.Y. 1917-1925.

Polish Jew, Pinchas Pinkus, sells old calendars to German Jews, causing them to observe Passover a month in advance.

- 1908 "Inheritors", short story. The Old Country, tr. J. & F. Butwin, Y. Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y. v. VI, ppg. 137-154, Y.

Identical twins, Meyer & Shneyer, cause ludicrous situations because of mistaken identity.

- 1908 "Menschen", play, one act. Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, Vol. IV, 1917-1925.

Insight into interpersonal relationships between "nouveau riche" Jews and those who serve them.

- 1909 "A Page From a Song of Songs", short story, Y. Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y. 1917-25, vol. II, 9-20.

Lyrical story of awakening love between young children, told in language reminiscent of Biblical "Songs of Solomon".

- 1909 "Charoses", short story, Y., in Heint; Oisgevailte Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Tog-Morgen-Journal, N.Y., 1959, v. 2, p. 203.

Lisa, the maid, is sent to Uncle Yossi for his special

Passover mixture of charoses. En route to the Seder, Liza slips in mud and drops the holiday dish. Her substitution of mud for charoses causes complications among neighbors and family.

- 1909 "Dos Porfolk", ("The Couple"), short story, Y., Sholom Aleichem's Oisgevailte Verk, Tog-Morgen-Journal Ausgabe, 1959, N.Y.

Tale about male and female fowl who are being fattened for Passover. Mutual plight leads to romantic relationship which continues till inevitable slaughter.

- 1909 "The Miracle of Hoshana Rabbah", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, N.Y., vol. XXVIII, ppg. 111-126.

Story of vinegar-maker, Berel, whose simple faith in the power of The Almighty is pitted against the cynicism of a professional man-of-the-cloth.

- 1909 "Tevye Fuhrt kein Yisroel", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917, N.Y., vol. V, p. 167-195.

Tevye's wife, Golde, dies and Beilke, who married wealthy vulgarian, Podhotzur, offers Tevye ticket to America or Palestine.

- 1909 "Tsvai Toite", ("Two Dead Men"), short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, vol. XIII, ppg. 179-199.

Tale about Jewish drunkard, Chlavne the cobbler, and his adventures with Rothschild, the pauper, on the holiday of Purim.

- 1910 "Passover in the Village" (Pesach in Dorf), Y. short story, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y.

1917-25. vol. XXIII, pp. 161-178.

Jewish boy, Feitel, and Christian chum, Fedka, spend idyllic afternoon together, unaware that Seder-time is near. Both families are distraught with anxiety and are apprehensive about mutual vindictiveness.

- 1910 "Reb Yosifel and the Contractor", short story, Y. Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, N.Y., vol. XIII, ppg. 131-140.

Gentle Reb Yosifel courageously approaches contractor to build home for the aged. When rebuffed by slap, he persists in mission, indicating slap was for him, now what about the project?

- 1910 "Sixty-six", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, N.Y., 1917-25, Vol. XXVIII.

Relates the woes of playing cards on railroad trains and the disaster caused by a combination of card sharks and gratuitous "kibbitzers".

- 1910 "Der Glicklichster in Kodne", ("The Happiest Man in Kodny"), short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. XXVIII, ppg. 23-38.

Impoverished Jew learns of visit of medical specialist to nearby town. He importunes wealthy man to speak to professor on his behalf. Rebuffed, he takes extreme measures to gain attention, and succeeds in getting doctor to visit his ailing son.

- 1910 "Vi Shain iz der Boim" (How Beautiful the Tree), essay, Y., Sholom Rabinowitz, Yiddish Schreiber, N.Y., 1919, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond.

On Mendele Mocher Sforims' 75th birthday, Sholom Aleichem dedicates this accolade to his "grandfather". He describes a confrontation between a dog and three literary men (Mendele, Ravnitzki and Sholom Aleichem) as

they pursue forbidden fruit--pears--in private orchard.

- 1911 "Marienbad", epistolary story, Y., Verlag Familienbibliothek, Warsaw; Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., vol. XII.

Correspondence between Marienbad and Warsaw in form of 36 letters, 14 love notes, 46 dispatches, revealing human frailties of social climbers.

- 1911 Wandering Stars (Blondjende Shtern), novel, Y., later dramatized. Tog-Morgen-Journal, N.Y., 1911.

Plight of emancipated Jewish woman artist. Albeit modern, singer Rosa Spivak remained natural in her Jewishness.

- 1912 "A Daughter's Grave", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. XXVIII, ppg. 89-101.

On annual visit to daughter's grave, parents tell fellow-passenger about suicide pact daughter made with cantor's daughter after reading Artzibasheff's Sanine.

- 1912 Shver Tsu Sein a Yid, (The Bloody Jest), play from novel, Der Blutiger Shpass, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, Y., v. XXV, p. 7-164.

Jewish family's precarious life in Tsarist Russia of early twentieth century, with awareness of second class citizenship of Jew as student, worker and human being.

- 1913 "Cnards", Chanukah short story, ("Die Velt Geht Zuruck"- Chanukah story), Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond Ausgabe, 1917-25, vo. XXII, p. 199-222.

Card sharks outwit victims by trickery and cheating, winning all their money.

- 1914 "Lech-Lecho", Tevye series, short story, Y., die Yiddishe Velt; Amerikaner; Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. V, ppg. 199-220.

Tevye does not go to Palestine because his daughter Tzeitl's husband dies. Pogroms drive Tevye from his shtetl home and Chava rejoins her father and sister in their exile.

- 1914 "V'Hal Kalah" ("May their Way be dark and slippery"), Tevye monologue, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. V, pg. 221.

Last Tevye monologue relating impact of pogroms on fate of Jews in shtetl.

- 1915 Funem Yarid, autobiographical novel, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, vol. XXVI.

Sholom Aleichem planned this as his life's story, to be told through a series of interrelated episodes. Book covered twenty-one years of his life.

- 1915 "Eternal Life" (Olom Haboh), one act play, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. XXIV, ppg. 263-280.

Account of nocturnal ride with a corpse over snow-covered road. Good samaritan loses way and becomes entangled in complications which are costly and enervating.

- 1915 "A Thousand and One Nights", short story, Oisgevailte Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Tog-Morgen-Journal, vol. XXVIII.

Only story about World War I relates adventure of Yechiel, Tsarist army draftee who defies Russian sergeant. Because of his humanity, Yechiel refuses to kill people and shoots into air.

- 1915 "Berel Isaac and Wonders of America", short story, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, Vol. VI, ppg. 247-254.

Teller of tall stories, Berel Isaac recounts adventures in America, including an elevator ride which took him to moon.

- 1915 Groisse Gevins, (Great Gain; later 200,000), play, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, vol. IV, ppg. 151-256.

Conflict in family of Shimele Soroker after supposed windfall reflects impact of social change on members of a Jewish family group. Tailor is eventually catapulted into impoverished reality.

- 1915 "A Vort Far a Vort", ("Tit for Tat"), monologue, Y., Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, 1917-25, N.Y., vol. I, ppg. 145-168.

Comedy emerges from reciprocal tales about rabbis, congregants and strangers, and the games they play in confusing each other.

- 1916 "Shalach-Mones", short story, Y., Oisgevailte Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Tog-Morgen-Journal, 1959, N.Y., p. 193, Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem, Folksfond, N.Y., 1917-25, vol. VI, ppg. 85-103.

Quality of Shalach-Mones becomes status symbol as servants upset balance by pilfering sweetmeats.



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