Here and Now: The Modernist Poetics of *Do'ikayt*

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the connections between Ashkenazi Jewish relationships to place and revolutionary politics in Central and Eastern Europe in modernist Yiddish literature in the first half of the twentieth century. I investigate the Yiddish concept of "*do'ikayt*" ("hereness"), which is used to describe practices of political organizing and cultural activism among Yiddishists and Jewish socialists especially during the interwar period. *Do'ikayt* meant an investment in the long history of Jews in the territories of Europe, an investment in Ashkenazi culture, in Yiddish, and in the possibility of continued Jewish life in places like Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus in the aftermath of World War One and the revolutions in the Russian Empire. I argue that there is a strong trend of *do'ikayt* in Yiddish literature of this period, which entails representation of "lived Jewish space," local history, culture, and language, as well as a political commitment to the improvement of Jewish and non-Jewish life in those spaces, often aligned with revolutionary socialist politics. Through close readings of works by Izi Kharik and Moyshe Kulbak, I further argue that it is not only (or not even especially) in realist or naturalist genres of literature that we find this poetics of *do'ikayt*, but rather in works of modernist literature. Formal experimentation, and an aesthetics of abstraction and fragmentation, especially, become these authors' modes for representing the tensions between building connections to history and culture, on the one hand, and the drive for revolutionary change on the other. Chapter One explores the concept of "*do'ikayt*" in political and historical contexts. I discuss works by Chaim Zhitlowsky and Sh. An-sky as examples of political *do'ikayt* in the contexts of early socialist and territorialist politics, and I read An-sky's novella *In shtrom* as an early example of the trend of literary *do'ikayt*. The second chapter focuses on Izi Kharik's poema (a long form narrative poem), "*Minsker Blotes*" ("Minsk Mud"), about the experiences of the pre-revolutionary period and the revolutionary period in a poor Jewish neighborhood of Minsk. I include a complete translation of "Minsk Mud" in the appendix to the dissertation, the first time the poema has been translated into English. In the third chapter I explore Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia as a framework for these modernist representations of place and use it to read the poetics of *do'ikayt* in Moyshe Kulbak's novel, *Zelmenyaner* (The Zelmenyaners), about a large multi-generational Jewish family living through Sovietization in Minsk in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In the final

chapter I begin to investigate what a modernist poetics of *do'ikayt* might look like outside of Yiddish literature, taking the example of Alfred Döblin's writings about Berlin and his travels in Poland.

For my grandfather
Abraham Cohen

Table of Contents

List of Images p. iii

Acknowledgments p. iv

Preface: My Own Private *Do'ikayt* p. vi

1. The Politics of *Do'ikayt*, the Poetics of *Do'ikayt* p. 1

2. "A Greeting to You from the Mud!": Izi Kharik's Poetics of *Do'ikayt* p. 43

3. "The Culture of Little Bits": *Do'ikayt* in Moyshe Kulbak's *Zelmenyaner* p. 75

4. Wie Sagt Man *Do'ikayt* auf Deutsch? p. 122

Appendix: "Minsk Mud" p. 142

Works Cited p. 153

List of Images

Dzyarzhynsk/Koydanov	p. vii
The Fortress Shul of Bykhov	p. x
Dzyarzhynsk War Memorial	p. xiv
Map of *Lite* and *Raysn*	p. xvii
Viciebsk/Vitebsk	p. 42
High Market in Minsk	p. 74
The Extent of the Zelmenyaner Idiolect	p. 108
Smarhoń/Smorgon	p. 121
Kulbak's House in Vilnius/Vilna	p. 141

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What an experience it is to be part of this generation of twenty-first century Yiddishists, who are every bit as fascinating as the generation a century ago that so many of us study. Despite all the ups and downs of graduate school, I've never doubted the meaningfulness of Yiddish, its

importance in our world today, and so much of that is due to the community of *yidishe lib-hobers*. I am proud to be a part of *In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies*, which has made me feel connected to our field in an entirely new way. My thanks especially to Saul Noam Zaritt, but also to everyone involved with *In geveb*, for building this new space together. I have learned and benefited from many other organizations dedicated to Yiddish, including Yiddishkayt, The Yiddish Book Center, and YIVO. My especial thanks as well to Clare Fester, who navigates so many of these same spaces with me and is the true definition of a *khaverte*.

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Preface: My own private *do'ikayt*

Mayn heym
(an entfer tsu di 'zukher' a heym far yidn)

Kh'bin a shtetldiker yid
Un ikh shem mikh nit tsu zogn,
Un ikh ken es nit fartrogn,
Ven zey zogn mir, az nit!

Dort hob ikh farbrakht fil yor
In a zoyber kleynem shtibl;
Ikh ver beyz un hob faribl
Ven ir ruft es goles gor!

Ikh hob lib mayn alter heym
Un ikh zog es aykh oysdriklekh,
Az geshpilt hob ikh zikh gliklekh
Bay di prizbelekh fun leym.

'Milkh un honik' – yo gevis.
Alts iz in der heym gevezn,
Nit in khumesh bloyz gelezn.
Milkh un honik – akh vi zis!

'on a land bin ikh' – nisht vor!
Dos volt dokh geven a bushe!
Undzer shtibl iz b'yerushe
Fun an alter zeydn gor!

In mayn shtetl di shul –
Hert un shtoynt un blaybt farvundert!
Shteyt shoyn yorn zibn hundert
Un mit kdushe iz zi ful.

On traditsyes, zogt ir, – neyn!
S'iz an oysgetrakhte mayse:
Fraytog est men bulkes vayse,
Shabes est men fish mit khreyn!

Avrom Reyzen[1]

My Home
(A response to the "seekers" of a home for the Jews)

I am a shtetl Jew
I am not ashamed to say it,
And I simply cannot bear it,
When they tell me I am not!

There did I spend many years
In a house both clean and small;
It vexes me and makes me bitter
When you dare to call that *goles*!

How I love my *alter heym*
And I'll say it to you clearly,
That I played so happily
By the *prizbelekh* of clay.

"Milk and honey" – yes, of course.
Home had everything we needed,
Not just something read in *khumesh*.
Milk and honey – oh, how sweet!

"Without a land am I" – not true!
That would be a shame indeed!
Our house has been inherited
Since our great-grandfather's time!

The shul in my shtetl –
Listen well and be astounded!
Has stood for seven hundred years
And it is full of holiness.

Without traditions, you say, – no!
Nothing but a made-up story:
On Fridays we eat fresh white rolls,
And Shabes we eat fish with *khreyn*!

[1] Avrom Reyzen. "*Mayn heym*." *Lider*. New York: Farlag "Yidish," 1917. My translation.

With students in Dzyarzhynsk, Belarus (Koydanov) on The Helix Project, 2013.

It's July and I am standing on the edge of a dirt road next to a schoolhouse painted in beautiful vibrant blues and greens, as are so many of the wooden houses in the small towns of Belarus. I am in Dzyarzhynsk, reading Avrom Reyzen's poem, "*Mayn heym*," about the shtetl called Koydanov in Yiddish, which is or was this same place. Several of the students I am with study Yiddish, and we are stuck on the word "*prizbelekh*." It sounds like a word of Slavic origin to us, and in the dictionary we find "*prizbe*: earthen bench affixed to the exterior wall of the house."[2] This seems to make sense, in the poem they are made of "*leym*," clay. The dictionary says the plural form is "*prizbes*," so we are looking at a diminutive form of the word. Little clay benches on the outside of a house? We now have a definition, but not the sense of the word. When we finish reading the poem we walk through the streets of the town from the schoolhouse to a Soviet-era World War Two memorial on its outskirts, and as we go we notice that the base of some houses are stone or cement, or clay, from the ground up to a height of about two feet, about six inches thick, seemingly part of the foundation of the homes. On some houses it is about wide enough to sit on, especially for a child. *Prizbelekh*.[3]

[2] Solon Beinfeld and Harry Bochner, eds. in chief. *Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013, p. 507.
[3] In Belarusian: прызба.

I've spent the last four summers traveling with students around *Lite*, the Ashkenazi designation for a region that now spans the borders of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, and Russia.[4] The borders drawn by Yiddish dialect, foodways, religious custom, and culture that held until well into the 20th century roughly refer to the political borders of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 13th and 14th centuries.[5] While that state's borders expanded, were redefined, and then radically contracted through the centuries, the Jewish cultural borders changed only as much as can be accounted for by the normal (or maybe "normal") population movement of Jews throughout the changing states of Poland, the Russian Empire, and later the Soviet Republics and nation states of the early 20th century. *Lite* is the territory explored in this dissertation, and to be more exact, the dissertation—like my travel-research—focuses largely on *Raysn*, the eastern part of *Lite* that corresponds with the regions where non-Jews speak a language that is called Belarusian today.[6]

In the former *shtetlekh* and provincial cities of *Raysn*, I've had so many experiences like that of reading Reyzen's poem. Far from the stereotypes of a grayscale Eastern Europe where all trace of Jewish life and Yiddish culture has disappeared, we experience a politically complex modern state that is bright with the vibrant green of its countryside, the multi-colored paint of the still wooden *shtetlekh*, the rivers, roads, and towns whose names fill Yiddish literature. In short, the *contexts,* the spaces of Yiddish culture in all aspects of contemporary life: foods, ecosystems, language, architecture, cemeteries and memorials, people who have stayed, people who work to keep Belarus' multiethnic history present and visible.[7] Eating local berries (*yagde* in Yiddish, *jahada* in Belarusian), seeing the endless birch forests (*bereze* in Yiddish, *biaroza* in Belarusian), following the course of the Nieman River. These are aspects of the culture I was familiar with from my reading, but know differently now that I've crossed the conceptual border that says the heartlands of pre-war Jewish life are no longer there.

These spaces and cultural contexts are important to me because they are important to the literature I read. It might sound nostalgic or romantic to think that seeing the points where the Nieman and Viliya Rivers converge can change how I read Moyshe Kulbak's poem, "*Di viliye un der nieman,"* but I think the danger of nostalgia and romanticism in regard to these territories lies actually in believing that one can no longer go there, that they no longer exist. Being in the landscapes of the literature would not be so affecting if the literature itself did not take its landscapes—the rivers, forests, and cities—as locations and subjects of political struggle. Take Reyzen's poem. It is a polemic against what had become in his time a Zionist attack on Jewish existence in Central and Eastern Europe, emphasizing the poverty of *goles* (exilic) existence, the lack of sovereign land, the lack of culture and tradition (or its bastardization through

[4] As an instructor and coordinator for The Helix Project, run by Dr. Robert Adler Peckerar through the organization Yiddishkayt. As mentioned in the Acknowledgements, my experiences on Helix have been inspirational for this project.
[5] For a history of Jews in Lithuania see Dovid Katz. *Lithuanian Jewish Culture*. Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 2004.
[6] See Dovid Katz's map of *Lite* and *Raysn* at the end of this Preface.
[7] Which, of course, is hard work wherever it occurs, making history present, especially non-majoritarian or non-hegemonic histories—not only in Eastern Europe and in regards to Jewish history.

contamination from non-Jewish Europe).[8] Reyzen categorically denies every element of that attack: his house was no hovel, it was small but clean. Milk and honey are not a messianic promise referring to *erets-yisroel* (the land of Israel), but a reality of shtetl life. The home goes back generations and the shtetl's shul goes back centuries. And yes, an "impure," mixed culture is still culture. Reyzen's language reinforces his polemics: in the final stanza his evidence that he does have culture and tradition is the *bulke*, *fish* and *khreyn* his family eat on *shabes*. The Yiddish "*bulke"* comes from Polish, "bułka." The word *fish* reveals the Germanic origins of the majority of Yiddish vocabulary (as it does of English, for that matter), and "*khreyn*," horseradish, is a Slavic term ("*khren"* in Belarusian). And of course playing on the *prizbelekh*—which we finally "translated" for ourselves as the Belarusian small town's equivalent of hanging out on the stoop—identifies his childhood with an architectural feature we may have been able to define in a technical sense through dictionaries, but never would have understood without access to the actual spatial practices of the "home" invoked in the poem. Reyzen certainly sees himself as coming from a rich culture, but for him that culture is defined by mixing, borrowing, living in the Central and East European landscapes of food, language, architecture, and so much more.

The fact that I and my students can study Yiddish but have limited resources to understand much of the material reality that formed its context is related to the triumph of the ideology Reyzen argues against. Reyzen felt the need to assert the existence of the seven-hundred-year history of the shul in his town against an ideological attempt to belittle that history. Today many would assume that that same shul was long destroyed by one of the catastrophes of the 20th century: World War One, World War Two, Soviet destruction of religious institutions. In fact in Belarus, many of those grand shuls still stand, ruined often only since the fall of the Soviet Union, having been put to other use up until the 1990s. For me, it took traveling to these places to undo the feeling that there is no way to access the material culture of the literature I study. Though of course, it was not just a feeling. It is the result of so many forms of ideological erasure of place: some through the upheavals and catastrophes of the 20th century, some through the responses to surviving those traumas, some through the anti-Soviet ideology of the US, and some through Zionist ideology that maintains today as it did when Reyzen wrote his poem that there is no valid past, present or future for Jewish life outside of a sovereign state.

Surprisingly, then, despite the great distance in time and space between myself and Reyzen's poem written one hundred years ago, I feel that reading the poem today does much the same work as it did when written: asserting that a place exists, a Jewish space, a home even, in *Raysn*. In this dissertation I explore the existence of a Yiddish literature of place, but more than that, a Yiddish literature of place that asserts something, that makes a political intervention through the very act of representing place in literature. And moreover, a literature that continues to make this intervention through modernist modes in a period when Socialist Realism was becoming hegemonic.[9] As we can see in Reyzen's poem, this creation of literary space as

[8] Which is not to say that only Zionists took this approach to *goles*; certainly that has a long history of polemical use by ideologues of many stripes.

[9] Soviet writers did produce modernist literature and art through the 1920s and into the 1930s. It was only in 1934 that the Congress of Soviet Writers adopted Soviet realism as its preferred genre. The assumption that realism always dominated Soviet culture is another erasure that can be traced to backshadowing, due both to ideological opposition to the USSR and responses to the later crimes of Stalinism. On the history of Socialist Realism in relation to Jewish literature, see Harriet Murav. *Music from a Speeding Train:*

representation of lived space was a volley in the multifaceted political debates of the early twentieth century about the place of Jews in the territories of Europe, and in the struggles to make those territories a better place to live for all present. I will explore how works like Reyzen's poem illuminate a very different relationship to place than the dichotomies of *goles*/*erets-yisroel* or even internationalism/territorialism that continue to dominate critical inquiry into modern Jewish conceptions of space and place. As I hope the story of my own experiences of moving from the page to the place suggests, I will explore how the recognition and close reading of these literary spaces can productively trouble discourses of nation, state, territory, and identity in ways that are as relevant today as they were one hundred years ago.

Lyudmila Semenova, our Belarusian guide for the last four years, in front of the 17th century "Fortress shul" in her hometown of Bykhov, Belarus (2015).

This literature and the political and cultural contexts within which it developed articulate positions that belong in contemporary conversations about autonomy, intersectionality, and what it looks like to make space for marginalized groups within heterogenous societies. Put another way, at a time when revolutionary movements were based on or dominated by either class

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Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. On backshadowing, see Michael André Bernstein. *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

politics or nationalist politics, this Yiddish literature of place is a mode of cultural production that sought a fine and difficult balancing point between the poles of nationalism and internationalism. I call this the modernist poetics of *do'ikayt*. While rejecting nationalism, the literature and politics of *do'ikayt*, which can be translated most literally as "hereness," sought to make room for the specific and diverse cultures of the working classes. At the same time, *do'ikayt* challenges the tightly drawn lines around who is or is not oppressed by recognizing that oppression looks different for different groups: the factory worker, the farmer, but also the petty Jewish artisan. Finally, the poetics of *do'ikayt* created space for doubt and ambivalence within struggles for liberation at a time when ideological lines were hardening.

Do'ikayt describes a political philosophy usually ascribed to the Bundists, members of *der algemeyner yidisher arbeter* bund (The General Jewish Workers' Bund), especially in Poland after 1917. The Bund was the largest Jewish socialist party in Russia, especially before the 1905 revolution, as well as in interwar Poland. The concept of *do'ikayt* can and has been applied, in varying degrees, to a number of other Yiddishist and Diaspora Nationalist organizations throughout Jewish Europe as well, and certainly is relevant for at least a decade before the 1917 revolutions.[10] In its most literal sense, *do'ikayt* means that, *here* (*do*, in Yiddish)—where Jews live—and not *there*—in Palestine—is where the struggle to improve Jewish life must occur. In practice, this resulted in a range of cultural activities whose aim was to help Jews connect to the histories and geographies of their homes in Central and Eastern Europe, from projects in local archeology to Jewish hiking and kayaking tours.[11] What separates *do'ikayt* and the politics of the Bund's national program from other territorialist or even diaspora nationalist movements, is that while it sought to foster these relationships of Jews to their European homelands, it did not make exclusive or nationalist claims to territory. As David Slucki defines it, "Doikayt was a decentralized, extra-territorial idea of nationhood, one that insisted that Jews were not bound by territory or the state, but by history, language, and culture."[12] Thus while *do'ikayt* would insist on Jews' rights as a nation, it did not demand Jewish territory or a Jewish nation state. In independent Poland, for example, Vladimir Medem, one of the Bund's chief theorists, advocated for a "state of nationalities" to replace the nation state, meaning that Poland should be the state of all peoples living on its territory, not a state of and for ethnic Poles with secondary rights for other nationalities.[13] I argue that the ideals of *do'ikayt* can be found not only in the theoretical writings of Bundists like Medem, but also in Yiddish literature of the period.

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My first chapter begins with a presentation of the different aspects of the trend introduced here, the modernist poetics of *do'ikayt*. In it I offer contexts for the term *do'ikayt* from the

[10] See the following chapter for a discussion on the origins and scholarly uses of the term "*do'ikayt*."
[11] See Samuel Kassow. "Travel and Local History as a National Mission: Polish Jews and the Landkentnish Movement in the 1920s an 1930s." *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*. Eds. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke. Burlington: Ashgate, 2008.
[12] David Slucki, "A Party of Naysayers: The Jewish Labor Bund after the Holocaust." *AJS Perspectives: The Labor Issue*. Fall 2013: 42.
[13] Vladimir Davidovich Medem. "The Worldwide Jewish Nation." *Jews & Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe & the United States*. Waltham: Brandeis Univeristy Press, 2012. I will return to a discussion of interwar Poland in the concluding chapter.

political and cultural movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to which it is applied, using the dynamic and lifelong relationship between the theorist Chaim Zhitlowsky and the activist/ethnographer/writer Sh. An-ski as a guide. This historical context includes the nascent socialist, Yiddishist, and Diaspora Nationalist movements with which Zhitlowsky and An-sky were engaged at various points in their lives, including the Bund, which offers the most developed example of *do'ikayt* in a political and cultural sense. In all of this my aim is not to define a coherent political movement, but rather to identify political and cultural trends common to many movements in order to help see those same trends as they appear in the realms of cultural production. Finally, I will turn to the question of why *modernist* Yiddish literature, building on work that identifies marginalized or minor modernisms with political engagement in ways that canonical Anglo-American modernism is often not.

The second and third chapters of the dissertation are in effect a case study of modernist *do'ist* literature about the city of Minsk, today the capital of the Republic of Belarus and, at the time under discussion in the 1920s and 1930s, the capital of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. Each chapter offers a brief portrait of Minsk through the biographies of Moyshe Kulbak (1896-1937) and Izi Kharik (1898-1937), the two authors whose works are read in the following chapters. Kulbak and Kharik were both popular and prominent Yiddish writers during their lives. Kulbak made his reputation in Wilno (today Vilnius, Lithuania) in the 1920s before returning to Minsk, where his family resided, in 1928. Kharik lived in Minsk as a teenager and returned there in 1926, after establishing himself as one of the most talented Yiddish poets of the new Soviet society. The choices of both writers to return to Minsk has to do in part with Minsk's rapid development as a city and as a site for Yiddish culture during their lifetimes. Minsk's position for Yiddish culture changed rapidly between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as it went from a provincial capital in the Jewish cultural orbit of Vilna to the capital of a new Socialist Republic that became its own center for Yiddish culture. Both Kharik and Kulbak grew up in and around Minsk the provincial capital and returned to Minsk the Soviet capital; both spent the final decade of their too short lives in the city. While there are so many possible works and places to explore, I have chosen to focus on these authors and their Minsk works specifically both for the quality of the pieces and because of the unique possibilities for Yiddish culture that Minsk offered in the 1920s and into the 1930s: many political and cultural goals for Yiddish, for Jews, and for working people in general seemed attainable there, which perhaps contributes to the space that both Kharik and Kulbak make in their writing to question the direction of revolution, to hope for and demand more, and to look to their culture and history as a necessary part of looking forward.

Written in 1924, Izi Kharik's long poem, "*Minsker blotes*" ("Minsk Mud"), follows a young Jewish orphan from his pre-revolutionary childhood in the poor neighborhood of *Blote* (yes, the neighborhood was really called "Mud") through the emotional and political awakening that causes him to join the revolution and eventually the Red Army. In its second half, the poema—a long form narrative poem popular in Russian literature—explores both the elation of revolution and its extreme hardships. With the many wars and fronts of conflict having finally ended, and without questioning the need for change and revolution, Kharik's work does begin to question the costs and sacrifices of the revolution, the civil wars, and the Polish-Soviet war at a time when most prominent Soviet writers were praising every effort to build a new society. The Appendix includes my translation of "*Minsker blotes*," the first translation of the poema into English.

Moyshe Kulbak's novel *Zelmenyaner* (*The Zelmenyaners*) was written after Kharik's poema, between 1928-1935, when it was also published in serial form. It focuses on a large, multigenerational Jewish family struggling with, adapting to, by turns participating in and resisting Soviet society. *Zelmenyaner* mixes satire and poetry to present a dialogic view of life during revolution. In this chapter I explore Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia as a useful framework for understanding the ways Kulbak's novel depicts the specificity and diversity of Jewish space in Minsk. Both Kharik's and Kulbak's works engage in representation of the lived space of Minsk, especially Jewish Minsk, making space and place into subjects, not simply settings. And more than this, both explore their political and cultural questions and ambivalence through the fractured, fragmentary, and dialogic form of the work as much as through the work's content.

The concluding chapter begins to explore what *do'ikayt* might look like outside the realm of Yiddish cultural production. The chapter examines the possibilities for a modernist poetics of *do'ikayt* in German Jewish literature in the essays and fiction of Alfred Döblin, the modernist chronicler of interwar Berlin and a member of the *Frayland lige*.

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I will end this preface with one further example from my experiences in Belarus. In exploring the historical context of Kharik and Kulbak's lives and work in Minsk, I will touch upon some of the catastrophic effects that changing Stalinist policy had on Yiddish culture and on the lives of Yiddish cultural producers in the Soviet Union. However, the catastrophe of World War Two and the Holocaust do not explicitly enter into this project. But their traces were present everywhere in my travels in Belarus, including in Dzyarzhynsk.[14] But these traces appear and work in very different ways from how one commonly finds the Holocaust marked in Poland, Lithuania, or Ukraine. The markers in Belarus can also serve as an example of the political idea of *do'ikayt* in the Soviet Belarusian Jewish community and help to explain why I have focused on this territory. In Belarus, memorials from the period immediately following the war still stand, erected by surviving members of the community.[15] Rather than English or Hebrew, the memorials are written in Russian and Yiddish—a sign of Belarus's longer history as a Soviet Republic, compared to the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic founded in 1940 or Poland's communist period beginning in 1947. Here is the memorial in Dzyarzhynsk as an example:

[14] Fully one fourth of Soviet Belarus's total population was killed in the course of the war, two million three hundred thousand people. It is by far the highest percentage of casualties of any Soviet Republic. This high wartime cost plays an especially prominent role in the myth of Belarusian statehood today; in a recent conference presentation, Zvi Gitelman called Belarus a "partisan republic," because the resistance and suffering of Belarusians during the war is seen as perhaps the defining reason for the Republic's continued existence in the post-Soviet period ("Myths and Realities of the Jewish Partisan Experience" presented at Lessons and Legacies XIV, Claremont CA, November 2016).

[15] In Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine Soviet memorials have been and are still being removed or replaced, to varying degrees. Regarding the role of communities of survivors in creating these memorials, a significantly higher proportion of Belarusian Jews escaped and survived the Minsk ghetto than in most other places, for reasons related to those I discuss here. See Barbara Epstein. *The Minsk Ghetto 1941-1943: Jewish Resistance and Soviet Internationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

The top line in Russian reads, "In life and death inseparable," a translation of a common Hebrew inscription for the grave of a married couple.[16] The next section reads in Yiddish: "Here lie the citizens of Dzerzhinsk killed by the hands of the fascist murderers on the 21st of October, 1941."[17] The following lines repeat this inscription in Russian, but with an interesting difference: "Here lie 1,600 citizens of the city of Dzerzhinsk who perished at the hands of the fascist murderers." There are several things in this short description that can be viewed through the lens of *do'ikayt* and thereby serve as another framing example of the concept. Both the Yiddish and the Russian refer to the town as Dzerzhinsk, the Soviet name it was given in 1932. In Yiddish and for many Jews, the town's earlier name Koydanov survives in the legacy of the Koidanover Rebbe, but the inscribers of the memorial chose to use the new and contemporary Soviet name,

[16] The Russian reads: "В жизни и смерти НЕРАЗЛУЧИМБ", a translation of "*be-khayehem u-ve-motam lo nifradu*," which is itself a quotation from David's lament for the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. I am grateful to Chana Kronfeld for helping me to develop this reading.

[17] "*do lign di dzerzhinsker birger umgekumen durkh di hent fun di fashistishe merder dem 21stn oktyaber 1941*."

signaling their commitment to or participation in the new political reality of their city over and above its Jewish history.[18] Additionally, in both languages the victims being remembered are referred to only as citizens—not as Jews. Similarly, the perpetrators are identified not as Nazis or Germans, or in combination, "German Fascists," as was common in Soviet memorials, but only as fascists. These three word choices mark the memorial as distinctly Soviet, and distinctly Belarusian, given the prominent placement of Yiddish.[19]

The interesting difference between the Russian and the Yiddish comes in the use of numbers: the Yiddish records a date, the Russian a count of the victims. There are several ways to understand this difference. It might say something about the intended audiences of the two languages: the Yiddish serves as a historical marker, signaling a Jewish relationship to remembering and marking communal disasters. The Russian, on the other hand, speaks outward, telling Jewish and non-Jewish audiences about the scale of the crime committed here, suggesting that more important than marking the date of the catastrophe is to give a warning about the dangers of fascism. In this viewing, the Yiddish and the Russian serve two very different purposes: one turned inward to a community that suffered but survived, a memorial to the dead; the other turned outward with a lesson, an attempt to educate against the violence of fascism.

But another possible effect of the difference in information is to remind us of the language system formed by Yiddish and Russian in Soviet Belarus: working together, the two languages provide more information than either one does on its own. This reading is supported by the inscription framing the memorial as a whole: "In life and death inseparable," which adds another linguistic dimension for those who know that this Russian inscription translates a Hebrew phrase. Though we might assume the phrase refers to the members of the community, it also describes the relationship of the two (or secretly three) languages and cultures. Not that one is alive and two are dead, but that they form an inseparable whole both for the dead and the living of the community. Soviet Belarus was the first state to declare Yiddish one of its official languages, along with Polish, Belarusian, and Russian. While this official multilingualism as a signal of official multi-nationalism did not last long (and while Hebrew was never included, given its association with religion and Zionism), the memorial serves as a powerful recognition of the heteroglossic language system that Jews of that territory lived within, and of the interconnection of cultures in this space.

The word "*birger*" also stands out as uncommon in the sampling of such memorials I have now seen, and as especially meaningful. The use of Yiddish on the memorial remembers the identity of those being marked in terms of culture and nationality, while "*birger*" remembers their identity as full members of the society and the state in which they lived; a status that the "fascist murderers" sought to erase. This assertion of belonging, and belonging as part of a "state

[18] It might seem obvious to use the current political name of a place on a memorial, but other memorials do not make the same choice. For example, the Yiddish inscription on the memorial in Kurapaty forest—the likely site of both Kulbak and Kharik's deaths—refers to the territory as *Raysn*, a name that was old-fashioned in Yiddish even in Kulbak's time, let alone in the 1990s when the memorial was placed.

[19] In my experience this language combination is quite common for memorials in Belarus, it is only unusual when compared with memorials in other countries (Poland, Lithuania), which do not use Yiddish as often. But the Soviet identity of Yiddish was still strong in the BSSR through the immediate post-war period, especially given the relatively larger surviving Jewish communities in the cities of Belarus and fewer incidences of post-war anti-Jewish violence. See Epstein.

of nationalities" that allows room for national difference—this is one vision of *do'ikayt*. Citizens of the BSSR were Belarusian, Jewish, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Tatar, etc. The acceptance and even support for national identities (at least for a time), especially those that had been marginalized or oppressed under imperialist and capitalist society, was very different from the assimilationist pressure in Western Europe or the United States or Imperial Russia. However difficult it may be to put hindsight aside while looking at the Yiddish word "*birger*" on this memorial, part of my argument is to take those etched letters seriously: what they meant in the lived moment, what they meant aspirationally for those they describe and what they mean as a historical marker today.

Map by Dovid Katz, cartography by Giedre Beconyte
(http://www.dovidkatz.net/WebAtlas/0_Lite_A2.htm)

Ch. 1: The Politics of *do'ikayt*, the Poetics of *do'ikayt*

> "'No, my beloved! You cannot leave this place. One must struggle where one is …struggle until the end,' the Lord of the Universe told the Good One."[20]

The Yiddish word "*do'ikayt*" in a literal sense is well translated by the English "hereness." "*Do*" means "here" (contrasted with its deictic partner "*dort*," "there"), and the ending "*-kayt*" (related to German "-keit") functions in much the same way as the English ending "-ness." The English translation brings out what feel like Buddhist implications: being present in the here and now. As used to describe a political and cultural approach to Jewish life in diaspora—specifically the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi populations of Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the twentieth century—the word might better invoke the slogans of union and social movement protest: "If not now, when? If not here, where?" Both realms of connotation invoke the temporal as much as the spatial, which is accurate for the Yiddish root "*do*," as well.[21] "Here/newness" might therefore be a better translation. As it relates to Jewish culture and politics at the turn of the century in the Pale of Settlement, the statement "Here and Now" declares an ideological position in the debates among the nascent socialist and Zionist movements.[22] Benjamin Harshav has compellingly framed the Jewish political questions of the time in terms of these deictic markers:

> Every movement of change in this period, either institutionalized or personal and existential, was borne by two powerful impulses: negative and positive. The negative impulse was shared by all the trends, although it assumed different forms. It can be described in semiotic concepts as the negation of the three deictic axes of the old Jewish existence…The three basic deictics are: *I, here*, and *now*, relating the discourse to the speaker, and the place and time of speech…
>
> In these terms, we can say that all the trends declared in one form or another: *Not here, Not like now, Not as we are* (though the interpretation of those negations varied widely). "*Not here*" was the response of the Zionists and the Territorialists as well as the instinctive response of millions who left the *shtetl* or turned to immigration. Even the Bundists, who ostensibly stood for "hereness" ("*doikeyt*") in the Diaspora, meant a decidedly different "here" from the old "here" of shtetl culture: an urban setting, an organized working class, an educational movement steeped in secular Yiddish culture.

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[20] Chaim Zhitlowsky. Trans. Rick Meller. "Territorialism: In Cash or on Credit?." *In geveb* (February 2016). ("*'neyn, mayn gelibter! Avekgeyn fun plats tor men nit, dortn vu men iz, darf men kemfn…kemfn biz tsu letst,' hot der reboyne-shel-oylem gezogt tsum yeytser-tov*.")

[21] Jordan Finkin's recent book *An Inch or Two of Time: Time and Space in Jewish Modernisms* will be an invaluable source for examining the connectedness of spatial and temporal categories throughout this discussion.

[22] These are not two movements, but the two main trends of a multitude of movements, many sharing elements and blending aspects of socialism and Zionism.

> "*Not like now*" was expressed in the struggle for political change—either in Socialism (turning to the future) or in Zionism (turning to the future as a revived past)... Hence the endless ideological debates in Jewish society, especially at the beginning of the century—ideology is future-oriented—and the many factionalizations over the formulations of "*programs maximum*" and "*programs minimum*" which emerged from the orientation toward a utopian or wishful future rather than from a need for current political blocs of power.[23]

Harshav acknowledges that many of the parties he refers to, and perhaps especially the Bundists, would balk at the claim that their ideology was only future-oriented or only elsewhere-oriented, but I agree that inherent within the claim of *do'ikayt* is an implication of "a *different* here, a *different* now."[24] This is in fact an essential element of the concept for the literary trend I am identifying: both in the realm of politics and cultural production, *do'ikayt* encourages a connection to the Here, where one lives, including its histories. But it also includes a demand to change, to improve that Here. *Do'ikayt* insists that this change cannot wait, and will not be easier anywhere else.

As is my goal to demonstrate, the ideas pointed to by the term *do'ikayt* productively describe not only a specific political strategy of a movement like the Bund, with which it is most commonly associated, but also broader trends of Yiddishist political-cultural movements in Central and Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Specifically, I offer a new application of the concept *do'ikayt* to modernist Yiddish literature of the period. In the following pages I will explore the many implications of what it means to identify a trend of *do'ikayt* in modernist Yiddish literature. Some of the main features of a poetics of *do'ikayt* that I will identify and examine are: 1) representation of specific spaces and places of Jewish life, neither in a realist mode nor in the "mythologized" mode in which the representation of the shtetl, for instance, has been discussed in scholarship;[25] 2) contrary to modernist movements and trends that are seen as apolitical or opposed to engaged literature, literary *do'ikayt* implies the same commitment to changing the Here as does its political version; 3) an ambivalent, fractured, or fragmentary relationship in terms of both literary form and content toward the representation of space and the conditions of political change. It is in this ambivalence that the poetics of *do'ikayt* varies the most from its political instantiations—thereby illuminating an aspect of the political concept not easily visible when examined only from within a political context.

Grappling with the contradiction or even paradox implied in a concept that means both "here and now" and "a *different* here, a *different* now" seems to be a central aspect of the literary trend. The literary works are ambivalent, expressing strong doubts both about the current state of "here" and about the pathways toward improvement. They engage with modern existence as fractured or "kaleidoscopic" in nature, especially when representing struggles for political

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[23] Benjamin Harshav. *Language in Time of Revolution*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 17-18.

[24] *Do'ikayt* is alternately transliterated as *doikeyt* (as in Harshav above, following the transcription practices of YIVO), *doikayt*, *doykayt*, etc. I have chosen *do'ikayt* to make clear that the word consists of three syllables, and following the majority pronunciation of the suffix קייט.

[25] For example, Dan Miron. *The Image of the Shtetl and Other Studies of Modern Jewish Literary Imagination*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000.

change. In Bakhtin's terms, to which I will often turn, the works are dialogic and engage a heteroglossic world. Thus by reading for *do'ikayt* in works of modernist literature, our understanding of the Yiddishist trends and attitudes of the time broaden by moving the concept from the often black-and-white propagandistic modes of politics to the full color kaleidoscope of cultural production.

With that as a brief introduction to the expression "modernist poetics of *do'ikayt*," the structure of this chapter will be to move backwards through the terms of the expression, unpacking each component in turn. I will start with "*do'ikayt*," looking at its historical context and theoretical application in Jewish politics of the early twentieth century. Chaim Zhitlowsky will help to frame this exploration, as one of the first Yiddishists to articulate a Jewish political position between socialist internationalism/assimilationism and territorial Zionism. Then moving to "poetics," I will consider the term in the realm of cultural production rather than political or social theory. Zhitlowsky's best friend Sh. An-sky will be our guide here, as one of the first Yiddishist revolutionaries who worked to create modern cultural productions from folk culture, and theorized the importance of this work for building political identity. And finally I will turn to the claims introduced above about the introduction of ambivalence and fracture into a modernist trend of *do'ikayt* in Yiddish literature, placing this project in dialogue with other critical approaches to Yiddish modernism and marginal modernisms.

Do'ikayt

The term "*do'ikayt"* appears only to have gained popularity and usage in the immediate post-World War II period when the ideological debate between Bundists (members of *der algemeyner yidisher arbeter bund*, the General Jewish Workers Bund),[26] scattered around the world and Zionists on the cusp of Israeli statehood became especially—and perhaps surprisingly—heated.[27] While recent scholarship on Jewish national politics in the first half of the twentieth century often uses the term to describe Bundist ideology, especially in the interwar period, nothing that I have come across traces the term back to actual use in the interwar period.[28] It remains something of a mystery how the term has become so accepted in historical and cultural scholarship of the last few decades with such sparse ties to the period and ideologies

[26] For histories of the Bund, see *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*. Ed. Jack Jacobs. New York: New York University Press, 2001. For the interwar period in Poland, see Gertrud Pickhan. *"Gegen den Strom": Der allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund "Bund" in Polen 1918-1939*. Stuttgard: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001. And for the Bund's complete internal history, see the five volume *Geshikhte fun Bund*. G. Aronson, S. Dubnov-Erlikh, I. Sh. Herts, et al, eds. New York: Farlag undzer tsayt, 1960.

[27] See David Slucki. *The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945: Toward a Global History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2012.

[28] My conversations with historians better suited than I to research the etymology and origins of the term have supported this conclusion in so far as those who have looked have also not been able to find any prewar uses. I am grateful to Nathaniel Deutsch, David Slucki, and Michael Casper for these conversations.

it is used to describe. The best answer I have at this point is a sudden rise in usage by Bundists and perhaps especially by Zionists critiquing Bundist ideology in the immediate postwar period.[29] The debate about Jewish territory and belonging took on new intensity and immediacy as displaced Jews decided where to live after the end of the war and as Israeli statehood became a reality. These debates become the basis for political and historical reassessments of territorialism, antiterritorialism, the Bund's legacy, and Zionism's "victory." Perhaps the term was found so useful in these debates that the lack of a prewar footprint was not noticed or—as I suspect—presented an obstacle later scholars preferred to avoid. This is supposition on my part. The point is, "*do'ikayt*" was not a rallying cry of Bundists until the late 1940s, and thereafter it became shorthand for their historiographers. I will give examples of all these things, but let's begin with how the term is used in scholarship today and then work back to the earliest sources I have found.

In several recent histories and studies of the Bund, *do'ikayt* is used to describe aspects of the party's ideology, especially in relation to its work in Poland between the two World Wars. The emphasis of the definition varies in each use, depending upon the focus and argument of the author and work in which it appears. Beginning with the most recent example, David Slucki writes about the 1948 conference to organize the Bund's World Coordinating Committee:

> The Bundist principle of doykayt, which called for Jews to foster viable and creative communities wherever they lived, had been reinvigorated as local communities set about strengthening their activities, with the support of the World Coordinating Committee. The doykayt notion stated that there was no single Jewish center, and that Jewish life benefitted most when local circumstances were a part of its development and Jewish communities around the world were implicated in a relationship of cultural and intellectual exchange and respect.[30]

Interestingly, even though Slucki is talking about a year in which I have found existing citations for the term, he does not refer to these.[31] This definition focuses on the meaning of *do'ikayt* in the postwar reality, on "fostering viable and creative communities," whereas in the interwar period the focus might rather have been phrased as acknowledging, studying, or strengthening the many viable and creative communities. Further, his definition refers to the continued importance to the Bund of the *many* centers of Jewish life in the world, opposing the idea that Palestine/Israel should become *the* center. At a time when Jewish refugees were in transit in large numbers around the globe, the Bund was seeking to convince Jews to rebuild the communities of Poland especially and Europe in general, rather than abandoning places that had been their homes for the United States or the new state of Israel.[32]

"*Do'ikayt"* is an important enough term for Roni Gechtman's invaluable dissertation,

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[29] And of course the relative difficulty of thorough research in interwar Bundist periodicals; perhaps current digitization projects will soon make this research easier, but as I said, historians who have worked in the appropriate archives have also thus far found nothing.

[30] Slucki 25.

[31] Indeed, while Slucki does not quote or cite the use of the term from contemporary sources, it was through his reference to articles by Leyvick Hodes in 1947 that I found the earliest use of the term by a Bundist that has so far come up in my research. More on Hodes and that article below.

[32] See Slucki 46-56.

Yidisher sotsializm: The Origin and Contexts of the Jewish Labor Bund's National Program, that it is used and defined in the dissertation's abstract: "The Bund's national program…also stressed that the solution to the Jews' problems must be found in the places where they already lived and not through emigration (*doykayt*)."[33] In the opening pages of his introduction, Gechtman includes this definition in a list of the three main premises of the Bund's national program, the other two being that Jews do constitute a nation with the Bund as the political representative of their working class, and that Jews and all national minorities must be granted national cultural autonomy by the state (in this case, the Second Republic of Poland).[34] Certainly simpler than Slucki's definition, Gechtman's focuses on the importance of sticking it out, essentially. In the context of interwar Poland, the target of such a focus is, as with Slucki, the Bund's opposition to Zionism. The Bund in Poland was involved in many local and municipal elections in which its major competition came from Zionist parties, thus the emphasis on improving Jewish life in the "here and now." The Bund believed that it was building power for recognition of Jewish rights in the Republic of Poland, which it saw as a much more immediate and realistic goal than Zionist promises of an independent Jewish state actually capable of improving the lives of Polish Jewry. It was an argument that was increasingly winning in the late 1930s, right up until the Nazi invasion of Poland.[35]

Later in his introduction, Gechtman adds to the definition of *do'ikayt*, acknowledging the realms of its meaning that extend beyond electoral slogans:

> The Bund's understanding of Jewish national identity was grounded on the idea of *doykayt*. The term *doykayt*, from the Yiddish *do* ('here'), indicates the political desire to solve the questions and problems of the Jews in the place where they lived, as opposed to solutions which implied migration. In the Bund's case, this view was accompanied by the active promotion of Yiddish-Jewish cultural institutions and the creation of a network of social and communal assistance, mainly during the party's Polish period: trade unions, newspapers (including a daily paper in Yiddish, the *Naye Folkstsaytung*), book publishing, schools and summer camps for children, youth organizations, sport and recreational organizations, theatres, adult education programs, etc.[36]

This broad range of cultural and social work inspired by the idea of *do'ikayt* demonstrates what I see as the dual tenets of *do'ikayt*, though the second is still only implicit in the two accounts explored thus far: both Slucki and Gechtman explicitly state the tenet of *do'ikayt* that means working to improve Jewish life in the places where Jews already live. Gechtman gives many concrete examples of what this meant for the Bund in Poland. But the educational and cultural programs referred to above also imply the second tenet: education about and promotion of the local history and culture—Jewish and non-Jewish—of the places where Jews lived. "*Do'ikayt*" is usually used to describe a political belief in organizing where Jews live for material

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[33] Roni Gechtman. *Yidisher Sotsializm: The Origin and Contexts of the Jewish Labor Bund's National Program*. Dissertation, New York University, 2005, p. viii.
[34] Gechtman 3.
[35] For examples of the Bund's record in local, regional and national elections in Poland and a discussion of how these numbers have been variously interpreted by historians of the Bund, see Jack Jacobs. *Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009, pp. 1-4.
[36] Gechtman 14.

improvement in their lives, as well as organizing cultural and educational work to build Jews' sense of history, culture, and belongingness in the places where they live.

Samuel Kassow focuses on the educational and cultural work fostered by a sense of *do'ikayt* in his study of the *landkentenish* ("Knowing the land") movement in Poland in the interwar period.[37] Kassow's important scholarship on *landkentenish* is also one of the few works to apply both the term and idea of *do'ikayt* beyond a discussion of the Bund. His work is an important model for my use of *do'ikayt* to describe trends that may be most easily located in the explicit policies of the Bund, but that existed and can be found in many aspects of Yiddish culture and politics in the period. The Yiddish word *landkentenish* translates a Polish term and concept, "krajoznawstwo." The Jewish Society for Landkentenish/Krajoznawstwo (which used both a Yiddish name: *di yidishe gezelshaft far landkentenish*, and a Polish name: Żydowskie towarzystwo krajoznawcze) "brought together intellectuals and laypeople in a collaborative effort to study Jewish history, material culture, architecture, and folklore through tourism, lectures, photography, and recreation."[38] It was modeled on Polish movements from the period of the partitions, in which Poles in their period of statelessness similarly organized around culture, history, geography and landscape to maintain and build their national identity. Kassow goes on to describe its mission: "The Society – and especially its historians, architects, and photographers – sought to foster *doikayt* (hereness), a deep sense of rootedness to the Polish lands where Jews had lived for hundreds of years."[39]

While I will return later to a discussion of *landkentenish* and its connection to Polish models in the concluding chapter, there are a few things to note here in terms of definitions of *do'ikayt*. Kassow's use of the term focuses on the aspect of *do'ikayt* that was secondary for Slucki and Gechtman: a connection to the spaces of Jewish Poland and building that connection through a wide range of cultural, educational, and even physical activity. *Landkentenish* portrayed itself as an apolitical organization, and indeed in comparison to the previous definitions of *do'ikayt*, this looks at first glance like *do'ikayt* without its political impetus toward change.[40] However, the very claim that Poland was home to the Jews who lived there and that they had an equal stake in the new Polish Republic was a claim that became increasingly politicized in the course of the 1930s, as the Polish right wing gained strength and the idea of a Poland only for Catholic Poles gained popularity over Piłsudski's original message of a multiethnic state. The disconnect from Zionist ideology is also as clear in the case of *landkentenish* as with the Bund's similar claim that Jews do have a place, a history, and a future in the territories of Poland.

Despite this contemporary scholarly use of the term *do'ikayt* to describe both the ideology of the Bund and other movements that emphasized Jews' "at-homeness" in Europe, the earliest instances of *do'ikayt* being used in the context of Bundist ideology that I have found are from 1947. This earliest appearance of "*do'ikayt*" is used in a way that suggests the term is

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[37] Samuel Kassow. "Travel and Local History as a National Mission: Polish Jews and the Landkentenish Movement in the 1920s and 1930s." *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place.* Ed. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, Alexandra Nocke. Burlington: Ashgate, 2008.
[38] Kassow 243.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Kassow 257.

already a familiar one—not as if it is a new term just being coined.[41] I have also found one or two uses from the 1930s (though not in specific reference to political ideology), which suggests that the term was around and used in the interwar period, if not earlier, but perhaps without being specifically associated with the Bund.[42] In an essay from 1947 entitled, "*Mitn ponem tsu der tsukunft*" (Facing the Future), the Bundist Leyvick Hodes uses *do'ikayt* to differentiate the ideologies of Zionism and the Bund. The essay is focused on comparing the legacies of the two movements at a moment when it seems that the Bund has been completely defeated and Zionism has triumphed:

> *Der gezelshaftlekher kamf oyf der yidisher gas hot zikh deriber opgeshpilt der iker vi a kamf fun tsvey organizirte hoypt-koykhes: fun eyn zayt, der tsionizm (religiez, demokratish, fashistish, sotsyalistish oder komunistish bafarbt). Fun der tsveyter – der 'bund', als di farkerperung fun kamf farn sotsyalizm un* ***do'ikayt****. Geven tsaytn, ven der tsionizm hot gehat di ibergevikht. Geven tsaytn, ven der 'bund' hot gefirt nokh zikh di breytste folks-masn.*[43] [Emphasis added]

In this passage, *do'ikayt* is presented as an element of the Bund's platform equal in importance to socialism. As such it is also used in a way that suggests the term will be familiar to and understood by Hodes' readers as foundational to the Bund; or rather, that the Bund is an "embodiment" of *do'ikayt*. Hodes seems then to use *do'ikayt* as shorthand for what others call the Bund's national program: everything that defines the Bund not only as a socialist party, but as an anti-territorialist Jewish socialist party advocating national cultural autonomy.

The main thrust of Hodes' essay is his belief that the Bund's message—even in the face of the unprecedented tragedy of the Holocaust—remains one of hope, while the Zionist message is one based on fear. Because this is the earliest and best example of the use of *do'ikayt* by a Bundist that I have found, I will quote from the conclusion of the essay at length:

> *Di idey fun 'bund' iz tifer gloybn in mentshn…di idey fun gloybn in mentshn iz haynt nisht popular. Mir hobn di ale, b'frat in di letste yorn, gezen tif derniderikt, tsetrotn un bashpign. Ober oyb der mentsh iz fun natur a khaye, vet keyn shum antloyfn nisht helfn. Oyb es iz nishto keyn tikun farn mentshn, iz nishto keyn tikun far yidn. Di khaye vet dem antloyfndikn nokhyogn un im trefn umetum. Oyb es farshvindt der gloybn, farshvindt oykh*

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[41] This suggests that the term was used before 1947, and of course it is to be expected that the oldest preserved written use of a word does not actually mark a term's creation or introduction into use.

[42] An article entitled "*Alter kacyznes literarishe perzenlekhkayt*" ("Alter Kacyzne's literary personality") by B. Mark in the Warsaw publication *Literarishe bleter* from April 15, 1938. It is interesting to note, then, that the earliest preserved use of *do'ikayt* that I have found is in a literary context, rather than a political one—suggesting that my own application of *do'ikayt* to literature is not without precedent in the world of Yiddish literary criticism.

[43] Leyvick Hodes. "*Mitn ponem tsu der tsukunft." Biografye un shrift*. Ed. Sofia Dubnov-Erlich. New York: Farlag undzer tsayt, 1962, p. 283. ("The social battle on the Jewish street played itself out essentially as a fight between two main organized forces: on one side, Zionism (religious, democratic, fascist, socialist or communist inflected). On the other side, the Bund as the embodiment of the fight for socialism and *do'ikayt*. There have been times when Zionism had the upper hand. And there have been times when the Bund led the broadest masses." My translation)

yede hofenung. Der zig fun tsionistishe idey'en iz a zig fun umgloybn in mentshn, dos iz a fuler zig fun hofenungslozikayt…

Der 'bund' hot shtendik gekemft far hemshekh, far sheferish natsional-lebn, far ***do'ikayt****, far dem rekht tsu farblaybn ayngevortslt oyfn bodn, vu di yidishe masn lebn un kemfn. Ot di idey'en hot mitsad dem hitlerizm gekrogn di shmertslekhste klep. Reshtlekh fun yidishe masn valgern zikh in lagern, blonken arum na-venad iber vegn, oder trogn zikh vi shpendlekh iber tseshoymte khvalyes fun der shturemdiker nokh-milkhome-velt. Ober es vert mit yedn tog klorer, az der veg tsu farheyln di vundn firt nisht durkh farmern di tsol hilfloze vanderer, nisht durkh vayterdiker oysvortslung, nor durkh boyen un videroyfboyen.*[44] [Emphasis added]

The passage demonstrates the internal logic of the Bund's identification as a *Jewish* Socialist party. The first paragraph emphasizes the Bund's commitment to international socialism, its belief that a solution to the "Jewish problem" can only be found in a solution to the social problems of all nations. Jewish nationalism will not protect Jews from the violent nationalism of other groups, which the Bund sees as rooted in capitalism's attempts to turn workers against workers as a distraction from the true class enemy. Hodes identifies Zionism as a victim of this logic in its belief that the best that can be done to protect the Jewish people from a hostile world is to become hostile themselves. The Bund, on the other hand, according to Hodes, requires that people maintain hope and a belief in the humanity of others. The second paragraph connects the Bund's belief in *do'ikayt*, in fighting for the "rootedness" of Jews in the territories of Europe, to the achievement of that internationalist goal. Remaining with and among the other nations of Europe is the proper stance against Nazism's final victory—and the best guarantee against perpetuating disruptions of populations and communities. Hodes believes that rebuilding Jewish life in Europe, working again for the possibility of coexistence without assimilation, is the most powerful assertion of this optimistic belief in a better future. It is worth pausing on this point because the role of hope in the socialist aspect of *do'ikayt* is a strong feature as well of the works of Yiddish literature that I read. A persistent hope and working toward social change in the face of increasingly difficult social realities—and one's own feelings of ambivalence—is an important aspect of the poetics of *do'ikayt*.

To the best of my abilities I have established that the term "*do'ikayt"* seems most likely to have gained in usefulness only after World War Two to describe a set of beliefs originating in

[44] Hodes 288-9 ("The idea of the Bund is a deep belief in humankind…Belief in humankind is not popular today. In these last years we have all seen it become deeply debased, trampled, and spat upon. But if man is by nature a beast, no amount of running away will help. If there is no *tikun*, no redemption for mankind, then there is no redemption for the Jews. The beast will hunt those who run from it and meet them everywhere. If the belief disappears, then every hope disappears. The victory of the Zionist idea is a victory for the failure of belief in mankind, it is a complete victory for hopelessness… / The Bund has always fought for continuity, for creative national-life, for *do'ikayt*, for the right to remain rooted in the ground where the Jewish masses live and fight. This very idea received from Nazism the most painful blow. The remnants of the Jewish masses lurch through the camps, wander around homeless, or float like splinters on the foaming waves of the stormy post-war world. But with every day it becomes clearer that the pathway to healing these wounds leads not through increasing the number of helpless wanderers, not through increasing the number of uprooted refugees, but through building and rebuilding.")

the interwar period. Those beliefs are associated chiefly with the Bund but also with ostensibly apolitical organizations like *landkentenish*. I will now turn to some examples of what the beliefs later termed *do'ikayt* actually looked like in the theory and practice of Jewish politics in the first half of the twentieth century. As already suggested by the differences between the Bund and the *landkentenish* movement, and the differences in the definitions and uses examined thus far, *do'ikayt* can best be said to describe an ideological *trend*—a trend with fuzzy borders, rather than a single clear ideological principle.[45] This might run in contrast to our expectations of a term associated with a strongly centralized party like the Bund, but makes perfect sense given the reality of the Jewish political landscape of the early twentieth century, in which political and social movements were developing, dividing, and reconverging in response to events. The lines between movements like Zionism and Bundism that people like Leyvick Hodes see so starkly were actually quite blurred in the period of their development. A figure like Chaim Zhitlowsky played an influential role in developing the ideologies of and helping to organize such varied causes as the Socialist Revolutionaries, Bundists, Zionists, and American Yiddishist education, and he was not the exception but rather the rule in this.[46] The history of Jewish Socialism, Yiddishism, Zionism, and varieties of Jewish Diaspora Nationalism and national cultural autonomy are all well covered topics in the historiography, and I will not summarize or repeat that large body of work here.[47] Instead, I will present a few examples from Zhitlowsky's long and changing career that help to demonstrate how the fuzzy trend of *do'ikayt* can be seen in many instances of Jewish political theory, beyond today's association with the interwar Bund. *Do'ikayt*'s broader presence and influence especially in Yiddish-inflected Jewish political movements will set the stage for my argument that it can also be used to identify a trend in the Yiddish literature of the period.

Chaim Zhitlowsky was born in 1865 in what is today Usachy, Belarus, about 100 kilometers west of Vitebsk, where he attended gymnasium and met his lifelong friend, Sh. An-sky (to whom I will return later in this chapter).[48] Both Usachy and Vitebsk had majority Jewish populations in the period until the First World War, a point always worth bearing in mind when considering the environment in which someone like Zhitlowsky grew up—ideas of Jewish territorialism, diaspora nationalism and national cultural autonomy are perhaps not so far-fetched when considering the demographics of large towns and small cities like these in the Pale of Settlement.[49] It was in gymnasium that Zhitlowsky and his friend An-sky were introduced to

[45] See my discussion of Chana Kronfeld's framework for literary trends later in this chapter.
[46] Other figures probably best described now as Yiddishists also ran the gamut of the Jewish (and non-Jewish) political spectrum, including Nokhem Shtif, Sh. An-sky, and among writers the extreme case of Uri Zvi Grinberg. The saying "two Jews, three opinions" is apt in this political environment.
[47] Some essential works in this historiography aside from those already cited include: Simon Rabinovitch, ed. *Jews & Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe & the United States.* Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012; Simon Rabinovitch. *Jewish Rights, National Rites: Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014; and Ephraim Nimni, ed. *National Cultural Autonomy and its Contemporary Critics*. London: Routledge, 2005.
[48] Part of the Russian empire during his youth, the town's name was Ushachi in Russian and Ushats in Yiddish. Vitebsk is the Russian and Yiddish name, Viciebsk the Belarusian name, though the Russian is still widely used.
[49] According to the 1897 census, nearly 78% of Usachy's 45,000 residents and around 51% of Vitebsk's 66,000 residents were Jewish. See David H. Weinberg. *Between Tradition and Modernity: Haim*

Russian radical populism and socialism; Zhitlowsky wrote in his memoirs that he was "an atheist and a revolutionary socialist" by age 14.[50] As a teenager, Zhitlowsky seemed to bounce back and forth between Russian Populism and the proto-Zionism or Palestinism of Ḥibbat Zion.[51] Indeed, when he was only 18 years old he was already trying to synthesize the two movements in a way that can be seen as part of the development of *do'ikayt*. In his study of Zhitlowsky, David Weinberg writes:

> In late 1883, he joined the local Narodnik group as a "nationalist Jew" and began to espouse the ideals of Yiddishism and Jewish Diaspora nationalism. Yet his synthesis of universalist and Jewish concerns found little favor among Populist militants in Vitebsk. His application to create a separate Jewish branch and newspaper…was rejected by the Executive Committee of Narodnaya Volya, the majority of whom were Jewish.[52]

The very terms "Yiddishism" and "Diaspora nationalism" should be put in quotation marks in such a statement, because they did not exists as movements per se at this point—indeed, Weinberg credits Zhitlowsky for being among the first to link "Jewish national revival with socialist revolutionism," offering "Jewish activists a way of maintaining their allegiance to the Russian socialist movement" as Jews.[53] As suggested in the above quotation, young Jews were already active in the revolutionary socialist and populist movements in Russia, but Zhitlowsky was among the first to look for a way of participating in these revolutionary movements as a Jew, without assimilating. At the same time, he believed that Jewish nationalist movements like Ḥibbat Zion would not succeed unless they joined the general Russian struggle for revolution. This search for a synthesis contains essential elements of *do'ikayt*, and of the Bund's eventual platform: the struggle for social change must take place in the here and now (as the socialists believed), and Jews must and can participate as Jews in that struggle (as the proto-Zionists believed).

It is generally agreed that Zhitlowky's ideas remained idiosyncratic throughout his life; he never developed a coherent ideology or attached himself to one political party or movement—a quality that is sometimes praised, as it kept him at some remove from the intense partisan battles of Jewish politics, and sometimes criticized. At the same time, his ideas were inspirational and his participation as an organizer constructive for many Jewish movements. I find these compelling reasons to see Zhitlowsky's work as exemplary of the way that *do'ikayt* itself can be identified in many varieties of Yiddishism, diaspora nationalism, and Bundism. For example, his 1897 essay "*Farvos davke yidish*?" (Why Only Yiddish?) calls for "Jewish intellectuals to end their estrangement from the Jewish 'folk,' to build Yiddish culture, and to build socialism in Yiddish."[54] Written in the same year as the Bund's official founding, it took

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Zhitlowski, Simon Dubnow, Ahad Ha-Am, and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996, p. 86. and Arkadi Zeltser. "Vitsyebsk." *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* 2 November 2010. 20 February 2016 <www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Vitsyebsk>.

[50] Weinberg 89.

[51] On Ḥibbat Zion see Michael Stanislawski. "Ḥibat Tsiyon." *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* 12 August 2010. 20 February 2016 <www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hibat_Tsiyon>.

[52] Weinberg 92.

[53] Weinberg 95.

[54] Rabinovich (2012) 82. "Why Only Yiddish" is Rabinovich's translation of the essays title, more accurate translations might be "Why Yiddish of all things?" or "Why in particular Yiddish?"

the Bund several years to come around to this position, which as we have seen eventually did become a major aspect of its national program. The founding generation of Bundists were largely not native Yiddish speakers, but rather Russian speakers. These were organizers whose first agitational projects included teaching Jewish factory workers Russian, so that they could become part of the revolutionary movement. Only with time, and as those Yiddish-speaking factory workers became part of the movement, did Bundists realize they should rather be learning Yiddish. And still more time was required for the relationship to develop from a utilitarian one to one that recognized the value of "building Yiddish culture," as Zhitlowsky had suggested in this essay.

Zhitlowsky did join the Bund in 1899 and remained a member until 1904, throughout which time his identification as a Jewish nationalist "made him somewhat exceptional in the organization," which was then and remained avowedly anti-nationalist.[55] In 1903-04, Zhitlowsky helped to found a new organization called Vozrozhdenie ("Rebirth" in Russian), whose ideology combined the agrarian socialism of the Socialist Revolutionaries (with whom both Zhitlowsky and An-sky maintained close ties throughout their lives) and the Zionist belief in an eventual Jewish territory in *erets-yisroel*. "Eventual" was the key word here that distinguished Vozrozhdenie from movements like Poaley Zion, founded in 1903:

> While positing territorial concentration as a long-term objective, Vozrozhdenie argued that in the meantime it was possible to effect significant change in the Diaspora. Specifically, the movement called for ethnic minorities in Russia to have autonomous jurisdiction over all of their national affairs…Vozrozhdenie's eclectic program, which included contrasting elements of Jewish self-defense, revolutionism, and territorialism all united under the banner of the call for national unity, encapsulated Zhitlowski's distinctive approach to the 'Jewish problem.'"[56]

Though the Bund is the party that becomes associated with *do'ikayt*, I find that Zhitlowsky's break with it (as it existed in 1904) and his turn to the "eclectic" program of Vozrozhdenie helps to illuminate the tensions inherent within *do'ikayt*. While the Bund wanted to be *the* Jewish Socialist party, Zhitlowsky among others did not see it taking a strong enough stance regarding specifically Jewish issues, such as condemning the 1903 pogrom in Kishinev. The shock of antisemitic violence was likely one factor in his turn—in this period—to the more nationalistic platform of Vozrozhdenie.[57] In its response to antisemitism and its approach to building Yiddish culture, the Bund in Russia before 1905 had significant differences from the Bund in Poland in the interwar period, which was much more openly engaged in cultural promotion and self-defense.

Zhitlowsky laid out his approach to Vozrozhdenie's belief in an "eventual" (but not immediate) goal of establishing Jewish territory in a 1906 essay entitled "Territorialism: In Cash or on Credit?" The essay compares the ability of both socialism and territorialism to make improvements in people's lives only in the future ("on credit"), or in the present ("in cash"), or both. Socialism, he writes, used to only promise an improvement in the future. The old socialists

[55] Rabinovich (2012) 82.
[56] Weinberg 99-100.
[57] Weinberg 98.

in fact believed that things would have to get worse for the working class before they could be inspired to revolution. The working class

> *muz zayn maymad zinken fun tog tsu tog, er muz vern alts mer oysgehungert un opgelozn un ersht demont, az er vet shoyn gornisht hobn tsu farlirn saydn zayne keytn, az er vet zikh shoyn in gantsn miya'esh zayn tsu fardinen zayn shtikl broyt in der itstiker gezelshaft, —ersht demolt vet er zikh a heyb ton, a klap ton un oyfraysn di moyerne vant, vos teylt im op fun dem gan-eydn.*[58]

Zhitlowsky never bought this line of thinking, he writes, and now socialists have come to recognize that socialism does not pay only on credit—with the eventual promise of freedom—but in cash, through the increased wages and reduced hours socialist campaigns have won. Zhitlowsky believes that these incremental improvements in the life of the working class are necessary steps on the path to revolution, because only through them do workers glimpse the possibility of what a different life could be:

> *Kidey ober bay di groyse masn zol zikh konen funanderbrenen der natirlekher kheyshek fun yedn mentshn tsu frayhayt, bildung, sheynkayt un gerekhtikayt, muz frier far alts farbesert vern der ekonomisher tsushtand, es darfn in zey oyfgevekt vern naye baderfenishn tsu a gutn bukh, a sheyn bild, a frayer tog, farbrakht in der frayer natur; es muz frier far alts der mentsh zikh oysglaykhn in dem arbeter, oyfheybn zayn kop, farlangen vos im kumt, nemen fun dem lebn in yeder minut alts, vos er kon, un farlangen mer un nemen vayter un nokh mer farlangen, biz zayn benkenish nokh a frayen mentshlekhn lebn zol vern azoy shtark, az zi zol andersh nit konen bafridikt vern, saydn in a sotsyalistisher gezelshaft.*[59]

This reasoning contains several elements of *do'ikayt*: the belief that education, access to cultural productions, and even time in nature are crucial to the development of a revolutionary person. This is the very work that the Bund in Poland and organizations like *landkentenish* would be doing two decades later. And of course it also includes the belief that work must be done to improve people's lives in the here and now, and that these improvements help to build the ultimate socialist revolution.

Zhitlowsky argues that the same balance that socialism has reached—delivering "the goods" in the present as part of its work to deliver its final promise in the future—will be true for territorialist movements, as well. They just haven't gotten there yet. The territorialists, he writes,

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[58] Zhitlowsky 7 ("must continue to sink day after day; it must grow ever more starved and downtrodden—and only then, when it has absolutely nothing to lose but its chains; when it has totally given up on earning its little piece of bread in today's society—only then will it rise up, strike back and demolish the brick wall that stands between it and the Garden of Eden." Trans. Rick Meller)

[59] Zhitlowsky 7 ("However, for the great masses to develop the natural desire for freedom, education, beauty, and justice in every person, first the economic situation for all must be improved in order to awaken a new desire for a good book, a beautiful picture, a free day to spend in nature. First the man within the worker must be raised up; the worker must lift up his head, demand what is coming to him, take from life in each of its moments what he can—and then demand still more. He must take more and make even greater demands, until his yearning to lead a free life becomes so strong that it cannot be satisfied by any other means—only in a socialist society.")

still think like the old socialists, believing that nothing can be done in the here and now, and perhaps things must worsen here in order to drive people to build a Jewish state. But in fact, according to Zhitlowsky, territorialist movements have also already started to deliver "cash in hand." He credits territorialism with having "*oyfgelebt di farkhaleshte natsionale koykhes fun a teyl yidisher inteligents un hot dem teyl vider gebrakht tsu dem folk*."[60] In essence, he equates territorialism with a Jewish national reawakening that is already making positive changes in the life of Jews, whether or not its ultimate goal is achieved. Zhitlowsky credits the cultural work that will become so important to the Bund and other *do'ist* organizations to work done by territorialists.

In fact, Zhitlowsky directly addresses what he sees as the shortcomings of the Bund. Returning to the analogy with socialism, Zhitlowsky equates Bundists who do not see territorialism as the natural long-term goal of their cultural work with trade unionists who do not see socialism as the long-term goal of their organizing. Zhitlowsky believes that one must have the long-term goal in order to motivate work in the present, and that victories in the present pave the way for the larger victory in the future:

> *der nayer sotsyalizm un der nayer teritorializm veysn, az idealn far der tsukunft zenen do, kedey tsu bafrukhtn mit zey di arbet far dem hayntikn tog, un vos mer 'mezumen' zey tsoln undz haynt, alts nenter makhn zey di tsayt far zeyer arayntretn in lebn, un az vos mer mir gleybn in zey, vos mer mir arbetn far zeyer arayntretn in lebn in der tsukunt, alts mer 'mezumen' konen zey undz gebn haynt.*[61]

The essay offers an example of a synthesis between socialism and Jewish nationalism that shares some elements of *do'ikayt* while differing from it significantly in its territorialism. It is an interesting reminder that while we may see *do'ikayt* as seeking to occupy a balancing point between socialism and nationalism, there were certainly other attempts to find such a point. For Zhitlowsky (at least in this essay), that balance is reached by acknowledging that even if territorialism is not ultimately realized, as a goal it improves people's lives in the here and now—and we can assume, given his analogy, that he believes this to be true of socialism as well.

In 1908, in a period of disillusionment with the prospects for revolutionary change in Russia, Zhitlowsky travelled to New York, where he would live (excepting several extended trips back to Europe) for the rest of his life. Without trying to impose trajectories on a career that remained idiosyncratic and changeable, we can say that beginning around the time of the Czernowitz conference on Yiddish in 1908, Zhitlowsky generally turned his focus to Yiddish education and cultural production from this point onward.[62] He hoped that the Czernowitz conference would "mark the beginning of a campaign to unite those left-wing elements interested in forming a mass movement for Jewish cultural and political revival in the

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[60] Zhitlowsky 8 ("reviving the enfeebled national energies within a section of the Jewish intelligentsia, and returning this section to the folk.")
[61] Zhitlowsky 9 ("The new socialism and the new territorialism recognize that the future ideals exist precisely to fertilize the work of the present day; and the more "cash" they pay us today, the sooner those very ideals will in fact be realized. And the more we believe in those ideals, the more we work for their realization in the future, the more "cash" they will be able to provide us in the present.")
[62] Rabinovich (2012) 83.

Diaspora."[63] In New York, he founded and edited the monthly publication *Dos naye lebn* (The New Life) from 1909 to 1920, in which he continued to advocate for the importance of Yiddish culture to the American Jewish population, among other things. He also helped to found Yiddishist schools in the United States.[64] There is some similarity between this turn to culture and education for Zhitlowsky in the 'teens and twenties and for the Bund in Poland, as mentioned above. Both seemed to have decided that a long-term investment in education to build the culture and identity of working class Jews was necessary. Finally, like the two authors that are the focus of this dissertation, Izi Kharik and Moyshe Kulbak, Zhitlowsky became a supporter of the Soviet Union in the late 1920s—a fact which seems to surprise and confuse David Weinberg, given that Zhitlowsky had never been an "orthodox Marxist" and had been critical of the Bolsheviks into the 1920s. I would attribute this surprise and confusion to "backshadowing," however; of course none of the Jews who immigrated to the Soviet Union before World War Two could have predicted the Stalinist atrocities to which so many would fall victim.[65] In the case of Kulbak, the truth about the purges of 1937 were unknown even to his family until the 1990s, so it is not hard to imagine that in the United States Zhitlowsky would have remained badly informed about these events as they were occurring. Further, like many American Jews and Jews around the world, he saw the Soviet Union as the best hope for Jews in the face of Hitler's Germany. The parallel I would draw about Zhitlowsky, Kharik, and Kulbak in their respective decisions to support, remain in, and immigrate to the Soviet Union in the late 1920s would be in the spirit of *do'ikayt*: whatever each of their calculations, the Soviet Union at that point appeared to offer them the best opportunities for building Yiddish culture and improving the lives of Jews and their neighbors in the here and now.

Chaim Zhitlowsky is not necessarily the best or clearest example in his generation for the origins of *do'ikayt*. For that, Simon Dubnow might be the better choice.[66] But I have chosen him in part because he isn't the best example, rather he is perhaps the most changeable example, being as he was "at varying times…a sharp opponent of Zionism and a Zionist, an antiterritorialist and a territorialist, a supporter of the Bund and one of its harshest critics, a Socialist Revolutionary and an apologist for Bolshevism,"[67] and in that way the best example of the interconnectedness of all these movements for his generation. His changing thought shows how elements of *do'ikayt* were present in the range of Jewish political and cultural movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the tension between long-term political goals and those whose organizing focused on the here and now; the role of education and cultural production in movement building, and specifically the import of Yiddish education and cultural production; the complicated approaches to territorialism and diasporism that socialist movements took. While the best-known version of *do'ikayt* forms in the Second Polish Republic, the work of

[63] Weinberg 105-6.
[64] Weinsberg 106.
[65] On "backshadowing" see Bernstein.
[66] See Weinberg, "Simon Dubnow: History and Modern Jewish Identity" in *Between Tradition and Modernity: Haim Zhitlowski, Simon Dubnow, Ahad Ha-Am and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity.* New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996 and Simon Rabinovitch, *Jews and Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe and the United States* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012).
[67] Jonathan Frankel. *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1981, p. 258. Quoted in Rick Meller, Translator's Introduction to "Territorialism: In Cash or on Credit?"

Zhitlowsky and even more so his colleague and friend Sh. An-sky help to illustrate the pervasive roots of these ideas in the Jewish movements of Imperial Russia. This in turn is important for the identification of a literary trend of *do'ikayt* that may point to the significance of Bundist ideas in the period, but certainly also shows that these ideas had broader spread and other iterations beyond the sometimes partisan sphere of the Bund. In the next section I turn to Sh. An-sky both to continue exploring these early iterations of *do'ikayt*, but also to transition into exploring what *do'ikayt* looks like in the realm of cultural production, rather than the realm of political or social theory.

Do'ikayt in Practice

As we have seen above, one way to think about the changes in Zhitlowsky's ideas throughout his life is as a movement between various forms of territorialism and non-territorial diaspora nationalism, and perhaps a search for points of synthesis or balance between the two. Scholars of Sh. An-sky love to think about what he and his work are "between," a framework suggested by An-sky's own subtitle for his best-known work, "*The Dybbuk: tsvishn tsvey veltn*" (Between Two Worlds). What might the two worlds be, in the play and in the life of its author?[68] In the most general terms, An-sky lived and worked between Russian and Yiddish, in many senses: between the two languages and literatures, certainly; also between the two identities of the assimilated intellectual, Narodnik and later Socialist Revolutionary, and the Jewish socialist and cultural activist who dedicated more than the last decade of his life to ethnographic and aid work for the Jewish communities devastated by World War One.

As in the discussion of Zhitlowsky above and in the earlier definitions of *do'ikayt* discussed, I find the framework of betweenness—perhaps surprisingly—productive in conceptualizing *do'ikayt*, as well. I say surprising because "betweenness" would seem to contradict "hereness": either one is in a place or between places, right? But "betweenness" is a spatial metaphor for conceptualizing relationships that are not actually spatial, and in that it does suggest a location—if a fuzzy, indistinct location, defined as much by its relationship to other places as by its own. In just such ways, *do'ikayt* can be conceived as between diaspora nationalism and international socialism, between the terms of *goles* and *erets yisroel,* and between the non-Jewish and Jewish cultures whose interaction it is a product of. Do'ikayt can also be understood as "between" in the sense that it is not associated with one specific location or

[68] An-sky apparently suggested himself that "future generations study his life, not his work." See Steven J. Zipperstein. "Introduction: An-sky and the Guises of Modern Jewish Culture. *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*. Ed. Gabrielle Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 9. Or, as Mikhail Krutikov suggests, "An-sky's life and work can be usefully perceived as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a complex 'project' that incorporates literary activity, political activism, scholarship, and a nomadic bohemian lifesyle, where every idea and detail reappear in a multiplicity of forms." Mikhail Krutikov. "The Russian Jew as a Modern Hero: Identity Construction in An-sky's Writings." *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*. Ed. Gabrielle Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 119.

place, but rather with any and all places where Jews live and struggle. Thus An-sky's betweenness provides many illustrations of a political and cultural activist and writer working in the between spaces of *do'ikayt*. Mikhail Krutikov also offers a productive way to reconceptualize An-sky's betweenness through another spatialized metaphor: "It is often said that An-sky himself lived 'between two worlds,' the Russian and the Jewish one. It would probably be more accurate to say that both his life and his work were ongoing efforts to bridge these two worlds."[69] As with the discussion of Zhitlowsky, I will attempt to focus on just a few examples from An-sky's career that offer early models of *do'ikayt*. First, his political origins with the Narodniks, then his turn toward Jewish workers and culture, and finally his embrace of ethnography and his work producing modern culture using folk culture.

Gabriella Safran begins her invaluable biography of An-sky with a portrait of his teenage friendship with Chaim Zhitlowsky: Zhitlowsky was well-off, An-sky poor; Zhitlowsky's upbringing was maskilic, he learned about Jewish tradition but also went to a Russian gymnasium, while An-sky learned about life from the tavern his mother ran and learned Russian only through his friend Chaim. When Zhitlowsky claimed in his memoirs that he was a socialist revolutionary by the age of 14, it was largely because of the reading, discussions, and rebellious behavior he shared with Shloyme-Zanvl Rapoport (An-sky's birthname), one year his elder.[70] An-sky's first two grand adventures as a young man already span the spectrum his politics and literary work would move along throughout his life. The first was his stint as a *maskil*, an adherent of the Jewish Enlightenment, going to a small Jewish town to bring enlightenment to Jewish youth. When he was just 18 years old he went to the nearby town of Liozno, ostensibly to work as a Russian tutor, "hiding his radicalism from the Jewish leaders of the town while doing his best to lead their children astray."[71] He apparently did not hide it very well: at one point his diary (written in the form of a letter to Zhitlowsky) was discovered, containing all his sarcastic observations of the townspeople. Not long after, one of the forbidden books An-sky had given to boys in the town was discovered and An-sky was told to leave immediately after a public book burning of the secular works![72]

The second adventure, lasting longer, was as a Narodnik, a participant in the Russian populist movement of the mid-nineteenth century, living among Russian peasants, learning about their ways of life (which were seen as unpolluted by capitalism) and in turn seeking to find and spread a revolutionary anti-capitalism among the newly liberated serfs through education and propaganda. An-sky spent several years travelling and living outside of the Pale of Settlement, including more than a year at the salt mines near Ekaterinoslav. In this time he worked as a tutor, read to peasants and mine workers, and listened and collected stories of their working lives, folk tales, songs, etc. He wrote several long articles about the conditions of mine workers, some of which he was eventually able to publish. An-sky returned to both experiences, as the Jewish enlightener and as the Russian populist, over and over throughout his career. He retold the story of the young Jewish maskilim in fiction like *Pioneers* (*Pionery*, 1904) and returned to the folk

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[69] Krutikov 132.
[70] See Gabriella Safran. *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk's Creator, S. An-sky*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. Especially ch. 1: "A Bad Influence."
[71] Safran 23. Liozno is known as the birthplace of Shneur Zalman of Liady, the founder of Chabad. It was also where Marc Chagall was born and home to his grandparents.
[72] Safran 25-6. The book was *Ḥat'ot ne'urim* (The Sins of Youth) by Moshe Leib Lilienblum.

material collected from the peasants and miners in works like *The Folk and the Book* (*Narod i kniga*, 1914).[73]

Already in his youth, then, An-sky was trying to revolutionize Jews. And while he might not have yet valued Jewish folk culture in the way he did Russian folk culture, he believed that a revolutionary future could be built through (Russian) folk tradition, through the peasants' traditional connection to land and communal life. In 1888 he explained his approach as an intellectual toward the peasants, building a synthesis of the different trends of the time. As Safran writes:

> By the time he wrote his book on folk literacy, he had found in the writings of Uspensky, Mikhailovsky, and the early Tolstoy the lesson that the folk needed not a teacher "who would like to rebuild the entire structure of folk life" but "an enlightener to help it fight the unfavorable phenomena and conditions that threaten it, to cast the light of knowledge on the folk's own rooted foundations and all the conditions of contemporary life." That is, intellectuals should serve the narod by helping it learn about its own traditions, so it could survive without adopting urban culture wholesale.[74]

Speaking about Russian peasants, An-sky is already using the language of *do'ikayt*: he believes that the tools the people need to combat modern changes that threaten their way of life can be found in their "rooted foundations." Further there is the acknowledgement that this will be a dynamic process, since the effects of "contemporary life" cannot be completely avoided or removed, but they can be put into dialogue with folk culture, rather than being allowed to erase that culture completely. At the time, An-sky would likely not have spoken this way about Jews or their culture. Indeed, in his short stint as a Maskil, he was intent on doing almost the opposite: bringing in modern (Russian) culture and freeing Jewish youth from their oppressive traditions. The "bridge" he had not yet built was to recognize that Jews were also a "folk" with traditional culture that could be studied and renewed, and that might also offer foundations for revolutionary resistance.

Reflecting back on this period at a party celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of his literary activity, An-sky spoke about the change in thinking he had to undergo to embrace the Jewish "folk":

> When I first stepped into literature 25 years ago I wanted to work on behalf of the oppressed, the working masses, and it seemed to me, mistakenly, that I would not find them among the Jews. I thought it was impossible to stand aside from politics, and I found no political movements among Jews. Bearing an eternal longing for Jewishness, I threw myself in all directions and left to work for another people. My life was broken, split, torn…I spent many years on that "border," on the boundary between the two streets—and thus I ask you, from the 25-year sum of my literary work, to cut off 16 years. But that time too, which was not dedicated to literature, was not wasted for me. I lived among the Russian folk for a long time, among their lowest strata, but I was never

[73] *Pioneers* has been recently translated into English by Michael R. Katz as *Pioneers: A Tale of Russian-Jewish Life in the 1880s*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.
[74] Safran, quoting An-sky, p. 44.

> insulted because of my national identity…Living among the Russian folk, I was also befriended by Russian intelligentsia leaders and I had the rare honor of being close to people whom the Russian folk will always remember with love—and the hope lives in me that our current dark times will pass, because the Russian folk has no hatred for the Jews.[75]

The change in thinking described here is of course not unique to An-sky, but rather reflects a general trend in the trajectory of Jewish politics in Czarist Russia from individual, assimilated or Russian-speaking Jewish activists in Russian movements, to self-identified Jewish activists. It is the change that Zhitlowsky was influential in articulating and that the Bund's very existence demonstrates. There are many elements of *do'ikayt* in An-sky's speech: he adopts a version of the "betweenness" metaphor here, describing himself as on a border—again, not a figure of speech that suggests placelessness, but rather a spatialized metaphor for the complicated, liminal spaces of Jewish life in Europe: spaces that are made up of many things, move between many things, and yet are still spaces nonetheless. Almost in the same breath, An-sky says that the sixteen years before he recognized that Jews were also oppressed, working people with culture should be wiped from his résumé, and then goes on to say why those years were so important to his thinking and career. As I suggested above, it was An-sky's time with Russian peasants and intellectuals that developed the models he applied later in his career to Jewish culture. And more than that, it was this time that gave him hope for the love that can exist between Russians and Jews. Those 16 years are an example of the dialogue and exchange between Jewish and non-Jewish culture that is also essential to *do'ikayt*.

Finally, the speech introduces elements of the poetics of *do'ikayt*, different from the politics of *do'ikayt* that I have been focusing on thus far. One of the characteristics of literary *do'ikayt* that will be explored in this dissertation is dialogue, in a Bakhtinian sense. An-sky was, by all accounts, truly a great listener, both in his time among Russian peasants and miners in his youth, and later during the ethnographic expeditions. He was aware, long before it was commonplace in anthropology, that he was in a conversation with his ethnographic subjects, and that this conversation affected the material he collected: "Earlier than others, An-sky described folklore as the dynamic product of interactions among people and nations. He grasped that the stories people tell depend on who is listening, and he strove to vanish into the background as he heard them, to be indistinguishable from the people he was studying."[76] The dynamic interaction among people suggests Bakhtin's heteroglossia, the many layers of interacting language that together build the specific here and now of a work of literature like Kulbak's *Zelmenyaner*.

Along the same lines as the dynamism, or the ever-changing dialogue that formed An-sky's experiences, is the very sense of being "broken, split, torn" that he recalls. While essays by Zhitlowsky or the Bundist Leyvick Hodes can proclaim in propagandistic tones the ideals of Jewish socialism, the necessity of maintaining the struggle for a liberated Jewish future among the liberated working people of the world, An-sky here acknowledges the deep divides and feelings of fracturedness that are also an essential aspect of building a culture of struggle—and writing literature about it. This culture must take what is useable from the traditional past, but be ready to leave behind oppressive, restrictive, or simply changing practices. A culture that must

[75] quoted in Safran 171.
[76] Safran 6.

change in response to the technological, social, and political change of the world. A culture that is in constant dynamic interaction with its own conceptions of itself and with other cultures and their conceptions surrounding it. These are all fractures that the poetics of *do'ikayt* engage, which seem less present in the related political theories. The notions of border and brokenness become important themes in An-sky's great literary work, "*Der dibuk: tsvishn tsvey veltn*" ("The Dybbuk: Between Two Worlds,") and we are reminded why that word, "between," is so productive in readings of the play. In literary *do'ikayt*, of which the play is certainly an example, this spatial category of "between" creates the space for dialogue, heteroglossia, and culture understood as interaction and not as static object. "Between" creates the space for the tension Harshav identified in which a belief like "*do'ikayt*" means both "here and now" and "a different here, a different now."

Before turning fully to the modernist poetics of *do'ikayt*, however, let us look at a few more moments from An-sky's career and his turn toward Jewish culture described above, and finally to his work as an ethnographer leading to the writing of "The Dybbuk." Somewhat like Zhitlowsky, and despite the speech quoted above, An-sky's political affiliations did not undergo a simple transition from Narodnik and Socialist Revolutionary to Bundist or Diaspora Nationalist at any point in his life. An-sky remained affiliated with the Socialist Revolutionaries throughout his life. Though his involvement with them waxed and waned, he ran for the Constituent Assembly in 1917 as an SR (while still pushing the party on its position on national cultural autonomy and its response to antisemitic violence).[77] But he also famously wrote not one but two anthems for the Bund, though unlike his friend Zhitlowsky he never officially joined.[78] And just as Zhitlowsky's break with the Bund was due in part to what he felt was its weak response to the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, An-sky's relations with the SRs were strained in 1905 for similar reasons.[79] An-sky and Zhitlowsky, like so many other socialist and revolutionary Jews at the time, were pushed toward various forms of Jewish nationalism by the shock and horror of the pogroms, the state-sponsored antisemitism, and what they perceived as lack of support from their Russian or assimilated Jewish comrades. It was around this time, in the wake of the 1905 revolution as well as the antisemitic backlash to it, that An-sky began pushing for the formation of a Jewish section of the Socialist Revolutionaries (which never materialized) and advocating for national cultural autonomy: "As Jews and as SRs we must put forth two points: broad national cultural autonomy (with representation) of the Jewish nation, and *land*. Land for the ploughman, land for the Jew."[80] The call for land here is not necessarily for a Jewish territory. Rather, given his history as a Narodnik and his affiliations with agrarian socialism, An-sky seems to have agreed with the idea that Jews were too urban, too disconnected from "the land," and that opportunities for them to engage in agriculture would be beneficial. This belief surfaces in many tendencies of Jewish and socialist politics, perhaps most notably in the Society for the Settlement of Jewish Toilers on the Land, known as OZET, founded in 1925.[81]

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[77] Safran 266, 274.
[78] Safran 100.
[79] Safran 120-121. The SRs had come out strongly after the Kishinev pogrom, organizing the assassination of Vyacheslav von Plehve, the Russian Minister of the Interior who was seen as responsible for the execution of Hirsh Lekert.
[80] Quoted in Safran 123.
[81] see Arkadi Zeltser. "Society for the Settlement of Jewish Toilers on the Land." *YIVO Encyclopedia of*

At the same time, An-sky was becoming more interested in Yiddish and Yiddish culture. In 1904, two years after the founding of the first legal Yiddish daily newspaper in Russia, *Der fraynd* (The Friend), An-sky began to write and publish in Yiddish regularly.[82] In 1909 he joined three newly formed cultural organizations: the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society, the Jewish Literary Society, and the Jewish Folk Music Society.[83] And, as Safran puts it, he was apparently "miffed" not to be invited to the Yiddish Language Conference in Czernowitz in 1908 (of which Zhitlowsky was a co-organizer!).[84] Despite his strong interest in Yiddish, An-sky remained an "ambivalent" Yiddishist, in Safran's words, "inconsistent" in his positions regarding the value of cultural specificity:

> Even while…he argued for the preservation and recreation of a modern, secular, but exclusively Jewish culture, An-sky felt pulled in the opposite direction, toward a broad, inclusive vision of culture and to the idea that one should not make distinctions between one's own kind and others, "because," in Tolstoy's words, "all people are children of a single God."[85]

Ambivalence, like betweenness, is an important term in the poetics of *do'ikayt* in relation to exactly this question: the tension between a so-called international revolutionariness (which in this context usually meant a revolutionary Russianness) and Jewish cultural autonomy. This same tension and the ambivalence about it is one of the core themes of Kulbak's *Zelmenyaner* and to a lesser extent of Kharik's *Minser Blotes*.[86] To call this inconsistency, however, suggests a judgment that An-sky was waffling between two positions that have no in-between, whereas we might rather see him as standing here on Krutikov's bridge. Or, as Sylvie Anne Goldberg puts it, we might look at An-sky as a messenger:

> An-sky may be seen as the meshulah, the Messenger—one of the main characters of *The Dybbuk*…Since a meshulah is a go-between, he belongs to both the realm from which he was sent and the realm to which he is sent: he transmits the voice of the one into the other. Thus, if we consider An-sky to be a meshulah, it becomes possible to reconcile the two parts of his life without necessarily breaking the continuity of a lifetime commitment.[87]

Adopting another spatialized metaphor, Goldberg suggests that rather than seeing An-sky as "lost" between two identities and, more importantly for this discussion, political positions, "Perhaps he was paving his own road throughout the different realms of which he was a part. Must we assume that he was navigating without a compass, or can we suggest that he was

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Jews in Eastern Europe 19 October 2010. Accessed 30 March 2016 <www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Society_for_the_Settlement_of_Jewish_Toilers_on_the_Land>.

[82] Safran 111.

[83] Safran 142.

[84] Safran 176.

[85] Safran 181.

[86] Kharik's ambivalence in that poema focuses more on the cost of revolutionary violence, and its ability to live up to expectations, as I discuss in chapter 2.

[87] Sylvie Anne Goldberg. "An-sky in 1892: The Jew and the Petersburg Myth." *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*. Ed. Gabrielle Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 45.

charting his own map?"[88] If we identify An-sky's political and cultural work with the development of a set of beliefs that can be described by the term *do'ikayt*—a belief that Jews are a part of the places they live, informed by them and informing them, and that knowledge of that cultural history can help to build revolutionary movements to improve their life in those places without an exclusively Jewish state or territory—then indeed it makes sense to think of people like An-sky and work like his ethnographic expeditions and *The Dybbuk* as mapping new territory in Jewish cultural and political identities of the time.

The ethnographic expeditions An-sky organized in the summers of 1912-14 are truly monumental feats in so many senses: the years of fundraising and building support, which continued during the expeditions as the true costs became apparent; the scope of territory and material the expeditions hoped to cover; and finally the amount of material—information, photographs, recordings, and physical objects—that they collected. Despite the greatly reduced amount of the Pale An-sky's team did manage to visit and the fact that World War I stopped the yearly trips that might have otherwise continued for who knows how long, the expeditions were successful by any measure.[89] Rather than duplicating the excellent accounts of the expeditions given by Nathaniel Deutsch and Safran in their respective books, I will focus on how An-sky came to see ethnographic work as essential to building and revolutionizing Jewish culture in the diaspora and how he put this belief into practice with the writing of "The Dybbuk."

Ethnography was an important part of both Yiddishist and socialist movements—Jewish and non-Jewish—in czarist Russia.[90] It's a prime example of *do'ikayt* in practice: figures like Simon Dubnow encouraged Jews to self-study, seeking to inspire *zamlers*, collectors of folk material in the broadest sense.[91] As in our definitions of *do'ikayt*, then, Jewish ethnography in Europe always had the dual purpose of collecting information and empowering Jews through self-study. Jeffrey Shandler describes the trend makes clear the inherent connection between study/education and political goals that we have seen are the two sides of *do'ikayt*:

> The first scholarly efforts to document contemporary Jewish life in provincial Eastern Europe as a subject in its own right were not works of dispassionate research undertaken as ends in themselves. Rather, they were produced by activists committed to improving

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[88] Goldberg 46.

[89] For excellent treatments of the expeditions see Nathaniel Deutsch. *The Jewish Dark Continent: Life and Death in the Russian Pale of Settlement*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011 (this includes a translation of the entire Jewish Ethnographic Program, 2087 questions about folk beliefs). And Safran's chapter, "The Dybbuk and the Golem" in *Wandering Soul*. See also Avrom Rekhtman's memoirs about his participation in the expeditions: *Yidishe etnografye un folklor: zikhroynes vegn der etnografishe ekspeditsye ongefirt fun Sh. An-sky*. Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1958.

[90] As well as for the czarist government itself, which conducted thorough censuses of its subjects and specifically regarding the Jews thought that ethnographic study of the shtetl would help them understand how to modernize or assimilate the Jews of the Pale. See Roland Cvetkovski and Alexis Hofmeister. *An Empire of Others: Making Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014. See also Jeffrey Veidlinger, ed. *Going to the People: Jews and the Ethnographic Impulse*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016 and Sasha Senderovich. *The Red Promised Land: Narratives of Jewish Mobility in Early Soviet Culture*. Diss. Harvard University, 2010.

[91] A movement that in fact continues today through organizations like the Yiddish Book Center, which explicitly uses the language of *zamlen* to connect to this foundational Yiddishist movement.

> or transforming East European Jewish life in some way – whether demonstrating the worthiness of Jewish folkways as the basis of an indigenous national culture, creating new works of modern culture, or enhancing East European Jewish life by alleviating poverty, expanding educational opportunities, or combatting antisemitism. Though wide-ranging in subject and methodology, these efforts are all works of applied, engaged scholarship.[92]

As we have seen, An-sky's work and vision are part of broader movements and trends. He is certainly not the originator of this approach to ethnography and its importance for renewing Jewish life. He does put these ideas into action on a grander and more successful scale than many and, perhaps most importantly, does not see the collection or even study of folk culture as the end goal. Rather, as Shandler terms it, his goal from the start is to use ethnographic materials to "produce new works of modern culture." Writing specifically about An-sky's expeditions, Shandler expands the claim: "The expedition conceptualized folkways in relation to modernist outcomes – artworks, musical compositions, literary productions, and theater pieces."[93] It is in this that we see An-sky building bridges, or as a messenger again: his project is not simply to preserve Jewish traditions, but rather to make new modern culture from folk materials, thereby re-presenting the cultural legacy to the folk.

Related to the goal of fostering a cultural renewal among Jews by collecting and re-presenting their folk culture, An-sky's ethnography aimed to help establish the basic fact that Jews constituted a nation among the other nationalities present in the Russian Empire and Europe—and thus had a culture that could be studied. This was a goal shared by many Jewish political movements; for An-sky the purpose of demonstrating national status was to establish Jewish claims to national cultural autonomy, a form of non-territorial self-rule over matters of culture, education, and communal organization. Even among the left-wing proponents of national cultural autonomy, Jews were not necessarily considered an eligible national group. Otto Bauer, one of the Austrian Marxists credited with developing the theory of national cultural autonomy, while himself of Jewish background, did not believe that Jews constituted a national group.[94] In several of his major essays, An-sky thus has to argue both that Jews have a distinct culture, and that they are part of the cultural interchange among the nations of Europe and Russia. As Deutsch puts this:

> In the same seminal essay in which An-sky called for the creation of a Jewish ethnography, he also took pains to identify the paradoxical nature of the Jews as a people: Jews were at once profoundly like their neighbors—that is, they were "normal"—and fundamentally different from them; Jewish culture was constantly being influenced by (and influencing) the cultures around it, and yet it also exhibited an essential unity from the Bible on. In short, Jewish culture was universal *and* particular, same *and* other.[95]

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[92] Jeffrey Shandler. *Shtetl: A Vernacular Intellectual History.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014, p. 56.
[93] Shandler 60.
[94] Roni Gechtman. "Conceptualizing National-Cultural Autonomy: From the Austro-Marxists to the Jewish Labor Bund." *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts / Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook*. Vol. 4 (2005), p. 17-49.
[95] Deutsch 33.

At the same time that An-sky argued outward, into the broader Russian context, that Jews did constitute a nation, a folk, with a culture both distinct from and part of the nations of Europe, he also used ethnography to make arguments directed internally toward Jews. In the introduction to *The Jewish Ethnographic Program*, An-sky describes the folk culture of European Jewry as a new Oral Torah.[96] As Deutsch discusses, this is a rhetorical move with a long tradition in Jewish philosophical and mystical thought, a form of "inventing tradition" by presenting new ideas as already present within the tradition. An-sky's innovation was to trace the origin of this new Oral Torah not to divine revelation, but to the people themselves:

> The implication of An-sky's ethnographic vision was nothing less than a profound transvaluation of Judaism itself. Just as generations of rabbinic scholars had devoted themselves to compiling, learning, and legally interpreting the traditional Oral Torah, so An-sky imagined that the Jews of his own day and of future generations would devote themselves to collecting, studying, and creatively reappropriating the Oral Torah of the "common folk."… An-sky envisioned a Populist transformation of Eastern European Jewish society in which an ever-growing cohort of professional and folk ethnographers, rather than rabbis, would play a defining role as culture producers and interpreters. In short, ethnography would become a, if not the, central mode for performing Judaism.[97]

Thus without disavowing religious tradition, An-sky replaces or rewrites one of the foundational religious behaviors of Judaism—study of holy texts—with a new secular form of study and performance. In this we can see the aspect of *do'ikayt* that seeks to educate Jews about their history and culture, while at the same time re-envisioning and radicalizing that history and culture, "creatively reappropriating" what is usable for a new and better future.

Among the material results of the Ethnographic Expeditions, perhaps the two most significant are An-sky's play, "The Dybbuk," and the Jewish ethnographic museum he established in Petersburg in 1914 to display objects collected on the expeditions. Without discussing these two greatest of An-sky's creations in depth—they are both well discussed and examined—I will point out just a few characteristics of each pertinent to the in-between position An-sky plays in this discussion of *do'ikayt*, the bridge or messenger between the realms of political and poetic *do'ikayt*. Work on building the museum and in preparing catalogues and studies of its collection progressed throughout World War I, even as An-sky was deeply involved in aid work for the Jewish communities of Galicia. Even in the midst of the revolutions of 1917, into which An-sky threw himself wholeheartedly as a member of the Petrograd City Duma and a candidate for the Constituent Assembly among other work, he found time to travel from Moscow to Petrograd when it seemed that a Bolshevik commissar was in the process of seizing the museum and its collection. He succeeded in having the museum returned to his and the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society's possession.[98] His commitment to the museum—despite what some would see as the much more immediate demands of civilian relief during wartime and the socialist revolution for which he had worked his entire life—demonstrates that for him, the ethnographic, cultural and educational work of the museum were not of secondary importance.

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[96] An-sky, "The Jewish Ethnographic Program." Trans. Nathaniel Deutsch. *The Jewish Dark Continent: Life and Death in the Russian Pale of Settlement*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.
[97] Deutsch 35.
[98] Safran 276.

The work of presenting Jewish culture to the people was as vital to An-sky as combatting pogroms during the war and as building his revolution, inseparable parts of that work, in fact, as we have seen in other iterations of *do'ikayt*.

The aspect of "The Dybbuk" I'd like to pause on is the process of its composition. "The Dybbuk" is often thought of as the result of An-sky's expeditions and his most successful venue for re-presenting many of the folk customs he observed as a work of modern art. An-sky first began telling people about the play and reading it with small groups in 1914. In Safran's words, "An-sky would spend the rest of his life working on this play, reading it aloud and asking the audience for suggestions, revising it, translating it from Russian into Yiddish and organizing a translation into Hebrew, and trying to arrange a staging."[99] There were thus several versions of the play, some with three acts, some with four, in Russian, Yiddish, and then in a Hebrew translation by Chaim Nachman Bialik. The play, like An-sky's ethnographic work and even like the time he spent in his youth "going to the people," was a product of dialogue, rewritings, and multilingualism. In other words, it is a heteroglossic work both in its form and composition as well as its content. Bialik remarked on what I see as the play's heteroglossic qualities—though for him it was not a positive thing—in his first reactions to the play. Safran writes: "After An-sky read the play to a Jewish audience in Kiev, Bialik compared him to a garbage collector who 'collects scraps of folklore and pieces them together.'" Addressing An-sky, the quotation from Bialik continues, "You worked for the *goyim* your whole life, and at the end of your life, when you were half dead, you came to us Jews and you were sentenced to wander among the garbage dumps and gather folklore. *The Dybbuk* came out of what you gathered."[100] While certainly not meant as complimentary, Bialik's insults are an apt description of the play as a work of bricolage, re-using and re-purposing the bits and scraps of folk culture—both Jewish and non-Jewish—for new purposes. These same approaches to re-purposing folk culture for modern, secular, and even revolutionary purposes will be apparent in my discussion of Kulbak's novel, *Zelmenyaner*, in which ethnography is thematized in the novel's exploration of the transformation of Jewish culture in a revolutionary society. Indeed, Kulbak's own job at the Institute for Belarussian Culture (*Inbelkult*) involved reading and editing the amateur ethnography of *zamlers* likely still inspired, in part at least, by An-sky's expeditions.[101]

"The Dybbuk" is the best example of An-sky putting the *do'ikayt* of his ethnographic work into practice (and his best literary work); it is also by far the most discussed among his works. I would like to take a lesser-known work as an example of An-sky's literary *do'ikayt,* one that embodies perhaps better than "The Dybbuk" the more literal aspect of literary *do'ikayt*: representation of specific Jewish spaces in relation to—and in the service of—revolutionary change. Finally, moving from examining *do'ikayt* in the realm of politics to the study of culture, I will take An-sky's novella, *In shtrom: ertseylung fun der yidisher revolutsionerer bavegung* (With the Flow: A Tale of the Jewish Revolutionary Movement), as my point of departure for the

[99] Safran 212.
[100] Safran 269.
[101] On Kulbak's work with *Inbelkult* see ch. 3 of this dissertation; see also Elissa Bemporad. *Becoming Soviet Jews: the Bolshevik Experiment in Soviet Minsk*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013, p. 103-5. and Senderovich (diss) 37.

discussion of *do'ikayt* in the realm of cultural production, the poetics of *do'ikayt*.[102]

The Poetics of Do'ikayt

An-sky began working on *In shtrom* as early as November 1905, even before he had managed to return to Russia from Bern, in order to be part of the revolution.[103] He had, however, been following news of every aspect of the revolution from abroad throughout the year. And he was still working on the novella almost a year later, by which point a pogrom in Białystok in June 1906 had become one of the major events with which the novella grappled. An-sky went to Białystok the day after the pogrom, really before it was entirely over, to cover it for the Yiddish paper *Der fraynd* and the Russian paper *Voskhod*.[104] *In shtrom* depicts a few days in the summer of 1905 in a provincial city, unnamed in the novella but certainly modeled on Vitebsk, between the murder of a police officer and the outbreak of a pogrom in response to the assumed perpetrators of the assassination: the Jewish Socialist Revolutionaries or the Bundists. The plot focuses on these Jewish revolutionaries of all stripes and the other Jewish residents as they try to figure out who—without party knowledge—committed the act of "individual terror," and as they try to prepare for what seems an inevitable pogrom in retaliation. Despite the anonymization of the city (referred to as N. in the novella, following the Russian narrative tradition), *In shtrom* represents the spaces, Jewish and revolutionary, of this moment in time and place, and uses those spaces to dialogically explore one of the pressing political questions of the time: the efficacy of revolutionary violence.[105] An-sky explores his own ambivalence and changing stance toward "individual terror" and assassination as a revolutionary tactic by giving voice to the different positions in this debate, without in the end offering a solution. As with the later modernist works of Moyshe Kulbak and Izi Kharik, this example of literary *do'ikayt* both offers a representation of revolutionary Jewish space and makes room for exploration of the ambivalence felt by revolutionary Jewish actors toward the transformed social spaces they are working to build.

As Jonathan Frankel aptly describes it, *In shtrom* "is tightly bound within a unity of space and time."[106] It takes place over the course of only a few days, as described above, and also in just a few locations: the marketplace, the shul, the apartments of a few radicals, and the city park. Indeed, the space of the park, called the "*birzhe*" (Russian for "exchange" or "bourse"), is at the

[102] This is Jonathan Frankel's translation of the title, which doesn't quite capture the senses of "*shtrom*" as meaning also a stream, current, flood, and also trend or tendency. Mikhail Krutikov translates it as "In Stream," and notes that the Russian version translates as "In a New Stream," Krutikov 79.
[103] After delays due to his health, finances, and a concern that he would be arrested upon returning to Russia or not allowed to enter at all, An-sky managed to cross the border from Königsberg only on December 31, 1905. Safran 122-126, 130.
[104] Safran 130.
[105] As mentioned above, this is also a central concern for Kharik's *Minsker blotes*, discussed in the following chapter.
[106] Jonathan Frankel. "'Youth in Revolt': An-ksy's *In shtrom* and the Instant Fictionalization of 1905." *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*. Ed. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

heart of the story. In the few years before 1905, the narrator explains, the city park has gone from a place reserved only for the bourgeoisie to the central meeting place for workers: "*der nayer gayst, vos hot tseshtert di alte lebns-formen, er hot ongerirt oykh dem park.*"[107] The workers quickly take over and the park becomes completely their domain, even the police eventually keep to the outskirts of the *birzhe*.[108] The novella describes at length the kinds of activities that take place in the *birzhe*: meetings among workers and with their representatives (in the various revolutionary "organizations"), party meetings and the passing along of instructions to party members, the distribution of party literature, debates and discussions and even lectures—truly exchanges of all kinds, aside from those the word "*birzhe*" typically denotes. As Krutikov describes it, "The term implies the radical reevaluation of the old concept: the aim of the new workers' *birzhe* is to destroy the world dominated by the old, conventional financial bourse."[109] Thus both the space and the term that describe it have been reappropriated by revolutionary forces.

The specific geography of the *birzhe* is described in great detail, taking time to lay out the complexities of the new revolutionary society that had arisen among the Jewish cities of the Pale of Settlement in the course of a decade:

> *Di "birzhe" hot zikh gehat ir konstitutsye. Di ale'en fun park zenen geven shtreng-funandergeteylt tsvishn di farsheydene parteyen un fraktsyes. Der "bund" vos iz geven di shtarkste partey in N. hot tsugenumen far zikh di tsentrale ale'en. Di zaytike ale'en zenen geven tseteylt tsvishn di ibrike parteyen, – "iskrovtses," sotsyalistn-revolutsionern, farshidene grupes tsionistn. Tsvey-dray ale'en zenen geblibn naytral– un dortn flegn zikh bagegenen mitglider fun farsheydene parteyen, kidey tsu firn debatn oder "diplomatishe unterhandlungen." Oyf der "birzhe" hot zikh dos publikum gehaltn fray un vegn alts geredt ofn. Ale hobn kimat eyner dem andern gekent un far a shpion iz geven shver arayntsuklaybn zikh in park.*[110]

Though it is new, this revolutionary space has already developed into a kind of sovereign territory, with its various regions, each with their own character, and well-defined borders; the *birzhe* has citizens and the citizens have their home regions. It has its forms of governance in the neutral territories where "diplomacy" between the different factions or territories can take place, and it has its maps of power, with the strongest party at the center and the smaller, weaker parties on the periphery. Importantly, its sovereignty extends also to how the workers and party

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[107] Sh. An-sky. "*In shtrom: ertseylung*." *Gezamlte shrift: naynter band*. Warsaw: Ferlag "An-sky", 1922, p. 18. ("The new spirit that had upset all the old ways of life touched the park, as well." My translation.) There is also a Russian version of the novella, which An-sky wrote first and from which he likely oversaw the translation into Yiddish, see Frankel 137.

[108] An-sky (1922) 19.

[109] Krutikov 80.

[110] An-sky (1922) 19 ("The *birzhe* had its own constitution. The avenues of the park were strictly divided among the various parties and factions. The Bund, which was the strongest party in N., took for itself the central avenues. The secondary avenues were divided among the rest of the parties, – the Iskrovites [RSDLP], the Socialist Revolutionaries, and various groups of Zionists. Two or three avenues remained neutral – there the members of different parties could meet in order to debate or conduct 'diplomatic negotiations.' People felt free in the *birzhe*, and talked openly about everything. Everyone knew almost everyone else, it was difficult for a spy to infiltrate the park.")

members *feel* in the *birzhe*: it is a revolutionary space not only in that it provides a location for revolutionary planning, but in that it gives people a space in which they feel free of the oppressive weight of their daily lives. Here, they can speak openly about opinions and activities that are illegal outside the *birzhe*, but not within. In that sense, the *birzhe* also already has its own system of revolutionary laws, or at least the ability to make people feel briefly free of the oppressive laws and systems that otherwise govern their lives. The novella then depicts an idea of revolutionary space in the *birzhe*, but it also uses the *birzhe* metaphorically to represent some of the promises of revolution: the new organizations of people and power, and the experience of liberation in the image of crossing a border into a place where one can be open and free.

Other spaces are described with this level of detail, as well. If the transformation of the city park into the workers' exchange demonstrates the creation of revolutionary (Jewish) space out of territory that had belonged to the bourgeoisie and the Czarist government, another scene depicts the transformation of traditional Jewish space into a new revolutionary Jewish space. Toward the end of the novella, members of the Bund file into the old shul during Sabbath morning services to make speeches to the people there in an attempt to build support—to protect the *birzhe*, in fact. It is a practice that terrified the observant members of the shul the first time it happened, but to which they have since become accustomed.[111] With the same care and interest that he took in describing the geography of the *birzhe*, An-sky describes the structure of the shul and the geography of the society it contains. It is among the oldest buildings in the city, it "remembers" Napoleon and pogroms and countless fires. The city around it has changed, but the shul stands "*glaykh zi volt zikh gornisht gefunen unter der virkung fun der tsayt un geshe'enishn*."[112] The congregation is mapped similarly to the way the parties in the *birzhe* are, according to their relative power within this territory:

> *bay der mizrekh-vant, fun beyde zaytn arn-koydesh, zenen geshtanen di pney—ale kimat alte yidn, tsvishn zey iz oykh geven der rov…un es hot zikh gedakht, az ot oyf di alte yidn, punkt vi oyf der shul un alts vi in ir, hot di tsayt keyn shum shlite nisht gehat. Un, tsugetrogene aher, tsu der vant, mitn shtrom funem lebn, shteyen zey do, vi shtume matseyves fun der alter tsayt.*
>
> *Oyf dem ander oylem fun shul iz shoyn gelegn der gayst fun dem nayem lebn. Tsvishn zey zenen shoyn geven yidn in kurtse rek, mit geshoyrene oder gegolte berd…mer nisht bay der tir zenen zikh vider geshtanen alte in bayort yidn, oreme, arumgerisene, in farshmoltsene, tseflakerte talisim, mit kranke mogere penimer.*[113]

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[111] I am grateful to Daniel Boyarin for pointing out to me that this practice has roots in traditional Jewish custom, as well, in which any aggrieved member of the community could interrupt services, demanding a resolution from the community for a problem.

[112] An-sky (1922) 99 ("as if it was unaffected by the workings of time and events.")

[113] An-sky (1922) 99-100 ("By the eastern wall, on both sides of the Holy Ark, stood the chief citizens—almost all of them old men, and the Rabbi with them…and it seemed as if time had no power over them, exactly as with the shul and everything within it. As if they had been carried here, to this wall, by the current [*shtrom*] of life, and there they stand, silent memorial stones to the old time.
Upon the other group in the shul lay the spirit of the new time. Among them were already men in short jackets, with trimmed beards or clean-shaven faces…and next to the door there stood old men again, but poor men, ragged, their prayer-shawls soiled and tattered, their faces sick and thin.")

The scene describes the shul and its members in a moment of transition. The narration depicts the "*pney*," the prominent Jewish men of the city, as metonymic to the building of the shul itself, untouched by the passage of time and able to withstand every kind of catastrophe. But the same "new spirit" that transformed the city park into the workers' exchange is spatially present in the shul, as well. Along with the old men there are the young workers, wearing modern fashions, and the impoverished of the city, both marking economic changes that have affected working people and the poor, while the community elite appears untouched. It's clear that at the same time the narrative describes the "*pney*" and the shul as though they are outside the stream of time and events, the "*shtrom*" is gathering the strength to affect them.

In the middle of the service the Bundists arrive, a different group altogether, clearly not regulars in the shul. They guard the doors, refusing to let people leave, and after the *hagobe* (raising of the Torah scroll), a speaker ascends the bima, the raised platform traditionally in the center of the shul. The congregants and the Bundists fight about letting the man speak, but finally fall silent (even the most resistant figuring that it is the quickest way to get things over with). As the Bundist speaks, he is contrasted with the old man still standing next to him on the bima, holding the Torah scroll:

> *Dernokh, vi der bundistisher redner un nokh eyner, a forshteyer fun di "poaley-tsion," hobn ge'endikt reyden un zenen arop fun der bime, –iz der alter yid mit der seyfer-toyre in di hent geblibn aleyn. Un es hot zikh oysgevisn, az oyf ot der hoykher bime, vi oyf an eynzamer vispe, shteyt der zokn mit der seyfer-toyre, vi a simbol fun dem altn yidentum, arumgeringlt fun di royshende khvalyes fun dem nayem, fun dem yungn shtarkn lebn, vos rayst zikh laydenshaftlekh foroys, vos rayst zikh tsu farfleytsn ot di kleyne, nor di hoykhe un shtarke vispe.*[114]

The image of a current ("*shtrom*") moves through all of these scenes in the shul, the older generation depicted first as *matseyves* (tombstones) and now the bima as an island, being surrounded and imminently inundated by the flood of the "new spirit" of the times. Finally the revolutionaries leave and the service is concluded with the prayer for the New Moon, "May He who performed miracles for our fathers and brought them out of slavery to freedom, may He soon redeem us and gather in our dispersed people from all the four corners of the earth, all of Israel one."[115] For the reader and the people in the shul both, the meaning of the prayer is put in the new context of the revolutionary struggle for freedom, just as the bima and the Sabbath services have been reappropriated by the revolutionary speakers. The scene uses the same tactic of transvaluation that An-sky will use a few years later in his introduction to the *Jewish Ethnographic Program*, in which he describes contemporary Jewish folk culture as the new Oral Torah. Here it is the contemporary fight for freedom taking the place—and the physical religious space—of the historical Jewish struggle for redemption.

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[114] An-sky (1922) 104 ("After the Bundist speaker and another speaker, a representative of the Poaley Zion, finished speaking and climbed down from the bima, the old man with the Torah scroll in his hands remained there alone. And it seemed as if that elder with the Torah scroll stood on the tall bima as if on a lonely island, a symbol of the old Jewry, encircled by the rushing waves of the new, young and strong life, which strained passionately forward, strained to flood that small but still tall island.")

[115] These passages are quoted also in Frankel's discussion of the novella, see Frankel 141-146.

Both of these complex spaces, the park and the shul, are locations for debate, discussion, and the airing of ideas throughout the novella. As we have seen, their space is also used as a means for depicting the different groups and ideas present within the societies that exist in the city of N. The differing constituencies of the city, the Jewish community, and the revolutionaries are mapped out for the reader spatially. In Bakhtinian terms, the novella uses spatial imagery to depict this heteroglossic society in order to dialogically play out a question which the author seems not to want to answer. As Frankel writes, the value of a novella like this is to "remind us how varied the reactions to the revolution would have been at the private (as against the public) level."[116] That is to say, unlike the press of the time or writings by the various political actors, or even histories that synthesize and generalize, the novella shows us the level of debate and difference that actually accompanied reactions to the unfolding events of the revolution by people at the individual level. This focus on showing variety and difference rather than unification and synthesization is one aspect of Bakhtin's heteroglossia.[117] Heteroglossia is often effective for describing how the variety, complexity, and specificity of language(s) in a literary work can be used to pinpoint and represent a moment in history and space. Again, as Frankel puts this:

> What An-sky did in his novella was to allow a variety of voices from 'the people' to question both the organizational structure and the operational decisions of the party (the Bund). All the protagonists were given their say, but no one was permitted a decisive victory … It is possible—as so often throughout the novella—to sense that An-sky identified himself with both of the opposing protagonists.[118]

Rather than seeking to put forward a position on the value of assassination for the revolutionary movement—as indeed he did in essays and in his editorial work!—An-sky allows the different positions in the debate to be given voice in the novella.[119] Even the novella's ending, while suggesting that the pogrom has finally begun and even that the young sister of the central revolutionary activist Bashe might have been killed, does not go so far as to show these events definitively. The novella ends from Bashe's perspective at the rear of the demonstration, where she does not yet know what has occurred at the front of the *shtrom*. Her position of being in the midst of an unfolding political situation, not yet knowing the price or benefit of revolutionary violence, mirrors the position of the novella itself—and probably the feelings of many involved in these events.

I will end with two final examples of different kinds of heteroglossia in An-sky's novella

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[116] Frankel 139.

[117] See M.M. Bakhtin. "Discourse in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Carl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. I will discuss heteroglossia as a framework for reading literary *do'ikayt* in depth in the third chapter.

[118] Frankel 149-154.

[119] After the assassination of Plehve, from Nov 1904 to May 1905, An-sky edited *Kampf un kempfer* (The Fight and the Fighters), "a series of Yiddish pamphlets with pictures and worshipful biographies of Sazonov, as well as Lekert, the Vilna Bundist who had shot at von Wahl; Alexsei Pokotilov, who dies assembling bombs in 1904; Fruma Frumkina, a young Jewish woman who attacked a police official in 1903 while in prison…" (Safran 115). An-sky also had a famous debate with Shimon Dubnow in the press in the winter of 1905-06 about anti-Jewish violence during the revolution and the response of the revolutionary parties to it. See Frankel 162-3 and Safran 127-128.

that will also be important elements of the poetics of *do'ikayt* in Kulbak and Kharik's works. The first is a consideration of the language in which the novella is written. As mentioned above, An-sky wrote the novella in Russian, though he published it nearly simultaneously in Yiddish and Russian. The Yiddish came out in the newspaper *Der fraynd*, mentioned above, beginning in January 1907 and a Russian version was published that same year.[120] While An-sky did write some things, especially poetry, in Yiddish, much of his prose, including *The Dybbuk* and his essayistic writing, was originally composed in Russian (which his friend Zhitlowsky had helped him learn to write in their school days). His greater facility with written Russian, even though Yiddish was likely his first spoken language, is characteristic of his political and educational orientation in the Narodnik and Revolutionary Socialist milieus. Despite the turn toward Yiddish and Jewish culture that he eventually made, he and his political generation came of age with Russian as the language of revolutionary culture. As with *The Dybbuk*, then, a work like *In shtrom* exists only in this multilingual context, and an attempt to claim the Russian or the Yiddish as the original or definitive version simply doesn't fit the terms in which the work exists. Like the societies the novella depicts, it is a polylingual and heteroglossic work. The readerships of newspapers like *Der fraynd* and *Voskhod*, both of which An-sky wrote for in Yiddish and Russian respectively, were complementary and overlapping, while each also expanded the reach of the other. The same is true for the Russian and Yiddish versions of *In shtrom*. In the Yiddish version, characters speak and make exclamations in Russian, just as they do in Kharik's *Minsker Blotes* and even more so in Kulbak's *Zelmenyaner* (in which Belorussian and Hebrew are also used by characters). The literary representation of these heteroglossic language systems is an important means for locating the works in a specific moment of history, in specific segments of society, in the geography of the political systems that language marks, in the processes of modernization and secularization, in economic spheres, etc.

Somewhat playfully, both An-sky and Kulbak also locate their works historically and politically through quotation of their own writing within their fictional worlds. At the crisis moment of the novella, as the crowds in the *birzhe* rally to march through the city, a young activist fashions a red flag from a bit of cloth and a stick and calls out,

> *"Brider, nokh mir!! In gas!!"*
>
> *A vayle iz tsvishn dem oylem forgekumen a geruder. Di mer energish un hitsike, hobn zikh durkhgeshtoysn foroys. Ahin hobn zikh oykh flink un energish durkhgeshtoysn dos kleynvarg. Un mit amol hot zikh funandergetrogn a begaysterter gezang fun hunderter shtimen:*
>
> *"brider un shvester fun arbet un neyt,*
> *ir ale, vos zenen tsezeyt un tseshpreyt,*
> *tsuzamen, tsuzamen di fon iz greyt –*
> *zi flatert fun tsorn, fun blut iz zi reyt."*[121]

[120] Frankel 137 and 456 n1.

[121] An-sky (1922) 115-116 ("'Brothers, follow me! Into the street!' For a while the crowd was in a tumult. The most energetic and hot-headed among them pushed their way through to the front. The youth all also quickly and energetically pushed their way through. And all at once a spirited singing broke out in

The song the crowd sings is An-sky's own, "*Di Shvue*" (The Oath), written in 1902 as an anthem for the Bund. Certainly the Bundist crowds were singing this song in 1905, and as Frankel notes: "It must have given An-sky some wry satisfaction to slip into his novella mention of how the words of Di Shvue had rung out over the May Day march of 1905 in the town of N."[122] More than that, the inclusion of the song accomplishes several things. First, it is a moment of heteroglossia in that it reminds the reader (and what reader would not know the anthem of the Bund?) of the author's existence and voice in the "real" world, removing us for a moment from the world of the novella. This is a crucial element of heteroglossia for Bakhtin, which he calls "double-voicedness." Bakhtin claims that novels are the exemplary genre of heteroglossia in that they are always double-voiced, with no voice being identical with that of the historical author; there is a distance between each voice presented and the voice of the writer. Additionally, the fact that there are always multiple voices in the novel (narrators, characters, incorporated genres, etc) suggests for Bakhtin that no one voice or language can be separated out as *the* voice of the novel or its author. These are some of the reasons that novels work so well as diversifying rather than centralizing forces for Bakhtin. In other words, a novella like *In shtrom* is heteroglossic both in its content—by voicing the many sides of the debate over revolutionary violence without advocating for one—as well as its form—because there is no single authorial voice that defines the work. By quoting himself, An-sky reminds us that he is not coexistent with the narrator or any of the characters of the novel, he himself is a voice who may be quoted by them, and the novella as a whole exists only in the polyphony of those many voices. This forces a separation between the narrator of the novella and the author An-sky at the same time that it reminds us of the closeness of the historical moment fictionalized in the novella and the real historical moment that both author and contemporary readership were still living through.[123]

The quotation of "Di Shvue" also performs heteroglossia and *do'ikayt* through a single vowel: the long "a" sound (*tsvey yudn* in Yiddish, transliterated as "ey") in the word "*neyt*," cognate with English "need." In standard Yiddish and in the southern dialects of Yiddish, this word is written with a *vov yud* and pronounced as the diphthong "oy" ("*noyt*"). In the Lithuanian and Belarussian Yiddish that are the dialects of An-sky and the other Yiddish writers discussed in this dissertation, certain occurrences of "oy" in the standard dialect are pronounced "ey."[124] This is important because it is thanks to this dialectal pronunciation that "*neyt*" ("need" or "want") rhymes with "*tseshpreyt*" ("scattered"). Though "Di Shvue" became the anthem of the Bund all around the world, it only rhymes in the native Lithuanian dialect of its author and the region in which the Bund was born. This single vowel then helps to locate the novella, the marchers, the author, and the political movement in the linguistic specificity of *Raysn*.

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hundreds of voices: 'Brothers and sisters in toil and want, / All who are scattered far and wide, / Together, together, the flag is ready – / It waves with rage, with blood is it red.'")

[122] Frankel 149.

[123] Kulbak does something very similar when one of his characters in *Zelmenyaner* quotes his poem "Di Shtot" (The City), which was also a very popular revolutionary anthem. See my chapter on *Zelmenyaner*.

[124] Though not always, when the change occurs harkens back to vowels that used to be long vowels at a point in the language's development, corresponding largely with long vowels in Middle High German. See Alexander Beider's newly published *Origins of Yiddish Dialects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

In these examples from *In shtrom*, I have identified some of the key features of a poetics of *do'ikayt* that I will explore in readings of Kulbak and Kharik later in this dissertation. These are: 1) literary representations of Jewish spaces in the midst of revolutionary transformations that explore both the history and tradition of the spaces within Jewish culture and how they are being changed by modernization and the revolutionary politics of characters. 2) Various forms of multilingualism and dialogism that I explore through the concept of heterglossia, usually serving to represent the heteroglossic nature of the societies being depicted, and thereby helping to locate and represent the literary space geographically, historically, economically, culturally, etc, through the patchwork of languages used (in a Bakhtinian sense). 3) The themes of ambivalence in regard to the political and cultural transformations taking place in society; even when we may know or believe that the historical authors were on the side of the revolutionary or transformative changes taking place, these literary works make room for doubts and questions about the direction and the costs of these revolutions in ways that other more explicitly political genres of the time may not have allowed.

Modernist Poetics of *do'ikayt*

Where An-sky's work differs from writers like Kulbak and Kharik is in the final term in the equation: modernism. While An-sky borders Yiddish modernism in many ways, much of his work and his explicit poetics are not modernist. An-sky's relationship to Yiddish modernism was certainly a work in progress during the last decade of his life. In her biography of An-sky, Safran describes his changing relationship to the journal *Literarishe monatsshriftn* (Literary Monthly) that debuted in Vilna in 1908. The journal, edited by A. Vayter, Shmuel Niger, and Shmarye Gorelik,

> meant to showcase highbrow, experimental, and frankly modernist Yiddish work in the name of a Jewish cultural renaissance based exclusively in Yiddish…its slim format and decision to print belles lettres and literary criticism but no political materials linked it to the new avant-garde journals then coming out in Russian…An-sky knew that he belonged to the generation that Niger, Vayter, and Gorelik were attacking, and he led a public debate in Vilna against the journal, its anti-Russian Yiddishism, and its announcement that literature should serve aesthetic rather than social aims.[125]

Despite this initial disagreement, and An-sky's recognition that for this new generation he was a representative of the "old guard," before the end of 1908 he was inviting many of the same writers who had been involved with *Literarishe monatsshriftn* to contribute to his new Russian language journal, *Evreiskii Mir* (Jewish World). In Safran's words again, "No matter how stridently An-sky had rejected *Literarishe monatsshriftn* in early 1908, when he began working as an editor [on *Evreiskii Mir*] a few months later, he could not dismiss trends as confidently as

[125] Safran 154.

he once had; he recognized that both its writers and its notion of an apolitical literary journal appealed to readers."[126]

An-sky's opposition to this trend of modernism was based largely on two points: the fact that it was apolitical, and the fact that it rejected Russian language publishing as assimilationist. While these were certainly trends of the Yiddish modernist publication An-sky first encountered, it should be clear already that the modernist literature under discussion in this project is both political and open to multilingualism or ideas of transnational modernism.[127] Further, An-sky's work itself is certainly modern and in some cases modernist, meaning that in this case as in others, he is more likely on the bridge between modernism and realism than he is clearly in one territory or the other.

Although An-sky is an early expression of poetic *do'ikayt*, I find the clearest and strongest connection between the politics of *do'ikayt* and a poetics of *do'ikayt* in modernist literature. The connection exists in the emphasis in the modernist works on a cluster of concepts that I have already discussed as characteristic of political *do'ikayt*: the multiple and multi (as in –lingual or –ethnic), the heteroglossic, the kaleidoscopic, the ambivalent, the in-between, the fragmented. While some of these concepts are present in An-sky's novella, especially heteroglossia and ambivalence or in-betweenness, a heteroglossic fragmentation and a kaleidoscopic perspective is an essential aspect of both the form and content of works like *Minsker blotes* and *Zelmenyaner*. By identifying a modernist poetics of *do'ikayt* we can both better understand the presence of heteroglossia and this cluster of ideas in political *do'ikayt*—how a political belief in the validity of Jewish life in diaspora must have multiplicity and divergence at its core—as well as the political nature of so much of Yiddish modernism. Exploring these two realms of *do'ikayt* shows their interconnectedness—as we have seen in An-sky's work—and changes the understanding of political *do'ikayt* as well as that of literary *do'ikayt*. As in the work of Chana Kronfeld and others of her students, this understanding of the politics of a marginal modernism reflects as well the ways that theories of Anglo-modernism fall short in describing and representing modernist trends in other languages and cultures, and why we must theorize from the reality of cultural production, rather than attempting to impose ill-fitting theories on those cultural productions.

Kronfeld's work is foundational for this project in several ways. *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* is of course an important and useful model for reading Yiddish modernism, but equally important for my work are the structures Kronfeld offers for thinking about literary trends—which is itself an essential aspect of her work's approach to modernism. Kronfeld offers the concept of a literary trend as a useful, "fuzzy" middle term on the continuum running from periodization to typology to describe groupings of literature:

> One of the main thrusts of the research in historical poetics in recent years has been to emphasize that intraliterary criteria should apply to periodization as well as to typology

[126] Safran 155.

[127] This is taking the anti-Russianness of *Literarishe monatsshritn* as attempting to assert a kind of Yiddish nationalism or chauvinism, rather than a more internationally orientated modernism that is aware of itself as part of modernist trends that cross language barriers—which most Yiddish modernism was.

> and, concomitantly, that literary styles cannot claim to be free of extraliterary periodological determinants. The same goes for the other attributes so one-sidedly associated with each pole: dynamic vs. static, diachronic vs. synchronic, heterogeneous vs. homogeneous. Critiques of "pure" periodization often point to the differences of "style" within a period, while critiques of the classical genre model emphasize the historicity and variability of all literary typologies. Increasingly, literary trends and movements are invoked as evidence of the typological facets of periodization and the periodological facets of literary types.[128]

Speaking of a literary trend allows us to speak both about the extraliterary categories (chronological, geographic, etc) that play a role in our organization of literary groupings, as well as the intraliterary categories (stylistics, genre, etc). Further, Kronfeld proposes that in thinking of modernism as a literary trend, we need neither resort to the extremes of an extensional definition (a definition that is little more than a list of everything we want to call modernism, or everything in a time period) nor of an intensional definition (that attempts to create "a list of necessary and sufficient conditions for all modernist trends").[129] Rather, she suggests Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblance," in which there are many common or shared attributes across a group, but no one attribute that need be shared by all members of the group.[130] Not only do I agree with this framework for understanding modernism, but as should be clear by now, it is the framework I use to describe *do'ikayt* as a political and cultural concept and the framework I use to explore a modernist poetics of *do'ikayt*. As we have seen, *do'ikayt* is not the same thing for the Bundists and the members of *Landkentenish*, nor for contemporary scholars. Rather than offering my own prescriptive definition of *do'ikayt*, I have suggested seeing it as a concept with fuzzy borders, within which I have my own preferred emphases.

In addition to using Kronfeld's framework for literary trends, I see my argument here as engaging with her project of reading minor modernisms, in this case in Yiddish, as literature with the power to decenter—be the center "major" literatures or reactionary politics. I have tended to use Bakhtin's terminology of centrifugal and diversifying forces in my discussions. I am interested, however, in thinking about literary *do'ikayt* as offering a complication to or a rethinking of the implications in Kronfeld's discussion of Yiddish modernism as a deterritorialized literature. Kronfeld writes:

> Both Hebrew and Yiddish modernisms remained, to a large extent, deterritorialized expressive systems and not only during the first quarter of this century, before the center of Hebrew literature moved to Palestine. Yiddish, which never had a territory, reveals all the linguistic marks of a deterritorialized language, marks which Deleuze and Guattari, following Vidal Sephiha, call "tensors" (1986:22). As the proverbial landless language (its writers joke bitterly about imaginary trips to "yiddishland"), Yiddish became an ideal vehicle for international radical experimentation with modernism… From about 1910 on, and especially during the years between the two world wars, Yiddish poets, writers, and dramaturgs created some of the most innovative modernist writing in Europe—

[128] Chana Kronfeld. *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, p. 39.
[129] Kronfeld 26.
[130] Kronfeld 28-9.

> impressionist, futurist, expressionist—in groups that clustered around literary magazines like *Albatros, Khalyastre* (the gang), *Ringen* (rings), *Milgroym* (pomegranate). In the movement's perpetually shifting centers, Berlin and Warsaw, Kiev and Moscow, the Yiddish modernists participated in a critique of major European culture launched from the deterritorialized linguistic, cultural, and often political margins. In the period immediately after World War I, at least nineteen Yiddish-language journals and periodicals were published in Berlin alone (Alt, 1987). It is perhaps not accidental that Deleuze and Guattari's model reveals the greatest anxiety (conveyed by them ventriloquistically through Kafka's own anxiety, 1986:25) about Yiddish, for Yiddish modernism is the ultimate counter example to their exclusive association of deterritorialization with minor/modernist writing in a major language.

While I certainly do not disagree with any of the above description of Yiddish modernism or its radical, decentering power, I want to pause on a few phrases used here. In a certain light, this project's inspiration lies in asking, what does it mean to say "Yiddish, which never had a territory…" or "As the proverbial landless language, Yiddish…"?

If "never had a territory" and "landless language" refer to the fact that Yiddish was never the language of a nation state, they are of course true statements. The location of the two works explored in depth in the following chapters, however, is a Socialist Republic during and immediately after a span of a few brief years during which Yiddish was one of that state's four official languages. In the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic during the 1920s, Yiddish was in fact a state language.[131] The brevity of this change of stature, along with the many difficulties people faced when actually trying to use Yiddish for official state purposes, might reaffirm Yiddish's reputation as a language more experienced on the margins rather than in the center of state power, and yet we should not minimize the profound effect that this elevation or centering had on Yiddishists—in Soviet Belarus, Moyshe Kulbak was employed in the Yiddish section of a State Institute of Culture; nowhere else in the world was that possible.

But beyond these questions of legal or state status, more interesting to me and more important to the idea of *do'ikayt* are Yiddish's relationships to land and territory outside of these official categories. In the opinion of the Bundists, in the work of *Landkentenish*, and in the lexicons, language use, and culture of many Yiddish speakers, the language was not deterritorialized, it was of a place and it could be about the language's connection to a place—albeit not in the way that major or state languages are "of a place." That is certainly Avrom Reyzn's argument in the poem "*Mayn Heym*" discussed in the Preface. The question is: must Yiddish (or Yiddish writers) be "landless" or "territory-less" in order to create a radically decentering literature? Or can, in fact, the claim of a relationship to territory also be radically decentering if it comes from a nonexclusive, antinationalist, internationalist, or otherwise revolutionary perspective? Or indeed, in the Jewish case, if the territory claimed as home is supposed to be a place of exile?

[131] See Bemporad ch. 4, "Soviet Minsk: The Capital of Yiddish." While thinking about the marginal cases in which Yiddish has attained official status, it is worth also recalling the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan in the Soviet Union, as well as Yiddish's recognition as a minority language of Sweden since 1999 and its inclusion in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages adopted in 1992.

Kronfeld's work on marginal modernisms has been taken up and taken in new directions by several other scholars, and this project is in dialogue with their work as well. In *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century*, I see a parallel between the way Allison Schachter uses "diasporic" to modify "modernism" and the way I am using "*do'ikayt*." And yet, while our projects cover similar ground, so to speak, the emphases and analytical perspectives suggested by the two frames move in different directions. Schachter's focus is on the mobility of Jewish writers and their audiences in the twentieth century (for economic, political, and social reasons, most of them not by choice), and what she terms "the nonterritorial relationship between Jewish-language writers and their audiences":

> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, approximately two million Jews left the Pale of Settlement and the Polish territories of the Russian empire, fleeing poverty, pogroms, civil war, and revolution. Among them were many of the period's prominent Hebrew and Yiddish authors. In the late nineteenth century, this was a literature largely rooted in the imagined space of the Jewish shtetl. Following the breakdown of both the multilingual and multiethnic Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, Hebrew and Yiddish writers could no longer be certain of a shared territorial context, a clearly defined and locatable audience, or even the future survival of their literary languages. By the first two decades of the twentieth century, many Eastern European Jewish authors immigrated to the urban centers of Europe and the Americas, as well as the Jewish settlements of Ottoman and, later, British-controlled Palestine. Writers moved between languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, and the various languages of their new homes) and identities. For Raymond Williams, such historical and cultural conditions are precisely what gave rise to modernism and its heretical doubts about language's presumed fidelity to the referential world. Williams contends that modernism develops when writers move to the metropolitan center and come to view language more as "a medium that could be shaped and reshaped—than as a social custom." However, for Jewish writers working in languages that had no fixed territorial home, these particularly modernist concerns about language were amplified by the tenuous relationship between a nascent literary culture and its displaced community of readers.[132]

I do not dispute this characterization of the ruptures in Jewish life in the early twentieth century, or the possible effects of those ruptures on Yiddish writers and readers, or the clear connections between the many upheavals and transformations of society occurring in Europe at the time and modernism. Further, Schachter and I are interested in some of the same formal markers of Yiddish modernism, such as fragmentation and double-voicedness.[133] But in all of these things, my interest in the concept of *do'ikayt* focuses—not surprisingly—on different aspects of the situation of Yiddish modernism. Rather than focusing on movement, mobility, or dislocation, I am interested in the places Yiddish writers and readers were moving from, to, and through, and the relationships to those places that are depicted in the literature and culture. Kulbak moved from the small town of Smorgon to the provincial city of Minsk, to the Jewish cultural capital of

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[132] Allison Schachter. *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literautre in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 9-10.

[133] Schachter 10. Schachter's readings focus on framing devices, which is not of particular relevance to my readings except in as much as it is one example of heteroglossia, of introducing multiple and diverging "languages" or "voices" into prose.

Wilno (Vilnius) and the briefly political capital of Kaunas, to the Bohemian capital of Berlin and then back again to Vilnius and Minsk. We might see his life and work as exemplary of Schachter's thesis about mobility and nonterritorial relationships to writing and audience. But in fact—or when looked at differently—his body of work is one full of places, their history, and the connection between Yiddish culture and those places. Smorgon is the setting of the poem "Asore Dibraye," "Vilne" is one of Kulbak's masterpieces, the decadence of Berlin is the subject of "Disner Tshayld Harold," and Minsk is of course the setting of *Zelmenayner*. I argue that it is important to distinguish between a nonterritorial literature—which does not describe the trend of writing I am interested in—and a nonterritorialist literature, which is an apt description. While it is true that exclusive claims to territory and romantic and uncomplicated relationships toward the idea of "home" are largely absent from the literature, this project demonstrates that in fact we can explore Yiddish literature's perspectives on the ruptures, transformations, and revolutions of society *through* its relationship to place, not only through a lack.

Finally, in regards to the Raymond Williams quotation which ends the above excerpt (that modernism develops when writers view language more as "a medium that could be shaped and reshaped—than as a social custom"), I would argue again that it is not necessarily because of their "nonterritorial languages" that Jewish writers were in a position to question "language's presumed fidelity to the referential world," nor is this necessarily a feature of modernity for Jews—Jews did not have to move to "new" homes to encounter and live in multiple languages. Rather these are (at least additionally) features of life in the multiethnic societies and given the economic and social position of Jews in the trading economies of Europe for hundreds of years. Writers and cultural producers like Bakhtin, Zhitlowsky, An-sky, and Marc Chagall who lived in the multilingual, multiethnic provincial city of Vitebsk on the border of the Pale of Settlement and Russia proper grew up surrounded by languages that were "medium[s] that could be shaped and reshaped," though each of those languages had been used in that place for generations. This is a reminder that the experience of a monolingual state, as is more common in Western Europe than Central and Eastern, is a privileged rather than a "normal" condition, while multilingual states are the norm for many other places, and for marginalized peoples living in perceived monolingual societies. This is an important example of how reading and theorizing Yiddish modernism gives us the opportunity not only to consider the different processes of modernity and modernism outside of Western centers, but also to recognize that within those centers, there are margins experiencing modernity and creating modernism in decentering ways.

Another recent work on Yiddish modernism with which my project is in dialogue is Jordan Finkin's book, *An Inch or Two of Time: Time and Space in Jewish Modernisms.* Finkin identifies a category of metaphors in Yiddish and Hebrew modernisms, in which time and space are used to represent one another: "the metaphorical interconnection of time and space in Hebrew and Yiddish modernist verse."[134] Identifying and exploring these examples of "spatiotemporality," as he calls it, offers insight not only into the literature, but into the changing experiences of space and time for Jews in modernity, of perception and ideas of self, of nation, history, and the narratives that construct all these things. "Modern writers used the linguistic intuition" of representing time via images of space and vice versa,

[134] Jordan Finkin. *An Inch or Two of Time: Time and Space in Jewish Modernisms.* University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015, p. 3.

> in order to come to terms with the radical changes of the modern world with which they were confronted, including rampant accelerations in urbanization, industrialization, democratization, communication, transportation, privatization, secularization; revolutions in politics, science, technology, warfare; new conceptualizations of the individual, the community, the nation; etc., etc. The ability to create time out of space and space out of time is a complicated expression of a creative power to impose a kind of order on a world spinning dizzyingly out of control. There are those who maintain that a language, its grammar, structure, and categories, determines how we understand and make sense of the world (the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis). A modernist would say, however, that not only does language itself form the world, but we deform the world through language. This is language's power.[135]

In the terms I have been using, we might also speak of language's power to center or decenter the world, or its power to diversify as well as unify. Finkin's work is in some aspects more focused and in some aspects broader than my own, or in other words there are areas of our projects that are quite complementary, and certainly areas that pursue different interests and connections. I am convinced that "spatiotemporality" is a significant feature of the spatial poetics I explore, while my project is more interested in understanding these poetics in their contemporary political and social contexts than in the theoretical and philosophical contexts which frame Finkin's work.

The closest connections in our work come in Finkin's discussion of "homelandscapes."[136] These connections begin with the writers Finkin discusses, including Kulbak, Peretz Markish, another of the most prominent Soviet Yiddish writers, and Leyb Naydus, another native of *Raysn* whose work I believe, especially after reading Finkin, can be looked at in the framework of *do'ikayt*. While focusing mostly on *shtetlekh* and ideas of "home"—neither of which are categories I want to limit my readings to—Finkin "present[s] these places' poetic representations not as self-contained microcosms nor as shards of a shattered world, but rather as creative spaces of their own, able to offer a both critical and constructive understanding of 'home.'"[137] The emphasis on reading literary representations of places as "creative spaces" that can be both "critical and constructive" has much in common with the poetics of *do'ikayt*, in which the literary representation of a place is complex not only because of its engagement with historical specificity, but also for a critical engagement with the world as it is or was and a constructive engagement with the world as it could be. It is also clear even from this brief comparison that my interest in Finkin's argument exists in a more political context than his argument is broadly concerned with. Finkin's use of Naydus as an example is a demonstration of this, as Naydus certainly did not have the political profile of the writers I discuss.[138] Nevertheless, the intersections of a poetics of *do'ikayt* and Finkin's homelandscapes is apparent in his discussion of Naydus.

Finkin reads in Naydus' poetry a positive attitude toward the character type of the wanderer and wandering as a state of being. Rather than the wanderer representing exile or

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[135] Finkin 5.
[136] Finkin, ch. 2 "'Heymen un Reymen': Homelandscapes, Shtetlekh, and Other Creative Spaces"
[137] Finkin 45.
[138] Though as Finkin points out, his apolitical reputation is not wholly deserved.

diaspora in negative terms, for Naydus, wanderingness is "a bridge to homelandscape." His poetry presents pastorals of the Lithuanian landscape, which can serve to represent the diasporic connectedness of "Jewishness to non-Jewishness," in the words of the critic Naftoli Vaynig, quoted by Finkin.[139] Through his wandering narrators' descriptions of their homelandscapes, "the vocabulary of wandering can itself be, paradoxically, the vocabulary of home."[140] One of the textual examples Finkin explores will recall an example from An-sky discussed earlier in this chapter: the use of dialectal rhymes. Finkin discusses a line from a short untitled lyric: "And I have homes more than spaces, more than the dreams in my soul." In Yiddish: "hob ikh heymen mer vi reymen, mer vi treymen in mayn zel." In Finkin's analysis:

> Naydus emphasizes the home-like nature of each of the stations of his wandering: "I have homes more than spaces" (*hob ikh heymen mer vi reymen*). This curious plural turns space into something scarcer than these many homes and therefore into a more precious commodity. Indeed, by the last element of this powerful dialectal rhyme, *heymen—reymen—treymen* (homes—spaces—dreams), Naydus effectively spiritualizes the very notion of home and space. That spiritualization then allows the power of the crux of the poem, namely the spatialization of time: "Every day a new threshold."…Each day is its own new creative reality, indeed a new home.[141]

While this line and the poem it comes from seem not to offer much in the way of specific location or place, in fact its locatedness exists in the very rhyme Finkin discusses: in standard Yiddish and in other dialects, the word for space used here is "*roym*," with a plural "*roymen*," but in Naydus' dialect (which is the same as An-sky's, indeed, this is the same feature of the dialect discussed in the An-sky example earlier), it is pronounced "*reym*" and "*reymen*." The same goes for dream: "*troym, troymen*" in standard Yiddish and "*treym, treymen*" in Naydus' dialect. At the same time that the content of the poem suggests its speaker is home in every "here," its rhyming form suggests the linguistic "home turf" of the poem—perhaps emphasizing the point of this line, that the speaker feels at home beyond those "spaces" delimited by his dialect. This is a *do'ikayt*, then, that formally represents the specific geographies of Yiddish in order to make a point that "home" need not be territorially limited by origin or language, but can exist wherever "*do*" is. Finkin concludes the chapter on homelandscapes with this thought:

> This literary diasporism—the attenuation of mythic bonds to the idea of a never-experienced place as home in favor of other models of intimate connection to place—is a richer seam in Jewish letters than has generally been credited, and one which can only serve to enhance our picture of the complicated relationships between Jewish literature and the image of home so fraught in these pages.[142]

It's my hope that this dissertation offers a few more examples and frameworks for exploring the "rich seam" Finking identifies.

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[139] Finkin 73.
[140] Finkin 73.
[141] Finkin 75.
[142] Finkin 92.

Finally, I'd like to mention one recent work in the field of Modernist Studies outside of studies of Yiddish (and Hebrew) modernism with which I see this project in dialogue. Jessica Berman's *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* is an attempt to complicate the long accepted wisdom in the field of Anglo-modernism that modernist literature and committed literature are separate categories. Through engagement with Postcolonial Studies and approaches similar to those Kronfeld advocates (though coming from different sources),[143] Berman reexamines canonical figures of Anglo-modernism in comparison with marginal English language modernists from India, the Spanish-Mexican writer Max Aub, and Jack Conroy and Meridel Le Sueur from the United States. It's an interesting reminder of just how different the terrain of Yiddish modernism is from Anglo-Modernism that Berman has to assert in her introduction:

> Symbolism and anarchism grew up together; manifestos of futurism or vorticism are manifestos of both aesthetic and political movements; feminism operates in the political and aesthetic domains at once. Yet the codification and canonization of modernism at midcentury erased the political allegiances of modernism, and its ultimate commercial success brought it safely into the fold of dominant culture.[144]

These—except for the bit about commercial success—are the starting points for discussions of Yiddish modernism. Despite the different pathways to these approaches to modernism, and the recognition of just how different the situations of different modernisms are, Berman's reading of modernism as "redescribing" the world and positing "as if"s resonate with my own work. She writes:

> Our imaginative narratives, whether in the form of memoir, reportage, fiction, or essay, create what Paul Ricoeur calls a realm of "as if," where the world can be both described and redescribed and where new possible worlds make ethical and political claims upon our understanding of this one. When the imaginative re-creation of the world takes place within the narrative web of human situations and relationships, narrative engages with politics and the possibilities of future justice.[145]

While Berman is likely referring to a more general idea of "describing the world" than I am discussing, if taken narrowly, "describing and redescribing" in the sense of rewriting and reimagining place evokes the idea of *do'ikayt* being both about engagement with the "here and now" and working toward "a different here, a different now."

Berman relates the idea of "redescription" more specifically to modernism by proposing that "redescription" does not mean only an imagining of a different world, but also that it be

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[143] For example, Berman rejects "nominal" definitions of modernism and advocates instead for understanding modernist narrative as a "constellation of rhetorical actions, attitudes, or aesthetic occasions, motivated by the particular and varied situations of economic, social, and cultural modernity worldwide and shaped by the ethical and political demands of those situations." Jessica Berman *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 7.
[144] Berman 26.
[145] Berman 7.

understood in formal terms to mean also a break with verisimilitude and accepted literary modes of "mimetic realism":

> The moments where a modernist text foregrounds its technique or steps out of a mimetic mode become the moments of tacit critique and opposition to the status quo. These moments are not unlike what I have been calling "redescription"—places where the text casts a new vision of the world or intervenes in its unfolding in a manner that resists or revises social reality…this redescription need not be bound to a wishful verisimilitude or a utopian version of a realistic future. Rather, the disruption of mimetic realism is precisely where the possibility of redescription emerges, and moments of linguistic or textual nontransparency open up the text not just away from reality but toward critique.[146]

The imaginary and political force of modernist form will be a major point in my discussions of Kulbak and Kharik in the chapters that follow; the moments when their works remind us that they are not mimetic wholes, presenting the reality of the city of Minsk, or a political argument about the future of that city. Rather, they repeatedly draw attention to themselves as works of literature, as fragmentary representations of a fragmentary reality. In doing so, they simultaneously offer glimpses of the spatial and historical moment of Jewish life in the midst of revolution, critiques and doubts about that moment, and hope for what can be built *here* with the help of critical cultural engagement.

Having finally put together the three pieces of this concept, the modernist poetics of *do'ikayt*, the next chapters will offer what I hope will be the more compelling demonstration of the trend through close readings of Kharik and Kulbak's work. In those chapters I will continue to provide historical context for the political concept of *do'ikayt* in the specific example of revolutionary Minsk, as well as other critical and theoretical sources, especially in further discussion of Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia. And of course, the best models of what this modernist poetic practice can look like in the discussion of Kharik's *Minsker Blotes* and Kulbak's *Zelmenayner*.

[146] Berman 25.

Soviet monuments in a central square in Vitebsk, An-sky and Zhitlowsky's hometown (2015).

Ch. 2 "A Greeting to You from the Mud!" Izi Kharik's poetics of *Do'ikayt*

Kharik and Minsk

In 1924, having just recently moved to Moscow from Minsk, Izi Kharik joined the executive board of the Moscow Circle of Jewish Writers and Artists, a sure sign that he was "making it" as one of the most talented young Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union.[147] It was also the year that he wrote and published parts of *Minsker Blotes* (Minsk Mud), a poema[148] about the revolutionary experience of the poorest Jewish neighborhood in Minsk and its "Everyman" revolutionary hero, a young Jew named Pinye. Izi Kharik (1898-1937) grew up in and around Minsk, then spent two years in Moscow, establishing his status as a prominent Soviet Yiddish writer, before returning to Minsk for the balance of his life. As David Shneer describes it, Kharik decided to return to Minsk to become the "big fish in the little pond" back in his hometown, in his own provincial Belarus, rather than starting out as a little fish again in the new environment of Leningrad.[149] He was considered a "second generation" writer, having begun his career in the post-revolutionary period. Shmuel Agursky, a prominent member of the Belarusian Institute for Proletarian Jewish Culture, celebrated this in a 1935 volume commemorating Kharik's 15-year anniversary as a writer, calling him "*eyner fun undzere ershte proletarisher dikhter*."[150] 1926 saw the publication of Kharik's first major collection of poetry, *Af der erd* ("On the Earth" or perhaps "On Home Soil"), which received major and laudatory reviews in the Soviet Yiddish press. Critics praised Kharik for "rehabilitat[ing] simple poetic language and the language of real human interactions"[151] and for his deep connection with the revolutionary masses, the land, and with the new Socialist Belarus. The important Soviet Yiddish critic Meir Wiener called Kharik an

> *emesdiker zinger funem sotsyalistishn vaysrusland. Er konkretizirt zayne sotsyalistishe gedanken un gefiln in dikhterishe bilder geshepte fun vaysrusland…fun di dortike arbeter un poyerim, horefashnikes un oremshaft, vaysrusishe un yidishe, fun der kegnvart in vaysrusland un…oykh fun der historisher fargangenhayt*.[152]

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[147] For biographical information on Kharik see David Shneer. "Becoming Revolutionary: Izi Kharik and the Question of Aesthetics, Politics and Ideology." *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture: 1918-1930*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[148] A poema is a long form narrative poem, a popular genre in Russian literature and, from Russian models, in modern Hebrew literature.

[149] Shneer 181.

[150] Shmuel Agursky. "Eyner fun di ershte." *Izi Kharik: tsu zayn 15-yorikn dikhterishn veg.* Farlag fun der visnshaft-akademie fun USSR, 1936, p. 20 ("one of our first proletarian poets." All translations from Yiddish sources are my own unless otherwise noted).

[151] quoted in Shneer 181.

[152] Meir Weiner. "*Tsu Izi Khariks yubiley*," *Izi Kharik: tsu zayn 15-yorikn dikhterishn veg.* Farlag fun der visnshaft-akademie fun USSR, 1936, pp. 69-70 ("true singer of socialist Belarus. His socialist thoughts and feelings are realized in poetic images taken from Belarus…from the local workers and farmers, from

Wiener's praise celebrates the idea of "territorialization," an aspect of the Soviet national policy practiced in the 1920s and into the early 1930s, which supported the development of previously oppressed national cultures like Belarusian and Yiddish.[153] Thus, by emphasizing both Kharik's ties to Soviet Belarus and how his work is "grounded" in Belarus, Wiener both praises Kharik and adds another brick to the foundations of Soviet Yiddish culture.

Kharik became one of the luminaries for the revolutionary Jewish population of the city. Elissa Bemporad writes in her book *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk*:

> In the second half of the 1930s, literary evenings and cultural events celebrating Kharik and his work were organized in factories, middle schools, and institutions of higher learning, with wall-newspapers, concerts, and radio programs dedicated to him…The Kharik cult was so widespread that when his new poem 'Af a fremder khasene' (At a strange wedding)—about the adventures of a Minsk jester, or *badkhn*—appeared in late 1936, young Jews across the city learned it by heart, in its musical version.[154]

But it was not just hometown pride that made Kharik's poetry so popular in Minsk. Minsk had been a hotbed of modern Jewish politics since the very first organized labor strikes of Jewish workers in the Czarist Empire in the 1880s. In 1897, the year the Bund was founded, more than 1000 Jewish workers in Minsk were already members of illegal trade unions, a number second only to Vilna.[155] It remained a major site for the Bund as well as Labor Zionist movements until the revolutionary era, as well as for the broader Socialist movement. It was in Minsk in 1898 that the RSDLP held its founding congress, at the site of the Bund's Central Committee.[156] As Bemporad notes, Minsk was both typical and unique as a Jewish city in the former Pale of Jewish Settlement. It was unique in that it became the capital of one of the newly founded Soviet Republics, with the concentration of political, cultural and educational resources that entailed. But it was typical of the towns and cities of the former Pale in that it was, in terms of population (and perhaps economically as well), a Jewish city.[157] During the interwar period, Minsk remained between 30-43% Jewish, while before World War One, Jews had constituted the majority of the city's population.[158] In the nineteenth century there were hundreds of Jewish merchants, members of the merchants' guilds, in Minsk. Towards the end of the century almost 90% of the city's merchants were Jewish. Minsk was the center for the lumber trade in the

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the toilers and the poor, Belarusian and Jewish, about the present in Belarus and…also about the historical past.")

[153] The Russian term is "korenizatsiya." On the policy of territorialization in Soviet Belarus, see Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013, pp. 103-08.

[154] Bemporad 188-9.

[155] Bemporad 52. These underground trade unions were among the organizations that formed the Bund that year.

[156] Bemporad 22.

[157] Bemporad 5.

[158] "In 1897, 47,562 Jews lived in Minsk, or 52.3 percent of the city population; in 1923, the Jews numbered 48,312 and made up for 43.6 percent of the city population; in 1926, they amounted to 53,686, or 41 percent. In 1939, 71,000 Jews lived in Minsk, or 30 percent of the total population. In June 1941, on the eve of the German invasion, with the influx of refugees from Poland, the Jewish city population had grown to 100,000." Bemporad 218.

province, which was a major industry for the area, and several of the largest factories in this industrial city were owned by Jews, including glass and tobacco factories, a brewery, and several typographies.[159] These are statistics worth bearing in mind when reading about young Pinye's resentment toward the city's merchants, shop owners, and wealthy residents in *Minsker Blotes*, and the threats made against them in revolutionary decrees in the second half of the poema.

Among the many changes to life in general and Jewish life specifically in Minsk brought about by World War One and the Russian Revolution was a major change in the Jewish geography of historical Jewish *Lite*.[160] The newly drawn (and hotly contested) borders between Soviet Belarus and her new neighbor, the Republic of Poland, suddenly cut Minsk off from other territories that had formerly been part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In Jewish geography, Minsk had always orbited the intellectual and cultural capital of Vilna (today Vilnius), which lies about 100 miles to the northwest and was the historical capital of the Grand Duchy. Vilna's fate was as—if not more—contested than that of Minsk. In the period between 1917-1920 (when Vilna and Minsk were both periodically occupied by Polish forces), war separated Minsk from the center it had previously orbited, to be followed by the political border with Poland until 1939.[161] This forced independence gave Minsk both the opportunity and the need to become its own center for Jewish life, albeit in the new rubric of the socialist state.[162] Since this new rubric sought to undo religious and nationalist forms of identity, Yiddish became the organizing feature (at least publically) of Jewish life.[163] Soviet Minsk became a major center for Yiddish cultural and scholarly work with the support of the Soviet state, until the mid-1930s. To give just a few examples: "Yidkentnish" (a Soviet style contraction of *Yidn* or *Yiddish* with *kentnish*, meaning knowledge of or familiarity with, Bemporad calls it "Local Jewish Studies") became a mandatory subject at the Belorussian State University in 1924.[164] Also in 1924 the Jewish section of Inbelkult (The Institute for Belorussian Culture) was upgraded from a section to a full department, while Polish and Russian remained only sections of the Institute.[165] And in 1928 that same Jewish department became an independent Institute for Proletarian Jewish Culture, with Moyshe Kulbak as its director.[166] In different ways, both Kharik's *Minsker Blotes* and Kulbak's *Zelmenyaner* depict the magnitude of change experienced by Minsk's Jews in this period, in which Jews born in the 1850s would have been born in a provincial capital with less than 20,000 thousand residents total, while their children might have been members of underground labor

[159] Bemporad 14.
[160] Yiddish for Lithuania, the territory of Jewish *Lite* roughly corresponds with the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania before the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and identifies communities of Jews who shared dialectal features of Yiddish and a misnagdic (anti-Hasidic) religious tradition among other cultural similarities.
[161] The Polish-Soviet war raged in the territories west of Minsk, and involved the city itself, which was occupied by Polish forces twice from August 1919 to July 1920 and again from October 1920 to March 1921. This fighting and the contested claims to Minsk arise in the Second Part of *Minsker Blotes*, discussed later in this chapter.
[162] Bemporad 50 and 67.
[163] Since Hebrew was associated both with religion and with Zionism. However, Bemporad argues throughout her book that religious identities, Hebrew culture, and forms of Zionism persisted in the Jewish community of Minsk into the Soviet period.
[164] Bemporad 99.
[165] Bemporad 101.
[166] Bemporad 103.

unions in a burgeoning industrial city of 100,000, and their grandchildren residents of a revolutionary capital, perhaps even Red Army soldiers.

Bemporad provides an excellent history of the political activity of Minsk Jews before the Russian Revolution, exploring how the various legacies of Jewish life in the city informed the specific process and meaning of Sovietization in that city. Bemporad writes that Minsk was

> a stronghold for the activities of Jewish radical groups and played a pioneering role in spreading Socialism through the region…During 1903-5 Minsk became [therefore] a prominent site of political demonstrations, meetings in synagogues, protests against the wave of anti-Jewish pogroms, arrests, strikes in factories, and terrorist assaults on local authorities. This opposition movement was largely coordinated by the Bund.[167]

Bemporad devotes an entire chapter, in fact, to demonstrating that given the overwhelming strength of the Bund in Minsk, the Bolsheviks cooperated with Bundists and former Bundists there to a much greater degree than perhaps anywhere else. Bundist publications and workers' clubs were allowed to continue (though under new Bolshevik names), and in many ways the Minsk *Evsektsiia* (Jewish section of the Communist Party) was a continuation of the local Bund in its members, leadership, and in its activities. Starting in the mid-1920s, however, the Communist Party attempted to crack down on what it saw as the dangerous "idealization of the Bund" in Minsk.[168] The Communist Party considered the Bund a counterrevolutionary party, because of its break with the Bolsheviks in 1917 and because, as a Jewish party, the CP identified it with bourgeois nationalism.[169] The accusations against former Bundists and the attempts to eradicate the positive legacy of the Bund in Minsk continued into the 1930s, when Party support for national cultures in general waned and sections such as the *Evsektsiia* were liquidated, culminating in the purges of intellectuals and cultural leaders as part of Stalin's "Great Terror" of the late 1930s, of which Kharik was also a victim.

But the legacy of Bundist thought (and other non-Bolshevik revolutionary Jewish movements) marked many aspects of Soviet Belarus through the 1920s and into the 1930s, including in the idea and policy of "territorialization," in many ways synonymous with *do'ikayt*. Part of the project of building Soviet Belarus was developing the identity of Belarus as a republic, despite its never having been a political state or even province before the founding of

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[167] Bemporad 22.
[168] Bemporad 77.
[169] By the 1930s, Kharik appears to have agreed about the threat of Bundism, at least publicly. Bemporad quotes a statement by Kharik made at a meeting of the party members of the editorial board of the journal *Oktyabr* in 1933: "There are party members, even devoted ones, who still talk, to this day, about the Bund with enthusiasm…to them the counterrevolutionary nature of the Bund is still unclear." (79) I would note, however, the late date of this statement, when the Party's position on the Bund was quite clear. Kharik joined the party in 1930. There is one mention of the Bund in *Minsker Blotes*, in poem 3, describing Pinye's youth: "What does a youth from warped alleyways know/ Except fearsome stories about the 'Bund'?" Interestingly, this stanza is omitted in the 1970 Soviet edition of Kharik's selected works (after his posthumous rehabilitation), *Mit layb un lebn*.

the BSSR.[170] Rather it was a region where peasants spoke a dialect or version of Russian now called Belarusian. The policy of Belarusian "territorialization" was especially important to the large Jewish population of the BSSR in that it emphasized "not a national-personal culture, but a national-territorial one, that is, not a culture of Belorussians as a people isolated in themselves but a culture of Belorussians as citizens living in the given territory."[171] In other words, much like Vladimir Medem's concept of a "state of nationalities," the BSSR and its national culture included all peoples or nationalities living in the Republic equally, not only or primarily the culture of ethnic Belarusians. For Yiddish scholars and cultural producers in Soviet Belarus, "territorialization" built on practices earlier propounded by cultural nationalists like Shimon Dubnow, including calls to research and collect (*zamlen*) the local history of Jewish life.[172]

Izi Kharik participated directly in the work of building a sense of Belarusian Jewish identity by co-editing a Yiddish literary anthology in 1935, entitled *Sovetishe Vaysrusland* (Soviet Belarus). He and his co-editor, Yashe Bronshteyn, write in the forward:

> *Es iz shoyn nisht eynmol bashtetikt gevorn: di yidishe sovetishe literatur vakst vi an eygnvaytlekhe alfarbandishe yidishe sovetishe literatur…Ober me ken nit un me tor nit farbaygeyn dem fakt, az di yidishe sovetishe literatur, in yeder republik bazunder, trogt arayn ir spetsifik, ir ortikn republikanishn eygnart in der yidisher sovetisher literatur fun farband. Dos hot bazunders a shaykhes tsu der yidisher literatur fun vaysrusland un ukrayine, vu in a meshekh fun doyres, lebn kompakte yidishe horepashne masn in briderlekhn tsuzamenlebn mit nit yidishe horepashnikes. Di yidishe sovetishe literatur fun vaysrusland trogt arayn in der alfarbandisher yiddisher sovetisher literatur dem gerukh fun vaysruslands peyzazh, dem gezang fun vaysrusisher folks-lid, dem eygnart fun sotsyalistisher boyung in vaysrusland, di geshtalt fun vaysrusishn horepashnik in zayn kultur-farbriderung mitn yidishn vorepashnik…Der zamlbukh "sovetishe vaysrusland"…iz tsunoyfgeshtelt mitn tsil tsu bavayzn vi azoy sovetn-vaysrusland iz kinstlerish farkerpert in undzer literatur.*[173]

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[170] Except for the brief existence of the Belarusian People's Republic, declared in 1918 but replaced with the Communist run BSSR in 1919.

[171] Elye Osherovitsh, quoted in Zvi Gitelman. *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: the Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 397. Note: before the fall of the Soviet Union, "Belorussian" was an accepted spelling, today "Belarusian" is preferred.

[172] See Jeffrey Shandler. "Forsht ayer shtetl!" *Shtetl: A Vernacular Intellectual History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014, pp. 50-92.

[173] Bronshteyn, Kharik. "*Forvort*" to *Sovetishe vaysrusland: literarishe zamlbukh*. Minsk: Melukhe Farlag fun vaysrusland, 1935. ("It has been demonstrated more than once: Soviet Yiddish literature is developing as an authentically union-wide Soviet Yiddish literature…Nevertheless, one cannot and must not pass over the fact that Soviet Yiddish literature, in each separate Republic, brings its own specific, local, unique republican character to the Soviet Yiddish literature of the union. This is especially relevant to the Soviet Yiddish literature of Belarus and Ukraine, where for generations, Jewish toiling masses have lived side by side in brotherly coexistence with non-Jewish toilers. The Soviet Yiddish literature of Belarus brings the scent of the Belarusian landscape, the music of the Belarusian folk song, the distinct form of socialist construction in Belarus, the figure of the Belarusian toiler in his cultural brotherhood with the Jewish toiler to the all-union Soviet Yiddish literature.…This anthology, "Soviet Belarus"…is put together with the goal of demonstrating how Soviet Belarus is artistically embodied in our literature.")

Kharik and Bronshteyn walk a fine line in this short statement: they emphasize the unified nature of Yiddish culture throughout the Soviet Union—which had been and continued to be important to establishing and maintaining the position of Jews as one of the nationalities of the Soviet Union—while also asserting the place of Jews in Soviet Belarus and their deep relationship to that land and culture.[174] The need to emphasize the "local, unique republican character" of Belarus and Ukraine reflects that these were the Soviet Republics in which the vast majority of Soviet Jewry continued to live, as territories that overlapped with much of the former Pale of Settlement, and they therefore featured prominently in efforts to show that Jews were part of the "toiling masses" (*horepashnes* is the word used here) of Soviet citizens. Given the liquidation of the Evsektsia in 1930 (the same year Kharik joined the Communist Party), the case for the value in supporting national cultures remained an ongoing struggle in Soviet policy, which is perhaps another argument being addressed by Kharik and Bronshteyn in this forward. This statement helps to establish that throughout his career (bookmarked for my purposes by the publication of *Minsker Blotes* in 1924 and this anthology in 1935) Kharik remained committed to the idea of "territorialization," or *do'ikayt,* for which Meir Wiener called him "the true singer of Socialist Belarus."

In Kharik's poema, *Minsker Blotes*, the idea of *do'ikayt* manifests in a deep engagement with the character and experience of one poor working Jewish neighborhood of Minsk, immediately before and during the revolution and the ensuing civil war and Polish-Soviet war. *Blote* is an unusual name for a neighborhood, it means "mud puddle" in Yiddish, and also has an idiomatic meaning of "nothing," or "meaningless," as in the expression "*s'iz blote*," meaning "it's nothing," or "*makhn blote*" (literally to make mud of someone or something), which means much the same as the English "to drag through the mud," to vilify someone or something. *Blote* can be used as an interjection in Yiddish, similar to yelling, "nonsense!" or "rubbish!" in English.[175] It would be easy to assume that *Blote* is therefore a poetic name for the neighborhood, symbolic of the low status of its residents, of their meaninglessness in the grander scheme of society—and this is certainly a theme of some of the opening poems of *Minsker Blotes*. It was, however, the actual name used by Yiddish speaking residents for their neighborhood. Nokhum Khanin, a former Bundist who had immigrated to the US in 1912 and returned to visit the Soviet Union in the 1920s, included this powerful description of *Blote* and its residents in the travelogue of his journey, which I quote at length:

> Mariashe lived in "Blote," once the poorest part of the city. There lived the discarded, the poorest of poor people: drivers, haulers, and just common folk without work. No work was too difficult for them, but they never had any work.[176] The Bund arose from "Blote." We used to have our meetings there, in our illegal headquarters. We were sure the simple residents of "Blote" would never betray us. We had our headquarters at Mariashe's place

[174] The status of Jews as a nation among the "family of nations" in what would become the Soviet Union had been deeply contested in the pre-revolutionary period. See Gitelman and Simon Rabinovitch. *Jewish Rights, National Rites: Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia*. Stanford University Press, 2014.

[175] See Solon Beinfeld and Harry Bochner, Eds. In Chief. *Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013, p. 173.

[176] Compare this sentiment to the line from poem 11 of *Minsker Blotes*: "We, – whole alleys of Pinyes / Accustomed to all, and to nothing."

> for a long time…She knew that we were "unkosher" people, but that did not bother her. She used to look out for us as if she had eyes in the back of her head. When I used to leave the Bund's headquarters, Mariashe would collect all the printed papers and hide them so they wouldn't be discovered by anybody. Mariashe never enlisted in the movement, never even attended a meeting, but she related to us with a certain respect. Her heart told her that we were the defenders of "Blote," that we sacrificed ourselves for its poor people. We would eventually make it so that Mariashe would have an easier and better life. When I came to the city where Mariashe lived, I remembered her and went off to find out if she still lived there, if she was still alive. When I came to the house, I found out that Mariashe no longer lived in "Blote," but on the main street in what was formerly one of the richest houses in the city. I went there…When I asked her how she survives, whether she's happy, if she's content, Mariashe said this: "…When we used to live in 'Blote' nobody cared for us…Everybody looked at us residents of 'Blote' with contempt. We were hated. We used to feel ashamed to walk on the city's main street because we were poor. We went around ragged. We're also poor and ragged now, but we can go wherever we want. Nobody is ashamed of us. My children go to school, they're learning. They're being made into decent human beings, educated…Those who used to live on the main streets now live in 'Blote' and they're now hated, like we used to be hated. Now *we're* the ones ashamed of 'Blote.'"[177]

Noteworthy in this description is the fact that not only is *Blote* the commonly accepted name for the neighborhood, it is also used to identify the community. For Khanin and Mariashe both, *Blote* and its residents have a definite character; it communicates something to say that one is from *Blote*, and that something is both negative (in terms of poverty, and shame) and positive (trustworthiness, politicization, and a proletarian nature). This sense that being from *Blote* means something, communicates something, is valuable to take to a reading of *Minsker Blotes*: Kharik's readers in Minsk and likely more broadly in Soviet Belarus—if not beyond—would have heard of *Blote*, the home turf of the Bund. It is interesting as well, in comparison to the poema, that Mariashe herself uses the connotations of the geographical space of *Blote* to represent the social upheaval of the revolution: all of the shame and contempt that she and her children experienced as residents of the *Blote* has been transferred to its new residents: those who used to live on the city's rich main street. This same spatial tension between *Blote* and the High Market area of town is depicted in *Minsker Blotes,* and suggests the engagement of Kharik's poema with the reality of lived experience in *Blote*, it's *do'ikayt*, in other words.[178]

The moment and location of Kharik's poem—Minsk with its more than 300 years of Jewish history, a center of revolutionary socialism, crossing the threshold of revolution—represented in Kharik's political and aesthetic vision are thus a premier example of what I am calling a modernist poetics of *do'ikayt*. As I will discuss in this chapter, *Minsker Blotes* represents and is grounded in the location of Minsk, creating and depicting a dynamic image of the "lived space" of Minsk in its positive associations as "home" and a city of revolutionary Jewish activity, but also as a location of suffering for the poor working Jewish people. As

[177] Nokhum Khanin. "A Revolutionary Returns." *Jewish Radicals: A Documentary History*. Ed. Tony Michels. New York University Press, 2012, pp. 241-2.
[178] Khanin is not the only source for mentions of *Blote*. Bemporad cites a description by Russian economist Andrei Subbotin, see p. 16.

interesting and meaningful as a portrait of Jewish Minsk might be to contemporary scholars looking to understand the lived experience of pre-war Jews, the poetics of *do'ikayt* do something more. My readings of *Minsker Blotes* and the other works under discussion here help us thus to understand that the poetics of *do'ikayt* represents not only a commitment to a lived space and its history, but also a commitment to the transformation of that space. In the cases of An-sky, Kharik and Kulbak, this means a critical commitment to revolutionary change. Identifying this trend as a literature of *do'ikayt* establishes a link between the political and the literary avant-garde, bringing into focus a body of works that are rich in their depictions of Jewish life and struggle in one of the most turbulent, promising, diverse and exciting moments of modern European and Jewish history.

Minsk Mud

Let me begin with a short overview of the poema.[179] Kharik wrote (or at least dated) *Minsker Blotes* between October and December of 1924, soon after his move to Moscow. Sections of the poema were first published in the newspaper *Emes*, the official paper of the Evsektsia and the leading Yiddish newspaper in the Soviet Union, as well as in a literary anthology entitled *Nayerd* (Newearth), published in 1925 in Moscow by Yekhezkl Dobrushin. The entire poema was printed in Kharik's collection *Af der erd* (On the land/soil, 1926), in pride of place as the opening poem of the collection, following two dedicatory poems. David Shneer writes that *Af der erd* "was reviewed by all the major Soviet Jewish publications," citing laudatory comments from important literary critics such as Yashe Bronstheyn (with whom Kharik would edit *Sovetishe vaysrusland* in 1935), Dobrushin, and Avrom Veviorke.[180] In a Festschrift from 1935 celebrating 15 years of Kharik's literary career, these same and many other critics repeated their praise of *Af der erd* and *Minsker Blotes* specifically. Bronshteyn counts *Minsker Blotes* among Kharik's most important works and praises him, as do many of these critics, for creating a new poetic form that is grounded in the history, the life, and the language of the working classes:

> *Kharik iz nit fun oto dem min literarishe shmeterlingen. Er shpant shver un ayngevortslt iber zayn dikhterisher strofe, vos ligt tsevolgert, fet un shvarts, vi oyfgeakerte poloses royerd…shraybn 's'iz yeder tog a bolshevik' hot tsu yener tsayt batayt nit bloyz naye idee, nor oykh naye poetik. Shafn a syuzhetishe poeme, ongezetikt mit sotsyale laydnshaftn fun masn, unter aza 'prozeyishn' kepl, vi 'minsker blotes' (lider tsu yener tsayt flegn batitlt vern mit mer 'derhoybene' 'sametene' keplekh) hot batayt nit bloyz naye idee, nor naye zhanr-traditsyes, naye kompozitsye-printsipn, kegngeshtelt der*

[179] To my knowledge, *Minsker Blotes* has not previously been translated into English. Thus my reading of the poem has also been an opportunity to produce a translation. I will cite from my translation, except where the discussion requires reference to the original. See Appendix A for my complete translation. My translation does not always replicate the meter or rhyme scheme of the original, but it attempts to approximate both wherever possible.

[180] Shneer 181-2.

impresionistishe lirisher miniyatur un der ideyish-tseshoyberter, filstrofiker, frayferziker dikhtung.[181]

The abundance of imagery in reviews of Kharik's poetry of earth, soil, groundedness, roots, etc., certainly calls to mind the concepts of territorialization and *do'ikayt*. Interesting in Bronshteyn's statement is an acknowledgement that what is new and revolutionary in Kharik's poetry is not simply the content, but the form of the poetics itself. Bronshteyn describes a kind of revolutionary "lowering," by naming the poema "Minsk Mud," for example. I would add, and will discuss below, Kharik's use of colloquial Yiddish, "*prost minsker yidish*," the simple language of the people, as one formal element of this "new poetics."

Minsker Blotes is divided into two parts, the first consisting of nine poems and the second of twelve.[182] Part One takes place before the revolutions of 1917. It depicts—in fragmentary fashion, as I will show—the neighborhood of *Blote*, the lives of working people in the neighborhood, and Pinye's youth, growing up as an orphan living on the street and later finding work as a roofer. Part One also introduces us to Pinye's rage at his poverty and to his first moments of rebellion against the society in which he lives. In the final three poems of Part One, Pinye is told the story of earlier revolutionaries who are now in exile in Siberia, and it ends with his longing to connect to them. Part Two throws us immediately into revolution with the text of Bolshevik decrees being made throughout the city. It presents scenes of both the elation of revolution, the triumphant collective spirit, as well as the suffering, especially the hunger, and the fear that soon overtake the residents of *Blote*. Pinye becomes a soldier in the Red Army and the poema depicts the feelings of camaraderie, newfound power, and having an outlet for his rage, as well as the hunger, exhaustion, fear of death and finally the homesickness for Minsk that he and the other young soldiers endure.

It is difficult to say who is the protagonist of *Minsker Blotes*, Minsk and the neighborhood of *Blote,* or Pinye, the young Jewish orphan and worker, or Pinye as a representative of the experience of working class Minsk Jews during the revolution. In fact, this tension between place, individual, and collective is one of the organizing tensions of this work by a poet dubbed "the ambivalent revolutionary."[183] Through close readings of *Minsker Blotes,* I will demonstrate that Kharik's poema carefully evades individual subjectivity at the level of the grammatical subject—often instead imbuing the streets, the houses, the city of Minsk itself, or a revolutionary collective "we," with subjectivity and grammatical agency. Furthermore, the

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[181] Bronshteyn. "Izi Kharik." *Izi Kharik: tsu zayn 15-yorikn dikhterishn veg*. Farlag fun der visnshaft-akademie fun USSR, 1936, pp. 51, 57-8. ("Kharik is not one of those literary butterflies. He stands heavy and rooted over his poetic verses, which lie, fat and black, like turned over rows of raw earth… To write 'every day is now a Bolshevik' meant at that time not just new ideas, but also new poetics. To create a narrative poema brimming with the social passion/suffering of the masses under such a prosaic heading as 'Minsk Mud' (poems at that time used to be titled with more 'exalted,' 'velvety' names) meant not only new ideas, but new generic traditions, new compositional principles, compared to the impressionistic lyrical miniatures and the ideologically disheveled, many-versed, free verse poetry.")

[182] I will refer to these throughout as Parts One and Two, and to the individual poems by their numbers, which run from 1-21 through both parts. Accordingly, Part One consists of poems 1-9 and Part Two consists of poems 10-21.

[183] David Shneer. "An ambivalent revolutionary: Izi Kharik's image of the Shtetl," East European Jewish Affairs, 32:1 (2002), 99-119.

ambivalence surrounding subject and agency extends to an ambivalence about action: about the possibility of taking action and about the possibility for action to bring about positive—rather than only destructive—change. This ambivalence is also expressed both at the grammatical level, manifesting in a thematized preference for agentless and impersonal structures, and as a leitmotif in the poema represented through the use and development of the antonyms *shtilkayt* ("quietness") and *umru* ("unrest"). The absence of individual subjectivity, the preference for collective subjectivity represented by the city, and the changing implications of the term *umru* are all employed to thematize the conflicts experienced by Pinye and the revolutionary Jewish working class of Minsk.

In the readings that follow, I will focus on the grammatical and topical evasion and denial of agency and subjectivity throughout the poema. The city and streets of Minsk are often more prominent than the human population of the city, yet even the city is usually presented as object rather than subject in the pre-revolutionary section of the poema. The city metonymically stands for the collective identity of the suffering working class of *Blote* whose transformation into revolutionary actors is presented through the experiences of the young man, Pinye. My readings of the second part of the poema will focus on the leitmotif of the opposition of *shtilkayt* and *umru*. What begins as an opposition of quietness as powerlessness and unrest as the promise of revolutionary change becomes transformed through the experience of the revolution into the nostalgic desire for quietness meaning home and peace, and unrest as the persistence of revolutionary terror. Here is the first poem:

> Around each proud street—perhaps a hundred quiet alleys
> With low little houses, like sheep at the mountain's base…
> Minsk had forgotten, about them, about everyone—
> And all roads lead to the marketplace…
>
> And here in the depths, in the warmth of the mud,
> In wooden houses buried at the city's edge, —
> A pain rises, juicy and ripe,
> And a fist shivers in every childlike heart.
>
> People haven't planted trees or parks here, –
> Here they play naked in the dirt…
> And a fist, young and strong, is pumping, filling up,
> And someday it will break the glass.
>
> Someday a hatred will push through all reason,
> And hard and sharp, make a cut above the heart…
> — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
> Little children play here, little Pinyes play here
> And roll around here, naked in the sand.

This opening poem establishes several themes and formal elements crucial to the *poema* as a whole. It does not begin with Pinye, in fact it avoids, dismembers, and negates any human presence until the final two lines, which are visibly divided or "cut" off from the rest of the poem by a line of dashes. Humanity enters the poem in the final line of the second stanza, "And a fist

shivers in every childlike heart." The fist and the heart, however, do not yet belong to a whole person—nor will they in the other poems in which they appear. In this first usage we see that they are closely related, the fist being used metaphorically, it seems, for the feeling of rage developing within the poor children of the *Blote*. Both here and in the next stanza the fist and the heart also operate synecdochically for Pinye and the working people of Minsk, representing them in their rage and suffering, respectively. Aside from these cut off parts, a generalized human subject also appears in the third stanza of this poem, though, importantly, only through the general pronoun "*men*" ("one" in English), and only in a negative statement, in other words, in the absence of any specific person and in the absence of action: "People haven't planted trees or parks here." Without yet introducing a specific person, the poem in its final stanza escalates the feeling of rage introduced through the image of the fist shuddering inside the childlike heart. "Someday," it tells us, "a hatred will push through all reason, / And hard and sharp, make a cut above the heart…" The hatred of these disembodied parts, heart and fist, and the people they metonymically represent, will grow so strong, the poem warns, that it will cut them off from the human emotions of those still unseen children. The poem visually represents this cut with the line of dashes before finally introducing its main character: "Little children play here, little Pinyes play here." The line of dashes suggests that these little children, "little Pinyes," are the products of the growing rage and hatred described above, the products of poverty. Finally, it is noteworthy that even after delaying Pinye's introduction until the final two lines of the poem, when we finally learn Pinye's name and read about him playing in the dirt of his neighborhood, he is made plural. Pinye is not an individual, he is all of the poor children of *Blote* in their collective experience of poverty and rage—struggling, as we will see in later poems, collectively and individually, with how to express that rage.

In place of people, place itself is the opening subject of this first poem. Similar to the way in which people were introduced through a statement of what they *don't* do, however, *Minsker Blotes* begins with a place that is forgotten: The tributary alleys [*geslekh*] that surround the main streets and the low houses or huts [*hayzlekh*] lining them have been forgotten by the city of Minsk, which is completely focused on the marketplace, on commerce and trade. In the same vein in which human agency is denied and delayed throughout the poem, the action and subjectivity of the city is also introduced in a delayed and agentless way. The streets and houses that begin the poem are not grammatical subjects, they are the objects that Minsk has forgotten three lines later. "Had forgotten" is, in fact, the first verb to appear in the poem, which is notably a semantically passive action, a failure to remember. The second stanza further develops the location of the poem, the *Blote*, as a non-place that is "buried at the city's edge." *Blote* both *is* and *isn't*—even forgotten and buried, it is also deep and warm. This is one of the poem's central ambivalences: *Blote* is both the location of poverty and suffering, the example of how life should *not* be after the revolution, and it is home, the irony of which is acknowledged in the second poem.

2

In each little house, in each little chamber
A sewing machine speaks, or a plane, or a hammer.

The noise of the machines is still quiet, still small here,
Still everyone is working hard, into the night, and since the dawn air.

In wooden houses bodies become restless,
In wooden houses ballads become restless…

By the drill, by the plane, by the cobbler's thread and awl, —
They sing high and they sing hot, and all together they call:

"ay, ay, ay, ay, Yashke is going away,
Let us say goodbye, the train is pulling away." — — —

Through days, through nights, through weeks rolling by without end…
But where is want and what is need by simple craftsmen!...

We find this form, rhyming couplets, only here in the second poem of *Minsker Blotes* and, mirroring it, in the second to last poem. Both of these poems, the second and second-to-last, also take the form of folk songs. This poem reads like the songs of the "simple craftsmen" depicted within, formally mimicking the sounds and songs that are its content, while the second to last could be a song of a Red Army soldier.[184] In both cases, the folky form contrast with the depiction of exploited workers here and scared soldiers in the later poem. As in the first poem, poem two does not begin with human subjects, but rather with the houses, rooms, and tools of the working people of *Blote*. It is the sewing machine, the plane and the hammer that speak in this poem, not their human users. Also building on the patterns of the first poem, when humans do appear, it is through a generic pronoun, in this case "everyone" (*yeder eyner*). Unlike the first poem, these people do take (grammatical) action, however their action is to be exhausted: "*yeder eyner midt zikh dokh*" (literally "each one tires himself out"). This is a fittingly Marxist depiction of the workers' alienation: while their tools are named, and can speak, the workers remain unnamed and generalized. Even when the workers sing, the poem again uses the indefinite third person, "one." The song "people" sing is a folksong about a soldier who has been conscripted into the Czarist army saying farewell, and they exhibit only exhaustion and uneasiness, or "unrest" (*umru*), as I will discuss later in this chapter. In the "quietness" (*shtil,* the other keyword to be discussed later) of these workshops, and perhaps even the quaintness of these one room factories—which would be dismantled in Soviet Minsk, Jewish artisans brought to work in large collective factories instead—there is the same kind of ambivalent nostalgia as was established in the first poem.[185] These workers, their song, the "quiet" (*shtil*) sounds of their machines, are Pinye's childhood home, but as the poem's sarcastic ending tells us, the days, nights, and "weeks without end" cause only "want" among even those lucky enough to have work in *Blote*.

Remembering the demographics of Minsk, smalltime *bal-melokhes* (artisans or craftspeople) like these would have made up the bulk of the working Jewish population in the city. Focusing on their conditions as a portrait of the working class at this early point of the poema highlights a point of revolutionary ambivalence surely felt by many Jewish revolutionaries in the post-revolutionary period: While within the Jewish world, *bal-melokhes*

[184] I will return to this pairing in my discussion of the second to last poem—perhaps a kind of modernist inclusio, in that it does not begin and end the poema, but almost begins and almost ends.
[185] See Part 2, Chapter 9 of *The Zelmenyaners* (pp. 170-174) and my chapter on *The Zelmenyaners* for more discussion of the Soviet policy of collectivizing the work of Jewish craftsmen and artisans.

were traditionally at the bottom of the social hierarchy, with only purely physical laborers or the unemployable below them, in the Bolshevik analysis they were seen as self-employed, or even as business owners. This led them to be categorized as bourgeois, though certainly many were living on the verge of poverty. This conception of the smalltime Jewish craftsman as a businessman can be seen as related to the antisemitic stereotype of Jews as a non-laboring people, and certainly led to tensions within revolutionary circles about whether Jews were part of the "toiling masses."

The fourth poem presents Pinye as a young man, and directly continues and develops many of the topics and formal strategies of absent subjects and agentless sentences that we have seen in the first and second poems.

4

It's good, like this, long past midnight,
When houses lie, all tired out,
To come out quiet, to come out sharp,
In old and restless rags.

To let loose, pell-mell,
Through alley after alley,
And there—it's you, and look—it's me,
Now let's forget ourselves.

We worry, there's a worry now, –
Now we need to run…
And a hatred pounds, and a heat pounds
In the heart and in the temples.

And unexpected, and unawares,
We stand still and—*basta!*[186]
Why is there suddenly so much light
Like a holy day in the streets?

So bright and high, the High Market stands
And so proud are its walls, –
"Walls, walls, you are strong,
But how long will you last?"…

And a sharp rock flies through the glass…
"A greeting to you from the mud!"…

———

Rushing back, running home,
Breath, it rushes, it flies…

[186] Basta: borrowed from Italian into Russian and other Slavic languages as well as Yiddish, "zabastovka" in Russian means a strike, in both the sense of an impact and a labor strike.

This poem mirrors the first structurally and thematically. Like the first poem, it begins with the houses of *Blote*, which metonymically stand—or in this case, lie—in the place of their exhausted and unmentioned occupants. Like the first poem, there is a passivity or actionlessness in the verbs of the opening five lines. The first verb is "lie," and does not occur until the second line. And the next three verbs, which do relate to unnamed human agents, appear only in impersonal structures: "to come out," "to let loose" (or, more literally, "to let oneself run"); there is no subject, aside from the houses, until the second stanza. Finally in the seventh line, we meet a "you" and an "I" for the first time in the poema.[187] "And there—it's you, and there—am I," and yet, just as the *Blote* was introduced in the first poem as something forgotten by Minsk, this "you" and "I" are introduced only to be forgotten: "Now let's forget ourselves." The poem depicts Pinye, we suppose, and someone else, coming upon a nighttime riot in Minsk's High Market, the central market of the city.[188] There is a sense of surprise in the structure of this line with its dashes, "ot—bistu, un ot—bin ikh," a surprise at the momentary recognition of two individuals. But it seems that Pinye cannot participate in this riot as himself, as an individual, rather he has to forget himself, forget the divide between "you" and "I" and become instead part of a collective, "Let's forget ourselves…Our worry…Now we need to run…"

Again paralleling the first poem, the image of the disembodied heart filled with hatred returns, as Pinye becomes part of the collective spirit and expression of rage created in the space of the riot. In the first poem, that hatred was only a threat that would someday "break the glass." This fourth poem shows us the fulfillment of that threat. Consistent with the erasure of individual subjectivity and its replacement by collective identity, when the rock finally does fly through the windowpane, completing the threat that has been building since Pinye's childhood, it is not thrown by any individual subject. The construction is agentless, "*un s'flit in shoyb a sharfer shteyn*" (literally "and it flies in the pane a sharp stone"). An unattributed voice—or even the voice of the rock—calls out where the rock has come from: "A greeting to you from the *Blote*!" Not until the depictions of revolution in Part Two will we see this kind of direct linking again of the collective identity of the people of *Blote*, the Pinyes, with their home, their neighborhood itself. Again, the *Blote* is both the location and symbol of their suffering, and the location and source of their resistance. This is an example of the motivating tension of *do'ikayt* discussed in the previous chapter: here and now, and a different here, a different now.

Pinye—and perhaps the reader as well—are surprised to find that this expression of rage and resistance occurs in a holiday spirit. These lines, "*farvos iz do azoyfil likht/ un yontef af di gasn?*" have several possible connotations: it is the first instance of Pinye's transformation from a child suffering in poverty into a revolutionary subject; so on one level it is his discovery that in collective action, rage can become joy. But the choice of "*yontef*," the *loshn-koydesh* term (referring to lexical items with Hebraic or Aramaic origins) for a holiday in Yiddish, suggests several other possibilities. Already by the mid-1920s, Hebrew was considered either bourgeois, for its religious associations, or nationalist, because of its use by Zionists. In *Af der erd*, *loshn-koydesh* terms are spelled phonetically—in order to minimize their distinctiveness within

[187] We will not meet that "I" again until the final poem of the Part One, which I will discuss below.
[188] For a description of the High Market of Minsk see Bemporad 16-17.

Yiddish.[189] Thus the term draws attention to itself: it is not just that the street appears festive, or like a holiday, but rather it appears specifically like a Jewish holiday, emphasizing the Jewish space that this midnight riot occurs within—including both the shop owners that are being protested and the youth like Pinye that are rioting. Further, the line invokes Yiddish slang for referring to a pogrom, for example "*a gantse simkhe*," *simkhe* also being a *loshn-koydesh* term for a celebration. The possible overtones of such slang introduce a note of danger and irony into the line: is the riot a celebration, or a slaughter? The poema as a whole moves back and forth between these extremes—the suffering of poverty, the joy of resistance, the suffering of resistance—and does not, I believe, ultimately preference one experience over the others. That is, it clearly does not valorize the revolution to the point of erasing the suffering it causes, nor does it undermine the validity of the experience of collective elation. Instead it retains a tension, an ambivalent stance.[190] Continuing the parallelism with the first poem, this poem also ends with a line of dashes that separate the closing two lines of this poem, which read literally: "One hurries back, one runs home./ The breath hurries and flies." Thus, in the same textual space in which the reader first met the little Pinyes playing in the dirt of *Blote* in the opening poem, we find the generalized or impersonal subject returning to that same "home," now with an experience of actual resistance and violence, rather than only the threat of these things raised in the first poem.

The final three poems of the first part of *Minsker Blotes* form a more connected, continuous narrative space than any other section of the poema. Poem seven shows us Pinye, a young man now, working as a tinsmith on the roofs of Minsk. He seems to enjoy this work, or at least the perspective it gives him: to tower above the "unrest" of the city and look down on the shop owners (*kremer*), "hurrying along, like little sparks of fire." Yet even in this seemingly joyful or liberating moment, Pinye's subjectivity is avoided. This poem provides several examples of a strategy Kharik uses throughout the poema: employing idiomatic phrases with agentless structures and/or impersonal subjects as a thematization of ambivalence about identity and agency. The subject of the first stanza is consistently an impersonal "it" ("*es*"), as in "it feels good to Pinye." Emotional descriptions that the reader can only assume apply to Pinye are phrased in an impersonal, fragmented form: "It rips, it pulls and yearns to go high and higher," rather than something like "Pinye is torn, feels pulled, and yearns to go high and higher." Even when this joy turns to a kind of disdain for the crowd hurrying about its business below him, the poem does not say "Pinye feels a desire deep in his heart to spit," but rather, to translate the line as literally as possible, "It desires itself so deeply from the heart to spit." As in poem 4, the evasion of Pinye as an active subject in a poem *about* how he *feels* as a worker in his city is a formal representation of his alienation. The formal strategy at work here can be found throughout the poema, and accounts (in part) for Kharik's reputation as a poet who "rehabilitates simple poetic language and the language of real human interactions." In lines like "*s'iz pinyen gut,*" Kharik is choosing common idiomatic, colloquial structures that use agentless and impersonal constructions, thereby avoiding an active individual subject. In Yiddish (as in German), one does

[189] Different from Hebrew, Yiddish is written phonetically, using letters as vowels, while Hebrew uses diacritics to mark vowels, or leaves them unmarked. Terms from Hebrew and Aramaic in Yiddish (referred to as *loshn-koydesh,* holy language), however, retain their original spelling, which makes them stand out on the page from other lexical items. In Soviet Yiddish, use of *loshn-koydesh* vocabulary was discouraged generally, but when it was necessary, the words were spelled phonetically. In some ways—as Kharik makes use of—this makes these terms all the more semantically loaded when they are used.
[190] This point will be a focus of my discussion of Part Two of the poema.

not say "I am/feel good" or "I am/feel hot," but rather "It is good to me" and "it is hot to me." "*S'iz gut*" is the correct and common way to say "it's good" in Yiddish, but it is no coincidence that this phrase is used so often in the poema.[191] Kharik uses agentless constructions like these as much as possible, transforming a common turn of phrase into a formal thematization of the tension surrounding individuality that is central to the poema—simply through heavy usage. Simultaneously, this formal strategy makes the patterns of colloquial Yiddish the language of Kharik's poetry. This use of colloquial Yiddish is another way of grounding *Minsker Blotes* in the specific cultural space, the *do* (here and now), of Jewish Minsk.[192]

The line "*farvilt zikh dos azoy fun tifn hartsn*" is another example of a feature of colloquial Yiddish being used to thematize Pinye's lack of individuality. In this case, through Yiddish's avoidance of possessive pronouns in reference to body parts. Thus, the line is not "deep in his heart," but rather "deep in the heart."[193] By putting these aspects of spoken Yiddish into heavy rotation, Kharik can write an entire poem about the turmoil of emotions felt by his main character without that character ever operating as the active grammatical subject of the poem, without so much as a "he," "his," or "him," thereby formally reinforcing the turmoil of identity the character is experiencing in this period of revolutionary turmoil. Indeed, the final line of the poem captures this perfectly: "*Un tif in hartsn shtromt un shtromt…*" (literally, "and deep in [the] heart surges and surges.") The line refuses, grammatically, to identify or name *whose* heart is storming, or perhaps the point is even more forceful: this heart is storming precisely because it is impossible for its owner to be named or take action. Though these are Pinye's feelings, he cannot actively, grammatically, feel or own them. He cannot act—and will not be able to, until the final poem of this trio, which is also the final poem of Part One.

Poem eight—the second of the trio—continues on the rooftops of Minsk: looking down on the city in the evenings after long days of hard work, Pinye's uncle tells him stories about a time when the workshops of Minsk "fevered and awoke" in "strikes, and blood" and about the heroes of that time, who "…Today…live in chains and in snow, / Today…are so far away…" The uncle laments their exile in Siberia, and wishes for the time when the Czar will be deposed and these exiled friends might be rescued. The uncle, not coincidentally, is also named Pinye. He is the only person besides our hero, Pinye, to be given a name in the poem, and so their sharing of a name further deemphasizes individuality in the poem: these men are family, they are both workers in the same trade, both—we will see—have felt the same "restless" need for revolution. Functionally, they appear to be the same in everything except their age and, therefore, their experience. In fact, it is by listening to Uncle Pinye's stories about what appears to be the 1905 revolution that Nephew Pinye finally undergoes the transformation of identity that allows him to take part in the revolution. It is only, finally, through imagining Uncle Pinye's comrades in exile, and desiring to know those men, to connect his own rebellious stirrings with their actions, that

[191] The phrase appears in poems 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, and 15.
[192] As in the discussion about An-sky in the previous chapter, in many places, Kharik foregrounds the Minsk dialect of Yiddish by relying on dialectal rhyme. For example in poem 4, Kharik rhymes two words that would be pronounced "*loyfn*" and "*shleyfn*" in *klal-yiddish* (standardized Yiddish), while in Minsk's *litvish* dialect, they are pronounced "*leyfn*" and "*shleyfn*."
[193] For instance, in Yiddish one says "the hand hurts me" rather than "my hand hurts."

young Pinye finally finds his voice, and speaks in the first person for the first and only time in this entire twenty-one part poema.

9

And every night in the quietness of bed
I hear quietly, as if carried on the wind, —
Chains clanging mournful on the roads
And they, far-blown, look quietly at me…

So tall, so strong, so far away,
Every one of them a giant.
If just once I could catch a glimpse
And quietly say to them: "I greet…"

But Siberia is far, so far from here,
And our greeting gets lost on the way and freezes…
We know: The Czar has such a land,
It's called – far-blown Siberia.

In this final poem of the first cycle, Pinye becomes a speaking subject in the first person singular and active voice, and an individual with interiority—but this interiority only occurs in a poem about his desire to connect to men who can be his models of revolutionary action. Pinye can finally make an active statement, "I hear…" but what he hears is the chains that bind his uncle's comrades, exiled strike leaders. What about this poem causes Pinye finally to speak and hear and strain for a glimpse—actually not of his heroes, but just of their chains? It may be their very distance, the spatial and temporal divide that separates them from Pinye: they are as far, as unreachable as anyone could be to him; that is the threat of Siberian exile in Czarist Russia. Thus while the poem shows us Pinye realizing his longing to form a connection with those men, to be able to greet them, their great distance from Minsk makes the forming of a collective identity impossible. They are simply too far away to be able to articulate a "we" with him. In a sense, it is this very contradiction that marks Pinye's transformation: he is forced to say "I," to become an acting individual, by the Czarist oppression that has physically separated his community from him. Siberia is thus contrasted with the space and subject of the poem, Minsk and the *Blote*. While Minsk is the site of both Pinye's and the exiled heroes' suffering, it seems that one needs to be in Minsk to form a part of the fragmentary collective that suffers, but can also resist.

This ambivalent stance toward Minsk as home in Kharik's poem is the manifestation of a poetics of *do'ikayt*: in the motto "here and now" the "here" is not a perfected place, it is a place of revolutionary struggle in the "now." As we will see in the second part of the poema, Minsk is a home that can be longed for and missed by Pinye the young Red Army soldier, but its condition, and his experience of poverty there, is also the reason he has been forced to fight. This is the definition of the relationship to space that Bundist activists—people of the same generation as the Siberian exiles Pinye hears about—hoped to build. Pinye, the ambivalent individual, moves from the collective experience of suffering under capitalism to the moment of transition depicted in poem nine, because a rare moment of individual reflection causes him to recognize the need for a different kind of collective: one that takes action despite its suffering. Pinye

quickly finds, however, that the revolutionary collective that brings him joy and strength will cause its own kind of suffering and destruction, lessons Kharik has learned by the time of writing in 1924. This change from the joyful "creative destruction" of revolution to a state of revolutionary terror with no end in sight is marked and tracked through the poema in the changing use of the word *umru,* "unrest."

Agency

Before offering readings of Part Two which focus on the use and development of *umru*, let me look first at how the tone and mode of *Minsker Blotes* changes between Parts One and Two, between the lead up to revolution and its outbreak. Like so much in this poema, there is no simple change between these two phases. Or rather, there are drastic changes, but things that at first seem radically different quickly move back toward one another in complex ways. As an example of this, I will first examine how the thematization of agentless and impersonal grammatical structures and the lack of active subjects dramatically changes in the opening poems of Part Two, while later readings will show that those strategies from Part One return as the waters of revolution become muddied. Additionally, I will look briefly at the uses *umru* and its antonym *shtilkayt* in Part One before turning to close readings of their transformations in Part Two.

In Part One, as discussed above, there is a thematic avoidance of specific and active subjects, especially active individual human subjects. Instead, the poem employs agentless or impersonal constructions, often motivated by the agentless structures of idiomatic Yiddish phrases. In place of active human and individual subjects, the city of Minsk, its streets, houses, and machines become the active agents, foregrounding the "lived space" of Minsk as a subject, standing metonymically for the collective experience of the working Jewish people of the *Blote*. This formal strategy is part of the poema's exploration of the capitalistic oppression of the people of Minsk: they are unable to act, even to actively suffer, except in generalized, impersonal terms. For a few brief moments, the rage of the poema's main character, Pinye, breaks through this passive suffering, and becomes part of a different kind of collective, tasting the joy and elation that can arise from collective rebellion against oppression (as in poem 4). But even those moments of rebellion are phrased in agentless or impersonal constructions. It's only in the final poem of Part One that Pinye articulates an active, individual longing to see, know, and communicate with the heroic revolutionaries from his uncle's stories, exiled from their home and site of struggle, Minsk, in far off Siberia. It is as if Pinye's contemplation of a "there," Siberia, and a "them," the revolutionaries, helps him to define his "here," Minsk, and his "I," thereby allowing him enough of a moment of active individuality to decide to join the revolution.

The grammar and structure of the opening poems of Part Two make immediately clear the implications of the transformation Pinye—and the world of the *Blote*—have undergone in the space between poems 9 and 10, between Part One and Part Two. Poem 10 begins: "*geyt aroys a hastiker dekret / mit verter zikhere, vi fayln*" ("A hasty decree goes out / With words as sure as arrows"). In stark contrast to the poems of Part One, which would delay the use of any verb until

the second, third, or fourth line, the very first word of this poem is a verb, and a verb full of active motion, no less: "goes out." In fact, the content and form of these opening lines reinforce one another: the poem becomes the "hasty decree" that it describes, reporting to us in "words as sure as arrows" the revolution that is being announced throughout the city. The mode of the poema's language changes in another important way in this opening poem: the human voices and the first person speech that was all but absent from Part One make a powerful, propagandistic entrance through the language of the Bolshevik decree:

> And we, those made of want and pain,
> From alleyways old and still,
> We will, as one does with rotten straw,
> Trample – and forget you….

The poema began with these same "quiet alleyways" (here "*alte, shtile geslekh*," and in the first poem "*shtile geslekh*"), but it is not until the decree of revolution in Part Two that the people who live in those alleys are able to speak, to give voice to the "want and pain" that has defined them. In the opening poem, the city of Minsk had forgotten about this neighborhood of alleyways and everyone in it. They were as if "buried" on the edge of the city, and their only presence was the "pain…juicy and ripe" that rose from the *Blote*, and the latent rage growing in its children's hearts. Here, the people of *Blote* prepare to rise and to express that rage, to be the ones who will "trample — and forget" the shopkeepers and merchants of the city, no longer being trampled and forgotten by them.

Poem eleven continues both the first person plural address and the propagandistic tone of poem ten. Just as poem ten reversed the previous mode of the poema by beginning with an active verb, so does poem eleven by beginning with the pronoun perhaps most absent from the first half of the poema: "*mir*," "we":

> We, – whole alleys of Pinyes
> Accustomed to all, and to nothing,
> In our hearts we are gathering a hatred
> And contempt is our daily bread.

These are, perhaps, the same hearts full of hatred that we encountered in poem one ("Someday a hatred will push through all reason, / And hard and sharp, make a cut above the heart…") and poem four ("And a hatred pounds, and a heat pounds / In the heart and in the temples"). Yet for the first time the heart and the hatred are spoken about by the people who possess them. And not only do they finally speak, but they speak as the collective of generalized Pinyes, defined by their connection to the space of *Blote:* "We, – whole alleys of Pinyes."[194] This collective "we" narrates several of the poems in Part Two, especially those that share the triumphalist tone of this

[194] Beyond the identification of the alleyways, the language of the collective subtly marks them as *Minsker yidn* through the stanza's use of a rhyme that reads differently in Minsk's *litvish* dialect (though it still rhymes in standard pronunciation). In *litvish* "*geveynt*" rhymes "*breyt*" (rather than "*gevoynt*" and "*broyt*" in standard), making it a kind of insider only rhyme. That is, the strict *abab* rhyme of this poem – consistent with its propagandistic tone – is not broken for non-*litvish* speakers who might read the poem, but it will read differently in its native dialect.

poem. In part one, the first person plural appeared rarely, in poem four, when Pinye discovered the nighttime riot, and in Uncle Pinye's stories in poem eight, reminiscing about the last revolution. Those were the hints, the premonitions of the revolutionary subjectivity that takes hold in Part Two.

This newly articulate collective is ready both to claim the pain and suffering that has defined their lives, and to take destructive action:

> Hard days, hard years of hunger
> With brothers, with freedom, with joy,
> So, take up and raise up our youth,
> Here, — take up and light up and tear down.
>
> It has to be so! And the time has come
> In storm, in love and blood.
> We stand and raise up the unrest:
> "This far." "Down with." "And enough!"

These lines are full of the kinds of active verbs absent from part one: *tsenemen, derhoykhn, tseloykhtn, tseraysn.* The prefix "*tse*-" increases the intensity of these lines; it often serves simply as an intensifying prefix, or one that suggests disintegration. For example, "*nemen"* means "to take," while "*tsenemen*" means "to take apart," and "*raysn"* means "to tear or rip," "*tseraysn*" to "tear up." Thus this vocabulary demonstrates that the collective has embraced not only the spirit of "joy and liberation," but also the need for "creative destruction," as David Shneer has shown in other of Kharik's revolutionary poetry.[195] The spirit of creative destruction appears, as well, in the collective's embrace of the term "*umru*" (which I translate throughout as "unrest"). In fact, just as the use of active subjects and verbs drastically shifts between Part One and the beginning of Part Two, so does its use of "*umru*" and its antonym "*shtilkayt*" as the poema shifts from depictions of powerless suffering to revolutionary action and back to suffering.[196] It is to the use of this pair of antonyms that I will now turn.

Shtilkayt

In Part One the poema's use of the city as subject and its avoidance of human action is a central strategy for thematizing the ambiguity of Pinye's position. In Part Two I will argue that the shifting positive and negative connotations of *umru* and *shtilkayt* serve a similar purpose. When thinking of an antonym for "*umru*," the first word to come to mind would be "*ru*" (rest, calm or quiet), and "*ru*" is indeed used several times in the poema, notably in the final poem,

[195] see David Shneer, "Becoming Revolutionary: Izi Kharik and the Question of Aesthetics, Politics, and Ideology," pp. 179-213. Especially p. 189.

[196] As I mentioned above, this change is not a simple opposition, and in the middle and ending poems of Part Two the empowered and active tone of these opening poems is nowhere to be found. Rather there is a return to the strategies of Part One. I will return to this.

which I will discuss. But I will demonstrate in my readings the clear pairing of *umru* and *shtil* that occurs. Through the use of the term *umru*, Kharik depicts how what begins as liberating revolutionary "unrest" becomes redefined through the city's experiences of revolutionary terror and suffering, especially in the ever-present hunger that tormented the poor of the *Blote* before the revolution and continues through the unrest of the civil war. That is to say, the prevalence of the term *umru* as a descriptor of the revolution on both an individual and city-wide scale is another means of foregrounding the ambivalence of revolution: unrest both makes possible the overthrow of the existing order and describes the existential insecurity that increasingly threatens the life of Minsk.[197] Indeed, both "*umru*" and "*shtilkayt*" often modify Minsk or aspects of Minsk itself: the quiet (*shtil*) alleyways of *Blote*, and the city-wide scope of the unrest, for example. At a basic, literal sense, these antonyms describe action and passivity. Their application to both individuals, collectives, and the city suggest a continuum of action, and the capability to remain quiet or take action by each of these subjects: human, community, Place. Thus, as we saw with the use (and lack) of subjects and active/passive verbs, Minsk and the *Blote* are portrayed as alive, struggling between passivity and action, or quietness and unrest, in ways that mirror the struggles of the people living in the city.

Let me begin the discussion of *umru* and *shtilkayt* by briefly looking back at their usage in the first part of the poema. A count of the number of occurrences of each word (in either their adjectival or nominal forms) in Parts One and Two suggests a trend that I will explore in these readings. Essentially, while both words are used throughout both Parts One and Two, and more often than not appear together in poems, *shtilkayt* dominates Part One of *Minsker Blotes* while *umru* defines Part Two.[198] Let us look, first, at how *shtil* is used in Part One, and how it is set in opposition to *umru* before turning to readings of poems from Part Two in which *umru* becomes one of the leitmotifs of the poema. As I will discuss below, however, the connotations of *umru* shift drastically throughout the poema, and perhaps cause a shift in the connotations of *shtilkayt*, as well, so that neither word signifies only one thing every time it is used. Rather, in the changing connotations of these terms we see the changing connotations of suffering and revolution, as well.

Shtil (translated throughout as quiet) appears in the very first line of the poema, the line that establishes the geography and power relationships of *Minsker Blotes*: "Around each proud street—perhaps a hundred quiet alleys." The poema begins with the contrast between street and alley, between legitimate, "proud," recognized space and the unnamed, chaotic, forgettable alleys that form Pinye's home. These alleys—peripheral, marginal, liminal to Minsk proper—are *the* constitutive spaces of the *Blote*, as we saw in the powerful line from poem ten discussed above in which the inhabitants of *Blote* finally speak and name themselves: "And we, those made of want

[197] The term "*umru*" also connects Kharik's poetry to international Yiddish modernism: "*umru*" was among the key terms of Yiddish expressionist poetry, for example in the work of Moyshe Leyb Halpern in the United States. See Chana Kronfeld. "David Fogel and Moyshe Leyb Halpern: Liminal Moments in Hebrew and Yiddish Literary History." *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 159-193.

[198] *Shtil* occurs in six out of the nine poems in Part One and four out of the 12 in Part Two, so a change from two-thirds to one-third. *Umru* occurs in four out of the nine poems in Part One and seven out of the 12 in Part Two, a little less than half to a little more than half. In five different poems (numbers 2, 4, 6, 17 and 19), they are used together.

and pain, / From alleyways old and quiet." These two lines parallel each other, each occurring in the opening poems of Parts One and Two, each describing the *shtile geslekh* of the *Blote*. The careful placement of the phrase *shtile geslekh* at the beginning (poem one), middle (poem ten), and end (poem twenty-one) of the poema—while appearing nowhere else—helps to formally signify the constitutive nature of the alleys: they both frame and form the center of the neighborhood of *Blote* and the poema *Minsker Blo*tes. And it suggests that "*shtil*" is an essential qualifier of the alleys.

It seems to me actually quite hard to image what were likely crowded, busy, working class neighborhoods in a city that was in the process of exploding from a provincial town to the capital of a new state as "quiet." So what does it mean to describe the *Blote* as "*shtil*"? The word is likely not a realistic description, but rather symbolic of a quality of the city, and the orientation of its inhabitants toward power. In the second poem it used again, this time in close proximity to the first use of *umru,* establishing the opposition of the two words and introducing their symbolic use in the poema:

> In each little house, in each little chamber
> A sewing machine speaks, or a plane, or a hammer.
>
> The noise of the machines is still **quiet**, still small there,
> Still everyone works hard, into the night and since the dawn air.
>
> In wooden houses bodies become **restless**,
> In wooden houses ballads become **restless**…

Again, it seems unlikely that the machines of the smalltime Jewish craftspeople of *Blote* are objectively quiet, rather the line suggests that in comparison to something else, something about to happen ("*still* quiet"), they can be considered quiet. In comparison, perhaps, to the collectivized factories that tailors, cobblers and carpenters would be transitioned into in the early Soviet period, where the noise of all their machines would join together.[199] Or quiet in comparison to the coming unrest, foreshadowed by the following couplet: "*in hayzlekh hiltserne vern umruik di glider, / in hayzlekh hiltserne vern umruik di lider…*" With only one letter difference between these two lines, Kharik introduces what I argue here is the keyword of the poema, highlighting the individual and collective implications of *umru* in these two repetitive utterances: *umru* grows in both the bodies of the workers of *Blote*, as well as in the songs that sustain their culture and community, making it a meta-poetic moment as well. The lines make clear that, though the machines are still quiet and small, the exploitation of their operators is none the less for that: they work from morning to night, and exhaust themselves doing so. The quietness described here relates then to the inability to articulate identity in the poema, or to claim agency: it is the quietness that doesn't allow "I" or "we" to be spoken until the revolutionary moment. It is the stasis, the inertia caused by the workers' powerlessness under capitalism, that traps them in their workshops from morning to night. The same that traps them in their "forgotten" alleyways. In that sense, their quietness is contrasted with the growing restlessness of their limbs—like a person forced to sit still too long—and the growing

[199] see note 101 above, and Bemporad 32.

restlessness of their songs. The restlessness of all these things: limbs, songs, crowds, streets, will continue to grow throughout the poema until, as with Pinye, "someday it will break the glass."

The pairing of *shtilkayt* and *umru* occurs again in the opening stanza of poem four, Pinye's midnight foray to the riot at High Market:

> It's good, like this, long past midnight,
> When houses lie, all tired out,
> To come out **quiet**, to come out sharp,
> In old and **restless** rags.

Pinye's quietness is not necessarily in his body or movements, it is in his relationship to his society, to the power the High Market has over him, a power he has not tested yet as he enters the street, but will learn to test later in this poem when he discovers that he need not be quiet in the face of those "proud," "strong" walls. In this first stanza, however, before that rock-throwing experiment is carried out, when Pinye can still be described as *shtil*, the sense of unrest remains external to him. It is not in his body yet, as it is already for the craftsmen of poem two, rather it clothes him, covers him with the growing nervous energy of the poem as he and his companion run through the nighttime streets. Quietness and unrest are held in tension in this poem, as they were in poem two and are as well in poem six. Or at least, held in tension until the "greeting from the *Blote*" flies and breaks the windows of the marketplace. Many times in Part Two, once the revolution has begun, we will see how much this poem has in common with the unleashed spirit of those poems. This moment in poem four is truly a break for Pinye, a crack that will wait until the outbreak of revolution in Part Two when it can fully split open. Again, like the restless leg forced to remain still, the use of *shtil* in these opening poems shows us the forced and habitual inertia of the poor workers of *Blote* placed in tension with their growing unrest.

To take one final look at the use of *shtil* in Part One, I will return to poem nine, the final poem of Part One, in which Pinye—finally speaking in the first person—imagines meeting the exiled revolutionaries of 1905. *Shtil* modifies almost every action that Pinye takes in this poem, which, in my reading of *shtil* as powerless inertia, adds a further complication to Pinye's ability to take action. I argued earlier that Pinye is finally able to say "I" and take action in this poem because of his realization of the distance—and the injustice inherent in that distance—of his uncle's comrades. He is effectively forced by his confrontation with and recognition of the Czar's oppressive power to speak for himself, to break the quiet, because those who might have been his role models and comrades in revolution have been exiled far away from Minsk. This creates another meta-poetic moment, as well, in which both the poem and character refuse to stay quiet. It is, paradoxically, this unique moment of individuality that engenders in Pinye the will to take collective action in Part Two. However, if we now turn our attention to the use of *shtil* as a modifier in this poem, we will see that even these actions remain restricted:

> And every night in the **quietness** of bed
> I hear **quietly**, as if carried on the wind, –
> Chains clanging mournfully on the roads
> And they, far-blown, look **quietly** at me…
>
> They are so tall, so strong, and so far away,

Every one of them a giant.
If just once I could catch a glimpse
And **quietly** say to them: "I greet…"

If we read *shtilkayt*, *shtil*, and *shtilerheyt* in this poem as in conversation with the *shtile geslekh*, the *shtil roysh fun mashinen*, and the other uses of *shtil* in Part One, the quietness of this scene takes on new meaning.[200] The insistence that every single night Pinye lies silent in his bed recalls the inescapable pattern of his work life: every day from morning to night working on the roofs, every evening hearing his uncle's stories, and every night lying in bed thinking about the exiles. His quietness in bed is thus also a forced powerlessness and a repetitive cycle.

Further, *shtil* modifies most of the action in the poem, both Pinye's and the exiles': Pinye hears the men quietly, and wishes he could quietly speak to them. And the exiles themselves can only look quietly at Pinye, even in his imagination. The quietness of the exiles is a reminder of the oppressive power of the Czar and of capitalism: exile is a political silencing. This insistence on quietness circumscribes the possibility of taking action in the poem, which we must remember is breaking the dominant patterns of Part One of the poema, in which "I" has appeared only once, and where active conjugated verbs have been thematically avoided throughout. It seems then that even here, with Pinye finally speaking, his actions must remain quiet. The revolution, the promise of liberation, the outbreak of true unrest, is also not the result of an individual action. Thus, even though the taboo in saying "I act" is broken in this poem, the ability to take action has not yet been realized. That will occur in the declarative opening lines of Part Two.

"*Umru, umru, umru'iker umru*"[201]

While *shtilkayt* and *umru* appear paired in several of the poems in Part One, as discussed above, *shtilkayt* becomes a much rarer concept in Part Two. *Umru,* on the other hand, appears in seven out of the twelve poems of Part Two. The effect in Part One is to create a relationship between the two words, to establish them as opposites and in tension through the pre-revolutionary section of the poema. In Part One, where *umru* usually signifies a growing dissatisfaction in members of the working class it coexists, tensely, with the forced quietness of the workers' oppression. But as Part Two throws us into the unrest of revolution, quietness as a quality, as a possible description of life, disappears—with both positive and negative results. In my reading of *Minsker Blotes*, *shtil* has largely negative connotations throughout Part One, the connotations of powerlessness and inertia. *Umru*, on the other hand, has an ambivalently positive connotation in Part One, foreshadowing the coming violent but necessary change and the possibility of disrupting the stasis of poverty that is Pinye's life. Yet through the continued and frequent use of *umru* in Part Two, it's possible that *shtil* becomes revalued more positively, even

[200] There are several other uses of *shtil* that I have not discussed. For example in poem six: "the city is **quiet** and vast…" and in poem eight: "The tin is already cool and the sky already **quiet.**"
[201] "Unrest, unrest, restless unrest," a line from poem sixteen.

in its absence. To put it another way, in the course of Part Two, the more positive connotation of *umru* as revolutionary unrest, or "creative destruction" changes as the revolution takes its toll on the people of *Blote* and on Minsk as a city. *Umru* comes more and more to mean a state of fear without the possibility of resolution. As Part Two progresses, *umru* also comes to describe the unsettled state of the city, threatened by the Poles to the west, the revolution to the east, and the threat of counter-revolution that could arise anywhere. The pre-revolutionary quiet, in the face of revolutionary unrest that comes to mean citywide terror and hunger, looks better in hindsight, as we will see in the final poem. The changing connotation of *umru* and, by association, *shtil*, is then a new phase of the poem's central stance of ambivalence. As an extension and development of the earlier ambivalence toward home and toward individual versus collective identity, this ambivalence touches the revolution itself, leaving unclear whether the early triumphs and sacrifices of Pinye (and of all the Pinyes) will ultimately succeed in bettering the life of the *Blote*. The readings that follow will focus on this transition of the significance of *umru*, especially as it becomes more and more applied to the space and life of the city, rather than to the emotions of individual people.

The first four poems of Part Two use a tone I described earlier as propagandistic. In two of them this is quite literal: the poems quote the language of Bolshevik decrees. Others, like 11 and 12, speak in the collective voice of the *Blote* that is rising up and recognizing its strength. In these poems, restlessness (*umruikayt*) is embraced by the speakers as a kind of power that they possess. Poem 11, which I discussed in part earlier, is the first example of this. After commanding acts of destruction ("*nat–tsenemt, un tseloykht, un tserayst*.") it ends:

> It has to be so! And the time has come
> In storm, in love and blood.
> We stand and raise up the **unrest**:
> "That far." "Down with." "And enough!"

This poem shows us one of the earliest moments of revolution, the collective enthusiastically welcomes the necessity of the "storm" that has finally come, and *umru* is raised like the banner of the revolution, or celebrated as the means of change. Poem thirteen continues what on the surface is still a hopeful, triumphalist tone, and issues a further decree:

> 13
>
> And as the land broke out in brotherhood and talk
> With a thousand fists, a thousand hymns in one breath, —
> A hurried decree was sent around
> From the Ural mountains to Minsk with her mud…
>
> Each one of us – with our **restless** pain,
> Through whose lives labor has harshly flowed, —
> "Prepare yourself,"
> "Prepare yourself,"
> "Prepare yourself,"
> "Educate yourself and join the *Sovnarkom*!"

Every single person – is from this moment no longer single,
Every head – is now a head made of a thousand heads.
We must be now together and united — — —
"Down with…"
"And down!"
"And — long live — — !"

Again, *umruikayt* is embraced by the collective voice, this time in the decree urging people to participate in the new governing body, the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). It is thus also opposed to quietness, encouraging the people to speak up. Restlessness here describes the suffering of working people, such as we saw with the craftsmen in poem two, and therefore unites them—as well as describes the state of political unrest. This poem also introduces the geographic dimensions of the revolution. Until this point, the geography of the revolution has been limited to the "*geslekh*" of the *Blote*. Here it's broader scope is first mentioned: "From the Ural mountains to Minsk with her mud…" Minsk, in this description, is the western front of a revolution that is overtaking a territory more than 1500 miles wide. This is the first of several geographic descriptions in Part Two that place Minsk in the context of the broader revolution, emphasizing the dangerous position it holds (indeed, on the western front of World War One and the Polish-Soviet War), and eventually serving as a reminder of Pinye's homesickness—a homesickness that comes to involve a longing for the old quietness that the revolution has swept away.

In poem 14, the poema turns to depictions of the darker consequences of revolution and war for Pinye and the residents of *Blote*. Poem 14 begins by introducing us to some of the change that the revolution has wrought, not on the structure of society, but on the working class revolutionaries as people:

In that year no one could have reckoned,
Who would remain and who would fade away,
People became strict, and **restless**, and loftier,
No one recognized themselves…

Umruikayt has a new and different meaning in this stanza. No longer the restlessness that might drive the poor and working classes to resist their suffering, it now describes the intensified insecurity of life and death. The demands of revolution have made people unrecognizable to themselves: imbuing them with strictness and discipline (qualities that will recur in poems about Pinye as a soldier), and a kind of loftiness ("*hekher*") that suggests a detachment from life given the omnipresence of death, as the rest of this poem portrays. Perhaps what is most troubling in this new use of *umruikayt* is the implication that the quality of restlessness that defined the suffering of the working class before the revolution (as in the lines from poem 13 just discussed: "Each one of us – with our **restless** pain, / Through whose lives labor has harshly flowed, —") is here to stay, describing a new kind of suffering. In part one, *umru* was depicted as a kind of restless energy seeking the release of revolution, of change. But in poem 14 umru becomes an existential condition, one that seems only to intensify in the course of the revolution.

Poem 15 expands this new meaning of *umru*, redrawing the map of the revolution introduced in poem 13 in the new harsh light of hunger and strictness that more and more comes to define people's experience of revolution. The third stanza reads:

> In every corner, in every street,
> A hard **unrest** waits and wakes.
> It pulls and pounds us with its hatred
> From the Black Sea to Warsaw and beyond.

This unrest recalls the mode of Part One, where the people were not actors, but were rather passive recipients of forces around them. *Umru* is personified in this stanza, like the streets and houses of the *Blote* in Part One, it "waits and wakes." Rather than being a force within people like Pinye, the craftsmen, or the united working class, here it becomes an external force that exerts control over them, pulling and pounding them, perhaps exhorting people to continue the fight despite the hunger and exhaustion described in the earlier stanzas of the poem. The use of Warsaw as the boundary of this map is a reminder of the continued threat of war facing the people of Minsk that was also invoked at the end of poem 14: "The Pole is coming, / Denikin is coming." On one side the threat of the new Polish nation seeking to draw its boundaries, on the other side the threat of the White Army. In poem 16 and continuing into 17, the redefinition of *umru* as a terror enveloping the entire city of Minsk reaches its climax.

> 16
>
> A city wraps itself in **unrest** and in black,
> Every window is covered today…
> A terror knocks and rocks around the heart,
> A terror has crept upon the city.
>
> All day a last train struggled
> And departed tired for Orsha and Smolensk,
> Now the city chokes on **restless** sounds:
> Whose are you and in whose hand?
>
> Tomorrow, again, the enemy could come,
> Again "*Chłopi*" and "*Psia krew*"[202]
> **Unrest, unrest, restless unrest,**
> The city will not withstand the terror…

Again, as in Part One, the subject of this poem is the city of Minsk. While in poem 4 Pinye was the one who wore *umru* in his ragged clothing, here it is the entire city that wraps itself in *umru*. Though Pinye returns as a character and subject in poems 17 and 18, the level of terror ("*shrek*") and unrest that this poem depicts is so enveloping, it cannot be depicted through the emotions or experiences of a single person, or even the collective that spoke in the opening poems of Part Two, but only as an emotion of the city itself. It is a state of the city, the new restless stasis that has replaced the "quietness" of pre-revolutionary Minsk. Another map is drawn in this poem,

[202] Polish: "boys" and "dog's blood" (a curse)

showing the route of escape to cities east of Minsk: Orsha and Smolensk.[203] Indeed, the geographic dimensions of the terror are not only a technique for representing unrest on a massive scale, since in fact the city's future political position is at stake: "Whose are you and in whose hand?" Will Minsk be held by Germans, the Poles, or the revolution? The sense of the city as an entity, a lived space with subjectivity, even, is given precedence in this poem over the experience of terror of individual people (though that is highlighted in other poems). Not only the success of the revolution, or the life and death of the people of Minsk, but the risk of losing Minsk to the terror is presented as almost unavoidable. This focus on the political status of Minsk recalls the Soviet project of "territorialization," the idea of building a Belarusian national (and socialist) identity, one that included the Yiddish-speaking nation. Kharik writes from a moment when Minsk has been the capital of the new BSSR for five years already, but at the historical moment of the poema, a nation of Belarus—socialist or otherwise—with Minsk as its capital was probably among the least likely outcomes of the many fronts of war and struggle. Thus the poema's concern for the political future of the city reminds us that, despite the poema and perhaps the author's ambivalence toward the terror and suffering of revolution, he was also that "true singer of socialist Belarus," helping to build the historical sense of the new nation's legacy.

In poem 17, the attention of the poema begins to shift from the grand scale of the terror in Minsk back to the experience of Pinye as he is shipped off to the front with the Red Army. Pinye's movement away from Minsk in these final poems of Part Two recalls the final poems of Part One, where Pinye heard the stories about the exiled revolutionaries of 1905 and dreamt of meeting them. In Part One, simply imagining the forced distance of those men from their homes was the catalyst that helped Pinye break out of the forced silence of his life, and allowed him to speak in the first person. Here, in the final poems of Part Two, Pinye is the revolutionary leaving his city and his home. His distance from Minsk occasions equally important changes in the perspective of the poema. Between poems 17 and 18, the scale of the poema's focus shifts from a vision that takes in the entire front and all of Minsk to the individual experience of Pinye. And what he is experiencing is a new kind of tedium: "Pinye couldn't say for how many days / He has met sleep hard in his saddle." From this point until the end, the iris of the poema stays small, centered on Pinye and his unit. Poems 18, 19, and 20 present the weary movement of the soldiers, their hunger, and their nervous energy at the prospect of fighting and the likeliness of their own deaths, so far from home.

Poem 20, the penultimate of the poema, mirrors the rhymed couplets of poem two, and its parody of a folksong. It depicts an operation to blow up a bridge, which is as close as we see Pinye coming to combat. If the action succeeds, "Then Minsk will be closer. Someone enters then, / 'Minsk, we will be coming, we will be again!…'" It's strange, not long ago these soldiers left a Minsk that was on the verge of either explosion or implosion. It was a place vibrating with terror, hunger, and the threat of death. And before that, it was a place of imprisoning poverty. Yet here, it seems only to be the longed for home of the young soldiers. The original ambivalence toward Minsk presented in the first half of the poema has expanded in intensity, the dangers of Minsk have increased along with Pinye's desire for it, and his distance from it. The final line, with its lack of a spatial referent (it does not say "*mir veln vider dort zayn*," or "*mir*

[203] The mention of evacuating to Smolensk suggests that the moment being described could be late 1918, when Smolensk housed the headquarters of the Bolshevik committees in charge of the Western Front while German forces occupied Minsk.

veln vider kumen," just "*mir veln vider zayn*"), suggests a temporal longing combined with the spatial longing, the openness of the longing to return clearly refers to the city, but is open enough to imply a return to a certain time, as well. The phrasing of this final couplet, with its ambiguous subject "*ver*" ("someone") recalls the agentless constructions of Part One. It is neither Pinye, nor a "we" who will return to Minsk, but "someone"—the poem cannot tell us who that person might be, perhaps because they "didn't even recognize themselves…"[204] It is likely not coincidental, then, that the action portrayed in this penultimate poem is a bridge-burning: even if the revolution is bringing Pinye toward a better life, is it also taking him irrevocably further away from his home and his past, both good and bad, and the fragile sense of identity, collective and individual, that he developed there?

On the other hand, the exclamation by the "someone," "Minsk, we will be coming, we will be again!…" recalls the idea of *do'ikayt*. Though the identity of the "someone" is ambiguous, and suggests a renewed confusion about identity for our protagonist, the exclamation hopes for a return to home (and for the city to be a place to which one would *want* to return). After several bleak poems that have focused on the suffering and fear experienced by Pinye, the soldiers, and the people of Minsk, this exclamation recalls the hope of the revolution. A hope that the soldiers will return home, but more than that that they "*veln vider zayn*," not that they will be *in Minsk* again, just that they will *be* again, like returning to life. This connection of the desire to live again, and to return home—both implying a desire to live better and to see their home restored or improved—recalls the dual aspects of *do'ikayt*: a commitment to a lived space, and a commitment to make life in that space better.

— — —

It's from this exclamation, partly hopeful and partly tragic (we do not know how many of those "someones" will actually see home again), that we transition to the final poem of *Minsker Blotes*. The themes and thematization of identity and agency, place and unrest that I have looked at throughout the poema all arise this poem, though they are not necessarily resolved. Here is the poem in its entirety:

21

In dense forests, in Belorussian forests
Who will keep watch tonight?
Hearts will embrace with fire today,
Tonight in a bluish light…

Quieter, exhausted ones, calmer, dear ones
Who will protect the calm?
Today will winds and quiet fires
Speak softly with you as a friend…

And he who will fall, – will need to forget
Onto a rifle, a head sinks…

[204] from poem 14, discussed above.

"Those alleys, far flung, sandy, quiet
Home, our bloody Minsk…"

This poem begins with place, not people, just as in the opening poems. The poem remains with the Red Army soldiers, somewhere away from Minsk in the thick Belarusian forests. Also continuing the pattern of the opening poems, there is no human subject (or object for that matter) in the opening strophe, there is only an interrogative pronoun, asking, "who will keep watch tonight?" The absence of human subjects—individual or collective, as in the propagandistic early poems of part two—suggests that the poema has returned to a state of alienation. This first strophe is then not only asking who is left to keep watch but also, what state are they in? The sense of alienation is further developed by the return of the disembodied hearts that appeared in poems one, four, seven, and sixteen. In those poems, as discussed earlier, the image of the heart was often connected to expressions of rage without an outlet, or in poem sixteen, terror without an outlet. The return of this image here in the final poem suggests that the moment of collective action described in poem thirteen has passed. In place of the sense of unity described by the lines: "Every single person – is from this moment no longer single, / Every head – is now a head made of a thousand heads," there are now these disembodied hearts "embracing with fire"—fighting.

The second strophe returns to the concept of "*shtilkayt*," but rather than being contrasted with "*umru*," it is used instead in context with "*ru*," from which "*umru*" is derived. In the course of the poema, "*shtilkayt*" has been used to describe feelings of powerlessness and voicelessness in the early poems, which I have read as describing the sense of being forgotten by the pre-revolutionary society, and unable to change that society. Later, during the terror of the revolution, it was something longed for—a return to quietness. The first line of this second strophe, which uses both terms "shtil" and "ru," is grammatically and syntactically ambiguous. "*Shtiler*" and "*ru'iker*" could be either nominalized adjectives referring to a man (or a masculine object), as in "the quiet one, the calm one," or they could be comparative adjectives, as I have chosen to present them in this translation. Similarly, "*farmaterte*" and "*tayere*" could be either nominalized adjectives referring to a woman (or feminine object) or a plural, as I have interpreted them here. The words are then formally disembodied, they are fragments that can be read in several ways. They could refer to the soldiers still, followed as they are by another question, "who will protect the calm?" Importantly though, the calm and quiet of this strophe, especially in the context of the third and final strophe of the poem (and the poema), seem to have a different meaning here than elsewhere in the poema; they seem more clearly to refer to death. This connotation is strengthened by the possible intertextual reference to Morris Rosenfeld's poem, "*Mayn rue plats*."[205] Rosenfeld was perhaps the most prominent of the "*svetshop poetn*" (sweatshop poets) in New York, and this was one of his best known poems, which was also set to music, and therefore likely well known.

[205] While Rosenfeld is known as one of the American "sweatshop poets," the first movement of Yiddish poetry native to the United States, he was also another *litvak*, coming from a village called Boksze near Sejny, in the northeastern-most corner of Poland, very close to the borders with Belarus, Latvia, and Lithuania. See Marc Miller. "Morris Rosenfeld." *Writers in Yiddish*. Ed. Joseph Sherman. Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 333. Detroit: Gale, 2007.

Nit zukh mikh vu di foygl zingen!	Don't look for me where birds are singing!
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats;	You will not find me there, my dear
A shklav bin ikh, vu keytn klingn,	I am a slave, where chains are ringing,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.	That will be my resting place.
Nit zukh mikh vu di mirtn grinen!	Don't look for me where myrtles bloom!
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats;	You will not find me there, my dear;
Vu lebns velkn bay mashinen,	At the machines where lives are wasted,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.	That will be my resting place.
Nit zukh mikh vu fontanen shpritsn!	Don't look for me where fountains play!
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats;	You will not find me there, my dear;
Vu trern rinen, tseyner kritsn,	Where tears are running, teeth are grinding,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.	That will be my resting place.
Un libst du mikh mit vare libe,	But if you love me, truly love me,
To zukh mikh dortn uf, mayn shats!	Then come and find me there, my dear!
Un heyter uf mayn herts di tribe,	And lift my heart about of the gloom,
Un makh mir zis mayn rue plats.[206]	And make my resting place more sweet.[207]

In this early Yiddish socialist poem, it is easy to understand the "*rue plats*" as the worker's grave—a grave he is put in by his hard work and hard life. And this seems referenced in Kharik's poem, especially in the "quiet fires" ("*ru'ike fayern*") that will "speak softly with you" ("*shtil mit aykh redn af du*").

In the final strophe, the possibility of death is quite clear, as the speaker considers what death will mean. This ending parallels the opening strophe of the poema, in which the city of "Minsk had forgotten, about them, about everyone—" referring to the alleys and low houses of the *Blote*. Here it is the dying soldier who "will need to forget" about Minsk, and about those same "quiet alleys." One reading of this reversal seems to be about failure: if one might have hoped that revolution would mean that the forgotten people, houses, and alleys of the *Blote* would be no longer "buried at the city's edge," the fact that dying soldiers from *Blote* instead have to forget their home does not seem like success.

And yet there is that word, "*heym*," "home," beginning the final line of the poema. And then there is the word "*undzer*," "our." While this final poem suggests the persistence of problems during the revolution as existed before it—especially alienation, rage, and powerlessness—it also suggests two important changes. The only other time the word "heym" is used in the poema is in the fourth poem, the one about the first experience of resistance, the first experience of action. Running away from the nighttime riot after hurling a rock through a window, the poem ends with a sense of exhilaration: "Rushing back, running home, / Breath, it rushes, it flies…" Within the lexical world of this poema, "home" is associated with a positive

[206] Morris Rosenfeld. "*Mayn rue plats*." *Gezamlte lider*. New York: The International Library Publishing Company, 1904, p. 29.
[207] My translation.

experience of struggle. It was also only in those poems that explored the experience of revolution that a sense of human community or collective was expressed, especially through the rare use of "we" and "our." The second part of this poema explores the suffering of the revolutionary period and the period of civil war and war with Poland after 1917. The suffering is so great, that many of the gains of the revolution—expressed in the poema as a sense of collective, an ability to speak, an ability to take action—seem lost in the course of the fighting. Yet in these two words in this final line, "Home, our bloody Minsk," I read the poem's *do'ikayt*: a continued commitment to Minsk as home, and to a new way of being there, in which the residents of *Blote* can articulate a "we."

The High Market is at the top of these stairs, Minsk (2013)

Ch. 3 "The Culture of Little Bits": *Do'ikayt* in Moyshe Kulbak's *Zelmenyaner*

Kulbak and Minsk

Two years before Izi Kharik was born in Zembin, Moyshe Kulbak (1896 – 1937) was born in Smorgon (Smarhon), Belarus, 150 kilometers to the west, almost equidistant between Minsk and Vilna. Today, Minsk and Vilnius are separated not only by a national border, but also by the border of the European Union, a border that is felt all the more strongly today given tensions within and without the EU.[208] But for Kulbak's Jewish Smorgon, still part of the Russian Empire, Vilna was the cultural capital of the region while Minsk was only a nearby provincial city.[209] Izi Kharik's life moved between Minsk and Moscow, but Kulbak's career and cultural passions circled in a more westerly direction, around Vilna and Berlin, before leading him in the final decade of his short life back to a Minsk in the process of becoming the capital of a new Soviet Republic. Barely a year after his arrival in Minsk in 1928, he started publishing chapters of a novel, *Zelmenyaner*, in the Minsk monthly Yiddish publication, *Shtern* (Star). In his introduction to the new English translation of *Zelmenyaner*, Sasha Senderovich posits that Kulbak had likely drafted much of the first part of this novel by December 1929, when the first installments were published in *Shtern*. This would mean that almost immediately after his return to this changing city, Kulbak began a project to satirically represent what Soviet life was coming to mean for Jewish inhabitants of the city.[210]

It is interesting to think that so quickly after making the decision to move to Minsk and the Soviet Union, Kulbak turned to satire to explore the experience of Sovietization. Unlike his colleague, Dovid Bergelson, Kulbak did not make any programmatic statements about his decision to move to the Soviet Union, so his reasons can only be gleaned from more subtle statements, and the hypotheses of critics and biographers (of which there are not so many).[211] In their biography of Kulbak, Peckerar and Rubinstein write:

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[208] When I first wrote this draft in the fall of 2015, my experience was actually that the border between the EU and Belarus felt all the more pronounced as borders within the Schengen zone relaxed. How much has changed in one year, with the migrant and refugee crises and Brexit.

[209] On Jewish life in Minsk in the pre- and Soviet period, see: Elissa Bemporad. *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. On the relationship between Vilna and Minsk, see p. 15.

[210] Sasha Senderovich. Introduction. *The Zelmenyaners*, by Moyshe Kulbak, trans. Hillel Halkin. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013, p. xvi. He writes, "The very first installment of the novel, published in the *Star* in December of [1929], contains both the first chapter and the chapter on Uncle Folye, numbered there as Chapter 8. Since that chapter would eventually become Chapter 4 when the novel was published in book form, we can estimate that Kulbak drafted a significant portion of Part One before the year 1929 was over."

[211] I am referring to Bergelson's 1926 essay "*Dray tsenter*" ("Three Centers") in which he analyzes the possibilities for Yiddish in its three main centers (Poland, the USA, and the Soviet Union), and argues that the only future for Yiddish lies with the Soviet Union. See the translation of this essay in Joseph

> [Kulbak] remarked at a farewell party held in his honor at the Jewish Literary Union in Warsaw that he was going to Minsk because he was dissatisfied with the literary atmosphere in Poland. Some scholars have claimed that the real reason was his desire to be reunited with his large extended family in the Soviet Union. Whatever his motivation may have been, Kulbak was clearly committed to the Soviet ideal at this period.[212]

Even Howe and Greenberg—who otherwise almost categorically deny that any Yiddish writer remained and worked in the Soviet Union by choice—write in their introduction to *Ashes Out of Hope* about Kulbak's move, "and then, in 1926 [sic], apparently out of genuine idealism, he moved to the Soviet Union, declaring himself a Soviet Yiddish writer."[213] And yet, both Howe and Greenberg and the editors of *A shpigl af a shteyn* make mention of a postcard sent by Kulbak to a friend in Vilna weeks after his arrival in Minsk that suggests he realized almost immediately that proving himself politically and learning to fit in was going to be a difficult task.[214] That task ultimately was an impossible one, for Kulbak as for Izi Kharik and so many others who were the victims of Stalin's purges.

Zelmenyaner and its contested reception

Rather than searching for and speculating biographically about the motivations for *Zelmenyaner*'s satire, I would like to focus on the ways the work itself articulates its satirical objectives. But first, let me give a brief overview of the novel and its critical reception. *Zelmenyaner* was first published as a serialized novel, written and published between 1929 and 1935 in Minsk. In an episodic manner typical of satire, it tells the story of a large, idiosyncratic Jewish family, living in a poor outlying district of Minsk, and struggling with the new realities of Soviet life. There is no strong overarching plot to the novel, except, as I will suggest in my readings, tensions around the family's adaptation to Soviet life and the simultaneous decay of their ways and traditions. This cultural decay is figured through the decay of their home, a

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Sherman and Gennady Estraikh, Eds. *David Bergelson: From Modernist to Socialist Realism*. Leeds: Legenda, 2007, pp. 347-56.

[212] Peckerar, Robert Adler and Aaron Rubinstein. "Moishe Kulbak." *Writers in Yiddish*. Ed. Joseph Sherman. Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 333. Detroit: Gale, 2007, p. 6.

[213] Greenberg, Eliezer and Irving Howe. *Ashes out of Hope: Fiction by Soviet-Yiddish Writers*. New York: Schocken Books, 1977, p. 25. The date of Kulbak's move is wrong by two years.

[214] Howe and Greenberg: "A few weeks after arriving in the Soviet Union, Kulbak wrote an Aesopian postcard to a friend in Vilna: 'I have come from the baths; one has to keep washing and purifying oneself here if one wants to avoid the extreme limits of life.'" (p.10) and from *A shpigl af a shteyn*: "*a por vokhn nokh zayn bazetsn zikh in minsk geshribn in a postkartl tsu zaynem a vilner fraynd, a. golomb: 'zogt mir tsu refue, ikh gey fun bod, men darf zikh do gut vashn un reynikn oyb men vil nit geyn baym rand fun lebn*." Benjamin Harshav, Chone Shmeruk, Abraham Sutzkever, and Mendel Piekarz. *A Shpigl Oyf a Shṭeyn: Anṭologye : Poezye Un Proze Fun Tsyelf Farshniṭene Yidishe Shraybers in Raṭn-Farband*. Tel-Aviv: Farlag Di goldene keyt, 1964, p. 757 (in my translation: "a few weeks after settling in Minsk [he] wrote in a postcard to his friend A. Golomb in Vilna: 'I'm told it's the cure, I come from the baths, here one must thoroughly wash and purify oneself if one does not wish to walk along the edge of life.'")

traditional central European courtyard (*heyf* in Lithuanian Yiddish, *hoyf* in standard Yiddish). In part, the decaying courtyard metonymially stands for the family's seeming inability to change in the face of the new Soviet reality. The novel satirizes this Jewish family as "backward," a trait so essential to them it is evident even in their name, Khvost, which means "tail" in Russian and was used in Soviet-speak to refer to those "at the tail end of the revolution."[215] Ostensibly, then, *Zelmenyaner* is a satire from a socialist perspective of a traditional Jewish milieu, urban and poor, though not considered part of the working class because they tended to be self-employed artisans and tradespeople. A political divide is presented between the generations of the family. The four uncles, the "pillars" of the family, are, on the one hand, glad the Czar has been overthrown but, on the other hand, they don't understand why the Bolsheviks "*hot zikh ongezetst oyf der shtikl yidishkayt, —ot dos iz nit rekht.*"[216] Their children, for the most part, are better suited to Soviet life. Several of them are party members, speak Russian, serve in the Red Army and Soviet police, and travel to the far ends of the Soviet Union as party officials. We might expect this satirical novel to set up a simple opposition between counter-revolutionary elements—older Jews stuck in their traditions, unable to join the new revolutionary future—and supporters of the revolution, the youth, the working class, the political avant-garde. But as it turns out, nothing is safe from the novel's satiric barbs, and the young Bolsheviks are its' object almost as much as the older Khvosts. In addition to this multi-directional satire, moments of poetic prose that verge on the sentimental or nostalgic interrupt the satirical tone of the novel. These poetic moments refer not only to the traditions and culture of the Zelmenyaner family that are being destroyed by life in a revolutionary period, but also to the wonders and innovations of Soviet life that grow from those sites of destruction: electricity, tram lines, earth being tilled by tractors.[217]

Satire, of course, is a dangerous game to play in a time and place where ideology—even or especially in literature—is a matter of life and death (though that is exactly the time it is most powerful). The multi-directionality of both the satire and the poetry of *The Zelmenyaners* has not been appreciated by all of its readers, however. In his introduction to the new English translation of the novel, Sasha Senderovich cites two contemporary Soviet critiques of the novel by Yasha Bronshteyn (1934) and A. Damesek (1936). Bronshteyn describes all of the Zelmenyaners as "*shilues*," rascals or rogues, specifically also as "*stikhayish-royen . . . biologish-antbloyztn . . . umitlbarn . . . naketn natur-mentsh.*"[218] The problem with this figure, Bronshteyn writes, is that it is *always* opposed to the "ruling class powers," even when that class power is the proletariat.[219] As Senderovich summarizes the argument:

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[215] Senderovich x.
[216] Moyshe Kulbak. *Zelmenyaner: ershter bukh*. Moscow: tsentraler felker-farlag fun f.s.s.r, 1931, p. 81. Hereafter cited as "Kulbak *ershter bukh*" ("begrudge us the little Jewishness we have left." I will refer to the English translation of *Zelmenyaner* by the translator's name: Halkin 61).
[217] Tractors are still one of the main industrial exports of the contemporary Republic of Belarus. They have been produced in a factory in Minsk since 1950, the company is called "Belarus."
[218] Bronshteyn, Y. *Farfestikte pozitsyes*. Moscow: Farlag "Emes," 1934, p. 159 ("raw-elemental, biologically-stripped, direct, naked nature-man." My translation). Senderovich cites and discusses this essay on pp. xix-xxii.
[219] Ibid.

> Bronshteyn asserts that the "call of blood" and the Zelmenyaners' own "version of world history" are stronger than the effects of Soviet ideology…the younger Zelmenyaners, even those who would appear to be ideologically reliable, are described according to their typical external Zelmenyaner traits and spontaneous decisions, rather than from the inside and as doing what heores of Soviet literature should be doing: undergoing a process of evolution from spontaneity to consciousness.[220]

Thus, according to this contemporary critic, it does not matter whether the Soviet generation triumphs over their petit-bourgeois parents, because their rebellion does not come from a place of political consciousness. Bronshteyn believes that the younger characters are still defined more by their (familial) nature than by a proletarian consciousness. Damesek's critique also focuses on a lack of proper consciousness among the characters, noting that only the young Yiddishist, Tsalke, has consciousness—but it is the wrong sort: his drive to preserve his family's culture reveals him to be a bourgeois nationalist. Senderovich concludes that "Damesek here joins the ranks of other critics who chastised Kulbak for his insufficient use of satire."[221] That is to say, these critics see too much sympathy for or too positive a portrayal of the non-Bolshevik characters, and not enough satire of them.

Readers of *Zelmenyaner* outside of the Soviet Union agree with these Soviet critics that the novel fails as a socialist satire of the Jewish petit-bourgeois milieu, though they do not necessarily see that as a bad thing. Shmuel Niger notes that Kulbak's "crime" in this novel is to make light of *both* the Bolsheviks and the counter-revolutionaries. Warning against Kulbak's satire of the Bolsheviks, Niger notes with typical sarcasm: "*men zol nit redn vegn bolshevistishe heldn mit a shmeykhl oyf di lipn! Dos iz a skandal*!"[222] And on the other hand, making the bourgeoisie laughable undermines their dangerousness as an enemy:

> *oyfn shlakhtfeld (un in der literatur fun shlakhtfeld) iz nito keyn plats far humor, saydn nor far galgan-humor. Oyfn front shist men. Ober az men makht dem soyne tsu kleyngelt, ken men in im nit shisn. Er iz shoyn mer nit geferlekh…tsu vos patern umzist koyln? Kulbaks zelmenyaner hobn aza ponim fun khoyzek, az afile shroyt, nisht bloyz koyln, loynt nit af zey tsu patern*.[223]

Given these dual crimes, Niger concludes—sarcastically, still—that from their perspective, the Bolshevik critics were right to distrust Kulbak's novel.[224] And yet even though he agrees—from

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[220] Senderovich xx.
[221] Senderovich xxi-xxii.
[222] Shmuel Niger. *Yidishe shrayber in sovet-rusland*. New York: S. Niger Book Committee of the Congress for Jewish Culture, 1958, p. 109 ("One should not speak of a Bolshevik hero with a smile on their lips! It's a scandal!" Translations from Niger are my own). I have not been able to determine the publication date of this essay, but it was likely originally published close to the time of *Zelmenyaner*'s publication and certainly before 1955, when Niger died (the collection cited here is part of a posthumous series of selected works).
[223] Niger 110 ("On the battlefield (and in the literature of the battlefield), there is no room for humor, unless it is gallows-humor. On the front, you shoot. But if you make small change out of the enemy, how can you shoot him? He is no longer so dangerous…so why waste the bullets? Kulbak's Zelmenyaners look so grotesque that not even buckshot, let alone bullets, is worth wasting on them.")
[224] Niger 109: "*fundestvegn iz di komyugishe kritik ongeblozn — un zi iz (far zikh) gerekht*."

an outside critical stance—that *Zelmenyaner* is not a good Bolshevik novel, Niger does not doubt its genuine commitment to the revolution: "*Moyshe Kulbak hot gemuzt filn, az er hot nit tsugeshtelt di neytike portsye* has *tsu di nit-farginer fun der 'eletrisher revolutsye,' hot er zikh gevolt kompensirn mit oysdrikn* libshaft *tsu der revolutsye*."[225] Kulbak does this in two ways, according to Niger: first, through poetic breaks in his satirical tone, and second, by never truly mocking his Bolshevik heroes the way he mocks their parents; rather "*shmeykhlt er nor, shmeykhlt shtil in di vontses, shmeykhlt vi es iz shoyn frier gezogt gevorn, gutmutik, tsufridn. Azoy shmeykhlt a foter, ven zayn kind heybt on vayzn kindishe breyshaft*."[226] Apparently, this good-natured smile toward the young Bolsheviks, toward their mistakes as well as their successes, did not satisfy Soviet critics as much as it did Niger in New York.

Howe and Greenberg in their introduction to *Ashes out of Hope* (1977), which includes (to my knowledge) the first translation of a portion of *Zelmenyaner* into English, seem to agree with Niger, and phrase their praise of the novel in distinctly American terms:

> Isaac Babel, the great Russian writer who was "liquidated" at about the same time as Kulbak, once spoke at a meeting of Soviet writers on behalf of "the right to write badly"…Kulbak, in his *Zelmenyaner*, seems tacitly to be pleading for, or perhaps celebrating, something equally precious: the right to live oddly. Oddly here means living in accord with ingrained ways, justifiable by nothing but the heart's desire, and thereby without any need for social rationale.[227]

They read *Zelmenyaner* as celebrating the idiosyncracies of this family, in line with an American valuation of individuality, and as a form of protest against a society demanding ideological and social conformity. As I will argue in the next section, I believe the Zelmenyaners and their world are much more in a state of flux than they are rigidly resistant to change, as these readings of their persistent idiosyncrasy suggest.

If these critics—reading from both within and without the Soviet Union—saw *Zelmenyaner* as not quite Soviet enough, more recent scholarship has also suggested that the novel fails, but fails by trying too hard to meet the constantly changing demands of Soviet culture; trying too hard to be Soviet. Senderovich notes that while Kulbak was working on Part Two of the novel, "a watershed event occurred that quite likely changed the author's attitude toward his own text."[228] The event was the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, which Kulbak himself attended as a member of *Inbelkult* (The Institute for Belarusian Culture, which included a Jewish department). It was in this Congress that Socialist Realism became

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[225] Niger 114 ("Moyshe Kulbak must have felt that he had not supplied the requisite portion of *hate* toward those who opposed the 'electrifying revolution,' so he wanted to compensate by expressing *love* for the revolution.") The campaign to electrify the Soviet Union is an important symbol in the novel for Sovietization, I discuss it below.

[226] Niger 109 ("only smiles at them, smiles quietly into his mustache, smiles, as I wrote earlier, good-naturedly, with satisfaction. A father smiles in this way, when his child begins to show signs of childish achievement.") To my knowledge, Kulbak did not wear a mustache.

[227] Howe and Greenberg 26.

[228] Senderovich xxii.

adopted as the "only acceptable mode of creative expression."[229] Senderovich reads the focus on the character of Bereh in Part Two as a genuine attempt on Kulbak's part to make his novel fit the new prescriptions, which included having a proletarian main character. Part One of the novel (written before the 1934 congress) mentions Bereh's time in the Red Army, but Part Two (written around or after the congreses) begins with four chapters about Bereh's wartime experiences, providing, as it were, his "proper Soviet biography."[230] While the renewed focus on Bereh is undeniable, I find it difficult to speculate about Kulbak's motivations for this. Whether he was trying to accommodate the new ideas about proper Soviet cultural production, or satirically commenting on them as with almost everything else in the novel, I cannot say. Senderovich also acknowledges that "Kulbak was still undercutting his own apparent efforts to conform to the requirements of a proper Soviet text" when he had another character, the previously mentioned bourgeois nationalist Tsalke, study Bereh's autobiography and conclude that "the entire document was unreliable."[231] A very brief reading by Elissa Bemporad implies doubts about Kulbak's commitment to the Soviet project, suggesting rather that his writing choices were guided more by attempts at self-preservation than by artistic and political choices.[232] Such a view stands in stark contrast to that of Niger, for example, who writes,

> *kulbak iz geblibn, vos er iz geven — a poet, dos heyst a mentsh, vos oyb er geyt avek funem emes, tut es nor kedey zikh tsurik umkern tsu im fun an ander zayt, durkh a farhoylener tir, un kedey im sharfer ontsukukn in klerer vayzn… un der vunder iz, vos er iz dokh geblibn a poet in di zelmenyaner.*[233]

Certainly the historical positions of the critics seems relevant, given the fact that only in the 1990s did we learn the full story of Kulbak's arrest and death.[234] Rather than wading into speculations that seem heavily burdened by our knowledge of the author's tragic death, I will follow Michael Bernstein's warning about backshadowing, and return to the question of how to understand the multidirectionality of satire and sympathy in *Zelmenyaner*.[235]

Centrifugal and Centripetal

How can this novel be all of these things? Too Soviet, and not Soviet enough; the novel of one of the greatest modern Yiddish poets, and a failed satire; a vindication of Jewish ethnic

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[229] Ibid. On the tenets of socialist realism in relation to Jewish literature in the Soviet Union see Harriet Murav. *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011.
[230] Senderovich xxiv.
[231] Halkin 145.
[232] Bemporad 105.
[233] Niger 108-9 ("Kulbak remained what he was—a poet, that is, a person who, if he turns away from the truth, does so only in order to come back to it from another side, through a hidden door, and in order to see it more sharply, in a clearer way…the wonder of it is, that he did remain a poet in *The Zelmenyaners*.")
[234] See Peckerar and Rubinstein.
[235] see Michael André Bernstein. *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

continuity in the Soviet Union, and a time-lapse view of Soviet Jewish culture in a process of decay and displacement.[236] Of course, it isn't actually surprising for a novel to contain within itself such contradictions. In Mikhail Bakhtin's writings about the genre of the novel, contradiction and diversity become in a sense the backbone of the form.[237] In this chapter I will propose and explore through close readings how Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and his theories about the "socio-ideological" implications of the novel as a genre of heteroglossia help to illuminate and understand the poetics of *do'ikayt* at work in *Zelmenyaner*. The multiple layers of heteroglossia, from within a single word to a bird's-eye view of the societies depicted, are used in this novel to represent the unique specificities of a place and a time, a "here and now": the Zelmenyaners' courtyard, the dynamics of their multi-generational family, the alternating and often opposing pressures of their traditional culture, the quickly changing revolutionary society in which they live, the languages they speak, etc. Further, I will argue that reading the novel through the lens of heteroglossia helps reveal that nothing in the novel, not the stubborn "rascal" Zelmenyaners, nor their culture, home, or politics, is stagnant or static. All of these things are constantly being acted upon by opposing forces, which Bakhtin calls "centrifugal" and "centripetal": forces that seek to homogenize, and forces that seek to heterogenize. In this dynamic we can find that delicate balance that *do'ikayt* seeks between past and future, between respect for culture and history and the desire for change, between national identity and international commitments. In other words, the seeming contradictions of *Zelmenyaner*'s multidirectional satire (and sympathies!), become—when viewed as examples of heteroglossia—exchanges in a dialogue, seeking a path that allows both the voices of culture and societal change to be heard. Seeking, as Bakhtin might write, a language not limited to a nation, an ideology, or a generation, but rather "the essential *human* character" of language.[238]

This phrase comes at the end of Bakhtin's long essay, "Discourse in the Novel."[239] In order to better understand the specificity and scope of what is at stake in that claim, I will present

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[236] These last two are coarse summaries of points made about the novel by Bemporad and Senderovich, respectively. While I don't agree in whole with either of their arguments about this novel, the work of both of these scholars has been absolutely essential for my own research and I am greatly indebted to both.

[237] Bakhtin (1895-1975) spent time as a child in Vilnius, and lived from age 25-29 in the city of Vitebsk, today in Belarus—formative years in which he developed the fundamentals of his thought. While his biography and career lie outside the focus of the current discussion, I find it interesting (and important) to remember that these two writers shared a "chronotope," as Bakhtin might have called it: Kulbak was three years his junior, moving around the same provinces as Bakhtin in their youths, experiencing different aspects of the cultures of the heteroglot cities of the Pale of Settlement. Vitebsk especially was home to many important figures in Yiddish culture at the time Bakhtin was there (1920-24), including Chaim Zhitlowsky, Sh. An-Sky, and in the world of Jewish visual arts Yehuda Pen, Marc Chagall, and temporarily El Lissitzky. It may not be a coincidence, then, that Bakhtin's theories of language and heteroglossia so well describe the worlds and works of modern Yiddish culture, which was steeped in diversity of all kinds, not the least linguistic. See Aleksandra Shatskikh. *Vitebsk: the life of art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. And Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984.

[238] M. M. Bakhtin. "Discourse in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Carl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 370.

[239] As another instance of the shared chronotope of Kulbak and Bakhtin's work, I note that "Discourse in the Novel" was written in 1934-35, the same years that Kulbak was writing Part Two of *Zelmenyaner*.

some key aspects of Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, and the novel as its prototypical genre. In the process I will begin to relate Bakhtin's ideas to *Zelmenyaner* specifically. I will then turn to close readings of the novel, while continuing to engage with and read through Bakhtin's arguments about the genre of the novel. I will start with examples and descriptions of heteroglossia, before turning to the function of heteroglossia in the novel and what, in light of that, can be accomplished in this genre.

There are a few directions from which we can begin to account for heteroglossia. At the macro-level, heteroglossia means that what appears to be one language is always actually many languages. The language of a nation, for example, is actually made up of the varying dialects of towns, cities, regions, the different registers of language used by the clergy, the government, the people, the jargons of different professions, of generations, of sexes, of literature, of the kitchen, of the schoolyard, and so on. Beyond these divisions of geography and social spheres, each of these languages also changes in time, with the epochs of history, large and small, and as new events give words and language new connotations. Language for Bakhtin is then always contextual; a matter of socio-cultural use, rather than structure. What a word or a sentence or a novel means changes depending on who speaks it and who hears it. But who speaker and listener are, and the context in which they live is also always changing. From these two points we arrive at two central concepts in Bakhtin's understanding of language and heteroglossia: 1) "languages are socio-ideological," meaning that language(s) cannot be separated from the social and ideological positions and world views of the people speaking (and hearing) them, and 2) languages are always changing: "Such is the fleeting language of a day, of an epoch, a social group, a genre, a school and so forth."[240] Both of these are examples of naturally existing heteroglossia, or "social heteroglossia" (which will be distinguished from heteroglossia in literature), the many forms of diversity always present in language.

In such a chaotic system, Bakhtin proposes thinking of two oppositional forces always at work on language: first, the forces of heteroglossia, of "stratification" and diversification that are described above—every person and every group tailoring language to their needs and meanings, away from the needs and meanings of other groups, times, and places. Second, the forces of unification, or centralization, that attempt to bring order to chaos, to assert the dominance of one language over many. Bakhtin refers to these forces as "centrifugal" and "centripetal," respectively. The centripetal force, the unifying force, strives to create a "unitary language," which is a "posited" language, an ideal "correct language," such as the language of a national literature. These forces can be "generative forces of linguistic life, forces that struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language, forces that unite and centralize verbal-ideological thought, creating within a heteroglot national language the firm, stable linguistic nucleus of an officially recognized literary language."[241] Working against the centralizing institutional forces of nation, ideology, religion, etc., are all the forces of decentralization present in everyday life:

> But the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a "unitary language," operate in the midst of heteroglossia…Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and

[240] Bakhtin 272.
[241] Bakhtin 270-1.

> disunification go forward… Every utterance participates in the "unitary language" (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)…It is possible to give a concrete and detailed analysis of any utterance, once having exposed it as a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language.[242]

Thus heteroglossia implies not only the diversity of language, but the struggle within every utterance between different uses.

The social and political implications of Bakhtin's theory of language for my purposes should already be apparent: the conflict between "centralizing" and "decentralizing" forces in language correlate with conflicts of political and social power. While acknowledging the necessary, "generative" potential of these centralizing forces, it becomes immediately clear that Bakhtin's sympathies lie with the decentralizing forces of heteroglossia, which he also identifies with what he calls "low forms" of literature and culture. Throughout the essay, Bakhtin identifies poetry with "unitary language," and the novel with heteroglossia:

> At the time when poetry was accomplishing the task of cultural, national and political centralization of the verbal-ideological world in the higher official socio-ideological levels, on the lower levels, on the stages of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles, the heteroglossia of the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all "languages" and dialects…[Heteroglossia] was parodic, and aimed sharply and polemically against the official languages of its given time.[243]

In this passage we should be reminded of Bronshteyn's attack on the Zelmenyaners as *shilues*, rogues and rascals—terms that Bakhtin takes up later in the essay as central character types throughout the history of the novel, for their ability to parody and satirize, to "dialogize" language. Bronshteyn and Bakhtin agree, then, that the rogue is always opposed to authority. For Bronshteyn, this is a danger, because the rogue can align with counterrevolutionary and reactionary tendencies in a revolutionary society as easily as he aligns with revolution in a bourgeois society. For Bakhtin, this opposition is an example of heteroglossia, of the "decentering of the ideological world" that the multivocality of the novel undertakes.[244]

Again, there are many ways to begin to account for the novel as the genre of heteroglossia.[245] Paralleling his descriptions of the heteroglossia of non-artistic language, Bakhtin describes the many types of styles and voices that are often found in a novel: the voice(s) of the narrator(s), which can be multiple; the voices of characters, represented in dialogue, thought, indirect discourse, etc; presentation of "semiliterary" forms like letters, diaries, newspaper articles; other literary or authoritative forms like speeches, scientific

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[242] Bakhtin 271-2.
[243] Bakhtin 273.
[244] Bakhtin 367.
[245] This is in part due to the spiraling structure of Bakhtin's writing; he does not move through an argument in a linear fashion, but rather makes points, builds on them, moves to a new aspect of the argument, and then cycles back to develop his original point. This offers many points of entry to the different components of his ideas.

discourse, moral and philosophical statements; even foreign dialects and languages, translated or not. The point is quickly made: *any* kind of speech or voice can be represented in a novel.[246] And from this observation, two essential points are inferred. The first is that a novel is not defined by any single voice or style present in it, but rather by a "structured artistic system" of all of those "subordinate" voices and styles:

> The stylistic uniqueness of the novel as a genre consists precisely in the combination of these subordinated, yet still relatively autonomous, unities (even at times composed of different languages) into a higher unity of the work as a whole: the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its "languages."[247]

Bakhtin believes that this is unique to the novel, and that it explains why analysis of the novel as a form often fails: because literary analysis attempts to pull out one voice, one thread from the novel and claim that as the "true" voice of a novel, rather than attempting to consider the system of systems, as it were, that structure any novel.

The second essential point is that all of these voices/styles/"unities" are represented and held by the authorial voice; they are not simply recordings or transcriptions of the language of people, but are presented by and through a consciousness, that of the author or, better, by the authorial voice the author has created to write the novel. Bakhtin calls this the novel's "double-voicedness" or "double-voiced discourse":

> [Double-voiced discourse] serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they—as it were—know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other. Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized…A potential dialogue is embedded in [it], one as yet unfolded, a concentrated dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages.[248]

Dialogue is, of course, at the heart of Bakhtin's theories: when an utterance, or a speaker, or a novel is aware of its own internal dialogue and the heteroglossia within itself, it can no longer see itself as central, primary, or unified. It decenters itself, making room for other viewpoints and other voices. The novel is unique, then, in that it is always "double-voiced," every voice within it

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[246] Bakhtin spends a good amount of time in this and other essays attempting to demonstrate why poetry is—at least in its pure or "ideal" form—incapable of heteroglossia; I agree with those critics who find these arguments less compelling and have chosen not to engage here with that negative proof for the novel. See for example Bakhtin 285-288. And see Jacob Blevins, ed. *Dialogism and Lyric Self-Fashioning: Bakhtin and the Voices of a Genre*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2008.
[247] Bakhtin 262.
[248] Bakhtin 324-25.

speaks both as the character (or narrator, etc) and as the "refracted intention of the author."[249] Elsewhere in the essay, Bakhtin explains "double-voicedness" and "dialogization" of language in a novel as entailing a "sense of the boundedness, the historicity, the social determination and specificity of one's own language," having "a critical qualified relationship to one's own language (as merely one of many languages in a heteroglot world)."[250] Such an awareness decenters the idea and the authority of a national language, a canonical literature, or a holy text, by engaging with the many languages of even one single speaker's life.

It is this decentering, finally, that connects us back to the claim with which I began this section, a claim that comes as close to a conclusion as can be found in "Discourse in the Novel," though it occurs fifty pages before the end of the essay:

> This verbal-ideological decentering will occur only when a national culture loses its sealed-off and self-sufficient character, when it becomes conscious of itself as only one among other cultures and languages…there will arise an acute feeling for language boundaries (social, national and semantic), and only then will language reveal its essential *human* character; from behind its words, forms, styles, nationally characteristic and socially typical faces begin to emerge, the images of speaking human beings.[251]

Remembering that, for Bakhtin, language is concomitant with the worldview of its speaker, this claim ultimately is about "speaking humans" seeing and acknowledging other "speaking humans." The claim has something in common with the ideas of National Cultural Autonomy that were held by various socialist parties of the time: it rejects universalist ideas that people and cultures need to become the same in order to become equal, and proposes rather that it is a recognition of and respect for difference that will allow "speaking humans" to recognize each other as such.[252] Further, we can see it as an example of *do'ikayt* in that Bakhtin suggests that a person needs to learn about their own culture in order to recognize the humanity of other cultures. Bakhtin is positing that if language and worldview are linked, as he believes, then a culture that produces non-hegemonic artistic prose might also be capable of non-hegemonic worldviews. That is what a novel can be, and seems good enough reason for his enthusiasm for the genre. I would rather not conjecture about how and when Bakhtin thinks this occurs in a culture; it's hard to ignore the messianic time implied by the above quotation, imagining an entire national culture "becoming conscious" at once or together. But I do like the image as something that can happen in a novel, in the process of its writing and its reading. Maybe even in its analysis.

I am also struck in this description by how closely it resembles the situation of modern Yiddish literature as an example of a minor literature, a stateless literature, a literature that has

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[249] Bakthin speaks of the authorial intention as "refracted," I believe, because when listening for the voice of the author through the voices of the novel, we are listening for a viewpoint that can't be resolved, can't be settled: it exists in the tension between different voices, different forces. It is changeable, moving between the viewpoint of the character and the unknowable intention of the author.
[250] Bakhtin 285.
[251] Bakhtin 370.
[252] See my introductory chapter for a discussion of theories of National Cultural Autonomy and their relation to *do'ikayt*.

always been aware of its boundaries, and conscious of itself as "only one among other cultures and languages." We can imagine that for Bakhtin, coming from the perspective of Russian literature, and with his training in other major, canonical languages and literatures (German, Latin and Greek), the situation he proposes is of a major language being forced to recognize its own boundaries. But what happens with a language like Yiddish, whose boundaries—as fuzzy and changeable as they may be—are visible to and felt by every speaker?[253] By bringing Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia into conversation with Yiddish, we create an opportunity to (re)read them from the margins, to test and employ them from perspectives to which the theorist did not have access. In essence, reading heteroglossia through Yiddish literature is an example of heteroglossia itself: the forces of diversification at work on the forces of canon formation.[254]

In the following close readings I will focus on the "diversity of languages" employed by the novel, and the ways these "languages of heteroglossia" in fact define the artistic structure of the novel, in content and form—as must be the case in a work of modernist fiction. Reading in this way I will demonstrate that the courtyard where the Zelmenyaners live is not, as it may appear to be, the unified, unique subject of the novel, a symbol of the unity and continuity of the idiosyncratic family. It is, rather, a heteroglot site, defined by diversity, tensions, internal contradictions and changing forces. This episodic novel, lacking an overarching plot and even fully fleshed-out characters (many of the Zelmenyaners are much more like caricatures), proves not to be lacking as a novel at all when read in this light:

> In the novel…the plot itself is subordinated to the task of coordinating and exposing languages to each other. The novelistic plot must organize the exposure of social languages and ideologies, the exhibiting and experiencing of such languages: the experience of a discourse, a world view and an ideologically based act, or the exhibiting of the everyday life of social, historical and national worlds or micro-worlds…or of the socio-ideological worlds of epochs…or of age groups and generations linked with epochs and socio-ideological worlds…In a word, the novelistic plot serves to represent speaking persons and their ideological worlds…There takes place within the novel an ideological

[253] On the multiple linguistic systems within which Yiddish exists and operates see Benjamin Harshav. *The Meaning of Yiddish*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

[254] As is true both in Kronfeld's theory of minor modernisms and in Bakhtin's theories of centripetal and centrifugal forces, the categories are almost never simple binaries: what acts as major or unifying from one perspective becomes minor and decentering from another. I will discuss this further in my close readings, but at the moment I'm thinking of Bakthin's own work: in relation to Yiddish Studies, Bakhtin's theories come from the "major" fields of Russian, German, and Classics, putting Yiddish in a marginal relationship. But Bakhtin and his work occupied marginalized positions within Literary Theory until the final decade of his life and his "rediscovery" in English translation in the 1980s: denied his PhD for many years because his work was seen as unorthodox in Stalinist-era USSR, he was both physically exiled and his work was relegated to the peripheries of academia, and largely unpublished until late in his life. The project of "decentering," then, was not only part of his work, was something he personally experienced.

> translation of another's language, and an overcoming of its otherness—an otherness that is only contingent, external, illusory.[255]

To translate this into the terms of *do'ikayt*, according to Bakhtin the chief task of the novel is a representation of a place (micro-worlds) and time (epochs), with all the specificity possible in terms of the social and ideological realities of that "here and now." This representation is more important than the plot of the novel, which becomes in Bakhtin's view only a framework around which to organize the "exhibiting" of the heteroglossia of the world. Further, as I have argued throughout, the poetics of *do'ikayt* does not stop at representation of a "here and now," but rather does so out of a commitment to societal and even revolutionary change. For Bakhtin, that change is evident in the novel's ability to translate between its many languages, and to expose the differences between speaking humans and their socio-ideological worlds as "contingent, external, illusory." I can think of no better way to describe the aims of *do'ikayt*. Finally, as my close readings will demonstrate, because of the commitment to representing the diversity, the tensions, and the contradictions of heteroglossia, I will return to ideas of fracture and ambivalence that have also been central to my examples of poetic *do'ikayt*, as they are to discussions of modernism. As the novel wavers between its sympathies for the family's culture and the revolution, between directing its satire at the religious petty artisan and the young pioneer, we will see that it is *not* on the side of a unifying language, but on the side of fractured and ambivalent languages.

As in my discussion of Bakthin's theories of heteroglossia above, turning now to heteroglossia in *Zelmenyaner* I will begin with a macro view of the diversity of languages, styles, and forms used in the novel to build its detailed and specific "micro-world," before moving to a few select examples. From the bird's eye view of the linguistic and formal diversity of the novel, I will turn to the *hoyf,* the courtyard itself, the heteroglot site at the heart of the novel, and look at examples of how the *hoyf* is changed by the forces in tension in its world: revolution, war, sovietization, seasons, industry, etc. One character in the novel, Tsalke, becomes the ethnographer and historian of his family and *hoyf*, a perspective that is tempting to identify with the work of the novel as a whole, representing the family and its culture. In looking at Tsalke's ethnographic projects, I will explore how the idea of "double-voicedness" helps to unsettle that too easy identification of the character with the novel as a whole, or even with the perspective of its author. Tsalke does become the tragic, romantic hero of the novel (or at least, he would like to see himself that way), and his unrequited love for his Bolshevik cousin, Tonke, creates a dialogue (in the Bakhtinian sense) between what are—in my reading—the two major forces in tension in the novel: the dedication to culture and the dedication to revolution. It is in this tension that the novel's *do'ikayt* is located. The novel closes with a showdown between Tonke and her family, whom she portrays in the worst possible counterrevolutionary light. Again, the idea of "double-voicedness" will help us to read her accusations not against but in conversation with the other voices of the novel. I propose that in the ongoing debate between Tsalke and Tonke there are brief moments of Bakthin's "dialogization," and of an ideal of *do'ikayt*, in which a balance is struck between the characters' ties to past and culture, and to the revolutionary now—with all its promise and disappointments. These moments certainly cannot be called happy endings; they are not lasting. They are only a momentary "here and now," a "fleeting language of a day." The

[255] Bakhtin 365.

novel does ultimately end with a complete fracturing of the space of the courtyard, returning that heteroglot object to its many disparate parts.

"A scientific investigation into the…culture, traits, customs…of Reb Zelmele's yard"[256]

I will begin, as does Bakhtin in "Discourse in the Novel," with an overview of some of the many different languages and forms that help to build the "artistic system" of *Zelmenyaner*.[257] There is a great deal of formal diversity in the novel, starting from its serialized publication. Serialization separated each chapter in time, including years between the completion of Part One and the start of Part Two, making the novel disunified and fractured in its very publication structure. Serialization allowed the order of chapters to be rearranged, timelines to be changed, contradictions to be introduced, and repetition to occur (ostensibly to remind the reader of things they may have forgotten from earlier installments). As I mentioned earlier, Senderovich hypothesizes that the intensified focus on the character of Bereh in Part Two was influenced by the adoption of Socialist Realism in the years after Kulbak wrote Part One. Whatever the reason, the novel changes from a group portrait in which no individual character takes center stage, to a novel focusing on the young Bereh. Another noticeable change between Parts One and Two involve Bereh's cousin Sonya. In Part One she is portrayed mostly through her relationship and eventual marriage to a non-Jewish Belarusian—a fact that scandalizes her parents and eventually contributes to her father's death: Zishe is apparently embarassed to death when the Belarusian's peasant parents show up in the courtyard hoping to leave their horse there while they go to the market.[258] In Part One, Sonya, who works at the "Commissariat of Finance," is a Jewish poster child of the revolution: educated in Russian, working in the government, and building relationships with non-Jews. But in Part Two she suddenly quits her job and becomes a hypochondriac, the worst caricature of a social parasite:

> *Dem letstn vinter iz sonye dem feter zishes nit aroys fun shtub. Oyb shoyn gut, iz zi nit gelegn, nor gezesn oyf der kushetke, farkutet in a fatsheyle, mit an ofenem bikhl in shoys*

[256] Halkin 186 ("*a visnshaftlekhe oysforshung vegn der tekhnisher kutur, kentnishn, sgules un oykh andere zitn un devoynhaytn funem rebzehoyf"* Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 97).
[257] See Bakhtin 262 for his description of the "basic types of compositional-stylistic unities into which the novelistic whole usually breaks down."
[258] See Kulbak Ch. 7: "Early Spring" and Ch. 16: "The Death of Uncle Zishe."

un baklogt zikh far der yunger shkeyne, der vuzevke stashko: "vos kumt mir, az ikh vil fort abisl kultur?" "nu, az ikh ken fort nit farlaydn keyn blote unter di negl?"[259]

It's difficult to see a consistency in this character development, which seems rather to be driven by a repurposing of a minor character in order to portray a different topic. In Part One, Sonya is useful for the topic of intermarriage, and in Part Two—to depict the dangers of parasitism.[260]

Finally, the serialized form also allows for strategic repetitions throughout the novel, seemingly out of a concern on the part of the narrator to remind the reader of crucial information. One noteworthy example is the story of Aunt Hesye, the only Zelmenyaner to die an early death. The uniqueness (and gruesomeness) of this death leads to a kind of notoriety, it is first mentioned on the third page of the novel, and referenced numerous times in passing—small moments when we are told that her widower, Uncle Yuda, is thinking of her. But the full story of her death is also told, word for word, twice in the novel. Once in the first chapter, and then again almost at the end of Part One, bookending the first half of the novel, as it were. Here is the story as told in Chapter One:

vos hot pasirt mit der mume hesyen?

undzer shtot iz demlt gelegn in harmatn-fayer. Balebostes fun der gantser gas hobn farshlosn di shtiber un arop ale tsu reb zelmeles in keler. Plutslung hot zikh der mume hesyen farglust a hinershe zup. Farvos? In der shtikenish hot zi azoy lang gekukt oyf reb yekhezkl dem shoykhet, biz s'hot zikh ir farvolt oyf. Khapt zi a hun, der shoykhet tsit aroys dem khalef, un m'geyt aroys in hoyf shekhtn.

s'hot demolt a zets geton in hoyf a vilder fayer un aroysgeshlogn, vu nor a shoyb.

dernokh hot a shokhn ongeklapt in keler, m'zol aroysgeyn. Di mume hesye iz gelegn ru'ik un blas, vi s'volt gornisht geshen, nebn ir iz gelegn mit der bord aroyf dem shoykhets kop, un er, der shoykhet gufe, iz gelegn oyf dem ayngefalenem parkn mitn khalef in hant.

derbay iz geshtanen di hun un gefilozofirt.[261]

This is repeated verbatim in Chapter 18. In both cases, as well, the topic changes immediately after the final line quoted above. The story is related, but not discussed. The only change in the

[259] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 128 ("This winter, Uncle Zishe's Sonya has not left her apartment even once. On good days, she gets out of bed and sits on the couch with a kerchief and an open book in her lap, complaining to her young nextdoor neighbor, the college student Stashko: 'Is it my fault if I want a bit of culture in my life?'Or: 'Am I to blame if I can't stand dirty fingernails?'" Halkin 205)

[260] This change does seem also to fit with Senderovich's theory about Kulbak reorienting aspects of the novel in light of Socialist Realism.

[261] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 12 ("Just how did Aunt Hesye die? / Our town was under an artillery bombardment. Housewives up and down the street locked their homes and took refuge in Reb Zelmele's cellar. All of a sudden, Aunt Hesye had a craving for chicken soup. This came from staring so long in the crowded cellar at Reb Yekhezkel the slaughterer that it was all she could think of. Aunt Hesye grabbed a hen, Reb Yekhezkel reached for his knife, and they went outside to slit the bird's throat. / Just then there

retelling is that the paragraph breaks disappear and the above passage becomes one breathless paragraph with only the final sentence, as here, set apart: "The hen stood philosophizing." What has changed is the context: in Chapter 18, Uncle Yuda has just left the *hoyf* and arrived at a *kolkhoz* (collective farm), of which he hopes to become a member. He is the only one of his generation to leave the ancestral home; even his brother Folye who hates his family and is hated by his them never leaves. Seeking a niche that he can fill in the *kolkhoz*, Yuda asks if they are in need of a fiddler and proceeds to demonstrate his playing abilities. But without intending to, "*demolt iz feter yude arayn in hisloves un opgeshpilt vegn der hun. Fregt zikh, vegn velkher hun? Er hot geshpilt oyfn fidl vegn an amoliker hun, vegn a hun fun yene tsaytn, ven undzer shtot iz gelegn in harmatn-fayer*."[262] The narrator suggests that we may have forgotten the hen that is so significant to Yuda (though it has come up more than once), and so refreshes our memory. But the context has changed; now the story is of something that happened "once upon a time" to a "long-dead hen" ("*amolik…a hun fun yene tsaytn*"). History has moved on and the fresh wounds of war and revolution should have healed. But the word for word retelling that describes Yuda's musical interpretation of the story impresses upon the reader that his wounds have not healed. If anything, the breathlessness with which the story is told the second time, represented through the long run-on paragraph, suggests an increased dis-ease with the memory. Indeed, a few paragraphs after the first telling of the story, the narrator adds: "*in hoyf iz shtil. Di milkhome un di revolutsyes zaynen sofkolsof adurkhgegangen besholem, bloyz mit der mumen hesyen hot getrofn der umglik umzist-umnisht, tsulib a narisher bisl zup."* We are told that, *"Di zelmenyaner hobn zikh umgekert fun di frontn in harte shineln, oyfgetrente vinterdike hitlen…vinter hot men di shineln bashlogn di kalte tirn…ot dos iz ibergeblibn fun der milkhome*."[263] The repetition of the story of Aunt Hesye's death, and the several times her memory is invoked by Yuda, along with his choice to leave home and start anew all serve to reveal the falsity of the original claim: all is not quiet in the yard, the family did not pass through safely. This is an example of the context-dependent meaning of language, so important to Bakhtin's theories. The same words, the same sentences, come to have an entirely different meaning through their repetition: they become evidence of a trauma, and how the violence of the war and the revolution live on, though largely unacknowledged, in the family's memories and behavior. The reminder through repetition of the wounds of the past are an example of *do'ikayt*, an insistence on the importance of history to the characters, whose actions in the present (like joining a *kolkhoz*) are informed by their lived experiences. While socialist realism would begin

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was a huge explostion. The yard burst into flames. Not a windowpane was left in place. / After a while, a neighbor knocked on the cellar door and asked that someone come out. Pale and peaceful, Aunt Hesye lay on the ground as if nothing had happened. Next to her, its beard sticking up in the air, was the slaughterer's head. The rest of him, knife in hand, lay by the wreckage of a fence. / The hen stood philosophizing." Halkin 9)

[262] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 143 ("Uncle Yuda so carried away that he played the song of the hen. Which hen was that, you ask? Uncle Yuda played the song of the long-dead hen, the hen of once upon a time, when our town was under an artillery bombardment." Halkin 112)

[263] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 15 ("All is quiet in the yard. Apart from Aunt Hesye, who died foolishly for some chicken soup, the war and revolution passed safely. The Zelmenyaners returned from the front in greatcoats and tattered fur hats…The greatcoats were draped over doors to keep out the winter cold." Halkin 11)

to turn away from depictions of the past—even of the revolution, if they focused on the death and chaos of that time—*do'ikayt* insists on connecting past and present.[264]

When telling the story of Aunt Hesye's death, the narrator both times repeats the phrase: "our town" ("*undzer shtot*"). This raises another type of formal and linguistic diversity in the novel: the voice(s) of the narrator. The novel seems to be told by a relatively consistent third person omniscient narrator throughout. But phrases like "our town" belie that sense. Suddenly we are dealing with a first person plural perspective, someone also from Minsk, someone who has experienced the artillery bombardment and, we might suppose, everything else that the Zelmenyaners' experience. A similar "slip" into first person plural occurs, rarely, as in the opening of Chapter Ten (my emphasis):

> *In sentyaber khoydesh hert uf **in undzere kantn** der zumer tsu etemen. Shtil, fayn-fayn, nor s'iz azoy, vi men volt ba eynem aroysgenumen di lungen. **In undzere kantn** iz der sentyaber-mentsh deriber abisl gezetster. Men hot festgeshtelt, az harte mentshn, vos **ba undz in gegnt** treft men zey ofter vi ergets andersh vu; azoyne, vos veysn nit fun sentimentn, shtrekn amol oys in sentyaber-khoydesh di hant bam gezegenen zikh, un es treft afile az zey tuen shoyn derbay a shmeykhl oykh.*
>
> *S'iz der klimat azoy.*[265]

Three times in this paragraph the narrator identifies themself as also belonging to the region ("*kant*" or "*gegnt*") where the Zelmenyaners are from. Interestingly, they also use the Russian word for September ("*sentyabr*," rather than "*september*") exactly three times. The effect of this repetition emphasizes the point of the paragraph: that people from "our region" are a certain way (including the narrator); they belong, both in terms of how they respond to the changes of season (which happen differently in "our region" than elsewhere), and even in how they call that season (with the Russian word, not the Yiddish-Germanic, nor the Hebraic, as would make sense given the *loshn-koydesh* term for "month" that is used, "*khoydesh*"). A paragraph like this offers the kind of break from the satirical tone that dominates so much of the novel: rather than ironically observing the characters from a distance, the narrator here briefly becomes part of the world of the novel, susceptible to the same traits and weaknesses as the characters.

This paragraph gives us a taste of the poetic voice of the narrator, which is certainly distinguished from the satirical voice in terms of genre, style, and often subject matter. The poetic voice is the one that pays the most attention to place and setting: the seasons and weather, as in the above quotation, and to descriptions of the courtyard, especially. Often these poetic descriptions are put into sharp satirical contrast with what precedes or follows them, highlighting

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[264] On Socialist Realism's break with depictions of the past see Harriet Murav. *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011, pp. 11-14.

[265] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 84 ("**In our region**, summer breathes its last in September. It's all done discreetly, with great delicacy, but in the end it's like losing your lungs. **In our region**, therefore, September makes a man thoughtful. The most hard-bitten types, who are more common **among us** than elsewhere and are not normally given to sentiment, shake your hand more firmly when saying goodbye in September and sometimes even do it with a smile. / It's a matter of climate." Halkin 63)

the difference between the voices, as well as the effect both of the poetry and of the satire. As an example, here is a rare moment in which the focus of the narration pulls back, to remark upon the city beyond the courtyard:

> *di shtot iz gelegn in a tifn, varememn shney. Shtil, vi oyf a boydem. Hundert draysik toyznt mentshn, nit rekhenendik keyn eyfelekh biz a yor, zaynen shoyn hipshe etlekhe sho gelegn unter di vareme koldres. Di produktsye fun khaloymes iz geshtanen in fuln bren. Khaloymes, khaloymes, khaloymes fun di farsheydnste shtofn. Ahinter di lodns hobn zikh durkhgetrogn alte layvntn fun birger-krig, hofenungen, klasn-nevies. Ergets unter a perene hobn zikh geshpunen shvere nepmanishe khaloymes. Elektrishe, lange tsifern hot zikh gekholemt a tuer fun melukhe-plan.*
> *Bloyz eyner in der gantser shtot, der feter folye, iz opgeshlofn zayne ayzerne nekht on khaloymes; gelegn vi a damf-mashin bay der vayb in bet un ir gekhropet in oyer*.[266]

The opening three sentences of this quotation take a descriptive tone, poetically relating the blanket of snow covering the town with the warm blankets covering its residents, and suggesting that the entire city, "quiet as an attic," is covered by one roof. The tone and register then shifts suddenly into Soviet industrial language: the line, "dream production was in high gear," takes us into the realm of production quotas, like the sleeping minds being described. This deliberate mixing of registers, or "languages," as Bakhtin would say, is used throughout the novel to both great poetic and great satirical effect. The initial impact of "dream production was in high gear" is comic and satirical: even in sleep, good Soviet citizens are working to produce dreams.[267] But in the following lines, the mixing of industrial and dream language is not utilized for satire, or not only, but rather also to poetic effect. In a sustained metaphor of dreaming as industrial clothing production, the dreams of different kinds of people are compared to different kinds of cloth. For the employees of the Planning Commission, working on bringing electricity to the state, the image shifts to rows of "electric digits," consistent with their industry. Finally, the tone and focus return home, to the courtyard that the novel has briefly left, by gently mocking the Zelmenyaners. But even this final comic image of Folye snoring carries over the poetic technique of the previous lines, comparing him to a steam engine traveling through a night made of iron. There are at least three distinct styles of narration present in this quotation: poetic descriptive, satirical, and comic, all three achieved through mixing and parodying languages.

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[266] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 119 ("The town lay under deep, warm snow. It was as quiet as an attic. One hundred thirty thousand people, not counting newly hatched tots, had been lying beneath their warm blankets for hours. Dream production was in high gear. Dreams of all kinds, cut from every possible cloth: old Civil War fabric, big bolts of new hopes, and loud patterns of class struggle were taken down and unrolled behind the shutters. Underneath a feather quilt, the dreams of a NEP-man were being woven. Long columns of electric digits blinked on and off in the sleep of employees of the State Planning Commission. / In the entire city one person alone, Uncle Folye, slept as dreamlessly as steel. Lying in bed by his wife, he snored into her ear like a steam engine." Halkin 92-3)

[267] This is an image that Zamyatin had already deployed in "We," written in 1921, in which sleep is as important a requirement as work for the ciphers of the One State (though no one dreams there): "The night was torturous. The bed underneath me rose, fell, and rose again—sailing along a sine curve. To myself, I kept suggesting: 'At night, all ciphers are obliged to sleep; this is an obligation, just exactly like working during the daytime. Indeed it is necessary in order to work in the daytime. Not sleeping at night is criminal…'" Yevgeny Zamyatin. *We.* Translated by Natasha Randall. New York: The Modern Library, 2006, p. 52.

Close readings allows us not only to distinguish these different "languages," but also to see how they blend, mix, and highlight one another in order to create the effect of each. Bakhtin describes how crucial this blending and mixing is to comic writing: "the comic style demands of an author a lively to-and-fro movement in his relation to language, it demands a continual shifting of the distance between author and language, so that first some, then other aspects of language are thrown into relief."[268]

The narration of *Zelmenyaner* also makes frequent use of found documents and citation, forms of heteroglossia Bakhtin associates with the novel.[269] In the opening pages of the novel, the will of Reb Zelmele, the founder of the courtyard, is reproduced in full. The will is written "*oyf yidish, mit di geherike hebre'ishe vertlekh*,"[270] marking Reb Zelmele's distance from the languages of his children and grandchildren, as is demonstrated in an anecdote immediately following the presentation of the will. Zelmele's wife, Bubbe Bashe, who will long outlive him, asks one of her great-grandchildren why he isn't saying his prayers. He answers, *"'bobe, ikh bin a pioneer!' tut zi a shokl mitn kop: 'ye, ye, er't shoyn gedavnt. Vus'te gedavnt*?'"[271] Just as her husband's will is written in a traditional language, inflected with the legal and religious uses of Hebrew, so Bashe speaks a language concerned with *davenen* (prayer) and does not understand the language of the Pioneers. As Senderovich reads this scene:

> The worldview apparent in Basha's exchange with Motele refers to a world that, given the seismic shifts brought on by the Revolution, exists only in language – for example, in the specific linguistic idiom Basha uses to ask her question. Motele responds by invoking a different linguistic and cultural idiom entirely. He is a Pioneer, he replies, implying that "being a Pioneer" performs a cultural function akin to "praying" (albeit a function with an entirely different content) in the new discourse of the times. "Being a Pioneer" is a linguistic item from a semiotic sphere perceived as irreconcilable with the sphere in which "praying" has cultural currency.[272]

The found document of the will and the miscommunication of the grandmother and child coming in the opening pages of the novel establish from the start that within the courtyard and the tightknit family, there exist linguistic and therefore social and ideological systems that are mutually unintelligable, worlds apart. I will look more closely at other examples of found documents and citation later in my readings, but the novel includes: a handwritten suicide note (actually presented as an image of handwriting), a postcard from a Rabbi in Moscow, a letter from Vladivostok, a citizen autobiography as part of a job application, a telegram, an ethnography, a sparrow quoting Heine (with citation given), Shakespeare quoted in English, Belorussian folksongs and, last but not least, a character reciting from memory Kulbak's own poem, "*Di shtot*" ("The City").

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[268] Bakhtin 302.
[269] Bakhtin 262
[270] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 7 ("in Yiddish, with the appropriate Hebrew words," my translation)
[271] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 9 ("'Grandma, I'm in the Pioneers!' Bubbe Bashe nods. 'Yes, yes. He's already said his prayers. In which synagogue did you say it was?'" Halkin 6). Importantly, the grandmother also speaks in a strong *litvish* accent, which I discuss below.
[272] Sasha Senderovich. *The Red Promised Land: Narratives of Jewish Mobility in Early Soviet Culture*. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2010, pp. 127-28.

The final form of linguistic and formal diversity that I'll introduce, before moving on to depictions of the courtyard itself, is the multiplicity of actual languages present in the novel. These include all of the languages that encompass the internal and external polylingualism of Yiddish-speaking communities: internally, the polysystem of Yiddish and *loshn-koydesh* (Hebraic and Aramaic), as well as the vast diversity of and within Yiddish of loshn-koydesh, Germanic, Slavic, and Romance lexical items; and externally, the many non-Jewish languages with which Yiddish-speaking Jews interacted and which they used on a daily basis.[273] In the case of Minsk in the early twentieth century, these languages include Russian, Byelorussian, Polish, German, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian. As Benjamin Harshav explains, Yiddish is both a fusion language that is "highly aware of its composing languages" and an "open system," a language spoken by a polylingual society. Thus it is natural and common for works of Yiddish literature to be multilingual and to make conscious use of that multilingualism (one of the reasons, as I mentioned earlier, that heteroglossia is such a well-suited theory for Yiddish literature). *Zelmenyaner* makes particular use of its access to this polysystem of languages in order to triangulate the place and space of the courtyard, the family, and the moment in time. That is to say, one of the primary modes of the poetics of *do'ikayt* in this novel is the careful and precise cocktail of languages, dialects, and vocabulary choices that could only belong to—and be used to represent—a multigenerational working class family in Minsk in 1929. To take the previous example, Bubbe Bashe starts her question to her great-grandchild with the word, "*nakhsol*," which means "why," but is used only in certain dialects of Yiddish, specifically in Lithuanian or "Northeastern" dialects, which includes Minsk.[274] Bashe also says "*ye*," instead of "*yo*," for "yes," another feature of Northeastern Yiddish. And further, she says it twice, "*ye, ye*," which is noted as its own dialectal feature by linguists, and documented in the *Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*.[275] It is not that the entire novel is written in a Lithuanian dialect of Yiddish, which is, after all, the author's native dialect, but rather that dialectal markers are specifically deployed to mark Bashe as an "authentic" speaker of Yiddish, a speaker of the traditional local dialect, and likely also from a specific generation. While Bashe and her family remain within the territory of that dialect, urbanization and Sovietization are drastically changing the language spoken by her children and grandchildren.

The difference within the Yiddish(es) spoken by the different generations and ideologies of the Zelmenyaner family are not only noticable at the distance of the four generations separating Bubbe Bashe and Reb Zelmele from their Pioneer great-grandchildren. Even within

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[273] See Harshav, especially "A Language of a Polylingual Society" 8-26, as well as Benjamin Harshav. *The Polyphony of Jewish Culture*. Stanford University Press, 2007.

[274] Both Uriel Weinreich's *Modern English-Yiddish/Yiddish-English Dictionary* and the new Beinfeld and Bochner *Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary* mark "*nakhsol*" as "*dial*." Beinfeld and Bochner define the term: "The symbol *dial*. indicates that a word or meaning is attested only from a minority of the dialects of Eastern Europe" (xxviii). Weinreich, always more colorful, explains, "Words and variants…(marked '*dial*.') are widely regarded as regional, although they are used by some excellent stylists for the enrichment of the language" (xxxix). Perhaps, for example, Kulbak. "*Nakhsol*" can be found in EYDES (Electronic Version of the Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry), used most frequently by speakers from the region between Vilnius, Mogilev, and Pinsk, which includes Minsk and Kulbak's hometown of Smorgon. See <www.eydes.de/Usr17AF1427TG/index/wi2/bin/w?05E005D005B705DB05E105D005B805DC> accessed September 24, 2015.

[275] As above, see <www.eydes.de>

the speech of a single generation, for example that of the four uncles and their wives (Bashe and Zelmele's children), the variety and specificity of their Yiddish, and the ideological positions represented by their language choices, are visible. When Aunt Malkaleh is learning to write (her son, Bereh, signs her up for a tutor as part of the Soviet "anti-illiteracy campaign"), her husband, Itshe, feels the need to educate her about proper written style:

> *"Ot shraybstu", zogt er, "'ikh bin gezunt'. Dos iz shoyn nit eydl oysgedrikt di gedanken. Me tor azoy nit shraybn…me darf shraybn", un feter itshe shlist tsu di oygn, "me darf shraybn: ikh befinde zikh in bestn folkomen gezunt." Di mume malkele zet, az er iz gerekht.*[276]

Itshe believes that the proper way to write Yiddish is a style referred to as "*daytshmerish*," essentially a highly Germanized Yiddish that was in vogue for early Yiddish journalism and literature in the late 19th century. He advises Malke also to read writing in this style, suggesting specifically Shomer, a prolific early Yiddish writer who was roundly attacked by the developing Yiddish literary circles as a writer of "*shund*," equivalent to pulp, who also wrote in a *daytshmerish*—and Lithuanian—Yiddish.[277] In addition to being a source of humor, these stylistic preferences identify Itshe with backwards-looking tastes in Yiddish, tastes that had been long disavowed outside of the Soviet Union as well as within it. Kulbak takes the opportunity to add in a metafictional joke, identifying himself and his novel with the modern kind of Yiddish that Itshe warns his wife away from: "*di hayntike toygn nit, epes alts mit der zun un mit der levone."* To which the narrator replies: "*Un in droysn, inderfintster, iz gelegn der vinter, vi a kalte zilberne shisl*."[278] In this moment of double-voicing, Kulbak presents a character who would clearly be critical of his own writing style and Yiddish language politics, while also further locating Itshe's Yiddish through his loyalty to a writer from the region: Shomer was from Nesvizh, a town in the Minsk Province, about 75 miles southwest of the city.

This is just one small instance of the internal polylingualism of Yiddish, the choice of register based on "composing languages" available to speakers, and the way those choices help to locate the character's worldview. A scene with Itshe's older brother, Zishe, demonstrates both the internal and external polylingualism that his generation negotiates, especially in interactions with his children's generation. As mentioned earlier, Zishe's daughter Sonya is the first in the family to marry a non-Jew. During their courtship, the Belarusian Pavel visits Sonya in her parents' house, and they sit on a sofa, speaking about Turgenyev in Russian:

> *Kimat shtendik in aza sho tut zikh plutslung an efn di tir, feter zishe tret ariber di shvel un fregt:*

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[276] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 21 ("'Here,' he says. 'You wrote "I feel good." That's not the proper way to put it…' Uncle Itshe closes his eyes. 'You should have said, "I am in the very best of health."' Aunt Malkaleh realizes he's right." Halkin 16)

[277] Shomer was the pseudonym of Nokhem Meyer Shaykevitch (1849? – 1905) see Jeremy Dauber. "Shomer." *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern* Europe 15 October 2010. 28 September 2015 <www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Shomer>.

[278] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 21 ("'Just keep away from the modern kind [of writer]. They're all stardust and moonshine.' Outside, in the dark, the winter is a cold silver bowl." Halkin 16)

'potshemu ne zazhigayete lampu? Eto zhe elektre.'

Un mit a fremdn shmeykhl oyf dem ernst ongetsoygenem ponem:

'Kamo pe'omim hob ikh dir shoyn gezogt, az du zolst mir nit brengen keyn oreylim tsu mir in bayis arayn!'

dernokh farendikt er oyf tif rusish:

'tovarishtsh, moya zhena mozhet vos pastavit samovar, pozhaluisto!'

nokh aza frayntlekher ibergegebnkayt mitsad dem feter zishe, trogn zey zikh op vos gikher fun shtub.[279]

Zishe begins by speaking Russian, just as Sonya and Pavel have been, establishing that they do not have a secret language from him—though it seems likely that Sonya's Russian is much better than her father's, given that she is reading Russian literature for pleasure. But Zishe makes his point, and also attempts to relate to his daughter and her friend politically by encouraging them to use the newly installed electricity, a major Soviet project of the time. This is all the more comic in context, because Zishe was one of the main opponents of electrifying the yard before it was installed. He then deploys the oldest trick in the book when it comes to using Yiddish as a secret language, incomprehensible to non-Jews: he peppers his Yiddish with as much *loshn-koydesh* as possible, so that there will be less cognates for Pavel to pick up on or, should Pavel speak some Yiddish (at least one other non-Jew in the novel is shown speaking Yiddish), that it will still be difficult for him to understand. After this display he switches back to "deep Russian," putting everything he's got into the offer to put the samovar on, again combining Russian with an attempt at political identification by addressing Pavel as "*tovarishch*," comrade. All of these efforts, of course, backfire, and that very night Sonya decides to marry Pavel.[280]

The examples of linguistic diversity in the novel are almost endless, so I will touch on just one final element. The above examples both portray the uncles as traditional or backward-looking: Itshe prefers an older, bourgeois style of Yiddish, Zishe doesn't want his daughter involved with a non-Jew—even though Zishe is also shown as capable of working in modern modes: speaking Russian, engaging with Soviet vocabulary and innovations, even if he is deploying this language with a deceptive purpose. These examples could support the idea that this novel portrays a simple dichotomy: backward parents and revolutionary children. But if we look at other examples, perhaps especially the language use of the childen's generation, we are quickly reminded that no such simple dichotomy holds.

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[279] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 94 ("As a rule, this is the time for the door to open and Uncle Zishe to ask why the lights aren't on. '*Pochemu ne zashigaete lampu? Eto zhe elektre*.' With a strange, tense smile he asks Sonya in a Yiddish full of Hebrew to keep Pavel Olshevsky from guessing its meaning: '*Kamo pe'omim* haven't I told you not to bring *oreylim* to this *bayis*?' After which, in proper Russian, he offers the Comrade Guest some tea: '*Tovarishch, moya zhena mozhet vam postavit' samovar, pozhaluista*!' In the wake of this friendly reception, the couple leave the room in all haste." Halkin 70)

[280] My thanks here and elsewhere to my colleague Alex Dubilet for his help interpreting the use of Russian in the novel.

Tonke and Falke are two of the revolutionary youth. They go off to Vladivostok together, where Tonke has been assigned by the party, and come back in a mess: Tonke has a child, Falke is not the father, Falke has a tattoo, and has had an affair with a woman mysteriously called "the Kondratyeva," who may or may not have been a countess. The two have a fight in which Falke yells at her:

> *"ti mnye nadoyela," hot er demolt plutslung a zog geton tsu tonken.*
>
> *Zi iz royt gevorn fun der baleydikung un ibergefregt dafke oyf yidish:*
>
> *'vos hostu gezogt?'*
>
> *'a provintsyele meydl i bolshe nitshevo!'*
>
> *demolt iz tonke tsu im tsugelofn un aropgelozn a por petsh.*[281]

We do not know what the default language is for the couple, Russian or Yiddish. We can posit that while in Vladivostok, among other party officials and in a city without a significant Jewish population, they spoke Russian often, at least in public. But now they are back in their home, surrounded by their Yiddish-speaking family. By beginning the fight in Russian, telling Tonke that he is tired of her, Falke recalls the other setting and their lives as Bolsheviks. Tonke responds to the insult by using Yiddish to emphasize that she cannot understand what he has said to her, as if the problem is the language in which he speaks to her, rather than the incomprehensibility of him insulting her so. The use of the word "*dafke*" further underscores Tonke's playacting at not understanding Falke's Russian. A notoriously difficult word to translate, *dafke* comes from Aramaic and is a term used in legal or philosophical disputation in Hebrew and Yiddish to signify something like "exactly" or "precisely," but often with a negative sense, as in "none other than."[282] The sense here is that Tonke makes a conscious point of switching languages for emphasis, and further that her sentiment can *only* be expressed in Yiddish, not Russian. The effect is to throw Falke off-guard: for a full half-sentence he is also tricked into speaking Yiddish, diminishing the effect of his second insult. If he is calling Tonke "provincial" for speaking Yiddish, he has shown himself to be provincial as well. He barely recovers in time for the second half of his sentence, an almost meaningless Russian emphatic added to the Yiddish insult, "*i bolshe nitshevo*," "and that's that."[283] There are several possible ways to interpret the significance of the code-switching in this short exchange. The reversion to Yiddish could suggest that the couple is not so different from their parents as they might like to think; that you can take the Zelmenyaners out of the courtyard, but you can't take the courtyard out of the Zelmenyaners. It could also suggest something about the power their home has over them, that once they are back they revert to the language and perhaps the behavior with which

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[281] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 62 ("'*Ti mnye nadoyela*,' Falke had said to Tonke, meaning: I've had quite enough of you. Crimson with indignation, Tonke snapped back–and in Yiddish: 'Say that again!' 'You're a provincial woman.' Tonke lunged at him and gave him two slaps." Halkin 162. Halkin does not translate the second half of Falke's reply, which means "and nothing more," in Russian. It functions here as an emphatic)

[282] Beinfeld and Bochner define *dafke* as "none other than, nothing less than; precisely, deliberately" (227). Weinreich: "only, necessarily; none other than, nothing short of" (133).

[283] Lit. "and nothing more."

they grew up.

Both of these readings reduce the complexity of the exchange, however. The couple has just come through a trying experience—little is said of exactly what happened to them in Vladivostok. They went together, both had affairs with other people, they did not marry (though they had told their family they did), and they return with a child and having sold many of their belongings. Immediately after the fight, the damage the time in Vladivostok has done to Falke is described, though things are never spelled out so clearly concerning Tonke:

> *Oy, falke, falke!—er is aroys funem rebzehoyf a brandovner bokherl, mit a tshuprine, mit an oysgeneyt hemdl, mit a farleygt nezl: tsvey yor bloyz hot gedoyert di geshikhte, iz er gekumen tsurik aheym a farshpilter, mit dem mutnem kuk fun a derfarenem mantsbil un mit a shvartsn shtempl afn layb.*[284]

The combination of languages in their fight emphasizes and embodies the division between the two: despite the fact that they both speak Yiddish and Russian, their inability to communicate is manifest in their choice to use different languages in the fight. While Falke attempts to leave Yiddish behind by starting and ending the conversation in Russian, he cannot do so completely. He is stuck between the two forces of these languages and the different socio-ideological positions that they signify, even as the bilingualism of his younger generation blurs any dichotomy between Russian signifying Bolshevism and Yiddish signifying tradition.

The different languages that make up the Zelmenyaners' world do not fit easily together. Rather, they rub against one another, overlap, leave gaps, and are generally *in tension*, representing the complexity and dynamism of the place and moment being depicted: a culture in a process of revolutionary transformation. In the next section I will turn to descriptions of the family's courtyard, and its presentation not as a stable location of identity or culture, but rather as a dynamic and changing location, in the continuing process of decay and regrowth.

"That's Reb Zelmele's courtyard that you're looking at."[285]

At the start of the novel we are told that Reb Zelmele, the patriarch of the family, first moved to the courtyard: "*a fartsaytiker moyer mit a tsekrishltn tink un tsvey shures hayzer ful mit zelmelekh. Faranen nokh shtoln, kelern, boydemer. Dos alts zet oys vi a shmol gesl*."[286] Reb Zelmele did not build the buildings or the courtyard, he simply moved in and started to take over all the adjoining living spaces—with the help of his wife—with his many progeny, who kept up

[284] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 62 ("Ah, Falke, Falke! He had left the yard a hotshot, with a wild mop of hair, an embroidered peasant blouse, and a nose that was always stuffed. Two years later he was back with a tattoo on his arm and the drained look of a man who has seen too much." Halkin 162)
[285] Halkin 3 ("*ot dos iz reb zelmeles hoyf*." Kulbak *ershter bukh* 5)
[286] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 5 ("An ancient, two-story brick building with peeling plaster and two rows of low houses filled with little Zelmenyaners. Plus stables, attics, and cellars. It looks more like a narrow street." Halkin 3)

the tradition:

> *di bobe bashe, git men iber, hot gekindlt gor on shum oysrekhenung, nokhanand, mit a min tiref…men hot zikh nit arumgezen, vi di kinder gufe hobn ongehoybn tsu kindlen. Shnir zaynen tsugekumen fun farsheydene frukhperkayt, oykh eydems alerlay, alts naye koykhes, biz di shkheynim fun hoyf hobn zikh gemuzt matriekj zayn. Ale hayzer zaynen ongepropt gevorn mit zhvave, shvartse zelmelekh*.[287]

Despite the identification of the space of the courtyard with the family, the fact that there were other people living there until the Zelmenyaners crowded them out establishes that the yard has always been changing, that in fact there is no stable period of its history. The buildings of the courtyard are described as "prehistoric" (*fartsaytik*), meaning they predate the arrival of and redesignation by the family. Zelmele moved in and started filling the space with his growing family, until the period of the novel in which the change continues with new forms of decay (rotting roofs) and growth (electricity, radio, and new connectedness with the city by tram). Even the name of the courtyard, the *rebzehoyf*, identifies the space only with the Soviet period, and nothing earlier. The name is constructed by shortening Reb Zelmele's name to "*rebze*" and attaching it to "*hoyf*" in the style of many Soviet acronyms, in Yiddish as well as Russian, such as Evsektsiya*,* the Russian acronym for the Jewish section of the party.[288] Rather than reading the courtyard as a symbol for the pre-revolutionary Jewish culture of Minsk, threatened, decaying, and eventually dismantled by Soviet life, the name and the history of change invite us to read the courtyard as a site of Soviet-Jewish culture, constantly evolving—sometimes even violently—as were so many things in this revolutionary society.

A powerful example (pun intended) of the evolution of the courtyard throughout the novel is the advent of electricity. It's introduction and presence offer occasions for moments of satire directed at the recalcitrant older Zelmenyaners, while at the same time the changes it brings to their lives is presented as understandably unsettling. Electrification was one of the great early projects of the Soviet Union. In his notes for the English translation, Senderovich recalls the Soviet slogan, attributed to Lenin: "Soviet power equals Communism plus electrification."[289] The Zelmenyaner courtyard is electrified through an act of rebellion by one of the younger generation against the family's continued adherence to religion and tradition. Bereh, who is as close to a proletarian hero as the novel has, gets married in a quick ceremony at the Soviet marriage bureau late one evening. The older members of the family are outraged and decide to hold a wedding feast for the young couple, though it must be organized in secret because they know Bereh would never willingly participate. Bereh stays for the dinner, but insults the family by reading the newspaper and sitting in silence through the feast. When his uncles can't stand it any longer and ask what he's thinking, he replies: "*dos zits ikh un ikh tracht…vi azoy me ken*

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[287] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 5-6 ("Bubbe Bashe, they say, bore children with reckless abandon, one after another without stopping to count…No one paid much attention when Reb Zelmele's children began having children of their own. Reinforcements arrived, sons- and daughters-in-law of varying degrees of fertility who soon crowded out the neighbors. The rooms bulged with black and rust-colored little Zelmeles." Halkin 3)

[288] Senderovich notes this in his dissertation as well, see p. 97.

[289] Senderovich, Introduction, p. 25.

eletrifitsirn dem hoyf."[290] The conflation in the novel of the family and the courtyard, where "*rebzehoyf*" is often used metonymically to mean the family, is here reversed by Bereh's logic: perhaps if he can Sovietize the courtyard through electricity, it will sympathetically change the family, as well.

The older generation's great distrust of the innovation when it arrives makes clear that they too understand it as an attempt not only to change the yard, but to change them. Uncle Yuda decides to pretend that the electricity doesn't exist:

> *feter yude hot gemakht dem onshtel, az er bamerkt nit, kloymersht, vi s'iz likhtik gevorn in di shtiber. Geven a khitrer yid. Di elektre hot gebrent, un er hot zikh geporet baym varshtat. Farendikt di arbet, hot er dafke ongetsundn dem lamp un tsugezetst zikh araynkukn in a seyfer. Derbay hot er shtark gehoybn di shpakuln ibern noz, vos es hot gezolt bataytn, az s'iz im epes grod haynt tunkl tsvishn di shures. Nishkoshe, dem feter yude vet men nit onhengen keyn elektre bigvald! Khayele feter yudes hot gekukt funem kamer oyf dem dozikn spektakl, gekhidesht zikh, vos der tate hot plutslung gekrogn a baderfenish arayntsukukn in a seyfer… 'meshugener yid, du zest nit, az se brent elektre?' feter yude hot gants kaltlekh farmakht dem seyfer, avekgeleygt im oyfn kamod un iz zikh avek shpatsirn ibern shtub, tsuzingendik a nigndl, a khasidish nigndl.*[291]

While Halkin's translation does not make the distinction, the Yiddish makes clear that Khayeleh is enraged not only because her father is reading by kerosene while the electric lights are on, but also because he is reading a *religious* book; the word used is *seyfer*, which in Yiddish refers only to religious books. The uncle has associated electricity with a challenge to tradition, thus he picks up a religious book for the first time in years and starts singing a religious melody—an activity that scorns the need for light at all. This scene paints the division in strictly generational terms: it is the younger generation that has brought electricity to the courtyard, and the younger generation that demands their parents embrace it.

But as I have argued, this simple division between old and new does not hold. Other reactions to electrification represent more complicated responses to the Soviet innovation, even among the generations of the uncles, blurring the lines between the old and the young and the dichotomy of Soviet and Jewish tradition drawn in the previous example. As the family discusses what having electricity will mean, the youngest uncle, Itshe, asks, "*Kh'farshtey nit, sofkolsof, vosi dortn azoy? In besmedresh iz dokh oykh faran elektre?"* The eldest uncle, Zishe, responds: *"Vos zogt ir tsu dem nayem khokhem…nu, un in besmedresh iz faran a bime, iz do oykh faran a*

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[290] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 32 ("I'm thinking…of how to electrify the yard." Halkin 25)

[291] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 50 ("A sly Jew, he pretended not to notice how bright the house had become. All day long, while busy in his carpentry shop, he left the electricity on. Then, quitting work, he lit the kerosene lamp and sat down to read, pushing his glasses up on his nose to let everyone know that electric light was worthless. Say what you will, no one was going to force it down Yuda's throat. Surveying the scene from her little room, Khayeleh, Uncle Yuda's daughter, wondered what had made him pick up a book after so many years… 'You crazy Jew! Can't you see there's electricity?' Uncle Yuda shut his book calmly, laid it on the chest of drawers, and strode around the room humming a Hasidic melody." Halkin 37-8)

bime?"[292] Itshe argues that if the synagogue has electricity, then surely it is "kosher," safe and approved, for use in their home. His older brother, in the same mode, counters that just because something is present and used in the synagogue doesn't make it right or necessary for regular people. The very mode of their conversation brings the question of electricity into the realm of Jewish tradition by subjecting it to a religious disputation, with the *shul* as the arbiter of what is and is not allowed or correct. The Soviet project of "*elektre*" is brought into the realm of Jewish disputational language, thereby changing each language, the Soviet and the Jewish, and of course the speakers who are using and changing them.

A third brother weighs in on the side of electricity the following day, attempting to explain it to the "fools" who are still frightened and confused by it:

> *"narishe yidn, vos farshteyt ir do nit? Ir hot gezen dem moyer mitn koymen baym breg taykh, gezen? Oto der moyer pompet in zikh arayn vaser, kokht es iber oyf elektre, un shikt es fanander nokhdem iber di drotn." Di yidn hobn nit farshtanen. "narishe yidn, vos farshteyt ir do nit?" feter yude hot zikh shoyn gehitst, "az se kokht a top afn fayer, geyt a pare, tsi nit?" "se geyt." "un vos iz azoyns pare, veyst ir? Dos iz bald roykh, un roykh iz shoyn bald fayer." "vet er take bald hobn derfun elektre!"*[293]

This is the same Yuda who will pretend electricity does not exist once it arrives, but here we are shown that his thinking on the matter is more complex than the first scene suggests. Just like his brothers, he is thinking through the new technology. Yuda's explanation gets some things right and some things wrong (he will continue to be somewhat mystified and amazed by the power of electricity throughout the novel), as he, like his brothers, attempts to assimilate the new phenomenon and understand it through their existing systems of knowledge—in the case of the last two examples, Talmudic reasoning. Importantly, though, these two exchanges show the older generation working to understand and accept the Soviet innovation, outside of the influence or perspective of their children.

When the electricity is eventually turned on, the pattern of these conversations continues in people's behavior: electricity is incorporated into the family's traditional behavior; assimilated by them, further blurring the distinction between Soviet and Jewish:

> *es hot zikh ongehoybn demolt, vi a min eletrishe kadokhes. Di yunge zelmenyaner…hobn getsoygn tsu zikh in di tsimern 'ilitshes lemplekh'. Me iz arumgekrokhn iber di faykhte*

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[292] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 46 ("'What's the big deal? Doesn't the synagogue have electricity?' 'Listen to the know-it-all!...The synagogue also has a prayer stand. Does that mean we need one in the yard?'" Halkin 35)

[293] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 48 ("'Numbskulls, what don't you understand? Haven't you seen that building with the chimneys by the river? It pumps in water, boils it up into electricity, and sends it out through wires.' The Jews still didn't get it. 'Idiots, what don't you get?' Uncle Yuda was growing exasperated. 'When you boil water, you get steam, don't you?' 'You do.' 'Well, what's steam? It's the same as smoke, and where there's smoke, there's fire.' 'Presto, electricity!'" Halkin 36)

vent, iber di dekher, geviklt drotn, gehamert punkt, lehavdl, amol erev sukes. Es hot zikh elektrifitsirt der hoyf biz tsu di fundamentn.[294]

The two references made in this single sentence bridge the two worlds of the novel, the Soviet and the Jewish, and show how they are both conflicting and blending. The lightbulbs being installed are named for Lenin but their wires are being strung in a manner reminiscent of decorating a sukkah, the traditional outdoor structure used to celebrate Sukkoth, the Feast of Tabernacles. The phrasing comically draws attention to the fact that these are two things (electricity and Sukkoth) that should not be compared in the exact moment that they *are* being compared. The phrase in Yiddish for "pardon the comparison" is *lehavdl*, a term from religious discourse used when comparing something sacred with something profane. The use of *lehavdl* implies that while electricity must still be considered profane and un-Jewish, the best metaphor for explaining the mood upon its arrival is a holiday atmosphere. In the course of their "electromania," electricity is made more Jewish because of how it is treated and considered by the family. Thus in this scene and others, while we watch the Zelmenyaners sovietizing, they are also Judaizing the soviet. As a result, the very fabric of the courtyard is changed: "electrified to its foundations," even as its walls are described as "*faykht*," damp or moist, implying their future decay through mold or rot.

In a different mood, the arrival of electricity and the transformative effect it has on the family and courtyard is represented through the changes it causes to the long-standing shadows of the courtyard the first time it is turned on:

es hot a fleyts geton a diner, fremder shayn iber di shtiber, aroysgerisn zikh mitamol adurkh di fentster in hoyf aroys, az me iz geblibn zitsn shtar un mevuhel.

Toyzenter kurtse shotns, vos hobn doyres lang zikh geporet arum di vent, zaynen plutslung oysgekert gevorn, vi mit a bezem un farshvundn. Di shtiber zaynen geramer gevorn ***un frayer****.*

O, es iz vayt nit keyn kleynikayt nemen itster oyf di elektre yorn un tsugevoynen zikh tsu naye elektre-shotns, lange azoyne un shitere, vos krikhn oyf di vent.

Dem feter itshes shotn, lemoshl, iz a gants vinter gelegn mit di fis tsum mashin un mitn kop oyfn pripetshik, itster iz der oyvn gevorn nay un veys, vi opgekalkht, un der shotn iz bikhlal nelem gevorn. Es iz geven epes a min modner hartsveytik. Feter itshe hot forzikhtik arumgezukht dem shotn zaynem, gezukht pavolinkes, un koym, vos er hot im dertapt, a farvorloztn un a fartayetn, ergets untern tapshan.[295]

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[294] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 53-4 ("There followed a kind of electromania…younger Zelmenyaners installed the light bulbs called 'Lenin bulbs' in every room and scaled moldy walls and roofs to bang in nails and hang wires as if they were building—pardon the comparison—a holiday sukkah. The yard was electrified to its foundations." Halkin 41)

[295] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 48-9 ("A sudden jolt cast a thin, strange glow over the houses of the yard, flashing through windows and leaving everyone aghast. Thousands of little shadows that had always clung to the corners were dislodged as though by a broom. The rooms looked bigger and more free. It wasn't easy to get accustomed in one's old age to the new, long, spindly shadows now crawling the walls.

This description is nostalgic, satirical and expressionist in its vivification of the shadows: the old shadows that have been washed away by the glare of electricity are depicted like cobwebs or dust bunnies, things to be swept away, not to be missed if they were suddenly cleared out of your house. Especially given that the rooms appear roomier and "*frayer*" in the new light. "*Frayer*" here has several meanings: in the context it would primarily signify "vacant" or "open"; it is the word one uses to ask if a seat is available in Yiddish: "*Iz dos fray*?" But it also means "free," signifying secularization and the ideological accomplishments of Soviet electrification: a literal enlightenment. At the same time, the passage compares Itshe's shadow to something like a scared housecat, found hiding under the couch. Thus the passage allows both that it would be rather foolish to miss the old shadows that used to crowd the rooms, and that once the shadows are gone, the role they played in defining the character of "home" becomes apparent. Losing them is like losing an old pet.

There is also something sinister and menacing about the new light and the new shadows it casts when it is described as "*a diner, fremder shayn*" ("A thin, strange glow"), and the shadows as "*lange azoyne un shitere, vos krikhn oyf di vent*" ("long, spindly shadows now crawling the walls"). There is an invasiveness to the electricity, perhaps comparable to the feared invasiveness of the new Soviet state. The description of electricity continues:

> *Azoy is durkhgegangen di eletrishe revolutsye.*
>
> *Der hoyf hot farlorn, unter di farsheydene vayse shaynen fun di kolerlay fentster, dem geveyntlekhn banakhtikn ponem. In di tunkele vayte hoyf-vinklen hobn geloykhtn bloye tikher shney. Di elektre hot mit shitere finger arumgekhapt di vent, genishtert in di shtilste bahentenishn, derkrokhn afile ahin, vu shtume lekher hobn lange yorn ge'etemt inderfintster un nit gevust fun shayn afile batog.* [296]

The critique raised against electricity here is that there is some utility to the dark corners of homes and lives, to having places where things can hide. The metaphor becomes quite direct: Soviet electricity is "bringing to light" the dirt, the old secrets, the long-standing and perhaps illogical customs of families like the Zelmenyaners that have been hiding in corners where the sun never reaches. The metaphor directly compares electricity with the Bolshevik revolution, in all its pervasivness, for better and for worse. The syntax of the Yiddish emphasizes that the courtyard has lost something in the "electric revolution," by delaying the object of the sentence "*dem geveyntlekhn banakhtikn ponem*" ("its customary nighttime look") until the very end, the opening phrase is left dangling "*der hoyf hot farlorn*" ("The courtyard had lost"), making the loss sound full and complete, as if the courtyard had lost a battle, as if the courtyard is the White Army. This as an example of modernist *do'ikayt*, bringing a poetic nuance that is deeply ambivalent to the political utopianism of, in this case, Soviet electrification. These passages

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Take Uncle Itshe's, for example. All winter long it had lain with its feet on his sewing machine and its head by the stove. Now the stove looked newly whitewashed and Itshe's shadow was gone. It made one's heart sink. Only after a long search did he find it forlornly cringing beneath the couch." Halkin 37. Translation adapted, Halkin's does not include the words "and more free.")

[296] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 50-1 ("The electric revolution had taken place. Beneath its rows of illuminated windows, the yard lost its nighttime look. Blue carpets of snow gleamed in its once dark corners. The long finger of electricity stabbed at the walls, probed mute recesses, and invaded crannies that for years had breathed quietly in the darkness without glimpsing a ray of light." 38)

acknowledge the improvements brought about by (the electric) revolution while appreciating and mourning the layers of history represented by the layers of dirt and shadows that accumulate in the corners of people's homes and which are dispersed by the new light. It requires an intense attention to place—to the shape of corners, nooks and crannies, the pattern of light throughout the different seasons—to understand what revolution will mean for that place and the people it metonymically represents.[297]

"It is our contention that the Zelmenyaners throw light on human existence as a whole"[298]

One character in the novel shares some of the intense attention to place that distinguishes the novel as a whole. Tsalke embodyies aspects of *do'ikayt* in his scholarly and ethnographic interest in the languages and culture of his family. In his dissertation, Sasha Senderovich identifies a connection between the character Tsalke's ethnographic study of his family and the practice of "salvage ethnography," which Senderovich ascribes as an impulse of the novel, and describes in this way:

> The impetus behind "salvage ethnography" is the perceived threat of disappearance of the culture observed by the researcher. An ethnographer arrives at a "primitive" setting only to find that the process of modernization, buoyed by the introduction of contemporary means of technology, has already started irreversibly to displace a lifestyle perceived as authentic.[299]

Tsalke's habits include writing down the dialectal vocabulary of his family (something Kulbak himself was known to do), especially his grandmother Bashe, staying up all night to identify a particular edition of the *Tsenerene*, and investigating the historical veracity of the wartime autobiography of his cousin Bereh. Part Two of the novel includes a chapter consisting entirely of an ethnographic study of the courtyard, "*tsuzamengeshtelt un ba'arbet loyt di notitsn funem yungn visnshaftlekhn tuer tsalel khvost, a gebirtiker funem zelbikn hoyf."*[300] Tsalke is a Yiddishist, a student and aspiring scholar (a "*visnshaftlekhn tuer*") of Yiddish language, literature, and folk culture, perhaps more along the lines of the work of YIVO at the time than of Inbelkult, with it's clear political mission to aid in the Sovietization of Jews.[301] As I discuss in the introduction, the ideas of *do'ikayt* are an aspect of some trends of Yiddishism, and ethnographic work as a scholarly practice of Yiddishism was often in line with the broader ideas of *do'ikayt*, as it sought to provide Jews with self-knowledge about their history and culture.

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[297] I am grateful to my colleague Emily Drumsta for helping me to develop this reading.
[298] Halkin 186 ("*loyt undzer meynung, varft der uftu fun di zelmenyaner a shayn oyf der mentshlekher tetikayt bikhlal"* Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 98)
[299] Senderovich (diss) 117-8.
[300] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 97 ("compiled and redacted from the notes of the young field worker Tsalel Khvost, himself the yard's native." Halkin 186)
[301] On the contested relationship between Inbelkult and YIVO see Senderovich (diss) 147 and Cecile Esther Kuznitz. *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 106.

Yiddishism, ethnography, and *do'ikayt* are certainly not coeval, however, as *do'ikayt* adds a political purpose to the study of Yiddish culture shared by all three.[302] Tsalke is certainly interested in studying his family's language and culture, but the goal of his study might be knowledge for knowledge's sake. Or, in Senderovich's argument, for the purpose of salvage: "Most importantly, [Tsalke] is a chronicler of a vanishing world, so the content of his notebook doubles as a project in salvage ethnography, becoming a repository of cultural and linguistic practices that are in the process of disappearing."[303]

Tsalke's scholarly and Yiddishist practices are certainly important, then, for an understanding of the practice of *do'ikayt* in the novel, and I will look at several examples below. However, I do not argue for a connection between Tsalke's salvaging impulses (or necessarily see Tsalke's work as primarily concerned with salvage) and the impulses of the novel as a whole. Nor would I equate Tsalke's perspective with the novel as a whole or the poetics of *do'ikayt* present in the novel. Rather, Tsalke is a powerful instance of Bakhtin's double-voicing, and I will argue that it is in Tsalke's doomed love affair with his cousin Tonke, the most stalwart Bolshevik of the family, that we can best see the negotiation of the opposing forces of the novel: the tension between the ties to culture and efforts to study and produce it, and the ties to societal and revolutionary change. In other words, it is in the *dialogue* between Tsalke and Tonke, in their different voices and languages, that the novel's delicate, perhaps ambivalent, poetics of *do'ikayt* is found. First I will give a few examples of Tsalke's Yiddishism and ethnographic work and how these aid in presenting the diversity of languages of the novel before turning to the relationship with Tonke.

As Senderovich notes, the fact that Tsalke would write an ethnography of his home is not surprising or unusual, rather it is completely in line with the spirit of the times for Yiddish culture both within and without the Soviet Union. In 1928 a pamphlet was published in Minsk entitled "*Forsht ayer shtetl!*" ("Research your shtetl!"), Senderovich writes about it: "This well-known pamphlet was published…by the very same institution—the Jewish sector of what would become the Belorussian Academy of Sciences—that would employ Kulbak two years later."[304] Kulbak was reviewing and editing Yiddish materials for the academy, which in all likelihood would have included ethnographic studies quite similar to Tsalke's. We can only speculate, however, that the ethnographies Kulbak reviewed were likely not as satirical or (at least intentionally) comic as Tsalke's; the chapter is one of the funniest in the novel. Tsalke's ethnography is divided into six sections: technology, medicine, geography, zoology, botany (which reads in its entirety: "*a beryoze,*" "a birch tree"), and philology. Notably missing are sections on economy, population, education, and sanitary conditions, which are all recommended in the pamphlet and contain the kind of information most valuable to the government.[305] Rather, Tsalke focuses on the history and cultural practices of the courtyard, with the emphasis on what he sees as distinctive. As Tsalke writes in the introduction to the ethnography, "*opgezundert,*

[302] While much of Yiddishism was oriented toward some form of socialism, it can't be said that all of it was politicized to the degree I am discussing here.
[303] Senderovich (diss) 126.
[304] Senderovich (diss) 139.
[305] "Ethnographic research on the shtetl was encouraged at the time to help the government determine appropriate economic policies that would enable the Jews residing in the former Pale of Settlement to enter 'productive' professions." Senderovich (diss) 138.

hobn nokhdem di zelmenyaner in a meshekh fun etlekhe doyres geshafn an eygene batsiyung tsum lebn."[306]

Tsalke's claim that the Zelmenyaners and their courtyard constitute a disctinct culture functions as a microcosm for the broader Yiddishist claim that Jews (here, specifically in the territories of the Soviet Union) have their own national culture(s). This is the significance of the quotation that begins this section, which is the concluding sentence of Tsalke's introduction to his ethnography: "*loyt undzer meynung, varft der uftu fun di zelmenyaner a shayn oyf der mentshlekher tetikayt bikhlal, un deriber iz umbadingt neytik festtsushteln di grenetsn fun der materieler un gaystiker arbet fun di dozike mentshn."*[307] Tsalke's motives, at least as they are explicitly stated, are not to preserve or salvage the culture of the Zelmenyaners, but—philosopher that he is—to understand something of human culture as a whole through the prism or sample of the Zelmenyaners. This certainly harmonizes with Yiddishist goals to see Ashkenazi Jews as a nation *among* the nations of Europe and the world, rather than as separate from them or exceptional. This idea is in turn further developed in socialist Yiddishist thinking to see Jewish workers as part of the international workers' movement, with distinctive circumstances and issues, but nevertheless part of the whole, rather than separate.

The final section of Tsalke's ethnography is the most pertinent to the present discussion: "Zelmenyaner philology." Tsalke carefully details attributes of the Zelmenyaners' dialect: they speak slowly, they replace a "z" sound with a "zh" sound (for example "*zhekhtshik*" instead of "*zekhtsik*" for "sixty"), and have other markers that are present in various Yiddish dialects (they do not have a syllabic "l" or "n" sound, they use dative case where standard Yiddish would use accusative, etc).[308] One of the dialectal features Tsalke notes is a well-known feature of some forms of Northeastern Yiddish, called "*sabesdiker losn*." The feature entails a replacement of "sh" sounds with "s" sounds, as indicated by the name for the feature: the phrase "*dos shabesdike loshn*" in standard Yiddish (meaning "the Sabbath language") would be pronounced as "*der sabesdiker losn*" by a speaker of the dialect.[309] "Especially informative" ("*bazunders balerndik*") according to Tsalke, is the creation of new vocabulary by the Zelmenyaners. He cites as examples: "*shilyue, khutske, finteflyush, trivalner, bradzhidle u.a.v*."[310] Of these, two can be found in the dictionary. I discussed "*shilyue*" (meaning "scamp, rogue, good-for-nothing"[311]),

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[306] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 97 ("Set apart, the Zelmenyaners forged a distinctive lifestyle of their own in the course of the next generations." Halkin 186, translation altered)

[307] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 98 ("According to our opinion, the accomplishments of the Zelmenyaners throw a light on human activity in general, and for this reason it is absolutely necessary to establish the borders of the material and spiritual work of these people." My translation)

[308] On Yiddish dialectology see Neil G. Jacobs. "Dialectology." *Yiddish: A Linguistic Introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. And Marvin Herzog, Vera Baviskar, and Uriel Weinreich. *The Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1992.

[309] See Max Weinreich. *History of the Yiddish Language.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 534. The phrase also identifies the loss of the neuter gender in this dialect.

[310] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 107. Halkin translates this line: "'whippersnaps,' 'shmintselgessel,' 'pifflehead,' and the like." (Halkin 192) "Shmintelgentsl" is used by Kulbak elsewhere in the novel, apparently another Zelmenyaner neologism, but it would take Tsalke to tell us whether it is a valid translation of "*khutske*." Aside from "whippersnaps," which is used throughout the novel, Halkin seems to have chosen words that resemble the whimsical sound of these neologisms.

[311] Beinfeld and Bochner 677.

earlier in the chapter as Kulbak's term for the revolutionary youth, which was thrown back at him by Yashe Bronshteyn in his critique of the novel, calling all of the Zelmenyaners "*shilyues*." As Senderovich notes in the introduction to the translation, the term was likely coined by Kulbak in this novel, becoming widely enough used to enter the vernacular.[312] "*Trivalne*" is also in the dictionary, though marked as a dialecticism (like the elements of Bubbe Bashe's speech discussed earlier), meaning "serious; firm, stable."[313] The other two terms are not found in dictionaries, though Kulbak does use "*finteflyush*" earlier in the novel, as an insult in a list with "*shilyue*."[314] Hunting for the meanings of these words feels something like the work of scholars of ancient texts, when faced with a word that appears in the written recond only once or twice, giving very little context from which to ascertain its meaning. Perhaps that's an appropriate description of Tsalke's (and Kulbak's) love for the study of dialect, and the linguistic and anthropological work of understanding the word in its context.

What is noteworthy in this (aside from watching Kulbak's creation of new words entering spoken Yiddish through literature, in a reflection of his characters' creation of new words) is the comment with which Tsalke follows these philological observations, and ends his ethnography:

> *di dozike shprakh-tetikayt shpart fun hoyf mit a temper akshones. Shprakh iz an onshtekndike zakh un farshpreyt zikh oykh oysern hoyf. Di grenets fun zelmenyanishn loshn tsit zikh haynt tsu tog fun mayrev-zayt unter minsk, lahoysk, samakhvalovitsh, smilovitsh, un pahost tsu selets, bay molyev, un vayter in der mizrekh-doremdiker rikhtung*.[315]

More than three-quarters of the way through a novel that has barely left the space of a single courtyard, and just as rarely even referred to locations outside the courtyard, at the end of an entire ethnography of that single courtyard, Tsalke leaves us with the information that the Zelmenyaner dialect covers a territory that stretches from Minsk nearly all the way to Mogilev, more than 100 miles away (see figure below).

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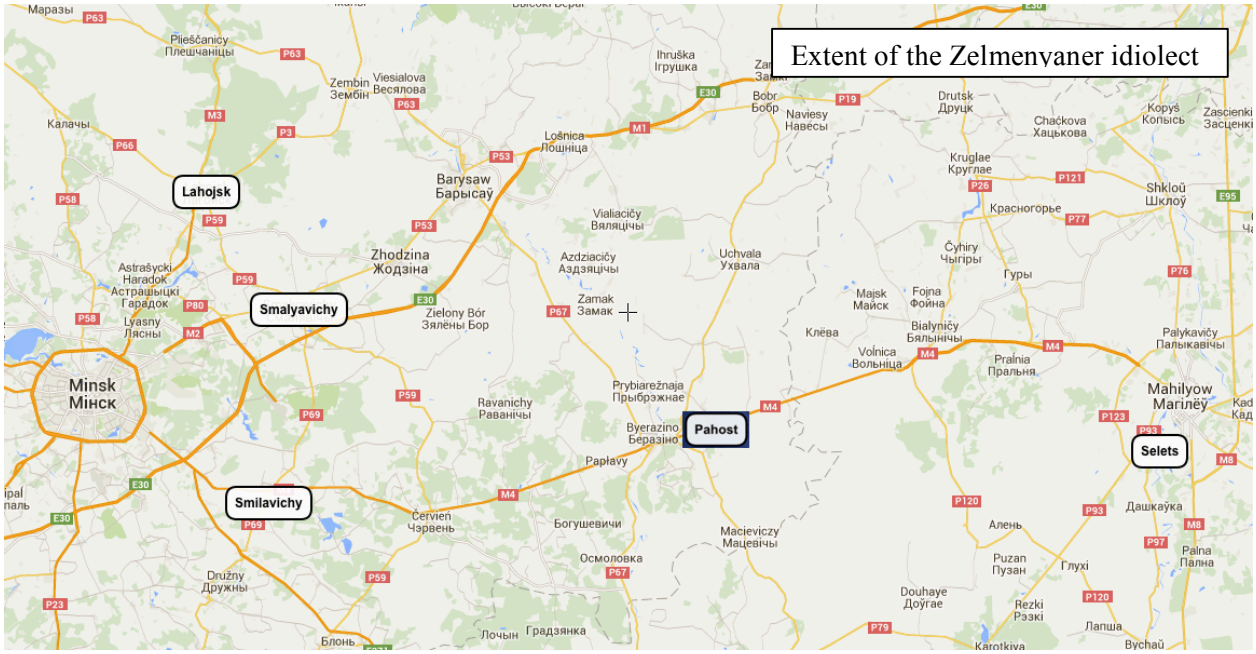
[312] Senderovich xix.
[313] Beinfeld and Bochner 330.
[314] see Kulbak *ershter bukh* 114
[315] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 108 ("Such expressions have spread beyond the yard with obstinate persistency. Language is contagious. The western limits of the Zelmenyaner idiolect are just below Minsk, Logoysk, Samakhvalovitsh, Smilovitsh, and Pahost to Seletz near Mogilev, and from there in a southeasterly direction." Halkin 192 Translation altered)



Tsalke has no explanation for the wide reach of the "Zelmenyaner idiolect," except for their "*temper akshones*," their "blunt obstinancy," and the fact that "language is contagious." The comment works first to comic effect, in line with the double-voicedness of the entire ethnography. Tsalke takes his work with deadly seriousness, but his attempts at scholarly objectivity are constantly betrayed by his insider status. For example, the section on "Zelmenyaner Geography" demonstrates how the Zelmeyaners' imagination of the world is limited to a few semi-mythical places outside of the courtyard. The first of these is "*noyrok*," a misspelling and mispronunciation of "*nyu-york*," Yiddish for New York. Tsalke writes that an aunt has lived in *noyrok* for thirty years, "*zi iz avekgeforn in* amerike*, nor zi hot zikh beser bazetst in noyrok*."[316] The Zelmenyaners—including Tsalke—are unaware that New York is in America, which makes good comic sense given that New York was perhaps the top destination, truly a world unto itself, in the imaginary of Eastern European Jewish immigrants (and likely still for most New Yorkers today).

Given Tsalke's education, it is hard to believe him capable of this and other examples of ignorance throughout the ethnography. But the effect is to remind us that Tsalke is an insider in the world he studies, and while he might be able to identify the publisher of a 17th century *Tsenerene* without a title page, he is no more sure than the rest of his family which is the farthest away: Palestine, Austria, or Vladivostok (it is Vladivostok, by at least 3000 miles). In the example above of the vast spread of the Zelmenyaner dialect, the joke on Tsalke is likely that what he assumes to be the unique dialect of his family is actually a much broader regional dialect that did not, in fact, originate in the *hoyf*. The implied author mocks his scholarly character for the outsized pretensions of his study, and for not seeing his own limitations, or rather, how his shared perspective with the subjects of his study prevents him from fully seeing their outline,

[316] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 102 ("Although their original destination was America, they settled there instead." Halkin 189)

their "*grenets*," as was his original intention. Perhaps this lampoon is directed at the Yiddishist scholars and cultural activists with whom Kulbak was closely connected, both in Vilna and Minsk, and perhaps he included himself in that group—but the satire aims more directly and closely at the novel itself. It suggests that the novel is aware of itself, at the way its borders overlap with the borders of its characters, cannot be separated from them and wouldn't want to be. This is an instance of the self-awareness that, according to Bakhtin, can only arise out of the double-voicedness, the heteroglossia, the "infectiousness of language," of the novel. It's also a reminder that *do'ikayt* is not just about the self-knowledge that can arise from scholarly work such as ethnography, it is also about putting that self-knowledge toward political work.

"They're talking in the most gorgeous Yiddish."[317]

With this as background on Tsalke's character and socio-ideology in the novel, I will turn finally to his relationship with his Bolshevik cousin, Tonke. Chapters eight and nine of Part One are dedicated to this relationship: "Tsalke and Tonke" and "More about Tsalke." Tsalke likes to visit Tonke, a fact that makes her father Zishe nervous, because Zelmenyaners don't like Zelmenyaners, especially as sons-in-law.[318] But after Zishe's other daughter Sonye marries a non-Jew, Zishe's opinion of Tsalke improves. In chapter eight, Tsalke visits Tonke and the two go for a swim. The entire scene is relayed in the bittersweet tone of a person remembering a childhood romance: from Tsalke's perspective we observe as everything Tonke does causes him to fall more deeply in love. In part because of Tsalke's romanticism, and in part because of an attraction of opposites, and the dialogue of opposing forces that the two represent:

> *Tsalke iz fun di naye gelernte. Er iz gezesn di nakht iber an alte "tseneurene," mizdaveg geven zikh mit fartsaytike yidenes un azoy arum farhulyet di nakht. Er iz derfar abisl mid, abisl farshlofn, un zayne riyoynes shvebn arum fun rivke bas bsuel biz tonke bas zishe, vos zey zaynen im ale lib…tonke tut ober plutslung a shprung fun der sofe un nemt im on far der grober peye: "kum kertshener hering, mirn zikh a loyf ton bodn*."[319]

Tsalke's passion for the *Tsenerene*, the 16th century women's devotional bible, is another signifier of his Yiddishism (the book is one of the earliest and most popular works printed in Yiddish), but in this instance it also feminizes him, as it reminds us of the social-historical associations of Yiddish as a language for women, if not itself somehow inherently feminine.[320]

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[317] Halkin 179 ("*zey reydn di sheynste vortn fun der zhargonisher shprakhe*." Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 87, says Esther the penmanship teacher in her extreme *daytshmerish*)

[318] Halkin 42.

[319] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 68-9 ("Tsalke was the new kind of scholar. He had sat all night over an old *Tsenerene*, joining himself with the Jewesses of old and so misusing an entire night. For this reason, he was a little tired, a bit lethargic, and his thoughts wandered from Rebecca daughter of Besuel to Tonke daughter of Zishe, whom he loved equally…Suddenly Tonke sprang from the sofa and grabbed him by his sidelock: "Come on, you herring, we'll go for a swim." My translation)

[320] The essential study of the gendering of Yiddish (and Hebrew) is Naomi Seidman's *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Tsalke has effectively spent the night praying to the Biblical women as was intended for the female readers of the work to do. The passage shows that Tsalke idealizes Tonke in the same way as he idealizes the Biblical women, the *Tsenerene*, and Yiddish in general (all feminized objects), while at the same time it feminizes him in contrast with Tonke's masculine Bolshevism. This dynamic is demonstrated as soon as the two set out for their swim. Tsalke tells Tonke of his research on the early edition of the *Tsenerene*, and after thinking it over, she responds:

> *"Hering, vos far a vert hot dayn antdekung far der sotsboyung?"*
>
> *"Hm…"*
>
> *"Oyb azoy," hot zi zikh plutslung oysgekirevet, "oyb azoy, kenstu geyn shlofn!"*
>
> *Zi hot im untergeshtelt a fus, vi es tuen groyse shleger, un arayngeshtoysn dem gelerntn in di korn.*
>
> *"idiotke!" hot er geshrien, zukhndik di briln oyf der erd.*[321]

Unimpressed with esoteric research, Tonke is concerned only with the productive contributions to "*sotsboyung*," a Soviet Yiddish compound of "*sotsyalistishe boyung*," socialist construction. Her use of the term emphasizes the different languages the two are speaking, while still speaking Yiddish. She drives the point home by physically bullying Tsalke, demonstrating that she is the more masculine and powerful not only in ideology. This interaction calls up several layers of gendered identities: Tsalke is, in this scene, the stereotypical scholar Jew, inhabiting what was once a respected male position in traditional Jewish society, but which came to be seen as emasculated by Western or "enlightened" standards. The internal Soviet Jewish ideology also rejected the ideal of the scholar Jew as unproductive and parasitic. Tonke tripping Tsalke is a scene straight out of revolutionary Yiddish propaganda, with her vibrant physicality and dedication to the revolution conquering his weak scholasticism—it is also a literalized Yiddish idiom, "*untershteln a fisl*," literally "to trip someone up," with the same sense in English of "to undermine."

There are brief suggestions in this scene and a few others that the dialogue is not entirely one-sided, that Tonke is interested in attracting Tsalke, winning him over to Bolshevism, and later in analyzing his ideological failings. Immediately after tripping him,

> *Zi hot aropgekhapt di bluzke un dos letste shtikl veg derlofn hendum biz tsum taykh.*
>
> *Fundervaytns nokh hot tsalke derzen a filklendikn shnur vaser, beys zi iz aropgeshprungen fun breg. Far zayne oygn hot a blend geton—un mit a tsiter in hartsn—tonkes farbroynter kerper; er hot derhert ir oysgeshray, un dos alts hot zikh epes a mish geton mit a sharfn veytik. Tsalke hot zikh oysgetsoygn in groz, abisl fundervaytns, gekayet*

[321] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 69 ("'Herring! What does your discovery mean for socialist construction?' Tsalke cleared his throat. 'In that case,' she said, turning to face him, 'you may as well go back to sleep!' Sticking out her foot like a wrestler, she sent the young scholar sprawling in some wheat. 'You moron!' he shouted, pawing the ground for his glasses." 52)

a shtroyele, un oyfgeregt getrakht un nit getrakht.

Zi hot zikh dortn gevalgert in vaser, aroysgeshpritst, unter der gliendiker zun, kalte vaser-raketn; plutslung hot zi zikh aroysgehoybn, glantsndik mit dem nasn layb, un oysgeshrien:

"tsalke, ze, a sheyner kerper, tsi nit?" [322]

The passage is from Tsalke's perspective; the reader watches Tonke with him, as her body gleams in the sun, almost blinding Tsalke—just like the arrival of the harsh Soviet electric lights in the courtyard. Tonke's body then joins electricity as a metaphor for Soviet power, further emphasized by the choice of "*farbroynter*," (browned) to describe her. As the two walk home from the river they see a group of workers laying tracks for a new tramline. They too are described as having "*broyne kerper, mit opgebrente pleytses*" ("brown bodies with tanned shoulders"), connecting Tonke's healthy and attractive body with those of the workers. The sight of the workers becomes an extended metaphor of working bodies as full of electricity and light, building on the metaphor of electricity and light as Soviet power in all its senses:

Di krume zun hot zikh opgeshlogn on zeyere hoyle pleytses, vi on geshlifene shpiglen…Di muskuln hobn zikh arumgeglitsht oyf di layber, vi lebedike, un in gang fun der arbet hobn zey zikh gekhvalyet iber der fuler gas kerpers, vi broyne khvalyes iber a modnem mentshlekhn taykh…fun tsayt tsu tsayt hot ergets, tsvishn a grupe nakete layber, oyfgerisn der atsetilen mit a zhiperay; der bloyer fayer tut a knal, tseshit zikh in fosfor-shterndlekh… "sheyn, vos?" hot tonke gefregt. "yo," hot ge'entfert tsalke, vi fun a bikhl aroys, "di sheynkayt fun mentshlekher arbet."[323]

The browned bodies mix with, reflect, and enhance the light of the sun, which is also mixed with the sparks of their acetylene torches. The image of "little stars of phosphorescent blue fire" also echoes Kulbak's short poem that appears as the epigraph of his first book of poetry, *Shirim*: "*gezen hob ikh yidishe verter vi fayerlekh kleyne, vi fayerelekh kleyne, / vi funkn getsoygn fun finstern orets, / gefilt hob ikh yidishe verter vi taybelekh reyne, vi taybelekh reyne / di taybelekh vorkn un vorkn in harts*."[324] This intertextual reference to his own early work adds a further level

[322] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 70 ("Tonke took off her blouse and ran the rest of the way to the river. From a distance, Tsalke saw the sparking ribbon of water into which she plunged, her browned body a blinding flash that made his heart flutter, her cry blending with his pain. Lying down in the grass, he chewed on a blade of it while a confusion of thoughts came and went. Tonke splashed in the water, spraying cold fireworks at the glowing sun. All at once she stood, her wet body glistening, and called: 'Tsalke, look! Am I beautiful or not?'" 52 translation altered)

[323] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 71-2 ("The slanting sun glanced off the burnished mirrors of their strong backs…Their muscles rippled like living creatures in a wave that ran down the street as though in a strange brown sea…Now and then sparks shot up from the half-naked figures with a crackle, little stars of phospherescent blue fire… 'Isn't it a gorgeous sight?' Tonke asked. 'Yes. The beauty of human toil.' Tsalke could have been quoting from a textbook." Halkin 54)

[324] *Shirim*. Vilne: *farlag fun dem farayn fun di yidishe literatur un zhurnalistn in vilne*, 1920. ("I've seen Yiddish words like little fires, like little fires, / Like sparks drawn out of dark ore. / I've seen Yiddish words like pure doves, like pure doves, / These doves coo and coo in my heart." Translated by Robert Adler Peckerar)

to the metaphor: Kulbak's Yiddish description of the sparks of the workers' labor are those same "little fires" of Yiddish words that have always inspired his poetry. On one level then, at least, Kulbak seems to align himself with Tonke's comment: the sparks of "human toil" are like the fires of Yiddish words, both of which are beautiful, as is Tonke, aligned with the tanned bodies of the workers. Tonke is then asking the same question of Tsalke at the river and while watching the workers, not "am I beautiful" and "are they beautiful," but "are *we* beautiful?" By repeating the question, Tonke connects herself to the workers as representations of the Soviet ideal, as does the narrator through the similar descriptions of both. Further, the question invites Tsalke to see the attractiveness of Tonke's ideology by acknowledging her attractiveness and then, by extension, the attractiveness of the workers as they build another new technology: the tram. Tsalke does not answer Tonke's first question by the river, and the second time it's impossible to tell whether his answer is sarcastic or not. He answers as if reading from a pamphlet. Is that sarcasm his, or the narrator's? If it is the narrator's, then Kulbak's narrator distances himself from the "beauty of human toil" almost immediately after identifying Kulbak with that position.

Already then the double-voicing of the passage is intense: There is Tonke's voice, Kulbak's intertextual voice, Tsalke and the narrator's potentially sarcastic, potentially honest voices. The polyphony increases in the next lines of the chapter with yet another self-reference, in which Kulbak actually names himself:

Tonke hot gezogt:

"faranen a lid fun a zelmenyanishn poet kulbak, vos plontert zikh mir shtendik in kop:

un bronzene yungen
bafaln
iz demlt
a viln
tsu shtiln
dem tsorn
fun yorn,
vos zaynen farlorn."

"yo," hot maskim geven afile tsalke feter yudes, "a sheyn lid!"[325]

The quotation is from Kulbak's poem "*Di Shtot*" ("The City") one of his earliest and most popular works. Written in 1919, the poem indeed became an anthem of the youthful spirit of revolution, leaving behind and even destroying that which is unwanted in the past. No doubt a woman like Tonke would be able to recite whole stanzas of this poem from memory, many could. The self-quotation raises many questions: what does it mean for Kulbak's character to call him a Zelmenyaner? Is there a kind of self-critique of his own youthful passion in the citation of this poem following a description of workers that reflects that same passion in his characters? Does Kulbak now see his youthful poem as something read "*fun a bikhl aroys*" (out of a

[325] *ershter bukh* 72 ("Tonke said: 'There's a Zelmenyaner named Kulbak who wrote a poem I can't stop thinking about: And driving them on, / The bronzed young, / Is the will / To still / The anger/ Of years/ In arrears.' 'Yes. It's a fine poem.' Even Uncle Yuda's Tsalke had to agree." Halkin 54-5)

pamphlet)? Or is it an affirmation of the author's continued dedication to the revolution, just as the earlier more oblique reference to the "little fires" connects his youthful poetry with his novel? The many voices of this passage answer both yes and no to each question. Kulbak satirizes himself by identifying himself as a Zelmenyaner, as well as for his youthful propagandistic tone, while at the same time inhabiting or giving voice to Tsalke and Tonke's view of the workers: they are beautiful, and both the novel and the poem represent that beauty and excitement. In the spirit of the dialogue or the debate between Tsalke and Tonke, between culture and politics (to reduce their positions to the lowest common denominator), the poem offers a point of agreement: *Even* Tsalke agrees that it is a beautiful poem, just as he has already agreed that Tonke is beautiful, and that he is in love with her and—ambivalently—with what she represents.

Tonke appears to win this first round of debate with Tsalke. After proving her Bolshevic physical masculinity over his scholastic Jewish femininity, she changes tactics, moving to seduction. In the course of the scene, Tonke unfolds an argument of bodies and poetry, playing on Tsalke's scholarly appreciation of the aesthetic with an argument about the *beauty* of her politics. In doing this, she shows herself capable of synthesis: while her politics demand that she ask of everything "What does your discovery mean for socialist construction?", here she speaks Tsalke's language. And Tsalke responds. Just as Tonke twice asks the question, "are we beautiful?", Tsalke in fact answers twice in the affirmative: he agrees that Kulbak's poem is beautiful. And, earlier, as they were still walking to the river, after she trips him, he sees for himself the beauty of Soviet industrialization, and he creates a synthesis with his own ideology:

> *di farsheydene helkaytn fun der zun zaynen umgeshvumen iber der gantser gegnt, opgegosn plutslung ergets a feld mit likht, az s'hot farshikert di oygn.*
>
> *Vayt, baym same shtrikh fun horizont, hot geknoylt a roykhl—a trakter hot kurts gesopet, gepoyzet pamelekh iber dem breg fun der erd un iz alts nit farshvundn fun oyg.*
>
> *Tsalke hot gezogt:*
> *"barukhatoadoynoyeloyheynmelekhhooylomhamoytselekheminhoorets!"*[326]

Again the narrative voice has drifted into a poetic mode in which natural scenery, Jewish tradition, and modernization are brought together. Just as with the Judaizing of electricity discussed earlier, Tsalke here judaizes the tractor tilling the field by saying *Hamotzi*, the blessing said before eating bread. In good dialectical fashion then, Tsalke offers a synthesis between his and Tonke's stance before she even makes her main argument. Which is not to say that their debate is resolved.

In Part Two of the novel, Tonke returns from Vladivostok with her bastard child. A group of aunts come to her one evening to convince her to marry quickly, so as not to shame her family. Tsalke shows up, and the women suggest him as a suitor, then leave the two alone to talk. The scene is presented like a dialogue in a play—adding another genre of speech to the list

[326] Kulbak *ershter bukh* 70 ("Bright streams of sunlight flowed all around, cascading from field to field until one's eyes felt drunk. Far off on the horizon rose a spiral of smoke. A tractor chugged beneath it, creeping slowly along the edge of the earth without vanishing. Tsalke said: 'BlessedartThouOLordourGodKingoftheUniverseWhobringethforthbreadfromtheearth!'" Halkin 52)

employed by the novel, and thematizing the ongoing heteroglossic dialogue between the two characters and the opposing forces they represent. The reader becomes a theatrical audience, watching as a late night bedroom scene turns into a didactic play. Tsalke begins with a scientific and philosophical comment: "*far di letste khadoshim hob ikh gezen, vi s'hobn zikh ibergerukt oyfn tsofndikn himl hipshe etlekhe shtern. Kentik, az umetum kumt for a bavegung. Alts geyt. Alts endert zikh. Bloyz ikh, tsalke dem feter yudes, shtey oyf eyn ort.*"[327] But Tonke is unconvinced by Tsalke's pre-Socratic philosophy. She agrees that he has a problem, but the problem is whether he has *developed,* an essential value for her as a Bolshevik and a fact of life in their world, as presented by the novel. So Tsalke tries out another philosophical concept: the idea of a Zeitgeist. "*herstu, ikh meyn, az di tsayt iz shuldik, undzer tsayt iz a shlekhte.*"[328] But Tonke has no patience for that philosophy, either. So Tsalke tries a little Socratic questioning, asking Tonke what *she* thinks his problem is. And she has an answer:

> "*faranen tsvey vegn tsu der diktatur funem proletariat: der veg fun an arbeter un der veg fun aza inteligent, vi du. Der arbeter geyt oyf dem dozikn veg organish, on katastrofes. Der kleynbirgerlekher inteligent kumt tsu der diktatur funem proletariat durkh katastrofes, durkh farlirn zayn gloybn, durkh skeptitsizm, durkh opzogn zikh un tsueygenen—durkh ibergeburt. Nokh di groyse shlakhtn hot di revolutsye ibergelozn hipsh farvundete in di betn oyf oysheylikn zikh."*
>
> *Tsalel dem feter yudes: "bin ikh, heyst es krank. Zol zayn azoy. Farshteystu khotsh, az ikh bin oyfrikhtik ven ikh shray?"*
>
> *tonke dem feter zishes: "nor vos-zhe kumt far der oyfrikhtikayt, tsalke? A burzhoy fodert erlekhkayt, a balebatish vaybl—freylekhkayt…un a kleynbirgerlekher inteligent—oyfrikhtikayt, oyfrikhtikayt…"*[329]

While Tsalke tries out different philosophies in his attempt to gain Tonke's sympathy, Tonke is steadfast in her communist ideology: Tsalke is a product of his class and his education, only by recognizing his role in relation to the revolution can he, essentially, get over himself. Whether Tonke is as successful in this round of their debate as in the previous is left unanswered—because at this moment the scene moves from the two characters to another member of the audience. The aunts listening outside the door want to know what's going on, and Esther, the *daytshmerish*-speaking penmanship teacher tells them: "*zey reydn di sheynste vortn fun der*

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[327] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 85 ("Lately I've noticed that the stars in the northern sky have changed position. Motion, it seems, is universal. All things are in transit, everything mutates. Only I, Uncle Yuda's Tsalke, remain in one place." Halkin 178)

[328] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 86 ("Look, it's the times that are to blame. The times are bad." Halkin 179)

[329] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 86-7 ("'There are two routes to the dictatorship of the proletariat: that of the worker and that of an intellectual like you. The worker takes the simple, organic route. The petit-bourgeois intellectual takes the route of crises—of the loss of faith, of skepticism, of self-denial and self-alienation, of having to be born again. The great battles of the revolution leave their wounded behind to recover on their own.' Uncle Yuda's Tsalel: 'You're telling me I'm wounded. Have it your way. But don't you realize that means my cries of pain are sincere?' Uncle Zishe's Tonke: 'What good does your sincerity do you, Tsalke? A bourgeois craves honor, a housewife happiness…and a petit-bourgeois intellectual sincerity, sincerity, sincerity…'" Halkin 179)

zhargonisher shprakhe."[330] Esther's comment is fascinating: earlier, Tonke could not even understand Esther's heavily germanized Yiddish, and Esther—trained in the language politics of a different generation—is unable to speak in the "simple" native Yiddish of her family members. But she understands both Tsalke's philosophical-romantic speech and Tonke's speech, full as it is of its own Bolshevic "jargon" (to use a different sense of the word with which Esther refers to Yiddish itself), and finds the two beautiful.

Again, then, one of the novel's voices identifies these Yiddish words—diverse as they are, representing totally different strata of the language—as beautiful. Just like the sparks and bodies earlier. Though Esther seems to hear in Tonke and Tsalke's conversation the romance that the women hope exists between the two, her words resonate in the double-voiced, heteroglossic languages of the novel: it is the very fact of dialogue, of divergent voices, that Esther, and perhaps we, the reader, find beautiful. This recalls Bakhtin's point:

> The plot itself is subordinated to the task of coordinating and exposing languages to each other. The novelistic plot must organize the exposure of social languages and ideologies, the exhibiting and experiencing of such languages: the experience of a discourse, a world view and an ideologically based act…In a word, the novelistic plot serves to represent speaking persons and their ideological worlds…there takes place within the novel an ideological translation of another's language, and an overcoming of its otherness—an otherness that is only contingent, external, illusory.[331]

I would go so far as to say that this scene thematizes Bakhtin's "exposing of languages" in the way it overtly stages a dialogue between two characters representing different languages, ideologies, and world views, and then shows us the effect upon a listener, Esther, of hearing and "experiencing" these languages. While on the surface the scene is a failed love scene, in a way it is successful, as Esther observes and experiences an "overcoming of otherness."

This is the high point of the relationship and the dialogue between Tonke and Tsalke, and like so much in the novel, it can be read in opposing ways: it is perhaps a moment of hope, of communication, of "overcoming otherness," at least for those observing the scene if not participating in it. But Tonke and Tsalke's romance goes nowhere, and their failure to build a relationship, or a sustained synthesis between their positions is analogous with the destruction of the *rebzehoyf*. It is Tonke who brings a carful of officials to the yard who survey it and notify the family that it will be torn down to make way for a new factory. This turns out to be the straw that breaks the camel's back for the older members of the family. However much they have adjusted to the new realities, they can't bear the thought of living elsewhere. The metonymic connection between the family and the courtyard has become too real: the family *is* the courtyard and knows it will not survive a move, at least without drastic change. The yard and family begin to decline rapidly at this point: Tsalke's father, Uncle Yuda, dies. Uncle Folye is caught stealing from the leather factory where he works. Even Tonke's faraway lover in Vladivostok dies, and the rafters of the yard rot through and break one by one as truckloads of bricks for the construction of the new factory arrive. When Tsalke finally kills himself it takes two tries: the first time the rafter he

[330] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 87 ("They're talking the most gorgeous Yiddish." Halkin 179 More literally she says, essentially in German, "They are speaking the most beautiful words of the jargonistic language.")
[331] Bakhtin 365.

hangs himself from breaks. The second time he suceeds, hanging himself from the symbolic western wall of his room.[332]

The two concluding events of the novel, before the family moves out of the courtyard and it is demolished, are: Tsalke's funeral, and Uncle Folye's trial. The trial is inserted between the news of Tsalke's suicide and the eventual funeral, which would be odd were it not for the strong connection between the trial marking the death of the yard and the funeral for "*Tsalel—der letster eydler bokher fun rebzehoyf*."[333] Tsalke was the yard's historian, its closest observer, and as such the two deaths are closely connected: "*der doziker yungerman, vos hot farshribn di geshikhte fun zayn lebn oyfn vaser, iz gekumen tsu kvure in eynem mitn rebzehoyf*."[334] The funeral contains another moment of quotation, in another scene reminiscent of Kulbak's expressionist poetry:

> *Ersht inem shmoln gesele farn besoylem hot zikh bavizn oyf a parkan a nomenloze feygele, a feygele far vemen tsalel hot a lebn gekemft me zol es onrufn shperl, un a tshirke geton a langvaylik nigndl onshtot dem barimtn troyer-marsh shopens. Dos nomenloze feygele iz ober geven genug gelernt un hot im dortn oyfn parkn, vos farn besoylem, sofkolsof opgezungen oykh dem bavustn ferz fun haynes gezamlte shriftn, band 1, zayt 457:*
>
> > *Keyne messe vird man zingen,*
> > *Kaynen kadosh vird man sagen,*
> > *Nikhts gezagt und nikhts gezungen*
> > *Vird an maynen shterbe tagen*.[335]

The quotation is Heine, a favorite of Kulbak's, and certainly the sparrow chose well. The speaker of the poem goes on to imagine the speaker's beloved visiting his grave, as Tsalke likely did thinking of Tonke.[336] The sparrow's quotation of German is perfect and precise, even giving a full citation, matching the scholarly attention to detail that Tsalke himself displayed. The choice of Heine emphasizes Tsalke's romanticism, certainly, and the tenuous cultural position he represents, pulled between his Yiddishism and the revolution, as Heine was pulled between German culture and his Jewish identity, and between romanticism and his radical liberal politics.

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[332] Halkin 252 (Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 203)
[333] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 222 ("Tsalel, the last noble youth of the yard." Halkin 265)
[334] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 222 ("This young man, who wrote the history of his life on water, was buried with the rest of Reb Zelmele's yard." Halkin 265)
[335] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 223 ("On a fence in a narrow street near the cemetery stood a bird without a name, though Tsalel had fought all his life to have it called a sparrow. While its tedious chirp was no substitute for Chopin's funeral march, the nameless bird was sufficiently educated to declaim from the fence several well-known lines from the collected works of Heine, vol. I, p. 457: 'Keine Messe wird man singen, Keinen Kadosch wird man sagen, Nichts gesagt und nichts gesungen Wird an meinen Sterbetagen.'" Senderovich gives a translation and citation of the poem in a note: "'Not a mass will be sung for me, / Not a Kaddish will be said, / None will say or sing a service / On the day that I lie dead' – from Heinrich Heine's poem 'Gedächtnisfeier' ('A Memorial Service')." Halkin 265)
[336] When Tonke's husband in Vladivostok dies, instead of paying condolences, Tsalke asks her: "And if I died, would you cry too?" Halkin 249.

And the silence described by the poem aptly describes the scene: "*di zelmenyaner hobn geshvign, nit azoy tsulib opshay farn mes, vi tsulib dem, vos s'iz prost poshet nit geven vos tsu zogn.*"[337]

But equally important is the "nameless bird," that Tsalke called a sparrow. This is a reference to his ethnography, in which he recorded:

> *faran a feygele, shtendik treft men es oyf di dekher funem rebzehoyf. Dos iz a groy prost feygele—a vorobay. Di zelmenyaner kukn oyf dem un ze'en es nit, vi zey kukn oyf der luft un ze'en zi nit. Zey hobn afile nit keyn nomen far dem dozikn feygele. Tsalke hot epes ye oysgetrakht far dem a nomen—shperl. Nor keyner darf nit dos feygele un keyner darf nit dem nomen.*[338]

At his funeral, the reader is reminded that Tsalke as the ethnographer, linguist, and general scholar of the yard, has much in common with the narrative voice of the novel. Within the world of the novel, he is the one who transforms that place into language. Without him, the sparrow (which actually has two names in the ethnography: *vorobay* and *shperl*) returns to a state of namelessness, no longer present in language. As, it is implied, might the entire courtyard and family without Tsalke's observing eye and recording pen. In that case, it is a necessity for the novel to end with Tsalke's funeral. And Heine's poem takes on another level of meaning: not only will no one speak or sing for Tsalke at his funeral, no one will speak or sing at all, because there is no longer a writer in the world of the novel to record it. In this scene, the novel seems strongly identified with Tsalke's position, both of them building places through their representation in language. But only a page earlier, during Folye's trial, Tonke delivers a long description and analysis of the courtyard with all the detail Tsalke would have used—only her aim is not scholarship, it is political condemnation. Thus, as I have shown in the pair's ongoing debate, the novel does not end with Tsalke's funeral, but rather somewhere in between the two scenes of the funeral and the trial.

The only thing that does follow Tsalke's funeral is a list of *"vos men hot aroysgeratevet in letstn moment frun umgekumenem rebzehoyf."*[339] The list includes pots, pans, other kitchen implements and odds and ends. A similar list is given in two other places in the novel. First, in the section of Tsalke's ethnography entitled, "The Technology of Reb Zelmele's Yard": "*di tekhnishe getsaygn funem rebzehoyf zaynen: a hak, a meser, a zeg, a hubl, a stupe, pastkes far mayz, a koromisl, a ridl, a nay-mashin, a fingerhut, shpakuln, nodlen, a lomp, a lom, a shpaktiv fun a zeyger-makher, a ribayzn, tsvelglekh, kotsheres, zaslinkes, skoverdes un tep*."[340] The other

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[337] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 223 ("the Zelmenyaners were silent, not so much out of respect for the dead as because there was simply nothing to say." Halkin 265)

[338] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 106 ("There is yet another bird that frequents the Zelmenyaners' rooftops. Grey and plain looking, it is, like the air around them, ignored by Zelmenyaners looking in its direction. Tsalke calls it a sparrow. Since no one has any use for it, no one else has a name for it." Halkin 191-2)

[339] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 224 ("what was salvaged at the last moment from Reb Zelmele's demolished yard." Halkin 266)

[340] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 98 ("The technological artifacts of the yard include axes, knives, saws, a plane, chopping bowls, mousetraps, shoulder yokes, shovels, a sewing machine, thimbles, spectacles, needles, lamps, crowbars, a watchmaker's eyepiece, graters, pliers, pokers, oven lids, frying pans, and pots." Halkin 187. Halkin makes plural many items that are singular in the original)

place is Tonke's testimony against her family at Uncle Folye's trial, immediately before Tsalke's funeral and the list with which the novel all but ends. Tonke's speech is in fact the final rejoinder in the debate between the cousins, in which she derisively cites Tsalke and his belief in the unique culture of the yard, while all she sees is a dangerous haven of counter-revolutionary petit-bourgeoisness. The speech is preceded and followed by reminders that Tonke's language is all but incomprehensible to the rest of her family—ostensibly because the trial is being conducted in Russian, but really because it is ideologically incomprehensible to them in its betrayal of her family and home: "*geredt hot zi rus, un mistome nor tsulib dem iz nit geven alts farshtendlekh, khotsh es hot gut vey geton oykh yeder umfarshtanener vort*."[341] It seems both because they can't understand her and despite the fact that they can't understand her, her testimony wounds her family, emphasizing that the "language" of a communist party trial is foreign to them. I will quote her speech at length:

> *"Di zelmenyaner," hot zi gezogt, "hobn gevolt farshtikn folyes gneyve. Es hot zey nit gepast, mer nit, vayl s'hot zey nit gepast. Vorum vos iz der rebzehoyf in grunt? Der rebzehoyf, oyb er ganvet nit, ken er ober ale sho ganvenen. Emes, nor tsu kleyne brekelekh fun umetum. Azoy ganvet a zelmenyaner…a fintstere grub iz der rebzehoyf," hot zi gezogt, "faran a zelmenyanerte, vos farmogt nor eyn zilbern lefl un zi vaklt zikh shoyn tsu geyn mitn proletariat. Es loynt ir nit. Di zelmenyaner klaybn fun doyres a shtrikele tsu a shtrikele un oyf dem boyen zey di velt. Faran in hoyf abisele gayve, un abisele lign, un abisele gnayve, un abisele khnife, vayl lekhatkhile iz a zelmenyaner tsuzamengeshtelt fun kleyne biselekh. Er hot nit keyn benk un keyn mayontkes, hot er ober akhtsn pamunitskelekh, tsvelf kuperne kendlekh, a rinal un a mufte un nokh un nokh. Shtendik farton, vi a milb, blaybt nokhdem fun a zelmenyaners lebn bloyz a kleyn lekhele, ober ful iz dos dozikn lekhele mit fintsternish un tempkayt. Der feter folye hot dokh gevolt zayn a heyb-mashin! Di fintsternish iz azoy groys, az undzer vor vert dortn farvandlt in a kholem, un farkert, klangen, bobe-mayses bakumen blut un fleysh un ekzistirn in rebzehoyf, vi lebedike bashefenishn… Der rebzehoyf lebt fun shtiklekh opfal, reshtlekh fun abergloybn, religye, farkriplte naive yedies fun farsheydene visnshaftn. Tsuzamen mit undzere pionern bavayzn zikh plutslung in di zelmenyanishe shtiber lamedvovniklekh, yidelekh mit fidelekh, vos tantsn oyfn drot, leykenen op di luft bloyz mitn eygenem sharfn seykhl. Me firt ayn elektre, derbay blit ergets in a vinkl fun a tukhln shtibl dos kishefdik, groz lyubeznik. Es treft, az mentshn geyen do arum, vi in a hiner-plet, ploydern vi fun shlof, un di oyern hern nit vos dos moyl redt. Ot dos iz der rebzehoyf. Es zaynen ober do azoyne, vos makhn funem hoyf a velt-onshoyung, a visnshaft, an ideal. O, di zelmenyaner-denker, vos hobn afile gepruvt festshteln an eygene kultur inem rebzehoyf, di kultur fun kleyne biselekh. Tsale, a visnshaftler, a gebirtiker funem zelbikn hoyf, hot azoy lang geforsht di eygntimlekhkayt fun di zelmenyaner, biz er hot zikh nit oyfgehangen fun gaystiker oremkayt…" ot hot zi gezogt.*[342]

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[341] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 214-5 ("Probably because of her elegant Russian, the Zelmenyaners failed to understand all she said, but what they didn't hurt just as much." Halkin 260)

[342] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 215-6. ("'The Zelmenyaners,' Tonke declared, 'wished to cover up Folye's theft. They thought it unbecoming, though it's in fact precisely what they've become. For what, at bottom, is Reb Zelmele's yard? The yard, even when it doesn't steal, is potentially stealing all the time. Ture, it only pilfers odds and ends. That's your Zelmenyaner thief for you…The yard is a bottomless pit of such

If one sets aside the negative connotation with which Tonke describes her family's culture, the objective observations are a powerful and apt description of what many Yiddishists and Jewish cultural activists of the period saw as unique and valuable in Ashkenazi culture: the fusion language that borrows what it needs from every available source, recognizing and celebrating the hodgepodge of Jewish, German, Slavic, European elements that come together in the culture. While Tonke repeats Tsalke's list of the material possessions of the yard critically, the reader sees the double-voicing of this passage in which her attack is perhaps also the most extended defense of the Zelmenyaners' "culture of bits" presented by the novel. By emphasizing the bits and pieces, Tonke turns the Zelmenyaners into bricoleurs.[343] True to their economic niche as petty artisans and craftsmen, they piece together and repurpose whatever they can get their hands on to build their world: hanging electric wires like sukkah decorations, adding a clock pendulum to a radio antenna, turning a chamber pot on a pole into a tree, naming a baby Marat. And at the same time as Tonke insults Tsalke's study of the courtyard, the detail that she herself takes in condemning the yard and Tsalke turns into a kind of eulogy for him, mourning him by blaming his scholarship for his death. She herself ends up acknowledging the seemingly supernatural powers of the yard to defy the modern age; even if she means this to be only a rhetorical technique, she has again ventured into poetry, in which simply saying that the "magical love grasses" survive in the dark corners of the yard makes them in fact real and magical.

Tonke's testimony and Tsalke's ethnography come together in another brief moment of synthesis here, along with the novel itself. Uncle Folye is forgiven his crime of stealing, but the family leaves the trial deeply injured both by Tonke's condemnation and in the renewed knowledge that the courtyard will be demolished:

> *der rebzehoyf hot zikh in letstn moment baganvet. Nit di gneyve, vi der sheyner gerikht, vu men hot opgedekt yetvider shmatkele funem rebzehoyf, getapt in di bebekhes—vi iz dortn gut, tsi shlekht. Un es hot zikh aroysgevizn, az nokh der groyser fargangenhayt*

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things. I know a Zelmenyaner woman with a single silver spoon because of which she doubts that she belongs to the proletariat. She thinks she's too good for it. For generations, the Zelmenyaners have collected bits of this and that and built their world from it. The yard has a bit of vanity, a bit of mendacity, a bit of larceny, a bit of sycophancy, and is in fact composed of nothing but bits. The Zelmenyaners own no banks or grand estates, but they do have eighteen trash bins, twelve copper ladles, a chamber pot, a fur muff, and plenty more. Always up to something, a Zelmenyaner leaves, like a moth, only holes behind him, but these are holes of the darkest stupidity. Uncle Folye thought he could be a mechanical lift! Their benightedness is so great that reality is transformed by them into a dream, while conversely, rumors and tall tales come to life in the yard as though they were real…The yard subsists on leavings and scrapings, on the remnants of superstition and religion, on naïvely distorted scraps of scientific knowledge. Alongside Komsomols and Pioneers, the Zelmenyaners' rooms spawn hidden saints, Yidls with fiddles who dance on electric wires and deny the existence of oxygen with dialectics. Even as electricity was being installed in the yard, the grasses of love potions kept sprouting magically in its dark crannies. Its inhabitants go about in a stupor, talking in their sleep, their ears not hearing what their mouths say. That's Reb Zelmele's yard—and yet there are those who make of it an ideal, a philosophy, even a science. Ah, our Zelmenyaner intellectuals, who would prove that the yard has its own distinct culture, the culture of bits! Tsalke, an educated young native of the yard, spent so long investigating its uniqueness that he hanged himself out of sheer spiritual poverty…' Those were her very words." Halkin 260-1)

[343] the term originating with Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.

hobn di zelmenyaner gornisht baym layb un lebn, khuts di tsen finger.[344]

The real damage has been done not by the theft, but by exposing the yard and all its bits and pieces to the world. It's as if the secret to a magic trick has been exposed, causing the illusion to dissolve. In the scene, it is Tonke who has overexposed the yard. But hasn't that been Tsalke's mission, as well? To study the idiosyncracies of the yard in order to understand them? And by extension, isn't Kulbak's novel itself the most successful, extensive exposition of the courtyard? The narrative voice seems to suggest that all three forms of representation of the space of the family have been equally destructive, arriving at a conclusion that ethnography and anthropology as fields also reach: the subject cannot be observed without being changed. This returns us to the dual aspects of poetic *do'ikayt*: representation of place with the aim of political transformation.

Conclusion

The tense relationship between Tonke and Tsalke embodies many levels of Bakhtin's heteroglossia. Both characters can be seen as representing different centrifugal and centripetal forces within the world of the novel: from Tonke's perspective, the Jewish culture and tradition that Tsalke values is an old authority that must be decentered by revolution. From Tsalke's perspective, Yiddish culture contains a diversity of languages that themselves decenter the new unifying power of Bolshevism. And through double-voicing, Kulbak's novel speaks both of their positions through dialogue: not erasing the tensions that exist between the positions, but rather embracing ambivalent positions between the two. Beyond the dialogue between Tonke and Tsalke, the diversity of voices employed by the novel builds a detailed and complex picture of a here and now: the space of a family changing through generations, through war, revolution, technological and ideological innovation, while remaining in a fixed spatial location. The metonymy of the family and the courtyard presents the centrality of place in a sense of cultural or national identity, while still presenting identity as dynamic and changing, full of realms and languages that overlap and diverge. It is an identity of fuzzy borders, in which two Zelmenyaners may have nothing in common, but can still be shown to be part of the same cord.[345] Through this diversity of identity represented by a diversity of language, Kulbak creates a novel that is aware of itself and its many borders. In so doing, he creates a work of culture that is aware of itself and thereby decenters itself, aware of the worlds and "speaking humans" that lie outside it. This poetics of *do'ikayt* represents a space both to those within it and without it, hoping to forge common purpose between the two.

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[344] Kulbak *tsveyter bukh* 219-20 ("Ultimately, the yard was guilty of theft. But the real crime was not the theft but the trial, which had yanked off every last flimsy coverlet, probing the yard's innards and holding them up to the light. For all their glorious past, the Zelmenyaners, it turned out, had not a stitch left to their name." Halkin 263) I'm not sure about Halkin's translation of the first line, Kulbak seems to be playing with the different meanings of "baganvenen," to steal, and "baganvenen zikh," to be satisfied.

[345] I am referencing of course Wittgenstein's various images of "family resemblace," how fitting to actually apply them to a literary family! In this I follow Kronfeld, who adopts the model for describing minor modernisms. See Kronfeld 28-30.

A house in Moyshe Kulbak's hometown of Smorgon (2013)

Ch. 4 Wie sagt man *do'ikayt* auf Deutsch?

In making my argument for a literary trend of *do'ikayt* in Yiddish modernism, I have followed Chana Kronfeld's model for describing literary trends using the idea of a "fuzzy set" and Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblance." This model allows us to recognize that the concept of *do'ikayt* is used by different scholars to describe concepts and practices that have some common features, but perhaps no essential unifying feature. It also allows us to recognize that the political beliefs and practices identified as examples of *do'ikayt* by contemporary scholars exist on various spectrums of nationalist, socialist, territorialist, Zionist, and Yiddishist ideologies, sharing many features but differing in many as well. Thus, for example, Samuel Kassow writes that the mission of the *Landkentenish* organization was one of fostering *do'ikayt*, which he describes as "a deep sense of rootedness to the Polish lands where Jews had lived for hundreds of years,"[346] while Roni Gechtman describes the Bund's *do'ikayt* as a "political desire to solve the questions and problems of the Jews in the place where they lived, as opposed to solutions which implied migration."[347] Both scholars emphasize a relationship to "the place(s) where Jews live," but differ in terms of the goals of that relationship and the conceptual framework within which that relationship exists.

These descriptive models—fuzzy sets based on family resemblance—are especially useful for modernism as a literary trend, and for trends within modernism, in which a "best" example—a prototype, to use Kronfeld's term—can also be an outlier, marginal in some way:

> It seems to me that modernism presents so many difficulties for the literary theorist partly because in its different constructions it involves both centrality and membership gradience. Thus, a poet or a work may be more or less modernist, or both modernist and anti- or postmodernist (in different aspects of his or her poetics), as is the case with most of the Hebrew and Yiddish poets I discuss. Modernism, furthermore, is a category with diachronically and culturally fuzzy boundaries, where "best examples" or prototypes of each subtrend are often quite atypical. And yet they tend to (misleadingly and at times subversively) stand for the whole.[348]

The atypicality of many modernist prototypes is one reason, Kronfeld argues, that contextualization of works, writers, trends, etc., is so important in our reading, to remind us that a prototype is only the "best" example within certain contexts, and that one example cannot demonstrate all the relevant aspects of a trend. Within my own project, Kulbak is an example of this: while I have discussed only *Zelmenyaner*, many of Kulbak's works could be read as prototypes of the modernist poetics of *do'ikayt*. The poem "Vilne," the poema "Raysn," and even "Disner Tshayld Harold," his mock-epic about an eastern Jew experiencing the decadence of Berlin in the late 1920s, come to mind immediately. He is my prototype for this trend. And yet in at least one important way he is a surprising prototype for the trend. Kulbak was much less explicitly political, in his public life that is to say, than many of his peers, especially among the

[346] Kassow 243.
[347] Gechtman (diss) 14.
[348] Kronfeld 30.

subset of Yiddish writers who chose to live in the Soviet Union. Kharik was the highest-ranking Yiddish writer in the BSSR when he served on the Communist Party Central Committee in Belarus. Dovid Bergelson announced his re-commitment to the Soviet Union with an essay proclaiming that it was the best chance for the future of Yiddish.[349] An-sky, without even being a member of the Bund wrote not one but two anthems for the party and was better known during his lifetime for his political work than for his literary work. In contrast to the explicit politics of these and many other Yiddish writers, Kulbak's politics by and large are best found implicitly in his work—which as we saw with *Zelmenyaner* often consist of nuanced and ambivalent positions.[350] In this way Kulbak is an atypical or even "deviant" prototype of the poetics of *do'ikayt,* though it is my hope that he and his work have been properly contextualized in this dissertation by being discussed within the spectrum of Yiddishist politics and juxtaposed with the work of Izi Kharik. Further, he is an important atypical prototype in that his relative distance from the party politics of the time demonstrates that the literary trend of *do'ikayt* is not limited to the world of party activists.

Offering a different kind of atypical prototype, in my discussion of Chaim Zhitlowsky as an early theorizer of *do'ikayt* I took him as a kind of border case: someone whose thought and work is more atypical than prototypical, thereby illustrating both the concept and its limits. I do not call Zhitlowsky a "best example" of *do'ikayt*, but nevertheless I find him a useful example to explore in describing the concept because in his turns toward territorialism, Palestinism, and nationalism he both demonstrates the spectrum of Yiddishist politics and helps us to find the outer edges of *do'ikayt'*s fuzzy borders. For example, Vozrozhdenie's belief in an eventual Jewish state while emphasizing that the foundation of a state is not an immediate goal both is and isn't *do'ikayt*: it is in that the members organized in the here and now to improve the lives of Jews, and it isn't in that their motivation was to pave the way for a nationalist, territorialist solution.

In this conclusion, I would like to look at another border case for the modernist poetics of *do'ikayt,* another writer whose work exists in and around the fuzzy borders of this literary trend, the German writer Alfred Döblin. This dissertation has concerned itself with Yiddish cultural production, with works of literature written in Yiddish and within a Yiddishist cultural and political framework. It has of course also attempted to read these Yiddish works in their multilingual and intercultural social contexts: the "diversity of languages" of *Zelmenyaner*, the Belarusian revolutionary experience of "Minsker Blotes," the Russian populism of An-sky's ethnography, the Polish nationalist and Austrian Marxist models of krajoznawstwo and National Cultural Autonomy, respectively. Yiddish, as Benjamin Harshav wrote, is inherently open to the languages and cultures with which and alongside which it exists, and is able to organize elements

[349] The essay is "Dray Tsentern" (Three Centers, 1926). Bergelson is another Yiddish writer whose work could be richly read as part of the trend of literary *do'ikayt*. See Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh, Eds. *David Bergelson: From Modernist to Socialist Realism*. Leeds: Legenda, 2007 and Allison Schachter. *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literautre in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

[350] To acknowledge an important exception to this statement I should mention the poem "*Di shtot*" ("The city"), discussed in the previous chapter, which as we saw is overtly revolutionary, propagandistic even, and indeed became a popular poetic anthem of Yiddish revolutionary youth.

from those surrounding languages and cultures within itself.[351] The politics and poetics of *do'ikayt* arose and existed within an inherently multicultural (or multinational) environment. Indeed, as this dissertation has undertaken to demonstrate, perhaps the most urgent message of *do'ikayt* is belief in the continued possibility of Jewish national life on shared soil, and the need to build and improve that possibility.

Acknowledging that the concept of *do'ikayt* within Yiddishist politics developed in relation to non-Yiddishist and non-Jewish political movements, and that Yiddish modernism existed in the contexts of international modernisms, the question I would like to explore in this conclusion is: is there then a literary trend of *do'ikayt* outside of Yiddish? So often in "minor" or otherwise marginalized fields, the task of scholarship is to adapt concepts and frameworks from major fields, or to demonstrate how the frameworks of major fields fail to meaningfully describe the realities of the minor. This is one of the reasons I find *do'ikayt* such a valuable corrective to this majoritarian move from center to periphery, because it arises from within the field of Yiddish Studies—and may have a transnational valence. Perhaps the concept of *do'ikayt* and the literary trend of a modernist poetics of *do'ikayt* can then also be valuable as a tool to theorize "the major through the minor," as Kronfeld puts it:

> Only if we construct the major through the minor, not—as current wisdom has it—the minor through the major, can we begin to discern the regionalism, contextual diversity, and interdependence of even the most highly canonical forms of modernism. Theories of modernism that are modeled on belated, decentered, or linguistically minor practices may provide some insight into the processes that have become automatized or rendered imperceptible in the canonical center. Through the multiple, broken prisms of the minor, the mystified notion of a unified canonical modernism is exploded, subjecting the very language of center and periphery itself to a critique that exposes its own historicity.[352]

Reading works of "major" or canonical modernism through the lens of *do'ikayt* would offer opportunities to read for the heteroglossic, for the diversity of languages present in works that are otherwise interpreted as arising from monolingual or homogenous cultural contexts. It would allow us to look for relationships to space and territory that are national but perhaps not nationalist, to remember that even the claims of "normal," "major" cultures like French or German to land, cities, and ways of life were also contested, violently so, in the same period. And it offers another way to read for the political engagement of works and authors who have otherwise not been read as politically engaged.

So is there, for instance, a modernist poetics of *do'ikayt* in German literature? If *do'ikayt* pertains to any place that Jews live, does it pertain to any language in which they live? And what might we gain by reading works of German modernism as existing on the fuzzy borders of a trend of Yiddish modernism, rather than as one of the centers that Yiddish orbited? I would like to explore these questions in the work of Alfred Döblin (1878-1957), an author who, like An-sky, exists between many worlds. Döblin's family was Jewish, if largely assimilated, and for a

[351] See Benjamin Harshav. "The Openness of Yiddish." *The Meaning of Yiddish*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 61-73.
[352] Kronfeld 5.

time in the early 1930s he was deeply interested in the questions of nation, state, territory, and the possibility (or lack thereof) for continued Jewish existence in Europe. In the 1940s he converted to Catholicism, and yet remained invested in the fate of European Jewry. His literary success was mixed throughout his life: despite the acclaim he received for *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) and a few other novels, several of his books were seen as failures, and his attempt to return to the German literary scene immediately after World War Two did not succeed—as well as perhaps more generally his attempt to reengage in postwar German society. After having spent more than a decade in exile, he left Germany again in 1953 and lived the final years of his life in France. And while *Berlin Alexanderplatz* has become a part of the modernist canon, this is due in large part to Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1980 film version, which reintroduced the novel to a new generation.[353] This discussion will focus on how the concept of *do'ikayt* allows us to read anew Döblin's writing about space—specifically, his explorations of Jewish space in Poland in his travelogue, *Reise in Polen* (Journey to Poland)—and put this writing into the context of his political engagement with ideas of Jewish space. This exploration of Döblin's political thinking about questions of a Jewish nation state or territory offers one example of what the politics of *do'ikayt* look like in Western European Jewish experience. As with Zhitlowsky, Döblin's politics are both more and less *do'ikayt,* nevertheless offering a different and valuable vantage point from which to view this political spectrum.

Döblin and Berlin

While the other writers discussed in this dissertation came from the Polish-Russian borderlands, Döblin was born on the Polish-German borderlands in a city then called Stettin in German and Shtshetshin in Yiddish, an important port city in Prussia, just seven years after German unification. Since World War Two the city is Szczecin, Poland. If the changing names and states of Minsk and Vitebsk help us map the rise and fall of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, then Stettin/Shtshetshin/Szczecin similarly maps the histories of the Third Republic of Poland, Weimar Germany, the German Empire, Prussia, the Swedish Empire, and Pomerania. The Jewish history of Stettin was an interrupted one: while the first formal permission for Jewish settlement in the town was given in 1261, the privilege was revoked and renewed many times in the intervening centuries as rulers and states came and went.[354] A more stable Jewish community was established only with the Prussian Edict of Emancipation in 1812, granting Jews in Prussia citizenship rights.

Döblin's parents came to Stettin from Posen (today Poznań), his father was a master tailor and his mother came from a merchant family. The household was a mostly assimilated one:

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[353] See Roland Dollinger, Wulf Koepke, and Heidi Thomann Tewarson, "Introduction," *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin.* Rochester: Camden House, 2004.

[354] This is, of course, common and not exceptional for Germanic cities, and a reminder of why Poland-Lithuania was a much more welcome home for many Jews from the time of the crusades until the Deluge. See Jan M. Piskorski, Bogdan Wachowiak, and Edward Włodarczyk, *A Short History of Szczecin*. Poznań: Poznańskie Tow. Przyjaciół Nauk., 2002.

his parents observed the high holidays, but apparently that was their most visible display of Jewish identity, and Döblin felt uneducated about Jewish religion and tradition.[355] When Döblin was 10 years old his father abandoned the family, and his mother moved with her children to Berlin, where Döblin would live—aside from a few years of university and his service as a doctor in World War One—until he was forced into exile in 1933. The subject of Döblin's relationship to Jewishness, Judaism and Jewish identity has been a matter of significant debate;[356] as with the discussion of Kulbak's move to the Soviet Union, rather than engaging in biographical speculation, I will note only a few relevant events from Döblin's publishing career to help frame the discussion of his engagement with questions of Jewish relationship to territory and representation of place in his writing. In 1921 Döblin published an essay entitled "Zion und Europa" in which he advocated for National Cultural Autonomy as a more pragmatic and logical solution to "the Jewish question" than Zionism. In 1923 there was a pogrom in the Scheunenviertel of Berlin, the quarter where many recent Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe lived. The incident shocked many in Berlin, including assimilated German Jews like Döblin, who was inspired to learn more about the "Ostjuden" who were so different from him and yet somehow connected to him by the identity of "Jew."[357] So in the fall of 1924 Döblin traveled to Poland, one of the products of which was the book *Reise in Polen*. In the book, Döblin states that the intention of the trip is to learn about Germany's new neighbor to the East. Years later, he described his motivation differently:

> In the first half of the nineteen-twenties, pogromlike events took place in Berlin, in the eastern part of the city, on and around Gollnowstrasse. They occurred against the lansquenet backdrop of those years; Nazism let out its first shriek. In connection with these discussions, a man came to my apartment and tried to talk me into going to Palestine, which I had no intention of doing. His influence had a different effect on me. I did not agree to visit Palestine, but I felt I had to get my bearings about the Jews. I realized I didn't know any Jews. I had friends who called themselves Jews, but I could not call them Jews. They were not Jewish by faith or by language; they were possibly remnants of an extinct nation that had long since integrated into a new milieu. So I asked myself and I asked others: "Where do Jews exist?" I was told: Poland. And so I went to Poland.[358]

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[355] For more on Döblin's personal relationship to Judaism, see Klaus Müller-Salget, "Döblin and Judaism," *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*, ed. Roland Dollinger, Wulf Koepke, Heidi Thomann Tewarson. Rochester: Camden House, 2004, and Hans Otto Horch. "Nachwort." *Alfred Döblin: Schriften zu Jüdischen Fragen*. Solothurn and Düsseldorf: Walter-Verlag, 1995.

[356] See Müller-Salget for a summary of the different scholarly and biographical positions on Döblin's relationship to Jewishness.

[357] For a recent work on relations between Ostjuden and German Jews in Berlin in the interwar period, see Rachel Seelig. *Strangers in Berlin: Modern Jewish Literature between East and West, 1919*-1933. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2016.

[358] Alfred Döblin. *Schicksalsreise: Bericht und Bekenntnis*. Frankfurt am Main: J. Knecht, 1949. Quoted and translated in Döblin. *Journey to Poland*. Ed. Heinz Graber, trans. Joachim Neugroschel. New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1991, p. xii.

I will return to a discussion of *Reise in Polen* and the goals of Döblin's trip to Poland below, but for now I will continue with the biographical information about Döblin's engagement with Jewishness and place.

In 1929 Döblin published his most successful work, the novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Up until that point, the settings for Döblin's fiction had been distant from his present reality. For example: *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun, Chinesischer Roman* (1915) is a historical novel about China set at the end of the 18th century; *Wallenstein* (1920) is a novel of the Thirty Years War; *Berge Meere und Giganten* (1924) could be called science fiction, set in the 23rd to 28th centuries; and *Manas. Epische Dichtung* (1927) is based on Indian mythology. Gabrielle Sander suggests that the dramatic change from these works located in exotic places and times to the here and now of interwar Berlin might have been in part motivated by the lack of success (artistic and economic) of these works; Döblin was ready to try something different. Once set on Berlin, however, his engagement with the reality and idea of his city extended beyond work on *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. In 1928—presumably while he was working on the novel—he published *Alfred Döblin. Im Buch—zu Haus—auf der Straße*, an autobiographical work that included many vignettes of Berlin, and he wrote a preface for Mario von Bucovich's photo volume entitled *Berlin* in that same year. Sander calls the writing of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* "a return to the roots of his writing. By way of detours, Döblin found his way to the theme of his life: the metropolis Berlin."[359] He would return to this theme with a trilogy of novels written during his exile from Germany, *November 1918. Eine deutsche Revolution* (1948-1950).

The Freeland League

Beginning around the time of the Scheunenviertel pogroms and his trip to Poland, Döblin came in contact with various Zionist and territorialist activists and organizations. According to Klaus Müller-Salget, Döblin was interested in the territorialists (or neo-territorialists) from the mid 1920s onward, though it is especially after his exile in 1933 that he began to write and publish about territorialism and the failings of emancipation.[360] Though he wasn't fluent in Yiddish, one of the things that attracted him to territorialism over Zionism was that it was a Yiddishist and not Hebraist movement. *Reise in Polen* contains several moments in which Döblin's affinity for Yiddish over Hebrew is apparent. In fact, one of the concluding scenes of the book involves him avoiding a meeting with a Zionist only to make time for a young Yiddish writer just before his departure from Łódź. The chapter concludes with the Yiddish writer telling Döblin:

> Die Zukunft der Welt liegt nicht da. Der Zionismus ist eine körperliche Bewegung. Die Welt muß aufgemenscht werden. Es ist nicht nur bei den Juden schrecklich. Auch den

[359] Gabrielle Sander. "Döblin's Berlin: The Story of Franz Biberkopf." *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*. Ed. Roland Dollinger, Wulf Koepke, and Heidi Thomann Tewarson. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004, p. 142.
[360] Müller-Salget 236-38.

> Deutschen, Polen, Franzosen, Amerikanern, Engländern geht es schlecht. Was ist mit ihrer Kultur? Sie imponiert uns nicht. Wir haben im Krieg viel gesehen. Alles muß aufgemenscht werden. Langsam. So wird auch die jüdische große Schwierigkeit behoben werden. Ohne Zerstörung der Substanz.

To which Döblin's reaction is: "Wie tut es wohl, solche Stimmen zu hören, ohne selbst die Lippen zu bewegen. Wie deutlich wird, daß man nicht allein auf der Welt ist. Kein aussprechbares Gefühl. Gefühl aller Gefühle."[361] The passage recalls—or rather anticipates—Leyvick Hodes' argument discussed in the first chapter that redemption for Jews can only be achieved if all mankind is redeemed. Döblin's great feeling of communion with the Yiddishist's point of view suggests that, at this point in his life at least, he does not believe that sovereign territory alone will solve the problems facing Jews. But over the next decade, with the rise of fascist antisemitism, he did come to believe more and more that sovereign territory was a necessity, if still not an abstract good. In 1935 Döblin concludes an essay entitled "Die drei jüdischen Widerstände gegen Eigenland" with the claim that, "ein Ding, welches für Staaten von heute 'reaktionär' ist, für die flüchtigen jüdischen Massen 'progressiv' sein kann."[362]

Döblin also believed until at least the mid-1930s that Palestine was not a practical location for a Jewish state: it was too small for the necessary mass emigration of Jews from Europe, and too dangerous for Jews to settle in only one place. Döblin preferred the territorialist idea that various and multiple locations for Jewish settlement might be found. In his first year in exile in France, he helped to found the *Liga für jüdische Kolonisation*, which united with other territorialist organizations in England and Poland in 1935 to become the *Frayland-lige far yidisher teritorialistisher kolonizatsye.* His involvement included editing the only German-language issue of the organization's publication, *Freiland*, in June of 1935, and giving the opening and closing remarks at the organization's founding conference in London in 1935. But it could be that Döblin was disillusioned with the League almost before it began, still held up with reservations that echo his positions in the 1920s. Müller-Selget quotes a letter from December 1934 in which Döblin expresses his limited expectations for the *Frayland-lige*: "Ich selber habe nur eine halbe Freude an der Liga, weil sie zu einseitig sich auf 'Land' verlegt und nicht das nach meiner Meinung centrale Thema der Menschen, der jüdischen allgemeinen Erneuerung

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[361] Alfred Döblin. *Reise in Polen.* Olten: Walter-Verlag, 1968, p. 331 (hereafter cited as Döblin *Reise)* ("'That's not where the future of the world lies. Zionism is a physical movement. The world has to be humanized. Things are horrible not only for the Jews. The Germans, the Poles, the French, the Americans, the British are also badly off. What's so great about their culture anyway? We're not impressed. We saw a lot of things in the war. Everything has to be humanized. Slowly. That will also solve the great problems confronting the Jews. Without destroying our substance.' It feels good hearing such voices without moving my own lips. How clear it becomes that one is not alone in the world. No unutterable feeling. The feeling of all feelings." *Journey to Poland*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, 255, [hereafter cited as Neugroschel]). It is worth noting that Neugroschel translates "aufgemenscht," which appears to be a neologism or at least a very rarely used word, as "humanized," a thoroughly normal word. My colleague Raphael Koenig suggests the line is a play on Novalis, "Die Welt muß romantisiert werden." And my colleague Lisa Eberle has come across it in Jewish writing from the 19th century, where the meaning seems to be more generally "to be better, in a better condition, better for people."

[362] Alfred Döblin. *Schriften zu jüdischen Fragen*. Solothurn and Düsseldorf: Walter-Verlag, 1995, p. 178, quoted in Müller-Salget 237 ("A thing that is 'reactionary' for the nation states of today can be progressive for the refugee Jewish masses." My translation)

aufgreift."[363] While Döblin's belief in the need for a sovereign Jewish state increased throughout the 1930s, it is interesting that in 1934 he is still uncomfortable with an emphasis on territory over identity and general renewal, or *tikun*, as Leyvick Hodes would put it in 1947.

"'Denn eine Grenze hat Tyrannenmacht': Allen Staaten gesagt und dem Staat überhaupt"

This is the epigraph to Döblin's *Reise in Polen*, the first half being a quotation from Schiller's play, *Wilhelm Tell*.[364] This strong, rather threatening statement frames the travelogue, making the political stakes of the work immediately clear. Midway through the book's first chapter on Warsaw, after recounting in detail the long history of the struggle for independence in Poland, Döblin states the goal of his trip also in terms of power, and reflects on the linguistic and cultural limitations that stand in the way of achieving his goal:

> Ich will wissen, was in dem Land jetzt vorgeht, welche Kräfte offiziell und welche inoffiziell regieren. Wer hat die Macht und wer den Mund? Ich verzage rasch, weil ich die Sprache, nein, die Sprachen des Landes nicht kann: Polnisch, Ukrainisch, Weißrussisch, Jiddisch, Litauisch. Ich frage: Wer hungert im Lande, und wer ist satt? Was sind hier politische Verbrechen? Wer steckt und wie viele stecken wegen politischer Verbrechen im Gefängnis? Welche Verbrechen sind am häufigsten?[365]

There are two ways of reading the Schiller quotation, and both seem at play in Döblin's list of questions: one can read the quotation as saying that a border wields tyrannical power, or that there is a limit to the power of every tyrant. Döblin wants to understand who wields the power in Germany's new neighbor, what are the limits to that power, and where does state power work to protect itself, through the definition of political crimes, for instance. The passage encapsulates much of what I see as the *do'ikayt* of this work: an attempt to represent and understand a people, a nation, and a culture through representing and understanding place (and actually, two peoples, nations, and cultures, the Polish and the Jewish); an engaged political position (rather than anything resembling attempted objectivity); and heteroglossia as a means to represent the

[363] Quoted in Müller-Salget 238 ("I myself am only half satisfied with the League, because it puts so much emphasis on 'Land' and does not take up what to my mind is the central question of the people, the general renewal of Jewishness." My translation)

[364] Well, a slight misquotation: it comes from the second act, where it is actually "Nein, eine Grenze hat Tyrranenmacht." The entire epigraph is translated by Neugroschel as: "'For every border wields a tyrant's power.' These words are aimed at all states and at the State per se." However, several translations of Schiller read the line quite differently, with variations such as: "There *is* a limit to a tyrant's power." (trans. E. Bull 1829)

[365] Döblin *Reise* 47 ("I want to know what is going on in this country right now, which forces, powers are organizing the state, which forces govern officially and which unofficially. Who wields power and who wields words. I soon throw in the towel, because I don't speak the language, or rather, the languages of the country: Polish, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Yiddish, Lithuanian. I ask: Who goes hungry in this country and who is sated? What are the political crimes here? Who and how many people are in prison for political crimes? Which crimes are the most frequent?" Neugroschel 31)

complexity of Poland, here for example in the emphasis on the multiple languages that make up Poland and which are necessary to understand it.

Language politics in Poland fascinate Döblin throughout *Reise in Polen*. Perhaps in no small part because he was not a frequent traveler and thus not used to being in places where he couldn't communicate. Heinz Graber notes in the introduction to the English translation,

> Döblin cared little for traveling and less for the opinion that travel is broadening. He was far more interested in studying his immediate environment; he himself was always intensely preoccupied with the world around him. His world was Berlin, where he was settled and sedentary since 1888.[366]

Several times Döblin expresses his frustration at having to rely on translators (though he is very grateful to them when he has them), as well as his surprise and doubt when people don't understand either German or French, and his wish to delve deeper into the mundane and dirty details of life in the cities he visits. Perhaps because of these linguistic frustrations, he often represents his experiences with a focus on heteroglossia: the many languages he hears, the double-voicedness of hearing everything through interpreters, and the relative power of Polish and Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew among the different groups and in the different places he visits. Graber notes that

> [Döblin] refuses to edit what he hears. In the oral translations which he depended on, he discovered a unique linguistic charm, which he preserved when writing them down…For here, immediacy is more important than information. Its primacy keeps perception from being retrospectively filtered and distilled into an essence. Mistrust of abstraction is a characteristic of the narrator, who does not sacrifice concreteness to concept…But at lucid moments, things appear as forcefully as signs, and concreteness becomes a symbol.[367]

The focus on concreteness rather than abstraction in the knowledge that concreteness can "become a symbol" seems an apt description of many moments of poetic *do'ikayt* explored in this project. The specific way the shadows changed in the Zelmenyaners' courtyard once electricity was installed, for instance, and how that also served to represent the penetrating hand of Soviet power in the family's lives.

A scene that demonstrates many of the techniques of concreteness at work in this book—including reported speech, language diversity and politics, the juxtaposition of history and the contemporary moment, and concreteness becoming symbolic—occurs when Döblin visits the castle hill in Wilno. The visit begins, as do many in the book, with the narrator recounting some of the history of the site for the reader, in this case beginning with the story of Gediminas (1275-1341), Grand Duke of Lithuania, who first built fortifications on the hill, and continuing with facts about the Russians removing a statue of Pushkin when they withdrew from the city.[368] The history is interspersed with Döblin's first impressions of the hill and castle, its geography and

[366] Heinz Graber. "Editor's Introduction." *Journey to Poland*. By Alfred Döblin, trans. Joachim Neugroschel. New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1991, p. ix.
[367] Graber xviii.
[368] Döblin *Reise* 128-29.

architecture, the traditions associated with it, such as a soldier playing a trumpet to mark the time. It's one of the few scenes in the book when Döblin explicitly mentions a "companion," a Wilno resident, perhaps Jewish, who is accompanying him for the day and acting as translator (though context suggests he is often accompanied by similar locals elsewhere, as well). He is debating whether or not it's worth actually entering the castle:

> Es ist ja nur für die Fremden der alten Sorte, ich bin aber neue Sorte. Mein Begleiter möchte es gern sehen; er ist aus Wilno; ich will ihm also das Schloß zeigen. "Der russische Generalgouverneur wohnte hier?" "Ja." "Ich wußte es; es war vorauszusehen. Später haben die Deutschen entweder ein Offizierskasino oder ein Lazarett daraus gemacht, – denn das Generalkommando war drüben?" "Ein Lazarett." "Die Marmortafel mit Goldschrift am Tor zeigt an, daß hier Napoleon auf seinem Rückzug aus Rußland wohnte. Er hat in der Nacht zum 24. November 1812 die Stadt verkleidet verlassen." Vor dem Tor geht ein Zigeunerweib vorbei, ein Kind an der Hand. Sie haben ein Lager vor der Stadt, kommen viel aus Rußland. Mein Begleiter meint: sie fliehen vor den Bolschewiken. "Sie fliehen nicht vor den Bolschewiken, mein Sohn. Arme Leute, die zur Macht gelangen, schlagen nur auf Reiche. Sie fliehen immer, genauer: gar nicht. Sie wandern." Ich präge meinem Begleiter das Wort "wandern" ein.[369]

The dialogue between Döblin and his companion demonstrates their different forms of knowledge about the place they are visiting: Döblin knows the history from books, which officials and official institutions existed here under Russian control, while the companion remembers the look of the buildings and the layout, and is able to read the plaque, presumably in Polish. What language this exchange of knowledge occurs in is unclear: Döblin speaks French and German, but seems at some points of the trip to converse with Yiddish speakers without the aid of an interpreter. Their conversation about the various empires that have passed through the castle hill is brought into the contemporary moment with the appearance of the gypsy woman. Is she a refugee from yet another state power joining the list of those who have controlled or attempted to control Wilno? The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Commonwealth with Poland, the annexation by the Russian Empire, occupation by the Germans, the new Polish state after its hard fought war with the Bolsheviks, the Bolshevik threat to Polish independence that remained. Döblin takes the Bolshevik side; he has already encountered the intense Polish animosity toward Russia many times on his trip, one manifestation of which is Polish admiration for Napoleon. This is not Napoleon's final appearance in the scene, however. Continuing his reflection on the

[369] Döblin *Reise* 129-30 ("After all, it's only for the old breed of tourists, and I belong to the new breed. My companion would love to see it; he's from Wilno; so I've decided to show him the castle. 'The Russian governor-general lived here?' 'Yes.' 'I knew it; it was obvious. Later on, the Germans turned it into either an officers' mess or an army hospital—the general command was over there, wasn't it?' 'A hospital.' 'The marble plaque with the gold inscription says that Napoleon stayed here during his retreat from Russia. He had to leave town in disguise during the night of November 24, 1812.' A gypsy woman passes the entrance, she's holding a child by the hand. The gypsies have a camp outside town; lots of them are coming from Russia. My companion says they're fleeing the Bolsheviks. 'They're not fleeing the Bolsheviks, my son. When poor people come to power, they strike only at the rich. The gypsies always flee, or rather, they do not flee, they wander.' I impress the word 'wander' on my companion." Neugroschel 95-6)

state powers that have come and gone through Wilno, Döblin and his companion consider declaring their own takeover:

> Dann gehen wir in den Schloßhof. Es ist gegen ein Uhr mittags. Man kann ungestört herumgehen. Napoleon ist geflohen, die Russen sind abgezogen, die Deutschen sind weg. Jetzt sind wir da. Ich erwäge mit meinem Begleiter, ob wir eine Fahne hissen wollen, eine Proklamation auf polnisch und jiddisch erlassen, daß wir als Freunde gekommen seien und man uns und unseren Truppen in jeder Weise behilflich sein solle. Aber er will erst den Portier fragen, wogegen ich auch nichts habe. Der Portier hat uns bemerkt und ist vor Schreck sofort mittagessen gegangen. Mein Begleiter erwischt ihn. Sie sprechen, was sprechen sie? Russisch. Sie verehren Napoleon und sprechen russisch oder polnisch. Ich verehre ihn nicht und spreche französisch. Als ich den Portier französisch anspreche, sagt er, er könne nicht Jiddisch. Ich wandere gebrochen weiter, Treppen hinauf.[370]

Döblin's anti-statism comes through strongly in this passage. Walking through the empty courtyard he reflects on the empires who have failed to hold it, and wonders if he might not just as easily declare himself ruler. The joke becomes an interesting exposure and obfuscation of national identity, however: whose flag will Döblin raise? Whose his companion? If we assume that his companion will be issuing a proclamation in Polish, does that mean Döblin issues the Yiddish proclamation? Or rather, do these two languages represent not so much Döblin and his companion as they do the two "nations" of the current Polish Republic, the Polish and the Jewish? The question of national identity becomes further complicated when the companion talks to the porter, not in Polish but in Russian (perhaps the porter is Lithuanian?), the language of the hated imperial power so recently driven out. Döblin finds an added irony in the porter's ignorance of French despite his admiration for Napoleon. More than just the language of Napoleon, of course, French is the language of Republicanism, liberté, egalité, fraternité—what kind of Polish Republic is this, exactly, if it admires the conquering emperor but does not speak the language of revolution? Döblin's knowledge of French and of the republican legacy of French is what informs his dislike of Napoleon. And yet, when Döblin speaks French the porter assumes it to be Yiddish, that is, the porter mistakes the language that symbolizes equality among citizens of different religions for a Jew speaking Jewish. The moment comes to symbolize the tension that is one of the main questions of the book: what kind of nation is this new Poland, a nation of Catholic Poles, or a nation of nationalities? And the symbolic moment arises from the history of the space in which it occurs: the castle hill as a location of (changing) state power.

The tension between Döblin's admiration for the Polish people and their long struggle for independence and his distrust of state power arises again and again. It is one of the ways that the

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[370] Döblin *Reise* 130 ("Then we enter the courtyard of the castle. It's almost one P.M. We can walk about undisturbed. Napoleon has fled, the Russians have left, the Germans are gone. Now we are here. My companion and I ponder whether we should hoist a flag, issue a proclamation in Polish and Yiddish, explaining that we have come as friends and that the inhabitants should assist us and our troops in every way. But he first wants to ask the caretaker, and I have no objections. The caretaker has already noticed us, and he was so startled that he instantly took off for lunch. My companion catches up with him. They speak—what do they speak? Russian. They admire Napoleon and speak Russian or Polish. I do not admire him and I speak French. When I address the porter in French, he replies that he doesn't know Yiddish. Crestfallen, I wander along, climb stairs." Neugroschel 96)

work presents its political engagement: the narrator is not satisfied with observing Poland, he is compelled to take a stance about what he observes, and suggests the reader must also decide. But ambivalence is again the strongest emotion. Early in the first chapter, Döblin concludes his recitation of Poland's long independence struggle with the observation: "– Sie sitzen jetzt in ihren eigenen Häusern. Denn eine Grenze hat Tyrannenmacht. – Es gilt nichts zu vergessen, auch sich nicht."[371] Again, the Schiller quotation, taken out of context, allows itself to be read in two ways to very different effect: the Poles are now masters of their own house; the limit of Russian imperial power has been found. Or: the Poles are now masters of their own house and in danger of asserting a new tyrannical power of their own through the newly established Polish borders. The insistence on remembering seems to ride this ambivalence: one must forget neither the struggle for independence, nor the oppressive power a state can wield over people.

Döblin often compares the situation of the Poles with that of the Jews, seeking lessons for the Jewish nation from the example of the Poles' struggle for independence. He reflects upon observing the celebration of Sukkoth in Warsaw:

> Ich kann mich nicht helfen: wie ich durch die Hausflure gehen und Hütte nach Hütte besehe, werde ich von Staunen befallen, von Ehrfurcht. Und von Freude: der Geist lebt, Geist schafft in der Natur. Geist, Wille hält diese zusammen. Kein sogenanntes Unglück hat sie zertrümmert, weil sie es nicht wollten. Wie sie durch die Jahrtausende irren, wanken, getrieben werden, sind sie ein Symbol für das Einzige, was Zukunft, Geburt, Schöpfung trägt: für den Geist und die Kraft des Ich. Bei den Polen hat es mich beglückt: sie sitzen in ihren eigenen Häusern. Den Juden kann es nicht entgehen. Wenn sie auch vielleicht für eine großere Aufgabe herangereift sind. Denn solch ungeheures Experiment kann eigentlich nicht auf gewöhnliche Weise enden mit dem Glück im Winkel.[372]

With a somewhat exoticizing gaze, Döblin admires the continuity of tradition and practice that he sees in the Polish Jews' observance of their holidays.[373] If the Poles managed to reestablish their sovereignty after roughly 120 years of statelessness, surely the Jews who have managed to maintain a group identity for almost two thousand years of statelessness cannot be denied the same success. And yet at the same time, the passage ends with Döblin's ambivalence about territorialism, his doubt that a Jewish state is really the answer. The collective will and spirit that

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[371] Döblin *Reise* 21 ("They are now dwelling in their very own homes. For every border wields a tyrant's power. One must forget nothing, including oneself." Neugroschel 9) Again, Neugroschel's interpretation of the Schiller quotation heavily impacts our reading of the passage.

[372] Döblin *Reise* 98-9 ("I can't help it: as I walk through the building lobbies and view hut upon hut, I feel amazement, awe. And also joy: the mind lives, the mind creates in nature. Mind, spirit, willpower hold them together. No so-called disaster has shattered them, because they wouldn't let it. Wandering through the millennia, reeling, driven, they are a symbol of the one thing that carries the future, carries the birth and creation—of the spirit and strength of the self. It made me happy among the Poles: they now are dwelling in their very own homes. *It cannot elude the Jews*. Even if they have *been* ripened for a greater mission. For such a tremendous experiment cannot really end in the normal way, with some cozy fireside happiness." Neugroschel, 71. I have modified the sections in italics)

[373] He seems also genuinely shocked to find that the Polish Jews are, in fact, unassimilated. I'll return to this.

has kept the Jewish nation alive for so long must make them destined for something more than just a "normal" state, what Hodes was to call a "statelet" in his essay twenty years later.

As with the castle hill scene, the concrete occasion of Döblin's reflection adds a level of symbolism to the concrete moment. Döblin is reflecting on Jewish perseverance while watching people sit in their sukkahs, the booths (or in the German, Hütte) that Jews build during the holiday of Sukkoth, the word itself meaning a temporary structure. The holiday has two traditionally understood meanings: it is both a harvest festival and a time to remember the Exodus, when the Israelites lived in temporary, transitory housing, houses that aren't their own, in a sense. Döblin discusses the former meaning, while the latter remains unspoken and yet central to his reflections on Jewish survival and sovereignty. Just before the section quoted above, he writes:

> Das wird ein merkwürdiges Fest für dieses Volk. Ob sie noch wissen, was sie hier vorbereiten. Es sind Reste eines Naturfestes. Welch trübe Erinnerung für ein Händler- und Geistesvolk. Kein Boden, kein Land, kein Staat. Keine Saat, keine Ernte, keine Natur…Bei manchen Völkern wuchs das aus in Pessimismus und Askese. Die Juden sind kräftig, irdisch geblieben, haben sogar, sehe ich, den Optimismus der strebenden Menschen. Ihre Metaphysik ist die nach innen geschlagene aktiver Menschen, denen die Aktivität genommen ist…Sie gehen jetzt ein Naturfest feiern auf den finsteren Hinterhöfen der Großstadt, neben Mülleimern, auf den dachhohen Balkons. Das sieht wie eine Geste der unverwüstlichen Masse aus: trotz alledem![374]

Döblin sees an irony in this urban, spiritual people celebrating a harvest festival, when they have no crops to harvest and no relationship to nature. And at the same time, the origins of the holiday remind him that Jews were a people with land and harvests, and he believes that that "earthly" energy still exists within them. Making it perhaps all the sadder to see them celebrating in courtyards and next to trash cans. The unstated meaning of the holiday, however, only reinforces Döblin's set of observations: during the Exodus, the Jews survived without land, without territory, without permanent houses, because of God—or, for Döblin, because of Geist. There is a tension in these passages between the metaphorical "eigenen Häusern" that are the Poles in control of their own state and the "Hütte" of the Jewish holiday. The Jews are sitting in their own Hütte, symbols of cultural and spiritual continuity, but also symbols of statelessness. The question that Döblin cannot quite resolve here is: which is preferable? Which is greater? The house, which is sovereignty, or the hut (which we might also call *do'ikayt)*, which is national continuity "trotz alledem"?

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[374] Döblin *Reise* 98-9 ("A strange feast for this nation. Do they realize what they're preparing here? These are the remnants of a nature festival. What a drab memory for a nation of peddlers and thinkers. No soil, no country, no state. No sowing, no harvest, no nature…In some nations, this condition developed into pessimism and asceticism. The Jews have remained strong, earthly; they even have, as I see, the optimism of striving people. Their metaphysics is that of active people whose active energy has been blocked and who have therefore turned inward…They are now going to celebrate a feast of nature in the dark courtyards of the metropolis, next to garbage cans, on roof-high balconies. It looks like a gesture of the indestructible masses: despite everything!" Neugroschel 70)

Döblin finds other reasons to question the example set by the new Polish nation, in ways that relate both to the contemporary status of Jews in Poland and to the kind of relationship to a state that Döblin might want for Jews more generally. Several times in the work, he writes about the struggle over whether the new Second Republic of Poland is the nation state of Catholic Poles, or a state of nations, in which the different national groups living on Polish soil participate equally. This struggle was at the forefront of organizing for the Bund in interwar Poland, which advocated of course for the state of nations, with national cultural autonomy for each group. It is this struggle, in fact, which comes to be most associated with the concept of *do'ikayt* by historians of the Bund today: perhaps even more so than in revolutionary Russia, Bundists in Poland in the same period felt they had a chance to establish cultural autonomy for Jews through the Polish parliament, and they invested deeply in building organizations to win local and national elections. While this struggle continued into the 1930s, and by some metrics the Bund seemed more successful in its electoral campaigns in the early '30s than it did in the mid '20s,[375] the ideal of a Polish state of nations seemed out of reach to many already at the time of this trip:

> An einem "Musée des beaux arts" schlendere ich vorbei. Dieses Haus besuchte der erste Präsident der polnischen Republik an einem Tage hoher innerpolitischer Spannung. Er fuhr von seinem Sitz Belvedere erst nach dem Sejm. Schon unterwegs wurde sein Wagon von der aufgeregten Masse mit Schmutz beworfen. Beim Betrachten von Bildern im Museum bekam er die Kugel in den Rücken. Es war eine Antwort auf die Frage: wer in Polen herrschen soll, eine Staatsnation oder ein Konnubium von Völkern. Der Schuß entschied für die Staatsnation.[376]

The anecdote refers to the assassination of Gabriel Narutowicz on December 16, 1922, less than a week after his election. Narutowicz had been elected president with the support of leftists, the national minorities bloc, and the centrist PSL "Piast" (one of the Polish peasant parties), who united to defeat Maurycy Zamoyski, the candidate of the right wing National Democrats. It was a supporter of the National Democrats who assassinated him, thus Döblin's conclusion that the assassination was a violent demonstration of the Polish nationalists' commitment to their narrow definition of Poland and a blow against the left and coalition of national minorities who followed Piłsudski's vision of a state of nations.[377]

What this means for Polish Jews and for Poland is explained to Döblin by a "young Jewish politician" soon after:

> Die Juden sind in Polen konstitutionell gleichberechtigt. Praktisch ist vieles wie bei den Russen geblieben. Wer sich jüdischer Nationalität bezeichnet, kann in polnischen Heer nicht avancieren. Im Versailler Vertrag spricht der Artikel 10 von jüdischen Gemeinden

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[375] see Jack Jacobs. *Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009, pp. 1-4.

[376] Döblin *Reise* 55 ("I stroll past the Museum of Fine Arts. This edifice was visited by the first president of the Polish Republic on a day of major domestic political tension. He first drove from his residence, the Belvedere, to the Sejm. En route, the agitated crowds threw dirt at his car. While viewing the paintings at the museum, he got the bullet in his back. It was an answer to the question of who should rule Poland, a state nation or a consortium of nations. The shot opted for the state nation." Neugroschel 38)

[377] See Norman Davies. *God's Playground: A History of Poland Volume II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 291-321.

> und 11 von Juden; sie sollen die Rechte der Minoritäten in Sprache und Religion genießen. Das ist, man muß es zugeben, keine juristische glatte Anerkennung der jüdischen Nationalität. Aber kraft der Tatsachen gelten sie dafür, stehen im Sejm bei den Minoritäten. Die Polen der Rechten wollen den Nationalstaat, andere eine Art Föderation. Dies war der Sinn des polnischen Feldzugs 1920, den Pilsudski führte; er war in Kiev, wollte die ganze Ukraine; er war im litauischen Wilna, wollte Litauen. Er wollte ein Groß-Polen, in dem föderativ Freunde leben und das Freunde umgeben. Die Rechte stand gegen ihn, Legionen und Jugend waren auf seiner Seite. Aber Bolschewiki vertrieben ihn aus Kiev. Es blieb die schwierige, schwierige Partiallösung von heute, das Stückelwerk des polnischen Staates von heute.[378]

The Jews are left with a partial legal framework for their status as a national minority, and while these rights are officially recognized, many limitations remain. There is a suggestion here in the description of Piłsudski's failed campaign of 1920 that while his vision of a federated Poland might have been better for the Jews (and certainly was supported by many Jews), that Piłsudski overreached. Echoes of "eine Grenze hat Tyrranenmacht" can be heard again: the borders of Piłsudski's Greater Poland collided with both the Soviet and Lithuanian borders. In that light, Groß-Polen looks rather like an imperial project. So where does this leave Poland's Jews, and what position is the engaged Döblin to take toward the Second Republic? The young Jewish politician has an ambivalent view of it, calling it a "Partiallösung," and a "Stückelwerk." As in the conversation with the Yiddish writer discussed earlier, Döblin seems here to let his conversation partner speak for him; to ventriloquize his own opinion by giving this other voice the final say on the matter. The political ambivalence of the young man is then amplified, thematized in this moment of double-voicing. The patchwork quality of the narrative, assembled from the reported speech of Döblin's interlocutor, perhaps also filtered through a translator, resembles the patchwork quality of the nation, a heterogeneous, mismatched whole stitched together from the different political visions of what it should be.

Poland's patchwork nature comes through as well in the radical differences Döblin perceives among the regions he visits. I'll end with a few comparisons of his impressions in Warsaw and Wilno—Wilno (elsewhere discussed as Vilna and Vilnius based on context) has the added benefit of bringing the discussion back to *Lite,* the region that has been the focus of this dissertation. One of the opening scenes of the book is Döblin's first glimpse of observant Jews in Warsaw, and his shock at the sight; and every other first encounter with different kinds of Jews

[378] Döblin *Reise* 81 ("The Polish constitution guarantees equal rights for the Jews. But in practice, a lot has remained the same as under the Russians. Anyone who registers as a Jewish national cannot advance in the Polish army. Article 10 in the Treaty of Versailles speaks about Jewish communities and article 11 about Jews, they are to enjoy the rights of minorities in language and religion. This is not, one must admit, a clear-cut legal recognition of the Jewish nationality. But the Jews count as a de facto nationality; in the Sejm, they are one of the minorities. The right-wing Poles want a national state, others a kind of federation. That was the goal of the Polish campaign of 1920, led by Pilsudski; he was in Kiev and he wanted the entire Ukraine; he was in the Lithuanian Vilnius (Wilno) and he wanted Lithuania. He wanted a Greater Poland, a federative structure inhabited by friends and surrounded by friends. The right wing opposed him, legions and youth were on his side. But the Bolsheviks drove him out of Kiev. What remains is the difficult, difficult partial solution of today, the patchwork of the Polish state of today." Neugroschel 57)

throughout the book—be they different Hasidic sects, Zionists, Socialists, or simply assimilated—seems to continue the shock. First Döblin is shocked that the Jewish nation *does* exist, and then he is shocked by its diversity—which his travelogue represents in brief, but appropriately complex vignettes. In this scene, Döblin describes his impressions during a walk around the city center. The first section break in the book occurs after the following paragraph:

> Ich stehe an einer Haltestelle, studiere die sehr höflichen Tafeln der Straßenbahn, die alle vorüberfahrenden Linien und ihre Route angeben. Da kommt im Gedränge auf mich zu ein einzelner Mann mit bärtigem Gesicht, in schwarzem lumpigen Kaftan, schwarze Schirmmütze auf dem Kopf, lange Schaftstiefel an den Beinen. Und gleich dahinter, laut sprechend, in Worten, die ich als deutsch erkenne, ein anderer, ebenso schwarzrockiger, ein großer, mit breitem roten Gesicht, rote Flaumhaare an den Backen, über die Lippe. Redet heftig auf ein kleines armselig gekleidetes Mädchen ein, wohl seine Tochter; eine ältere Frau mit schwarzem Kopftuch, seine Frau, geht bekümmert neben ihr. Es gibt mir einen Stoß vor die Brust. Sie verschwinden im Gedränge. Man beachtet sie nicht. Es sind Juden. Ich bin verblüfft, nein, erschrocken.[379]

We must assume that this family is not the first traditionally-garbed group of Ostjuden that Döblin has ever seen: Berlin had a population of Jewish immigrants from the East, and Döblin lived and worked not far from the Scheunenviertel, one of the neighborhoods where many Ostjuden lived and where the pogrom had occurred in 1923. It's not necessarily the sight of these Jews, then, that so shocks and frightens him, it seems rather the fact that "man beachtet sie nicht," that there is nothing out of the ordinary about the family, so unassimilated, so different from the other Poles, passing through the city center. Perhaps it is also the moment of "Erkennung," of recognition, when Döblin hears something familiar in the Jews' Germanic Yiddish, cutting through the Slavic sounds that surround him. Despite how very foreign the Ostjuden seem to Döblin, he has more in common with them linguistically than he does with the Slavic-speaking Poles. Döblin does not explain his fright, after the section break he continues on with his exploration, writing nothing more about Jews for several pages.

Döblin's next stop after Warsaw is Wilno, which begins with a parallel and opposite shock to the one he experienced in Warsaw:

> Mir fällt auf, wie ich an einem Kino vorbeikomme: die Plakate sind doppelsprachig; es gibt polnische Plakate und jiddische. Auch die Schilder vieler Kaufleute haben hebräische Lettern, sind in jiddischer Sprache. Dies traf ich in Warschau im Nalewkiviertel oft, hier ist es über die ganze Stadt verbreitet. Scheint eine große oder sehr mutige Judenschaft hier zu wohnen. Aber ich sehe sie gar nicht, und das ist das zweite. Es müssen doch einzelne herumlaufen, selbst wenn Fest ist. Und da merke ich, daß ich

[379] Döblin *Reise* 18 ("I stand at the trolley stop, perusing the very obliging streetcar signs, which indicate every passing line and its route. All at once, a lone man with a bearded face comes toward me through the crowd: he wears a black, ragged gabardine, a black visored cap on his head, and top boots on his legs. And right behind him, talking loudly, in words that I recognize as German, another one, likewise in a black gabardine, a big man, with a broad red face, red fuzz on his cheeks, over his lips. He talks intensely to a small, poorly dressed girl, his daughter no doubt; an elderly woman in a black kerchief, his wife, walks alongside her, with a troubled look. I feel a jolt in my heart. They vanish in the throng. People pay them no heed. They are Jews. I am stunned, no, frightened." Neugroschel 7)

> sie doch sehe und nur nicht beachte. Sie stehen neben mir vor dem Kino, gehen, junge Männer und Mädchen, in weißen Mützen; ältere kommen langsam über den holprigen Platz, unterhalten sich in ihrer Sprache. Geht niemand im Kaftan! Ich sehe keinen in der schwarzen "Kapotte." Gehen alle europäisch und—sprechen doch nicht polnisch. Das ist ein anderer Schlag Juden als in Warschau.[380]

In Warsaw, Döblin was shocked by the coexistence of unassimilated Ostjuden and Poles, what he calls "dieses Nebeneinander zweier Völker" during one of his descriptions of the Jewish district of Warsaw.[381] In Wilno, Döblin sees something even more shocking: "European" Jews, meaning secular or westernized Jews, who are neither linguistically assimilated nor geographically segregated in the city. In Warsaw he saw two peoples living next to one another, contiguous; in Wilno the situation is more complicated, something Wilno had a reputation for.[382] The Jewish population wasn't particularly large, however. Percentagewise, Wilno and Warsaw's populations in the early 1920s were very close, Jews made up around 33% of both cities.[383] But Wilno was the capital of Jewish culture in the region, which perhaps did give its 50,000 Jews some swagger. If Döblin was looking to understand the "Nebeneinander" of Jews and Poles, Wilno would give a better picture of the Jewish nature of the towns and small cities of the former Pale of Settlement (of which Warsaw was not a part), with a Jewish plurality if not majority in the urban centers and an overwhelmingly non-Jewish rural population. In Wilno, Döblin is seeing the twentieth century version of the "Nebeneinander" that goes back to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; the history that the *do'ikayt* of Wilno's Yiddishists and Bundists sought to recall.

It's not just in the relations of Jews and Poles that Wilno confounds and complicates the impressions of Poland Döblin had begun to form based on his time in Warsaw. Polish nationalism also appears differently there, in a city whose status was still in contest between the Poles and the Lithuanians:

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[380] Döblin *Reise* 118 ("Upon passing a movie house, I notice that the posters come in two languages: there are Polish posters and Yiddish ones. The signs of many shops are likewise in the Hebrew alphabet, in Yiddish. I often encountered this in Warsaw, in the Nalewki district; but here, it's spread throughout the city. There seems to be a very large or very courageous Jewish population here. Yet I don't see any Jews, and that's the second thing. Individual Jews must be standing around, even if it's a holiday. And now I notice that I do see them but don't notice them. They stand next to me outside the movie house, walk about in white caps, young men and girls; older ones slowly crossing the bumpy square, conversing in their language. No one wears a caftan! I see no one in a black 'capote.' They all wear European clothes—and yet do not speak Polish. This is a different breed of Jews than in Warsaw." Neugroschel 86)

[381] Döblin *Reise* 75 ("This contiguousness of two nations." Neugroschel 52)

[382] Wilno had a reputation as a city in which many religious confessions and ethnicities coexisted to a somewhat remarkable degree. David Frick describes the city as "a particularly good laboratory for observing the 'how' of coexistence" in the Early Modern Period. See David A. Frick. *Kith, Kin, and Neighbors: Communities and Confessions in Seventeenth-Century Wilno*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013.

[383] Of course, Wilno was a fraction of the size of Warsaw at the time. According to the Polish census of 1923, Wilno had around 168,000 total residents, with 55,000 Jews. Warsaw in 1921 had 937,000 total residents and around 310,000 Jews.

> Viele Leute, die ich spreche, können Russisch. Keine Spur von Haß auf Rußland. Wenn man daran rührt, ob sie Russisch können, lächeln sie wie ertappt. Das gilt für die Einheimischen; die zugereisten Polen hassen und fürchten wie in Warschau. Ich habe einen Plan Wilnos aus der Russenzeit und einen von jetzt. Man hat fast alle Straßen und Plätze umbenannt. In Warschau hat mich das erfreut, herzlich erhoben; sonderbar: hier mag ich es nicht recht. Es ist, kommt mir vor, über diese Stadt von oben geworfen. Es ist nicht wie in Warschau von innen zum Vorschein gekommen…Eine gebildete Dame flüstert mir zu: der Pole ist höflich, sentimental und falsch; der Russe hat ein freies Wesen, ist ehrlich und liebeswürdig. Oh, sie mißversteht mich. Ich bin ein Freund des polnischen Volkes. Der Pole hatte jahrhundertelanges Unglück, mußte sich verstecken, durfte nicht offen sein—unter eben jenem ehrlichen liebenswürdigen Russen. Unterdrückung macht schief und schwächlich. Und Polen liegt nicht frei wie Rußland, nicht weit wie Rußland, sondern geklemmt zwischen Osten und Westen, zwischen Süden und Norden. Das gibt überhaupt nicht einfache Menschen. Eine Brücke: ist das Land oder Wasser?—Aber ich bin betrübt.[384]

While here as elsewhere, we shouldn't take Döblin's impressions of things like general hatred-level toward Russians as anything other than anecdotal, what is interesting is watching him attempt to understand the different perspectives he encounters. Everything was simpler in Warsaw: Döblin could observe the symbols of Russian imperialism, like the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral,[385] and celebrate the Poles' liberation (even if, as we have seen, his celebration was tempered with wariness). But what does it mean to be a friend of the Polish people in Wilno where the Polish renaming of streets feels—to some at least—as much an imperialist gesture as did the Russian names in Warsaw? Compared with Warsaw, Döblin now finds himself in the Polish borderlands, 25 miles from the Lithuanian border to the west and less than 100 miles from the Russian border to the east—both borders that had existed for less than a decade. In his defense, or maybe apology, for Polish character, Döblin lists a set of conditions that again recall the similarity he (and many others) saw between the situation of Poles and Jews: both stateless, existing under foreign empires, positioned between the West and the East, doing what it takes to survive, perhaps even becoming crooked under that pressure. Again, there is the sense that in such a complex situation, an answer as simple as statehood will not suffice. Döblin calls Poland a bridge, though he does not know what kind, and I am reminded of Mikhail Krutikov calling Sh. An-sky a bridge—a place that is between places, and between moments of political possibility.

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[384] Döblin *Reise* 122 ("Many people I speak to know Russian. Not a trace of hatred for Russia. If you ask whether they know Russian, they smile as if caught in flagrante delicto. This is true of the locals; the Poles who have moved here from other places hate and fear the Russians like the Poles in Warsaw. I have a map of Wilno from the Russian period and a more recent map. Nearly all the streets and squares have been renamed. In Warsaw, this renaming delighted me, elated me; strange: here, I don't really care for it. It seems to have been inflicted upon this city from above. It did not issue from within, as in Warsaw…An educated woman whispers to me: the Pole is polite, sentimental, and deceitful; the Russian has a free nature, he is honest and charming. Oh, she misunderstands me. I am a friend of the Polish people. The Poles had bad luck for centuries, they were forced to hide their true feelings, they couldn't be open—under those very Russians, the honest, charming ones. Suppression makes you crooked and feeble. And Poland does not lie free like Russia, not vast like Russia; it is wedged in between east and west, between north and south. This produces anything but simple people. A bridge: is that land or water? I feel distressed." Neugroschel 89).

[385] Döblin *Reise* 16.

Again Döblin does not explain his feeling of distress after making these observations: it might be his fear that the "simple" solution of Polish statehood is not sufficient; it might be that he is drawing the parallel to the possibilities of Jewish statehood again, as well.

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In the other examples of literary *do'ikayt* that I have discussed in this dissertation, the writers are engaged with the places where they live, presenting a deep and complex picture of a Jewish space to which they are connected, and which they hope to see improve. Döblin does not have the same connection to the cities in Poland that he visits. Perhaps he has a sense of ancestral connection, but Berlin is his home. What's more, he feels that he must travel to Poland to find Jews and the places they live; he doubts that the assimilated German Jews are distinct enough to constitute a separate nation—a doubt which might have changed in the course of the 1930s when his own life was disrupted by Nazi antisemitism. Döblin is convinced by his trip of the existence of both the Jewish and Polish nations, even if he is not convinced that a state is anything other than violence (a sense which likely didn't change during the course of the 1930s). The final chapter of *Reise in Polen*, "Ausreise" (Departure), begins:

> Gern war ich hier, gefesselt bin ich; was ist das für ein Menschenschlag, Gemisch von Menschen; welche brodelnde Lebendigkeit, starken Reize. Hätte mich gern tiefer in alles hineinbewegt: aber blieb mit Taubheit und Stummheit geschlagen. Nun ade. Es gibt dieses Land. Ich weiß es herzlich.[386]

At the end of the trip, it is the complexity, the mixture, perhaps the heteroglossia of Poland that Döblin has enjoyed, and that he wishes he could have had a deeper understanding of—but as at the beginning of the work, it is that very complexity that stood in the way of deeper understanding. He didn't know the languages that would have allowed him to engage further. Perhaps some sense of this came home with Döblin, that he did know the languages of Berlin in a way that would allow him to create a complicated and messy picture of that city in a way he couldn't as an outsider in Poland. Nevertheless, Döblin removed himself from the center of Berlin to the borderlands of Poland to gain a political understanding grounded in a spatial experience, and I find it worthwhile to likewise take his work out of the center and read it through that same Yiddish political and literary lens that he hoped to better understand through his travel and writing.[387] It strikes me that the Yiddish translation of "Es gibt dieses Land" would be "*Es iz do dos land*."

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[386] Döblin *Reise in Polen* 335 ("I enjoyed being here, I'm enthralled; what kind of human breed is this, human mixture; what seething life, powerful stimuli. I would have loved to get deeper into everything; but I remained deaf and dumb. And now, farewell. This land exists. I realize it from the bottom of my heart." Neugroschel 256)

[387] (In another dissertation, I would love to read *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and *Verratenes Volk* as works of modernist *do'ikayt.*)

With Helix students and my colleague, Michael Casper, outside the house where Moyshe Kulbak lived in Vilnius—at the time Alfred Döblin visited the city (2012).

Appendix: Minsk Mud

A translation of Izi Kharik's "*Minsker Blotes*"[388]
by Madeleine Atkins Cohen

Part One

1

Around each proud street—perhaps a hundred quiet alleys
With low little houses, like sheep at the mountain's base…
Minsk had forgotten, about them, about everyone—
And all roads lead to the marketplace…

And here in the depths, in the warmth of the mud,
In wooden houses buried at the city's edge, —
A pain rises, juicy and ripe,
And a fist shivers in every childlike heart.

People haven't planted trees or parks here, –
Here they play naked in the dirt…
And a fist, young and strong, is pumping, filling up,
And someday it will break the glass.

Someday a hatred will push through all reason,
And hard and sharp, make a cut above the heart…
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
Little children play here, little Pinyes play here
And roll around here, naked in the sand.

2

In each little house, in each little chamber
A sewing machine speaks, or a plane, or a hammer.

The noise of the machines is still quiet, still small here,
Still everyone is working hard, into the night, and since the dawn air.

In wooden houses bodies become restless,
In wooden houses ballads become restless…

[388] based on the earliest version published in book form, Izi Kharik. *Af der erd*. Moscow: Farlag "shul un bukh," 1926, pp. 5-25.

By the drill, by the plane, by the cobbler's thread and awl, —
They sing high and they sing hot, and all together they call:

"ay, ay, ay, ay, Yashke is going away,
Let us say goodbye, the train is pulling away."[389] — — —

Through days, through nights, through weeks rolling by without end…
But where is want and what is need by simple craftsmen!...

3

Pinye didn't grow up spoiled here,
Like thousands of others abandoned under the sun…
What does a youth from warped alleyways know
Except fearsome stories about the Bund?[390]

And hard days, and nights without dad or mom
With only a bare fist and misery under his head—
There's a city full of light, close by, nigh on,
From up there to down here no one descends.

Minsk—clarified Belorussian sorrow
With warped and beggarly hands,
Why for every proud wall,
Must there be so many cellars as well?

4

It's good, like this, long past midnight,
When houses lie, all tired out,
To come out quiet, to come out sharp,
In old and restless rags.

To let loose, pell-mell,
Through alley after alley,
And there—it's you, and look—it's me,
Now let's forget ourselves.

We worry, there's a worry now, –
Now we need to run…

[389] These lines are from the song "*Yashke fort avek*" (Yashke departs), a song about a Jew who is conscripted into the Czarist army.
[390] This strophe is omitted in the 1970 collection of Kharik's poetry, *Mit layb un lebn*, I suspect because of the mention of the Bund.

And a hatred pounds, and a heat pounds
In the heart and in the temples.

And unexpected, and unawares,
We stand still and—*basta!*[391]
Why is there suddenly so much light
Like a holy day in the streets?

So bright and high, the High Market stands
And so proud are its walls, –
"Walls, walls, you are strong,
But how long will you last?"…

And a sharp rock flies through the glass…
"A greeting to you from the mud!"…

———————

Rushing back, running home,
Breath, it rushes, it flies…

5

Old signs hang on old storefronts,
Full to bursting with all their goods.
"Hurry," "hurry," "a bargain for a kopek:
Whoever wants it and whoever needs it!"

The profits roll in all day long, big and hot,
Shopkeepers take to wheeling and dealing…
Pinye, Pinye, do you need new pants?
You must be crazy, to go out like that!

O, so many good things behind the glass,
And his mouth gets hungry and sweet.
Hey, but who wants to cry here, oy, but who can laugh here,
"Women,"
"Women,"
"Fish-what a bargain!"

On old storefronts hang old signs,
But they are full to bursting with everything good.
Ach, where can one find a plain Gilden?
With bread, a warm meal—a full mouth…

[391] Basta: borrowed from Italian into Russian and other Slavic languages as well as Yiddish, "zabastovka" means a strike in Russian, in both the sense of an impact and a labor strike.

6

Minsk is blessed with shacks and with “shacks,”
Without red curtains, without red lamps over the doors…
And all night long, until the whitening of day
They smoke and drink plain beer here.

And when the “Sabbath Queen” arrives dressed all in white,
And the glass in all the windows piously ignite,
Pinye sees: it becomes restless in the “shacks,”
Where sound and smoke are wine-like and thick …

The heart is torn, the blood churns and seethes, —
It’s *shabes* now…the city is quiet and vast…
And nearby with sorrow in their hearts—
Strong girls, among their own flesh and blood.

And the boys come, to take and scorn them,
And leave behind in stillness *vey-un-vind*…
And over there the shul burns now in bright, devout light
And each bends down under his sins…

So why do they come here in neckties and bowties
With quiet eyes, with cautious looks?
Oy, it’s good to give a smack across the head, –
“Take that,” “quiet, take that” – strange pleasure…

Girls, girls, good, humble sisters
From low “shacks,” from cellars and street corners,–
Take these lanterns, take these knives,
Raise your hands and strike.

And the glass windows take to fevering, and voices break and tear
And all around becomes loud and thick -- -- --
-- -- -- -- -- -- --
And when the “Sabbath Queen” arrives dressed all in white,
All the glass in all the windows piously ignite…

7

It feels good to Pinye, being a young tinsmith,
Laughing high and loud over the roofs.
It rips, it pulls and yearns to go high and higher,

Out there, where the day rests, out there, where the night rests…

The tin is already hot, and the sky is still misty,
The sun is close: grasp — and catch it…
And down below a throng is already churning,
Store signs creak and the unrest begins.

Shop owners hurry along, like little sparks of fire,
Hearts are striving and hands chatter…
A terrible urge rises up from deep in his heart to spit:
Ay, burn up and disappear!

It feels good to Pinye with ringing laughter,
Laughing away above the city.
They rip, they sing, they ring out, the light tiles,
And deep in his heart it surges, surges…

8

The sky is already quiet, it's already cool on the tin,
Every forehead damp but still.
Carrying over the rooftops is an evening hymn
And every heart becomes radiant and rich…

Worked all day long – into the night and since the dawn,
Sitting now on the tin roofs, tired…
Uncle Pinye sings to his nephew Pinye
Every evening, every night a song:

-- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- --

"…Today they live in chains and in snow,
Today they are so far away…

O, but what a time that was, —
The workshops fevered and awoke…
Strikes, — and blood, — and the joy of the Marseillaise,
But what do you know, what do you understand, —
You worm!

In a burning rush, every one of those men
They took and sent off to Siberia.
When, oh when will someone take that Czar
And with all heaviness break down that door…

And just like that, take back those brothers,
Just like that, bring them back here."

-- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- --

Every evening Uncle Pinye sings songs,
Every evening the roof gets lost in thought…

9

And every night in the quietness of bed
I hear quietly, as if carried on the wind, —
Chains clanging mournful on the roads
And they, far-blown, look quietly at me…

So tall, so strong, so far away,
Every one of them a giant.
If just once I could catch a glimpse
And quietly say to them: "I greet…"

But Siberia is far, so far from here,
And our greeting gets lost on the way and freezes…
We know: The Czar has such a land,
It's called – far-blown Siberia.

Part Two

10

A hasty decree goes out
With words as sure as arrows:
From morning – 'til evening, from evening 'til morning
No more need to hustle, shopkeepers…

Take a look with silent stares:
The market is covered with rust…
Every day is now – a Bolshevik,
And every Bolshevik – a comrade…

And we, those made of want and pain,
From alleyways old and still,
We will, as one does to rotten straw,
Trample – and forget you….

11

We, – whole alleys of Pinyes
Accustomed to all, and to nothing,
In our hearts we are gathering a hatred
And contempt is our daily bread.

Oh, it's good, all is good and for the best,
When our pain starts to sway and cries out! …
In our blood it grows thicker and hotter,
And our hands become hairy and stiff…

Hard days, hard years of hunger
With brothers, with freedom, with joy,
So, take up and raise up our youth,
Here, — take up and light up and tear down.

It has to be so! And the time has come
In storm, in love and blood.
We stand and raise up the unrest:
"This far." "Down with." "And enough!"

12

It's good, it's hot,
With heavy boots across the curtains,
It's good,
It's hot,
With heavy boots through the halls…
And every evening singing the rapid "Dubinushka,"
And every day, and every night – The Internationale.

From the high ceiling – to the soft floor
Now we've settled in here,
And whoever needs it and whoever wants it,
From high ceiling – to soft floor, –
The whole world is ours now.

13

And as the land broke out in brotherhood and talk
With a thousand fists, a thousand hymns in one breath, —
A hurried decree was sent around

From the Ural mountains to Minsk with her mud…

Each one of us – with our restless pain,
Through whose lives labor has harshly flowed, —
“Prepare yourself,”
“Prepare yourself,”
“Prepare yourself,”
“Educate yourself and join the *Sovnarkom*!”

Every single person – is from this moment no longer single,
Every head – is now a head made of a thousand heads.
We must be now together and united — — —
“Down with…”
“And down!”
“And — long live — — !”

14

In that year no one could have reckoned,
Who would remain and who would fade away,
People became strict, and restless, and loftier,
No one recognized themselves…

In every corner – posters and handbills,
In every house death burned hungrily,
And no one knew, no one could know, --
What was better: camphor or bread…

And the fever would pound in your head, — no point in taking your temperature.
It’s all the same, all the same: death is waiting at the door,
And such a pull to the street, and such a pull to people,
Though they are exhausted with hunger and to the depths…

How can someone take a life and choke it,
Beat it down, lock it up between four walls?...
The Pole is coming,
Denikin is coming,
Heartily and hungrily, a land caught fire!

15

The last board from the last fence
Warmed the little stove for us.
Now all is well — a piece of bread

Is left for us from supper.

A thin wick burns in the smoke
And will keep drawing until dawn, —
Youthfully and strictly
There is no sleep ‘til dawn.

In every corner, in every street,
A heavy unrest waits and wakes.
It pulls and pounds us with its hatred
From the Black Sea to Warsaw and beyond.

16

A city wraps itself in unrest and in black,
Every window is covered today…
A terror knocks and rocks around the heart,
A terror has crept upon the city.

All day a last train struggled
And departed tired for Orsha and Smolensk,
Now the city chokes on restless sounds:
Whose are you and in whose hand?

Tomorrow, again, the enemy could come,
Again “*Chłopi*” and “*Psia krew*”[392]
Unrest, unrest, restless unrest,
The city will not withstand the terror…

17

Minsk sent off a train of hot-blooded boys,
And Pinye burned among them…
No marches were sung to see them off
And no one waved with joyous hands.

Too great, too great is the unrest on the front
And the sky above Minsk might burst — —
And if you must — you won’t come back
In stillness stay under your gun…

[392] Polish: “boys” and “dog’s blood” (a curse)

18

Pinye couldn't say for how many days
He has met sleep hard in his saddle
Through wind, through smoke – tired out and soaked through,
Through wind,
Through smoke
And summer rains.

It gets quiet in the field. Hoof follows hoof.
The hot horse walks quietly through the night…
And there is no bread, and there is no hay –
If only there was a little village in sight.

But the little villages lie far-flung in terror
And the farmhouses are burnt or shuttered.
All the youths are long gone
With bullets, —
To Poland, to the landowners and *Szlachta*.

Somewhere by a farmhouse he will quietly dismount.
Tiredly knock on the gate:
"Hey, comrades – brothers, open up –
One of your own – a Red Army man…"

19

No strong men. No hairy heroes,
Their large frames, lost in thought,
Young youths with young eyes
Rock themselves exhausted on their horses…

It's quiet now, the night full with summer,
With pine forests, with honey and with pitch.
Who knows, maybe you won't be coming back,
It's a long way to Warsaw.
"Brothers, hey!

"Let's sing, make the night jealous,
It's too quiet, it's too heavy!"
And hard hooves pound and pound
With young whistles, with waves and yells…

And let someone hear, let the enemy come
And test itself here, blade against blade.

The night is hot, the night is full with unrest,
And the unrest screams from head to foot.

20

Away above the birches hangs a rough bridge,
The troop formations hurry, rush across the bridge.

And when the final rider at last cuts through the fight
And gruffly shouts an order: “Now, comrades – ignite!”

Then the bridge will break, waving with its hands:
Once upon a time, here did a bridge once stand.

And then Minsk will be closer. Someone enters then,
“Minsk, we will be coming, we will be again!...”

21

In dense forests, in Belorussian forests
Who will keep watch tonight?
Hearts will embrace with fire today,
Tonight in a bluish light…

Quiet, exhausted ones, calm, dear ones
Who will protect our rest?
Today will winds and quiet fires
Speak softly with you as a friend…

And he who will fall, – will need to forget
Onto a rifle, a head sinks…
“Those alleys, far flung, sandy, quiet
Home, our bloody Minsk…”

October—December 1924.

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