

לקט

יִיִדִישֶׁע שטודיעס היינט



Jiddistik heute

Yiddish Studies Today

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Der vorliegende Sammelband *לקט* eröffnet eine neue Reihe wissenschaftlicher Studien zur Jiddistik sowie philologischer Editionen und Studienausgaben jiddischer Literatur. Jiddisch, Englisch und Deutsch stehen als Publikationssprachen gleichberechtigt nebeneinander.

Leket erscheint anlässlich des XV. Symposiums für Jiddische Studien in Deutschland, ein im Jahre 1998 von Erika Timm und Marion Aptroot als für das in Deutschland noch junge Fach Jiddistik und dessen interdisziplinären Umfeld ins Leben gerufenes Forum. Die im Band versammelten 32 Essays zur jiddischen Literatur-, Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft von Autoren aus Europa, den USA, Kanada und Israel vermitteln ein Bild von der Lebendigkeit und Vielfalt jiddistischer Forschung heute.



יִיִּדִישׁ אױסגאַבעס און פֿאַרשונג

Jiddistik Edition & Forschung

Yiddish Editions & Research

Herausgegeben von Marion Aptroot, Efrat Gal-Ed,
Roland Gruschka und Simon Neuberger

Band 1

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Nathan Cohen

Sherlock Holmes in the Pale of Settlement

Yiddish Crime Stories 1860–1914

The assumption that any attempt to arrive at a detailed definition of mystery novels, police stories, thrillers, spy, and detective fiction relies on subjective distinctions rather than objective criteria has led researchers of these literary genres to prefer the more inclusive term ‘crime stories,’ within the framework of which they then distinguish various types of writing.¹ In Western Europe and America crime stories have formed a branch of sensational literature since the early nineteenth century: these stories expose readers to varying levels and scopes of violent acts under the guise of mystery; are guided by one or more of the questions ‘who,’ ‘why,’ and ‘how’; and keep readers in suspense until the mystery is solved and the guilty party/ies punished. The raw material for the plots of many of these works was typically drawn from the pages of the daily newspapers as well as from urban, at times also familial, situations familiar to all (unlike the forests or isolated castles of the sensational works that were renowned and popular before the advent of crime stories). The range of crime stories includes works of high literary quality, attesting to the superior writing abilities of their authors, alongside trivial works devoid of literary value. Consumption of crime stories crosses the borders of gender and social class. These works at once incorporate attempts to contend with the evil lurking in every corner and inspire confidence in the eventual victory of the good and righteous,² though some crime stories originating in Western and Central Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century raised the criminal to the status of hero, leading to the readers’ identification

The titles and quotations of the Yiddish works discussed in this article are reproduced here in the original spelling.

1 The first to discuss the problematics of the definition and to suggest this inclusive term was Julian Symons (Symons 1972: 7–11). Symons’ approach has been generally accepted: see the foreword to Steven Knight’s work (Knight 2004: x–xv).

2 Symons 1972: 11–19; Brantlinger, 1982. The characteristics of the sensational story closely resemble those of the gothic novel (widespread in eighteenth-century England, France, and Germany): they create an atmosphere of dread combined with elements of mystery. On the great demand for this literary genre in Germany and a list of keywords characterizing it (including, for example, ‘blood,’ ‘evil,’ ‘murder,’ ‘isolated,’ ‘waif,’ ‘imprisonment,’ ‘demon,’ ‘ruin,’ and ‘dread’) see Schenda 1977: 210 and 245. For general information on this literary genre, its characteristics, and circulation, see Hogle 2002.

with him, while at the same time criticizing the injustice of society towards individuals that unintentionally nurtures crime and violence.³ In contrast, works dating from the second half of the nineteenth century, many of which are based upon authentic material, distinguish clearly between heroes – including policemen and detectives – and villains.

The inclusion of the word ‘mystery’ in the title of a work is an identifying characteristic of sensational literature that can also be applied to crime stories.⁴ The concept of mystery (געדיימניס) penetrated Yiddish literature from the mid-nineteenth century as a means of attracting readers. Before 1918 the term is to be found in the titles of at least 35 books, booklets, and stories serialized in the press (most of these translated or adapted from foreign languages). The Yiddish-speaking intelligentsia quickly began to associate sensational works with the so-called ‘*shund*’ literature that in their opinion had no right to exist.⁵

With the development of police systems in Western Europe and America, the popular press showed increasing interest in police activities. Events involving the police were also utilized as raw material for literary works of different levels and involving varying degrees of crime and sensationalism.⁶ One of the new types of crime stories were the detective stories focusing on solving murders that began to appear in the second half of the nineteenth century. In these detective stories

3 The earliest and most prominent example which is typically noted in this regard is Caleb Williams, suspected murderer and the hero of the novel bearing his name, written by the British political thinker William Godwin in 1794 (Knight 2004: 10–19). For a distinction between the various levels of violence in German literature of this period see Schenda 1976: 106–116.

4 Symons 1972: 10; Brantlinger 1982: 1–3; Pykett 2003: 32–37. In America alone between 1794 and 1854 seventy works were published featuring the word ‘mystery’ in the title (Knight 2004: 19).

5 This number is only partial and is based upon the catalogue of the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem and the Index of Yiddish Periodicals: <http://yiddish-periodicals.huji.ac.il/>. Undoubtedly a wider search would reveal additional titles. However, it should be noted that on the one hand booklets such as these were not considered worthy of inclusion in libraries, and on the other, some have been lost due to the great extent to which they were read and circulated. For more on ‘*shund*’ literature see Shmeruk 1983a: 335–341. On the active battle against the *Hintertreppenroman* (Backstairs Novel) and other booklets sold by peddlers in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century see Schenda 1976: 84–99; and Schenda 1977: 241–247. It is highly likely that ‘dealers’ of Jewish culture were aware of this battle and attempted to implement it also in Eastern Europe. It should also be remembered that at times the concept of mystery was employed in order simultaneously to criticize works of which the critic did not approve and to bring to readers’ attention other qualities entirely. This is the case, for example, in Alexander Zederbaum’s important work דיא גיהיימניסע פון בערדיטשוב: איינע קאראקטער שילדערונג דער דארטיגען יודישען געמיינדע (The Mysteries of Berdichev: A character description of the Jewish community there; Warsaw, 1870).

6 Among the prominent authors to write about criminal and police subjects were Alexandre Dumas (the father), Emile Zola, Eugène Sue, Émile Gaboriau, Wilkie Collins, Ellen (Mrs. Henry) Wood, and Charles Dickens.

the most successful revelations of the guilty party provided the reader with an intellectual experience as he/she followed the process of cracking the case. The origins of the detective story, in all its varieties, are ascribed to the works of mystery and suspense by Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), creator of the scholarly detective Auguste Dupin – indeed Poe is regarded as the ‘father’ of the detective story (in addition he is considered to have rejuvenated the gothic style in his suspenseful horror stories).⁷ Detective stories reached the height of their development and popularity with the tales of Sherlock Holmes, written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930).⁸ These two key figures, Dupin and Sherlock Holmes, together with a range of professional detectives, amateur enthusiasts, lawyers, and policemen, exposed readers, and to a great extent drew them closer, to the distant yet alluring metropolitan cities of Paris, London, and New York. The extent of the popularity of detective stories in the United States in the last decades of the nineteenth century is evidenced by the circulation of 801 weekly booklets of the New York Detective Library in the years 1892–1899, and by the (approximately) one thousand stories about the private detective Nick Carter published between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1920s.⁹ In Germany in 1908 the same Nick Carter merited 250 stories in weekly booklets, each of which circulated in 45,000 copies, featuring alongside Carter other heroes (and heroines), both original and imported from foreign literatures.¹⁰

In the Russian Empire, the last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a rise in the number of periodical publications of various kinds and levels directed at diverse target audiences¹¹ – mainly in the cities, but also reaching rural areas – the circulation figures of which rose continuously. These numerous publications included sensational, ‘yellow’ periodicals which sought to reach the widest possible readership, with prices as low as one kopek. Editors and publishers sought to bring a wide variety of subject matter to readers through the medium of these periodicals; among other topics, they competed to provide detailed information on city life in general, and on crime in particular. Aside from current ‘news’ reports on these subjects, the periodi-

7 Symons 1972: 33–41; Knight 2004: 26–29.

8 Much criticism and research has been published on Poe and Doyle, and their heroes. In addition to the referrals in the indexes of the works by Symons and Knight, see Kayman 2003: 41–58. A recent analysis and additional bibliographical references are available in Handelzalts 2006.

9 Knight 2004: 54, 77. The stories of Nick Carter were written by various authors.

10 Fullerton 1979: 499.

11 The statistics demonstrating the rise in the popularity of these periodicals from the 1860s onward, and mainly after 1905, may be found in Brooks 1985: 112.

cals also offered serialized novels and collections of stories printed in installments (in the periodical itself or in accompanying booklets), the plots of which transpired in the not-too distant past in familiar locales.¹² Tales of Cossacks and 'bandits' achieved great popularity. The most prominent of these were Vaska Churkin (1882–1885) and Krechet (1909–1916), robbers and murderers who chose (or were forced) to live outside of society and proceeded to terrorize the general public. Bandits and Cossacks provided thrilling crime stories replete with violence and cruelty, adventures, journeys to distant lands, and even magical and folkloristic elements.¹³ These stories did not depict heroes reminiscent of Robin Hood or the Count of Monte Cristo who sought to right social injustices; rather, they contained clear social (and religious) messages, designating total loyalty to the Czar and Church as examples of the highest moral values. For this reason it was almost completely impossible for the bandits to enter into society.¹⁴

Following the 1905 Revolution, alongside the tales of bandits and Cossacks, there appeared Russian translations and adaptations of European and American detective stories, including those featuring Sherlock Holmes, Nat Pinkerton, and Nick Carter.¹⁵ Despite, or possibly due to, the foreignness of the heroes and the setting of events far from Russia's borders, demand for the serials published in these booklets grew steadily. In 1907 the price of a booklet varied from 15 to 20 kopeks, with circulation figures of between 5,000 and 10,000 per booklet. By 1908 the price had fallen to five kopeks or less per booklet and circulation figures increased, on occasion rising as high as 50,000 or even 60,000 copies.¹⁶ At the height of circulation in 1908, the number of booklets in each series reached 123 Pinkerton stories and 218 Holmes stories.¹⁷

The readers of these stories were for the most part youths, young people and workers. In order to draw the heroes closer to the Russian reader, Nat Pinkerton was given a Russian double bearing his name, and Sherlock Holmes was imported into Russia in a series of booklets and stories in the journal *Ogonek* (both 1908).¹⁸ According to the scholar of

12 Smith and Kelly 1998: 113–125; Brower 1990: 170–180; Brooks 1985: 117–141.

13 Brooks 1985: 123–129, 177–195.

14 Ibid.: 169–171, 197–200.

15 On the last two see Knight 2004 and Priestman 2003.

16 In addition to the approximately ten million copies of detective booklets circulated in 1908, in the same year 26 different novels were published in booklet form. Between 1907 and 1915 6.2 million copies of Nat Pinkerton booklets, 3.9 million copies of Sherlock Holmes booklets, and 3.1 million copies of Nick Carter booklets were sold. See Brooks 1978: 144–146; Brooks 1985: 141–143, 148, 366f.

17 Brooks 1985: 366, table 18.

18 Ibid.: 116, 146.

Russian literature Geoffrey Brooks, in their Russian garments the western detective stories were transformed into thrillers with detective elements. Although the setting of events remained America or Europe, these works reflected Russian socio-economic reality. Yet at the same time they presented to the Russian reader concepts that differed from the accepted notions of freedom, society, and the state, and the relations between these and the individual. Detectives and other heroes battle corruption and crime for the sake of a more just society and perhaps, to a certain extent, these works even contributed to the revolutionary atmosphere.¹⁹ Alongside these 'western' detective characters there also appeared Russian detectives, similarly endowed with abilities of perception and analytical thinking. In the years following 1908, when these stories reached the peak of their popularity, there was a clear decrease in the demand for detective stories, although even during the First World War they continued to be published and read.

Parallel to the upsurge of crime and detective stories in the years 1907–1909 in Russia, similar works appeared in the divided Poland. These stories were published in Polish in illustrated booklets with colorful bindings and sold at an affordable price. Four series of Sherlock Holmes stories were printed in Lvov (Lemberg), Cracow, and Warsaw and circulated throughout the former Polish territory. The printing of 5,000 copies of each booklet apparently failed to meet demand and accordingly dozens of these booklets were reprinted repeatedly. The series of booklets were bound together in thick volumes numbering thousands of pages in length.²⁰ Aside from Sherlock Holmes, stories printed featured Nick Carter, Nat Pinkerton, Harry Dickson, Ethel King (Holmes's 'partner'), and even Stefan Wenke, the "famous Warsaw detective." In addition to this list of detective stories, westerns and Indian stories, such as Jack Taksas and Buffalo Bill, were also published in Polish. As with the Russian market for thrillers and detective stories, works set in locales outside Poland were translated and adapted into Polish; apart from the names of characters, cities, and streets, these stories do not contain any definite local character. At the same time famous detectives are to be found in stories that have nothing in common with the source texts.²¹

19 *Ibid.*: 143–146, 207–213.

20 This literature was generated in parallel with, and as a continuation of, more established series of sensational stories and romances. On this see Martuszevska 1992: 580–582, as well as Dunin and Mierzwińska 1978: 5–7. The large number of printed copies and their circulation are discussed in Dunin and Knorowski 1984.

21 Martuszevska 1992: 581.

A further book market which must be examined in relation to Yiddish publishing is the German-Austrian market. Authors, translators, and adaptors of crime and detective stories were active throughout the German-speaking Empire from the beginning of the nineteenth century. From the 1860s until the outbreak of the First World War tens of millions of booklets on the topics discussed herein were added to the existing, fertile, market of popular booklets directed at readers from the lower classes; these included Westerns and novels about the 'Indians' in Central and North America. Seasoned publishers raked in profits from employing writers of varying degrees of talent who composed, or adapted, these booklets. For the most part the works were sold not in book shops but rather in market stalls and by peddlers.²²

A central milestone in the history of crime stories was the sensational crime novel *Les Mystères de Paris* by the popular French author Eugène Sue (1804–1857), the ten volumes of which were published in Paris in the years 1842–1843. This work is in fact a novel set in contemporary Paris that reveals, in thrilling and suspenseful fashion, life in the poverty- and crime-stricken neighborhoods of that city. It swiftly became a best-seller, caused considerable reverberations, and was translated into a number of languages and published in numerous editions. A relatively short time after its first publication this work was made available to the Hebrew reader in a shortened version (four parts in two volumes), without the descriptions in the original that were considered to be too daring or tastelessly sarcastic for the Jewish reader.²³ This Hebrew translation/adaptation by Kalman Shulman (1819?–1899), a Vilna-based *maskilic* author, was published in the years 1857–1860 and achieved highly coveted circulation figures.²⁴ A few years later a Yiddish translation of the work was published by translator Yehoyshue Gershon Munk entitled *מסתרי פאריז: דיא געהיימניסע פאן פאריז* (Warsaw: Lebenzon, 1865–66).²⁵

At the same time that *Les Mystères de Paris* was published in Hebrew, translations of stories featuring the Italian bandit Rinaldo Rinaldini were printed in Hebrew in Warsaw.²⁶ Likewise, simultaneous

22 Fullerton 1979. Hügel provides a bibliographic list of crime and detective stories published before 1919. See Hügel 1978: 305–327.

23 Sha'an'an 1952: 144–147.

24 On the demand for the work and on Avraham Mapu's hostile and prejudiced reaction to this demand, see Sha'an'an 1952: 144f, 149–159; Miron 1988: 64, note 66.

25 On this translation and others see Shmeruk 1983a.

26 *Lahaqat ha-šōdēdīm ašer nō'adū yaḥdāw lē-hit'ōlēl 'alilōt bē-reša', li-šēlōl šālal wē-lāvūz baz [...]* *hū'ataq mi-lēšon 'āmim [pōlanit] 'al yēdēy Hayim ben Zēvi Hirš Goldšteyn* (The Group of Bandits Famous for Carrying out Evil Deeds, Plundering Spoil and Their Scorn [...], copied from the language of other peoples <Polish> by Hayim ben Zevi Hirsh Goldšteyn; Warsaw, 1859).

with the publication of Sue's work in Yiddish, a Yiddish work featuring Rinaldo Rinaldini was published in Warsaw, translated from Polish by Avigdor Berachiah Ruf (four parts, 1865–1866).²⁷ This work is a 'Robber Novel' (*Räuberroman*), written by the German author Christian August Vulpius (1862–1927), the events of which take place in eighteenth-century Italy.²⁸ The Yiddish translation substantially shortens the text and includes a foreword containing a warning of typically *maskilic* character. The fact that the hero of the tale embarks on his evil path as a result of idleness is used as a moral lesson on the value of study: "You, young people, occupied [too] little with study, and lacking sufficient supervision, it is preferable that you should study and not go about unoccupied [...]. Everyone must know [how to study] to the best of their abilities." Apart from this edition, and a partial one printed in Lvov in 1875, no further editions of the Yiddish novel have been found.²⁹ The heroes of these stories commit acts considered criminal according to general human moral standards. They wreak fear and terror on their surroundings, and therefore they are pursued as criminals. Yet in actual fact, many of these criminal acts were committed according to the Robin Hood principle: they constituted an attempt to repair social injustices and to assist those suffering as a result of others' crimes.³⁰

The potential of attractive titles was exploited in modern Yiddish literature by both popular writers and respected authors. Alongside princes and princesses, disappointed or realized loves, and wondrous events of various kinds, deliberate use was made of titles containing words from the vocabulary of mystery and crime, even though they do not always accurately reflect the content of the work; at times there is no link whatsoever between the two.³¹

27 Avigdor Berachiah Ruf, רינאלדא רינאלדיני: בעשרייבונג פאן דעם שרעקליכען איטאליענישען (Rinaldo Rinaldini: The Story of the Terrible Italian Robber, He Was a Robber-Chieftain, translated from Polish by Avigdor Berachiah Ruf; Warsaw: Shriftgiser, 1865–66). In 1875 a copy of the first part was published in Lemberg, but the translator's name was removed and instead of the Polish source indicated in the first printing, this later edition claims that the work was translated from German. On Ruf and his literary works see Oyslender 1993: 252–263.

28 *Rinaldo Rinaldini der Räuber-Hauptmann*, 1799.

29 However, the hero's name was used in a series of booklets printed by the Warsaw publisher Yehude Leyb Morgenshtern in 1902, the first of which is entitled געשיכטע פון א גרויסען פון א גרויסען (The Story of the Great Murderer Rinaldo Rinaldini: The Greatest Robber-Chieftain in All of Italy). The details of the author and the source of the original story were not included in the first Yiddish translation, but it is noted that this is "an Italian story translated from French."

30 On this novel and the genre see Hart 2008.

31 A number of examples: a story in installments entitled "דער שרעקליכער מאַרדער" (The Terrible Murder) by Khayim Molits (1861–1924) was published in issues 5, 6, and 7 of the יודישעס פֿאַלקס-בלאַט (1888), yet before the suspenseful plot even began to be revealed pub-

Nokhem Meyer Shaykevitch (1846–1905), better known by his pseudonym Shomer, is considered to have been one of the most prolific and popular writers of Yiddish literature in the last two decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. In the literary environment of his time he was considered a writer of *'shund'*; one should be cautious of reading his works, and warn others against them.³² Shomer is known for the fantastic and appealing titles which he sometimes attached to his stories, among them *שוודד ישר, אָדער דער פרוּמער מערדער* (The Righteous Bandit or the Pious Murderer; first edition, Vilna, 1879; at least two further editions were printed). This is the story of a 'modern' Jewish family exposed to the criminal activities of a gang of criminals (also Jews) in which the criminals eventually receive their due punishment. During the course of events, lost family members are discovered, while others meet their deaths. The work contains numerous Biblical verses, axioms of the sages, and Yiddish proverbs, the didactic purpose of which is clear; the accompanying crime story is nothing more than a tactic to increase suspense and arouse the curiosity of the reader, thus ensuring continued reading. Other works by Shomer with similar titles include *דער שרעקליכער מערדער ריכאַרד, אָדער זיגעל* (The Terrible Murderer Richard, or The Seal; first edition Vilna, 1895; two further editions), a historical work concerning the intrigues of the royal house of Portugal at the end of the eighteenth century; or *די צוויי מאַרדערישע ברידער לעווי און יאַקוב* (The two Murderous Brothers Levi and Jacob; Warsaw, 1904), which reveals a failed murder plot, together with other familial complications. However, the work ends on a note of 'happily ever after' and offers the reader a message on the importance of reading.

lication ceased, in all likelihood due to the migration of the writer. A booklet by the popular author Avraham Yitshak Bukhbinder (186?–1897), *דער קינדער מערדער* (The Infanticide; Vilna, 1891), is a tale of disappointed love and revenge which culminates in the tragic deaths of its heroes. *דיא גיהיימע ליבע אדער דיא שרעקלעכע מערדערייא* (The Secret Love or the Terrible Murder; Lublin 1895) is a complex story by Shimen Voltsonok (1856–??), a competitor of Shomer in the 1880s and 1890s. At the center of the story lie attempts to take control of property and earn money through guile. Another example is *דער גרויסער העלד צווישען דיא שיינע מער* (The Great Hero Amidst the Sea-Robbers; Warsaw, 1903). *דיא שיינע מער* (The Beautiful Murderess, or The One who Goes Astray; Vilna, 1911) bears the title of a work by Gavriel Rubin (1870–??) and contains elements from the original genre, but is melodrama rather than crime. In *דער פרעזידענט אלס מערדער אדער דיא אונגליקליכע פאמיליע* (The President as Murderer, or The Unhappy Family; Piotrków, 1908) the author, Khayim Eliezer Mushkat, according to his foreword, attempts to exploit an attractive title in order to provide his readers with an interesting historical tale, the likeness of which is not to be found amongst 'simple novels.'

³² Leading the battle against Shomer and his works was Sholem Aleichem. See *Leksikon* 1956–1981 (8): 733–745; Grace-Pollack 1999: 109–160; and the memoirs of Shomer's daughter: Shomer-Batshel 1950.

Another popular writer, a contemporary of Shomer, Sholem Lederer (1860–1952), also utilized sensational titles containing messages of violence and crime in order to provide his readers with stories of romance, separation, family intrigue, and adventure.³³ The protagonists of most of the stories are Jews, and the setting of events, as indicated by the titles, moves between Poland, London, and New York. Like Shomer, Lederer addresses his readers directly within his narrative. Thus, for example, in the introduction to *די יודישע ציגיינערין, אָדער, דאָס גערויבטע קינד* (The Jewish Gypsy, or The Kidnapped Child; 1901) he declares that this work is a response to the Captain Dreyfus stories (see below), novels in twenty parts imported from America, and “Paul de Kock” stories.³⁴ On page 23 of the same book, one of the protagonists asserts to his beloved the importance of reading good books as medicine for the suffering soul. He complains of the relative lack of good books in Yiddish and the fact that the “Jewish Alexander Dumas” (Shomer) is unjustly attacked.

A thin booklet bearing the promising title *דער געהאַרגעטער קאַב-טאַרשיק, אָדער דער אונגערעכנטער טויט פאַן פייגעלעט* (The Murdered Counting Clerk, or The Unjust Death of Feygeles; Warsaw, 1896) which, exceptionally, includes the name of the author (Moshe Shleyfsteyn, c.1850–c.1917), is in fact a rhymed lament for the young Jew Avraham Feygeles, who was drugged, murdered, and robbed in Warsaw by two of his friends. His body was packed in a crate and sent first to Lodz and then to Odessa. The murderers, two youths of ‘good family’ (one Jewish, the other Christian), were caught and tried for their crime.³⁵

One historical event of global scale which left its impression on Yiddish crime stories was the Dreyfus trial. The dramatic events in Paris and their implications for Jewish life throughout Europe provided a source of income for a number of entrepreneurs. Following the pub-

33 Of Lederer’s stories (collected in dozens of booklets) I would like to point out: *דער שרעקליכער פערברעכער, אָדער דיא געמאַכטע אלמנה: איין העכסט אינטערעסאַנטער ראָמאַן אין פיער טהייל אויס דעם פּאָלנישען און אַמעריקאַנישען יודעשען לעבען* (The Terrible Criminal, or The Fake Widow: A Highly Interesting Novel in Four Parts Concerning Polish and American Jewish Life; Vilna: Katsenelenbogen, 1897); *דיא ציגיינער, אָדער, ראָכע פון אַ באַנדיט: איין אינטערעסאַנטער ראָמאַן פון פּאָלנישען און אַמעריקאַנישען יודעשען לעבען* (The Gypsy, or The Vengeance of a Bandit: An Interesting Novel Concerning Polish and American Jewish Life; Vilna: Katsenelenbogen, 1898); *די יודישע ציגיינערין, אָדער, דאָס גערויבטע קינד: איין אינטערעסאַנטער ראָמאַן פון פּאָלנישען און אַמעריקאַנישען יודעשען לעבען* (The Jewish Gypsy, or The Kidnapped Child: An Interesting Novel Concerning Polish and American Jewish Life; Vilna: Katsenelenbogen, 1901).

34 The works of Paul de Kock (1793–1871), a French writer famous for his works depicting Parisian life, were translated into various European languages and considered extremely popular. I have not been able to locate any translations of his works into Yiddish; thus it would appear that Jews read them in Russian. On the topic of de Kock see also Sholem Aleichem’s first Yiddish story, “צוויי שטיינער” (Two Stones, Sholem Aleichem 1883).

35 The event took place on 13/25 November 1896. News reports on the event were published in *דצפירר*, 18/30 November 1896: 1235, and 19 November/1 December 1896: 1239.

lication of a German novel in installments concerning Alfred Dreyfus and the accusation of spying leveled against him, Mordkhe Spektor, Leyzer Zuckerman (the son and heir of the bookseller and publisher Avraham Zuckerman), and two investors invited Meyer Yankev Freyd (1871–1940) to translate the German novel in weekly installments in return for appropriate financial compensation. Freyd accepted the project and, despite his concerns about the character of Dreyfus as depicted in the German novel, carried out the task. As Freyd wrote later, in the second booklet he already began to deviate from the German source and continued the story in his own fashion, creating “thousands [?] of protagonists, each one worse than the last.”³⁶ The Yiddish novel is entitled קאַפיטאַן דרייפּוס, דער פֿערשיקטער אויפֿן טייוועלט-אינזעל: ווירקליך אינ-טערעסטאַנטער פּאַריזער ראָמאַן (Captain Dreyfus Who Was Sent to Devil’s Island: A Truly Interesting Parisian Novel; Warsaw: Tursh, 1898). In other words, this is another ‘Parisian’ novel, a kind of continuation of the famous *Mystères de Paris*.

In this novel Dreyfus is depicted as the cheating lover of an innocent young girl who bears his son and then, when Dreyfus abandons her in favor of his wife and legitimate son, swears to take revenge upon him. At this point Esterhazy (a relative of the abandoned lover) sets in motion the well-known story of espionage. Freyd continues to spin a complicated tale over the course of dozens of booklets, moving between Devil’s Island (*île du Diable*, the small island off the coast of French Guiana where Dreyfus was imprisoned) and the Parisian underworld, and for the sake of solving the mystery he furnishes the Paris police with an experienced female detective. The novel was printed in 53 booklets with continuous pagination. Its publication ceased when the project’s initiators stopped paying Freyd the agreed-upon wage.³⁷ Freyd did not completely abandon the Dreyfus affair and in 1899 published a new series of booklets, this time 46 letters supposedly written by Dreyfus to his wife from prison: דרייפּוס’ס ברײעף: פּון פּראַנצאזישען כתב-יד (Dreyfus’ Letters: from the French manuscript, translated by M. Y. Freyd; Warsaw: Boymsritter, 1899).

³⁶ Freyd 1926: 341.

³⁷ Ibid., 342. In the same year, 1898, a number of other works were published in Warsaw concerning the Dreyfus affair: דער טייפּעל: פּאן ט. בּאַרנאַרדע (The war of truth and lies or Dreyfus on Devil’s Island; this work lacks the sensational elements and concerns only the legal and familial drama). A further, apparently serious, book was written by M. Gradzensky: ריכטיגע גענויע, בעשרייבונג פּון די דריי פּראַנצעסען דרייפּוס, עסטערהאַזי און [...] עמיל זאָלאַ (The Truth Comes Out: An Exact, Truthful Description of the Three Frenchmen Dreyfus, Esterhazy and [...] Emile Zola).

with no definable national identity (Peter, Adolf, Max, Franz, Anton, Charlotte, Margarita, Adela, and so forth), and the geographic settings move between Galicia, France, and even New York. There is a significant lack of religious identification.

The first series of stories published by Morgenshtern is a convoluted crime story involving murder and attempted murder for the purpose of financial gain. The plot, which takes place in central and western Europe and on a boat sailing to the United States of America, relates a complex family tale of separation and re-unification. The police play only a marginal and passive role in the story. The plot of the third series is located in these same geographical settings and also includes kidnapping and enforced separation of family members, who are then thought to be lost forever, as well as detailed descriptions of interrogation (not by the police) employing methods of severe torture. In this series the police and legal authorities play no role whatsoever. The plot of the second series also unfolds in various countries and involves murder, robbery, and a family saga. However, in opposition to the other two series, in the last booklet an anonymous detective from the Cracow (!) police appears. As a result of his involvement, the mystery of an attempted murder in Paris is solved and lost family members are reunited in an emotional meeting.

Superficially, these booklets, their titles and plots, are similar to series of booklets printed in German in the second half of the nineteenth century in the format of *Die schwarze Bibliothek* (The Black Library, published in Dresden between 1853 and 1871).³⁹ These stories and others like them inspired writers and publishers in Eastern Europe to adapt and suit them to the Yiddish reading public. Some of the stories underwent a process of Judaization, and at times social and religious messages were integrated, as will be demonstrated shortly.

זיך געלאזט איינריידען אז גולנים געהען ארום אין מיטטען שטאדט (Robbers, Murderers with Swords and Rifles in the Middle of the Street: This Story Tells How a Great Millionaire Became Unlucky When his Beautiful Wife, Who Was Invited to a Ball, Was Convinced that Robbers were Running Around in the Middle of the City; 1904); פאר צוואנציג קאזאקען מיט ראפניקעס (Before Twenty Cossacks with Whips one Must Admit Everything, Even One's Innermost Secrets; 1904). דיא קרעטשמע אין וואלד, אדער צווישען גולנים, פרייא איבערזעצט: פון יהושע מוזח דער מארדער מיט א האק אין דער האנד, אדער גענוג געזאגט (The Inn in the Forest, or Amidst Robbers, freely translated by Yehoyshue Mezakh; Warsaw: Lebenzon, 1891); ודווי! דיין צייט איז שוין געקומען צו שטארבען (The Murderer with an Axe in His Hand, or Enough Saying Confession! The Time Has Come for You to Die; 1904).

It should be noted that one of the pen names used by Yehoyshue Mezakh was Yahalom. This pen name appears on many of the stories published by Morgenshtern publishing house, but Yahalom are also the initials of Yehude Leyb Morgenshtern. In every catalog entry these initials are linked to the latter.

³⁹ Each series in this collection numbers 20 booklets. Most of the stories were written by Gustav Adolf Berthold (1818–1894), some by other authors. Many more titles were published in *Die schwarze Bibliothek* than in the Yiddish series.

The first booklet in the fourth series, דיא קרעטשמע אין וואַלד (The Inn in the Forest),⁴⁰ is the shortest and is exceptional for the Morgenshtern publishing house: it bears a neutral title, lacking any appealing elements, and Yehoyshue Mezakh (1834–1917) is named as translator and adapter of the story. Mezakh was a Vilna Jew, a pious maskil, famous for his popular folk tales. The first booklet of this series was in fact published twelve years before the second, which was given a significantly more meaningful title – דער מאַרדער מיט אַ האַק אין דער האַנד, – אדער גענוג געזאגט ודווי! דיין צייט איז שוין געקומען צו שטארבען (The Murderer with an Axe in His Hand, or Enough Saying Confession! The Time Has Come for You to Die).⁴¹ These booklets tell the story of the kidnapping of a Jew, a moneylender from the city of Hanau, as a means of extorting money from his brothers and business partners. Thanks to the cunning of the kidnapped brother and the faithfulness of one of the prince's servants, whose name the kidnappers attempt to use in the extortion, the kidnapped Jew is saved and becomes a generous giver of charity. Both installments of the story have a Jewish character and guide the reader to a clear moral lesson: „פֿרומקייט און חכמה איז דעם מענטשנס גליק“ ([only] piety and wisdom are man's bliss [and not money]).⁴² Likewise, moral messages are woven into the third booklet of the second series (פאר Before Twenty Cossacks with Whips...),⁴³ including the importance of studying and the value of speaking the truth, the latter with the justification „עס איז דאָ אַ לעבעדיקער גאָט וואָס ער ווייסט פֿון אַלעס“ (there is a living God who knows all).⁴⁴

Certain stories were chosen for the purposes of voicing social and/or cultural criticism. For example, amidst the dramatic events of דער ראַזבאָיניק מיט דרייצעהן קאפּ און אַ שטיינערנע האַרץ (The Murderer with Thirteen Heads and a Heart of Stone; Warsaw, 1903), seeking to illustrate the extent to which the inhabitants of Cracow are paralyzed by fear of the murderers in the city, the writer describes how, as a result of this terror, Jews have ceased to purchase any books apart from *tkhines*. The writer goes on to claim that when Shomer noticed a decline in the purchase of his books he began to write about the tragedy of the Spanish exile and then later, when readers became bored with this topic, he moved on to theatre.⁴⁵ One story, דער פֿרומער מערדער אדער דער וועג צום,

40 See note 37 above.

41 It is reasonable to suggest that Morgenshtern reprinted the first booklet close to the publication of the second, but I have not been able to locate a copy.

42 „דער מאַרדער מיט אַ האַק אין דער האַנד [...]“.

43 Cf. Fn. 38.

44 „פאר צוואנציג קאזאקען מיט ראפניקעס [...]“.

45 A significant number of works bearing the name of Shomer were published by Morgenshtern. For example an 1885 edition of די אנטלאפענע טאכטער published by Morgenshtern attributed the work to Shomer, but the text is in fact a reprint of Ayzik Meyer Dik's 1856 novel of the same name. It would seem that the writer did not find each and every use of

גליק (The Pious Murderer, or The Way to Happiness; Warsaw, 1904) (different from Shomer's story of the same title, discussed above), includes attempted murder for romantic reasons, but most of the work focuses on criticizing Hasidism and preaching the importance of acquiring knowledge, especially learning languages. Disparagement of Hasidim is also alluded to in the story פון לאנדאן קיין אינדיע אדער פון איין חתן מאקס מיט זיין בלה הרסה (From London to India, or Concerning the Bridegroom Max and His Bride Hadassah; Warsaw, 1894). This complex family saga of love and crime condemns arranged marriages and the religious zeal that prevents the widening of horizons. At the close of the story, following the revelation that a certain Ba'al shem (wonder-worker) is a wanted criminal – in addition to his other crimes he has also left behind an *agune* (an abandoned wife unable to obtain a divorce) – the bathhouse attendant is forced to empty the ritual bath (מקוה) of its putrid waters, and since this event Jews (including Jewish women) have not immersed themselves in the shtetl's *mikve*.⁴⁶

A typical title for stories in these series – דער רויבער הויפטמאן (The Robber-Chieftain) – appears in the second series published by Morgenshtern and, completely independently, also in Piotrków in 1904, here also similar to the *Räuberhauptmann* in German stories. The story from Piotrków carries an additional subtitle, דער געשטאכענער פאטער (The Stabbed Father), certainly adding a dramatic aspect to a story that weaves social messages into a tense, sensational plot. The plot, set in the first third of the nineteenth century, concerns a loaded and violent meeting between the leader of a gang of forest-based bandits and his father, a well-known philosopher. In the exchange of words between the two, the son calls his father “a murdering capitalist” (9), accusing him of possessing an uncontrollable appetite for money, as a result of which the son was prevented from marrying his chosen bride. It becomes apparent that the son (Yohan Nordhaym) has already succeeded in ending the lives of a number of family members, and the tale concludes with a tragic finale in which the son kills the father and then proceeds to take his own life.

דיא פֿרומע מערדערין, אָדער מאַריע אין טיורמע (אָ העכסט אינטערעסאַנטער ראַמאַן וואָס דייע לעזער וועלען זיין זעהר צופרידען) (The Pious Murderess, or Maria in the Tower – A Highly Interesting Novel Which Will Please Readers) by Leon Shvarts (dates unknown) was also published in Piotrków in 1904/5. Although the title of this serialized crime story is sensational,

his name acceptable and sued the publisher on account of this (see the entry on Morgenshtern, *Leksikon* 1956–1981 (5): 493f).

⁴⁶ This anonymous work also uses the name of Shomer on the title page, as one who “took much from it” for his own stories – „דער גרויסער מחבר שמר האט פון דעם פיעל ארויס גענומען”.

the content is quite restrained.⁴⁷ At the centre of the plot, which takes place in Sachsen, Germany, is a betrayed wife (Maria) seeking to cause harm to her husband, but due to confusion and bad luck she is caught shooting at two policemen. Maria is then imprisoned and her husband leaves town with his young lover. The role played by the policemen is minor and the chapters of the story that have reached us do not include any mystery requiring a solution.

One of the last crime stories published before the outbreak of the First World War was סאָנקע פֿון בערדיטשעוו (Sonke from Berditshev), printed in installments in the Warsaw weekly newspaper ערב שבת (1913–1914).⁴⁸ The real-life heroine of the story, the Jewish Sofiya (Sofiya) Bliuvshstein, nicknamed „דאָס גילדערנע הענטל“ (The golden hand; Sonka zolotaya ruchka), became famous in the second half of the nineteenth century as a sophisticated robber into whose life story fictional elements are woven: daring and fantastic journeys, the seduction of numerous men, and the amassing of an enormous fortune, at least part of which she apparently actually gave to the poor and oppressed. Sonka of Berditshev ended her life as a prisoner in a penal colony on the island of Sakhalin. A film about Sonka, described by Richard Stites as “one of the greatest hits of early cinema,” was screened in Russian cinemas in 1914, one of many dramatizations of Russian crime stories for theater and cinema.⁴⁹ The written adventures of Sonka, published in Russian in 1903, apparently had no influence on Yiddish literature. The film, on the other hand, found an immediate response in the story discussed above.

An early Yiddish detective story – set in an unidentified location, although all the protagonists are given titles in Russian and Polish – was published in Warsaw in 1884 under the title דער קלוגער סליעדאוואטעל (The Wise Detective), without the name of an author, translator or source text. This is a classic although quite primitive story, in which a quick-witted police detective succeeds in revealing the truth behind the apparent attempt of a woman to murder her husband and then kill herself. Thanks to his sharpened senses and acumen, the detective succeeds in discovering, stage by stage, that the husband is a violent and

47 This title is given to two booklets. At the end of the second booklet the readers are directed to the conclusion of the story in a third booklet entitled דער טויט פֿון אוגאָסטין (The Death of Ogostin), which was apparently never printed. It appears that in these years Piotrków took Warsaw’s place as the center of crime publishing, but the market was not dominated by a single publishing house and the levels of success achieved by Morgenshtern were not replicated.

48 The story was printed in 13 installments between 18 April/1 May 1914 and 11/24 July 1914.

49 Stites 1992: 24. For more on the film and its heroine see Brooks 1985: 203f; Smith and Kelly 1998: 120; and Von Geldern and McRynolds 1998: 161–269.

famous gentleman-thief”), by Maurice Leblanc, translated and adapted by Avrom Leyb Yakobovitch (1882–1964).⁵⁴ As in the source text, here too a conflict takes place between the ‘honest criminal’ Lupin and Sherlock Holmes, yet while in the original the name of the British detective is only hinted at, in the Yiddish translation it is clearly stated.⁵⁵

The Lodz newspapers also brought to their readers echoes of events taking place in the American underworld. The first to do so was the טאָגעבלאַט, which in October 1911 published a serialized novel entitled דיא שוואַרצע האַנד: אַ העכסט אינטערעסאַנטער און שפּאַנענדער ראָמאַן (The Black Hand: A highly Interesting and Thrilling Novel about New York life). The name of the novel is taken from the name of gangs of extortionists (Black Hand [Mano Nera]) who terrorized New York and Chicago at the beginning of the twentieth century, for the most part the communities of Sicilian immigrants in both these cities.⁵⁶ In order to arouse the interest of the Jewish reader, the plot depicts the murder of a New York Jewish millionaire by the gang’s members. A competing newspaper, מאָרגענבלאַט, also used the title דיא שוואַרצע האַנד (The Black Hand), but preferred to bring the setting of events ‘home’ – פֿון לאָדזער לעבען (A Thrilling Novel about Life in Lodz) – providing the reader with a love story totally disconnected from the world of crime.⁵⁷

From the beginning of its publication (in May 1907), the weekly literary journal ראָמאַנ־צייטונג (Warsaw, 1907–1908), edited and published by the educator and businessman Magnus Krinsky (1863–1916), printed three stories by Edgar Allan Poe⁵⁸ and four by Arthur Conan Doyle, clearly indicating the names of these writers, but usually without the name of the translator(s). The hero of Conan Doyle’s stories is Sherlock Holmes, but only the title of the last story is similar to that of the source

54 Maurice Leblanc, (פֿון פאַריזער לעבן) 813, די ווונדערליכע מעשה פֿון אַ באַרימטן דעטעקטיוו (פֿון פאַריזער לעבן), (813: The Wonderful Story of a Famous Detective [from Parisian life]), לאָדזער טאָגעבלאַט, 10/23 January–27 March/9 April 1914. Another story by the author, lacking the element of crime, was published under the title דער שרעקלעכער געלעכטער (The Horrible Laughter), 25 ערב־שבת (1913), 2f.

55 Ibid., 11/24, 12/25, 13/26 February 1914. For more on the meetings between Lupin and Holmes see Knight 2002: 72; Schutt 2003: 70f.

56 The novel was published between 14/27 October 1911 and 11/24 January 1912. On the Black Hand gangs and their deeds of iniquity see Lombardo 2002: 394–409.

57 גייעס לאָדזער מאָרגענבלאַט, 23 September/5 October 1913–13/26 November 1913. In the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem there exists a book entitled די שוואַרצע האַנד (The Black Hand), lacking date and place of publication. An examination of the contents demonstrates that there is no link between it and the topic discussed herein.

58 Eight additional stories by Poe were published slightly later (1910) in the monthly journal אייראָפּעיִשע ליטראַטור, edited by Avrom Reyzen (1876–1953). Another story by Poe was published in a booklet entitled וויליאַם ווילסאָן (William Wilson; Warsaw: Progres, 1914), and five more appeared in the booklet ערצעהלונגען (Selected Stories; Warsaw: Progress, 1913).

text – די גוטבאזיצער פֿון רייגעט (The Landowners of Reigate; the title of the English original is “The Reigate Squires”).⁵⁹ The other stories carry more enticing titles than the original texts: די שרעקליכע געהיימניס (The Terrible Mystery; originally “The Adventure of the ‘Gloria Scott’”);⁶⁰ די פרוי מיטן רעוואָלװער (The Woman with a Revolver; originally “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton”);⁶¹ and מיס אירענע אַדלער (Miss Irene Adler; originally “A Scandal in Bohemia”).⁶² Apart from the changes in titles, the translations, apparently the fruit of the editor’s pen, contain only minor alterations, the most prominent of which is the transliteration (rather than translation) of the name of the street on which Sherlock Holmes resided, Baker Street, to דער בעקער־סטריט. In the second story, instead of “port wine,” the Yiddish suffices itself with “wine” only. The name of the ship “Hotspur” in the third story is written “Gotspur” in the Yiddish, so too “Hudson” has become “Gudson.” The use of ‘g’ instead of ‘h’ may indicate that the stories were translated from Russian.

In 1907 the first and (apparently) last booklet in what was intended to be the collected stories of Sherlock Holmes was published: a precise translation of the story “The Resident Patient” entitled דער שטענדיקער פּאַציענט (The Permanent Patient).⁶³ Prompted by the appearance of a new daily newspaper in Warsaw, *היינט*, in January 1908, the title pages of the existing popular daily *טאָגעבלאַט* (1906–1911) announced that it was to publish a new series of stories, די גרעסטע וועלט־געהיימניסן (The Greatest World Mysteries), from the tales of Sherlock Holmes, Nat Pinkerton, and others. The first story, serialized in 13 installments, was a further translation of the story “A Scandal in Bohemia,” entitled in Yiddish אַ קעניגליכע פּאַטאָגראַפֿישע קאַרטע (A Royal Photographic Card), without the opening of the source story.⁶⁴ It would appear that the decision to begin the series with this story was motivated by the fact that it does not contain an act of murder and the Warsaw origins of the heroine, who succeeds in deceiving the acclaimed detective. For unknown reasons this story was also the last in this promising series.

59 Issues no. 5–7 (1908), 139–146, 177–182, 207–212.

60 Issues no. 1–5 (1907), 21–26, 57–60, 85–90, 119–124.

61 Issues no. 26–27 (1907), 821–826, 849–858.

62 Issues no. 29–32 (1907), 919–923, 941–946, 967–976, 999–1004. It should be noted that as in the following publication of this story (see below), the editors almost completely avoided the explicit use of the term ‘Bohemia’ in the title and body of the story, apparently for political reasons.

63 *שערלאַק חאַלמס דער בעריהמטער שישיק: זיינע כתבים פון קאנאן דויל: דער שטענדיגער פּאַציענט* (Sherlock Holmes the Famous Detective: The Writings of Conan Doyle – The Permanent Patient; Warsaw: Edelstejn, 1907).

64 The announcement was published almost daily in the second and third weeks of May 1908. The story was published between 22 May/4 June and 19 June/2 July 1908.

At the same time as these publications appeared, other booklets appeared in Yiddish (likewise in Russian and Polish) bearing the name of the famous detective, but lacking the name of the author, and with a 'new' assistant, Harry Taxon. Into these booklets were inserted stories of various bizarre murders lacking any connection to the original hero and his surroundings. One series of these booklets was published at the initiative of the Vigoda publishing house and *Ha-z'efirah* publishers in Warsaw (c. 1907–1908). Each story was divided into three booklets of 47 pages, sold for the minimal sum of three kopeks each.⁶⁵ Another series was published in Cracow and circulated across the border. These stories appeared in single booklets of 21 pages each, sold at the relatively high price of ten kopeks per booklet.⁶⁶ These stories and their predecessors were translated from two similar series in Polish, one published in Warsaw in the years 1907–1909 (52 booklets) and the other in Cracow, 1908–1909 (86 booklets). The Polish Cracow series was translated from a German series, *Aus den Geheimakten des Weltdetektivs* (from 1907, 230 booklets), with Sherlock Holmes as its main hero and Harry Dickson as

65 The series as a whole is entitled: העכסט אינטערעסאנטע וואונדערליכע: שערלאק האלמס: ערצעהלונגען פון וועלט בערייהמטען גיהיים-אגענט שערלאק-האלמס (Sherlock Holmes: A Highly Interesting Wonderful Tale of the World-Famous Secret Agent Sherlock Holmes). The title page of the booklet includes a portrait of Holmes and next to him portraits of Nat Pinkerton and Nick Carter (although I am not aware of translations of any of the stories concerning Pinkerton and Carter into Yiddish) and also an illustration characteristic of the title of the story. In the Israel National Library in Jerusalem and in the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York I was able to find three series (totaling seven booklets) bearing the titles: דער אריסטאקראטישער באנדיט (The Women-Murderer; nos. 1–3); דער פרויען-מערדער (The Noble Bandit; nos. 4–6); and דער מאַרד פון פירשטין מאלקאָלם (The Murder of Duchess Malcolm; nos. 7–[9]). On the custom of employing the names of famous detectives as a technique of sales promotion for other stories see above. It should be noted that the name Harry Taxon was 'adopted' from a German series with the hero Harry Dickson, as Holmes' friend (about which see note 66 below).

66 This series is entitled: שערלאק האַלמעס: דער באַרימטער וועלטדעטעקטיוו (Sherlock Holmes: The Famous World-Detective). The title page features only a portrait of the detective and an illustration suited to the story. The price is noted in *heler* and in *kopeks*. It would seem likely that the relatively high price resulted from the distance between the place of printing and the market itself and it is possible that this is a slightly later publication than that discussed above (c. 1909). The titles which I have been able to see are: שערלאק האַלמעס אין ווין (Sherlock Holmes in Vienna; no. 1); שערלאק האַלמעס און דאָס צירקוס אַנגעלאָ (Sherlock Holmes and the Angelo Circus; no. 2); צווישן הימעל און ערד (Between Heaven and Earth; no. 3); דער פאַרליירענער קאַפיטאַן (The Lost Captain; no. 4); דער מאַסענמערדער (The Mass-Murderer; no. 9), in which Sherlock Holmes is studying medicine in Brooklyn, New York; and די מפלה פלאַקס (The Overthrow of Prof. Flax; no. 10). On the German series see <http://www.sherlockiana.dk/hjemmesider/Om%20museet/hefteserier/Om%20hefteserier/hefteserier.htm> and <http://www.sherlockiana.dk/hjemmesider/Om%20museet/hefteserier/Original%20German/Tysk%20original.htm>. Last access: 20 April 2012.

his friend. The Yiddish stories of this series were translated either from the original German or the Polish translation. The colorful cover pages of the Yiddish booklets were also copied from the German (or Polish) series (Russian publications of the series had the same format).⁶⁷

At the same time, in Congress Poland other booklets of a format similar to those discussed above circulated featuring the hero מאַקס שפּיצקאָפּף: דער קעניג פון די דעטעקטיווס, דער ווינער שערלאָק האַלמעס (Max Shpitskop [or Spitzkopf]: The King of Detectives, the Viennese Sherlock Holmes). Shpitskop is a Jewish detective with a Jewish assistant, Fuks; the two work from an office in Vienna named “Blits.” Shpitskop’s work is not connected in any way to his religion, but according to the advertisement for the booklets, when presented with the opportunity he immediately comes to the defense of his people.⁶⁸ Information on the circulation of these booklets in Warsaw may be found in the childhood memories of Isaac Bashevis Singer, who mentions them together with the Sherlock Holmes booklets he also read at the time.⁶⁹ In opposition to the series discussed above that, inspired by similar booklets in Polish, ‘adopted’ the character of Sherlock Holmes, it would seem that the anonymous initiators of the stories about Detective Shpitskop were inspired by popular stories about the Viennese detectives Josef Müller (created by the writer August Groner, 1850–1929) or Dagobert Trosler (by Balduin Groller, 1848–1916); the latter is similar to Sherlock Holmes in terms of character and the plots in which he is involved.⁷⁰

It is significant that in the years during which Yiddish detective stories reached the height of their popularity (1908–1914), Rabbi Yehuda Yudel Rosenberg (1859–1935) published a number of original stories, written in Hebrew and Yiddish. Aside from their clearly pious context, Rosenberg’s works demonstrate the influence of the detective story. One of these stories even mentions the name of Conan Doyle.⁷¹

67 Dunin and Mierzwianka 1984: 84–86; 89–91.

68 According to the advertisement on the back cover of the booklets, 12 were published in the series. I have seen געהיימניס פון אַ מיליאָנער (The Mystery of a Millionaire) and אַ רעטהוועלהאַפּטער מאַרד (The Mysterious Murder). The year of publication is not noted on the booklets, which were published in Cracow by Jüdischer Roman-Verlag in the publishing house of Yosef Fisher. It should be noted that these booklets were the source for a later reincarnation of detective booklets that appear to have been published in the 1920s, entitled וויליאַמסאָן: דער קעניג פון די דעטעקטיווס, דער פאַריזער שערלאָק האַלמעס (Williamson: The King of Detectives, the Parisian Sherlock Holmes; Warsaw: Goldfarb publishing).

69 Bashevis Singer 1963.

70 On these writers and their heroes see Tannert and Kratz 1999.

71 See Yasif 1991: especially 10–28.

Criticism

Responding to an angry letter from a reader of ראָמאַנ-צייטונג complaining about the inclusion of '*shund*,' in the form of detective stories, in a serious newspaper, the acting editor and prominent translator A. L. Jakobovitch seized the opportunity to acquaint readers with the writers Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe, the character Sherlock Holmes, and the contribution of the last of these to society, and to specify that these stories were considered 'literature for its own sake.' Yakobovitch warned readers against the widely circulating booklets translated from Russian and Polish bearing the name of the famous detective but not attributed to any specific author: in his opinion these booklets constituted a danger to the relatively inadequate Yiddish literature, and it was necessary to avoid them as much as possible.⁷²

An anonymous review in Odessa, (purportedly?) written by a woman, condemned stories of terror because depressed young readers, due to their age, were not able to cope with the negative content contained therein. Pinkerton, Carter, and other damaging publications, the reviewer writes, corrupt readers' taste and their estimation for the written word. Young people need an enriching literature which will support and nurture them at the outset of their lives.⁷³

A satirical review, in the form of a short story set in the office of a well-known London detective, portrayed Sherlock Holmes as an arrogant person whose faith in his abilities to detect the hidden characteristics of others eventually results in a humiliating defeat that shows him to be nothing more than an empty vessel. The review ends with wish, "Let us hope that he will no longer rule over minds."⁷⁴

A similar motivation inspired another satirical story by the writer Zalman Vendrof (1879–1972). The hero of the story, Khone, the son of Getsl the money lender in the shtetl of "Pupkeve," does nothing but "sit all day long and half the night reading detective stories and crime chronicles, together with newspaper reports about the courthouses."⁷⁵ Khone knows by heart the most intimate details of all the criminal events of the preceding decade. He keeps detailed lists of victims of crime and of the histories of "all the great murderers and bandits, money forgers, cheats, blackmailers, arsonists, forgers of wills, bank swin-

72 Noel (A. L. Jakobovits) 1907. It should be noted that Jakobovitch himself, a known translator, was forced to translate '*shund*' novels for the daily popular press as a source of income (see Shmeruk 1983b).

73 אַ ייִדישע טאַכטער 1910a and 1910b. I would like to thank Dr. Nurit Orchan for bringing this review and others mentioned here to my attention.

74 Zhaliklerk 1910.

75 Vendrof 1913.

dlers, thieves and other criminals” about whom he reads in the newspapers in his collection. Khone also knows every detail concerning the characteristics of Russian and foreign secret agents and detectives. Khone, nicknamed “The Pupkeve Sherlock Holmes,” decides to exploit a series of fires which break out across the shtetl and expose the arsonist terrorizing the shtetl’s Jews. Vendrof describes Khone’s actions and his humiliating defeat in a ridiculing manner, with the clear intent of warning potential readers against the superficiality and worthlessness of reading unrealistic detective stories and reports in the newspapers from police stations and courthouses.⁷⁶

In January 1909 a theater troupe starring Ester Rokhl Kaminsky staged a drama in four parts entitled “Sherlock Holmes” in the “Muranov” theatre in Warsaw.⁷⁷ On Shabbat, the day before Tisha B’Av 1910 (13 August), the play “Sherlock Holmes,” a comedy in four acts starring Julius Adler, translated from the German by Anshel Shor, premiered at the “Great Theatre” in Lodz managed by Y. G. Zandberg.⁷⁸ The editor of the *לאָדזער טאָגעבלאט*, Lazar Kahan, described the latter as a refreshing innovation in the dull landscape of current Yiddish theatre. He added that the play could not be compared with the common ‘*shund*’ booklets so detrimental to the literary value of both the hero and writer.⁷⁹

Conclusion

Various types of crime stories have existed in Yiddish since the 1860s, undoubtedly inspired by similar literature in the surrounding languages (Russian, Polish, and German). Just as European *belles lettres* found their way to Yiddish readers through translations and adaptations even before the invention of the printing press, so too in the second half of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century Yiddish readers were exposed to this popular genre. At a time when newspapers, in all languages, were becoming more readily available to growing readerships and providing up-to-date information on a variety of topics, including detailed reports from the diaries of police stations and courthouses, this information, combined with the development of European crime stories and the existence of folk tales concerning bandits

76 A similar motivation caused another writer to depict a Jewish coachman/carter with detective abilities who supposedly surprises the great Sherlock Holmes himself (L.B., ווי אַזוי דער איינזעסער האָט דערקענט דעם גרויסן סיסטטיק [How the Coachman Recognized the Great Detective], גוט מאָרגען, 13/26 June 1910, 3).

77 According to announcements in the newspaper *לעבען* from 9/22 January.

78 *לאָדזער טאָגעבלאט*, 31 July/13 August and 12/25 August 1910.

79 Lazar 1910.

and criminals, motivated writers, translators, adaptors, and publishers to print Yiddish tales of suspense and drama from the 'big wide world,' the events of which take place far away from familiar Eastern European shetls and towns. At times these stories included a didactic message, but usually they were intended to entertain and to convince readers to buy the next installment in the dramatic story. Their circulation, in the form of detective booklets and stories serialized in newspapers and journals in Yiddish (and Polish), reached a peak in the years 1907–1910. Following this there was a marked decline in demand and, in the period after the First World War, this literature was pushed to the sidelines of the Yiddish book market in Poland. It is possible that, due to the increased use of Polish in daily life, Jewish readers began to read works such as these in Polish. However, there is no doubt that the cinema became the principal supplier of crime and detective stories for entertainment purposes for both the general and Jewish audiences.

Translated by *Rebecca Wolpe*

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