

Tied to German, Unable to Find a Foothold in Yiddish: Examining Kafka Editing Choices of Yitzhak Löwy's 'Vom jüdischen Theater'

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Abstract: When Franz Kafka first saw Yitzhak Löwy's Yiddish theater troupe perform in Prague in 1911, he was enthralled with this unabashed expression of Jewishness from the actors, which led to an almost yearlong study of Yiddish language and theater. This study culminates in Kafka's speech on Yiddish, in which he claims that Yiddish had no fixed grammar, was made up entirely of loanwords, but that his audience would be able to understand more than they realize through their knowledge of German. In the speech, Kafka promotes speaking a faux Yiddish, imitating the sounds and structures of Yiddish speech, in German. In several letters to friends, Kafka includes quotes from Löwy. This article discusses a particularly long quote which has not been widely examined, in which Löwy's writing style features a blend of Yiddish and archaic, poetic German. Though Kafka expresses appreciation for Löwy's playfulness with German grammar, he also smugly states that it was difficult to understand. Kafka's own fixation with 'proper' German grammar did not allow him to replicate this way of speaking in his own works, which are famously free of regionalisms and which make only oblique references to Jewish culture and worldview. As editor of an article that Löwy wanted to publish in the magazine *Der Jude*, Kafka strikes a balance between maintaining 'proper' German grammar, while imitating features of Yiddish, such as the interspersion of Hebrew words within the German and, in one case, imitating Yiddish speech patterns. In this article, Kafka, as editor, is able to overcome his long-internalized anti-Semitic sentiments, which compel him to avoid regionalisms and direct references to Jewish culture, and his interest in Yiddish, which for him allows for an unabashed expression of that culture.

Keywords: Kafka, Löwy, Yiddish, Editing, Untranslatability

When Franz Kafka first saw Yitzhak Löwy's Yiddish theater troupe perform in Prague in 1911, he was enthralled with the actors' unabashed expression of Jewishness, which led to an almost yearlong study of Yiddish language and theater. In his 1912 speech on Yiddish, Kafka depicts the language as more naturally evolved from Middle High German than German, as well as rife with loanwords from various languages and with no fixed grammar (Kafka, Rede 423). He also argues that it is impossible to translate Yiddish into German because the two languages are so similar (Kafka, Rede 425). While his rhetorical purpose was to make Yiddish sound interesting to a group of acculturated German Jews who might otherwise be skeptical of or even hostile to Yiddish, the speech contains many inaccuracies about Yiddish. However, it also reflects some of Kafka's later comments on Jewish identity and several features he mentions are reflected in a large quote from Löwy which Kafka includes in a letter to his then-fancé Felice Bauer. While his quotations from Löwy show an interest in the actor's playful use of grammar which are influenced by Yiddish and show features of archaic German, in his own works Kafka adheres strictly to German grammar rules and does not directly reference Jewish culture nor does he use loanwords. As editor of Löwy's article "Vom

jüdischen Theater.” On the Jewish Theater, Kafka takes a completely different approach, allowing the actor to retain his authorial voice through the inclusion of mostly Hebrew loanwords, archaic German, and direct references to Jewish culture.

This article traces Kafka’s understanding of Yiddish and how it helps him to express his experiences as a Jew in German while striking a balance with his own internalized prejudices. It begins with Kafka’s initial feeling of estrangement from both the German language and other Jews, as well as his thoughts on how to write about one’s life as a Jew in German. *Willkür und Gesetz*, whim and law, is a key aspect of Yiddish for Kafka as it represents Yiddish’s playfulness with grammar and mixing of languages. Kafka saw Yiddish as a sociolect of German, emphasizing the Germanic elements and largely ignoring the Slavic influences; though he never seemed to learn the language beyond what he could understand vis-a-vis German. This is highlighted in a quote from Löwy that Kafka included in a letter to Felice Bauer. However, his interest was tempered by his concerns about being perceived as writing an artificial German, often associated with Jews who wrote in German, and how he saw himself as a protector of the German language, which he viewed as hostile to foreign elements. This led him to reference Jewish culture and worldview indirectly in his own works. With this background, the article turns to examine Löwy’s article “Vom jüdischen Theater” and what editorial choices Kafka made to retain Löwy’s authorial voice through the inclusion of Hebrew and Yiddish words and direct references to Jewish culture, while also using ‘correct’ German grammar.

There are numerous influential books and articles that look specifically at Kafka’s relationship to Yiddish, the Yiddish theater, and how he describes his life as a Jew in his writings. Many of these works focus on how Kafka struggled with internalized feelings of anti-Semitism, while also being deeply interested in Yiddish theater. Several articles also examine Kafka’s interest in the Yiddish language while also balking at how it diverged from German grammar. In his 2011 article, Mark Harman argues that a translator of Kafka needs to understand the undertones of Jewish culture in his works as Kafka uses descriptions that would be “coded” Jewish.¹ In her essay, Maria Kager (2013) examines several diary entries and letters by Kafka to argue that Kafka felt estranged from other Jews in the Habsburg empire. For Kager, this was due in part to Kafka’s father’s desire to distance himself from Jewish society in Prague; this feeling was lifted only after he found an alternative way to express himself as a Jew through Löwy and his Yiddish theater troupe. In the seminal *Kafka and the Yiddish Theater* (1971), Evelyn Torton Beck breaks down how themes, plots, and characters from several Yiddish plays that Kafka had seen, as well as his friendship with Löwy, influenced his early works. Doreen Densky (2015) focuses her analysis on Kafka’s “Speech on Yiddish”, which she argues emphasizes the “lively” and “transitory” aspects of Yiddish. In *Beyond the Mother Tongue* (2012), Yasemin Yildiz demonstrates that while Kafka showed great fascination with the “lively” aspects of Löwy’s writing, he struggled with how to make it adhere to German grammar rules. In several works, Jeffery Grossman (2000, 2014) examines multiple translations of popular Yiddish writers into German and explores why the translators chose to use Hebrew-derived words or find a German equivalent to either emphasize or downplay Yiddish culture and how those changes affected their translations. In this article, I will show that the “lively” and “transitory” aspects of Yiddish that Kafka emphasizes, appear in the edited article both as loanwords from Yiddish and Hebrew, as well as a poetic style peppered with archaic words, which also appeared in a letter from Löwy.

In his famous letter to Max Brod on minor literature from June 1921 Kafka laments that a German Jew can do nothing but *mauscheln*, which he describes as: “die laute

oder stillschweigende oder auch selbstquälerische Anmaßung eines fremden Besitzes [...] auch wenn nicht der einzige Sprachfehler nachgewiesen werden könnte" (*Briefe* 336–37). *Mauscheln* was a term developed as Jews in German-speaking countries began adopting the German language and used by non-Jewish Germans to deny that Jews could speak German as a native language, it could only be an imitation. Kafka's obsession with avoiding writing that could be perceived as *mauscheln* led him to critique a line from Brod's translation of Leoš Janáček's Czech opera, "Jenufa" as sounding artificial, like the German that they got from their non-German mothers (Kafka, *Briefe* 178–79). In other words, it sounds like a 'bad' German that could be associated with Jews. But Kafka also saw the potential for creativity in this tension. For him, the creativity of young Jews who began to write in German was inspired when they were still tied to the Judaism of their fathers but could not find a foothold in the German language or culture that they tried to enter (*Briefe* 337). This failure to find a foothold in the dominant culture while also feeling estranged from the culture of their fathers led to creativity in how to write in German as Jews, but they could not reference Jewish culture directly. For Kafka, "the German idea of a *Muttersprache* had not yet accepted the *Komödie* of its borrowings from French as well as Jewish sources" and that German culture grew hostile when these elements were exposed (Suchoff, *Jewish* 75, emphasis in the original). He is searching for a way for German Jews to express themselves fully as Jews without creating a comedy of errors.

Before his exposure to the Yiddish theater, Kafka did not feel much connection with the Jewish community. He once lamented in his diary on January 8, 1914: "Was habe ich mit Juden gemeinsam? Ich habe kaum etwas mit mir gemeinsam" (*Tagebuch* 255). As Kager writes, his parents disregarded Jewish customs and even looked down on Jewish culture so that consequently "Kafka felt estranged from Judaism" (168). This changed when he saw some performances from Löwy's acting troupe. In a diary entry, Kafka portrays the Yiddish actor Frau Klug as an ersatz mother-figure when she calls to her "jüdische Kinderloch" ² (sic!), little Jewish children, which draws Kafka and the audience to her³ (Yildiz 45). The figure of the mother comes up again in his diary entry from October 24, 1911, when Kafka writes that he was not able to love his mother fully because he used the German-Christian word *Mutter* to describe her as a Jewish woman. For Kafka, there is a mode of intention inherent in the role of *Mutter*: someone who has "christliche Glanz" but also "christliche Kälte," characteristics which Kafka argues do not apply to a Jewish mother (Kafka, *Tagebücher* 102). A different signifier with a more Jewish mode of intention is needed. Kafka suggests and then immediately dismisses the word *Mama*, because it is strongly associated with "Mutter" (*Tagebücher* 102).

For Kafka, the Christian (non-Jewish) mode of intention within German makes it impossible to translate his understanding of Yiddish into German as the Christian mode of intention will always have primacy when speaking German⁴ as it is the language of the majority culture in which he lives. It is the mode of intention that causes *Brot* and *pain* to mean different things to a German and Frenchman in Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator," but they are both cultural signifiers that developed from the same fundamental thing: *bread*. In other words, "während dergestalt die Art des Meinens in diesen beiden Wörtern einander widerstrebt, ergänzt sie sich in den beiden Sprachen, denen sie entstammen" (Benjamin 16). For Benjamin, a word cannot be translated individually for its mode of intentions to be fully understood; the meaning of an individual word must be understood within the context of the whole work (20). The question for Kafka was how do you show the Jewish "mode of intention" in the German language?

Kafka first proposes a solution in his speech, “Rede Über die Jiddische Sprache,” in which he emphasizes the transitory nature of Yiddish: it has no fixed form, is not contained by grammar, and contains many languages within it. With these characteristics “strömen in diese Sprachgebilde von Willkür und Gesetz die Dialekte des Jargon noch ein” (Kafka, Rede 423). Kafka associates *Willkür und Gesetz* in Yiddish with variations in grammar and liberal borrowings from other languages, in contrast to the hostility which some German-speakers showed towards the foreign elements in the German language. Kafka also argues, though not convincingly, that Yiddish developed more naturally from Middle High German than German⁵ (Kafka, Rede 423).

In the speech and in his diary entries around this period, Kafka describes and shows examples of Yiddish that are understandable to German-speakers. The only non-German Yiddish word that Kafka uses in his diary and letters is a Hebrew curse word his father used: *meschugge* (crazy), a word which probably had a deep emotional meaning for Kafka.⁶ Kafka focuses primarily on the German, and later Hebraic, influences on Yiddish. He only mentions the Slavic influence on Yiddish once in his speech and never provides examples. Kafka encourages his audience to focus on what they can understand of Yiddish from their knowledge of German and to allow this “uninhibited” form of being Jewish to wash over them through performance, which would allow the “Yiddish” meaning and context of a word to come through.

An excellent example of showing meaning through context comes from a letter dated April 8, 1913, where Kafka quotes a letter from Löwy when he was sick. “Gott ist groß, wenn er gebt, so gebt er von alle Seiten” (Kafka, Briefe an Felice 360). Löwy starts out saying that God is great and generous but ends by saying that God is so generous that He gave him an illness. The ironic humor of Löwy’s statement is understandable through the context of his letter, and his written “gebt” instead of “gibt” hints at his pronunciation. However, the conveyance of a Yiddish or Jewish mode of intention through the imitation of Yiddish through grammar and pronunciation has its limits.

In an earlier letter dated November 5, 1912, early in his relationship with Felice Bauer, Kafka includes a long quote from Löwy, complete with grammatical and spelling errors, describing the road going to Bauer’s home in Berlin:

Von Alexander Platz zihet sich eine lange, nicht belebt Strasse, Prenzloer Strasse, Prenzlower Allee. Welche hat viele Seitengässchen. Eins von diese Gässchen ist das Immanuel Kirchstrass. Still, abgelegen, weit von den immer roschenden Berlin. Das Gäßchen beginnt mit eine gewenliche Kirche. Wi sa wi steht das Haus Nr 37 ganz schmall und hoch. Das Gässchen ist auch ganz schmall. Wenn ich dort bin, ist immer ruhig, still und ich frage, ist das noch Berlin (*Briefe an Felice* 75)

Examined purely in terms of grammar and vocabulary, this lively description could easily be dismissed as poorly written: Löwy uses *immer* incorrectly, *wi sa wi* somewhat awkwardly, and he uses the wrong adjective ending several times. However, there are several examples of Yiddish grammar and pronunciation as well as examples of poetic, antiquated German that would have interested Kafka.

There is one instance where Löwy follows Yiddish, rather than German, grammar rules. In “Prenzlower Allee. Welche hat viele Seitengässchen,” Löwy places *hat*, in the second position and separates Prenzlauer Allee from the dependent clause with a period (German: Prenzlauer Allee, welche viele Seitengässchen *hat*). According to Dovid Katz, in his book *Grammar of the Yiddish Language*: “The inflected verb usually follows the relative [pronoun] and is thus maintained in second position within the relative phrase” and the relative pronouns in Yiddish can either be un-inflecting, *vos* (וואָס), or inflecting, *velkher* (וועלכער)⁷ (245). By following Yiddish grammatical rules, this

replicates how a native-Yiddish speaker would speak German and allows for a Yiddish mode of intention to shine through.

Löwy has two instances of more poetic elements in this text. The sentence “ich frage, ist das noch Berlin” uses a stylistic device from 18th or 19th century German: *Fragen* in German can be either reflexive, you ask yourself something (i.e. ich frage *mich*), or a simple transitive verb if you are asking someone a question (i.e. ich frage *den Mann*). Löwy describes the road that Bauer lives on as ‘weit von den immer *roschenden* Berlin’ (emphasis added). Löwy’s *roschend* is most likely either a misspelling of either *rauschend*, *glittering* or *resounding*, or from *rauschen*, (nominalized *das Rauschen*, *hissing* and *whooshing*). It is also related to the Yiddish *royshend* (רױנעשירן), *rushing*, strongly suggesting that Löwy wanted to portray Berlin as a busy city whooshing or rushing by. These rhetorical flourishes make the text more interesting to read and reflect the older form of German that Yiddish more naturally evolved from and still harkens back to for Kafka.

This passage is an example of how a native-Yiddish speaker, specifically Löwy, speaks German, integrating Yiddish and archaic German elements into his writing. It is similar to Walter Benjamin’s concept of translating *wörtlich*, which promotes keeping the grammatic structure of the original text in the translation to allow the pure language to come through in the foreign sentence structure. Benjamin writes: “hinsichtlich der Syntax wirft jede Sinneswiedergabe vollends über den Haufen und droht geradenwegs ins Unverständliche zu führen” (20). However, it does not necessarily convey a Yiddish worldview and this reliance on Yiddish-inflected German can lead to difficulties in understanding.

Kafka notes, with a certain smugness, in a later letter to Felice, that he was uncertain what exactly Löwy had written in another letter: “Hast Du eigentlich den Brief des Löwy, den ich Dir für Sonntag schickte, lesen können? Er spielte Sonntag in Berlin, wenigstens glaube ich es aus dem Brief herauslesen zu können, [...]” (Briefe an Felice 281). The “slight tone of superiority” that Beck notes from Kafka regarding his “genuine concern” about Löwy’s business dealings (87) is also revealed in his quotations of and comments on Löwy’s writing. Yildiz correctly states that while Kafka “identifies the German language as the law, he himself is the one who repeatedly guards its boundaries” and balks at the inclusion of foreignness (61). Despite Kafka’s genuine excitement for Löwy’s unabashed expressions of Jewishness, it does not agree with Kafka’s view of himself as protector of the German language, a role he performed even when he was excited by Löwy’s creative use of grammar.

In a letter to Max Brod dated September 1917, Kafka discusses proofreading an article Löwy had written for the magazine *Der Jude*. He only mentions a single line: “frackierte Herren und neglegierte Damen”, which Kafka finds “excellently put” (Kafka, *Briefe* 173, Letters 148). Löwy creates the neologism *frackiert* by turning the noun *Frack* (tuxedo) into a verb, *frackieren*, and then turns the verb into an adjective. “[T]he form itself follows the grammatically correct act of transforming verbs into adjectives. [That is,] the morphology is correct, but not the word to which it is applied” (Yildiz 60). While Kafka appreciates Löwy’s playful adaptation of German grammar, he states: “the German language balks” and Kafka has to “polish” the grammar (Kafka, *Briefe* 173, Letters 148).

Before moving on to “Vom jüdischen Theater”, in which this polished line appears, it is important to see how Kafka expresses a Jewish worldview in his own writings. In his early mature works, Kafka began to focus exclusively on showing a Jewish mode of intention through context rather than grammar. In Kafka’s short story “The Judgement”, Georg interprets his father’s judgement, “Tod des Ertrinkens” (death by drowning), literally as a legal pronouncement. His inability to see the mode of intention of the phrase as a Jewish curse or oath, and not as something to be taken literally, results in his

death. To demonstrate the impossibility of translating from Yiddish to German, Kafka, in his speech, states: “‘Toit’ [YIVO - toyt] z. B. ist eben nicht ‘tot’ und ‘Blüt’ [YIVO - blut] ist keinesfalls ‘Blut’” (Rede 425). As Liska notes in her book *When Kafka Says ‘We’* “The umlauts in the Yiddish Blüt and Toit inevitably ‘twist’ and soften the pathos-filled sound these words have in German” (31). Suchoff convincingly demonstrates that the father’s sentence of “Tod des Ertrinkens” in “The Judgement” is given in the sense of a *Klolle* or curse or oath, which is meant to express frustration and not to be taken literally as Georg does using *Amstdeutsch*, reflecting Kafka’s training in the Austro-Hungarian legal system (Jewish 77–78). While both *toyt* and *tot* literally mean “death,” the way the father uses the sentence of death, in a Yiddish tradition, and how the son interprets it, in a German or legalistic framework, are completely different. It is the linguistic similarities between *toyt* and *tot* that mask their different intentions and allow the German mode of intention to dominate. Georg could not interpret the curse as anything but literal as German is the dominant language.

Themes from Yiddish theater and culture reappear unmarked throughout Kafka’s works, lying, as Kagan states “underneath the German” to be found by those who know what to look for (173). As Harman notes, Kafka described Oswald in *The Castle* as the “ewigen Landvermesser,” a term associated with the “ewigen Juden (83). In her analysis of *The Castle*, Beck shows how Kafka chose the profession based on wordplay in Hebrew: the Hebrew words for land surveyor and messiah, *moshoak* and *mashiakh* respectively, are nearly identical (195). In his work, Kafka hides the Hebrew origins of the wordplay using the German translation of the words and avoiding any connection to the foreign. Another example of references to Jewish culture comes from “Forschungen eines Hundes,” (1922), in which a group of dogs who are artists are referred to as *Lufihund*, *airdogs*, which plays on the Yiddish term *Luftmensch*, *airperson*, to refer to someone “without a definite business or income, someone who is a parasite to society and was often used by assimilated Jews to designate, and denigrate, lesser-integrated artists from Eastern-Europe” (Kager 173–75).

As has been shown, Kafka’s works contain many references to Jewish culture, but these references are not direct, he seeks to hide these influences. The short piece “Vom jüdischen Theater” directly references Jewish culture and highlights the foreign elements within it. The work which appears in Kafka’s *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente 1* is the unnamed article that Kafka edited for Löwy. It is written as a first-person narrative that recounts Löwy’s early experiences with the theater. It begins when he first watches, enthralled as an uncle dresses up and performs during *Purim*, a Jewish holiday similar to Karneval. While Löwy is fascinated by the theater, his pious parents and other religious relatives forbid him to go, telling him that the theater is a sacrilegious place. As Löwy grows older he ventures out to the Polish opera and then later to the Yiddish theater in Warsaw, where he is captivated by the performances and being surrounded by bourgeois Jews. It concludes with his worried father warning him that the theater would take him far away.

In the scene describing Löwy’s first visit to the Yiddish theater in Warsaw, the line “frackierte Herren und neglegierte Damen”, discussed above (Kafka, *Briefe* 173), reappears in Löwy’s article as: “Vor allem keine Herren im Frack, keine Damen in Dekolleté [...]” (Kafka, *Nachgelassene* 435). Here Kafka as an editor continues to guard the German language by removing the nouns that had been changed into adjectives and using the original nouns. He also replaced the original *Negligé*, a long dressing gown, with *Dekolleté*, a type of long evening dress, which makes the dress more appropriate for a bourgeois theater audience. This line shows that Löwy is excited to be among other Polish Jews of all walks of life at the theater and is fascinated by their clothing.

After Löwy's parents learn that he has been going to the theater, they have a serious talk with him, which is signaled using a play on two Hebrew words. Löwy writes of that moment: "Instinktiv fühlte ich, daß hier eine 'Kasche' für mich gekocht wird" (Kafka, *Nachgelassene* 436). This is a pun based on both *Kesche* (a religious question) and *Kasche* (buckwheat groats) being pronounced and spelled identically in Yiddish (קאַשע). A question is going to be cooked up for Löwy to find out if he was doing something that he had been forbidden to do. In contrast to the wordplay with *Lufithund* and the connection of land surveyor and Messiah, whose original meanings and connections in Yiddish and Hebrew are only suggest through German translation, this sentence uses the Hebrew word and connects a tradition of posing a religious question to the parents asking Löwy a tough question about his nightly visits to the forbidden theater.

The article contains other Yiddish as well as many non-German, Hebrew-derived words that are associated with Jewish culture such as *Purim*, *Rebbe*, and *Kaftan*, which Kafka retains without providing a translation for the words in the text or as a footnote. Except for the Yiddish *Rebbe*, rather than the German *Rabbi(ner)*, and the German-derived *Klaus* (a Talmudic school) the Hebrew-derived words are in quotation marks. Grossman notes that "[t]he small Hebrew-Aramaic component [of Yiddish] tends to occupy a higher register and to occur more in the discourse of religious study or intellectual writings specific to Jewish life" (From East 297). The Hebrew words cover a range of topics from the name of a holiday, common food and dress, as well as rules of religious life. When their son first expresses interest in the theater, Löwy's parents declare the theater to be "'trefe', nichts anders als 'chaser'" (Kafka, *Nachgelassene* 430). *Trefe*, is a term for food prohibited by Jewish dietary laws and *chaser*, *chazir*, is a word for pig or greedy person. *Chazir tref* together is a Yiddish phrase: meaning "as unclean as a pig." This puts the parents' disapproval of the theater in religious terms and is shown as a concept that does not have a German equivalent. In retaining the Hebrew-derived words, Kafka avoids what Grossman defines as "the need to translate the *cultural* discourse more than the language of the source into that of the target culture" (From East 290, emphasis in the original). As Grossman argues, including many Hebrew words "produces an exoticizing effect on the [German] language itself, producing a form of German unfamiliar even to most Jewish readers in early 1900s Germany" (From East 297). It also "partially replicat[es] what Max Weinreich called the 'fusion' structure of Yiddish, and produc[es] a sound-image resonant of, but not, Yiddish" (Grossman, From East 297). This fusion allows Kafka to retain the article's Yiddish context without sacrificing 'correct' German grammar.

In the final example, Kafka retains the word *Gedenk*, the imperative form of *gedenken*, to remember, which is an antiquated verb from Kafka's time. As has been shown, Kafka's long quote of Löwy contained some elements of antiquated and poetic German, which probably interested Kafka. At the end of the article, Löwy's father commands his son: "Mein Kind, gedenk, das wird Dich weit, sehr weit führen" Kafka, *Nachgelassene* 436). This line conveys the father's concern for his son and captures his mode of speech, which for Kafka might connote how a Yiddish-speaker sounds in German. Most likely Löwy used this archaic word and Kafka left it in. Kafka's retention of poetic devices from the 18th or 19th Century that comes up in Löwy's article, suggests an interest in the older elements of German that Kafka associates with Yiddish when he says that the language developed more naturally from Middle High German than German.

In his 1912 speech on Yiddish, Kafka said that the listener should experience something of Yiddish culture through hearing it. Kafka uses several methods throughout his life to show the *Willkür und Gesetz* that he attributes to Yiddish in his works. While he first promotes showing it through imitating Yiddish grammar and pronunciation, he defers

to subtle references to Yiddish culture in his own writings. The direct references to Yiddish culture through the mixing of Hebrew words into German sentences in Löwy's article retains his authorial voice and allows the *Willkür und Gesetz* of Yiddish to shine through with the fusion of German and Hebraic elements. But it also allows precisely this *Komödie* of foreign elements, which made it impossible for Kafka to use in his own writing, in which he referred to Yiddish culture only indirectly.

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Notes

- ¹ Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's influential, though controversial, book *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1974) argues that Kafka's minor literature deterritorializes German; meaning that a minority group, in this case Jews, uses the major language to speak from their perspective, i.e. bringing the language to those outside the majority. In contrast, David Suchoff in his book *Kafka's Jewish Languages* (2012), shows that Kafka's use of Yiddish themes in German writing denationalizes the language, i.e., bringing foreign influences into German. I would argue that these are two separate aspects, though they are often combined in minor literature.
- ² The YIVO standard transliteration is *Kinderlekh* (קײַנערלעך). Kafka spells Yiddish based on how it sounds.
- ³ Bei manchen Liedern, der Aussprache „jüdische Kinderloch“, manchem Anblick dieser Frau, die auf dem Podium, weil sie Jüdin ist uns Zuhörer weil wir Juden sind an sich zieht, ohne Verlangen oder Neugier nach Christen, ging mir ein Zittern über die Wangen“ (Kafka, *Tagebücher* 59).
- ⁴ Suchoff, in his book *Kafka's Jewish Languages*, takes another track when he argues that the German language would not allow the *Komödie* of foreign words or foreign concepts into it, denying the possibility of expressing a non-Christian sentiment through a Christian language (75).
- ⁵ “Oder der Jargon entwickelte mittelhochdeutsche Formen folgerichtiger als selbst das Neuhochdeutsche; so z. B. ist das Jargon'sche ‚mir seien‘ (neuhochdeutsch ‚wir sind‘) aus dem Mittelhochdeutschen „sin“ natürlicher entwickelt, als das neuhochdeutsche ‚wir sind“ (Kafka, *Rede* 423).
- ⁶ In a diary entry, Kafka writes that his father called Max Brod a “meschuggenen ritoch” (a crazy hothead), (Kafka, *Tagebücher* 214).
- ⁷ “the poem, which the poetess wrote is very beautiful – די ליד סאָד – רעכלעוון/סאָוון, עסעטעאַפּ יד רעכלעוון/סאָוון, דײַל סאָד – זײַש רעײז זײַא ןבירשענאָג טאָד [dos lid, vos/velkher di poetese hot angeshribn iz zeyer sheyn]“ (Katz 246).

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